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Publication Date

2019

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Fanm ak Pouvwa:

Images of Women in Haitian Sovereignty

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Theater and Performance Studies

by

Eva Heppelmann

2019

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Fanm ak Pouvwa:

Images of Women in Haitian Sovereignty

by

Eva Heppelmann

Doctor of Philosophy in Theater and Performance Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2019

Professor Sean Aaron Metzger, Chair

This project analyzes the use of nineteenth and twentieth-century images of Haitian women as performances of sovereignty by looking at a varied archive of literary, theatrical, artistic, and political performances. Although frequently assimilated into nationalist and anti-nationalist struggles for liberty, these representations are not always liberating for Haitian women. I examine transtemporal and trinational representations of Haitian Revolutionaries, the play *Antigon*, the fifteenth century Taino queen Anacaona, and Ertha Pascal-Trouillot's presidency. My project reads these representations through Édouard Glissant's theory of relation and creolization to unpack ways sovereignty, gender, and race are reconfigured in depictions of

women. Addressing the limitations of discourses of ‘exceptionalism’ and ‘primitivism’ that have narrated Haitian history, my work extends scholarship on Haitian nationalism and feminism to combat the repeated exclusion of women from histories of Haiti.

My work draws from multiple theoretical lenses including performance studies, literary theory, postcolonial theory, and gender/feminist theory. I consider the ways narratives of the Haitian revolution over-determine discourses of Haiti, masking the role of the international community and obscuring the contributions of women. The purpose of theorizing sovereignty in relation to images of women is to challenge and disrupt the narrative of sovereignty as inherently masculine. By problematizing the performance of both femininity and sovereignty in cultural performances, this dissertation articulates how gender, nationalism, and globalization inform performances and discourses of Haitian sovereignty.

The dissertation of Eva Heppelmann is approved.

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2019

For Charles, Nella, and Bea

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe a debt to Marie Vieux-Chauvet, the author of the novel *Amour, Colère et Folie* that first captured my attention and inspired this entire project. I would not have been able to complete this work without the FLAS fellowship, everyone from Florida International University's Latin American and Caribbean Studies department, and Jacques Pierre who was a fabulous instructor. I want to thank the Theater department and LGBTQ Studies program faculty and staff at UCLA who helped support and mentor me as a student and Teaching Assistant. I am grateful for the academic and emotional support of my fellow doctoral students Gweneth Shanks, Lisa Sloan, Jenna Tamimi, Hye Kyoung Kwon and especially Kimberly Welch. Robin Derby and François Lionnet taught courses and offered mentorship that helped me understand my project and envision a future in academia. I want to thank Michelle Liu Carriger who provided support and very welcome advice, and Sue-Ellen Case who inspired me to think in new ways. Thank you, Sean Metzger for keeping me on-track, telling me that I could do this, and being ever so patient. Finally, thank you to my family, who reminded me why I do this work.

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Introduction

A remarkable and unparalleled event, the Haitian Revolution produced ideas, codes, and symbols of freedom and sovereignty that reverberated throughout the world. Representations of the Revolution inspired and signaled an expansive array of agendas. Artists and historians have relied upon the Revolutionaries to unpack histories of colonialism, slavery, and nationalism. Politicians have used Revolutionary representations to access the power of this historical event. In the African Diaspora, Revolutionaries perform a racial, Caribbean, and postcolonial identity. However, a repeated emphasis on the Haitian *men* in depictions ignores the labor of Haitian *women* in the Revolution. Underrepresented but hardly insignificant, women suffer from large-scale omissions in the national narrative and historical archive that contribute to the experience of everyday gendered oppression. Haitian scholar Myriam Chancy explains Haitian women's experience as, "defined by exile within her own country, for she is alienated from the means to assert at once feminine and feminist identities at the same time that she undergoes the same colonial experiences of her male counterparts."¹ Because of representations' power to shape perceptions, the attention paid to Haitian Revolutionary *heroes* generates a narrative of Haitian sovereignty as inherently masculine.

Masculine narratives of sovereignty reproduce gender discrimination and risk distancing Haitian women from the nation and its history. In this dissertation, I explore the role of gender in the narrative of Haitian sovereignty through examination of cultural representations of Haiti and Haitians. Beginning with the Revolution, I consider the emphasis on men and the masculine that

¹ Myriam Chancy, *Framing Silence: Revolutionary Novels by Haitian Women* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 13.

leave women and the feminine as the anonymous and victimized masses. I use examples of representations of Haitian women that either challenge or access sovereignty to disrupt the narrative of sovereignty as masculine. By considering the ways these representations perform femininity and sovereignty in plays, speeches, and newspapers (to name a few), I offer a nuanced articulation of the ways gender, nationalism, and globalization inform performances and discourses of Haitian sovereignty.

As products of creolization, the representations of women examined in the following chapter share similarities with depictions of male Revolutionaries through their reconfiguration and reinvention of multiple cultural aesthetics and ideas. I use the Caribbean theoretical concept creolization to unpack the cultural and historical histories behind representations of sovereignty. Although quite different in scope and form, representations of Revolutionaries and the three women discussed in my project, a Haitian adaptation of Antigone, indigenous princess Anacaona, and first female president Pascal-Trouillot are all shaped by gendered national narratives. By comparing the representations as performances, I consider the intention and reception of a variety of depictions of Haitian women. I argue that creolization has the potential to both expand and restrict representations of sovereignty by either codifying or subverting gendered narratives. Through performance, I analyze the representations as multi-author, composite pieces and the complex audiences to identify how gendered national narratives influence the production and reception of representations.

By focusing on the interplay between gender and sovereignty, my project has a complex relationship with women's lived conditions in Haiti. Not often a direct replication but still related to Haitians experiences, the representations reveal aspects of the shifting role of women in the national narrative. The circumstances of Haitian colonialism, slavery, racism, and sexism

influence both the lived experience and the performance of gender within the national narrative. Therefore, I will first illustrate some of the circumstances under which Haitian sovereignty exists. National and international actions have continually threatened Haitian sovereignty, producing a volatile political arena that produces violence and structures women's lives. To situate women's relationship to the state, I will discuss some of the roles women serve in Haitian society. Next, I will present the methodology for this project. I use theories of performance and gender to analyze representations as well as the theoretical concept Creolization. With performance theories as a guide, I will establish a multifaceted archive of cultural works. Finally, I will outline the four chapters of my project.

Haitian Women and Sovereignty

Haitian sovereignty has always been a question of national and international politics. Social divisions, partly a legacy of colonial society, have created extreme economic disparity. Limited industry and inability to access education has impeded social mobility. Severe poverty and instability have hindered democracy, creating ideal conditions for military coups. As a postcolonial nation, the structure of the Haitian government and society is both a replication and refutation of colonial models. On a small island, access to material goods structure international relations. France and later the United States have consistently influenced the Haitian government through cultural, economic, and political means. In short, Haitian sovereignty has continually been defined, often threatened, by external international affairs. Late twentieth and twenty-first-century scholarship contextualizes the Haitian politics within a framework of global relations,

specifically in terms of economic aid.² Like with many postcolonial and impoverished nations, aid becomes a critical factor in questions of sovereignty. Mascarenhas explains, “the nature of twenty-first-century sovereignty, particularly as it applies to humanitarianism, is one where sovereignty has become transnational. The role of crisis as the paradigm of modern government has provided the means for the continued global expansion of this new sovereign power.”³ In Haiti, sovereignty has consistently been defined by the transnational and frequently framed in terms of the role of crisis. After the revolution, the threat of attack from France and other colonial powers forced Haitian governments to prioritize the military. Lack of trading partners and political allies rendered Haiti economically and politically vulnerable. Additionally, many nations dependent upon systems of slavery chose to isolate Haiti economically, fearing the precedent set by the Haitian Revolution.

Becoming independent did not completely erase colonial legacies of classism and corruption. According to Michel-Rolph Trouillot, colonial slavery produced an elite class whose self-interested promoted exploitive policies and a Haitian state designed to protect the elite at the cost of the rest of the population.⁴ Most of the Haitian regimes ended as a consequence of a military coup, rather than a peaceful transfer of power. The US occupation of Haiti (1915-1934) empowered US corporations at the expense of Haitians, even employing slave labor to build

² Earlier scholarship offers a less unified perspective with some scholars, often Haitian scholars, identifying instability in Haiti as a consequence of national and global factors. However, some earlier scholarship, largely US American and European uses racist justifications to blame Haitians for instability. Other scholarship focuses exclusively on the success of the new nation that it ignores the problems facing Haiti.

³Michael Mascarenhas, “Sovereignty: Crisis, Humanitarianism, and the Condition of Twenty-First-Century Sovereignty,” in *Framing the Global* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 296-316.

⁴Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Haiti, state against nation: The origins and legacy of Duvalierism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990).

infrastructure. The Duvalier dictatorship (1957-1986), which was unofficially supported by the US government, committed egregious humanitarian crimes against Haitians in order to maintain power.⁵ These crises often define the nature of Haitian sovereignty as well as further threaten the most vulnerable population groups, often women and children. In spite of the complex relationship between Haiti and the international community, US American media has tended to reproduce a simplified narrative of the United States as savior, rather than recognize the long controversial history of US involvement.

The Diaspora community play a crucial role in Haitian sovereignty as part of the network of aid but also as ambassadors of Haitian culture. Remittances sent to Haiti from relatives abroad give the diaspora influence. Frequently the Haitian diaspora community are better positioned to critique the US narrative of the destitute nation. Artists, musicians, and writers from the Diaspora, who are better able to distribute their work internationally, help to spread depictions of Haiti as beautiful. New technologies, inexpensive cameras and cell phones, enable the diaspora to remain connected to Haiti and forge and maintain political alliances.⁶ The importance of the diaspora community for Haiti led President Aristide to refer to the diaspora as the tenth department of Haiti.⁷ With the ability to translate work into multiple languages and cultural contexts, the diaspora bring representations to non-Haitian populations and foreign cultures to Haiti. Through these connections, the Diaspora can promote and fund political candidates,

⁵ Trouillot, *Haiti, state against nation*.

⁶ Political pressure from outside of Haiti has led to the overturning of regimes. See Laurent Dubois: Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012).

⁷ Prior to and during Aristide's presidency, Haiti was divided into nine regions known as departments. The role of the diaspora in Haitian politics inspired Aristide to claim that the diaspora community was the tenth department and should have the ability to vote in elections. More recently, the government has restructured the county into ten departments, such that the diaspora is called the unofficial eleventh department in the vernacular.

pressure foreign governments, and critique the Haitian government without fear for their safety. Their active participation in Haitian culture and politics creates routes of cultural exchange that have the power to strengthen or destabilize Haitian sovereignty.

The precarity of Haitian sovereignty has a long history. Although economic and racial divisions have frequently segregated society and produced conflicting visions of sovereignty, the threat of invasion often unified the nation.⁸ Since the Revolution, France, England, the United States, and the United Nations have all threatened Haitian independence. As a result, the Haitian military has taken a prominent role in the political process in either defending or overthrowing the current political leader. In recent years, since the Haitian military has been disbanded, the United Nations troops have taken the former place of the Haitian military, serving as a personal guard for certain political elites and multi-national business interests. The conflict between the Haitian people, government, and international community is complicated by the addition of INGO/NGOs. These new forces which influence and sometimes restrict Haitian sovereignty belong to a global capitalist system that is unbound by any state or nation. The money and resources of outside groups continually undermines the authority of the Haitian government, leaving the real sovereignty of Haiti in question. Money, resources, political sway, and international loopholes create a strange system in which it is not always clear who is beholden to whom and where real authority lies. Within this unstable system, gender, race, and class produce different spheres with different rules. My project examines the some of the cultural repercussions of this system and the way sovereignty, citizenship, and agency become complicated by gender.

⁸ Since the revolution, class divisions have resulted in different understandings of the role of the nation and the government. See Laurent Dubois and Michel-Rolph Trouillot.

As is the case for many subaltern women, Haitian Creole women suffer from being doubly obscured as both non-white and female subjects, which has led to absences and omissions within the Haitian, French and US American archives.⁹ Patriarchal structures, which are complicated by international political agendas and complex aid networks, restrict women's access to political power. These structures devalue and hinder the circulation of representations of empowered women. Consequently, women are oppressed both in practice and within the public imaginary. Archives tend to preserve primarily textual artifacts that often reflect a strong bias from the society's hegemonic culture through what is recorded, who has access to produce textual documents, and under what conditions these documents are read. Therefore, simply locating representations of women within historical archives becomes a challenge.

Notwithstanding the gender politics that have contributed to the paucity of documentation of Haitian women, researchers face difficulties due to political instability and environmental disasters that have scattered or destroyed archives within Haiti. My own research has frequently been limited by what has been recorded and preserved, dictating the direction and breadth of the archive constructed in this dissertation. Nevertheless, the absence of women in the archive does not reflect women's participation in society.

Women perform crucial roles in everyday society and have participated in all major historical events. On a most basic level, women are integral to the Haitian economy. *Poto mitan*, meaning pillar of society, is a traditional Kreyòl phrase used to describe Haitian women's role in society. Women, known as 'Madan Sara,' participate in both rural and urban economies as the primary merchants at roadside and open-air markets selling products grown or made by the entire

⁹Gayatri C. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (C. Nelson and AL Grossberg, 1988), 271-313.

family, both food stuffs and household goods. The entrepreneurship of Haitian women means that women have control over domestic finances and provide an essential communication network.¹⁰ Furthermore, women perform central roles within Vodou practice. Vodou priestesses, mambos, interpret the signs from the spirits, conduct rituals, and offer guidance as informal therapists.¹¹ Despite this engagement in the economy and religious practices, Haitian women's formal social and political power is often linked to their relationship to husbands and male partners. Legally Haitians women's rights have been second to the rights of their fathers and husbands. Consequently, relationships become crucial for women's economic and social security. Marriage and liaisons offer the possibility for social mobility to many women who live in precarious financial situations. Haitian scholar Carolle Charles argues that women struggle as both *marchann* (merchant) and *marchandiz* (merchandise).¹² As a result, the socio-political power of Haitian women can become entangled in the women's performances of race, class, and gender and as this performance can be leveraged in relationships. Social and racial identifications complicate the majority of women's access to education, work, and relationships. In addition, due to systematically barring girls from access to education, widespread illiteracy has limited women's participation in politics. In spite of everything, widespread gendered discrimination has

¹⁰N'Zengou-Tayo explains that women run and participate in marketplaces, a legacy from the colonial period when were more inclined to let women over men leave the plantation. For rural families who primarily work in small scale agriculture, this means that women control family finances that helps to create strong matriarchs in rural society. Marie-José N'Zengou-Tayo, "Fanm Se Poto Mitan': Haitian Woman, the Pillar of Society," *Feminist Review*, no. 59 (1998), 118-142.

¹¹Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: a Vodou priestess in Brooklyn* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

¹²Charles considers the ways in which women access financial security and social mobility through entrepreneurship in small scale markets and sexual/romantic liaisons. Carolle Charles, "Reflections on Being *machann Ak Machandiz*". *Meridians* 11 (2011): 118–23. doi:10.2979/meridians.11.1.118.

forced women to be resilient and adaptive.¹³ The representations of women in this project help to unpack the challenges that women face in navigating these forces.

Theories and Methodology

My methodology relies upon theories of creolization and performance to examine the role of gender in representations of power, agency, and sovereignty. When I can, I use theoretical work from Haiti and the Caribbean alongside other European and American academic work in order to not perpetuate the marginalization that I seek to address. I employ creolization and performance theories because of their value in recognizing multiple cultures and authors. My work builds from scholarship on Haitian history and sovereignty to discuss representations of Haitian government and sovereignty. As a central theme of my work, gender becomes as much the object as the analytic of my dissertation.

Creolization offers a perspective on cultural exchange and invention that is central to the history of cultural production in the Caribbean. Although there are many different iterations of the concept of creolization, most owe some debt to the work of Edouard Glissant. Not simply a process of hybridization, Glissant defines creolization as both mixing and creation. Creolized culture is more than the sum of the original parts. Based in the linguistic history of the region, creolization originally identified the process by which creole languages developed in the Caribbean. Several African languages, French, Spanish, English and Taino all have influences Haitian Kreyòl, which is both related to but also more than a summation of multiple languages. Glissant extended the theory to broadly include cultural production. “As a process that registers

¹³Carolle Charles, “Gender and Politics in Contemporary Haiti: The Duvalierist State, Transnationalism, and the Emergence of a New Feminism (1980-1990),” *Feminist Studies* 21 (1995): 135-164.

the history of slavery, plantation culture, colonization, settlement, forced migration, and most recently the uneven global circulation of labor, creolization describes the encounter among peoples in a highly stratified terrain. So it is not just any transculturation but 'forced transculturation.'¹⁴ According to Glissant, creolization addresses not only the blending and creation but also the politics behind encounters that force this process. Derived from the history of the colonial slave trade in the Caribbean, the process is a product of a specific type of violence; however, the cultural model is now applied more widely to include cultural processes in all periods of Caribbean history. For Haiti, colonialism, plantation slavery, political instability, and economic vulnerability have structured creolization. Moreover, the same factors directing creolization have characterized Haitian sovereignty, making creolization a convenient tool in understanding the conditions and the performance of sovereignty in Haiti.

In addition to creolization, Glissant's work presents his theory of Relation to more broadly address relationships, patterns, connections that create a network that can result in creolization. Inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'rhizome' in which relationships are modeled as decentralized and fragmented rather than 'rooted,' Glissant proposes that Relation as a mode for thinking through questions of identity and culture. This model helps in understanding the practices of Haitian Vodou not as an evolution of an earlier religion but an original practice that combines elements from many religions to accommodate the specific needs and experiences of Haitians.¹⁵ The desire to provide an 'origin' for Vodou can produce a narrative that oversimplifies the diversity of the practice. Unbound by a rooted vision of geography and origin,

¹⁴Françoise Lionnet, *The Creolization of Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), Kindle Edition, 25.

¹⁵ Superficial discussions of Vodou often depict it as a derivation of West African Vodun. See Karen McCarthy Brown's work.

Relation emphasizes flow and connection, avoiding essentializing regions and people. By discrediting the idea of origin, Relation does not imply that people and places are without history. Instead, Relation attempts to subvert the primacy given to the concept of ‘authenticity’ that can tyrannize within discussions of language and culture.

Relation relinks (relays), relates. Domination and resistance, osmosis and withdrawal, the consent to dominating language (langage) and defense of dominated language (langues). They do not add up to anything clearcut or easily perceptible with any certainty. The relinked (relayed), the related, cannot be combined conclusively. Their mixing in nonappearance (or depth) shows nothing revealing on the surface. This revealer is set astir when the poetics of Relation calls upon the imagination.¹⁶

Glissant’s poetic often opaque language performatively illustrates his theory. Trans-Atlantic relationships and the culture of the African Diaspora can be understood via Relation. Ideas, practices, and icons circulate but also develop in parallel, connecting Relation provides a means to articulate elusive, interconnected, and unstable cultural relationships, in contrast to creolization which he defines as a dynamic process of cultural/knowledge production. Both concepts generate a vocabulary and a perspective that is useful in discussing the transnational and trans-historical representations of women. Although Glissant thoroughly neglected gender in his theoretical work, his emphasis on fractured rather than absolute or universal knowledge provides a useful perspective for approaching narratives of gender and sovereignty.¹⁷

To complement Glissant’s theories, I turn to several other scholars whose work examines global flows of culture, specifically with regards to the transatlantic.¹⁸ Paul Gilroy’s *The Black*

¹⁶Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of relation* translated by Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

¹⁷ Glissant’s work responds to both the critiques universalism in the Negritude movement as well as offering an alternative to a Euro/American centric epistemology, which tends to define spaces as either center or periphery.

¹⁸For a more thorough discussion see: Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986); Paul Gilroy, *The black Atlantic: Modernity and double consciousness* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1993); Lara Putnam, *Radical Moves* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press,

Atlantic offers a perspective on transnational circulation of culture that overlaps with Glissant's Relation. Like Glissant, Gilroy rejects the overemphasis on origins. For my project, Gilroy provides a useful exploration of the African Diaspora, which helps in connecting Haiti to the African Diaspora as well as the continued role of the Haitian Diaspora in Haitian affairs. Gilroy's suggestion that scholars approach the Atlantic as a unit of analysis has helped me to frame my project. Although I intentionally structure my project around Haiti and Haitian culture, Gilroy's discussion of the Black Atlantic outlines the limitations of this perspective and provides guidance in recognizing the transatlantic relationship inherent in my project. Furthermore, Gilroy unpacks the complex concept of 'tradition' in African Diasporic communities. He describes the appeal and difficulty of 'tradition' as a means to identify and perform a black history and identity. Tradition, both erased and established by slavery, offers legitimacy of a black political culture but also can risk becoming "a cluster of negative associations."¹⁹ The complications with tradition help explain the international interest in the Haitian Revolution, as a part of black history and response to narratives of slavery.

In addition to Gilroy, Elizabeth DeLoughrey and Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih offer an analysis of culture exchange and circulation. Particularly pertinent to my project, DeLoughrey illustrates the power of narratives in shaping the conceptualization of an island. She explores colonial and diasporic relationships by tracing tropes, such as the image of the lone man conquering the exotic island. I identify the legacies of colonial tropes that produce models of power and gender. Finally, I turn Lionnet and Shih's work on Minor Transnationalism, an

2013); David Geggus, "Slavery, War, and Revolution in the Greater Caribbean," in *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 1-50.

¹⁹ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 189.

extension on Glissant's theory of Relation and a tool in considering Diasporic communities. Lionnet and Shih use the concept of *minor* to recognize the role of minority within majority culture but also relationships between different minority groups and cultures. Lionnet and Shih explain that minor-to-minor sometimes "circumvent the major altogether."²⁰ In Haiti, relationships across to the African Diaspora in Canada, the United States, and France illustrate this minor-to-minor interaction. All of these theorists offer a similar but slightly different version of Relation, which helps me to adapt and expand creolization and Relation in my work to include a discussion of gender.

To address the role of language in my project, I turn to discourses that consider the intersection of language and race and how the intersection shape and perform codes of gender. Language plays a central role in discourses of identification and cultural production. As Frantz Fanon explains in *Black Skin, White Masks*: "To speak means being able to use a certain syntax and possessing the morphology of such and such a language, but it means above all assuming a culture and bearing the weight of a civilization."²¹ The weight associated with the French language includes a specific history of racism, which not only informs the speaker's access to the language and culture but also the psychic relationship with the culture. Fanon analyzes the effects of colonialism on the psychology of the colonized and identifying language as a marker for the colonizer. Fanon describes the effects of linguistic colonialism. "At school the young Martinican is taught to treat the dialect with contempt"²² because in the colony and post-colony Creole marks the speaker. Fanon argues that the black man internalizes the colonial identity as

²⁰Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, *Minor Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005) 194.

²¹Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008) Kindle edition. 167.

²² *Ibid.*, 198.

‘Other,’ producing a self-misrecognition. The Creole language and identity are crucial in representations of Haitian sovereignty. The criminalization of creole practices, specifically Vodou practice, accompanied the violence of several authoritarian regimes to maintain power but also control narratives of nationalism and sovereignty.

For most of Haitian history the public performance of Creole culture, language, and religion constituted a political act. Although the meaning of Creole varies depending upon location and historical period, signifying “among other things, language type, person, style and culture,” the significance of performing and identifying as Creole has always been influenced by race, class, and gender.²³ My project examines the role of race, class, and gender in representations of creolenees. In Haiti, Creole shifts between something to celebrate and something to condemn. Although the linguistic origins of the word have long been debated, Creole typically references the specific phenomena of the Atlantic slave trade and the subsequent cultural and linguistic encounters. Haitian anthropologist Jean Price-Mars addressed the stigma associated with Creole by urging Haitian artists and writers to look to Creole culture for inspiration, rather than rely upon the oppressive influence of European aesthetics and traditions. Embracing Creole culture meant redefining the colonial cultural hierarchy. Years later, Martinican writers Patrick Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé, and Raphael Confiant expressed a similar sentiment in their seminal essay *Eloge de la Créolité*. “Creoleness is an annihilation of false universality, of monolingualism, and of purity.”²⁴ The desire for Caribbean and other postcolonial populations to define themselves independently of Europe produced new political and cultural movements, threatening an imposed cultural hegemony. Models provide different

²³Carolyn Allen, “Creole Then and Now: The Problem of Definition,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 44, no. ½ (1998): 34.

²⁴Jean Bernabé, “In Praise of Creoleness,” *Callaloo* translated by Mohamed B. Taleb Khyar 13, no. 4 (1990): 90.

understandings of the process of cultural production, such as hybridity, multiculturalism, and creolization, and the tyranny of hegemonic culture.²⁵

Part of the significance of Creole language and culture can be understood, as Benedict Anderson explains, through language and culture's role in community and nation building. For Anderson, the nation is largely defined in the imaginary. Knowledge, sentiments, and ideologies circulate within a population to create an imagined sense of commonality and shared experience. Anderson, who tends to prioritize print culture, identifies the phenomena as a collective process of remembering and forgetting. Anderson's concept of imagined connectedness is useful in understanding the importance of Creole and French culture. In Haiti, the performance and perception of creole culture is one crucial part of the 'imagined connectedness,' and silencing, a form of remembering/forgetting, specifically concerning narratives of nationalism and gender, is another. Some narratives are preserved and remembered, such as the famous Revolutionary hero Toussaint, while others, like the women fighting in the Revolutionary army and crafting Revolutionary politics, are silenced. Silencing occurs in both official acts of the state as well as products of unofficial quotidian interactions. According to Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "effective silencing does not require a conspiracy, not even a political consensus. Its roots are structural."²⁶ In other words, in Haiti class structures, gender codes, and cultural traditions have been just as defining for marginalized subjects as violent dictators. Moreover, acts of silencing produce and control narratives of sovereignty. For Haitian women, silencing influences how women are

²⁵For further discussion see: Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* translated by Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Reviews Press, 2001) Kindle edition.

²⁶ Michel-Rolph Trouillot. *Silencing the Past (20th anniversary edition): Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 2015). Kindle Edition, 106.

represented as well as how representations of women are interpreted. Using creolization and relation, I uncover some of the effects of silencing in my project.

Although theories of Creolization offer an expansive model for thinking through culture in the Caribbean, silencing is part of the power dynamics that direct Creolization and its theorization. Glissant neglected gender in his work on relation and creolization. Moreover, he depicts creolization as a process without agency, a complex system, not the work of individuals. “The phenomenon probably has no political or economic power. But it is precious for mankind’s imagination, its capacity for invention.”²⁷ Although useful as a large-scale analytical tool, art and cultural production that have individual authors and possibly distinct intentions do not fit well into this perspective. Not only does this analytic ignore gender but it does not leave room for intervention, addressing omissions, and producing new narratives of gender. In several of the cases in this dissertation, representations serve as intentional interventions. For that reason, I find the concept of performance to be useful. Performances are both purposefully designed and part of large complex system. Both influencing society and a product of society, political and economic systems of power, performance offers space to identify agents within creolization. Additionally, performance is well situated to describe the possibility of transcendence and complications of an author’s original intention. In the case of my project, representations are a product of creolization and an attempt to master creolization for a specific purpose. Considering these cases as performances, I can identify the intentions of directors and actors and examples when performances gain a life of their own.

Performance theory offers insight into women’s navigation of Haitian society and the circulating image of the ‘Haitian Woman.’ Representations of women wielding power help

²⁷ Edouard Glissant, “Creolization in the Making of Americas,” *Caribbean Quarterly* (2008), 89.

uncover the significance of gender in narratives of power and agency. For example, the folksong “Choucounè” recounts the story of a woman, a marabou²⁸, who is about to wed a (black) Haitian man but instead leaves her fiancé to marry a 'petit blanc' (poor white man). The lyrics critique the beautiful (lighter skinned) Haitian women who betrayed her fiancé for a white man. The representation of the marabou suggests a lamentation of the colonial past and neo-colonial present that drives Haiti to ‘whiten’ and ‘westernize’ itself. However, traditionally sung in a quick upbeat tempo, performances of the folksong often reconfigure the representation of the traitorous woman as attractive and desirable.²⁹ Rather than condemn the marabou for leveraging her ‘whiter’ racial status for socio-economic gain, the quick cheerful performance of the lyrics implies an acceptance and possible admiration for her actions. The complex performance of the folksong can subvert the textual meaning of the poem, illustrating ways in which a representation can be made unstable through performance. Representations such as the folksong *Choucounè* hint at the conditions under which women struggle to obtain sovereignty over their bodies and their lives. Moreover, examples such as this folksong speak to the complexities of the way women are represented in Haiti.

Using performance models, I analyze dramatic and literary references of Haitian women in order to trace the representation of the female ruler and recuperate an archive for the Haitian woman. By incorporating cultural evidence such as theater, speeches, and performance rituals, I use performance as a source of embodied knowledge which transmits culture and experiences. A benefit of performance is its use as a means of transmitting knowledge and histories without the

²⁸ The Haitian word marabou refers to a mixed raced person, typically someone with a small fraction of ‘white’ heritage, such as one quarter white.

²⁹Chancy, *Framing Silence*, 4.

limitations of texts, which rely upon literacy. The domination of text-based archives has further obscured knowledge of and by women. Diana Taylor explains that:

History-as-dicipline has long served colonial masters throughout the Americas, trumping the historical memory of native and marginalized communities who relied primarily on former practices, genealogies, and stories to sustain their sense of self – and communal identity. The process of entering into history becomes the meaning-making act reserved for the literate.³⁰

Performance can serve as a technology that indexes experiences and involvement in society.

“The physical mechanics of staging can also keep alive an organizational infrastructure, a practice or know-how, an episteme, and a politics that goes beyond the explicit topic.”³¹ Taylor’s model for understanding performance practices or ‘repertoire’ as a method of preserving knowledge is particularly pertinent for a project concerning performance by Haitian women. Creole culture relies upon oral and practical knowledge passed between generations. As I explain in the second chapter on a Haitian adaptation of *Antigone*, the practice of performance such as Vodou practice can create a visual vocabulary within Haitian culture, as specific epistemology. When this knowledge is translated through visual and gestural cues within the play *Antigòn*, the result can be meaning that is easily understood by Haitian but completely incomprehensible to French audiences. Haitian culture records silences, references, and surrogations that can remain unintelligible in the European written archive. Creole culture and Vodou practice have provided essential avenues to preserve and safeguard information and narratives. In some instances, Haitian heroines that have been silenced in the written archive persist as repertoire in song,

³⁰Diana Taylor, “Performance and/as History,” *TDR*, 50, no. 1 (2006), 70.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 68.

stories, and images. My project attempts to draw connections between these different written archives and performed repertoires to uncover and unpack representations of Haitian women.

The Haitian hero, not heroine, has taken center stage in recent scholarship.³² By exploring and analyzing the lives of the Haitian ‘founding fathers,’ this recent research aims to reconfigure the understanding of Haiti and disrupt the narrative in which the Haitian revolution is only a footnote of the French revolution.³³ This scholarship has painted a masculine-dominated scene, which is unsurprising given the difficulty in locating women within the archive.³⁴

Representations of Toussaint Louverture, the leader of the Revolutionary army, appear at the forefront of this scholarship, frequently presenting sovereignty as inseparable from masculinity. Using Peggy Phelan’s work, I examine depictions of several Haitian icons. Phelan explains, “Representation follows two laws: it always conveys more than it intends; and it is never totalizing. The “excess” meaning conveyed by representation creates a supplement that makes multiple and resistant readings possible.”³⁵ For Haitian women this means that representations are not a replica of the ‘real’ experience but instead, help to establish a point of reference that mediates the interaction between women and their environment. Representations illustrate both the oppressive and subversive functions of gender by re-presenting and disrupting stereotypes.

³²Responding to Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s call for action and working from precedents set by Sidney Mintz, researchers reexamined the Haitian revolution. US scholarship has in recent decades attempted to offer a more thorough exploration of Haiti, with a specific focus on the revolutionary period.

³³Nick Nesbitt, *Universal emancipation: the Haitian Revolution and the radical Enlightenment* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008).

³⁴ Several texts have characterized the significance of the Haitian men who became the first sovereigns of Haiti. See: Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004); Deborah Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex, and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution*. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011); Nesbitt, *Universal Emancipation*.

³⁵Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. (London: Routledge, 2001), 2.

Therefore, my project intends to address the representation (and in some cases lack of representation) of Haitian women's sovereignty over themselves and their families as well as representations of women in positions of power. Performance theory provides a method of reading representations by considering the relationship between the text, image, speech, and body.

In some cases, especially theatrical ones, representations feature embodied speech and action, making performance helpful in locating the body. Performance links the body and text, connecting the material and the imaginary. Judith Butler explains that the link between the material body and its ascribed gender is unstable. Representations, such as those that produce national narratives, rely on reiteration and repetition. Performativity functions as a “reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains.”³⁶ Butler's definition of the performative explains identification as part of materiality and hegemonic discourses. Within this theoretical framework the subject is legible within discourse, meaning that the body is always marked by language. “[T]he body is marked by sex, but the body is marked prior to that mark, for it is the first mark that prepares the body for the second once, and, second, the body is only signifiable, only occurs as that which can be signified within language, by being marked in this second sense.”³⁷ This definition of gender as a discursive social construct can be useful in understanding the complex and shifting ways women have been identified in my work. As I discuss in my final chapter on the Haitian president Ertha Pascal-Trouillot, the discussion of Pascal-Trouillot as the first female president varied depending upon the social class

³⁶Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 2011) 2.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 98.

of the participants. The politics of Pascal-Trouillot's gender cannot be separated from the politics of socioeconomic class in Haiti.

The articulation of gender as a product of discourse, while useful, also risks leaving the actions and gestures of the material body that exist outside of language largely unaddressed. The imagery and gestural references in performance are crucial to understanding the performance of gender. In the context of Haitian society, the ontological understanding of the body and the subject is often complicated by the epistemology of Vodou. Vodou insists on the power of embodiment in its rituals.³⁸ Therefore, to understand gender as performative, based in the material body, it is useful to consider the choreography of the body.³⁹ Representations of gender rely upon embodied choreography that connects the physical action and gesture with material conditions of the body. Moreover, “[c]horeography is not a permanent, structural capacity for representation, but rather a slowly changing constellation of representational conventions.”⁴⁰ Like language, choreography (or gesture) produces a repeated performance of gender that becomes legible within a specific cultural context.

Theater and more broadly performance reflect, repeat, as well as shape ideologies and practices of the society. In contrast to Glissant's understanding of creolization, performance scholarship offers a method for analysis with the understanding that performance is inherently political. Because my project investigates representation of minor subjects, I turn to Peggy Phelan for an understanding of the ethics of representation due to Phelan's nuanced

³⁸Claudine Michel, “Le Vodou Haïtien Est-il Un Humanisme?” *Journal of Haitian Studies* 12, no 1 (Center for Black Studies Research, 2006), 116–36.

³⁹Susan Foster, “Choreographies of Gender,” *Signs* 24 (1998), 1-33.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

understanding of the slippages between the real and the representational as well as her interest in minority subjects. Phelan problematizes the argument that visibility equals power. By discussing relationships between identification and representation, Phelan underscores the ways in which visibility is understood to be the ‘real.’ Visibility and the act of ‘seeing’ are as much about invisibility and blindness as consuming visual information such that “representation always shows more than it means.”⁴¹ Representations which rely on the visual, such as photography or video, partake in certain discourses of truth-claims and discourses of power. Phelan argues that performance affords a perspective that better considers these discourses because of its ephemeral quality. The act of disappearance or the ‘unmarked,’ which Phelan attributes to all forms of representation, is acknowledged within performance because “[p]erformance approaches the Real through resisting the metaphorical reduction of the two into the one.”⁴² In the case of the presidency of Pascal-Trouillot, standard narratives of Feminism do not fully accommodate or explain her actions and legacy. Reading her time in office as a performance better acknowledges the contradictions and conditions of presidency. Performance and the performative present an understanding of the power in the immediacy and liveness of these forms and a model for considering the supplement of representation.

Rebecca Schneider explains that although performance is not permanent, but rather a disappearing act, there is something that persists or remains.⁴³ The immediacy and the embodiment of performance can foster a particular type of knowledge creation and knowledge

⁴¹Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, 27.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 152.

⁴³Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003). and Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

transmission. Schneider suggests that the strength of performance is as a model of a simultaneous act of disappearing/remaining. Although performance can be defined by its non-permanence, it still leaves a trace.

This body, given to performance, is arguably engaged with disappearance chiasmatically – not only disappearing but resiliently eruptive, remaining through performance like so many ghosts at the door marked ‘disappeared’. In this sense performance becomes itself through messy and eruptive reappearance, challenging, via the performative trance, any neat antinomy between appearance and disappearance, or presence and absence as simultaneously indiscreet, non-original, relentlessly citational, and remaining.⁴⁴

The embodied performance serves as a type of knowledge through this experience and negotiation of presence/absence and remaining/disappearing. Diana Taylor’s conception of the ‘repertoire’ as a “non-archival system of transfer” identifies the trace of performance as a tool which can create and transmit knowledge. As a complement to the archive, performance repertoire supplies a different type of knowledge as well as allows for access and participation of a different type of knowledge creator/communicator. For Vodou, a religion based in performed practice not written doctrine, this understanding of knowledge creation and transmission can be very useful. As a non-institutional religion without a large-scale hierarchy Vodou is diverse, ephemeral, and flexible. Ritual, and performance record, transmit, and preserve the ideology and practice, along with local values and history. The traces of ephemeral performances that are not recorded within the written archive are crucial elements of Vodou and carefully recorded through music, dance, and ritual possession. Thus, performance offers different and sometimes complementary knowledge to the traditional archive.

All of these archives depend upon the concept and the importance of power as a structuring force. To discuss the role of power within the context of performance, I draw from

⁴⁴Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 103.

Foucault's understanding of power and de Certeau's treatment of quotidian power relations. Foucault treats power as a social network of relations rather than as an object. For Foucault: "The idea that there is either located at – or emanating from – a given point something which is a 'power' seems to me to be based on a misguided analysis... power means relations, a more-or-less organized, hierarchical, coordinated cluster of relations."⁴⁵ This definition of power accommodates the changing status of power relations and the process of exchange that takes place within a relation. Technologies of power, "dispositions, maneuvers, tactics, techniques, functionings," are enacted to discipline bodies.⁴⁶ In Haiti, creolization, syncretization, and performance are always in response to the technologies of power such as the sociopolitical divisions that preserved colonial power dynamics and the complicated international agendas that defined national politics and economies. Moreover, according to Foucault, these relations of power are inseparable from knowledge because such relations require knowledge and the production of knowledge requires power.⁴⁷

De Certeau extends Foucault's interpretation of power by analyzing power relations of everyday life. Proposing that practice can be understood as a constant navigation of hegemonic structures, De Certeau categorizes power relations as either strategies or tactics. Strategies, the manipulation by an agent of established authority, contrast with tactics, which are marked by the subversion of dominated structures. This distinction is useful in comparing conspicuous and covert negotiations of power. De Certeau employs these categories to analyze the relationship between the body and a space. In Haiti, representations illustrate these negotiations often through

⁴⁵Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 198.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

aesthetics and metaphor. Practice constitutes the techniques used to inhabit and re-appropriate space. In terms of performance, De Certeau's discussion of practice serves as a model for relating the body and performance to the complexities of specific spaces.

To understand the role of power dynamics on gender in Haiti, I refer to American, Francophone and Caribbean Feminists. Feminist scholars unpack historical moments and circulated narratives, helping to situate and contextualize the representation of Haitian women. Scholar Eudine Barriteau insists that constructions of gender cannot be discussed without acknowledging the *relations of power* which are enacted on and within the construction of gender. Language acts as part of the *relation of power*. Luce Irigaray posits that language is always gendered. Gender influences access to language and the subject's position within language, with men positioning themselves as creators and women positioning themselves as observers in discourse.⁴⁸ Moreover, gender infiltrates the realm of the imaginary and the symbolic. "Sexual difference – which is at once biological, physiological, and relative to reproduction – is translated by and translates a difference in the relationship of subjects to the symbolic contract which *is* the social contract: a difference, then, in the relationship to power, language, and meaning."⁴⁹ Language defines the discourse that structures the concept of gender but also the participation of the subject within the discourse. Furthermore, this relationship with language means that different languages produce different iterations of gender. Language asserts its power through the performative. For multilingual speakers this relationship of gender and language becomes crucial in the process of identification. Access to language grants access to different positions of power, meaning that language not only signals nationality or race but also

⁴⁸Luce Irigaray, *To speak is never neutral* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

⁴⁹Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," *Signs* 7 (1981), 21.

constructions of gender. Ulysse explains that her position as a feminist relied upon her relationship to the English language as a “linguistic lacuna” in which she could re-make herself.⁵⁰ Ulysse, a Haitian immigrant in the United States, experienced French as the language of her father and the patriarchy, whereas English provided a connection to American feminism around her and was outside her father’s realm of control. For Ulysse, language, like the body, partakes in the performativity of gender, both cementing and destabilizing constructions of gender.

In addition to the complexities of language, ethnicity and race act as a matrix of power in producing code of gender. Recognizing that ethnicity cannot be ignored when interrogating gender, postcolonial feminists argued for a more nuanced investigation of *relations of power* which influence the experience of women of color. Sylvia Wynter considers the relationship between the representation and the ontology of Caribbean women, which helps me to relate the material conditions of Haitian women to the cultural imaginary of the Haitian woman. Wynter points to the desire of Afro-American and Caribbean women to position themselves in relation but not as identical to many Euro-American feminist discourses.

[A]t the level of the major text these essays are projected within the system of inference-making of the discourse of feminism, at the level of sub-text which both haunts and calls in question the presumptions of the major text, the very attempt to redefine the term feminist with the qualifier ‘womanist’ expresses the paradoxical relation of Sameness and Difference which the writers... as members of the Caribbean women intelligentsia, bear to their Western European and Euroamerican peers.⁵¹

⁵⁰Gina Athena Ulysse, “Papa, Patriarchy, and Power: Snapshots of a Good Haitian Girl, Feminism & Diasporic Dreams,” *Journal of Haitian Studies* 12 (2006) 33.

⁵¹Sylvia Wynter, “Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un/silencing the 'Denomic Ground' of Caliban's 'Woman,’” in *The Black Feminist Reader* (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2000), 109-127.

Feminist discourses which do not provide space to address the role of race risk re-inscribing racist and sexist rhetoric. Identifying “white supremacy as a racial politic” and “the psychological impact of class” is crucial to address conditions facing black women. Black American feminist explain that this also means recognizing and supporting different types of resistance.⁵² Collins points out that part of the work of black feminists is to acknowledge different types of knowing. Survival often relies on a certain Afro-centric feminist epistemology, which Collins defines as “two types of knowing, knowledge and wisdom.”⁵³ In the case of the Caribbean, this epistemology references a specific history of postcolonial legacies, patriarchal practices, poverty, and foreign involvement. Additionally, in Haiti, women’s experiences differ for urban and rural women.⁵⁴ Epistemological differences between women of different races and classes are further complicated by transnational differences. Haitians who have experience living outside of Haiti relate to gender differently. Members of the diaspora often have a more flexible relationship with their Haitian citizenship allowing for more flexible constructions of gender. In some instances, women are more able to adopt a mix of differing practices and ideologies when they have access to a range of identifications through different cultural appropriations.⁵⁵

Patricia Mohammed argues that gender and concepts such as femininity and masculinity cannot be discussed ahistorically. Constructions of gender do not exist as simply individual identifications but instead relate to a history of practice. Therefore, the performative cannot be

⁵² bell hooks, “Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory” in *The Black Feminist Reader* (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2000), 133.

⁵³Patricia Hill Collins, “The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought” in *The Black Feminist Reader* (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2000), 192.

⁵⁴N'Zengou-Tayo, “Fanm Se Poto Mitàn,” 118-142.

⁵⁵Ulysse, “Papa, Patriarchy, and Power”.

fully investigated outside the context of its specific history. For Haitians, this requires an analysis of gender which not only takes into consideration racial and economic categories but also historicizes these categories within a given time and place. Like Butler, Mohammed defines gender as a ‘process’ rather than as a social category, however, unlike Butler, Mohammed grounds this understanding in the material specifics of the Caribbean.

Gender may be more easily appreciated as this process of moulding and construction, blending possibilities along with constraints. Gender socialization is by no means fixed throughout the lifetime of the individual. Changes in social and economic conditions are very likely to shift cultural practices and expectations of each sex, adding to the complexity of how gender is constructed over time. Cultural practices that define gender sometimes undergo rapid shifts from one generation to the next.⁵⁶

Using this understanding of gender as a process, which can be enacted through the embodied immediacy and instability of the performative, will help to accommodate the differences in women’s experiences. This interpretation is particularly useful with regards to the transnational circulation of representations of women.

As Myriam Chancy explains in her work *Framing Silences*, Haitian women suffer from repeated silencing, policing, and exclusion. Nevertheless, women still find ways to protest and shape their world, but sometimes to recognize such acts we must examine the silences. In this dissertation, I analyze representations, often marking the silences within relations of power and creolization. Even when uncovering the silence is impossible, identify the lack, or *lacune* as Chancy describes it, can help to decode the narratives that produce silences.

⁵⁶Patricia Mohammed, “A Symbiotic Visiting Relationship: Caribbean Feminist Historiography and Caribbean Feminist Theory,” in *Confronting power, theorizing gender: interdisciplinary perspective in the Caribbean* (Kingston: University of West Indies Press, 2003), 106.

Chapter Breakdown

Focusing my attention on twentieth century examples, I have chosen to consider four particular cases: theatrical and performance representations of the Haitian historical figure Toussaint Louverture, the Haitian Kreyòl adaptation of Antigone by Felix Morisseau-Leroy, representations of the Taíno leader Anacaona, and the political staging of the first and only female president of Haiti, Ertha Pascal-Trouillot.

In my first chapter, I consider the role of gender in popular narratives of the Revolution. Revolutionary heroes are of the most represented figures in Haitian history. Furthermore, Toussaint Louverture tends to be the most popular of the historical figures appearing in a myriad of ways in Haitian culture. The former slaver turned commander in chief defined much of Haiti's Revolutionary politics and symbolizes independence and sovereignty for many Haitians. His strategy and leadership helped to unite a diverse slave population, but his capture and death transformed him into a legend and martyr. Representations of Toussaint creolize his story, changing and adapting his image overtime, keeping him relevant to the evolving issues of sovereignty and national identity in Haiti. Understanding the complex multitude of depictions helps in unpacking national narratives of sovereignty, race, and gender. Although a Haitian Revolutionary, Toussaint appears in works across the Caribbean and African Diaspora, establishing a model for masculinity and sovereignty that extends beyond Haiti. Depictions of Toussaint surface in a variety of mediums but I focus my attention on theatrical, literary, and visual art forms produced within and outside of Haiti. I use this chapter to sketch the ways masculinity becomes naturalized within representations of sovereignty. Toussaint serves as a model for identifying the influence of narratives of gender and uncovering a discourse of femininity within narratives of sovereignty.

My second chapter examines the play *Antigon* by Felix Morisseau-Leroy. In 1953 Morisseau-Leroy produced his adaptation of Sophocles' Antigone in Port-au-Prince Haiti, which featured a Haitian setting, a Creole aesthetic, and an alternative ending. Morisseau-Leroy's play offers a perspective on Haitian sovereignty that includes women. Although fiction, his Antigone depicts an understanding of Haitian femininity as an integral part of Haitian sovereignty. Moreover, combining Haitian culture with contemporary questions and ancient Greece foregrounds the possibilities of creolization. First performed in Haiti and later produced in France, the productions reveal not only Morisseau-Leroy's vision but also the complex relationship between Haiti and France. Additionally, *Antigon* is one of the few full-length plays published in Kreyol. For centuries, language has marked divisions of class, identity, and politics. Morisseau-Leroy's text complicates the standard divisions hierarchies of language by linking ancient Greece with Kreyol. This adaptation of Antigone interrogates the role of culture in sovereignty and includes an interesting perspective on gender.

The third chapter focuses on the mythology of an indigenous princess Anacaona, who through creolized narratives serves as a Haitian icon. Historical records depict Anacaona as a Taino leader from the fifteenth century, who after negotiating with Spanish invaders was betrayed, captured, and executed by the Spanish. Although long before the formation of Haiti as a nation, Anacaona has been adopted into the Haitian imaginary as part of Haitian history. As a commentary on resistance and colonialism, Anacaona is presented alongside Haitian Revolutionaries. She appears in novels, plays, poems, and paintings, each time adapted and creolized to suit specific needs. Equally claimed by the Dominican Republic, her legacy shifts from Haitian to Dominican, producing conflicting and sometimes anachronistic narratives. Representations of Anacaona complicate gendered narratives of sovereignty by featuring a

female leader but sometimes undermine her agency by framing her within a masculine narrative of power. Although representations of Anacaona resemble the Revolutionaries who bridge history and fiction, unlike the Revolutionaries, gender is foregrounded in many of the depictions of Anacaona. Her femininity is emphasized and sometimes presented as synonymous with victimhood. Anacaona provides an appealing case study as both a historical and mythological figure because of the widespread use of her image. She features in representations of sovereignty, colonialism, racism, gender, and performance due to her reputation as a performer and storyteller. Overall, Anacaona represents an interesting vision of Haitian sovereignty. Her race, as neither black nor white, and her colonial encounter with the Spanish and not French make her story appealing for many elite Haitians who prefer to redefine resistance and revolution as independent of blackness and France. In this chapter, I will specifically explore the ways in which representations are repeated and reconfigured with regards to race and ethnicity.

My final chapter considers the performance and reception of Ertha Pascal-Trouillot's presidency. Only interim president for eleven months, Pascal-Trouillot's term was short but meaningful. Appointed in 1990, she was the first and thus far only female president of Haiti. She oversaw the unprecedented democratic elections that elected Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Her presidency offers a fascinating example of a female leader and creolized performance. Pascal-Trouillot constructed creolized performances to address the Haitian population. In her acceptance speech given in Haitian Kreyòl rather than the traditional French, Pascal-Trouillot promised to respect her presidential responsibilities in the name of all Haitian women. Violence from decades of dictatorships and military coups threatened the sovereignty of Haiti, giving special importance to the election. In spite of the success of the elections, Pascal-Trouillot received mainly threats and disdain for her involvement. Pascal-Trouillot's speech as well as her presidency reflects the

gendered national narratives that insist on masculinity as a characteristic of sovereignty. Visible in both her performance that tries to preempt gendered critiques and the many sexist reactions to her presidency, gendered narratives appear at many levels. Her speech offered a controversial model for the role women within Haitian sovereignty. Like representations of Toussaint, representations of Pascal-Trouillot cite different cultural identifications. Pascal-Trouillot performs an image of the Creole Haitian woman at pivotal historical moment.

Haitian sovereignty has remained in flux since the Revolution due to internal and international factors. National narratives present an image of sovereignty as masculine, determined by individual men. My project attempts to expand the limited narrative of sovereignty as the purview of a few men. By focusing on women who intersect with depictions of sovereignty, I illustrate the important, if often unacknowledged, role of women and the complex effect of gender on national narratives.

Chapter One

Tout Toussaint: Creolizing Toussaint and Masculine Sovereignty

Over two hundred years ago, slaves on the colony Sainte Domingue did something remarkable and almost unthinkable at the time; they rebelled against the French empire to form their own free nation: Haiti. In rebelling, Haitians not only obtained their freedom but put into question the world order, commonly held Western definitions of personhood, and Western definitions of national sovereignty. Following Haitian independence, representations of the male Revolutionary heroes have circulated as part of a national imaginary. Toussaint Louverture and his counterparts represent an array of Revolutionary or nationalistic discourses. Toussaint Louverture's appeal lies in his dynamism and his many contradictions. He managed to achieve remarkable successes but also suffered terrible failures. Archival evidence paints a complex, sometimes paradoxical, picture of Toussaint, which invites a variety of interpretations of his actions, personhood, and historical significance. Even though Haitians officially won independence in 1804, the conflicts and the discourse of the Revolution are still very pertinent to contemporary Haiti. In some ways, the conflicts central to the Revolution are on-going. Extreme income disparity, corruption, and international interference have caused political and economic crises that force continued questioning of the definitions and utility of sovereignty, nationalism, and citizenship. Figures like Toussaint have become tools to address national discourses, representing both the idealism and the failures of the Revolution. Artists and politicians turn to Toussaint as well known and powerful symbol to articulate power, nationalism, and sovereignty. Through his far-reaching presence, Toussaint reflects and shapes the norms of Haitian masculinity.

In this chapter, I turn to Toussaint to address the relationship between masculinity, sovereignty, and nation in Haiti. Omnipresent but also adaptive, representations of Toussaint highlight the interplay and shifts in discourse. As a man, Toussaint participated in the creolization that formed the nation.⁵⁷ As a symbol, he became part of the national imaginary, attracting the attention of Haitians and foreigners, who refashioned and creolized his image to suit a variety of discussions and agendas. Toussaint plays a role in the encoding of masculinity into discussions and representations of the nation. Moreover, representations of Toussaint illustrate the tension between differing and often competing iterations of Haitian masculinity. Because Toussaint lived at the crossroads of multiple African, European, and Native Caribbean cultures, his story illustrates processes of creolization as well as providing an icon to be creolized. In some cases, by creolizing representations of Toussaint, Haitians creolize articulations of masculinity. However, the creolization of Toussaint has also worked to fix codes of masculinity. Commonly, creolization connotes a liberatory practice. Understood as a tool to navigate oppressive situations, creolization is narrated as progressive, which sometimes discourages certain types of scrutiny. The Revolutionary nature of the Toussaint myth combined with the liberal progressive association of creolization deter critiques of the representations of Toussaint, promoting the notion of sovereignty as masculine. I argue that although creolization has the potential to open up the meaning and articulation of masculinity, it has frequently produced a more codified version of masculinity due to the understanding of creolization and the pairing of masculinity and power via representations of Toussaint.

⁵⁷ As governor of Saint Domingue, Toussaint publicly endorsed French culture with his dress and use of ceremony, demanding his officers marry in official Catholic ceremonies. Toussaint's apparent promotion of French culture caused tension among some of his officers. During the Revolution, Saint Domingue was a multicultural space. See Philippe Girard, "Toussaint before Louverture: New Archival Finding on the Early Life of Toussaint Louverture" *The William and Mary Quarterly* 69.3 (2012); Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*.

Contested Histories and Representations

Toussaint Louverture and his fellow Revolutionaries have inspired all types of representations across disciplines and spaces, frequently claiming authority and legitimacy through citations of history.⁵⁸ History and ‘truth’ serve as essential components to the Revolutionary narrative, used to lend legitimacy to different messages. Haitian writers and artists reimagine the Revolutionaries in order to glorify the past or provoke critical discussion of their contemporary politics. Beyond Haiti, representations surface across the Caribbean, in France, the United States, and the greater African Diaspora, as mythic inspirational symbols of democratic republican ideals, emblems of black nationalism, or racist buffoonish caricatures. Frequently, the Revolutionaries function as metonyms for the Revolution. As such, narratives of Toussaint’s vary widely according to political agendas with politicians and artists taking many liberties.⁵⁹ The individual Revolutionaries tend to symbolize one facet of the Revolution, following a standard pattern. Toussaint signifies the role of the French Enlightenment. Dessalines represents an aggressive racist black nationalism. Christophe connotes a version of African royalism. Boukman, holding his iconic conch shell, embodies the independence of maroon communities and Vodun. At best a simplification, but in some cases a true distortion of the historical evidence, these figures act as pieces in a game of politics. In most cases, the individual representations push an extreme or uncomplicated portrayal that belies the complexity of the archival evidence

⁵⁸ Politicians and artists reference Revolutionaries frequently. See David Geggus, *The Changing Faces of Toussaint Louverture* (2013); Vèvè Clark, “Haiti’s Tragic Overture: (Mis)Representations of the Haitian Revolution in World Drama (1796-1975)” in *Representing the French Revolution Literature, Historiography and Art* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 1990).

⁵⁹ Histories differ greatly in some cases relying upon invention in other cases forgeries. See Geggus, *The Changing Faces of Toussaint Louverture*.

of the Revolutionaries; however, taken as a whole, the representations provide insight into the historiography and discourses of race, power, and gender.

Commonly, representations of Toussaint replicate European discourses as a means to understand a postcolonial Haiti, although Toussaint never lived in a postcolonial Haiti. Captured before Haiti gained independence, his experience was defined by colonial politics. Nevertheless, his image is used to represent Haitian independence and sovereignty, at times through anachronistic representations of Toussaint. Moreover, the impact of Enlightenment texts on Toussaint (and the Revolution in general) remains contested, but artists and writers continue to emphasize Toussaint's engagement with the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.⁶⁰ Labeling him the 'Black Napoleon,' writers and some historians erase the specific conditions of slavery, race, and politics in the Caribbean.⁶¹ By defining his actions as simple enactment of Enlightenment philosophy, the specifics of history are ignored as well as the racism and sexism latent in Enlightenment thought. When narrativized as a simple victor or tragic figure, Toussaint's life most often functions as propaganda.⁶²

Despite (or maybe because) Toussaint Louverture played a critical role in the Revolution, his personal history remains highly contested. As Philippe Girard and Jean-Louis Donnadiu have explained, information about Toussaint's life offers contradictions, not a clear narrative. In part, the histories reveal a lack of information due to the conditions of slavery on Saint Domingue, where slaves lived outside official record-keeping. On the other hand, the confusing

⁶⁰ Nick Nesbitt, "Troping Toussaint, Reading Revolution" *Research in African Literature* 35, no. 2 (2004): 18-33

⁶¹ Geggus, *The Changing Faces of Toussaint Louverture*.

⁶² Clark, "Haiti's Tragic Overture"

archival picture reflects the engineering of different narrators, such as Napoleon, Toussaint's son, and Toussaint himself. Most French archival information made up of letters from survivors of the LeClerc mission reflects the shifting political relationship between Toussaint and the French state. Earlier descriptions of Toussaint from 1794-1797 tend to emphasize his intelligence, courage, and commitment to France. Later images from Bonaparte supporters describe his ambition, religious hypocrisy, and tyranny.⁶³ As J. A. Ferguson points out: "the treatment and evaluation of Toussaint's life and career can shift from the hagiographical to the demonological, according to political motivation and subjective *partis pris*".⁶⁴ In addition to French writings, early nineteenth-century Haitian newspaper articles and oral histories tend to reflect the accounts given by his son Issac, who was concerned with the family legacy and his personal inheritance.⁶⁵ Issac paints Toussaint as the martyred, good-Catholic, loving husband and father, enlightened intellectual, grandson to an African king, and patriotic hero consistent with romantic imagery. Yet, the most significant archival evidence comes from Toussaint's own writings.

Manipulating his narrative to suit his audience, Toussaint performed many differing versions of himself, obscuring realities if it suited him. Having played many roles by the time Toussaint became head of the Revolutionary army, Toussaint was a savvy communicator and capable propagandist, leading scholar Deborah Jenson to dub him a master of political "spin."⁶⁶

⁶³ J. A. Ferguson, "Le Premier des Noirs : The Nineteenth-Century Image of Toussaint Louverture" *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, Vol 15. No. 4 (1987), 394-406.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 395.

⁶⁵ Issac fought in the courts to have his older brother deemed illegitimate in order to inherit the entirety of his father's estate. If he knew of his father's other family, he would have been hardly likely to provide evidence of them given his desire to be legally the sole heir. See Girard, "Toussaint before Louverture"

This political acumen which aided him in negotiations, also helped to make Toussaint appealing to the European media, who published Toussaint's proclamations and details of the Revolution. Once introduced through the European media, Toussaint, as Deborah Jenson argues, carefully presented himself to Europe as a noble tragic hero, appealing to a European Romantic sensibility. At this point, his Revolutionary discourse combined with the 'poetry' of the New World inspired European romantic authors, further adding to the mythology surrounding Toussaint. French poets, such as Alphonse de Lamartine, incorporated Toussaint into a combined romantic myth of Revolution and the new world 'noble savage.' Thus, relying upon assumptions, misinformation, and myth, early historians largely promoted Toussaint's or Napoleon's image, an enlightened romantic Revolutionary hero, or an ambitious violent leader.

Historians agree on some aspects of Toussaint's life. Toussaint was born into and lived as a slave on Saint Domingue. He married Suzanne Simone Baptiste with whom he raised two sons: Placide and Issac. After the French republic abolished slavery, he fought for the French Revolutionaries against the British, becoming the governor of the colony. When Napoleon reinstated slavery in the colonies, Toussaint led the revolt against the French. In 1802, he was captured by the French and sent to die in a prison in France. Jean-Jacques Dessalines took Toussaint's place as the leader of Haiti and officially won independence from France in 1804. Beyond this general outline, the details and the interpretation of the rest of Toussaint's life and his contribution to the Revolution vary greatly. Consequently, although Toussaint Louverture died over two centuries ago, his accomplishments still prove to be provocative and controversial.

⁶⁶Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*.

Twentieth-first century historians claim the reality might be much more complex than early nineteenth-century history suggests. Furthermore, Toussaint seems to have cultivated a persona that at times contradicts archival evidence. Records indicate that Toussaint had a first wife and several children, gained his freedom, owned land and slaves, and had friendships or family relationships with the men who became his generals in the Haitian army.⁶⁷ Although this evidence hardly contradicts his commitment to abolition and Haiti, the evidence complicates the ‘neat’ portrayal of his life.⁶⁸ As Girard describes colonial Saint Domingue was a complex society that did not always fit well with Revolutionary propaganda. Owning property did not indicate wealth. Although Toussaint was free, he married and subsequently fathered children with Suzanne while she was a slave. Gaining freedom did not mean severing ties with slavery. Even Toussaint’s ownership of slaves is complicated; he bought one slave who he later freed and hired his son-in-law’s slaves to help work his small coffee farm for a short period. The details and the reasoning behind these acts are difficult to uncover, largely because, as Girard explains, Toussaint was, “a reserved man who zealously guarded his privacy or even purposely obscured his past for political reasons. His official correspondence with French authorities generally eschewed personal matters, and the memoir he wrote after his downfall in 1802 dealt primarily with his public record as governor of Saint Domingue.”⁶⁹ His personal memoirs may offer more insight into his agenda than the facts of his life. Toussaint adeptly performed the role of Revolutionary, scripting the legend that circulated in Haiti. Archival evidence complicates, if not out-right contradicts, the portrayal of Toussaint in the 1799 newspaper article from *Le Moniteur*

⁶⁷Girard, “Toussaint before Louverture”

⁶⁸ David Geggus offers a very useful outline of the conflicts in the historiography. See Geggus, *The Changing Faces of Toussaint Louverture*.

⁶⁹ Girard “Toussaint before Louverture,” 42.

Universel, a description frequently used as fundamental evidence in his early biographies.⁷⁰ Some of the discrepancies can be explained by mistranslations or misinterpretations of the languages and practice on Saint Domingue. Giving familial names often indicated respect and the way families were invented and adopted, meaning that familial titles may or may not indicated biological relationships. The absence of official records makes identifying familial lineage challenging. Moreover, the understanding of slavery on Saint Domingue has evolved over time due to research that both examines Saint Domingue in relation to global politics and as a specific space with its own cultural norms.⁷¹ Scholars passionately disagree on the cause and significance of events.⁷² Other contradictions can be explained as the result of several French biographers who intended to justify Napoleon's actions. Mostly, the *Moniteur's* portrait resembles Toussaint carefully crafted performance. Toussaint orchestrated many aspects of his publicity's own complex self-publicity, giving speeches, writing letters, and even writing memoirs. The portrayal of Toussaint reflects both the complicated nature of doing research in Haiti and the very intentional performance by Toussaint. Regardless of the reasons for the competing depictions of Toussaint, the complexity of the historiography invites myth-making.

Like Toussaint, the life and impact of Jean-Jacques Dessalines is frequently oversimplified. Representations depict Dessalines as a bloodthirsty, racist, nationalist who serves

⁷⁰ Girard, "Toussaint before Louverture".

⁷¹ For a more thorough discussion of the historiography of Saint Domingue see Geggus's work, specifically, David Geggus, "The Haitian Revolution: New Approaches and Old" *Proceedings of the Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society*, Vol 19 (1994), 141-155.

⁷² For a discussion of some of the various debates see: Deborah Jenson, "Review: Hegel and Dessalines: Philosophy and the African Diaspora" *New West Indian Guide*, Vol 84, No, ¾ (2010), 269-275.

as a counterpoint to Toussaint.⁷³ Scarce and conflicting archival evidence makes it difficult to reconstruct Dessalines' early life; however, his military career and presidency are better documented, revealing a complex leader with evolving policies. Evidence suggests that as a leader Dessalines was a product of his time, creolizing practices to suit the changing situation and performing different cultural identities to inspire slaves to fight in the Revolution.

Dessalines, like the characterization of Haiti, must be understood within the on-going nineteenth-century international agenda to discredit Haiti as a means to prevent the spread of slave uprisings. Girard explains, “[o]f course one should not deny entirely the Revolutionary nature of a rebel colony governed by a black ex-slave. But the reputation of Dessalines as a destroyer of worlds, one whose political agenda could be summarized as “coupé têtes, brûlé cases” (cut off heads and burn houses), must be thoroughly reappraised, along with, by extension, the image of early Haiti as a pariah nation isolated from and at war with white Atlantic societies.”⁷⁴ Haiti's first constitution, full of nuanced definitions of citizenship including regulations of equal pay for men and women, hints at the complexities of Dessalines and his understanding of Haitian sovereignty.⁷⁵ Despite this evidence, representations of Dessalines tend narrowly to depict him as a violent black nationalist, generally void of sophistication and intellect. For some, Dessalines's image is something to celebrate, for others, a justification for racist attacks on Haiti. In a

⁷³ Philippe Girard, “Jean-Jacques Dessalines and the Atlantic System: A Reappraisal” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 69, no. 3 (2012), 549-582.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 554.

⁷⁵ Deborah Jenson provides insight into the politics and racism behind claims that Dessalines was not responsible for documents attributed to him as well as offer evidence to prove his authorship. Deborah Jenson, “Dessalines's American Proclamations of the Haitian Independence,” *Journal of Haitian Studies* 15 no ½ (2009). Also see Julia Gaffield's work on Dessalines for a discussion of demographics and Dessalines's articulation of race and citizenship, Julia Gaffield, “Complexities of Imagining Haiti: A Study of National Constitutions,” *Journal of Social History* 41 no. 1 (2007); 81-103.

situation similar to that of Toussaint, the lack of archival evidence and confusing historiography invite mythologizing. Paintings of Dessalines holding severed heads reinforce the claims made by the French of the cruelty and savagery of the newly independent Haiti. The Haitian dictator François Duvalier bolstered this interpretation by appropriating Dessalines's image to represent Duvalier's violent form of black nationalism.

Like in the case of Toussaint, the archive only offers a vague outline of Jean-Jacques Dessalines's life, leading to speculation and invention. With almost no known records of his life as a slave and an aversion to discussing his personal history, Dessalines belongs more to myth than official histories. The archive suggests that he was first enslaved on Henri Duclos' sugar plantation in northern Haiti and later by a free black man named Dessalines. Jean-Jacques was known to display his scarred back to remind Haitians of the brutality of slavery. Enlisting in the Revolutionary army, Dessalines quickly rose in rank. Most histories describe Jean-Jacques as a Creole who could successfully appeal, even fashion himself, as African, yet little evidence proves he was born in the Caribbean. According to Deborah Jenson, determining Dessalines's origins is far from simple. "In Dessalines's lifetime the few individuals who spoke of his background at all described him as African-born, and this designation became the accepted historiographical account of his origins until the middle of the nineteenth century. The narrative of Dessalines as Creole, born on a particular plantation, emerged only in the mid- to late nineteenth century, in piecemeal fashion."⁷⁶ Comparing the relatively scarce archival evidence with later historical narratives, Jenson suggests that naming Dessalines Creole rather than African reflected the politics of promoting a pro-creole narrative of the nation rather than

⁷⁶Deborah Jenson, "Jean-Jacques Dessalines and the African Character of the Haitian Revolution" *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 69, no 3 (2012), 616.

historical evidence. Whether Dessalines was an African who could perform creoleness or a Creole who could perform Africanness, the changes in his biography reflect the politics of rewriting history and the cultural imagination. Details, like Dessalines's origins, shape decades of representations of Dessalines and the Revolution.

The significance of the Revolution helps to enrich a mythos that can be much more influential than facts and dates. The relationship between the mythology and the history of the Revolution is complex and fluid. Although the myth often appears to take on a life of its own, the association with 'history' and 'fact' both empowers and at times dictates the evolution of the myth. The heroes, functioning as metonyms for the Revolution, impart assumptions about gender and sovereignty. The ubiquity of Revolutionary imagery and the semblance of historical fact help representations to naturalize codes of gender. Images and codes of masculinity, cultural ethnicity, and race become integrated with more general messages of anti-colonial liberty and power. Toussaint, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, and Henri Christophe produce a powerful trifecta that defines Haitian masculinity and integrates it with Haitian sovereignty, leaving little room for femininity. Nevertheless, the same slippery relationship between history and myth that invites Revolutionary representations to glorify masculinity, offers opportunities to rearrange and reinterpret the Revolution. New societal conditions and cultural encounters produce opportunities to creolize Revolutionary imagery, unpacking gendered assumptions and problematize standard gendered depictions.

Creolized performance helps to explain how the representations of these men are adapted and reconfigured for different situations and purposes, carrying with them codes of masculinity and power. I understand creolization as cultural combining and invention as a strategic negotiation that arises from forced cultural encounters. Performances cite cultural codes,

representing cultures in new configurations and producing a creolized production. Certain heroes of the Revolution, namely Toussaint but also Dessalines, Christophe, and Boukman among others, are refashioned specifically to address historical moments and agendas, or more broadly as cultural myths that generally impact daily life. I identify the processes as creolized performance both because the use of the figures relies on strategic reconfiguration but also because reading the representations as creolized performances helps to understand them as tools and as a process rather than be seduced into considering them as simply historical figures or worse as fixed signifiers. As the figures are creolized over time, the meaning of the figure shifts, adding, subtracting or reinterpreting significance, making visible historical moments or ideological trends. Nevertheless, the past meanings rarely disappear entirely. Instead, archaic meanings hide beneath the surface, subtly informing later interpretations. This layered presence is most true for the secondary meanings of the representations. Typically used to comment on sovereignty but sometimes used in reference to race, the representations of Revolutionary heroes always carry with them secondary implications of gender. As a secondary significance, the ideas of gender are less frequently addressed. Historical meanings are less likely to be shed. Codes of masculinity are subtly inserted into discussions of sovereignty and race. Eighteenth-century colonial images become unconsciously replicated. Too frequently, creolizing and reconfiguring the representations with regards to power and race, representations neglect a thoughtful analysis of gender. This chapter aims to analyze the codes of gender implicit and explicit in these representations.

Because the Revolution had global repercussions, the circulation of Revolutionary representations extends beyond the border of Haiti creating many opportunities for creolized representations. Frequently, international representations of Toussaint reflect a shared colonial or

racial history with Haiti. Put in dialogue with other cultural spaces, the Revolution becomes a symbol for the larger African Diaspora that in turn influences how the Revolution is perceived back in Haiti. The immense impact of the Revolution to colonial nations and private industries explains the large-scale attempt to control the narrative of the Haitian Revolution: dismiss it as isolated, negate it as savage, or repurpose it as European. Consequently, white European authors contributed to the complex image of the Revolution either supporting or undercutting their government's views of Haiti, incidentally, restaging the Revolution in terms of nineteenth-century romanticism.

Even sympathetic depictions of Toussaint tend to replicate colonial or racist world views, serving as better examples of appropriation than creolization. William Wordsworth often considered a founder of English Romanticism chose to write about Toussaint, addressing contemporary events as a symbol of international politics. First published in 1803 in *The Morning Post*, Wordsworth's short poem illustrates the ways favorable representations reinscribe a colonial worldview. Wordsworth identifies Toussaint's legacy as powerful and unforgettable.

TOUSSAINT, the most unhappy man of men!
Whether the whistling Rustic tend his plough
Within thy hearing, or thy head be now
Pillowed in some deep dungeon's earless den;—
O miserable Chieftain! where and when
Wilt thou find patience? Yet die not; do thou
Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow:

Though fallen thyself, never to rise again,
Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind
Powers that will work for thee; air, earth, and skies;
There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.⁷⁷

Although he seems to ally himself with Toussaint, Wordsworth still replicates an image of the 'primitive' in describing Toussaint. Wordsworth uses not General or Governor (factually accurate titles) but Chieftain to name Toussaint, hinting at the rhetoric of the 'noble savage' and the trope of New World 'primitive' societies. Wordsworth indicates that Toussaint's strength resides in a connection to nature, through the 'air, earth, and skies,' a romantic image of a mastery of nature rather than presenting Toussaint as a seasoned military leader and politician. Finally, Wordsworth alludes to Toussaint as a representative of a larger philosophical debate, possibly as a reference to conflicts between England and France.⁷⁸ In this sense, Wordsworth employs Toussaint as a mythic romantic figure who transcends the specifics of colonial Saint Domingue and foreshadows the unending fascination with Toussaint. Wordsworth's celebrity only helped to promote his sympathetic but racist depiction of Toussaint in Europe.

The contested histories lead to an array of representations. Toussaint, Dessalines, and their contemporaries offer legitimacy and interest as historical figures but remain flexible as

⁷⁷ William Wordsworth, *The Complete Poetical Works* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1999).

⁷⁸ The poem was originally published during the last days of the peace between France and Britain as a result of the Treaty of Amiens. The foreboding nature of the poem seems to hint at the looming threat of war.

legends. Just as the interpretation of the Haitian Revolution widely varies, the significance of the Revolutionaries shifts from one representation to the next with histories, politicians, and artists cherry-picking historical narratives. Consequently, the Revolutionary figures provide useful insight into the prevailing notions of power and nation.

Sovereignty and Gender

Representations of Revolutionary heroes circulate forming an image of Haitian sovereignty that equate masculinity and power. Although the image of Revolution and heroism dominate discussions of Haitian history and sovereignty, this dissertation plans to unpack the masculine narrative of sovereignty. Whether relevant or not, Haitian sovereignty is repeatedly framed in terms of the Revolution and militarism which helps to emphasize certain versions of resistance, slavery, colonialism, and masculinity. Grounded in history, Revolutionary imagery and rhetoric impact the staging of power as masculine, even as individuals creolize codes of masculinity and power. In many instances, colonial codes do not so much disappear as become part of the creolized representations of power, sovereignty, and masculinity, embodied by Revolutionary figures. Thus, gender offers a convenient lens from which to dissect the codes of power, and the Revolutionary figures offer a useful manifestation of these codes.

Haitian nationalism, like most national ideologies and despite an attestation of neutrality, relies upon a gendered construction of the nation, producing discursive and material consequences. Frequently, discussions of the nation and nationalism, as in the case of Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson, articulate the nation in terms of a collective consciousness, a product of shared imagining, language, certain technologies and mythology. This conceptualization assumes both a shared experience and a neutral subject, ignoring or at least undervaluing the diversity of experiences. For Anne McClintock “nations are not simply

phantasmagoria of the mind, but are historical and institutional practices through which social difference is invented and performed. Nationalism becomes, as a result, radically constitutive of people's identities, through social contests that are frequently violent and always gendered.”⁷⁹ In Haiti, the ‘social contests’ pit classes of Haitians against each other, competing for material resources and a national imaginary. Religion and language serve as clear social markers of this division.⁸⁰ The powerful role of the press as discussed by Anderson, is less germane to Haiti where most of the population has historically been illiterate. Cultural festivals, oral traditions, and later radio publicize national narratives that formulate a national consciousness. Haitians perform and embody Revolutionary figures, adapting and creolizing narratives to suit the contemporary moment. Through performance, which is often segregated by class, Haitians form community. Gender shapes the participation in these activities, generating gendered relationships with the nation. Myriam Chancy describes the gendered discourse of the nation as so complete that nationalism has existed as a primarily uncontested masculine history. “Nationalist agendas, focusing as they do on “the people,” have, by and large, been gendered as male even as they espouse gender-neutral politics. In Haiti, the neutering of nationalism from the onset of Independence contributed to the general exclusion of women from the nation's record – if women were involved at all in Revolutionary acts they were remembered not as having taken part in them as women but as members of the faceless mass.”⁸¹ By ignoring and sometimes

⁷⁹ Anne McClintock, “Family feuds: Gender, nationalism and the family” *Feminist review*, 44, no. 1 (1993), 61-80.

⁸⁰ Many public performances reflect class divisions that are signaled through religious references. Jean-Bertrand Aristide was unique in that he used Catholicism, rather than Vodou, to signal his support of lower classes. More frequently, Haitians use Vodou in performances for lower-classes. See Elizabeth McAlister's discussion of Rara, Elizabeth McAlister, *Rara! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

⁸¹Chancy, *Framing Silence*, loc 569.

actively denying the role of gender, masculine narratives remain unchallenged as universal truths. Part of the appeal of the Haitian Revolution is the usefulness in unifying history. Members of different classes share this history. Men and women fought side by side. Despite the opportunity for an egalitarian narrative, more frequently, the Revolutionary figures promote a specific narrative of the upper-class, Francophile, masculine Revolutionary. Representations of Toussaint Louverture perpetuate the naturalization of a masculine nationalism and sovereignty.

As a national figure, Toussaint articulates explicit and implicit connections to power, emphasizing a colonial representation of gender. Representations of Toussaint contribute to Haitian nationalism, not only as an actor in history but also as a symbol that can embody different facets of Haitian life: slavery, emancipation, colonialism, suffering, the relationship between French/Kreyol, European and African culture, and race. Despite the breadth of his appeal and ability to relate to a range of Haitian experiences, colonial discourse still plays a significant role in narratives of Toussaint. Frequently, representations of Toussaint perpetuate colonial structures and codes of masculinity, partly because the period of history is inseparable from the conditions of colonialism but also because European art continues to influence the standards for artistic form and aesthetics in Haitian literary culture. Many early nineteenth-century Haitian playwrights emulate French playwrights even if the message of the plays is ostensibly anti-French.

In theater as in life, racism and colonialism were inseparable from family relationships. For this reason, early French and Haitian theater pieces often depict the Revolution as a family drama, combining the drawing-room French social dramas of the eighteenth-century with the new Romanticist affinity for politics and history. Toussaint's family serve as proxy for the population of Saint Domingue. Using the family to articulate colonial society reflected a larger

trend of justifying racism and slavery with the language of patriarch. Furthermore, colonialism produced more than just symbolic families. Rape and sexual relationships lead to interracial families that were both acknowledged and denied by society. Moreover, the structure of colonialism, denying slaves body and sexual autonomy and physically separating families by selling slaves, specifically broke down slaves' familial relationships. Colonial structures undermined traditional kinship structures, creating an understanding of family that inevitably blurs race, class, and kinship. Thus, during the Revolution, the status of the family both reflected complex colonial structures but was also experiencing a period of change. The Revolution made possible new articulations of family and kinship and with them new notions of masculinity and race. Therefore, theater presenting the Revolution as a family drama, potentially addressed the complexity of the Revolution in terms of the complexity of the Haitian family or simply repeated patriarchal tropes, simplifying a complex historical event.

The French poet Alphonse de Lamartine reproduces an Oedipal model in his play *Toussaint Louverture*, reducing a magnificently complex man and historical moment into a trite crisis of the patriarchy. Like Wordsworth, Lamartine played a crucial role in European Romanticism. His play provided a popular representation in Europe, referenced by many later playwrights depicting the Revolution.⁸² Lamartine incorporates Toussaint into a romantic vision of Haiti. A *mélange* of all things foreign and mystical, Lamartine's Haiti is other without becoming too different or too Haitian. In the opening scene, the stage directions claim slaves play flutes, tambourines, and Spanish castagnettes in celebration. Lamartine attempts to create a sound of foreignness but hardly attempts to capture the sounds and music commonly played in Haiti. Making the scene sound Spanish balances both a foreignness and familiarity. Either by

⁸² Ferguson, "Le Premier des Noirs"

negligence or design, more than once the text represents a scene of the foreign that remains comfortably still European. Toussaint and Haiti can appear romantically but not threateningly as Other.

Like Wordsworth, Lamartine offers a sympathetic portrayal of Toussaint but still reiterates racist colonial stereotypes. He claims to detail a historical event, stressing his commitment to abolition, explicitly addressing his politics in the preface, and professing his admiration for Toussaint, all the while making strange and arbitrary changes to the historical record. He insists on the importance of history but enjoys creative license to invent new names for Toussaint's sons and falsely to attribute early slave revolts to Toussaint's leadership. Writing in *Alexandrian*, Lamartine constructs a nineteenth-century image of Toussaint as a noble savage filled with patience and wisdom. At the beginning of Act five, Toussaint sits upon a tree stump wearing a panther hide. The outrageous image links Toussaint to depictions of African savages and nature without any interest in historical accuracy. The play features melodramatic scenes and lengthy monologues. To fool and engineer a meeting with Leclerc, Toussaint pretends to be the blind feeble father of Adrienne. Lamartine constructs a Toussaint who appears barbaric, uses wily tricks to succeed, but ultimately requires white men to supply the ideology, specifically the voice of the white monk, Père Antoine. Lamartine constructs an image of Black masculinity that is fundamentally reliant upon the nobility of White masculinity. When Toussaint considers choosing the safety of his sons over the freedom of his people, Père Antoine advises him against it. "Si tu perds tes enfants un peuple les remplace. A ta vaste famille, aveugle, ouvre tes bras."⁸³

⁸³ Alphonse de Lamartine, *Toussaint Louverture : Poème dramatique* (Paris : Michel Lévy Frères, 1850), 69.

Toussaint's soliloquies and monologues emphasize loyalty, depicting conflicts as products of race, but they also depict him as vulnerable.

Lamartine's use of Romanticism in his choice of content and form help to frame Toussaint within European expectations and standards. He uses Toussaint to showcase critiques of French politics, not to retell history. For Lamartine, Toussaint represents the humble French patriot betrayed by a cruel Napoleon. Although the play addresses abolition, Haiti remains essentially a non-entity in the play. Lamartine highlights the willingness of Toussaint to send his sons to France during his conflict with the French government as a commitment to France. In the play, when Toussaint's sons return to Haiti, their loyalties are tested with one son praising France and the other advocating for independence. The play frames masculinity and nobility in terms of respect for the patriarchy where the crisis arises when the sovereign and the patriarch are in conflict. Toussaint as the romantic 'Noble savage' protects his family when the sovereign, Napoleon, fails the family by threatening to re-enslave them. Lamartine's abolitionist message relied upon the image of the familiar (French) Revolutionary and the romantic but primitive foreigner, a trope common in romantic literature.

More myth than man, Lamartine's Toussaint represents all of Haiti, proposing a homogeneous masculine image of Haiti. In Act 2 Scene 4, when Toussaint asks his niece Adrienne if she loves her country. She responds, "My uncle and my country, are they not the same thing?" She defines the country as a sum of Toussaint's actions, claiming that it would be nothing without him. Throughout the play, Toussaint debates his position in front of Adrienne, who functions as both a sounding board for Toussaint and as an embodied vision of the people. However, Adrienne a fictional character has no individuality or agency outside her representation of 'the people.' In a patronizing manner Toussaint declares Adrienne's, or the

people's, need of a father, stressing her innocence and ignorance. Lamartine suggests that although a slave can be noble and virtuous, knowledge remains a European privilege that Toussaint uniquely possesses. Toussaint describes himself as inferior to the French, "Ignorant, je sentis le besoin de m'instruire./ Un pauvre caporal d'un de leur régiments, Des sciences des blancs m'apprit les éléments./ Je réduisais d'un sou ma vile nourriture/ Pour payer jour par jour ses leçons d'écrire./ Sitôt que le rideau de mes yeux fut levé,"⁸⁴ Ultimately, the play denies the existence of African or creole knowledge in slave societies. Although Lamartine advocated for abolition, he understood abolition as freedom for blacks to acquire and participate in French culture. Moreover, because Lamartine perceived striving for knowledge to resemble religious piety, Toussaint's quest for assimilation rendered him noble. Like nobility, Lamartine relates Toussaint's masculinity to his relationship to European knowledge and the patriarchy. White and Black masculinity are presented in relation to each other, emphasizing contrast and similarities. Toussaint becomes part of a discourse with white masculinity. In turn, Lamartine's representation of Toussaint provides another portrait to be reworked in creolized Caribbean representations.

The celebrated Haitian poet Jean Brière's play *Adieu à la Marseillaise* (1934) discusses a similar crisis with the added sophistication of intertextual and African Diasporic references, including references to Lamartine's play.⁸⁵ Like Lamartine, Brière dramatizes the return of the sons of Toussaint in classic Alexandrian verse; however, Brière stages the conflict not as a simple family drama. The sons, Isaac and Placide, not the bizarre invented Albert found in

⁸⁴ Lamartine, *Toussaint Louverture, poème dramatique*, 42.

⁸⁵ Jean-Ferdinand Brière gained celebrity in Haiti by voicing his opposition to the US occupation. His work is considered a good example of Negritude. See Clark "Haiti's Tragic Overture"

Lamartine's play, do not serve only as representatives of different colonial perspectives but as figures that reference the historical, ideological, and literary role of the Revolution as connected to Brierre's contemporary society. Without de-historicizing him, Brierre uses the personal history of Toussaint as a symbol for larger sociopolitical conditions, mirroring Aimé Césaire's references to Toussaint in *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*. In the play, the tension arises from the (historically accurate) presence of the sons' chaperone Abbé Coisson, whose role as negotiator has been well documented. Vèvè Clark explains the sophistication of Brierre's historical reconstruction: "Brierre's approach to this significant moment in Haitian history reminds readers at once of the double bind in which leaders of independent nations would find themselves, but also that reconciliation with former colonial powers was not simply a personal issue; it had to be political."⁸⁶ The play restages Lamartine's family drama concerning paternity and a romantic vision of identity politics into a scene that articulates a layered crisis in which familial ties, ideology, and personal identity are bounded and structured by threats of physical violence. In Brierre's depiction decisions to capitulate to demands and ally with France or to declare independence are not merely personal but reflect the arrival of Leclerc's troupes. Toussaint's masculinity still relies upon his role as a patriarch but Brierre conceives of patriarch as a politically savvy father and sovereign, not a man wistfully dreaming of martyrdom. The play addresses Brierre's contemporary moment, the US occupation of Haiti. Brierre's hints of Romanticism and antiquated use of Alexandrian helps to situate the text as designed more for a literary audience than the stage. As an intertextual poetic piece written by a poet critiquing the US occupation, the play foregrounds a vision of a noble, passionate, and dutiful fight for

⁸⁶ Vèvè Clark, "When Womb Waters Break: The Emergence of Haitian New Theatre (1953-1987)" *Journal of Haitian Studies* 1 no. 1 (1995), 93.

sovereignty as a means to inspire. Nevertheless, without the presence of significant female characters, sovereignty and Revolution remain a masculine affair.

Both plays reconstruct the Revolution as a family drama pairing the struggle for Haitian sovereignty with an articulation of patriarchy. The plays have few female characters. Brière stresses the relationship between father and son. The rare female presence is underdeveloped serving as a foil to male characters or representing the ‘people’ in a generic vague manner. Although Lamartine includes the character Arianne, she serves to reinforce the image of Toussaint as a father, rather than offer a role or perspective of women in the Revolution. Even in Brière’s more historically accurate text, Toussaint and his family remain the focus, downplaying the large population on the island who feared re-enslavement and the many military generals whose ideology, capabilities, and personal ambition influenced the outcome of the Revolution. Focusing on the men of the Louverture family reinforces the image of Haitian sovereignty as belonging to the elite families rather than national institutions or larger populus. Procedure, councils, and public opinion all remain overshadowed in these representations by individual heroes. The masses are a loving mother, sister, or daughter who eagerly awaits male leadership. By eliminating female agency, the public, and diversity (other than the few moments of tension between the blacks and lighter skinned military leaders), these plays along with many others reinscribe an image of the elite creole military hero who represents power, sovereignty, and sometimes even all of Haiti. The diversity of the slave experience defined by gender, location, and heritage disappear in most of these plays, supporting the narrative of Haitian sovereignty as a French/Creole man. In reality, military records show the composition of the Revolution and the participation to be multifaceted. Women consistently fought alongside men. Different regions of the colony formed different tactical strategies. Haitians from the same African ethnic groups

frequently formed their own military units with individual styles of fighting. Archival evidence suggests that Toussaint's ability was not that he represented *all* Haitians but his masterful ability to communicate across the diverse population.⁸⁷

Presenting the Revolution as solely a family drama or individual's heroism erases the diversity and complexity of the Revolution and reinforces masculine narratives. During and after the Revolution, colonial tropes persisted in Haitian culture as a means to harness colonial cultural capital or to support the Haitian elite's consolidation of political power. Integrated into the narrative of resistance, even Toussaint employed colonial tropes in his self-publicity. Linking colonial codes of power with Haitian masculinity and sovereignty tropes such as the eighteenth and nineteenth century 'man and the island', in which the heroic man molds the romantic exotic isle, perpetuate a conception of one man conquering an island.⁸⁸ In this depiction the 'island' is feminized. Female characters serve as representatives of the island rather than individuals or actual historical women. Thus, the trope provides no space for female agency. Many depictions of the Revolution simply replace one masculine conqueror (the European) with another (the Haitian Revolutionary). One man (not community or group) masters and leads the savage occupants and exotic landscape.⁸⁹ The 'feminine' island represents the collective island inhabitants who are often depicted as 'primitive.' In contrast to the 'one man', women are presented as plural, not individuals, representing the community, and lacking individual agency. Nineteenth-century images repeat the subordinate wife, sister, or daughter. Twentieth-century

⁸⁷ I use the term Haitians anachronistically here to designate all people of color on the island, black, mixed-raced, African, Creole, free and enslaved people whose French citizenship was in question.

⁸⁸ Robinson Crusoe

⁸⁹ Gwo Neg discourse which I discuss in a later chapter.

images reformulate this trope as part of the contemporary economy of aid in which Haiti is feminized through images of impoverished women and shoeless children. Brière, Lamartine, even Wordsworth, exemplify a larger body of representations that emphasize the family and the individual. Borrowing from the trope of the man and the island, these depictions equate patriarchy with nationalism. Consequently, the narrative of the nation that circulates within and beyond the borders of Haiti reinforces a gendered understanding of power.

Sexuality and Sovereignty

Like the trope of the family drama, codes and representations of sexuality within the context of the Revolution illustrate the relationship between gender and sovereignty in Haiti. Colonial norms of sexuality structured gender and power in part as an extension of French norms but mostly as a product of slavery. Official regulations and customs of ‘libertinage’ created a complex system of practices and discourse that marked gender and status. During and after the Revolution, many politicians’ action reflected the on-going legacy of colonialism, frequently as disavowals of racist stereotypes or classist restrictions. Performing power, the Haitian Revolutionaries used sexuality to subvert colonial stereotypes either by accessing official ‘legitimate’ status or embracing the status symbol of libertinage. Meanwhile, lower-class Haitians sometimes rebelled against the colonial system entirely by embracing practices known as ‘creole.’ Consequently, as in Saint Domingue, class divisions in Haiti correlated to different codes of sexuality and performances of power. Representations of Revolutionaries reproduce and reinforce the correlation between sexuality and sovereignty.

Sexuality in the colonies provided a means to communicate power and class with white landed men using sexuality to reinforce their political and social dominance. Even as a highly structured system of relationships, sexuality marked social categories but also invited slippage. Frequently tropes of colonial sexuality defined representations of gender. “[T]he ability to gain access to a woman’s sexual favours served as a measure of one’s position in colonial society.”⁹⁰ Sexual conquests signaled masculinity. Colonial libertinage produced racial, spacial, and gendered tropes that persist in contemporary Haiti. “In Saint-Dominuge, affairs were not simply about sex. Saint-Domingue was by far France’s richest colony, and much money was at stake in deciding who would control the land. Eighteenth-century laws discriminating against illegitimate mixed-race offspring were not merely the product of a moralistic and racist bias against mistresses, bastards and mixed races; they were also designed to ensure that the legitimate (that is, white) spouse and children would inherit the valuable sugar estates.”⁹¹ Whether or not sexual and marital mores were in fact so vastly different from France and Europe is irrelevant. Sexual mores existed to restrict the exchange of wealth and power. Representations of licentiousness and sexual abuses within slavery helped to paint race as a marker of sexual behavior, equating skin light color with propriety, even though behaviors mostly reflected access to power. Archival evidence suggests that sexual conquests continued to signal social capital and masculinity during the Revolution; however, representations of sexual mores sometimes reflected political propaganda more than reality.

⁹⁰ Philippe Girard, “Rebelle with a Cause: Women in the Haitian War of Independence, 1802-04” *Gender & History*, 19, 66.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 66.

Toussaint and his admirers typically emphasized his Catholic marriage and dedication to his wife, equating Catholic sexual mores with power and legitimacy. However, many historians believe that Toussaint maintained numerous mistresses with whom he fathered many children. Relying upon these relationships, he created a powerful network of information and support. Other historians explain his many paramours as a means to display power in a colonial society that equated sexual dominance with sovereignty. Artistic representations of Toussaint portray either a faithful Catholic husband or a sexually promiscuous rogue. In either case, sexuality served as a way to perform status. By insisting upon strict codes of sexual propriety, colonial and later Haitian society reinforced class divisions. At the same time, acts of transgression signaled political and social power.

Although definitions of sexual propriety mark class, codes of sexuality simultaneously offer points of slippage and room for critique and social mobility, which is why lower-classes who performed creolized codes of behavior understood the role of sexuality as a social marker and have used it to critique upper-classes. Typically, sexuality serves as a commodity that can be traded as a part of social, political, and economic exchange. “[T]he body becomes a central site of power relations. Based on a combination of factors including physique, comportment, complexion, dress, and speech, any actor in Haitian society can instantly read the class position of another. In any bourgeois household at the present writing one can find thinner, darker bodies nurturing, nursing, feeding, pleasuring, and guarding heavier-set, lighter ones.”⁹² Because the body performs and exhibits codes of sexuality and gender that publicly announce class, embodied performances offer means to mobilize or critique these codes. In Haiti ‘betiz’ are irreverent sexual jokes, language, or commentary that rely upon the grotesque and the obscene to

⁹² McAlister, *Rara!: Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora*.

voice critiques. Used generally in moments of protest, betiz shows up most in Carnival and Rara.⁹³ During Rara, men perform music written by their band, singing, playing instruments, dancing, and interacting with spectators who line the streets. The performers write betiz into the lyrics and support them with obscene gestures and playful adlib. “Sexualized popular laughter constitutes a national politics in which Rara ti neg use sexual imagery to “read” the social order as well as current events and issues in the local and national arena. While other forms of Rara songs are explicit political critiques and can occasion violent response from the state, the politics of betiz songs are obscured and generally go unremarked.”⁹⁴ The outrageous language of betiz, a social idea but also embodied laughter during public performances, provides a form of cover that shields the commentary and the speaker from violent censorship. The body acts as the site and source of the critique that subvert the efforts that the elite extol to distinguish themselves from the lower-classes.⁹⁵ Performances of sexuality serve as markers of gender. Ti Nèg who may feel emasculated when poverty prohibits them from fulfilling certain roles of masculinity use public performances of sexuality to reaffirm their masculinity. Betiz links sexuality and gender for Ti Neg. Through betiz, sexuality and gender become not only institutionalized means of control but also a language to critique and view the powerful.

The concept of Gwo Neg and Ti Neg, big and small man, define many social and political interactions. A Gwo Neg is a man with power and prestige who controls enough resources that

⁹³ Rara is a Haitian celebration in which musical bands walk the streets singing original music that frequently comments on relevant politics. Often incorporating Vodou practice, the tradition belongs mostly to lower-class men in rural areas who form small musical troupes. Betiz and political protest are integral to Rara.

⁹⁴ McAlister. *Rara!: Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora*.

⁹⁵ The role of betiz in Haitian society shares many commonalities to Achilles Mbembe’s discussion of the grotesque. See Achille Mbembe. *On the Postcolony* (University of California Press, 2001).

he can rule a region, neighborhood, or group. Often due to his plentiful resources and better nutrition, he is literally larger (hence the 'gwo' big), taller and fatter than those around him. In contrast, the Ti Neg (small man) is subject to the unforgiving rule of the gwo neg. Deprived of resources and malnourished, the Ti Neg tends to physically be a smaller man. The body serves as a clear visible marker of inequities and social class. The elite's performance of excess creates a vocabulary that informs language of betiz. Elizabeth McAlister explains that the wealthy elite partake in the language of vulgarity through public performances of decadence. "[P]erformances of conspicuous consumption are vulgar and obscene in a deeper, more profound sense than those of the downtown Rara bands. Furthermore, in a cultural dialectic between "high" and "low" cultural forms, the poor read and interpret the vulgarity of the rich, and it is these readings that become incorporated into their own performances of obscenity on the public stage."⁹⁶

Representations of the body replicate this division between high and low culture.

Artistic depictions of the Revolution tend to reproduce the division between gwo and ti neg. The Haitian national gallery is filled with portraits of the Revolutionary leaders, namely Toussaint, Christophe, and Dessalines. Although in different styles, European romantic, surrealist but more frequently in the Haitian styles, the portraits depict individuals sometimes in the image of European generals, sometimes as servants to the Haitian lwa.⁹⁷ Some of the paintings borrow from early nineteenth-century lithographs helping to cement an image and interpretation of these men. The prevalence of these lithographs, particularly the few of Toussaint, naturalize these interpretations giving them an air of 'authenticity.' In contrast, the

⁹⁶ McAlister. *Rara!: Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora*.

⁹⁷ Haiti has a vibrant art scene with distinct art styles from different regions in Haiti that are lumped together by many art critics under the category 'art naïve.'

role of the 'ti neg' in the Revolution is depicted as a violent blurry fray. Paintings of the battlefield or more commonly the ceremony at Bois Caimain show a frenzy of activity while de-emphasizing the individual. In many paintings such as Haitian painter Dieudonné Cédor's *L'insurrection des esclaves dans le Nord* (1925), there are no individuals. Monochromatic bodies overlap each other, and the scenery fades individual bodies into the collective. The paintings of Bois Caimain tend to emphasize the movement of the group over depiction of individuals. In Louverture Poisson's *Cérémonie du Bois Caimain*, the dancing participants placed so close together become indistinguishable from each other. *La Proclamation de 1801 par Toussaint Louverture* (1941) by Casimir Joseph illustrates a tightly packed audience listening to Toussaint who stands on a platform far above everyone. The clearly depicted figure of Toussaint in contrast to the 'huddled masses' reinforces the distinction between the heroes of the Revolution and 'pèp la' (The People). In the logic of these paintings, individuality is a privilege afforded to the Gwo Neg and denied to everyone else: ti neg, women, children. The division between the Gwo and Ti neg helps to explain the representations and circulation of Toussaint as a symbol that reinforces the gwo/ti social division.

The representations of Toussaint extend well beyond Haiti and European Romanticism, appearing in Caribbean, African, and North American art and literature. American playwright Ntozake Shange references Toussaint in her plays that address an African American experience. For Shange, Toussaint serves as a myth, a symbol of power and liberation, a Gwo Nèg whose significance extends far beyond the history of the Revolution. In the play *for colored girls who have considered suicide/ when the rainbow is enuf* (1976), the mythic Toussaint inspires the imagination of a young African American girl in one of the plays poetic monologues. Lady in Brown recounts her love affair with the idea of Toussaint Louverture as a young girl who

ventured into the adult history section of the library. For the Lady in Brown, a child experiencing racism and oppression with few tools to express let alone resist, Toussaint represents a romantic vision of resistance. However, Lady in Brown's Toussaint as a Gwo Nèg and a fantasy lives outside the reality of time and space. He is unburdened by the context of the Caribbean, Haiti, and France and instead able to defeat zombie armies of white Frenchmen. When the girl meets a 'living' Toussaint, a perfect example of Ti Nèg, the mythic representation of Toussaint loses its potency. The monologue illustrates the global significance of Toussaint as an African Diasporic symbol. Furthermore, the appearance of a real local boy named Toussaint uses the Gwo/Ti relationship to question the real value of universal symbols.

Jamaican-Canadian Writer Nalo Hopkinson uses Toussaint as a symbol for both the Gwo Neg but also the 'official, formal, and correct' vision of pan-African Diaspora culture in order to creolize and subvert a masculine narrative of African Diaspora culture. In her Afro-futuristic novel *The Midnight Robber* (2000), she names her planet, one of the primary settings of the novel, Toussaint. Like most of the many references to African Diaspora culture in her novel, the reference to the Haitian Revolution is left completely unexplained, simply part of the aesthetic, imaginary, and vocabulary proffered as standard. The text creates a world in which Caribbean history and culture is no longer the object but the aesthetic. Deeply imbedded in every aspect of the narrative, metaphors and references to the African Diaspora are creolized to create a unified hegemonic culture. The planet Toussaint on which the characters live is never openly linked in the text to the man Toussaint Louverture. Hopkinson extends the metaphor of Toussaint by deemphasizing him. The novel, which explores the experience of penal colonies and maroonage, reshapes a story of resisting oppression but reframes the struggle in terms of gender.

The protagonist Tan-Tan's perpetual exile is a result of gendered violence in the society. The planet Toussaint is a part of the menacing masculinist discourse.

But wait—you mean you never hear of New Half-Way Tree, the planet of the lost people? You never wonder where them all does go, the drifters, the ragamuffins-them, the ones who think the world must be have something better for them, if them could only find which part it is? You never wonder is where we send the thieves-them, and the murderers? Well master, the Nation Worlds does ship them all to New Half-Way Tree, the mirror planet of Toussaint. Yes, man; on the next side of a dimension veil. New Half-Way Tree, it look a little bit like this Toussaint planet where I living: same clouds in the high, high mountains; same sunny bays; same green, rich valleys. But where Toussaint civilized, New Half-Way Tree does be rough. You know how a thing and the shadow of that thing could be in almost the same place together? You know the way a shadow is a dark version of the real thing, the dub side? Well, New Half-Way Tree is a dub version of Toussaint, hanging like a ripe mami apple in one fold of a dimension veil. New Half-Way Tree is how Toussaint planet did look before the Marryshow Corporation sink them Earth Engine Number 127 down into it like God entering he woman; plunging into the womb of soil to impregnate the planet with the seed of Granny Nanny.⁹⁸

Hopkinson creates New Half-Way Tree, a space that homes everyone barred or alienated from planet Toussaint. Her world building suggests that in the powerful symbol of Toussaint, many are excluded. Ti- Neg, women, and those who do not subscribe to the rigid sexual and gender roles become exiled from Toussaint to New Half-Way Tree. Exclusive, rigid, and patriarchal, at the same time that it symbolizes Black liberation and achievement, the planet casts the reference of Toussaint in a mixed light. By using the name as part of an aesthetic full of Caribbean imagery, language, and cultural icons, rather than as an object in her narrative, Hopkinson's use of Toussaint adds to the broader mythology. Her use of the name reinforces the association of Toussaint with that which is official, formal, and masculine, addressing the association of Gwo Neg and masculinity with the official and formal. Furthermore, as the novel progresses and the

⁹⁸ Nalo Hopkinson. *Midnight Robber*, kindle edition, (Grand Central Publishing, 2000), 2.

protagonist finds herself exiled from Toussaint, planet serves as a symbol of the exclusion of the deviant, the queer, and the feminine.

In both Shange and Hopkinson's texts, references to Toussaint exemplify the breadth and flexibility of the Toussaint myth. Both writers use Toussaint to create a sense of an African Diasporic experience, despite writing decades apart and from different backgrounds. The references creolize Toussaint's image with different concepts of liberation and blackness. Furthermore, in each piece the specifics of Toussaint's life appear less significant than the general symbol of Toussaint as a specific vision of black liberation. The dichotomy of Gwo and Ti Neg offers a clear way to understand the representation of masculinity, sexuality, and power; however, the model still leaves no room for women. Codes and representations of sexuality reinforce the division between the Gwo and Ti Neg but leave no means to articulate women as powerful. Gwo and Ti Neg explain the social implications of economic disparity, giving Haitians a language to articulate these positions. Sexuality both defines and bridges these divisions. Superficially, the image of Gwo Neg reproduces a definition of masculinity that follows the formal Catholic image of monogamy, propriety, and patriarchy; however, the Gwo Neg also exhibits power through the ability to bend and ignore the same codes of propriety. Moreover, Ti Neg's informal status in sexual relationships reflects his inferior position but also allows him to use vulgarity, reversal, and mockery of sexual codes to subvert power structures. Propriety and betiz both reify and subvert gender norms as well as help to define masculinity. By ignoring women, the discourse silences women, presupposing that women have no role in this sociopolitical power struggle.

Replication and Resistance

An erasure of women occurs in narratives of resistance, where Revolutionary figures define the concept of resistance and radicalism. Whether reproducing European tropes or contributing to new imaginaries, representations of Revolutionary figures particularly Toussaint tend to illustrate a complex understanding of masculinity. Radicalism and resistance incorporate masculinity into a narrative of creolization. Although creolization does not explicitly address gender, the gendered representations of Revolutionaries become essential components of creolized Caribbean culture. Toussaint reveals different interpretations or debates of radicalism, sometimes his figure as an emblem of black radicalism but other times as a conservative force. Caribbean intellectuals Aimé Césaire and CLR James, addressed in the following section, present Toussaint as an ultimate symbol of black excellence. In contrast, as part of a critique of patriarchal narratives Hopkinson uses Toussaint to represent conservative and restrictive forces. Alternatively, Derek Walcott and Edouard Glissant, also discussed later in this chapter, explores an impression of the Revolution that embraces contradictions. Toussaint provides a useful tool to understand the different interpretations of resistance.

The Revolution appears across the Caribbean in different representations of resistance, often as a ‘black’ version of the French Revolution. In some cases, representations depict the Revolution as an independent historical event, more in line with the way the United States narrates its war of independence. But more commonly, the Caribbean, particularly the Francophone Caribbean, depict the Revolution as either an extension of the French Revolution or an important counterpart. Although the magnitude of the Revolution makes it useful to tackle the large-scale erasure of Caribbean history because of the Revolution’s appeal and strong presence in the archive, the narrativization of the Revolution can be far from radical. Revolutionary narratives suffer from the same conservative colonial power structures that define many aspects

of Caribbean culture. The Revolution can appear simultaneously radical and conservative because of two competing forces. Roger Toumson explains this phenomenon as a difficulty in analyzing Caribbean literature as a consequence of duality in the narration of colonialism and the impacts of colonialism that differentiates between “deux visions contrastées de l’univers colonial insulaire, celle des colons et leurs descendants, d’une part, et celle des colonisés, de l’autre.”⁹⁹ The act of producing testimony, replacing silences with narratives, defines a significant portion of Caribbean literature. Formal Histories belong to the colonizer, while the colonized struggles to piece together histories, filling in gaps with cultural and personal knowledge and creative invention. The Haitian Revolution destabilizes this relationship, making it attractive to the whole of the Caribbean. Reproducing the History of the Haitian Revolution can be a radical act of resistance by retelling the radical acts of the Revolutionaries and resisting the Western History. Nevertheless, despite its inclusion in formal Western History, the Haitian Revolution still suffers from extensive silencing and racist narration. Gender can provide a critical site to recognize what is both radical and conservative within representations of the Revolution.

CLR James celebrates Toussaint for radicalism, while still depicting a somewhat conservative portrayal of Toussaint in *The Black Jacobins*. James’s history reconstructs Toussaint as a European hero to glorify blackness and black masculinity. By asserting a radical message alongside conservative threads, James naturalizes the blending of codes of masculinity with heroism and sovereignty. The text, a unique history, produced standards for scholarship on the Revolution for decades, circulating well beyond Caribbean studies. Although presented as a history, many parts of the text read more like a literary narrative. Through elegant prose, James

⁹⁹ Roger Toumson. *La Transgression des couleurs : Littérature et langage des Antilles (XVIII, XIX, XX siècles)*, vol 1, (Paris : Editions Caribéennes, 1989) 22.

crafts a flowing narrative that defines inner motivations, outlines tragic characters, and blends ideology with analysis seamlessly. James's text suggests a personal identification with Toussaint. At other moments, the figure Toussaint becomes larger than life – a mythical symbol rather than a man. The glorification of Toussaint in a text claiming to examine the Revolution as a whole and present a balanced history helps to reify the mythic image of Toussaint, who 'is' the Revolution.

James supports his mythologizing of Toussaint by depicting the Haitian people as one united character. The text establishes a duality between the hero and the masses reminiscent of many Enlightenment works. Paul Miller explains that the text constructs a clear narrative with focused characters. "Rather than considered as a mere aggregate of individuals, which, statistically and demographically speaking at least, is their only empirically verifiable status, the masses in James's work are homogenized into a single will or "spirit." This monolithic mass is then endowed with characteristics belonging to individuals only, such as intelligence, goodness, etc."¹⁰⁰ The parallelism of Toussaint and the character who is the 'masses' appears in many representations of Toussaint, plays and paintings, in which the individuals within or multiplicity of the general public is downplayed. This framing of the Revolution can easily produce a gendered narrative, particularly when the masses or the island are feminized. Frequently, a literary vision of Toussaint and his position of power overshadows the historicity of Toussaint's rise and fall.

James develops the myth of Toussaint with passionate language, narration, and explicit literary references, linking depictions of sovereignty and masculinity. Even as he includes

¹⁰⁰ Paul B. Miller, "Enlightened Hesitations: Black Masses and Tragic Heroes in C.L.R. James's "The Black Jacobins"" *MLN*, Vol 116, 5 (2001), 1076.

thoughtful archival research the tone of the text emphasizes James's passion for the Revolution and his desire for Toussaint to receive admiration. He describes Toussaint's rise as a product of cunning and Herculean effort. While working under Governor Laveaux, "Toussaint made himself into a whole cabinet like a fascist dictator, except that he actually did the work."¹⁰¹ Commitment and intensity are crucial to James's descriptions of sovereignty. According to James, perseverance is a key characteristic of a sovereign. James praises Toussaint for his morality, at the same time, creating a conflicting portrait. He insists on Toussaint's 'virtuous' reputation for conciliation and forgiveness; however, he describes a man who trusts no one, sentencing his own nephew to death for insubordination. The conflicting facts of the history are overshadowed by the consistent praise for Toussaint. "Toussaint was always careful of his reputation. If he did not have a virtue, he assumed it...All his life he strove for conciliation with enemies and peaceful settlements in all disputes."¹⁰² The tone of the text encourages a mythic portrayal of Toussaint. In his analysis the betrayal and capture of Toussaint, James sites Prometheus, Hamlet, Lear, Phèdre, Ahab. "The hamartia, the tragic flaw, which we have constructed from Aristotle, was in Toussaint not a moral weakness. It was a specific error, a total miscalculation of the constituent events. Yet what is lost by the imaginative degree atoned for by the historical actuality of his dilemma"¹⁰³ Poetic rhetoric colors the text, reminding readers of the spiritual and artistic legacy of Toussaint. "Despite Toussaint's despotism, his ruthlessness, his impenetrability, his unsleeping suspicion of all around him, his skill in large-scale diplomacy and petty intrigue, to the end of his life he remained a man of simple and kindly feelings, his

¹⁰¹ CLR James, *The Black Jacobins* (Vintage Books, 1989), 159.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 168.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 291.

humanity never drowned by the rivers of blood which flowed so plentifully and so long.”¹⁰⁴ A construction of masculinity forms from the descriptions of virtue, intelligence, and compassion. James does not emphasize illustrations of Toussaint’s physique or comportment, keeping the portrait focused on the social and spiritual. In the text, masculinity functions as a social performance of the ‘good’ patriarch. Describing Toussaint’s love of children, his care for women, and his respect for the elderly, James outlines a man who perfectly filled the role of father for all of Haiti. Like the aforementioned plays, fatherhood and fidelity are crucial to this portrait of Toussaint as the martyred father of the nation. For other representations, the role of fatherhood is less critical than race in the construction of patriarchy.

Aimé Césaire, equally fascinated by the Haitian Revolution as James, presents Toussaint as an emblem of Black Caribbean history. Césaire, who typically wrote poetry, plays, and occasionally essays, produced something quite different in his history: *Toussaint Louverture*. His text depicts Toussaint as avenue to celebrate Negritude; however, the French Revolution still takes center stage in his work. Césaire’s history begins not with the origins of Toussaint but the failed pleas of Vincent Ogé for the rights of free people of color at the National Assembly. He seems to situate the Haitian Revolution as the Haitian version of the French Revolution, instead of its own rightful event. Although this perspective is unsurprising given Césaire’s politics of critiquing colonialism but on-going commitment for Martinique to remain part of France, the focus on France deflates the text as a whole. By framing the Revolution as a Caribbean extension or as part of a universalist discourse of the French Revolution, Césaire misses an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the particularities of Haitian history. Instead, he structures Blackness as only in opposition to white Frenchness, failing to explore Black or Creole identity beyond this

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 254.

binary. A comparable sentiment appears in his poetry when he directly compares himself with Toussaint.

Ce qui est à moi
c'est un homme seul emprisonné de blanc
c'est un homme seul qui défie les cris blancs de la mort blanche
(TOUSSAINT, TOUSSAINT LOUVERTURE)
c'est un homme seul qui fascine l'épervier blanc de la mort blanche
c'est un homme seul dans la mer inféconde de sable blanc
c'est un moricaud vieux dressé contre les eaux du ciel.¹⁰⁵

Césaire employs Toussaint as part of a symbolic discussion of colonialism and racism, but he also claims a personal identification with Toussaint. The Haitian Revolution and Toussaint are not so much part of a historical moment as part of the repeating violence of colonialism. For Césaire, the Revolution can signify both the first spark of Negritude, as in the place “où la négritude se mit debout pour la première fois et dit qu’elle croyait à son humanité,”¹⁰⁶ but also the attempts to overcome a system that produced cycles of colonial and postcolonial violence as depicted in his play *La tragédie du roi Christophe*. In Césaire’s version, Henri Christophe, the perfect tragic figure, strives to develop a thriving kingdom but overtime his postcolony resembles the despotic colonial state. Martin Munro explains Césaire’s use of the Revolution well. “Personal failings and individual vagaries are recuperated into the mythical scheme, as the

¹⁰⁵ Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (Paris : Présence Africaine, 1939); 25-26.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 24

Haitian story is in a sense de-Haitianized and reframed into a more global, universal context.”¹⁰⁷

Césaire shortened and rewrote his 1963 text in 1970 to make the play more suitable for performance. Blending stylized French tragedy with humor and a narrator that connotes Creole storytelling, Césaire creolizes the Revolutionary hero Christophe. Césaire combines prose and verse, French and Caribbean references, and French tragedy with Caribbean oral storytelling to create Creole aesthetic that rejects the stereotype of the primitive king and the treatment of the Haitians as simply black versions of French Revolutionaries. In both the history and fiction, Toussaint and Christophe are uniquely Caribbean. Césaire’s works define the Blackness of the Revolutionaries as something much more than non-white. Nevertheless, by focusing on the *heroes* of the Revolution, Césaire offers a limited vision of the Revolution and blackness as predominately masculine. Only in one brief scene does Madame Christophe, the sole named female character, appear, attempting to reason with her husband. Not a developed character, she serves as foreshadowing. The play creates a scene of tragedy and intrigue between politicians that is mirrored in the cock fights of the peasants, with both scenes dominated by men. Although not overtly patronizing and sexist like in Lamartine’s scenes of daughters and wives, the absence of women and analysis of gender naturalize the presumed masculinity of the Revolution. Moreover, both Toussaint and Christophe support Césaire’s masculine image of Negritude.

Frequently, by eliminating multiplicity, masculine representations dominate the historical narratives of the Revolution. As popular narratives are repeated and condensed, representations risk simplifying a complex event to the detriment of alternative and feminist narratives. Specifically, the colonial gender codes which were exploded by the chaos of the Revolution are

¹⁰⁷ Martin Munro, “Can’t Stand up for Falling down: Haiti, Its Revolutions, and Twentieth-Century Negritudes” *Research in African Literatures*, vol 35, 2, (2004), 13.

still reified by popular narratives of the Revolution. For the most part, European codes of gender prohibited women from combat. Slaves in the middle of a revolt were much less concerned with gendered codes of propriety. “White women only rarely took a direct part in the fighting. A detailed roster of the second Polish demi-brigade lists many children, serving as drummers, but only two women in combat roles... The rebel army, by contrast, incorporated many women of colour.”¹⁰⁸ Slave women fought in combat, acted as spies for the rebellion, and served in advisory capacities. Not only did the need of the rebellion require women to be involved, but some African societies had very different gender codes. In parts of West Africa, specifically Dahomey, women participated in warfare and combat. “Dahomey invaded the Allada kingdom in 1724, around the time when Louverture’s father was captured and shipped to the New World as a slave, so the Dahomean precedent may have influenced Louverture’s views on women’s roles in wartime.”¹⁰⁹ Evidence suggests that slave women played a crucial role in the Revolution in all capacities, including in combat. Nevertheless, few specifics of women in combat have been included in the archive. Documents record women’s participation as anonymous individuals, naming only the wives of high-ranking officers such as Sanite Belair or Claire Heureuse. Oral traditions include records of Revolutionary women but suffer from inconsistencies and absence of detail. Narratives of the Revolution are preserved in Vodou; however, Vodou is specifically not hierarchical with consistent ideology across Haiti. Stories and spirits in Vodou are inherently multivalent, meaning a lwa can be both a historical figure and more than that. The Vodou lwa Marinèt is sometimes claimed as a reference to a rebel fighter Marianne who fought alongside

¹⁰⁸Girard, “Rebelles with a Cause;” 68.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Dessalines, lighting the canons for his troupes.¹¹⁰ Défilée, referenced in popular culture, appears in different forms serving alongside Dessalines. Sometimes wise, frequently crazy, a rape victim turned prostitute, or innocent child turned cook, Défilée embodies the inconsistencies and gendered reading of history. Most often narratives depict her as a madwoman who buried Dessalines. In some representations, she appears as a wise woman who solemnly buries the mutilated body of a hero, warning the Haitian people of the bad omen of this execution. In any case, the conflict and anxiety surrounding her image hint at the tension of representing women as strong voices of the Revolution. Ezulie Danto, the Vodou lwa, alludes to a similar anxiety. Danto, a symbol for maternal love, blackness, poverty, and strength, is typically depicted as a black Madonna, a single mother, and fierce but silent spirit. She allegedly fought in the Revolution, only to have her tongue cut out.¹¹¹ The archive and the cultural representations contribute but also comment on the clear silencing of women in the Revolution.

Even if unnamed or devalued, the archive still clearly illustrates the critical role of women in the Revolution. The French implemented many additional restrictions for female workers because Leclerc discovered the involvement of many women of color. Women frequently helped the rebels through espionage. Transporting goods between plantations, they provided essential information networks. Famously, Jean-Jacques Dessalines' wife Claire Heureuse bought a barge to trade along the coast to supply the troupes. Mambos priestesses acted as organizers. "*Mambos* were similarly targeted as Vodun had underpinned conspiracies to revolt against or poison planters (according to the oral tradition, a *mambo* called Cécile Fatiman was the one who slit the throat of the sacrificial pig in the Vodun ceremony that preceded the

¹¹⁰ Girard, "Rebelles with a Cause," 68.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 71-72.

1791 uprising).”¹¹² Black nurses and female servants, perceived as benign due to their gender, sabotaged and poisoned French soldiers. Poisonings, sabotage, and espionage created vast paranoia among the French and inspiration for the rebels. Women’s roles were hardly passive despite the emphasis on male heroes and participation in popular narratives.

Creolization provides a model for complicating the dominant narratives of an exclusively masculine Revolution and subsequent masculine sovereignty; however, many otherwise subversive creolizing pieces still reassert masculine narratives of the Revolution. Theater, a means for creolized narratives to enter the written archive and oral tradition, illustrates the way gender is too frequently ignored by artists and intellectuals who claim to be undermining hegemonic Histories. Derek Walcott and Edouard Glissant present the Revolution, like James and Césaire, in order to celebrate Caribbean achievement but also to muddle the monolithic ideas of European and Black that dictate Caribbean History. Creolization, in this context, borrowing, rearranging, and adapting to make something new, manifests in the impressionistic and postmodern form of the plays. Glissant’s theoretical concept of *Relation*, as both relation and relationship, an active, ever-changing, and unfixed concept helps to explain the non-linear episodic texts that blur anachronistically scenes and people to produce an impression of the Revolution. Nevertheless, for all of the artistic liberties each playwright takes to put into questions notions of heroism, leadership, or historical glorification, Walcott and Glissant represent the Revolution as a masculine affair.

Derek Walcott reimagines the Haitian Revolution as a space of conflict, compromise, and creolization, rather than a straightforward articulation of ideals. In his trilogy of Haitian plays, Walcott uses the Revolution to explore his idea of history, as more than just the story of

¹¹² Girard, “Rebelles with a Cause,” 71.

individual men. His early play *Henri Christophe* presents a fairly common interpretation of Christophe as a man seduced by the grandeur of establishing a legacy, not dissimilar from Aimé Césaire's interpretation, albeit with no female characters. The later plays offer a more nuanced look at the Revolution, insisting upon the ambivalence of war and the *Relation* between different Caribbean islands' experience of colonialism and revolt. Walcott presents one of the few iterations of a Toussaint blurred and surrounded by the unnamed men and women of history. Walcott claimed a "desire to replace 'heroes' with 'heraldic men' connects with his quarrel with history. If heroes are towering men, larger than life, then the idea of history he counters is that of history as the deeds and impact of heroes. By contrast, heraldic men would be simple, ordinary persons ('foresters and fishermen'), close to the earth, the elements, who, by their experience and integrity, become icons representative of the generality, the common people."¹¹³ Walcott's heraldic men still occupy powerful and well-known positions in history. Presenting these men as symbols of monumental moments maybe deemphasizes their personal biographies but does not necessarily give voice to many unnamed participants and witnesses of events. Walcott constructs Toussaint as a symbol of nobility surrounded by ignoble and excessive violence. Moreover, Walcott's perspective does not help to recuperate the ignored, maybe unknown, role of women in these events. In fact, the overuse of a few individuals to represent the many serves as a main contributor to the erasure of women's voices. Unfortunately, even when authors counter the representation of history as the stories of a few powerful men, this subversion does not necessarily tackle the dominance of masculinity in historical narratives.

Frequently, Walcott creolized image of history leaving gendered representations of power unchallenged. The only female characters in the Haitian scenes of *Drums and Colors*, Pauline

¹¹³ Edward Baugh, "Of Men and Heroes: Walcott and the Haitian Revolution" *Callaloo*, Vol 28, No 1 (2005), 47.

Leclerc and Mme de Rouvray, reinforce stereotypes of French women. Although Walcott does invent characters outside of the archive, he does not create named Haitian female slaves. The play features well-known historical men. His creolized imagery focuses on developing the complexities of known men, like Toussaint, or contending that Caribbean history can be understood as a *Relational* web of ideas and circumstances. Walcott fashions his narratives with references from throughout the Caribbean. In *Drums and Colors*, Walcott depicts Toussaint as jaded military leader who is depressed by the on-going war and violence but remains pragmatic. Toussaint admonishes his former master, who charges Toussaint with the hell of the Revolution, with the simple reminder, “War is not a drawing-room minuet.”¹¹⁴ When his former master accuses Toussaint of cruel butchery, Toussaint places the blame for the war and destruction on colonial masters. At the same time, he expresses hopelessness in the face of the godless chaotic world. “I am pushed forward, lifted on the crest of the wave,/ Then I am abandoned among the wreckage, while/ The mass of guilty men say, Oh , Toussaint, he is gentle, good. Leave him to clean it.”¹¹⁵ Walcott’s interpretation of Toussaint is at odds with the portrayal of simplistic leadership and heroism but still repeats concepts of patriarchy from earlier narratives, Toussaint as the ‘good moral father’ of Haiti, even as the play questions them. Toussaint, allegedly a devout Catholic, in Walcott’s play admits to a loss of faith. He mourns the destruction of St Domingue as he orders it. After witnessing the execution of his former master, Walcott’s stage directions describe Toussaint as “weeping, shoulders shaking.”¹¹⁶ Meanwhile, Walcott constructs

¹¹⁴ Derek Walcott, *The Haitian Trilogy: Plays: Henri Christophe, Drums and Colours, and The Haytian Earth* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 245.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 246.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 250.

a slightly different Toussaint in his play *The Haitian Earth*. The play covers the span of Toussaint's involvement in the Revolution, at first depicting an idealistic healer and later a pragmatic leader more resigned to the bloody violence of the war. Both plays feature an almost identical scene in which the character of Toussaint confesses to being conflicted and troubled by the ethics and violence of war, but the character explains that this is not how he is viewed by those around him. Like in *Drums and Colors*, soldiers present M. Calixte-Breda to Toussaint, leading to a debate between the former master and slave about the brutality of war and slavery. Rage rather than mourning define the interaction. A much shorter scene, the exchange is punctuated by short powerful description. Toussaint even cries in front of Breda rather than after his departure. Unlike in the previous rendition of the scene, Toussaint does not appear to mask his emotions to perfect a performance of leadership. Walcott creates a character whose sense of self is in conflict with the world's perception. This character is conscious and unashamed of the conflict. In the first scene, Toussaint appears to intentionally organize a performance of all-powerful leader. In *The Haitian Earth*, the myth of Toussaint extends beyond his own control, as part of the mythos of the Revolution. Above all, he critiques the naïve adoration of Toussaint and his fellow Revolutionaries, highlighting the roles of men and masculinity.

These images of powerful men stress the masculinity of the Revolution in contrast to the abused 'feminine' Haitian earth. When Leclerc mocks Toussaint's shifting loyalties, Toussaint insists that he "served her. That place," referring to Haiti. Leclerc interrogates Toussaint's response. "Why do we call countries women?/ We see them as wives or whores. It is a piece of earth."¹¹⁷ Later, an unnamed man explains the need to burn Le Cap as the corruption a woman

¹¹⁷ Walcott, *The Haitian Trilogy*, 392.

who starts out beautiful but becomes a dirty whore.¹¹⁸ Throughout the text, Haiti is both feminized and victimized. The only developed female character in *The Haitian Earth*, Yette, represents the Haitian Earth, continuing the colonial trope of feminizing the island. The fortunes of Yette take many twists and turns, but despite her beauty and praised lighter skin, she struggles to acquire agency. She takes little action in the first half of the play. Only in the final scene, when she refuses to speak to King Christophe, does she find her voice. Shifting roles as first a prostitute, then a farmer, and finally killed for being a witch, she represents the hope and despair of Haiti. The chorus sings, “So Yette find a piece of land/ Where she teach herself how to plant,/ Her skin the same shade as the ground,/ And you’ll see why I sing this chant/ Fer her, my rose and my queen/ And for Christophe and Dessalines.”¹¹⁹ The chorus foreshadows Yette’s symbolic end in which Dessalines rapes her, and Christophe kills her. Although her lover Pompey supports her, the Revolutionaries only pose a threat to Yette and the Haitian Earth. Walcott attempts to signal the silencing of women, having Yette remain silent when she is charged with cursing King Christophe. However, the play primarily repeats the narrative of women as victims, leaving no room for women to assert agency, be associated with the Revolution, or perform sovereignty. The bleak depiction does not help to recuperate the Revolution for Haitian women. Power remains in the hands of a few select men.

Even with the potential for encouraging a liberating radical perspective in art and literature, Creolization reflects the gendered politics of the artist and intellectuals. Toussaint offers artists an opportunity to creolize European politics, creolize the French Revolution. Césaire and James present Toussaint as an emblem of universal emancipation and a creolized

¹¹⁸ Walcott, *The Haitian Trilogy*, 333.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 334.

vision of citizenship; however, this depiction of citizenship still remains inherently masculine. The aim of this creolizing, combining of multiple cultural aesthetics, focuses on producing a new cultural monolith of Blackness, Negritude. On the other hand, produced later and consequently in dialogue with Césaire and James, Walcott's plays approach creolization as a destabilization of the mythic imagery of Negritude. For Walcott, creolizing images and ideas serves to complicate simple narratives but also place different Caribbean spaces in conversation. Walcott unpacks images of heroes. For all three men, Toussaint signals the struggle in navigating Caribbean identity. Nonetheless, they either omit entirely or stereotype the involvement and concept of women in the Revolution. James, Césaire, and Walcott's use of creolization does not extend to reimagining narrow definitions of gender.

Creolizing Images

In representations of the Revolution, masculinity acts as a dominant aesthetic. Actions and character traits, images of bodies and the military, as well as color and line all signal masculinity within the grand narrative of the Revolution. The Revolutionary figures translate different iterations of masculinity: European or African, and Black, mixed race or color-blind fantasy is translated into an aesthetic. As fundamentally a creolized concept, Haitian masculinity draws from different facets of Haitian culture and history to produce multiple versions of masculinity. In literature, the character of the Revolutionary can be presented in depth, revealing the actions and personality traits associated with Revolutionary masculinity. Whereas the plastic and visual arts offer insight into the aesthetic of masculinity through imagery of bodies and aesthetic form. All of the representations rely on affective portrayals of masculinity that become linked with abstract concepts of resistance, power, and sovereignty. Frequently depicted as

antithetical, Toussaint and Dessalines stand for two portraits of masculinity, differentiated by race, temperament, and cultural signifiers. Although alone, Toussaint may represent a range of racial politics, in relation to Dessalines, he often embodies a color-blind idealism. He becomes a hero who happens to be black, often signaling a transcendence of race. Conversely, Dessalines remains a figure defined by race. Celebrated or cursed, representations of Dessalines feature race as a dominant factor that explains his success, his cruelty, or his demise. Depictions of other Revolutionary men tend to repeat this dichotomy staged by Toussaint and Dessalines. Through these figures, societal conflicts are staged as conflicts of masculinity. Depictions of the Revolution, even creolized progressive representations, tend to either omit depictions of women or reaffirm them as Other. The most radical depictions attempt to destabilize standard depictions of masculinity through subverting popular images of the Revolutionaries.

Overall, the celebrity of Toussaint has left Dessalines as a less-developed character in the Revolutionary narrative. Even sympathetic portrayals shy away from nuance, simply reinterpreting Dessalines' 'ruthlessness' for steadfast conviction. In Charles Moravia's *La Crête-à-Pierrot* (1908), Dessalines appears only briefly on stage and always to the same effect. The play chronicles the siege at Crête-à-Pierrot and the amazing victory of Dessalines' troupes over Leclerc despite being at huge disadvantage in number and tactical position. In the face of a white colonist begging for mercy, Dessalines counters with the lack of mercy shown to slaves and announces, "Je suis l'Esclavage debout, et qui se venge!"¹²⁰ The play celebrates his valor and efficacy as a general while insisting upon his consistent motivations and character. The consistence of portrayals of Dessalines and Toussaint help to normalize specific

¹²⁰ Charles Moravia, *La Crête-à-Pierrot. Poème dramatique en trois tableaux et en vers* (Port-au-Prince, Impr. J. Verrollot, 1908), 25; For a more thorough reading of the play, see Carrol F. Coates "Dessalines: History in the Theater" *Journal of Haitian Studies*, Vol 2, 2 (1996), 167-187.

characterizations of masculinity. As the European-esque ‘Black Jacobin,’ Toussaint reinforces a link between a ‘cultured’ masculinity with propriety, patriarchy, intelligence, and integrity. Dessalines, as the passionate African, associates African and Black masculinity with illiteracy, violence, rage, and ferocity. In part, the Caribbean intelligentsia has gravitated towards Toussaint as a means to dispel the stereotypes of Black masculinity perpetuated by many of the representations of Dessalines. Although the reality of these men was more complex than either trope would suggest, the proliferation of representations reinforces a binary understanding of masculinity. Moreover, together the images of these iconic men affirm the importance of masculinity in the Revolution.

The multivalent nature of spirits within Vodou provides insight into the layered persona of Haitian cultural figures, specifically Dessalines. Vodou lwas have multiple personas, representing different versions of a family of spirits, with some iterations local to a region or even a family. The lwa reflect on-going creolization of the religion or, as some argue, the lwa are alive. In Haitian Vodou, Ogou frequently carries iron smithing and tools or a saber, representing technology and human’s mastery over the environment. Ogou Feray is a spirit of war. Ogou Desalin or Papa Desalin signals the war and the Revolution.¹²¹ By incorporating Dessalines into Vodou, he retains a living presence in Haiti beyond the grave. The stories of Dessalines and the other characteristics of Ogou blend together influencing the legacy of Dessalines. Ogou’s warrior spirit and his love of women become part of the legend of Dessalines. Oral tradition identifies Dessalines as a practitioner of Vodou. Legend claims he used his magic to disguise himself to slip through enemy lines, but he is also known to have massacred Vodou practitioners. His

¹²¹ For a more nuanced and extensive discussion of Papa Desalin see Joan Dayan, *Haiti, history, and the gods* (University of California Press, 1998).

Vodou persona helps to enrich the image without downplaying the contradictions of his contribution to history. Referred to as Papa Desalin, he performs a brash, violent, and hyper-sexualized image of masculinity. He fights, dances, drinks, and woos women with intensity. However, like Dessalines, the lwa Papa Desalin rejects all things European. Consequently, the celebration of Dessalines is often divided along lines of class. His name appears in Vodou ceremony and rara festivals but is less common in published literature. Glissant, Césaire, and their counterparts tend to gravitate towards the more Francophile image of Toussaint, even if they critique Toussaint's partnership with the French.

Edouard Glissant emphasizes divisions of culture and ideology in his play *Monsieur Toussaint*. Although the text thoroughly problematizes the glorification of Toussaint, Glissant leaves gender completely uninterrogated. He presents Haitian sovereignty as a paradox of cultural allegiance borrowing gendered troupes to support his argument. Glissant depicts Toussaint as a flawed leader with conflicting loyalties. Through the characterization of Toussaint and the fractured narrative, Glissant illustrates his philosophy of obscurity and anti-universalism. Divided between France and St Domingue, Toussaint realizes the futility in attempting to serve both spaces. The play, which unfolds in overlapping locations, blurs the boundaries of Toussaint's prison cell and Saint Domingue. Like the obscured expression of place, events do not unfold linearly but instead shift back and forth discursively to present an affective impression of events rather than a narrative history. Muttering to himself in his cell, he attempts to justify his actions, becoming an example of the anti-myth and the opacity of history. Meanwhile, the ghostly figure of Mackandal, the African-born maroon, weaves throughout the narrative representing both conviction, fiery resistance, and an alternative to European epistemology. As the title 'Monsieur' suggests, Toussaint strives to marry French civilization with his quest for

liberation. He favors a calculated ‘European’ and ‘civilized’ attitude when dealing with the French. The voices of the dead punctuate Toussaint’s story, undermining his ideology. Mackandal’s spectral voice passionately cries: “Je crie sur la terre brûlée! Entendez-moi, la voix des morts traverse l’océan,” hinting at the continued relevance of this history.¹²² Nevertheless, the crisis of epistemology and historiography, which seems to be the central theme of the text, centers on the actions and philosophies of men. Sovereignty, rebellion, and liberation belong to men in the play. Madame Toussaint, one of the few female characters, remains uninterested and resentful of the Revolution, which she blames for threatening her immediate family. Although not incorrect in her suspicions of danger, Madame Toussaint does not offer a competing strategy or politic to Toussaint, only a sounding board to illustrate and problematize Toussaint’s choices throughout the play. She represents the wives and mothers who feared and suffered loss. The character reproduces the trope of the grieving wife and mother but does not illustrate female agency.

The play presents female characters as purely allegorical. Mama Dio, the only significant female character other than Madame Toussaint, is an invented spirit/Vodou priestess who narrates and embodies the voice of the people. In other words, Glissant feminizes the unnamed masses. Mama Dio facilitates the fractured narrative, acting as Toussaint’s spiritual guide as he re-enacts his past and confronts the ghostly Makandal. She warns Toussaint: “Craignez le mot qui éclaircit la chose obscure!” foreshadowing his death and articulating Glissant’s theory of Relation.¹²³ Frequently, she uses the pronoun ‘we’ reinforcing her role as the voice of the Haitian people. Mama Dio helps to articulate Glissant’s ideology but also illustrates Glissant’s myopic

¹²² Edouard Glissant, *Monsieur Toussaint* (Paris: Seuil, 1986), 218.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 60.

vision of gender.¹²⁴ As an allegorical character, Mama Dio embodies the ‘spirit’ of the ‘people’, a reminder to Toussaint of the need to listen and respect the will of the people; however, as more of a symbol than a standard character, she is without traditional agency. While the male characters (excluding Makandal) exhibit character development, action, and agency, the female characters, even the historical Mme Toussaint, represent concepts not individuals. Moreover, the least European male character, Makandal, functions as symbol of rebellion not a historical individual. Consequently, the blacker, more African, and more feminism characters operate as symbols and tropes, while the whiter, more European, and more Euro-masculine characters represent individuals.

Although presented as a subversion of grand historical narratives in favor of rhizomic relationships, the play reinforces colonial stereotypes of gender and sovereignty. The feminized island, Saint Domingue, must be saved by the lone man. Even though Toussaint fails, as Makandal failed, he is simply replaced by Dessalines, another lone male. Glissant attempts to problematize the depiction of Toussaint as either liberator or traitor. Toussaint best voices his positions when he explains that a slave cannot betray a country: “Ma patrie? Trahir est votre privilège, un esclave ne trahit pas. Sa seule science, son refuge, c’est le néant et la stupidité. Alors on l’avoue pour une bête.”¹²⁵ Glissant questions existing narratives of Toussaint as heroic for his embodiment of the ideal French citizen, by offering an image of a flawed man, but clearly reinscribes gendered stereotypes of the island and power. He problematizes the grand narrative

¹²⁴ The text reenacts for and against departmentalization, sketches the struggle to creolize culture, and insists on the Relational nature of historical events, figure, and ideas. Toussaint’s death concludes the play without firmly reconciling the questions of citizenship, nationalism, and identity. In the whole of the theoretical argument, gender only appears as a part of the feminine spirit, the will of the people. This reflects a larger pattern in Glissant’s work in which he ignores gender as a point of interrogation.

¹²⁵ Glissant, *Monsieur Toussaint*, 44.

of masculine Revolutionary heroism without recognizing the on-going parallel narrative of the absence of the feminine.

In response to the recurring omission of women, Mayrse Condé parodies the repetition of gendered tropes. Like Glissant she aims to subvert simple narratives of Revolutionary heroism, yet her play *An Tan Revolisyon* offers a commentary on more than just heroism but also gender, power, and cultural hegemony. Through both form and content, Condé presents a more thoughtful representation of creolization than Glissant's *Monsieur Toussaint*. Her play text published in French, Kreyol, English, and Spanish reminds the reader of the multilingual and multicultural nature of the Caribbean. Her play bridges the Haitian Revolution with revolt and slavery in Guadeloupe insisting on a shared history. Incorporating song, dance, and oral storytelling into the text, she breaks away from European theatrical models to create something predominantly Caribbean. Cultural and anachronistic references produce a sense of creolization that feels current as it tackles the complexities of the past. The aesthetic makes the absence of women feel strange. The English production at the University of Georgia in 1997, most likely for practical reasons, dealt with the gender imbalance in the play by changing the gender of several roles and using masks and stylized performance to include cross-gender casting in others. The abstract set, Brechtian use of song and projections, and anachronistic costumes create a postmodern production that supports Condé's pan-Caribbean performance. As in the cases of other representations, the postmodern form seems offer a more nuanced version of gender. The text explicitly addresses the gendering of the Revolutionary narrative through the narrator. He informs the audience: "Revolution is like a woman: you do whatever you want with her. Soldiers of fortune sodomize her, poets read her poetry, the middle class makes her cough up cash. In the kingdom of France, revolution aborted the baby that had turned its womb into a mountain of

justice. All that remains is a stinking pile of coagulated blood lying in the gutter. Yet it could have been beautiful, this child, born on July 14!”¹²⁶ In this passage, Condé subverts the trope of the male savior and the feminine island. In a later scene, the narrator returns to the metaphor, this time to pervert a slightly different gendered trope: the hag/witch/monster. “I was mistaken. Revolution isn’t a woman. It’s a witch. She feeds on fresh blood. She smears it all over her jowls. She licks it off her fingers. And then, in the colorless hours before dawn, she gives birth to monsters.”¹²⁷ By linking the stereotype of the witch with the Revolution, Condé simultaneously subverts the gendered trope and discredits the naivete of glorifying war. Unfortunately, the play does little to give voice to silenced women from the period. The majority of named characters, including the narrator, are men. The text frames the Revolution as an affair of men.

Although not through the inclusion of women, Condé challenges traditional narratives of the Revolution by exposing, satirizing, and sometimes inverting representations of Revolutionary masculinity. Because *An tan révolisyon* stages a creolized vision of Revolution, not a concise history, and moves between Guadeloupe, Haiti, and France, the Haitian Revolutionaries have little stage time.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, depictions of Toussaint and Dessalines subvert standard stereotypes of the men. Condé’s Toussaint illustrates the hypocrisy and brutality of the Revolutionaries, forcing the former slaves to return to the plantations under slave-like conditions and calling for the violent destruction of St Domingue: “annihilate and burn everything.”¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Maryse Condé, *An tan révolisyon: Elle court, elle court la liberté* (Paris : Editions de l’Amandier, 2015), 190.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹²⁸ The narrator and several Guadeloupean invented characters dominate the scenes. Although the play includes many historical figures, they have significantly fewer lines and smaller parts than the invented characters.

¹²⁹ Condé, *An tan révolisyon*, 220.

Conversely, Dessalines, who typically embodies African primitivism, barbarism, and violence, exudes leadership and nobility in the final scene of the play. Addressing his public, Dessalines calls for liberty, courage, and the formation of constitutions. To the Guadeloupeans fleeing the reinstatement of slavery, he offers fraternity and refuge. The reversal of the standard portrayals of Toussaint and Dessalines is not an invention of historical evidence, rather a reinterpretation of well-documented events.

Not unlike the subversive style of Maryse Condé, visual artist Edouard Duval-Carrié engages with the iconography, aesthetics, and tropes of masculinity to produce a creolized sometimes queered vision of masculinity. Duval-Carrié creolizes aesthetics in his work by referencing European Romantic portraiture, Haitian ‘peinture naïve,’ and Haitian Vodou alongside his postmodern pop-cultural references and magical realism. His striking combinations of different interpretations of Toussaint undercut a traditional depiction of Haitian masculinity. Neither subscribing to the stereotype of African primitivism, French Republicanism, or Black excellence. Duval-Carrié’s Toussaint is both all and none of these stereotypes, hinting at the complicated nature of creolization that neither abandons nor preserves but reworks cultural representations. His work cites traditional imagery: Toussaint in a bicorn hat and epaulettes, Vodou lwa, and Revolutionary scenes. Depictions of Toussaint commonly stress the importance of his French citizenship by dressing Toussaint in French military garb but frame the citizenship as Haitian. Duval-Carrié queers standard imagery, suggesting value in both accepting and subverting masculinity. He notes the pitfalls of celebrating representations of Toussaint that highlight French iconography. If Toussaint becomes too French, his achievements are reduced to a side note of the French Revolution, reasserting French cultural hegemony. Through creolized imagery, Duval-Carrié explores the relationship between the French and Haitian Creole culture.

He offers different iterations of masculinity through his paintings of spirits and historical figures, specifically the ambiguity of Toussaint. In a 1987 portrait, Duval-Carrié emphasizes contradictions in the Toussaint mythology. The imagery raises questions of citizenship. Toussaint holds the constitution in one hand and a dagger in the other. He steps on a serpent which has been interpreted as both the demise of the French and the Duvalier regime. The painting resembles older portraits with Toussaint's military dress, constitution, and island scenery; however, in this case, Duval-Carrié commissioned the painting to be reproduced as a Haitian beaded flag. The intricate ornate flags hand-sewn on colorful silks with beads and sequences tend to feature Vodou lwa iconography. In this instance, Duval-Carrié translates his European style portrait into the bold aesthetic of Vodou flags hinting at the complex history of this subject.

Commissioning an entire collection of his painting of the Revolution into flags for the 2004 Centennial celebration, Duval-Carrié claims Haitian ownership of Revolutionary imagery without hiding or eliminating European elements. The flags both celebrate and subvert the image of the Revolution in his many art pieces, illustrating the ability of creolization to complicate but not erase previous narratives. *L'Armée Républicaine de St. Domingue* depicts officers and soldiers in Revolutionary uniforms, standing on small pedestals.¹³⁰ Only skin color differentiates the soldiers. Otherwise, the figures stand tall and square like identical toy soldiers. The figures bring to mind pieces on a chess board, creating a symmetry between the men. Duval-Carrié suggests that men are less defined by race than the games of power and sovereignty. Masculinity functions as a performance within the game. The drapo *Toussaint l'Ouverture* presents a similar

¹³⁰ Displayed for the centennial in a building in the central square of Port-au-Prince, the drapo were damaged when the exhibition was trashed.

vision of masculinity, with Toussaint as a broad-shouldered, square jaw, stern looking general who fills the frame. Duval-Carrié ties masculinity to physical strength but also cultural practice. Toussaint offers an image of Gwo Nèg within the confines of European portraiture. The figure stands immobile and expressionless suggesting a narrative of ‘rational,’ ‘formal,’ and ‘civilized’ masculinity. Dressed in an elegant uniform with gilded epaulettes, a tricolor guarder on his white culottes, Toussaint holds a dagger in one hand, his constitution in the other, while stepping on the head of a snake. Is the snake a Christian symbol for evil or the Vodou lwa Danbala, the primordial creator? The snake hints at hidden meanings, syncretism. The eye-catching sequences insist that the viewer acknowledge the image as Haitian. Both the stoic formal European dress and the colorful Haitian beaded art represent Haitian masculinity. His masculinity relies upon a creolized performance of both French and Haitian culture.

Duval-Carrié continues this conflicting portrayal in a series of portraits of Toussaint that repeat a profile of Toussaint in different colors and with different backdrops. *Le General Toussaint enfumé or Pretty in Pink* presents a common profile of Toussaint dressed in gilded military uniform; however, the bust is framed symmetrical designs of roses and vises with shades of pink and black smoke creating the impression of a frame around the central circle of pink. In a similar piece, Duval-Carrié presents the same profile of Toussaint dressed in a golden uniform and blue background. The image of Toussaint reappears in different colors with different patterns in the background. Duval-Carrié reexamines nineteenth century lithographic images of Toussaint in vibrant colors, framed by multiple ornate borders. The images are literally reframed and recolored hinting at the changing complex role in history. The bright colors overshadow the naturalizing force of grand narratives, reminding the viewer that history and masculinity are always socially constructed. Duval-Carrié subverts the depiction of masculinity as a subset of

colors or images. The colors and delicate flourishes on the portrait *Pretty in Pink* hint that masculinity and femininity are not necessarily opposing but co-exist in a more fluid manner, even if they are depicted as symbolic opposites.

Duval-Carrié returns to the Revolutionary figures again and again suggesting the importance but also the unexplored wealth of these images. By distorting traditional imagery, he alludes to the complications of history that are overlooked in standard narratives. He challenges the imagery of masculinity and heroism. *The Fall of the Hero*, a large mixed media on canvas, features Toussaint riding a horse who seems to be leaping in distress with legs at unnatural angles.¹³¹ Streaks and smudges of dark paint, almost like cracks, interrupt the portrait creating a feeling of anxiety. The figure contrasts with the traditional emotionless static depictions of Toussaint that suggest his complete control of his surroundings. Like some of Duval-Carrié's other works, he repainted the image multiple times with variations. In one version, Toussaint rides a yellow horse in the night on the beach with a full moon creating an eerie glow. In a different version, Toussaint and his horse appear to be outstretched between two scenes in the background: a city scape and palm trees. Both paintings exude chaos. The angles, colors, and design make Toussaint and his situation appear strange and unnatural. Duval-Carrié reverses the imagery that present Toussaint and his fellow heroes as traditional, natural, and European. Instead, he uses strangeness to question traditional imagery without obscuring traditional narratives. He presents the Caribbean not masculinity as central to Toussaint. For Duval-Carrié Caribbean represents a truly creolized history which cannot be understood without Europe. By

¹³¹ Incidentally, this depiction of Toussaint appears in many recent academic works discussing Toussaint, including texts by Deborah Jenson and Martin Munro, suggesting the image speaks to a contemporary fascination with troubled representation of Toussaint.

emphasizing creolization, he stresses that the Revolutionary figures are not defined by masculinity but a complex interplay of cultures encounters under extraordinary circumstances.

Ina Césaire, ethnographer and Aimé Césaire's daughter, explores a similar interest in re-presenting Revolutionary figures but unlike Duval-Carrié's layered portraits, her vision insists upon Creole as an independent cultural identity. As an intellectual, playwright, and ethnographer Ina Césaire uses her play *Le Général et le prisonnier* to refute representations of Toussaint as French. Contrary to her father's work, which tends to highlight Toussaint's importance as a universal hero, Ina's play focuses on specificity and Haitian particularism. The form of the play, an intimate dialogue written in prose with a minimalist *mis-en-scène*, supports her depiction of the Revolution and Revolutionaries as belonging to Haiti, not as a European or global phenomenon. She does not problematize Toussaint like Glissant or Duval-Carrié. Ina's Toussaint clearly self-identifies as Haitian Creole with no concern for French citizenship. The play affirms Haitianness rather than question or critique it. Although the play does not strictly present a pan-African Negritude agenda, Ina does offer a pan-Caribbean image. The play takes place behind closed doors of Toussaint's French prison cell, dramatizing the imagined interrogations between Toussaint and the French general Auguste Caffarelli. The text makes explicit references to identity and cultural citizenship. Toussaint refers to Napoleon as the leader of the 'whites' and himself as the leader of the 'blacks'. He demands the use of titles in the interrogation, which leads to a powerplay between Toussaint and Cafferelli and a debate on citizenship. « Mon nom est en effet Toussaint Bréda, dit Louverture, général en chef des armées d'Haïti. Il est de coutume de me donner mon titre ! »¹³² By correcting Cafferelli, Toussaint claims Haitian

¹³² Ina Césaire, *Rosanie Soleil et autres textes dramatiques ; Textes Réunis et Présentés Par Christiane P Makward* (Paris : Karthala, 2011), 163.

citizenship and asserts his military rank, placing the mythos of French nationality in question. According to the mythology of the République, the French citizen's relationship to the state is undifferentiated by class, race, and gender. The text highlights the role of race in the treatment of Toussaint and citizenship. Ina Césaire underscores the Haitian Revolution's challenge of the mythology of French citizenship; however, she does not extend her interrogation to questions of gender.

Within the private intimate setting of the prison cell, the play represents the Revolution as a struggle between individuals, between men. Although he remains the prisoner, Toussaint equally interrogates Caffarelli, producing a rhetorical debate of citizenship, history, and personal philosophy, a symbolic representation of the Haitian Revolution. After each scene, Caffarelli's respect and admiration for Toussaint grows and Toussaint's physical condition worsens. Despite Caffarelli's physical and material advantages in the prison cell, Toussaint prevails. Toussaint finds rhetorical and spiritual strength in proclaiming his Caribbean identity and making Caribbean references. He invokes the 'Gods of Africa' and the power of a tropical storm.¹³³ As his body shakes from fever, he describes the power of the tropical storm as an unstoppable force. His body serves as a metaphor for Haiti: an island surrounded by the powerful French. As he dies, he hallucinates a mambo priestess dancing to the voice of Toto Bissainthe singing a Haitian Kreyol song of mourning. The power of the dancer and song suggest Toussaint's spirit will rise even after the failing of his body. Ina constructs a Toussaint who defies European definitions and serves as a spiritual inspiration for the Caribbean.

¹³³ Césaire, *Rosalie Soleil*, 170.

Although Ina's portrayal produces a powerful emblem of Caribbean strength and culture, she reproduces a masculine narrative of the Revolution. Toussaint offers a performance of a Gwo Neg with an emphasis on wisdom, cunning, status, and mastery of his environment, even as he dies in incarceration. Césaire represents the Revolution as the conflict between Toussaint and Caffarelli: as the story of two men, two citizens, and two cultures. Each present a vision of masculinity as a spiritual Haitian strength or an intellectual formal French. In spite of his death; the *mis-en-scène* suggests the superiority; if not victory, of Toussaint, and by association his version of masculinity. The only female figure remains unnamed and voiceless. The only female voice, Toto Bissainthe, is disembodied and symbolic. Together the figure and voice position the feminine as part of the mythos of Haiti. Toto Bissainthe is the only actual woman, but she is an anachronistic symbol of Haitian Creole culture. In historical reconstructions or artistic interpretations women remain largely symbolic.

Conclusion: Where are all the Women?

Representations of the Revolution exclude women. The absence of women masks women's contribution to the Revolution, reinforcing masculinity as a dominating force. As part of a narrative of silence, even narratives of women that do persist become perverted. Defillée, the woman who collected and buried the battered remains of Dessalines, becomes a madwoman in stories. Sanité Bélair, a lieutenant in Toussaint's army, becomes a woman who lead her husband to his death. Cécile Fatiman, a powerful Mambo united slaves and inspired revolt, became an unnamed priestess. Either masculine narratives obscure the contribution of these women or they appear different due to gendered expectations. In addition, many stories of women are simply left untold. Haitian scholar Jasmine Narcisse explains how mothers are forced to hide things from

their children.¹³⁴ Original exclusions are compounded by the erasure of stories of powerful women. The representation of women is not simply a historical problem. When the international media, particularly the US media, describe Haiti, women remain at a significant disadvantage. Haitians, specifically women, are repeatedly misrepresented as primitive victims who practice superstition and witchcraft. Emphasizing the dangerous, salacious, or pitiable, media representations tend to omit the longstanding history of US and European imperialism that have helped to create and maintain conditions in Haiti. Instead of thoughtful discourse, media coverage reproduces affective portrayals that stigmatize and commoditize Haiti. From American CDC's racist labeling of Haitians in the 1980s and 90s to the rampant abuse by NGOs after the 2010 earthquake, the misrepresentation and abuse of Haitians is a contemporary as well as a historical problem.

Because the expectation dictates that women did not contribute to the Revolution, sometimes the contributions that are identical to the men's contributions are ignored. By 1801, the demographics of Saint Domingue had shifted from two thirds of the slave population being male, to the majority of the population being female. Thus, when fighting continued in 1802, women played key roles in all aspect of the Revolution. However, as narratives pass down from generation to the next, they can become more affected by masculine narratives that deny or downplay the role of women. Given the extensive silencing of women and the emphasis on masculine narratives, it is essential to examine the iterations and implications of masculinity in Revolutionary representations. As Laurent Dubois explains even with archival evidence the Revolutionary heroes belong as much to legend as to history. Their lives are colored by

¹³⁴ Jasmine Narcisse, interview by Monique Lafontant. *Entre Nous: Livres "Mémoire de Femmes" de Jasmine Narcisse* Radio Haiti Archive (1997).

unknowns. “The absence of information surrounding the early lives of Haiti’s founders interestingly drives home precisely how radical the Haitian Revolution ultimately was. These four figures all grew up in circumstances largely constructed to exclude and even erase them, to make the expression of social and political power unimaginable.”¹³⁵ Artistic invention, national narratives, and cultural legends fill in the archival gaps, thereby constructing powerful narratives of masculinity. Creolization or what Joan Dayan refers to as “syncretism, hybridity, and contamination” define many of the representations of the Revolution and subsequently masculinity.¹³⁶ The representations reveal the association between masculinity and heroism that help to promote masculinity at the expense of femininity. Returning to Toussaint reveals the brilliance and power behind exceptional individuals but also the damage in using a single man to represent the whole of a complex period of history. As Haitian and Caribbean intellectuals search for an aesthetic and vocabulary to articulate their experiences, Toussaint and his fellow men offer particular advantages; however, Toussaint’s image can also easily promote masculine narratives that have helped to oppress women for more than a century.

¹³⁵ Laurant Dubois, “Dessalines Toro d’Haiti” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 69, no 3 (2012), 545.

¹³⁶ Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*.

Chapter Two

Antigòn in Kreyòl: Vodou and Sovereignty in Morisseau-Leroy's Antigone

The story of Antigone, a young woman who confronts the state and sacrifices herself for her beliefs, has inspired audiences for centuries. Adapted and reborn in different countries and during different eras, Antigone's struggle has resonated for generations provoking discussions of lamentation, martyrdom, and sovereignty, and more recently sexuality and feminism. Félix Morrisseau-Leroy's play translates Antigone into the Haitian Kreyòl language and culture, relating the discussion of Antigone to discourses on colonialism, cultural appropriation, and racist ideas of primitivism. His 1953 play *Antigòn* situates the classic narrative in the early 1950s Haiti, presaging the infamous Duvalier dictatorship. Using Haitian politics and the Haitian religion Vodou as the *mise-en-scène* for the play, Morrisseau-Leroy wrote a text that bridged the cultures of Classical Antiquity and his contemporary Haiti. Moreover, the productions, which invited rural Haitians to the theater and later international Parisian audiences to rural Haiti, tested the limits of transnational art and cultural appropriation. Audiences reacted strongly to the play's avant-garde politics and aesthetics, the beginning of a new movement in Haitian theater. The adaptation of this old narrative resonated with historical and contemporary crisis of Haitian sovereignty. The discussion of power and the role of civil disobedience underscored the fraught state of Haitian politics. Furthermore, the play foregrounded powerful Haitian women during a period in which few artistic representations included Haitian women as agents. The text explores the relationship between Haitian political sovereignty and hegemonic culture, highlighting the importance of culture sovereignty. In representing Antigone as Haitian Creole, Morisseau-Leroy offers a model for Haitian cultural sovereignty as part of a broader discussion of sovereignty.

Antigòn presents language and performance, albeit stylized, of everyday practice to establish a depiction of cultural sovereignty as a response to the dominance of French culture. At the 1959 *Théâtre des Nations* festival in Paris, the performance of the play offered a chance for cultural exchange between the former colony and colonizer, reintroducing Kreyòl in order to position it as a legitimate source of cultural pride. French and US American threats to Haitian sovereignty have consistently manifested as cultural attacks. Haitian activists (as with French politicians) recognized the significance of cultural production in gaining and maintaining political sovereignty. The ability of the government to transform words into actions relies not simply on military strength but additionally on cultural capital. Even within legal discourse such as Carl Schmitt's identification of the sovereign as the one who makes decisions during 'states of exception,' sovereignty inherently (as well as the concept of exception) depends upon norms formed through cultural practice. Using a Foucauldian understanding of power as relational, in this chapter, I consider sovereignty in terms of power and space and as structured by cultural practice and cultural production. Because Haitian intellectuals and politicians articulated sovereignty as related and reliant on culture, Morisseau-Leroy's adaptation of *Antigone* made a significant intervention in the discourse surrounding sovereignty and government. Both the text of the play and the historical context of the productions address the question of the limit of Haitian sovereignty when cultural sovereignty is unaddressed. Produced in Haiti and France, the performances highlight the fraught relationship between the sovereignty of these two countries. Through narrative and language, *Antigòn* challenges the hegemony of French culture in Haiti, thereby challenging a critical aspect of the foundation of the Haitian government. The reception of the productions in Haiti and later in France reveal the way Morisseau-Leroy's representation

of gender, religion, language, and sovereignty challenge the cultural sovereignty of Haiti and France.

Cultural sovereignty, a derivative of discourses of political sovereignty, refers to the authority given to practices and traditions of a society. Wallace Coffey and Rebecca Tsosie articulated cultural sovereignty as a means to rethink the relationship between Native American tribal nations and the United States Federal government.¹³⁷ Coffey and Tsosie explain that by using the Federal government's rather than Native American's cultural definitions of 'interests' and 'best practices,' the Federal government justified infringement on tribal sovereignty. Cultural sovereignty meaning the collection of norms, practices, and values influences the ability to establish governments and be recognized internationally as an independent nation. Krasner explains that a necessary condition of this interpretation of sovereignty is "the principle of non-intervention: One state does not have a right to intervene in the internal affairs of another."¹³⁸ As evidenced by the Native American tribes and Haitian history, the concept of non-interference becomes complicated by cultural definitions of 'best interest.' Although more economically and politically powerful nations maintain a monopoly on such definitions, cultural sovereignty offers a means for nations to participate in the on-going international debate. For Haiti, cultural sovereignty can mean recognizing an official culture as separate from French and having cultural practices and norms be considered and valued in national policy. Morisseau-Leroy's play proposes acknowledging Creole culture as part of Haitian cultural sovereignty. In the case of American tribal relations in the United States, cultural sovereignty is often narrated in terms of

¹³⁷ Wallace Coffey and Rebecca Tsosie, "Rethinking the Tribal Sovereignty Doctrine: Cultural Sovereignty and the Collective Future of Indian Nations." *Stanford Law & Policy Review*, 12 no. 2 (2001), 196-197.

¹³⁸ Stephen D. Krasner, "Sovereignty" *Foreign Policy* no. 122 (2001), 21.

‘origins,’ emphasizing the roots to ancient traditions.¹³⁹ Since ‘origins’ do little to articulate the complex creolized cultural practices in Haiti, Morisseau-Leroy takes an alternative approach. He relies upon relational equivalents to make claims for cultural authority. Relating Creole culture to Ancient Greek culture, the play claims cultural authority for Creole aesthetics, practices, and ideology. Ultimately, a claim for Creole authority becomes a challenge to French cultural dominance. The text and performances of *Antigòn* reveal the complexities and obstacles to proclaiming Creole culture as part of Haitian cultural sovereignty.

Cultural Sovereignty and the Theater

Morisseau-Leroy’s *Antigòn* represented a new style of theater. He addressed a different social milieu, who were typically socially and economically barred from attending the theater, through location and artistic form. The original production played only two nights at the Rex Theater in Port-au-Prince and then one night on the lawn in front of the Haitian Ministry of Agriculture building in July of 1953. This outdoor performance, uncommon for theater produced in Port-au-Prince, was specifically designed for Haitians who could typically not afford to attend the theater. The audience consisted primarily of monolingual Kreyol speakers, fulfilling Morisseau-Leroy’s dream of creating a popular theater. As an experimentation in form, Morisseau-Leroy’s *Antigòn* marked the beginning of a movement in Haitian theater later known as ‘Haitian New Theater,’ in which both form and content articulated prevailing societal concerns.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Kirby Brown, “Sovereignty,” *Western American Literature*, 53, no. 1 (2018), 81-89.

¹⁴⁰ Vèvè Clark considers the work of Morisseau-Leroy and Frank Fouché to be the innovators of this movement. See Clark, “When Womb Waters Break.”

Beginning in the 1950s through the 1980s, Haitian theater experienced a shift in which playwrights sought new theatrical forms to suit Haitian narratives.¹⁴¹ Around the 1920s, Haitian playwrights moved away from replicating early 19th century French dramatic themes to instead focusing on Haitian narratives but often continued to rely on French theatrical forms. The desire to validate Haitian culture developed among artists and intellectuals as a reaction to the US occupation of Haiti (1915-1934), spurring many Haitian elites to reconsider the role of culture in their understanding of Haiti as a sovereign nation. Historically, racism had functioned in Haitian society as a complex and unstable system indexed by class, gender, and cultural practice. Since the Revolution, Haitians have proudly called themselves a black nation, largely as a statement against slavery. However, this self-identification has not erased the prejudice against cultural practices labeled as African, the consolidation of wealth by a light-skinned elite, or the gendered representations of beauty linked to whiteness. Reactionary politics renewed discussions of race and culture but did not always result in a more liberated or less prejudiced society. Or as Martin Munro describes, “[d]uring the occupation, Haitian intellectual culture was reenergized in diverse and often contradictory ways, constructing a discourse of resistance that would finally imprison the nation in a rigid idea of cultural and racial authenticity that served also as the ideological justification for the worst excesses of the Duvalier regime.”¹⁴² Questions of sovereignty became ideologically inseparable from discussions of culture as political parties used cultural and racial discourses to consolidate power.

¹⁴¹ Clark, “When Womb Waters Break.”

¹⁴² Martin Munro. *Tropical Apocalypse: Haiti and the Caribbean End Times* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015), .35.

Theater served as a means to maintain or challenge cultural sovereignty. Nineteenth-century theater tended to reproduce racist politics and representations of French cultural dominance by replicating French theatrical form and theatrical tropes. The US occupation of Haiti vastly changed the political landscape, pitting elite Haitians against American racism. Earlier discrimination against lower-class Haitians that subtly supported by racist rhetoric was replaced with the overt racist treatment of all Haitians by US Marines regardless of class or cultural practice. The disruption of the nuanced Haitian racial and class hierarchies elicited a new era of open racial discourse. Faced with the racist treatment of US marines, some elite Haitians began to consider the hypocrisy of their own disdain for local Haitian culture.¹⁴³ Others needed to reformulate representations of race in terms of culture in order to differentiate themselves from the lower classes. These new perspectives among the elite fueled by anti-US sentiment produced a renewed interest in Haitian history and the formation of a Haitian nationalist movement.

Resistance to the US presence bolstered a new Haitian nationalism supported by artistic and cultural leaders anxious to celebrate the Haitian revolution and the grandeur of the Haitian people. Ironically, this new nationalism did not preclude the on-going promotion of French culture, only complicate it. Haitian nationalists promoted racial authenticity as “the tenets of the political ideology of the rising black middle class.”¹⁴⁴ Discourses of ‘cultural authenticity’ appropriated and reinterpreted racist essentialist theories circulating in Europe. Social and cultural theories promoted by Haitian nationalists survived “this period to fuel racialist

¹⁴³For further discussion of this topic see Renda, Dubois, and Munro: Renda, Mary A. *Taking Haiti: Military occupation and the culture of US imperialism, 1915-1940*. Univ of North Carolina Press, 2001., Dubois, *Haiti: the aftershocks of history*, Munro, *Tropical Apocalypse: Haiti and the Caribbean End Times*.

¹⁴⁴ Munro, *Tropical Apocalypse*. 36.

ideologies later on in this century.”¹⁴⁵ During and after the US occupation of Haiti, artists in particular playwrights sought out Haitian history as thematic inspiration. Morisseau-Leroy diverged slightly from the new nationalist convention of featuring Haitian narratives with French overtones or aesthetics by selecting a Greek instead of a French text as his inspiration. *Antigòn* celebrates Haitian Creole culture as crucial to cultural sovereignty without adopting the militant politics of nationalism popular following the Occupation.

Haitian New Theater embodied the change in narrative as well as a search for new Haitian derived theatrical forms. Morisseau-Leroy participated in this search, emphasizing the importance of language. Morisseau-Leroy was told that writing a full-length play in Kreyol could not be done due to the deficiencies of the language.¹⁴⁶ Not only did his play disprove this claim but it stresses the importance of Kreyol language not the Haitian nation in the play. In choosing *Antigone*, Morisseau-Leroy selects a narrative that is profoundly ambivalent about the value of the state. His text advocates for an alternative morality and authority, which through the form of the play, he suggests might be found in Kreyol culture and language.

Language features prominently in Haitian history as both a reflection of and a contributor to political and social conditions. The colony featured extreme luxury and depravity with language as one of the clear markers of the acute divides between inhabitants. Haitian Kreyòl, a language developed as consequence of cultural encounters (including forced migration and plantation slavery), suffered from the stigma of racist and classist divisions in the colony and later in Haiti as an independent nation. According to racist colonial rhetoric, Kreyòl was not a

¹⁴⁵ Dash, *Literature and Ideology in Haiti*, 73.

¹⁴⁶ Felix Morisseau-Leroy.” *Callaloo* 15, no. 3 (1992): 668.

separate language but instead an indication of slaves' inability to learn French.¹⁴⁷ As power dynamics changed during and after the Revolution, two different reactions to this prejudice emerged in Haiti: those who wanted to claim the former slaves' ability to use French and those who insisted on subverting previous discrimination by valorizing Kreyòl. In general, the agenda aimed at promoting French among the elite and within the government dominated the nineteenth century. Although the use of French became common practice among an elite class of Haitians, the language was not successfully spread to the entire population. Less than 10% of the population spoke French, yet it remained the only official language of Haiti until 1987. As a result, language remained a significant marker of class and barrier to social mobility.

The segregated use of languages helped to maintain class and cultural divisions, reproducing elite Haitians' identification with French culture and ideology. In contrast, Kreyòl speakers maintained many West African, French, and Indigenous traditions, practicing an inventive creolized culture. The language divisions reinforced the suppression and devaluation of local folk practices and arts, frequently reaffirming racist colonial structures in the postcolonial nation. As monolingual Kreyòl speakers, most Haitians were excluded from politics. Additionally, language fortified racial divides since the elite tended to be lighter skinned. During much of the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century both Haitians and French referred to Kreyòl as a patois, a derogatory term referring to illegitimate off-shoots of the French language.¹⁴⁸ Consequently, the promotion of Kreyòl as an artistic literary language by a member of the elite class was revolutionary. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon addresses the importance

¹⁴⁷Schieffelin, Bambi B., and Rachelle Charlier Doucet. "The 'Real' Haitian Creole: Ideology, Metalinguistics, and Orthographic Choice." *American Ethnologist* 21.1 (1994): 179.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 178.

of language in how individuals identify themselves. “A man who possesses a language possesses as an indirect consequence the world expressed and implied by this language...there is an extraordinary power in the possession of a language.”¹⁴⁹ For Morisseau-Leroy, who embraced Kreyòl from an elite perspective, the use of Kreyòl illustrated the power of the language to everyone.

Language is not the plays only contribution to Haitian New Theater. Featuring a minimalist set, contemporary Haitian styled costumes, Vodou references, and the Kreyòl language, the production represented a Haitian experience familiar to many in the audience. The characters were costumed in a contemporary 1950s Haitian style, which reflected the blend of hand-made clothing of lower-class Haitians and the cosmopolitan dress of elite Haitians. Creon’s white suit, tie, and military style jacket clearly suggested to Haitians that the character belonged to the elite bourgeois military dictators who had fought for control over Haiti for over a century, just as Filo’s tan pants and a button-down shirt marked him as a member of the petit-bourgeois class.¹⁵⁰ Iconic clothing identified the class and role of the characters for Haitian audiences. Tiresias’s loose fitted tunic and pants and djakout satchel highlighted his *paysan* origins, suggesting a wisdom in the traditional rural spiritual leader.¹⁵¹ The lower-class characters were barefoot, while the upper-class characters wore leather shoes. The women were dressed in loose fitted blouses with puffed-sleeves, full skirts belted at the waist, scarves covering their hair, and leather sandals: stereotypical Haitian folk dress, the type of clothing that is worn during Vodou

149 Fanon. *Black Skin White Masks*. 2

¹⁵⁰ Morisseau-Leroy created the character Filo, a servant of King Creon, who represented an additional socio-economic class of Haitians in the play.

¹⁵¹ Djakout is a messenger like cloth bag that rural farmers and laborers use. This was possibly a reference to Morisseau-Leroy’s recently published book of poetry, Djakout. Particularly because Morisseau-Leroy played the role of Tiresias.

celebrations. The clothing differentiated the characters by their positions in society, from military leader to peasant.

Minimalistic abstract set pieces rejected the trend of producing either ornate period pieces or naturalistic contemporary dramas. All of the action took place on a fixed set within a narrow plane. The set suggested a Haitian village by creating a bamboo fence and wooden canopy with a single bamboo wall suspended from the canopy. A table and chairs completed the simple scene. Atop the table sat an urn from which the voices of the spirits could be heard. The urn, which alludes to both Vodou practice and Ancient Greek pottery, reminds the audience of the parallels between the two societies. The realism used in the costumes and the symbolism of the set, which borrowed from the aesthetics of contemporary Haitian rural life, created a visual that could be recognized by different classes of Haitians. In photographs from the production in Paris, the actors stand within the same plane, bodies angled towards the audience. The images suggest the use of a presentational style of acting that would have been suitable for the open-air amphitheaters of Haiti and resonate with the image of the out-door Ancient Greek theaters.¹⁵² Although further evaluation of the acting is difficult from the limited photographs and descriptions, we know that many of the actors were professionals who performed frequently in Port-au-Prince in a variety of different types of productions. The set indicates, the performance highlighted the similarities of the two cultures by comparing Haitian objects and aesthetics with references to Ancient Greece.

Creole visual aesthetic and the use of language exemplify the key characteristic of Haitian New Theater but also the twentieth-century politics of ‘folk’ or ‘Indigenous’ culture in Haiti. Morisseau-Leroy followed the advice of Haitian anthropologist Jean Price-Mars. Price-

¹⁵² Roger Pic. 1959. *Antigone en créole, texte d'après Sophocle lot de photographies*. Paris (21, avenue du Maine 75014) ; Roger Pic.

Mars, the early voice of the Haitian nationalist movement whose field work about folktales from rural Haiti became influential, questioned the effects of the racist legacies of a colonial culture in a postcolonial society. Often considered to be Haiti's greatest intellectual, Price-Mars “truly defined the cultural awakening of the 1920s” with his work becoming “a touchstone for generations of Haitians.”¹⁵³ Many of the intellectuals of future generations considered themselves to be heirs of Price-Mars and his work. In particular, his argument that a Haitian desire to emulate French culture had produced a twisted self-effacement, preventing Haitians from appreciating their own cultural achievements, became a theme of Leftist politics. He describes the situation as a tragic paradox:

Par un paradoxe déconcertant, ce peuple qui a eu, sinon la plus belle, du moins la plus attachante, la plus émouvante histoire du monde – celle de la transplantation d'une race humaine sur un sol étranger dans les pires conditions biologiques – ce peuple éprouve une gêne à peine dissimulée, voire quelque honte, à entendre parler de son passé lointain.¹⁵⁴

(Through a disconcerting paradox, these people who have had, if not the finest, at least the most binding, the most moving history of the world – that of the transplantation of a human race to a foreign soil under the worst biological conditions – these people feel an embarrassment barely concealed, indeed shame, in hearing of their distant past.)

Predating many of the other monumental Caribbean Negritude publications, Price-Mars explicitly identifies the colonial system as producing a psychology of self-loathing and cultural disavowal of local practices within his contemporary postcolonial Haiti. In his foundational text *Ainsi parla l'oncle*, Price-Mars concludes that artists and academics must combat this destructive pattern and encourages Haitians to find inspiration in their own culture. Félix Morisseau-Léroy's

¹⁵³ Dubois. *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*, 289. For more on the influence of Price-Mars see Michael Dash and Martin Munro.

¹⁵⁴ Jean Price-Mars, *Ainsi parla l'oncle*. (Port-au-Prince : Bibliotheque Haitienne, 1928).

work responds to Price-Mars's call for cultural production, focusing on the linguistic conditions in Haiti. Morisseau-Léroy adapted Sophocles' play *Antigone* as a challenge to the prevailing opinions and representations of Kreyol as incomplete and unsophisticated.¹⁵⁵

Price-Mars used the phrase *Indigeniste* to refer to a movement that promoted Haitian Creole culture as a touchstone for a new Haitian identity, nationalism, and in some cases essentialist racist rhetoric.¹⁵⁶ *Indigenistes* such as Price-Mars revived discussions of local history and supported the promotion of local cultural production, leading to the start of new political and cultural agendas. The words of Price-Mars became an informal doctrine for this movement, encouraging intellectual interest in local Haitian culture as well as strengthening international intellectual/artistic partnerships.¹⁵⁷ Forging relationships with the burgeoning *Négritude* movement and Harlem Renaissance, the *Indigenistes* considered themselves to be creating a Haitian Renaissance. Morisseau-Léroy, who came of age as an artist during the beginning of this movement, was prompted by his contemporaries to consider art within both a local and transnational framework. During the occupation of Haiti, he attended an elite high school in Jacmel, a town known for its history of activism, and organized protests against the Americans. As with many of his Haitian contemporaries, Morisseau-Léroy avidly followed international as well as local intellectuals, specifically the work of Price-Mars, which led to participation in the Leftist Nationalist movements and attending Columbia University.

¹⁵⁵ Most plays performed in Haiti during the 19th and early 20th century were written and performed in French with the exception of some burlesque comedies. See Vèvè Clark for more information. Clark. "When Womb Waters Break," 90.

¹⁵⁶ J. Dash. *Literature and Ideology in Haiti, 1915-1961*. 73.

¹⁵⁷ David Nicholls explains how the *Noiriste*, which is largely based on the work of Jean Price-Mars, and *Négritude* movement influenced Haitian politics in the 1930s and 40s; Nicholls, David. "Ideology and Political Protest in Haiti, 1930-46." *Journal of Contemporary History* 9.4 (1974): 4. Print.

Morisseau-Leroy's training, studying in Haiti and then the United States, not France, reflects the paradigm shift for many elite Haitians, in which popular discourse no longer positioned Haiti in relation to France but now reflected a growing relationship with the United States. Although in many cases this relationship emphasized the need to regain sovereignty from the US, in some cases the relationship also encouraged new partnerships. In particular, Haitians found solidarity with many of the artists and intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance. Such as Morisseau-Leroy who attended Columbia University, where he met Langston Hughes and Paul Robeson.¹⁵⁸ These friendships contributed to a growing dialogue between Haitian Leftists and the intellectuals and artists of the New York Harlem Renaissance. Langston Hughes who had visited Haiti during the US occupation shared Morisseau-Leroy's critic of Haitian elites whom he believed perpetuated economic disparity within Haiti and lack of public infrastructure which left Haiti vulnerable to occupying forces. Although initially this critique of the elite distanced Hughes and many Haitian intellectuals, as the Indigeniste movement gained momentum, perspectives such as Hughes's became more mainstream. Haitian writers such as Jean Price-Mars and René Piquoin published reviews and translations of Hughes' work in the Haitian literary journal *La Relève*, featuring Hughes' discussions of race, if not his Marxist politics.¹⁵⁹ Morisseau-Leroy insisted on the importance of the Harlem Renaissance to Haitians in his novel *Récolte*, stating "They knew by heart the verses of Langston Hughes translated by René Piquoin."¹⁶⁰ The influence of transatlantic relationships appears throughout Morisseau-Leroy's

¹⁵⁸Judy Cantor. "The Voice of Haiti." (Miami New Times, May 2 1996).

¹⁵⁹J. Dash. *Haiti and the United States*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997). 69.

¹⁶⁰ Felix Morisseau-Leroy, *Récolte* (Port-au-Prince: Haitiennes, 1946) 30.

work. These new intellectual coalitions drove Haitian politics, inspiring theatrical works like *Antigòn*.

Opposition to the US occupation, rather than shared interpretation of cultural, economic, and political conditions in Haiti, served as the strongest unifier, rallying the Marxists and Indigenists (later noiristes).¹⁶¹ In terms of literature and art, this unification was even more tenuous. “If they shared any common feature, it was the dream of a polyvalent literary culture inherited from Indigenism. The Marxists saw themselves as vanguard of a proletarian culture as opposed to the ‘alienated elitist artist’.”¹⁶² The writer and activist Jacques Roumain and Max Hudicourt led the Haitian Left, encouraging discussions of racial and class oppressions and class consciousness, all the while Roumain maintained relationships with intellectuals and the communist party in New York. The themes of Hughes' work mirrored the earlier work of Jean Price-Mars who had continually lectured on the necessity of acknowledging and appreciating Haitian culture as a means to promote political sovereignty. Price-Mars considered the validation of indigenous culture (if not Marxist class consciousness) to be necessary for uniting Haitians against US imperialism. In contrast, the notable statesman Dantès Bellegarde championed a Haitian version of liberal French culture in which sovereignty depended upon a sort of French republicanism. Viewing the support of French liberal intelligentsia as the solution to the US occupation, Bellegarde worked within more mainstream international circles. For Bellegarde, the Francophone and Roman Catholic Haiti, which was more of an imagined potential rather than an empirical reality, would be best able to withstand US political and

¹⁶¹ Indigenism and Noirism were two groups with roots in literature that promoted an idea of a Haitian identity. Indigenism developed first in the 1920s. As an off-shoot of Indigenism, Noirism appeared very similar but in practice was more associated with radical figures that were willing to use violence to achieve their goals.

¹⁶² Dash. *Literature and Ideology in Haiti*, 93.

economic imperialism.¹⁶³ In all of these cases, the conditions of Haitian sovereignty were understood as inseparable from questions and conditions of culture. Attacks found in literary/political accused the Americans occupiers, the Haitian elite, and the Catholic Church “for collaborating in cultural imperialism or what was termed *l’occupation de la pensée*.”¹⁶⁴ For the most, political sovereignty necessitated Haitian emancipation from mainstream American and in many cases European ideology. The mutual interest in questions of sovereignty among those who strove for the promotion of different cultural landscapes in Haiti is evidenced in the variation of responses to Morisseau-Leroy’s work.

Within this context of political conflict, Indigensime and Noirisme, the new populist political ideology that argued that the elite employed European bourgeois traditions of republican democracy to mask the oppression of the majority of Haitians and local Kreyòl culture. The movement proposed using Haitian folk traditions as a form of resistance.¹⁶⁵ Unlike the Negritude movement that emphasized the universality of experience of the African Diaspora, noirisme focused on Haitian history and the Haitian experience, framing the discussion of race in terms of blacks and mulâtres, and celebrating Kreyòl culture and Vodou. However, by the 1940s noirisme had expanded into a large-scale political movement. Although the 1940s and early 1950s was a period of revived nationalism and comparative peace for the Haiti, this period was not without tumult. Along with the Haitian marxists, noiristes lead the overthrow of the US-backed President Lescot. This presidency, as most regimes since the US occupation, relied heavily on military rule to maintain control. The authoritarian violence in the Antigone narrative resonated with the

¹⁶³Patrick D Bellegarde-Smith. "Dantes Bellegarde and Pan-Africanism." *Phylon* (1960-) 42, no. 3 (1981): 233-44.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., 78.

¹⁶⁵Additionally, the nationalist movement was formed as an off-shoot of the noiriste movement. The nationalist emphasized Haiti over Africa; Nicholls, “Ideology and Political Protest in Haiti,” 9.

conditions in rural Haiti under Lescot. After the US occupation, the use of the military as a police force, in particular military aggression in rural areas against Haitian citizens, became normalized by subsequent presidents.

A successful display of political capital, the removal of Lescot, did not produce the results many of the Leftists had hoped. Their candidates did not get elected into office. Nevertheless, they were able to promote their agenda, influencing the progressive social policies of President Dumarsais Estimé. The complexities of the problems facing Haiti along with crippling debt hindered the success of most of these policies. Failed policies once again left the country vulnerable to military coups and dictatorships, leading to the infamous Duvalier dictatorship (1957-1971). The use of the military as a tool to police citizens rather than as a force that protects citizens from international aggression became a central tenant of Haitian sovereignty. In his play, Morisseau-Leroy not only questions the repeated use of violence by the government but also the role of the citizen in responding or resisting to this violence. *Antigòn* underscores the normalization of violence in Haiti. Overall, the vast complex political response to the US occupation that produced unresolved conflicts in the Haitian government generated more clear success in the realm of literature and art.

Through changes in form and the incorporation of folk culture, the play featured women in a manner that was not typically seen in earlier Haitian plays. The focus on Haitian women was a key element of the 'Haitian New Theater' movement. Morisseau-Leroy's incorporation of Haitian culture into the narrative reflected a derivation of an on-going trend in Haitian theater. Although the earlier Haitian theater explored nationalist themes, women and questions of gender were typically ignored in these productions.

The play blends Sophocles' text with Haitian themes and while most of the characters are unchanged in the adaptation, the slight modifications directly highlight Morisseau-Leroy's insertion and interpretation of Haitian culture adds an emphasis on Creole culture and a Feminist reading of the narrative. For example, in his adaptation, Antigone is the younger rather than older sister of Ismene, which emphasizes the role of youth in the history of Haitian rebellion. Or rather than use a chorus to narrate events and interact with characters, Morisseau-Leroy uses Vodou spirits.¹⁶⁶ The presence of the spirits foregrounds the importance of Vodou in Haitian culture. Likewise, in order to facilitate the interaction between Creon and the spirits, Morisseau-Leroy invented Marenn, a priestess godmother for Antigone and Ismene. This focus on women's participation in folk culture differs from the patriarchal celebrations of Haitian nationalism emphasized in the majority of drama from the 1920s, 30s and 40s.¹⁶⁷ Although the nationalism from the early twentieth century lead to an explosion of new artistic works, the ideology and enthusiasm did not consistently translate into theater that represented the contemporary experience of many Haitians nor was it often produced for the consumption of most Haitians. Frequently Haitian nationalists promoted images of the 'Black Jacobins' while turning a blind eye to the rich folk culture present throughout Haiti. Morisseau-Leroy insists on the importance of Creole culture and claims it for women.

Unfortunately, in almost all of these movements including the arts, discussions of gender discrimination were completely absent. The image of military heroism, despite the misuse of military force, served as the ultimate depiction of Haitian identity for many of the new nationalist

¹⁶⁶ Morisseau-Leroy argued that gods and spirits being the creation of a collective of men were as ideally suited to voicing the community as a chorus. See "Morisseau-Leroy." *Callaloo*, 668.

¹⁶⁷ J Dash, *Literature and Ideology in Haiti, 1915-1961* (Totowa N.J.: Barnes & Noble Books, 1981).

movements. In most cases, binary models of gender relationships prevailed in the Haitian nationalist discourses. In some cases, the nationalist ignored gender all together. Discourses referred to the masculine as if it were the universal human. Nineteenth century racial theories that used male and female metaphors to establish racial hierarchies persisted. For Haitian Indigenists and later Noirists, undoing racial theories meant affirming masculine qualities of Haitian racial categories, not subverting sexism.¹⁶⁸ The Nationalist movements that promoted artistic creativity and innovation as a means to empower Haitian sovereignty did not extend this liberal agenda to include gender equality. During the 1930s and 1940s, playwrights repeated stories of the revolutionary heroes such as Toussaint Louverture and Henri Christophe. Plays and novels focused on representations of powerful masculine historical figures. Even in novels that actually feature women and highlight rural life such as *Gouverneurs de la rosée*, the male characters drive the action. Women's voices are overshadowed or silenced. Although several of the female characters seem superficially to embody the idea of 'poto mitan' a concept that roughly translates to pillar of the community, the women's strength and importance lies in their voicing and enacting the plans of male characters. The female characters are vehicles for the male characters rather than agents in their own rite. In contrast, *Antigone* portrays women actively propelling the narrative through their debates and confrontation with the state. Morisseau-Leroy's choice of featuring a female protagonist was uncommon but also tempered by his use of a famous text.

Referencing twentieth-century examples of Haitian military authoritarianism, creole culture, and Haitian religious practice, *Antigòn* engages with a specifically Haitian aesthetic as well as a classical Greek narrative. This forging of Haiti and Greece (or maybe more accurately

¹⁶⁸ Dash. *Haiti and the United States*. 3.

Haitian and iconic neoclassical European traditions) pushed for a reevaluation of Haiti on the international stage, staking claims of legitimacy on the weight of Classic Greek culture and making arguments for equivalence between the two cultures. Morisseau-Leroy's *Antigone* identifies the cosmology of Vodou with Greek deities in order to contend that Vodou spirits are no more 'primitive' than the celebrated ancient Greek gods. Part of a larger discussion of the value of Haitian folk culture, the text and later the production reveal the complex on-going negotiation between artists from and advocates for the African diaspora and Euro/American hegemonic cultural production. In choosing the story of Antigone, Morisseau-Leroy makes a claim that Haitian culture is of equal value, sophistication, and beauty as ancient Greek culture.

The push for artistic innovation drew attention to French and later Haitian and West African source material, but few Haitians professed interest in replicating Ancient Greek or other European sources. Haitian Intellectuals frequently framed discussions of artistic form as a binary between French and African models. Nevertheless, the international relationships formed between artists and intellectuals during the first half of the twentieth century did at times challenge this dichotomy. In his analysis of Haitian folk culture, Price-Mars compares Haiti to many past societies including Ancient Greece, at times playing into familiar discourses of 'primitivism.'¹⁶⁹ As Marianna Torgovnick explains, "[E]thnographers tend to compare the societies they study to Western culture and to other societies that have been the object of ethnographic inquires; even here a generalized primitive is often indirectly invoked as a way of understanding the special qualities of the group at hand."¹⁷⁰ Price-Mars follows this model, relying upon Western culture as a point of reference. Meanwhile, in trying to elevate rural folk

¹⁶⁹ Price-Mars. *Ainsi parla l'oncle*.

¹⁷⁰ Marianna Torgovnick. *Gone Primitive*. (University of Chicago Press, 1990) 22.

culture, he “carefully glossed over the misery and disastrous poverty of rural communities”¹⁷¹ in favor of creating an attractive somewhat nostalgic portrayal of these communities. His representation of rural Haitian life draws from a sort of “racial mystique.”¹⁷² By romanticizing many of the conditions in rural life, Price-Mars links Haiti to other past and contemporary cultures. ‘Primitive’ becomes a label that explains this equivalence between societies.

...[T]he same causes have produced the same effects everywhere on the planet. Love, Hunger, and Fear have given rise to the same fables in the ardent imagination of men – whether they live in the tangled brushwood of the Sudan, whether they appeared in olden times on the hills where the Acropolis arose or on the shores of the Tiber where the City of the Seven Hills was built. And this is why the modern-day African furnishes the sociologist with the elements which allow him to ascertain the psychology of primitive man. The constitution of the family is for him, above all, an act of faith, a religious initiation ceremony. So it was in ancient Greece and Rome, so it is in certain tribes of the Sudan, of Dahomey, of the Congo save for the inevitable variants engendered by the circumstances and necessities of the physical milieu.¹⁷³

This is one of several references to Greek and Roman civilizations, in which Price-Mars links African and through African, Haitian, cultural practices to Antiquities. Despite his state aim for a reevaluation of Haitian culture, he replicates some of the classist and racist attitudes found in nineteenth and twentieth century anthropology. Consequently, his work highlights the difficulty of ethnographic work in Haiti even when done by fellow Haitians. Furthermore, Price-Mars’s goal of inspiring appreciation (or appropriation) of folk culture did not always have the desired effect of producing more unified communities. Reproducing folk culture in French and in elite forums far removed from the practitioners of the culture, frequently commoditized and eroticized these

¹⁷¹ Dash. *Literature and Ideology in Haiti*, 100.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁷³ Price-Mars. *So Spoke the Uncle*. 205.

practices and aesthetics yielding benefits only to a small elite population. *Antigòn* served as an exception to this trend, reaching a wider Kreyòl speaking audience.¹⁷⁴

Education was a primary concern for Morisseau-Leroy who distanced himself from the violent political radicalists by emphasizing the use of Kreyòl in cultural production and public schools. As the General Director of Urban Education in Port-au-Prince, he attempted to introduce Kreyòl into Haitian primary and secondary schools, which had taught exclusively in French and severely reprimanded students who were caught speaking Kreyòl.¹⁷⁵ He began writing for *Le Matin*¹⁷⁶ about the importance of Kreyòl and in 1953 published a book of poetry in Kreyòl, entitled *Djakout*.¹⁷⁷ As opposed to many early colonial examples of Kreyòl writing in Haiti, Morisseau-Leroy did not attempt to translate French style and poetic structure into Kreyòl; instead he incorporated Kreyòl phrasing found in songs and proverbs.¹⁷⁸ Within the national context of competing narratives of race and culture, Morisseau-Leroy chose to focus his attention on language, adapting *Antigone* to celebrate the Kreyòl language.¹⁷⁹ Although he identified his primary goal as the promotion of Kreyòl, in choosing Sophocles' *Antigone* Morisseau-Leroy presents relevant political critiques of sovereignty under the guise of simply producing a

¹⁷⁴ As the Minister of Education, Morisseau-Leroy arranged for his troupe to tour Haiti, offering free performances in schools.

¹⁷⁵ Kreyòl was not an official language until 1987 and not incorporated into school curriculums until 1987. See, Bambi B Schieffelin and Rachelle Charlier Doucet, "The 'Real' Haitian Creole: Ideology, Metalinguistics, and Orthographic Choice" *American Ethnologist* 21 no. 1 (1994), 178.

¹⁷⁶ *Le Matin* was liberal newspaper based out of Port-au-Prince Haiti.

¹⁷⁷ *Djakout* is the name of a Haitian satchel commonly used by peasants, an iconic accessory of Haitian peasants

¹⁷⁸ Lang, George. "A Primer of Haitian Literature in 'Kreyòl.'" *Research in African Literatures* 35.2 (2004): 134. Print.

¹⁷⁹ Morisseau-Leroy advocated the concept of Haitianité as an alternative to the competing cultural/racial identities such as Black, French, and African. For Morisseau-Leroy Haitianité or Haitianess referred to the experience of living in Haiti rather than having a specific ethnic or racial identity.

canonical Euro/American play. Through his choice of text, Morisseau-Leroy addressed multiple audiences on multiple fronts.¹⁸⁰

Morisseau-Leroy claimed to write *Antigone* to challenge prevailing stigma surrounding Kreyòl, however, his choice also presented women as capable of addressing Haitian sovereignty.¹⁸¹ Like language, gender has a complicated history in Haiti. Although traditions of African matriarchal systems do exist in Haiti, particularly in rural communities, this has not translated into representation in the government. Women did not win suffrage until 1950 or full citizenship under the law until 1979.¹⁸² Though Vodou women gained prestige and authority but this authority was not acknowledged by governments. Influence in the domestic sphere and forced financial independence due to hardship did not translate into recognized political power, partly because of the division between ‘Kreyòl’ and ‘French’ culture. Gender discrimination in Haiti replayed patterns begun during the colonial era. A severe gender gap existed in the French colony. Few French women immigrated to Saint Domingue and slave holders generally preferred male slaves, so fewer female slaves were brought to the island. The slave women that did inhabit the island were frequently brutally sexually abused by slave holders. In the late eighteenth century when international conflicts and pressures from abolitionists threatened the continuation of the slave trade, planters looked to long ignored reproduction. For many reasons including the

180 The actress who first played *Antigone*, Odette Weiner, performed had just finished performing *Antigone* in Anouilh’s adaptation at the same Rex Theater in Port-au-Prince. Morisseau-Leroys work was not staged in a vacuum but in a thriving theater scene. However, Morisseau-Leroy makes the point, which is supported in his text, that his play an adaptation of Sophocles’ and no other version of *Antigone*. This only reinforces Morisseau-Leroy’s aim to subvert the dominance of French culture. Clark, “When Womb Waters Break”; Haiti Sun 09.18.1953

181 Mélissa Simard. “Le Théâtre Populaire Selon Franck Fouché : Éclatement Dramaturgique et Résistance Haïtienne.” *Journal of Haitian Studies* 18.2 (2012): 200.

182 Married women were considered minors per the law until 1979. See Carolle Charles. "Feminist Action and Research in Haiti."

harsh conditions, the birth rate among the slave population was extremely low. Plantation owners blamed slave women for the low fertility rate and high infant mortality rate. The racist attacks on slave women relied upon misogynistic European understanding of conception and pregnancy. “Anxieties over the effects that a mother’s emotions and lifestyle had on her fetus had a long history and emerged from the debate over the power of the maternal imagination. Since the Renaissance, scholars had asserted that the creation of monsters resulted from the violent desires, whims, and fancies that mothers experienced during conception and pregnancy.”¹⁸³ The infant mortality rate was explained by slave women’s lack of maternal qualities. All of these conditions lead to a hostile environment for women and an ideology that understood women as immoral, unnatural and hyper-sexualized. Although French colonial perspectives were not the only factors that shaped the understandings of gender in Haiti, they were influential in women’s relationship to civil society. During the brief period in Saint-Domingue when slavery was abolished under colonial rule, former slaves were paid wages as sharecroppers. Women protested for being paid only two-thirds the wage of male coworkers. To combat this protest, the French state produced misogynistic rhetoric that attempted to convince male workers of the threat to their masculinity.¹⁸⁴ The exclusion of women became standard for civil practices of Saint Domingue and later Haiti.

Antigòn challenges these practices by representing both women and spheres that women typically inhabit as powerful. In making claims of the legitimacy for Kreyòl, the play presents women as agents of language and culture. The character Antigone actively uses language to

¹⁸³ Karol K Weaver. "'She Crushed The Child's Fragile Skull': Disease, Infanticide, and Enslaved Women in Eighteenth-Century Saint-Domingue." *French Colonial History* 5 (2004): 102.

¹⁸⁴ Charles. "Gender and Politics in Contemporary Haiti," 138.

confront and change to her world order. Morisseau-Leroy depicts a female character that not only resists being silenced but resists conforming to codes of masculinity in order to access power. Due to colonial and postcolonial gender discrimination, there is a striking absence of women's voices represented in Haitian literature. By writing *Antigone*, Morisseau-Leroy portrays women not as objects of desire but as desiring agents who can both affect and be affected by the state.

Likely due to the historical relationship with colonial power structures, language is often represented as gendered as well as related to class in Haiti. French, the language of the elite, has often been associated with political and cultural power as well as masculinity. Paternalistic representations of the statesman and military hero à la Toussaint, promote French discourse and rhetoric as the tool of the powerful. In this binary model, Kreyòl signifies the primitive, infantile, and feminine opposite of French. However, an alternative model of linguistic relationships exists. Kreyòl is simultaneously associated with the powerful masculine figure of the Maroon who was able to defeat the French (and later stand up to the US marines) armed with wit, creativity, and physical strength. In both of these models, the power of the language is associated with representations of Haitian masculinity.

Femininity and its relationship to linguistic power are left out of the discourse. Consequently, this is one reason that when artists and activists discuss Haitian women, there has been a tendency in recent years to focus on silence. Myriam Chancy describes the repeated silencing of Haitian women as a lacuna, an articulation of the woman's experience in terms of alienation or unknowability. Chancy labels this experience of marginalization as "culture-lacune." The act of writing silence creates a sort of paradox. Chancy describes this process in terms of her own experiences:

I have survived annihilation, both cultural and personal, by clinging to the vestiges of creole that lie dormant in my mind and by preserving a sense of self in an area

of my consciousness that seems untranslatable. Where I once thought of myself as having no identity, or as having one filled with holes, with what in French are referred to as lacunes, I have come to understand myself as operating out of a culture-lacune.¹⁸⁵

The translation of experience and identity becomes complex when women are excluded from the symbolic power of language. Silencing in Haiti is a concept that has been used in many different contexts, not exclusively to describe the condition of women. Yet, in terms of women, this idea illustrates the struggles for a voice within multiple realms: civil, domestic, literary, artistic, and international. For this reason, the representation of Antigone who accesses political, domestic and spiritual power through the use of language offers an atypical representation of Haitian women for the time.

Antigòn: the text

Several devices in the text foreground questions of morality and sovereignty: the style and quality of the speech, the addition of a prologue, the absence of the chorus, and the representation of Vodou. The tone and manner of Antigone's lines demonstrate the discourse surrounding sovereignty and morality. In the play, Antigone illustrates and exercises her power through performative language. Although the act of burying her brother (which in this case is done with magic) serves as the act of defiance, this occurs off stage. The enunciation of rebellion, not the burying, is the most meaningful act of defiance. Had Antigone's only goal been to bury her brother, she could have used her magic to do so anonymously in the logic of this dramatic world. Instead, Antigone announces her intentions to her sister, godmother, and eventually Creon. The performative declarations reinforce the agency of her character. As the

¹⁸⁵ Chancy. *Framing Silence*, 16.

curtain opens to the first lines of the play, there is nothing circumspect about Antigone's language. She declares “Mwen di w non!”(I tell you no!)¹⁸⁶ Antigone’s speech discursively performs her defiance but maybe more significantly, her speech acts define her as a political agent. Given that Antigone speaks within a context of silencing women, in which women are legally minors under the law, her transgressive speech acts position her as a member of civil society whether she was originally acknowledged under the law or not.¹⁸⁷ Through performative speech she embodies a subject position typically denied her by the legal and cultural restrictions in Haiti. The succinct and direct style of dialogue that mirrors Kreyòl speech patterns emphasizes the performative quality of Antigone’s lines. For the most part, her lines are not descriptive. She does not retell past events or elaborate on her emotional state. Antigone’s speech is active: a series of acts of defiance. The eloquence and power of her speech do not rely upon complex syntax or elevated vocabulary. Antigone uses ‘simple’ language that highlights her intent and act of speaking up.

Antigone does not admit indecision or shy away from taking responsibility for her actions. Even as she describes the burial of her brother, she avoids lengthy explanations. By not extensively justifying her actions, she again defies Creon. Her clipped responses to his questioning serve as a critique of his sovereignty, a refusal to submit to his authority. When directly confronted by Creon with the information that she had been seen burying her brother, Antigone’s response is precise and non-apologetic.

Wa Kreyon: Li di ou ale antere Polinis.

Antigòn: Se sa l wè.

¹⁸⁶Morisseau-Leroy, Felix. *Antigòn*. 11. My translation.

¹⁸⁷ Until 1979 married women in Haiti had the same legal rights as minors. Property rights were relinquished to a woman’s husband. See Charles. “Feminist Action and Research in Haiti.”

Wa Kreyon: Ou pa di se pa ou?

Antigòn: Se pa okenn lòt moun.

Wa Kreyon: Pale yon jan pou m konprann.

Antigòn: Mwen fè sa m te dwe fè.

(Wa Kreyon: He claims that you buried Polinis.

Antigòn: That is what he saw.

Wa Kreyon: You do not deny it?

Antigòn: It was no other person.

Wa Kreyon: Speak so I may understand.

Antigòn: I do what I must do.)¹⁸⁸

In this scene, Antigone not only claims her past transgressions but warns of further actions, offering the explanation: “I do what I must do.” The lack of subtlety employed in Antigone’s language, in addition to eliminating the loquacious debates found in the original, represents an important aspect of Kreyòl. In Kreyòl there is a common proverb “Kreyòl pale, Kreyòl konprann.” Roughly translated, this proverb addresses the Haitian popular wisdom that Kreyòl is a clear language meaning that by speaking in Kreyòl Haitians articulate ideas in a straightforward and unambiguous manner. This belief references a history of French speakers who have used French to trick and take advantage of the majority of Kreyòl speakers.¹⁸⁹ The many false cognates with Kreyòl and the nuance in French complicate and sometimes inhibit communication between French and Kreyòl speakers. Historically, Francophone elites have

¹⁸⁸Morisseau-Leroy. *Antigòn*. 24.

¹⁸⁹This belief held by many Kreyòl speakers is complicated by the fact that the majority of lower-class Haitians spoke limited or no French. Elite Haitians in positions of political power frequently exploited this linguistic barrier.

benefited from this fraught communication to perpetuate abuses of power. Although the play is entirely written in Kreyòl, it alludes to this communication dynamic by presenting two styles of speech: clear versus complicated and cryptic. Antigone epitomizes the ideology behind the proverb by using 'straightforward' Kreyòl. Throughout the play, her dialogue is succinct. Not until after her death, does she offer a lengthy monologue. Her concise lines do not diminish the strength of her character or argument but instead highlight her performance of 'honest talk' in the play. By choosing to clearly articulate her interests and actions, Antigone exhibits honesty and trustworthiness that is considered noble and moral in Kreyòl culture. Her speech patterns mark her as the obvious protagonist in the play. In contrast, Creon repeatedly performs lengthy monologues about his decisions and the consequences of his actions, indicating within this Haitian Kreyòl aesthetic the moral ambiguity of his actions.

From the very beginning, the text raises the subject of morality in relation to sovereignty through the use of a prologue. Anticipating the critique that Antigone does not relate to Haiti, the prologue contextualizes the narrative and justifies the production. Before the actors enter the stage, a narrator introduces the play, outlining each event that will come to pass, eliminating any suspense for spectators unfamiliar with Antigone. The narrator reminds the audience of Oedipus's legacy and the familial relationships of all the characters, managing to situate the narrative, contextualize the mythology for audiences unfamiliar with Greek theater without alienating those well versed in canonical European theater. Repeating the phrase "lontan lontan" which means both past and distance in Kreyòl, the narrator states that Antigone is an old story that repeats throughout the ages in all countries and all languages. The narrator offers a context and a justification for this adaptation by promising the audience a commonality between Haitians and the Greeks. He insists that the narrative tells of life, death, fate, and chance as experience by

everyone. By explicitly linking this adaptation to the past and a concept of universal humanity, the narrator makes the claim that the precarity and complexity of Haitian sovereignty is not due to Haitian exceptionalism.¹⁹⁰ Instead, the text proposes abusive authority and violence are and have been universal problems. Next, the narrator qualifies this claim of presenting a universal narrative by disavowing any role in the play. Claiming no responsibility for the actions of the characters, he insists this is not really his story but a repeated ‘human’ narrative that will reappear every time an Antigone says no to a Creon. “M pa reskonsab sa ki rive yo./ M kou nou tout la a./M prale rete gade yo./ M prale chita tande yo./ Men Antigon nou an.”¹⁹¹ By distancing himself from the plot, the narrator and effectively Morisseau-Leroy (who played the narrator in both the 1953 and 1959 productions) offers a model of resistance rather than a singular narration of it. Moreover, the model suggests that questions of sovereignty are not divorced from the past. Consequently, Morisseau-Leroy encourages the audience to place Antigone’s line “I tell you NO!” within the context of past revolutions and acts of resistance. At the same time that this insistence on universalism connects Haitian sovereignty to universal discourses, it highlights the unfinished nature of the Haitian revolution. Succinctly, this introduction summarizes the story of Antigone, offers commentary on the characters' actions, and links Haitian sovereignty and politics to universal discourses and global histories. Furthermore, Morisseau-Leroy toys with these different audience expectations by critiquing the narrative of exceptionalism and celebrating Haitian Kreyòl, meanwhile ironically insisting that he has no political agenda.

¹⁹⁰ Haitian exceptionalism is a narrative that began after the Haitian revolution that has continued to the present day that has defined Haiti as unexplainable and outside conventions. This narrative hides the many ways that Haiti is a product of historical and global circumstances. Although occasionally used to celebrate the revolution, more frequently, this narrative repeats racist ideology to obscure the blame (Euro/American and Haiti’s) for the conditions in Haiti. See: Nadège T Clitandre. "Haitian Exceptionalism in the Caribbean and the Project of Rebuilding Haiti." *Journal of Haitian Studies* 17, no. 2 (2011): 146-53. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41715438>.

¹⁹¹ Morisseau-Leroy. *Antigòn*. 9.

Although Morisseau-Leroy claims in his prologue to not have a moral agenda, cultural references in the text hint at ethical and moral critiques. Specifically, the absence of the chorus underscores many of the cultural references. Without a chorus, the text does not provide a cohesive concrete ‘voice of the community’ to process the action of the play. The interpretation of many events and the reaction of ‘the public,’ originally provided by the chorus, are instead represented through contextual and aesthetic clues. Both Antigone and Creon claim the support of the community and her deceased brothers. Without the voice of the chorus, their arguments rely on their own personal testimony. Antigone admits that we will only know what we believe. In this way, (and without the confirm/contradict voice of the chorus) Antigone proposes the idea of a relative truth that corresponds to a person’s position and perception, reflecting a conventional Haitian epistemology.

The theme of relativity appears in multiple instances throughout the play. Even in her conflict with Creon, Antigone refuses to claim her reality as the only ‘truth.’ Creon demands an explanation of her argument, but Antigone responds, “Sa pou m esplike a? Nanpwen anyen pou m esplike. Mwen antere Polinis, se tout. Ou mèt touye m.” (It is for me to explain? There is nothing for me to explain. I buried Polinis, that is all. You must kill me.) In spite of this potentially balanced argument, analyzing the text in the larger Haitian cultural context, the presentation of the dialogue clearly favors Antigone’s position. In the Vodou religion, morality like ‘truth’ is subjective and depends heavily on the conditions of the situation and the individual. Antigone showcases her wisdom when she recognizes that both she and Creon are bound by circumstances. She insists that morality is not as simple as following or disobeying the law. This flexible representation of morality corresponds to Haiti's complex history in which the demands of the government were not always in line with the needs of the majority of the Haitian people.

With the Haitian government and the Catholic Church proposing moral standards that in many cases were not compatible with the realities for most people, many Haitians approach morality as flexible and conditional rather than absolute.¹⁹² For Antigone this representation of morality manifests in her approach to disobeying the law and the patriarch of her family. Her actions are excused because of extenuating circumstances: the need to bury her brother and the tyranny of her uncle.

In addition to removing the communal reaction, the omission of the chorus eliminates much of the gendered language, which in Sophocles's text directly associates Antigone's final actions with masculinity. Judith Butler describes this gendered language in Sophocles's play as appearing "to assume the form of a certain masculine sovereignty, a manhood that cannot be shared, which requires that its other be both feminine and inferior."¹⁹³ She understands the confrontation between Antigone and Creon as a binary that results in the manning/unmanning of the two subjects. Rather than have a chorus champion Antigone, the argument for Antigone's stance as ethically superior is suggested through her style of language as well as her insistence on the importance of familial relationships, which resonates in a culture that prioritizes the family over the individual.¹⁹⁴ The characters instead of the chorus debate the opinion of the community, opening up the possibility for moral relativity. In the case of Morisseau-Leroy's adaptation, the context of moral relativity, lack of chorus, and the particular relation with Kreyòl to gender present opportunities to resist a strict binary representation of gender. Throughout the dialogue

¹⁹² For a more in-depth explanation of the representation and function of morality in Vodou see: Claudine Michel. "Women's Moral and Spiritual Leadership in Haitian Vodou: The Voice of Mama Lola and Karen McCarthy Brown." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 17, no. 2 (2001): 61-87. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25002412>.

¹⁹³ Judith Butler. *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between life and death*. (Columbia University Press, 2002), 9.

¹⁹⁴ Charles. "Gender and Politics in Contemporary Haiti."

between Antigone and Creon, the lack of gendered pronouns opens rather than forecloses the depiction of gender. Haitian Kreyòl does not distinguish between he/she, using instead the pronoun 'li' in all cases. Nouns and articles are not gendered, meaning that unless a text explicitly distinguishes between man/woman, the role of gender in language is more ambiguous and contextual in Kreyòl. Consequently, in terms of the symbolic, written language does not primarily define the representations of gender in Haitian Kreyòl culture. The language represents gender contextually rather than explicitly through grammar. Although gendered pronouns and grammar do not structure Haitian Kreyòl, their absence does not relieve the language or culture of gender discrimination. For example, at the end of the play after Antigone has withstood all critiques and suffered death, she is rewarded by becoming a bride. Her compensation for everything that she has sacrificed is a return to the heteronormative structure. The flexibility of the representation of gender in Haitian Kreyòl offers possibilities even if it does not always present new non-normative representations of gender.

Overall, the theme of flexibility and relativity appears in not only representations of gender and morality but also in social relationships. Flexibility in social relationships can complicate and challenge the prevailing disciplining structures within the play. Moral flexibility does not always help the characters reconcile their needs/wants/obligations within the context of an authoritarian rule and a patriarchal culture. For Antigone, her recognition of differing subjective restraints does not relieve her conflict with Ismene. When Ismene reverses her position and asks to help Antigone bury their brother, Antigone refuses the help. She accuses Ismene of being controlled by her fears. However, her understanding of subjectivity allows her to continue her relationship with Ismene. "Mwen pa rayi w. Chak moun fè sa l kapab fè. Chak

moun sibi konsekans sa l fè.”¹⁹⁵ (I do not hate you. Each person does what he is capable of. Each person suffers the consequences of what he has done.) Rejecting the idea of a fixed ‘truth’ in favor of acknowledging relative and multiple ‘truths’ and perspectives, Antigone advocates for a feminist epistemology based upon experience and subjectivity. The character argues for the importance of recognizing the subjective experience, without losing all standards of ethics and morality. This representation of moral relativity that is decidedly not amoral reveals a specifically Haitian philosophy. His representation of Haitian fatalism both acknowledges all of the critiques and fallacies of the various accusations of Haitian fatalism and Haitian Vodou limiting cultural development and the (in)famous idea of progress. Moreover, Antigone’s salvation as a Vodou lwa suggests not only the power of religion as related to but not necessarily subject to the state but also the ultimate reliance of state sovereignty on religion. This relationship between religion and the state ultimately critiques the depiction of Vodou as a barrier to social resistance and action.¹⁹⁶

Both the original and Morisseau-Leroy’s adaptation feature the conflict between state sovereignty and religious sovereignty, however, in Morisseau-Leroy’s version the role of religion is more complex. Who or what entity dictates decisions in exceptional cases?¹⁹⁷ In *Antigòn* religion and the state are not so clearly separated. Just as Marenn calls on the lwa on behalf of

¹⁹⁵Morisseau-Leroy. *Antigòn*. 26.

¹⁹⁶ Fatalism is a term used by foreigners and sometimes the Haitian elite related to two different interpretations of the practice of Vodou. First, the older 19th and 20th c usage is a critique that rural and lower class Haitians believe that Vodou spirits control fate, making human action/resistance futile. More recently, protestant missionaries accuse Vodou of being a satanic cult that relieves practitioners of taking responsibility for their actions. Both interpretations of Vodou are entrenched in racist rhetoric and deny the very active role of Vodou in the Haiti’s history of resistance and rebellion. See Felix Germain. "The Earthquake, the Missionaries, and the Future of Vodou." *Journal of Black Studies* 42, no. 2 (2011): 247-63. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41151338>. and Munro. *Tropical Apocalypse*.

¹⁹⁷ I am using Schmitt’s definition of sovereignty in this case.

Antigone, Tiresias calls on the lwa for Creon. Creon does not act outside or beyond the scope of the religion. The conflict of the play rests more between Creon and the community (the other characters and his family), than between Creon and the lwa. This relationship reflects the function of Vodou in Haitian society. In Vodou, practitioners serve the lwa and in return the lwa serve the practitioners. Religious practice is both very personal and individual at the same time that it reflects a communal understanding of the human experience. This reflexive relationship between people and the lwa diverges slightly from the representation of Greek deities in Sophocles' text. The Greek deities appear both more stable and less personal than the role of the lwa in *Antigone*. Despite these differences, both Greek deities and Haitian lwa share many attributes that encourage a comparison.

In Ancient Greece and Haiti, religions pantheons of deities or lwa create a certain level of flexibility and variance in religious practice and doctrine. Due to the cosmology, representations of morality are less absolute. Lacking extensive written doctrine or rigid hierarchies that create centralized authority, the religions tend to feature regional practices and ideology. Both feature a cosmology of multiple deities that can produce complex (if not conflicting) dogma. Direct and sometimes personal relationships between gods and people and the moral ambiguity of deities themselves who at times appear selfish, vengeful, and petty contribute to variation in religious practice. In many ways the religions share many characteristics. However, there are two specific and important differences between Ancient Greece and Haiti within the context of the play. First, Vodou is a religion that has historically been practiced alongside Catholicism such that the role of morality cannot be completely understood without reading it in dialogue with Christian morality. Second, a consequence of the relationship to Christianity, Haitian lwa always exist

within a context of Bondye.¹⁹⁸ Although lwa spirits function similarly to Greek deities who do not present fixed moral agendas but instead can be led by more personal (and mercurial) desires, Bondye represents a fixed (if unknowable) morality. Unlike the lwa, Bondye does not directly interfere in daily life. Bondye represents a distant powerful moral and natural force that is far removed from the general lives of humans, even as it structures humanity. Bondye is not changeable or even as knowable as a lwa, meaning practitioners do not have intimate relationships with Bondye. For Vodou, the existence of Bondye suggests that beyond the individual lives of people, there is a greater force that fashions the world.

The difference in the Greek and Haitian cosmologies manifests in the role of religion in the two plays. Morisseau-Leroy's characters all serve the lwa; however, the lwa actively downplay their role in establishing morality. Creon emphasizes the existence of his edict forbidding the burial over the justification for the edict. Creon's behavior references the tyrannical military leaders whose actions frequently secured their personal authority at the expense of Haitian society. Instead of a clear conflict between a 'natural' religious morality and ethical civil law, Morisseau-Leroy's text blurs the role of religion, thereby depicting a conflict between a citizen and a sovereign. Without the polarizing role of religion, *Antigòn* highlights conflict between genders. Antigone's interaction with Creon, Ismene, and Tizerias present her as the morally superior protagonist. She critiques Creon not specifically for his disregard for the lwa but for his abuse of power and inability to empathize. Her active and independent role encourages a feminist reading of the narrative. Furthermore, her death (and rebirth) helps to critique the patriarchy, associating positive Haitian values with feminist values. Unlike in

¹⁹⁸ Brown. *Mama Lola: A vodou priestess in Brooklyn*.

Sophocles' text, Morisseau-Leroy's *Antigone* does not commit suicide, nor does her story end with her death. In *Antigòn*, Creon curses Antigone with magic, drawing upon dark forces in Vodou. Therefore, both Antigone and Creon accept and practice Vodou. *Antigòn* addresses civil sovereignty in relation to religion and morality, rather than as diametrically opposed to religion.

The use of Vodou complicates the effect of Antigone's death through the stylized mode of her murder and her final rebirth as a spirit. After being disobeyed by Antigone and abandoned by the spirits, Creon kills Antigone in a theatrical manner by plunging a dagger into a glass of water. The water slowly turns blood red as Creon murders Antigone. This violent and symbolic death illustrates the ways in which Vodou has understood and represented violence in Haiti. Although Vodou practice primarily focuses on healing the body, mind, and community, the practitioner can use that same power to heal or to hurt. Morisseau-Leroy blends Vodou cosmology and symbolic theatricality to produce a scene that represents the effect of patriarchal violence. Transcending the boundaries of space, the stylized murder prevents the victim from reacting or protesting. Antigone is not on the stage when she is killed; her presence is not required. Using magic Creon distances himself from Antigone. Performing the deed in silence, the scene echoes the theme of silencing in the text. Reportedly, the scene affected audiences so strongly that they became absolutely silent and still, during both Haitian and French performances.¹⁹⁹ Thus, in this scene, the absence of text, the *mise-en-scène*, and the audience's reaction repeat the theme of silencing, which is discussed by contemporary Haitian feminists.²⁰⁰ By enacting and identifying silencing that typically is powerful because of the absence of attention and discussion, the scene provides of critique of the role of silencing. Creon uses *sorcier* (sorcery) to portray violence in a manner

¹⁹⁹See Haitian Sun and Le Nouveliste

²⁰⁰ Ulysse. "Papa, Patriarchy, and Power."

that is visceral and symbolic. Vodou and Haitian cosmology serve as an aesthetic means to explore themes of violence and silence.

At the same time, Morisseau-Leroy does not allow this stylized death to be Antigone's only legacy. Countering this act of silencing and drawing again from Vodou, he gives Antigone a voice. After her death, several lwa offer Antigone new life as a spirit. Danmbala honors her, helping her to become a lwa, a path that has been reserved for a select few in Haitian history. In this way, Antigone is able to respond to the living characters, as a lwa (disembodied voice). When Tirezyas calls on Antigone to ask her to leave Haemon's spirit alone, Antigone explains that Haemon has already joined her in the afterlife. In a lengthy monologue, Antigone describes her salvation. The two have reached the beautiful country where their feet no longer touch the earth and they can be married in the heavens. Under the protection of Danmbala and Ayida Wèdo, the troubles of the earth no longer worry her. Antigone's monologue includes martyr like imagery of peace and transcendence. The text uses the Vodou understanding of death that relies on a process of forgetting. Traversing the waters and forgetting the horrors of her past life, Antigone achieves a homecoming, a Vodou process of salvation. In this case, forgetting serves as a means of subverting the violent acts of silencing. In general, this ending with the explicit salvation/rebirth of Antigone indicates a judgment of the characters. Lacking subtlety, the ending of the play declares Antigone to be the fully sympathetic and morally superior protagonist, even if it is less conclusive about Creon.

Morisseau-Leroy's representation of Antigone as a clear protagonist invites a feminist reinterpretation of a Haitian concept of *gwo nèg*. In Haitian popular culture, *gwo nèg* refers to a specific type of political and cultural figure, specifically a figure of resistance. I argue that although the concept of *gwo nèg* has been used to describe Haitian men, this figure is useful in

understanding Morisseau-Leroy's representation of Antigone. *Gwo nèg* literally translates as 'big man' but maybe more accurately could be translated as 'hot shot.' In Haitian society *gwo nèg* has served as a label for men who have contributed to society, economically, politically, or culturally. The *Gwo nèg* derives authority "to some extent from his performance abilities as a man-of-words. More than that, it is his everyday style and charisma, his personal power that attracts followers."²⁰¹ In contrast, *Ti nèg*, which serves as the dialectical opposite of *gwo nèg*, refers to the average man who either through ability or circumstance has little control over large scale economic, political, and cultural affairs. This (little) man although part of the majority suffers from consistent marginalization, whereas, a *gwo nèg* distinguishes himself through his rebellious actions and leadership. The *ti nèg* assert power in this relationship by subverting, often perverting, the message and image of the *gwo nèg*. Haitian revolutionaries, who are depicted as provocateurs, rebellious leaders, and pro-Haitian (anti-French), are often considered to be the ultimate examples of *gwo nègs*. However, *gwo nèg* can also indicate someone who abuses his power. In her work on Haitian diasporic performance, Jana Evans Braziel extends the conventional definition of *gwo nèg* to include Haitians living in the diaspora. Discussing the performative nature of *gwo nègs*, her work includes queered performances of masculinity.

I would like to expand upon this queered definition of *gwo nèg* to argue that this concept can be useful in thinking through performances of powerful and rebellious women. Applying *gwo/ti nèg* to Haitian women refashions the figure through a feminist rereading of the concept. Although the word *nèg* is frequently translated as man, it also is used to connote the more general concept human. Jana Evans Braziel explains *gwo nèg* in terms that easily apply to Morisseau-Leroy's Antigone.

²⁰¹ McAlister. *Rara! : vodou, power, and performance in Haiti and its diaspora*.

To be a *gwo nèg* in Haiti is to command the attention of local power brokers; to utilize the linguistic and cultural resources of *pwen*, spoken or sung points, or pointed critiques; to challenge corruption; and to question those officially or unofficially vested with authority, and to renegotiate its terrains. To be a *gwo nèg* in Haiti is to register one's place geographically and historically in order to become a big man in the neighborhood or even on the national level. To be a *gwo nèg* in Haiti's diaspora or in its tenth department is to take the local into translocal spaces, to export the politics of big man-ism transnationally and to deploy local political practices and forces within migratory contexts in order to critique the politics of the diasporic countries of adoption.²⁰²

Antigone challenges the authority of both Creon and the patriarchy and his articulation as a *gwo nèg*. She employs the cultural use of *pwen*, tactically effective remarks, in almost a poetic fashion in order to critique authority. More broadly, *Gwo/ti nèg* offers a model for resistance and a method of thinking through Haitian agency in relation to sovereignty that relates to the actions of Antigone but also the circumstances of the production. *Antigòn* situates Antigone's act of resistance in a larger sociopolitical as well as transnational context. Using *Kreyòl*, the play relates her speech acts to a broader sociopolitical discourse of language in Haiti. As an adaptation of Sophocles' work, the play contextualizes the acts of Haitian resistance as transhistorical and transnational. Specifically, Antigone challenges Creon's authority as *gwo nèg* through *pwen*, well placed verbal and performative critiques.

However, the use of *gwo/ti nèg* is not a suggestion that Antigone serves as a masculine figure in the play. Antigone does not adopt stereotypically masculine behaviors. Although characters disapprove of her choices, no character critiques and comments on her demeanor. The text does not characterize Antigone as an atypical representation of the feminine. The play illustrates both the familiar silencing of women at the same time that it articulates a resistance to this silencing, without insisting that women must become masculine in order to resist. Therefore,

²⁰² Braziel, Jana Evans. *Artists, Performers, and Black Masculinity in the Haitian Diaspora*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008, 2.

the strength of the concept *ti nèg* comes from the articulation of the ability to voice opinions and critiques in spite of others' (often government's) efforts within the context of silencing. The murder of Antigone demonstrates the very real dangers for the women who resist but Antigone's rebirth as a *lwa* provides (even if only imagined) a representation of resistance as a feminine *ti nèg* and transformation into a *gwo nèg*. After being silenced by Creon, Antigone reappears as a voice, a particular iteration of *gwo nèg* that intersects with representations of Haitian femininity.

Antigone is not the only woman in the play, nor is she the only representation of a Haitian woman as agent. Ismene supports the image of Antigone by showing the context of femininity in Haiti. Sympathizing with Antigone's frustration but unwilling or unable to follow her lead, Ismene represents a silenced female voice. While Antigone resists Creon's violent silencing through her transformation into *lwa*, Ismene suffers from repeated critique that results in her disappearance from the play. Even with her sister, Ismene is silenced. Antigone refuses to hear Ismene's protests and later her explanations and support. Morisseau-Leroy changes the ages of the sisters to make Antigone the youngest. Therefore, when she ignores her sister, she is also disregarding the rank accorded by their ages. While Antigone boldly acts according to her ideals, Ismene concerns herself with preserving the family that remains. In this way, she represents an image of the Haitian who persists and survives but is frequently silenced. Ismene is first to look to the spirits for advice, asking her godmother to sound the conch shell. Despite the other characters silencing Ismene, she continues to act even when those actions are unseen or suppressed. When Creon accuses Antigone, Ismene insists that whatever happens to her sister must also happen to her. Antigone cries, "Izmèn, pe bouch ou!" (Ismene, shut your mouth!)²⁰³ After Antigone's command, Ismene is practically absent from the rest of the text. She only utters

²⁰³Morisseau-Leroy. *Antigòn*. 26

one further line of disapproval of Creon's actions before she quits the stage without reappearing in the final third of the play. In contrast to Antigone, she is effectively silenced. Caught between the patriarchal authority and her sister's, Ismene is forgotten. Without the support of the lwa who protect Antigone, Ismene's voice is erased from the narrative. Through Ismene, we can see that it is Vodou that helps to produce the figure *gwo nèg*. Vodou plays a central role in enabling women to resist patriarchal authority.

In addition to the original sisters, Morisseau-Leroy creates a new female character Marenn. Although Morisseau-Leroy tends to respect the basic structure of Sophocles' text, he changes the tone and dialogue through the inclusion of Marenn. As a godmother to Antigone, Marenn offers information that in Sophocles' text is provided by the chorus. Meanwhile, she acts as confidant to both Ismene and Antigone, representing the participation of Haitian women in everyday life. In Sophocles' text the question of private versus public and familial versus civil define the primary conflict. By eliminating the role of the chorus, Morisseau-Leroy de-emphasizes the division of private/public but instead highlights the questions around the role of the spiritual within the state. Defining the role of religion in the play, she mediates Antigone's relationship to the gods, who take a more active in Morisseau-Leroy's text.

As a liaison to the spirit world, Marenn's actions demonstrate the active way in which the lwa participate in Haitian life. When Ismene realizes that stopping Antigone will be impossible, she not only asks Marenn for advice but also to call the spirits. Sounding the conch shell, Marenn calls upon Papa Legba for help. Although he is a powerful spirit who speaks to them as if they were his children, Legba, like all of the lwa according to the Haitian religion, is not all powerful. He can give advice and help to nudge events in certain directions; however, humans and chance still strongly influence outcomes. Ceremonies of music, dance, and offerings lead my Mambos

and Ougans are used to summon lwa who provide advice, support, and entertainment. Although lwa can influence the outcomes of events, more frequently their power manifests in their ability to voice an astute observation or thoughtful advice. Even though Ougan and Mambos mediate the relationship between lay practitioners and the lwa, the religion maintains a communal component rather than reflecting a strict hierarchy. Because lwa visit the earth, often inhabiting (riding) practitioners during ceremonies in order to voice their opinions, the religion produces a personal and embodied relationship between practitioner and lwa. The immediacy and intimacy of the religion is evidenced in the play when the voices of the lwa respond to the pleas and questions of the characters. Legba warns Marenn of the tragic outcome of the events to come and explains that Creon will not listen to him, therefore, there is little that Legba can do to remedy the situation. This interpretation of the events of the play presents but also offers an alternative reading of the Haitian fatalism that often appears in explanation of Haitian trauma.

Foreigners and elite Haitians frequently accuse Vodou of promoting fatalism within Haiti. Within the cosmology of Vodou, the *lwa*²⁰⁴ have significant power to influence large- and small-scale events. *Lwa*, who have strong personalities, can be difficult to sway, leading to conversations and offerings from practitioners who hope to gain favor or help. Generally, if a *lwa* is set upon a particular outcome, humans may have limited ability to change their fate. Haitian activists criticize Vodou for producing a fatalistic perspective that inhibits political involvement and discourages revolt. However, this pessimistic view of the Vodouistes ignores several important facts. First, although many Haitians practice Vodou, if asked, most regardless of class will self-identify as Christian.²⁰⁵ Frequently, Haitians do not practice Vodou exclusively, which

²⁰⁴Lwa is the Kreyòl spelling for the Haitian Vodou spirits sometimes called loa or loi.

²⁰⁵ Michel, "Vodou in Haiti: Way of Life and Mode of Survival."

complicates this critique of Vodou as the primary motivator of rural Haitians. Second, even though Vodou presents a complex cosmology in which spirits influence worldly outcomes, healing is the primary focus of the religion. Although Vodou has frequently been discussed by academics and non-Haitians as syncretic, this representation tends to simplify the practice and history of Vodou in Haiti. Ougans and Mambos, the priests and priestesses of Vodou, offer herbal and spiritual remedies as well as modern medicine to practitioners, acting as a combination of a nurse, pharmacist and counselor with a holistic approach to medicine.²⁰⁶ This focus on healing is a productive, active function of Vodou that acknowledges the material benefits of the active engagement of priest and practitioner. Thirdly, historically, Vodou has been a source of power and inspiration for revolting Haitians, particularly in the case of the Maroon communities during the Revolution. Overall, Vodou has played a complex role in politics and resistance that is often oversimplified amidst discourse of ‘primitivism.’

Within the play, Morisseau-Leroy does not present a simplistic representation of fate. On the one hand, when the godmother Marenn calls upon Legba²⁰⁷ for help and advice, Legba, whose voice emerges from the urn placed on the table, warns Marenn that disaster will arise because Creon will not be diverted from his path. Legba says that there is something in Creon that is driving him to do what he should not do. The text suggests that the circumstances are influenced by fate but that the concept of fate refers more to the individual’s ability to move beyond their own interests or inclinations, instead of a prewritten narrative. The Lwa do not force Creon to act in any particular manner. In fact, Creon repeatedly refuses advice. Typically in Vodou, the lwa form the potentially fatalistic component of life. In this case, Creon’s incapacity

²⁰⁶ Dubois, Laurent. “Vodou and History.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43.1 (2001): 92–100.

²⁰⁷ Legba is a lwa often depicted as a father and is the gatekeeper between the spirit and the physical world.

to change dictates his fate. Like Creon, Antigone disregards advice from family and lwa. The text depicts 'fate' as the logical outcome of human choice, not a preordained Vodou narrative. Both Antigone and Creon become fixed characters, doomed to clash violently – each of them forewarned. However, unlike Creon, Antigone appears to understand and accept the consequences of her actions, signaling her agency within the text.

By the end of the play all of the other characters, gods and humans, categorize this disaster as a consequence of Creon's actions. He chooses to not listen to any advice, yet he refuses to accept full responsibility for his choices. Creon claims that even though he made decisions that instigated these tragedies, there was something outside his control that blocked him from listening to advice. The character uses the idea of fatalism to excuse his actions. Notably, his faithful servant Filo never offers an opinion. Even Tirezyas who serves as an advisor constantly apologizes and justifies his offering of advice. This dynamic raises the question of whether Filo does have an opinion or not. Perhaps, Filo recognizes the danger and futility in offering opinions. Each of Filo's statements is carefully constructed to exhibit impartial reactions, possibly representing one strategy used by Haitians: to simply outwait the violence and caprice of the current dictator. In this case, Filo represents another victim of silencing. A ti nèg, a character without social or political capital, Filo does not risk voicing his opinions. Unlike Ismene, Filo never invites the possibility of silence. Consequently, unlike Ismene, Filo does not disappear from the scene. The capacity to voice and understand the critique defines the 'fate' of the characters.

The relationship between fate, advice, and critique becomes particularly significant in the interaction between the lwa Ezili and Creon. On behalf of Creon, Tirezyas summons Ezili Freda to ask for advice. Ezili dismisses Creon's questions, reminding him that while she reins over the

spirit world, it is he who is in charge of the earth. She states that Creon should already know the answer he seeks and that it is not up to her to decide Antigone's fate. Nevertheless, after having denied responsibility, Ezili proceeds to chastise Creon. She critiques his prohibition of Polinis's burial. This contradictory position taken by Ezili is common for lwa/human interactions. Ezili both recognizes human agency at the same time that she participates in earthly situations. In this way, her intervention belies Creon's insistence on the role of fate.

The spirit Ezili, the primary female lwa, represents multiple sides of sexuality and gender. In the play, Creon serves Ezili which means that she looks out for Creon but this relationship does not supersede Ezili's autonomy. Like all of the other lwa, Ezili has her own particular personality and capabilities. Different iterations of Ezili, with different sub-names, portray different sides of Haitian femininity, such as the mother, the seductress, or the 'French' woman, and some of these personas cite 'masculine' gender codes, while others express sexual desire for both men and women. As the spirit associated with love, sexuality, femininity and imagination, Ezili presents a complex relationship between identity, gender, and sexuality. She resists strict codification, in particular the unification of gender and sexual identity. Her image signals multiplicity.²⁰⁸ In the context of Ezili, this separation of sex/gender and body is less relevant. Depictions of Ezili's physicality can change along with her performance of sex/gender; however, she remains a singular subject.

The flexibility of representations of lwa invites flexibility in the broader understanding of gender and subjectivity in Vodou. Although men and women have separate roles in Vodou

²⁰⁸ This representation of subjectivity relates to Judith Butler's discussion of a dubious presumption of a body that precedes gender discourse. Recognizing that the body is constructed within cultural discourse is helpful when thinking of the relationship between gender, lwa, and subject in Haitian Vodou. Tinsley, O. N. "Songs for Ezili: Vodou Epistemologies of (Trans) gender." *Feminist Studies*, 37 no.2 (2011), 417–436.

practice, practitioners can be mounted (inhabited) by spirits of both genders, creating an unfixed and porous interpretation of gender and sexuality. The relationship between the physical body and personhood is not always fixed. Like the understanding of morality, personhood is contextual. Because Vodou emphasizes the importance of community, gender and personhood are relational, influenced by structures of kinship.²⁰⁹ Unlike Catholicism where codes of gender often relate to a policing of sexuality based upon a fixed morality, Vodou prioritizes the role of gender in supporting the family structure. Therefore, in *Antigòn*, Antigone's act of resistance does not conflict with gender codes because her aim is to protect her family. However, Vodou always exists within the context of Catholicism. Haitian gender codes reflect this layered (sometimes contradictory) perspective. The performance of self (human and lwa) supersedes a psychological or an ontological identity. Consequently, Vodou can provide a method of reading subjectivity as multiple and intersectional. Vodou facilitates a multilayered reading of Antigone: as daughter, sister, bride, practitioner, and citizen.

Flexibility and multiplicity emphasized in Vodou offer a useful tool in analyzing the representations of gender, morality, and sovereignty in the text. Antigone performs the typically masculine role of a *gwo nèg*: voicing her opinion and using *pwèn* to critique Creon. Meanwhile, she prioritizes her role as sister who upholds the importance of family. A flexible representation of gender invites the appropriation of historically masculine terms such as *gwo nèg*. Moreover, flexibility and multiplicity inform an epistemology that determines the representation of morality, and through morality (especially in the case of Antigone) sovereignty. Morisseau-Leroy incorporates the use of multiplicity by layering a Haitian story on top of an Ancient Greek one. Addressing the role of flexibility in the understanding and function of morality and sovereignty,

²⁰⁹ Claudine Michel, "Le pouvoir moral et spirituel des femmes dans le vodou Haïtien: La Voix de Mama Lola et de Karen McCarthy Brown." *Numen*, 50 no. 1 (2001), 71–107.

the play presents two characters that are completely inflexible. The unyielding positions taken by Antigone and Creon emphasize the importance of being both steadfast and flexible. Overall, through the lens of Vodou, the play offers representations of gender and morality, producing a nuanced discussion of sovereignty.

The Reception: 1953 v 1959 or Haiti v Paris

First produced in Haiti and later revived in France for the international theater festival *Théâtre des Nations*, *Antigòn* explicitly invited discussion of sovereignty, meanwhile, the reception of the production revealed many of the factors that implicitly defined the conditions of the discourse. Reviews of the production sharply differ according to the country of origin (Haiti or France) revealing the conflict over cultural hegemony, which can be understood as a proxy for a competition for sovereignty. In Haiti, the critiques center on the politics of language. In France, reviewers focused on the significance and success of adaptation, exposing their own cultural biases. In both countries, questions of cultural superiority and rhetoric of primitivism informed the reception of the play.

After the premier in Haiti, two of the popular newspapers from the period with differing political perspectives, *Haiti Sun* and *Nouvelliste*, reviewed the play, illustrating the ways in which the play resonated in Haiti and the ways politics defined the reception. In general, the audiences in Port-au-Prince liked *Antigòn*, leading to the extension of the original run of the play. Haitian newspapers reported largely positive reaction from Haitian audiences. The *Haiti Sun*²¹⁰ articles promoted *Antigòn* as a ground-breaking event for Haitian theater. The liberal English language paper closely followed the progress of the play within Haiti as well as abroad. The first

²¹⁰The Haitian Sun was a weekly newspaper in Port-au-Prince that tended to have a progressive slant.

review on July 19, 1953, introduced the play by complimenting Morisseau-Leroy's "master hand" in writing the adaptation and briefly explains the logistics of the translation. In contrast, *Le Nouvelliste* a French language paper with a more moderate stance also covered the opening performance but categorized the evening in slightly different terms. Whereas the first article in the *Haiti Sun* only briefly outlined the performance with mild praise for the author, *Le Nouvelliste* claimed that there were mixed opinions in the audience, particularly prior to the start of the play.

The *Haiti Sun* articles focus on the use of adaptation, foregrounding the idea of Morisseau-Leroy belonging to an international intelligentsia. The first article explains that the Haitian setting blends the "philosophical fatalism of the Haitian peasant...[with] the Greek attitude that man is a puny instrument indeed in the hands of the gods."²¹¹ Already, this brief announcement of the play highlights the significance of cultural ideologies as influential in producing interpretations of tragedy. The article identifies the Haitian concept of fatalism as compatible with Greek tragedy. However, the articles do not problematize the concept of fatalism, nor mention the ways in which the play questions fatalism as a Haitian trope. In general, the articles celebrate the production without offering a thorough critique of the play. After the debut performance, the paper continues to review the play as well as track the invitation and subsequent performance in France. Focusing on Morisseau-Leroy's personal history and agenda, the paper promotes an auteur reading of the play, which supports the Neo-liberal stance of the paper. As an English language paper, *Haiti Sun* frequently provided alternative perspectives to other mainstream newspapers in Port-au-Prince. At the same time, the paper wrote for a US expatriate community meaning that many articles adopted a naïve,

²¹¹ "Creole Version of Antigone Acclaimed." *Haiti Sun*. Digital Library of the Caribbean. 19 Jul. 1953, 3.

superficial, and even didactic attitude when discussing Haitian culture. From this perspective, the consistent praise of Morisseau-Leroy void of thoughtful critique can appear condescending.

Conversely, *Le Nouvelliste* offers a more measured, if less extensive, response. As a French language newspaper based out of Port-au-Prince that has survived many regimes and much political turmoil by carefully remaining diplomatic, *Le Nouvelliste* has typically remained a moderate paper. Strategically, the paper has had a series of high-profile editors and writers who would be noticed if missing and catered to the elite by evoking a sort of reverence for France. The *Haiti Sun*, which has not lasted like *Le Nouvelliste*, chose to take more risks, printing articles in English, Spanish, French, and most importantly Kreyòl.²¹² Not surprisingly, the article in *Le Nouvelliste* emphasizes the connection to French adaptations of *Antigone* versus the *Haiti Sun* that relates Morisseau-Leroy's play to Ancient Greece. *Le Nouvelliste* reminds the reader that a month earlier Jean Anouilh's adaptation of *Antigone* was performed at the same theater and the actress currently playing *Antigone*, performed the same role in Anouilh's version.²¹³ The article is careful to allude to the existence of a knowledgeable theater audience in Port-au-Prince, reflecting the desire of the Haitian elite to affirm their status as culturally cosmopolitan. Specifically, *Le Nouvelliste* describes the audience's reactions to the production as "enthusiastic" but in some cases as well as "mocking." Although not explicitly discussed, the article hints at the complicated politics of language in 1953, suggesting that questions of the sophistication of Kreyòl circulated among the audience. Carefully, the article distinguishes between the varied audience reception and the position of the paper itself. Interviewing the performers and author

²¹²This information comes from my interview with Henri Chauvet the owner and editor during the 1950s and 1960s of *Le Nouvelliste* and my interview with Bernard Dietrick the former editor of the *Haiti Sun* from July 2014.

²¹³ Interestingly, *Haiti Sun* articles make no mention of the performance of Anouilh's play.

before performance, *Le Nouvelliste* characterizes them as confident despite potential skepticism amidst the audience. By labeling the play as an “extraordinary experience” the paper chooses to align itself with the enthusiastic rather than the skeptical observers, while maintaining a distance from the enthusiastic admirers. Addressing the context of the performance, the article refers to the performance as a “literary battle” that will have historical significance. This prophetic remark signals the complex opinions of the audience as well as the differences between the reviews in *Le Nouvelliste* and the *Haiti Sun*.

Overall, the newspapers tended to ignore the play’s obvious scrutiny of Haitian politics in favor of discussing the linguistic achievements of the production. Overlooking questions of sovereignty posed in the play, the reviewers emphasized language and cultural appropriation. *Haiti Sun* stresses the presentation of Haitian culture, while *Le Nouvelliste* emphasizes the use of language. The depictions of political violence and abuse, although foregrounded by the production, disappeared in the reception. Most likely, language was a safer topic to discuss. Although Morisseau-Leroy directly critiqued the government, his comments were protected by the artistic medium. In Haiti, newspapers suffered significantly more censorship than artists. Consequently, the approval of the newspapers, even if tentative, indicates a politically risky stance.

The *Haiti Sun*, which was somewhat protected by its US citizen readership, covered more of the development of the production than *Le Nouvelliste*. When the play was revived a month after the debut, the *Haiti Sun* includes an extended review of the adaptation as well as a review written in Kreyòl. Later in October of the same year the play was produced in the outdoor amphitheater *Théâtre de Verdure* and featured again in the *Haiti Sun*. The article reiterates much of the original praise, particularly complimenting the beautiful use of Kreyòl and the

performances of the actors. Mentioning that the actors wore Haitian peasant clothing and that the set was minimal, this review is the first of three articles in the *Haiti Sun* and the one in *Le Nouvelliste* that describes the material conditions of the production. In general, neither newspaper emphasizes the quality of the actual performance in the context of other plays or the quality of the costumes, set, or stage direction. Even the acting, which is mentioned, is discussed in the broadest language, giving little concrete information on the look and stylistic choices made in the production. Instead, the articles focus on the language and the novelty of an adaptation that showcases Kreyòl and Haitian culture.

The differing perspectives and the superficial criticism in the newspapers reflect the differences in political ideologies within the Haitian elite as well as the restrictions of Haitian journalism during the 1953 performance. The community of elite Haitians, typical patrons of the theater, were divided after the US occupation between those who envisioned a sovereign Haiti in the image of France with French political and cultural values and those who sought a more radical image of sovereignty. For the former, the promotion of Kreyòl, although useful in combating the influence of the United States, did not support their ideal image of Haiti. In contrast, the latter community was more attracted to the possibilities afforded by the promotion of Kreyòl as a nationalist language. In both cases, Kreyòl signified a divestment from French language and culture. Therefore, *Le Nouvelliste's* choice to contextualize Morisseau-Leroy's production as following a performance of Anouilh's *Antigone* can be understood as either useful commentary or strategic reporting that reaffirmed the importance of French culture even as paper praised the performance. The context of government censorship necessitates careful reading of the subtext of each review. The absence of any discussion of Anouilh in the *Haiti Sun*, despite the extensive number of articles in the paper dedicated to *Antigòn*, indicates the editor's decision to

avoid comparing the play to French theater. Furthermore, these perspectives can be understood as a product of differing views on the nature of Haitian sovereignty. Should sovereignty be judged based on the Haitian state's ability to mimic French republicanism or does Haitian sovereignty look different? The conflict over language stands in for a conflict over sovereignty. Both papers are careful to discuss sovereignty only in terms of language rather than address the violence that is presented in the play.

Years later, living in the US, Morisseau-Leroy openly explains the emphasis on the violent consequences of the Haitian state's understanding of sovereignty. In an interview for the literary journal *Callaloo*, Morisseau-Leroy compares his adaptation to Anouilh's *Antigone*. Although he frequently focused his attention on performing for rural Haitian audiences who rarely attended the theater, Morisseau-Leroy's comparison of his work to Jean Anouilh's play suggests that he kept in mind the urban elite and their frequent disregard for the experiences of rural Haitians.

Let's look at Jean Anouilh's *Antigone*. It is another representation of an Antigonian situation. I would say that what Anouilh finally proves in his *Antigone* is that politics prevails. "It is time for the council." Those were the last words that Creon said, "Forget about the girl."

Then you come to my *Antigone*, which is the conflict of the chief from a rural area. The chief of this area was set up by the Haitian army and was an agent of political dictatorship in Haiti. The chief of the rural populace had the right to kill without having to be accountable to anyone. He was not even responsible before the gods. I use the plural because he called on many gods. He also used the God of the Christians, but that God was so far away. That God was not really the one who was going to intervene in my *Antigone*. The gods who intervened in my *Antigone* are those who intervene everyday in the affairs of those Haitians who follow Vodou.²¹⁴

Morisseau-Leroy's description of his play reminds the reader of the very separate existence of many rural Haitians, not so much because they are outside/beyond the reach of the city and

²¹⁴ Morisseau-Leroy. *Callaloo*.

government but instead because these communities are defined by, yet not part of, governments that violently control their experiences.²¹⁵ His play ends with the lives of the individuals rather than ending with the political. The adaptation presents a dual commentary on Haitian society by elevating Kreyòl language and folk culture in addition to critiquing the violent conditions upon which Haitian sovereignty was maintained. Interestingly, Morisseau-Leroy considered his play *Wa Kreyon* (a rewriting of Antigone), not *Antigòn*, to be his most significant play.²¹⁶ Unlike *Antigòn*, *Wa Kreyon* was written after Duvalier rose to power and specifically references this dictatorship. Nevertheless, in both plays, Morisseau-Leroy presents Haitian sovereignty as inseparable from discussions of culture.

The role of culture in presenting and debating questions of sovereignty was highlighted again six years later when the same adaptation was performed in Paris. Although French reviewers responded very differently from Haitian reviewers to *Antigòn*, their reviews still revealed the significance of cultural conflicts in regards to questions of sovereignty. Culture served as a both a proxy and an extension of competitions over sovereignty. The reception of the play in Haiti reflected in part the local debates on the construction of Haitian sovereignty. In France, the reception reflected the past and contemporary struggles with French sovereignty in a changing political climate. I argue that the preoccupation with certain visual and linguistic markers prevented the French reviewers from understanding the play from a Haitian perspective and highlights the strong desire in Parisian society to assert French cultural sovereignty. The context of the *Théâtre des Nations* was such that the desire to glorify France as a cultural icon and curator shaped the reception of productions, in particular those from former French colonies.

²¹⁵ Trouillot. *Silencing the past*.

²¹⁶ Felix Morisseau-Leroy. *Callaloo*.

The reviewers' strong emotional reaction to the language and culture was amplified by France's desire to remain the global cultural leader.

When Félix Morisseau-Leroy was invited to present *Antigòn* at the *Théâtre des Nations*, he chose to bring a dance troupe to perform Haitian folk dances as well as his actors. In a review written for *Le Monde*, Robert Kemp, a member of Académie Française, only discusses *Antigòn* in the second half of his article. Preoccupied with the folk dances, Kemp shows his distaste for *Antigòn*, which was intended as the primary act of the evening. When describing the dances, Kemp fails to mention that the dances constituted a separate presentation and were not intended as part of the play. This lack of attention to the performance is evident throughout his review as he praises the dancers but heavily critiques the play. Using language such as “big snake,” “wings of the beetle” to describe the dance, he links the dancers to untamed animals, even using the phrase “animal dances” and “beastiality.” His praise for the dancers comes in contrast to his negative opinion of the play but aligns with his preconception of Haitians as primitive. Moreover, his review and the manner of his critique reveal his expectations for a Haitian play written in Haitian Kreyòl.

I argue that *Antigòn* disrupted Kemp's preconceived idea of Haitian theater because it resisted a simplistic reading as ‘primitive.’ Unlike the dances that Kemp could more comfortably interpret as ‘primal’ and ‘animalistic,’ the play combined sophisticated Haitian tropes with ideas from Classical Antiquities, which challenged Kemp's understanding of the two concepts as diametrically opposed. Unable to reconcile his expectations and the production, inevitably, Kemp hated the play. For Kemp, in contrast to the play, the dancers created a sort of dithyrambic frenzy consistent with his preconception that Haitians were ‘unknowable’ and ‘uncivilized.’ His desire to witness a performance that was foreign, exotic, and yet easily identifiable resembles a pattern

in Western male gaze. Rebecca Schneider describes the pleasure of the ‘primal’ as offering a connection to the ‘real’ but simultaneously decontextualizes the primal object, rendering the object in a way outside time and space.²¹⁷ The production’s insistence on making connections between Haiti and Ancient Greece as well as Haiti and international politics upset Kemp. Watching the dancers and musicians perform who did not attempt to conspicuously blend European and Haitian themes or aesthetics, better suited Kemp’s preconceptions of Haitian culture as separate and foreign. Mixing Haitian culture and Greek literature legitimized claims for Haitian culture that contradicted Kemp’s perception of Haitians as primitive as well as Ancient Greece as sacred. Consequently, Kemp maintained that he hardly recognized Sophocles’ *Antigone* in this adaptation. Given that the play clearly follows and in some cases quotes Sophocles’ play, what does this statement mean? Having read the text and Kemp’s review, I am inclined to believe that Kemp’s article reveals more about his understanding of French cultural sovereignty than it does about the performance.

The perception of French culture’s superiority reflects the post-colonial power dynamics that structured this theater festival. The *Théâtre des Nations* foregrounds the post-WWII endeavor to reassert French cultural influence. Formed by French theater practitioners in 1954, the project was pitched to UNESCO as an avenue to promote cross cultural understanding: bringing theatrical performances from across the globe to perform in Paris over the course of a summer theatrical festival. However, UNESCO has from its inception exhibited an agenda second to the official objective of the organization. Formally, UNESCO intended to support world peace by promoting high standards of education, science, and culture throughout the

²¹⁷ Rebecca Schneider. *The explicit body in performance*. (Psychology Press, 1997).

world.²¹⁸ By identifying programs and projects, UNESCO claimed that it would be able to promote these standards. *Théâtre des Nations* was selected as a project that would promote cultural exchange. Underneath this ostensibly positive agenda, leaders in the UNESCO organization conceived of alternative goals. After WWII many French policy makers feared France's loss of global political influence. The English language rose to prominence, often replacing French as the obvious international language of politics, science, and culture. French policy makers viewed UNESCO as a potential tool to reinforce France's presence globally, expending significant effort to establish Paris as the headquarters for UNESCO.²¹⁹ Historically French sovereignty had been linked to cultural unity as well as cultural dominance. The country was not based upon multiple ethnic communities working together to create a political union, instead " a small royal power created a state in the course of the Middle Ages and, for the sake of its domination and glory, set out to create a people. Because this state's power was at all times as centralized as the means of communication and coercion permitted, struggles about what was France and who spoke for the French people tended initially to be claims for hegemonic domination rather than proposals for inclusion."²²⁰ Sovereignty defined by cultural unity meant that cultural boundaries and cultural dominance were essential to imperial and later international politics. Ever since François I, French kings and the Republican states heavily invested in the unification of culture, language, and aesthetic life of the nation.²²¹

²¹⁸ Huxley, Julian. "UNESCO." *World Affairs* 110.3 (1947): 163.

²¹⁹ Pendergast, William R. "UNESCO and French Cultural Relations 1945-1970." *International Organization* 30.3 (1976): 445.

²²⁰ Lebovics, Herman. *Mona Lisa's escort: André Malraux and the reinvention of French culture*. Cornell University Press, 1999, 29.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 30-33.

Even without the military counterpart, France continued to promote a narrative of cultural sovereignty that positioned France and French culture as both dominant and omniscient, fostering an environment in which French reviewers presume cultural literacy. Without questioning his ability to interpret the play, Kemp never considers that he might misread or mistranslate parts of the production. His expectation of cultural literacy and France's cultural sovereignty dictate his interpretation. Unfortunately, Kemp's review reveals several instances of cultural illiteracy. Directly translating some of the Kreyòl text into French, he mistranslates the register, not understanding that words that appear informal in French do not imply the same informality in Kreyòl. Similarly, he misreads the costume worn by Creon as a plantation owner's suit rather than a Haitian military uniform. These simple (mis)perceptions reveal his cultural preconceptions of Haitians. His assumptions that aesthetic cues and linguistic meanings can be understood from a French perspective and do not require special knowledge about Haitian culture or Haitian Kreyòl illustrate the influence of post-colonial power dynamics. When he professes that the production left him underwhelmed because it was insufficiently tragic due to the lack of magnitude of the characters, it is unclear whether this lack of magnitude was not simply due to his inability to see past his prejudices. Was Creon truly poorly presented in the production or was he doomed (for Kemp) as a result of his nationality? Anxieties of gender and race propel the concept of the primitive as well as a long-standing tradition of the feminization of the colonial subject. Tropes used to describe the 'primitive' serve equally to describe the 'feminine,' such that the concept of the 'primitive' acts as a place holder for the different and the subjugated. Does Creon lack magnitude because Kemp is unable to separate the character from the stereotype of the feminine primitive Haitian? Interestingly, Kemp focuses primarily on Creon

largely ignoring the role of Antigone and the actress's performance in his review, other than to complain that she was neither grand nor majestic.

Kemp's use of French culture as the point of reference for the performance informs most of his judgments. When Kemp argues that the end of the play is not sufficiently tragic, he is using French and not ancient Greek definitions of tragedy. Racine rather than Sophocles serves as point of reference, which Kemp suggests when he critiques Morisseau-Leroy for not properly modeling the play on the 'Greeks' or Racine.' This comment appears to recognize that Racine, the Neo-Classical French playwright, and not Sophocles is the real exemplar of tragedy. Unable to situate the play within the canon of Racine or within his idea of the 'primitive' and 'exotic' Haitian performance, the performance falls flat for Kemp. He advises Morisseau-Leroy to avoid translation, if he is unable to do it properly. This critique indicates Kemp's complete misunderstanding of the production as both an adaptation (not a translation) and as a commentary on Haiti. Kemp actively decontextualizes the production according to his limited knowledge of 'primitive' Haiti. The primitive, as Marianna Torgovnick describes, "is structured by sets of images and ideas that have slipped from their original metaphoric status."²²² This slippage occurs in Kemp's review as he misreads the imagery and symbolism, then asserts new disconnected unsupported associations such as calling Creon, Uncle Tom. Posing questions about the nature of Haitian culture or considering the significance of using Kreyòl, required an investment in Haitian culture rather than racist stereotypes and French aesthetics. Kemp distances himself from work that threatens his definition of 'classic' theater and French cultural hegemony. A superficial viewing of the play preserves Kemp's notion of primitive Haiti and French cultural sovereignty.

²²² Torgovnick. *Gone Primitive*, 8.

Kemp's primary objection that the play was not tragic relies upon his understanding of tragedy as a French neo-classical invention. Above all, French tragedy depended upon respecting the rules of 'bienséance' which translated into an appropriate believability for all of the actions of the characters.²²³ Social categories and mores restrict the 'acceptable' emotional response of a character, meaning that French tragedy depends upon context. From this perspective it is not surprising that Kemp could not view Morisseau-Leroy's characters as tragic. He was utterly unfamiliar with Haitian society. Frantz Fanon defines the social existence of the black man: "For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man. Some people will argue that the situation has a double meaning. Not at all. The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man."²²⁴ This lack of ontological existence for the black subject or in this case Haitian performer as described by Fanon can be seen in terms of the Kemp's reaction. For the white reviewer, Antigone was only made visible in relation to the 'white' French Antigone or as the exact opposite of the 'white' Antigone, which translated as the primitive Antigone. The reviewers were unable to read the play outside this binary, meaning that they could not consider the play as an adaptation with a Haitian context as it was described in the *Haiti Sun* articles. The discourses revealed in the reviews provide evidence as to the influence of past colonial ideologies on later articulations of sovereignty with regards to culture. In short, when Kemp finds the play underwhelming and lacking in the necessary magnitude, he is asserting France's dominance.

²²³ Gilles Revaz. "La 'Veuve Captive' Dans La Tragédie Classique." *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France* 101.2 (2001): 214.

²²⁴ Fanon. *Black Skin, White Masks*, 90.

The desire to affirm French cultural sovereignty is not limited to Kemp's review. Although Jacques Lamarchand, a reviewer for *Le Figaro*, enjoyed the performance, his review reiterates many of the assumptions of primitivism and French cultural present in Kemp's article. Jacques Lamarchand's review, for the literary edition of *Le Figaro*, celebrates the production as a 'black' Antigone. Betraying both his primitivist preconceptions of Haiti and his allegiance to French culture, the Lamarchand positions Haiti as a 'black' France. Upholding France as the axis of culture, he praises the production's aims and intentions because for Lamarchand Morisseau-Leroy strives to produce theater that rivals French theater. Lamarchand is less outright dismissive of *Antigòn*; however, he maintains many of the same racist beliefs as Kemp. In the first sentence of his review, Lamarchand refers to the production as a 'black Antigone' rather than a Haitian Antigone. Comparing the production with French adaptations, he presents the Haitian version as strange and shocking in contrast to the genius of French productions, implying that the primitive Haitian play is the opposite of the sophisticated French play. In lieu of being unenthused due to his preconceptions of primitivism like Kemp, Lamarchand justifies his admiration by explaining that the Greeks were also primitive. He relishes the pleasure to be found in the 'exotic' and 'primitive' production that for him is at times mysterious and unknowable. Lamarchand rationalizes his pleasure and interpretation by assuring the reader that the Greeks too were primitive. By equating Vodou to Greek mythology, Lamarchand avoids a direct comparison between *Antigòn* and French neo-classical tragedy, allowing French culture to remain cultural superior. According to Lamarchand, the ancient Greek audiences would not appreciate the sophisticated philosophical themes that French playwrights have incorporated into French adaptations. Any lack of magnitude in *Antigòn*, Lamarchand explains, can be attributed to the lack of sophistication of Kreyòl. Rather than perceiving the use of Kreyòl as an aggrandizement

of Kreyòl, Lamarchand suggests that the language must be overlooked in order to appreciate the grand nature of the play. Thus, even Lamarchand, who approved of the play, could only consider the tragedy as a primitive adaptation. By positioning Ancient Greeks as primitive, he is able to accommodate his interpretation. Emphasizing the ‘primitive’ nature of the Ancient Greeks, Lamarchand attempts to maintain his control and affirm his superiority at the same time that he praises the piece. Neither Lamarchand nor Kemp are able to see beyond their limited understanding of Haitian culture and their perceived superiority of French culture. Using similar language and revealing similar cultural assumptions, the reviewers reach opposite conclusions.

The reactions of the reviewers are consistent with the context of the theater festival. Because France could no longer claim dominance as a military power after WWII, the promotion of cultural influence internationally became an underlying agenda for the French state. Defining France as a custodian of Western culture helped to preserve France’s international political influence. French sovereignty, no longer determined by military autonomy, could only be characterized by cultural significance. Projects advertised to promote cultural exchange often emphasized a specific exchange in which French culture was reasserted in former French colonies. Meanwhile President de Gaulle tasked the newly appointed Minister of Culture André Malraux with both unifying French culture nationally and reasserting French influence internationally. Malraux approached these objectives with through two principle strategies: restore neo-classical art and architecture and promote theater. Theater, which was supported by preexisting networks, offered a social and pragmatic means of reaching large audiences.²²⁵ Additionally, theater helped to reaffirm the significance of the French language. Believing that art was the key to renewing the nation, Malraux initiated regional theater projects, new works

²²⁵ Community and regional theater troupes throughout France could be easily repositioned to promote Malraux’s agenda of reviving representations of a glorified neoclassical past.

projects supporting young artists, and large scale restoration projects. He sought to restore French cultural dominance through riving interest in iconic French art. Malraux viewed art as a potential form of diplomacy in addition to a means to enhance the prestige of France as the cultural capital.²²⁶

This reassertion of French dominance through restoration of traditional French art, such as Neo-Classical French Theater, and the reinforcement of colonial power nurtured a context for the *Théâtre des Nations* that supported the preconception of Haitians as primitive. By giving prominence to French culture, this exchange promoted an unequal relationship between French and other cultures. With colonial legacies having already created unequal power relationships, these programs reinforced nonsymmetrical power dynamics. Morisseau-Leroy wrote *Antigòn* in response to this postcolonial power dynamic in Haiti, in which Haitians discriminated against their own culture. The Haitian author Patrick Chamoiseau claimed that the most tragic consequence of colonization is not simply the domination of one people by another; it is the colonization of the imagination.²²⁷ One culture dominates another producing a domination of the imaginary. Morisseau-Leroy's *Antigòn* challenges this colonization of the Haitian imaginary in which French language, French forms, and French aesthetics dictate theater. The effect of this colonization and the continued struggle for cultural sovereignty plays out in the reception of this production. In Haiti, the changing social context of Kreyòl influenced the reception of the play. The bodies, ideas, and aesthetics presented onstage elicited questions of Haitian identity and Haitian sovereignty. Parisian critics understood this same presentation of Haitian bodies, ideas,

²²⁶ Lebovics, Herman. "Malraux's Mission." *The Wilson Quarterly* (1976-) 21.1 (1997): 85.

²²⁷In *Manman Dlo contre la fée Carabosse* the French folk fairy Carabosse battles the Caribbean magical spirit Mother Water for dominance over a tropical island.

and aesthetics as either a challenge or a confirmation of French cultural sovereignty because of post-colonial power dynamics, uncritical assumptions of primitivism, and the context of French policy. At least for Haitians, *Antigòn* presented an alternative perspective on Haitian culture, in particular in terms of Kreyòl. Despite the post-colonial barrier that shaped the response of the French critics as well as their ability to understand the ideas and aesthetics represented in the play, *Antigòn* offered a point of rupture in this post-colonial power structure.

Conclusion

Antigòn initiates a discussion of sovereignty, posing questions about the relationship between sovereignty and culture, women and power, and Kreyòl and French. In the text, the production and the reception of the play set up encounters between people and ideologies that challenge social structures. What is Haitian culture? Who can and should speak for Haiti? How should Haitians understand and react to the continual violence enacted on Haitians by the state? What role do Haitian women have in shaping Haitian sovereignty? How should Haiti position itself internationally to be recognized as politically and culturally sovereign? The play and the context of the production invite this discussion. Furthermore, these questions correspond to a broader movement in Haiti that was originally spurred by resistance to the US occupation.

The textual discussion of sovereignty mirrors the questions raised in the reception in Haiti and later in Paris. The performances situate the narrative within a specific historical moment of tension concerning conditions of sovereignty in both Haiti and France. Haitian audiences responded to Morisseau-Leroy's advocacy for Kreyòl and critique of the state. The opinions of reviewers in Haiti reveal the restrictions and expectations placed on print media. Similarly, the French reviewers evince the agenda of the French state that intends to reassert

cultural dominance even at the cost of other cultures. Furthermore, the reviews from both Haiti and France expose the condition of the representation of women by way of absence.

Even though the text centers on the actions of Haitian women, the reviews hardly mention the role of women or the female performers. Women are overlooked, silenced, in the reception of the production. Meanwhile, the text offers a model for Haitian women to combat the repeated historical silencing. As *gwo nèg*, the women in the play confront the state as social and political agents. Morisseau-Leroy's text presents a representation of a strong Haitian woman, who acts independent of male counterparts, yet does not adopt masculine attitudes or characteristics. Haitian literature offers few depictions of Haitian woman as protagonists. Therefore, *Antigone*, who is not only strong woman but participates outside of the domestic sphere, is significant. By addressing the limits of sovereignty, the play adapts the question of sovereignty in relation to gender and religion. Frequently, Haitian sovereignty becomes entangled in the history of colonialism and the racist discourses of primitivism that defined representations of Haiti internationally. Morisseau-Leroy's adaptation attempts to reconfigure the image of Haiti and Haitian *Kreyòl* and in the process, offers a unique representation of Haitian women and Haitian sovereignty.

The role of language structures the representation of women and sovereignty. The use of *Kreyòl* serves as a way of resisting normative representations. As a symbol of larger conflicts of cultural sovereignty, the use of *Kreyòl* proposes an argument for supporting Haitian rather than French culture without the need for further explanation. During this period, *Kreyòl* appeared in the theater as a vulgar language of crude comedy. *Kreyòl* was rarely spoken on stage except for in the case of some Burlesque performances.²²⁸ Therefore, *Antigòn* which presented *Kreyòl* and

²²⁸ Morisseau-Leroy. "Félix Morisseau-Leroy." 1.

Haitian culture within the legitimizing context of Greek drama offered a powerful counter narrative to the prevailing perceptions of Kreyòl and Haiti. Buoyed by a Leftist and Nationalist movement, the play spoke to an audience of Haitian eager for new ways of narrating Haiti. The desire to celebrate Haitian culture may account for the positive reception in Port-au-Prince. *Antigòn* resonated with a population interested in changing old paradigms. On the other hand, audiences in France did not have the same desire to redefine cultural structures. Within a larger project of promoting French culture, *Théâtre des Nations* creates a context undermines the objective of the play. Ultimately, the intent of the festival was to reinforce historical structures, not change them. The French reviews exemplify this situation, showing little interest in understanding the play from a Haitian context. Consequently, representations in the play that were so easily identified by Haitians were practically unintelligible for French audiences. Language acts as the point of convergence for the questions of representations of women, culture, and sovereignty.

I argue that the different reception reflects more than simply the difference between the sophistication of the reviewers. The discrepancies reveal a more fundamental characteristic of both Haitian and French culture. In the case of Haitian society, culture exists within the framework of Haiti's history as a diverse, vulnerable, yet independent country. The political threat of loss of sovereignty defines Haitian culture. Resistance, negotiation, and survival resonate throughout all forms of Haitian art, literature, and above all language. Persisting despite adverse conditions, Haitian culture, like Vodou, persists due to its emphasis on practices and efficacy. Many Haitians do not participate in 'Culture' but do rely upon cultural practices to survive and celebrate life. For Haitian audiences who live in a constant negotiation between different cultural cosmologies and epistemologies, the creolization of Ancient Greece and

Haitian folk culture appeared natural even while it was foreign. For French audiences, whose relationship to cultural mixing and creation tended to be mono-directional, the creolized production read as confused and unnatural. For Morisseau-Leroy, *Antigòn* promotes Kreyòl as a means of securing Creole cultural sovereignty for Haiti.

Chapter Three

Anacaona: a Haitian Queen

In Léogâne, Haiti, a grand marble composite statue of Queen Anacaona overlooks the Place de Sainte Rose. Holding a staff with a sunflower in one hand, she raises her other hand above her head as if to welcome those who enter the plaza. A metal crown of feathers adorns her head. The sunflowers on the base and at the end of her staff recall the meaning of her name: Golden Flower. Dressed in beaded jewelry, a bra made of shells, and a split beaded skirt, the statue presents youth and racial ambiguity. Although the top of the statue depicts a more life-like figure, it entirely monochromatic, the color of red clay. The bottom-half which is more abstract, features smaller figures, stylized Taino warriors, carved in the space between her legs. The circular base of the statue features stylized painted scene in red and yellow of the arriving Spanish ships and the subsequent violent encounter between the Spanish and Taino. A golden plaque identifies Anacaona as the ‘Fleur d’Or’ and claims Léogâne as her birthplace. The entire statue sits upon a large cylindrical mosaic of blue and red tile. The multiple styles and materials produce a contemporary playful postmodern aesthetic that appear someone disjoint with the many components. Anacaona stands in the center of the square far above the heads of any passersby. At over five meters tall, the statue presides over the entire square. Erected in 2015 through a project funded by the German government, the statue is part of a rebuilding project in Léogâne, a small town not far outside of Port-au-Prince and the epicenter of the 2010 earthquake.²²⁹ The unveiling drew crowds, including President Martelly and the German ambassador. Speakers at the unveiling all seemed to agree that Anacaona symbolized the

²²⁹ The German project funded the playground and school that boarder the square, along with the ‘beautification’ of the square, which led to the commissioning of the statue.

strength and beauty of Haiti, and the statue stood to mark the hope and progress for the future of Léogâne.²³⁰ These statements and the very presence of the statue begs the question: How does a sixteenth century Taïno woman represent (or even relate) to contemporary Haitians? In effect, the statue corresponds to a broader history of representations of the pre-Haitian indigenous Anacaona serving Haitian national agendas.

Anacaona reappears throughout Haitian literature as both poetic critique of Haitian politics and a celebration of Haitian history, providing insight into Haitian culture. Plays and poems from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century reenact her story: a tribal leader who attempted to negotiate with Spanish forces, was betrayed by the Spanish, but died with honor in defiance of enslavement. Although archival evidence of Anacaona's life is scarce and at times inconclusive, the story of her act of resistance remains alive in literature and Haitian oral tradition.²³¹ In fact, her presence in oral tradition directly supports and inspires her role in Haitian literature. Represented as a martyr, artist, and resistance leader, Anacaona has served to evoke both pre and anti-colonial space. Frequently, her image appears in conjunction with antiauthoritarian resistance movements²³² in Haiti. However, the details and framework of these representations vary greatly, reflecting a diversity of both political and artistic agendas.

²³⁰ "Mitchel Mompremier s'impose," *Le Nouvelliste* (Port-au-Prince, Haiti), Jun. 3, 2013.; "Cér émonie inauguration place Sainte-Rose de Léogâne, jeudi 5 mars 2015" YouTube video, 20:26, unvailing ceremony of new plaza on March 5, 2015, posted by "Tele Ginen," March 6, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yAH-P0rzHQs>.

²³¹ There are discrepancies between the limited number of surviving firsthand accounts of Anacaona. See: Samuel M. Wilson, *Hispaniola : Caribbean Chiefdoms in the Age of Columbus* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990); Maria Cristina Fumagalli. *On the Edge: Writing the Border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic*. Vol. 4. Oxford University Press, 2015.

²³² She appears alongside representations of the Revolution during the US occupation of Haiti and the Duvalier dictatorship.

Due to the adaptability of her narrative, Anacaona offers particular advantages as a cultural icon that illustrates cultural relations and creolized reinventions of narrative. Representations of Anacaona remap contemporary Haitian politics onto a centuries-old narrative of an indigenous/colonial encounter, performing discourses of gender, race, and sovereignty in Haiti. The role of aesthetics, such as Neo-Classicism, frame depictions of Anacaona highlighting the power relations that influence the production and reception of these artistic representations. Drawn from a range of archival and oral histories and artistic conventions, the representations of Anacaona embody the interconnectedness of the Caribbean and the active ongoing creolized nature of producing culture as theorized by Glissant. In this chapter, I unpack the evolution of Anacaona as a Haitian icon. I argue that tracing depictions of Anacaona offers insight into the role of cultural creolization in producing narratives of the nation and sovereignty. This chapter aims to investigate the ways Anacaona enriches the discourse of Haitian sovereignty.

As a collection, the depictions of Anacaona illustrate Edouard Glissant's concept of Relation. Her image links seemingly disparate pieces of history to create a narrative of Haitian identity. The Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor of the rhizomic network depicts the tangled connections and histories that led to the placement of the statue of Anacaona at the center of Léogane. Over eighty percent of the buildings in Léogane were destroyed in the 2010 earthquake. AS part of efforts organized by the World Bank, the German and Spanish governments paid to rebuild the schools, hospital, and library of the town. The statue of Anacaona was only a small part of the project; however, the symbolism of choosing Anacaona is full of contradictions. Europeans paid for the memorial of a Taino queen who was murdered by European colonists. A smiling young woman covered in flowers with a hopeful expression represents a people who were erased through genocide on the island. To mark the rebuilding of

the city, the Haitian government selected Anacaona was not Haitian and whose legacy was hardly uplifting. Despite her ethnic origin and tragic history, Haitians frequently present Anacaona as part of the nation, an allegorical figure to address Haitian politics. Identifying Anacaona as Haitian presents history not as a linear sequence with a clear origin but a complex series of relationships. According to this model, Haiti is not a nation that simply began with the Revolution but a collection of events and ideas that make up Haiti. The unrecorded details of Anacaona such as her words, appearance, and actions, the fact that parts of her history are unknowable does not interfere with contribution to the national narrative. Instead, as Glissant would argue, the opacity of her story is part of the ill-defined process and condition of relations. “La déconstruction de tout rapport idéal qu’on prétendrait définir dans ce jeu et d’où à tout coup resurgiraient les goules du totalitaire.”²³³ The phantom presence of Anacaona representing Haiti as a nation is part of the non-binary significance. Anacaona represents neither the universal colonial encounter nor merely a specific event but a range of conditions and meanings that relate to each other and to larger questions of Caribbean politics. The Anacaona myth illustrates “the ideals of authority, comprehension and totalization in terms of participation, involvement and interdependence.”²³⁴ In other words, Anacaona represents the limitations of conceiving of colonialism in terms of only a specific history or specific colonial power. Her image can signal continued conflicts of race and gender that persist in Haitian national narratives. Moreover, the celebration of Anacaona despite her tragic death alludes to the continued ambivalence concerning Haitian nationalism. She was a martyr whose mission to protect her people failed. Is placing Anacaona at the site of the earthquake a celebration of Haitian history or an act of

²³³ Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation*, 145.

²³⁴J. Michael Dash, *Edouard Glissant* (Cambridge : University of Cambridge Press, 1995), 9.

mourning? Given that Haitian creole culture often exists as product of navigating opposition, I suggest that the statue symbolizes both.

Consumed and absorbed into Haitian (and Dominican) culture, the creolized Anacaona myth changes and adapts, resisting a single fixed interpretation. Her presence in oral folklore and literature works to deconstruct the concept of the 'ideal' or 'historically accurate' depiction of her actions. Moreover, the temporal component of the narrative that links the sixteenth century woman and nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first century contexts illustrates the role of participation and interdependence as a means to transcend historical moments. The many representations of Anacaona exemplify the visible/hidden, domination/liberation, and singular/plural concept in Relation. Anacaona encompasses opposites and contradictions. Although individual representations of Anacaona reveal specific artist's intentions and/or historical moments, the larger body of representations reveals a complex process of cultural creolization.

Anacaona embodies contradictions not typically present in Haitian 'Revolutionary' figures, particularly in her address of gender and ethnicity. Authors and artists have used the narrative to pose questions about national sovereignty, gender, and indigeneity; however, the relationship between Anacaona and 'Haitian' sovereignty is hardly straightforward. Representations of Anacaona reveal an example of creolization through a trans-temporal discussion of Haitian politics. Addressing moments of crisis through the Anacaona myth expands the discourse of the nation beyond the historical time frame of the nation-state. Thus, fifteenth century pre-Haitian history serves as a component of nationalism. Embracing Anacaona as Haitian means connecting Haitian nationalism with an extended history of the island and an expanded geography of the island. Revolutionary figures like Toussaint Louverture, Henri

Christophe, and Jean-Jacques Dessalines often represent a nationalism defined by the period of revolution and associated with masculinity, blackness, and military achievement. Archival evidence helps to unify a revolutionary figure's image but also can limit the concept of nationalism in Haiti. Even Toussaint whose political maneuvering or success as the "Spin Doctor" has created an image of multiple personas and therefore a more complex presentation of nationalism, as a product of French/Creole culture, black masculinity, and military prowess.²³⁵ However, revolution, masculinity, and blackness do not relate to the Anacaona myth. The Haitian revolution, France, or even the concept of Haiti as a nation are absent and unintelligible within the context of sixteenth century Spanish/Taino encounters. The conflict in the Anacaona narrative pertains to colonial violence rather than nation-states and revolution. Furthermore, the myth circumvents Haiti's complex relationship with France. Anacaona was killed long before the French reached the island such that the myth presents a critique of colonialism without vilifying the French.

As a woman living in a matrilineal society, Anacaona presents an alternative to the hyper-masculine revolutionary heroes in a society that frequently idealizes masculinity. According to most archival evidence and artistic representations, Anacaona held significant political and cultural power. Like the revolutionaries, Anacaona represents an ownership of the land strengthened by the spilling of her blood on the 'Haitian' earth. Her association with power and legitimacy question the implicit connection between Haitian sovereignty and masculinity. By presenting a woman as an honorable and admirable sovereign, the narrative suggests that femininity is not incompatible with sovereignty. In addition to her position of power, Anacaona was known as a sister, wife, and mother, which some narratives have used to highlight the

²³⁵ Jenson, *Beyond the slave narrative: Politics, sex, and manuscripts in the Haitian revolution*, 45.

importance of 'traditional feminine' roles and subvert any threat her image poses to patriarchal narratives. Moreover, her ethnic identity complicates the discourse of sovereignty that frequently presupposes a binary between white and black. This intervention on gender and race invites, even if it does not assume, a critique of racism and sexism in Haiti. In line with the theory of Relation, the Anacaona myth connects Haitian sovereignty to discussions of gender and race without fixing these discourses. Her versatility due to the vague historical details of her life enable a fluidity and opacity that produce a useful, if variable, national narrative. The flexibility of the myth facilitates a range of narratives as a means to unify or subvert different perspectives.

Frequently, the concept of indigeneity can be at odds with representations of multiple or creolized identity; however, the Anacaona myth relates to creolized national narratives. Elizabeth DeLoughrey explains that in many parts of the world claims of indigeneity help individuals and communities make legal claims to land or cultural practices. In these cases, indigeneity opposes a blended or creolized identity. In Haiti, claiming indigenous heritage is complicated by the mass genocide of the indigenous population that left no recorded Taino communities in Saint Domingue prior to the Revolution. Legacies of Taino culture remained in Maroon communities that are believed to have merged with indigenous populations in the late seventeenth century; however, merged with maroon communities the legacy is always creolized.²³⁶ Consequently, rather than as an identity associated with specific communities in Haiti, Taino culture signals a rhizomic representation of nationalism. Anacaona validates indigeneity as an antecedent of contemporary creolized Haitian culture. Her claim to the precolonial island offers a rooted connection to the space and her complicated relationship to Haitian culture emphasized the

236 Elizabeth DeLoughrey. *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 198.

relational or rhizomic connection to Haitian identity. Indigeneity is not consistently represented as part of the national discourse in Haiti, which makes Anacaona's prevalence more significant. Furthermore, incorporating Anacaona into creolized Haitian culture and national narratives helps to emphasize experience and perspective over certain formal definitions of citizenship. Her anti-colonial stance and relationship to the island confirm her role as Haitian. For twentieth century artists and authors living abroad in exile, a rejection of formal definitions of citizenship has been important. Due to economic and political conditions, many Haitians live outside the national borders of Haiti. The desire to define Haitian identity beyond the criterion of residence in Haiti becomes more essential for exiled Haitians. Anacaona acts as part of the shared history and imaginary marks Haitian cultural identity.

As an indigenous woman, she does not explicitly represent whiteness or blackness, a fact that enables her image to unite political and socio-economic classes divided by racism. Using the narrative valorizes resistance to colonial powers, while advocating that a connection to the land rather than racial identities defines Haitian nationalism. Although Haitian nationalism often promotes the image of Haiti as a 'Black Nation,' the incorporation of indigenous Taino history and culture into the national narrative of trans-Atlantic slavery and blackness complicates this image. Labeling indigeneity as Haitian illustrates the long history of creolized cultural identity. The Haitian revolutionaries considered the significance of Taïno heritage when renaming of the colony from Sainte Domingue to Haiti, based on the Taïno word Ayiti. The revolutionaries, like the nineteenth and twentieth century artists, strove to provide an alternative to French history and culture by emphasizing a mentality of resistance. The flexibility of Taïno culture served this need. The Taïno phrase "Aya Bombe" translated as 'death over enslavement' became a slogan

for the Revolutionaries illustrating how early Anacaona was creolized into the Haitian national narrative.

Amerindian culture offered a reprieve from many of the racial and cultural conflicts in revolutionary and post-revolutionary Haiti. Historically, representations of the Taïno provided unification for a diverse slave population. Even after a significant portion of the slave population was born on the island, dozens of different languages were spoken and cultures practiced.²³⁷ The heterogeneous culture offered limited unifying linguistic and cultural symbols. Tension between different cultural ethnic groups strained the revolutionary army. Mixed raced and free blacks held prominent positions in the Revolution, which complicated claims of African heritage. Race acted as a divisive pitfall of the movement despite leaders such as Toussaint Louverture's aim to position blackness as sources of pride for Haitians. Taïno culture offered a less controversial symbol for Haitian nationalism as non-black icon. Furthermore, the Taïno claim to the land respected the importance of the soil and earth, which feature prominently in Haitian Vodou and Haitian cosmology. Consequently, the Anacaona myth grounds Haitians in the soil, the ground of Haiti rather than the idyllic distant concept of Africa, often referenced as Ginen in creole culture.²³⁸ Ultimately, the myth of Anacaona is inclusive and references an identification based upon a relation to the Haitian earth rather than ideas of national or ethnic identity related to Frenchness or Blackness. Anachronistically, the story of Anacaona speaks to the struggles to define Haitian culture and sovereignty beyond the limitations of race.

²³⁷David Geggus, "The Naming of Haiti" *New West Indian Guide*, 71, no. 1-2 (1997), 44.

²³⁸Ginen refers in Vodou cosmology as the geographically non-specific West African homeland. The space signals a powerful and cherished (imagined) past space that is largely unrestricted by the realities of contemporary West Africa.

Additionally, Anacaona serves as marker of Haiti as a cultural space without the inherent limitations of representing a specific geographical location. Archival and archaeological evidence suggests that Anacaona was born in a region called Xaragua, the southern western part of the island, but she later ruled in Caonabo, a southern region in the middle of the island. However, historians believe that the Taïno kingdoms did not divide the island according to fixed geographical borders but by general regions that permitted shared space and access to other communities.²³⁹ The use of the myth as a representative for contemporary nation states that insist upon fixed borders is at odds with the Taïno tribes' flexible understanding of borders. Her connection to the 'land' that supports the nation's claim to the location is at best inconsistent with contemporary Haitian borders and at worst completely incompatible with contemporary geographic and national borders. Nevertheless, the historical evidence has not prevented the use of Anacaona as a Haitian national figure even while she symbolizes different geographical locations. Like the rhizome, the location of her origins become less important than her scope. Anacaona appears as frequently in Dominican as in Haitian culture. The narrative circulates through the Caribbean, addressing anti-colonial themes as well as a pre-colonial paradise. Because the 'land' that she represents is not well defined, she easily adapts to the needs of different nations, all the while symbolizing the 'land' of various nations in different depictions. For Haitians, the 'land' commonly refers to the town of Léogâne or more broadly the entire nation of Haiti. Dominicans often claim her as a national figure. Rarely, do representations acknowledge her as a shared heritage of Hispaniola²⁴⁰ or of the Caribbean. Instead, her symbolic

²³⁹ Wilson, *Hispaniola*.

²⁴⁰ Haiti and the Dominican Republic use different names to refer to the island. Following the convention in academic literature, I will use the name Hispaniola to respect convention, not make a political argument.

connection to the earth is appropriated by a variety of nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first century agendas that correspond to completely different geographic spaces. Both Haitian and Dominican poems describe her beauty as indistinguishable from that of the land, sometimes reiterating Western tropes of identifying ‘tropical’ islands as an idealized exotic female body.²⁴¹ Her appearance on advertisements for Dominican spas and resorts reinforces her role as representative of the beauty and luxury of the Caribbean, illustrating the versatility of the myth. She performs a past claim to land that usefully non-European.

As an allegory, Anacaona blurs the temporality of the sixteenth century precolonial past and the contemporary moment of the artist to produce a national myth. As both a historical and allegorical figure, she accomplishes different tasks. Her role in history supports an authoritative ‘truth’ claim that can be used to validate other messages. The distance of time and ambiguity of archival evidence that facilitate her role as an allegory help her image to bypass complications that can arise from strictly adhering to one consistent narrative. Her image offers a flexibility to unite and critique political parties and demographics making her useful as a national myth. Mythic figures create a vocabulary for the nation. Specifically, Anacaona enriches the national vocabulary for discussions of nationalism, race, and gender. This potential for social and political commentary supported by the authority of ‘history’ mirrors the role of other cultural myths. Haitian authors have relied upon Anacaona to create an origin myth in the same way Homer’s epics have served the Greeks or *La Chanson de Rolland* performs and solidifies Frenchness.²⁴²

²⁴¹ DeLoughrey. *Routes and Root*.

²⁴² Marie-Agnès Sourieau. "Anacaona, mythe national." *Journal of Haitian Studies* (1997): 124-131.; Christiane Ndiaye, "Anacaona de Jean Metellus: une tragedie caribbeenne en paroles baroques" *Les Theatres Francophones et Creolophones de la Caraibe* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2003).; Fumagalli. *On the Edge: Writing the Border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic*.

Defining Haiti in terms of a geographical locale, a spirit of resistance, and a non-European ancestry, Anacaona provides a useful national narrative. Christiane Ndiaye describes the function of the epic as literature that establishes “la certitude d’une communauté élue implantée sur une terre élue.”²⁴³ Thus, for Haiti, the epic attempts to legitimize both the space and the people. The success or failure of the hero in the epic is irrelevant for the strength of the claim. In fact, Edouard Glissant explains that epics frequently depict failure. He identified the epic as “le chant rédempteur de la défaite ou de la victoire ambiguë.”²⁴⁴ Martyred and consistently resistant to Spanish tyranny, Anacaona’s death can be read as in different ways. Although she died, the Spanish failed to convert her or enslave her. Furthermore, Glissant’s concept of ‘ambiguous victory’ speaks to both the Anacaona myth and a reoccurring theme in the Haitian imaginary: the ambiguity surrounding the Haitian revolution. Although the Haitian revolution accomplished a monumental feat, the continued conflicts in Haiti complicate the notion of victory. Many Haitians have continued to struggle to achieve the stability, equality, and prosperity that was the professed goal of the revolution.

Reproducing the myth of Anacaona links twentieth century iterations of struggle with pre-Revolutionary Haiti, transcending the specificities of the revolution. Representations of Anacaona rely upon the desire for both mimesis and alterity. Drawing strength from her presence in oral traditions and replicating the theme of resistance, the myth portrays the Haitian struggle as extending beyond the limits of modern nationalism. Like many mythic stories, the myth details war and sacrifice, however, less common in epic literature, Anacaona features a woman

²⁴³ Ndiaye, “Anacaona de Jean Metellus” 100.

²⁴⁴ Edouard Glissant, “Langues et langages” *Introduction à une poétique du divers* (Montreal : PUM 1995), 28.

protagonist.²⁴⁵ In contrast to the many representations of male revolutionary heroes, the myth frames the role of sovereign as accessible to women. Moreover, the myth celebrates Anacaona even as she fails to defeat the Spanish. Valued not only for her beauty or status, the narrative describes a sovereign whose strength rests in her intelligence and cultural capital.

Representations of Anacaona illustrate the Haitian belief in the importance of culture, specifically the mastery of language as an essential tool of a sovereign. Even though archival evidence suggests that she most likely accompanied her warriors into battle, Haitian representations tend to emphasize her cultural and artistic capabilities over her military ones. Representations portray Anacaona as a musician, dancer, and storyteller. Emphasizing an affinity for arts and language, the myth depicts a sovereign whose strength lies in her intelligence, facility with language, and cultural capital. Her image as an artist circulates across the Caribbean. In Cuba, the first all-female music group chose the name Anacaona after several people remarked that the women appeared Amerindian due to their straight dark hair and golden skin. Therefore, this jazz dance band of seven women selected Anacaona as a symbol for both artistic expression and ethnic identity.²⁴⁶ In Léogâne, Haiti, the stature of Anacaona, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, drew from the myth to symbolize the local history of the town as well as the need for a beautification project after the 2010 earthquake.²⁴⁷ In several iterations of the narrative, Anacaona is an inventor of words, a powerful skill. Giving attention to Anacaona's artistic talents, specifically her ability to produce language, reveals the importance Haitians

²⁴⁵ Sara Poor, and Jana Schulman. *Women and the Medieval Epic: Gender, Genre, and the Limits of Epic Masculinity*. (Springer, 2016).

²⁴⁶ Alicia Castro. *Anacaona: The Amazing Adventures of Cuba's First All-Girl Dance Band* (London: Atlantic Books, 2002).

²⁴⁷ Léogâne has a history and reputation for being a town of artists.

assign to culture and language as a means to judge and secure sovereignty. Haitians who are literate in French have access to political power.²⁴⁸ Toussaint's ability to speak compellingly to both French diplomats and Haitian soldiers enabled his rise during the revolution.²⁴⁹ During the U.S. occupation of Haiti, Americans were surprised by prevalence of metaphor and poetry in parliamentary discussions.²⁵⁰ Aware of the role of language in the formation of Haiti, Haitian discussions of sovereignty consider the capacity to invent and manipulate language.²⁵¹ Anacaona's acts of resistance took shape in language, lending significance to the twentieth century plays and poetry that critiqued threats to Haitian sovereignty. The controversial relationship between Haitian Kreyol and the Haitian government illustrates the contemporary debate concerning the restriction of political access through language. As political contexts change, the implications of representing a Taïno woman as a Haitian ancestor shift, yet, as a mythic figure, her allure continues to show the relationship between sovereignty and culture and the desire for national narratives.

Twentieth century artistic representations of Anacaona appear to rely upon artistic invention and oral traditions more than archival evidence. However, understanding the complexity of the historical evidence can help to explain the diversity among the different versions of the narrative. Possibly one of the factors that hinders the application of historical

²⁴⁸ Until 1987 all official Haitian governmental actions were performed, written, and discussed in French. To participate in politics through running for office, voting, and learning about politics necessitated fluency in French. Even after legislation officially recognized Haitian Kreyol as a national language, fluency in French serves as marker of social status.

²⁴⁹ Nick Nesbitt. "Universal emancipation." *The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008).; Jenson, Deborah. *Beyond the slave narrative*.

²⁵⁰ Dash. *Haiti and the United States*.

²⁵¹ Both François Duvalier and Aristide relied on rhetoric and cultural symbols to acquire and secure political capital.

evidence in Haitian works, is language. All of the archival evidence is in Spanish and categorized as Spanish history. Even though he scarcely mentions her, Bartolomé de las Casas provided the most comprehensive account of Anacaona in his history, entitled *Historia de las Indias*. Writing several works on Spanish colonization and the Amerindian people, Las Casas chronicled the initial contact between Spanish and Taíno. Years after Columbus arrived in the Caribbean, Las Casas compiled Columbus's letters to the crown describing his experiences, Columbus's son's journals describing his father's travels, and a few other letters from Spanish officials on the island to write a history of the island. Las Casas supplemented his archival work with his own personal experience with indigenous populations. As a champion of the Amerindian population, Las Casas's writings tend to use language signaling his persona as an advocate but also drawing from racist and problematic tropes of the period.²⁵² Although flawed, Las Casas's descriptions offer more insight on the conditions of Taíno tribes than the writings of Columbus who "assessed his encounter with the New World in the terms he knew best, religion and profit."²⁵³ Given that few records have survived from this period, reconstructing the encounter between the Taíno and the Spanish is challenging. Therefore, historians frequently look to Columbus's letters to the crown, despite the documents' obvious limitation as historical evidence given that Columbus intended to impress and assuage the crown in order to obtain more funds, not provide accurate descriptions of his experiences.

Even in Las Casas's text, only a few short paragraphs provide information on Anacaona. describing her as a beautiful queen whose talent in singing, dancing, and storytelling made her a

²⁵² Daniel Castro. *Another Face of Empire: Bartolomé de Las Casas, Indigenous Rights, and Ecclesiastical Imperialism* (Duke University Press, 2007).

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 377.

favorite among her people. According to Las Casas, she negotiated a peace with the Spanish; however, at the banquet celebrating this peace, the Spanish betrayed her. After capturing and slaughtering her unarmed people, the Spanish offered her the choice to live as a Spanish concubine or die along with her tribe. She chose death.²⁵⁴ Her martyrdom is replayed in Haitian oral tradition. Although the details of her life and death remain vague, making her an ideal subject for legend, the literary and artistic depictions of her tend to reiterate the same themes. The historical reconstruction of Anacaona's life based on more recent scholarly work relies heavily upon studies of other Caribbean Taïno populations. Even though historical archival accounts do not directly inform all of the artistic representations, the history does influence the larger discourse and become an important characteristic of the narrative. In popular histories, Anacaona appears as a standard component of Haitian history texts. School textbooks portray Anacaona and the Spanish encounter as the beginning of Haitian history.²⁵⁵ When politician Leger wrote his history of Haiti in 1907, claiming that Haitian history was underrepresented and too frequently told by foreigners rather than Haitians, he began his text with the Taïno.²⁵⁶ Throughout the twentieth century, the Taïno and Anacaona have been presented as part of Haitian history. In terms of the literary and artistic representations, history is used as a means to claim authority, if not always a resource to reproduce accuracy.

Tracing both the path of Columbus as well as his propaganda campaign for the benefit of the Spanish monarch helps to interpret Columbus's accounts and interactions. In August of 1492,

²⁵⁴ Sourieau. "Anacaona, mythe national."

²⁵⁵ Justin Chrysostome Dorsainvil, *Manuel d'histoire d'Haiti* (Port-au-Prince: Procure des Freres de l'Instruction Chrietienne, 1934).

²⁵⁶ Jacques Nicolas Léger, *Haiti: son histoire et ses détracteurs* (New York: Neale Publishing, 1907).

the expedition headed by Columbus (or Cristóbal Colón as he called himself) arrived in the Bahamas, encountering the Taíno people. Next sailing to Cuba and a few months later reaching Hispaniola, Columbus slowly learned the geography of the Caribbean and the societies that inhabited it. Stories from the Arawakan people on Cuba of the ruthlessness of the islanders on Hispaniola influenced Columbus and his companions.²⁵⁷ Samuel Wilson proposes that these stories inspired the Cannibal myths of the Caríbe tribes. Regardless of the veracity of these warnings, Columbus did find his attempt to make contact on Hispaniola more complicated than on previous islands. Mistrustful of the Spanish, the islanders avoided and at first rejected Columbus's overtures. Eventually, relationships were established leading to the first attempt to organize a more permanent Spanish camp on Hispaniola.

The Taíno had divided the island into five distinct kingdoms ruled by caciques. Relationships between the kingdoms were complex, and possible rivalries between caciques may have impacted the reception of the Spanish on the island. Anacaona could claim influence over two regions, being the sister of one cacique and the wife of another in a matrilineal system of inheritance.²⁵⁸ In 1496, Columbus met with Anacaona and her brother Bohechio to arrange a treaty at the same time that Spanish forces were demanding tributes from different kingdoms throughout the island, threatening the Taíno with violence and enslavement. Struggling to maintain a colony and desperate to ship gold back to Spain, the Spanish requested gold and in some cases food. Island-wide famine complicated the already precarious relationships between Taíno and Spanish, leading to more violence. Initially, the Spanish maintained a marginally

²⁵⁷ Wilson. *Hispaniola*, 117.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

peaceful relationship with Anacaona's and her brother's tribe. However, dissension among the Spanish lead to divided and uncertain leadership with many Spanish attempting to seek their fortune at the expense of previous peace agreements. Small bands of Spanish soldiers raided and pillaged different chiefdoms, destroying hope for peace and further decimating the Taïno population. Over time the politics of the Spanish shifted from an interest in tributes to a desire to enforce an encomienda system, in which Amerindians farmed or mined gold directly under Spanish control. After several years of peaceful relations and under the guise of friendship, the Spanish arrived in the Xaragua region to attend a banquet hosted by Anacaona and attended by many of the regional chieftains. The policy of Nicolás de Ovando, one of newly arrived noblemen, was to "establish large areas of food production to supply the mines."²⁵⁹ Xaragua was one of the few regions not overtly ruled by the Spanish.²⁶⁰ Anacaona negotiated a treaty with Ovando in which she retained control but would agree to trade with the Spanish. At the banquet Anacaona to celebrate the agreement, Ovando ambushed her. Following the lavish meal, the Spanish attacked the unarmed Taïno people.

Both the unique original relationship and then the extreme case of betrayal highlight the Anacaona narrative as distinct from other encounter narratives. The conflicts between different archival accounts of Anacaona, such as being executed in front of her people versus held and transported to Santo Domingo to be hanged publicly, contribute to the mystique of her death.²⁶¹ Many versions of the myth claim that Ovando promised to spare Anacaona if she became his concubine but she refused. Jan Carew suggests that because of her direct threat to Spanish rule

²⁵⁹ Samuel Wilson, *Hispaniola*, 133.

²⁶⁰ Sourieau, "Anacaona, mythe national."

²⁶¹ Wilson, *Hispaniola*, 132-133.

and potential as a symbol for Amerindian resistance, the Spanish specifically chose to make her execution public. Evidently, such attempts to tarnish her name (whether accurate or imagined) only contributed to her martyrdom.²⁶²

The threat of sexual violence depicted in several versions of the myth speaks to the conditions of women in sixteenth-century Spain but more importantly in twentieth-century Haiti. Sexual violence was common aspect of sixteenth-century encounters, evidenced by the writings of Columbus and his counterparts. As with prevalent racist prejudices and tropes that supported rhetorical justifications for slavery, misogyny and firmly held gender stereotypes circulating in Spain informed the treatment of Amerindian women.²⁶³ From the earliest encounters, Columbus set a precedent of sexism in his already violent and dehumanizing treatment of native peoples. “Native women of colour would henceforth be accorded even less in the way of human rights than their male counterparts.”²⁶⁴ Columbus treated Amerindian women as separate and less than men. Not only has this type of sexual violence continued, it resonates with several moments in Haitian history that writers have turned to the Anacaona myth. Using sexual violence as a tool to secure sovereignty was common practice during the U.S. occupation of Haiti as well as during the Duvalier dictatorship.²⁶⁵ Sexism, be it representing power and authority as masculine or the use of sexual violence as a means to take or maintain power, has for centuries been entwined with Haitian sovereignty.

²⁶² Jan Carew, "Columbus and the origins of racism in the Americas: part two." *Race & Class* 30, no. 1 (1988): 33-57.

²⁶³ Castro, *Another Face of Empire*, 539

²⁶⁴ Carew, "Columbus and the origins of racism in the Americas: part two." 35.

²⁶⁵ Renda, *Taking Haiti*; Trouillot, *Haiti: State against nation*.

Within this context of racism and sexism, figures like Anacaona explicitly threaten a misogynist and Machiavellian (might is right) ideology, all the while revealing an underlying Haitian morality. Carew insists that Anacaona's threat to the Spanish patriarchy necessitated her particularly public execution.

But because Queen Anacaona represented all that was noble, upright, civilized, honorable and compassionate, she had to be disgraced and subjected to a vile and ignominious death to prevent her from becoming a symbol of resistance for all women. The legends still live, however, of how Anacaona died shouting defiance at her executioners and condemning Ovando's treachery. In the legends about her that have been preserved through an oral tradition, there are tales about how all those who took part in her betrayal and execution met untimely deaths and their descendants were cursed.²⁶⁶

By staging their dominance through a public execution, the Spanish attempted to reassert their sovereignty of the island. However, Anacaona or at least her defenders equally understood the value of public performance which explains the reports of her shouts of defiance even as she was heading to her death. The idea, suggested in the myth, that the actions of the Spanish led to a cursed existence or even death illustrates a Haitian Vodou understanding of fate. The curse can enable the performance of defiance to continue long past the original event. Although violence and injustice are rampant, Haitian cosmology proposes that a balance between good/evil, often enforced through spirits and God, does exist. Curses offer a means to achieve this balance. Thus, the myth serves not only as an inspirational symbol of resistance to oppression but also a clear warning to the enemy: you cannot escape your sins. This depiction of Haitian morality transcends Anacaona's historical moment, applying to a wide range of instances of violence in Haitian history. Despite this interpretation of the myth's critique of sexism and sexual violence, representations of Anacaona do not always display a proto-feminist message.

²⁶⁶ Carew, "Columbus and the origins of racism in the Americas: part two," 36.

In some cases, versions of the myth levy charges of violence and cruelty against the Spanish without giving agency to Anacaona as a figure of resistance or sovereignty. Instead, these representations perpetuate sexist stereotypes, depicting Anacaona as a symbol of a lost innocence and primitive paradise. Representations from the early twentieth century incorporate gendered and racist tropes of the weak but beautiful Amerindian woman and the noble but naive Amerindian man. A Haitian instructional textbook from 1924 mentions Anacaona twice: first, to name her as a *samba*, a spiritual singer and poet but also to recount her demise. Describing the meeting between Anacaona and Ovando, the text claims that she permitted the fateful meeting because she was ‘flattered’ by the honor of Ovando’s attention. Several Haitian histories written at the beginning of the twentieth century repeat this gendered characterization of Anacaona, implying that her gender led to her inability to defeat the Spanish.²⁶⁷ Nineteenth century French scholar De Lorgues is among those who most explicitly blames Anacaona’s ‘failure’ as a sovereign on her gender.

Sûre de sa puissance, l’enchanteresse, négligeant les attributs extérieurs de la souveraineté, ne portait, au lieu du diadème royal, qu’une couronne de fleurs; pour collier, pour bracelets, pour brodequins, pour ceinture, elle n’avait que des fleurs. Sur le luisant ébène de sa chevelure tranchaient de blanches fleurs entremêlées d’églantines incarnat. Un tissu de fleurs ceignait ses reins. Son sceptre se formait d’une tige fleurie. Il semblait que la fleur de Reines fut aussi la reine des fleurs.²⁶⁸

The author uses vanity and flowers describe Anacaona not her ability to lead or inspire. In these contexts, her facility with language is presented as charm instead of tactical political cunning.

The Haitian textbook further draws from Western stereotypes of the ‘noble savage.’ After the treachery of the Spanish, the textbook states, “Ainsi disparut toute la noblesse indienne du

²⁶⁷ Léger, *Haiti: son histoire et ses détracteurs*; Louis Morpeau, *Anthologie d’un siècle de poésie Haitienne* (Paris: Bossard, 1925); Duraciné Vaval, *Histoire de la Littérature Haitienne ou l’ame noire* (Port-au-Prince: Heraux, 1933).

²⁶⁸ Roselly de Lorgues, *Anthologie d’un siècle de poésie Haitienne* (Paris: Bossard, 1925), 12.

Xaragua.”²⁶⁹ Gender and race frequently color the depictions of Anacaona and the Taïno. In some cases, the horrific massacre of the Taïno is characterized as a romantic tragedy.

The modeling of ‘Nature’ as a tool of maritime and colonial narratives defines the reading of Anacaona and Amerindian peoples, even for Haitian postcolonial writers. DeLoughrey describes the tropes as part of a broader trend: “The difficulty in reconciling the natural aesthetics of a landscape that has been so dramatically altered with the violence of colonial history has proven a continuing paradox for Caribbean writers. For instance, in the French-Caribbean literary tradition, the first black writers perpetuated the European romanticization of the landscape.”²⁷⁰ The continuation of this Western characterization of the space works alongside a gendered characterization of maritime exploration and colonization. Or as DeLoughrey explains: “an assumed one-to-one relationship between woman and land (and island) was one of the originary tropes colonial Caribbean discourse. Centuries later, few of these ideologemes have disappeared; the gendering of Caribbean nature, as well as idealizing its utopian contours, continues to the present.”²⁷¹ Representations of Anacaona frequently exhibit this pattern of discourse. Working as a tether to the land, she serves a Haitian nationalist agenda. However, the relationship between Anacaona and the land frequently relies upon the colonial trope, in which her body substitutes for the land. By conflating Anacaona’s body with the pre-colonial Caribbean space, writers articulate the violence of colonialism as sexual violence. Unfortunately, these representations do not always work to unpack and often instead perpetuate

²⁶⁹ Dorsainvil, *Manuel d’histoire d’Haïti*, 25.

²⁷⁰ Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Renee Gosson, George Handley, *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 8-9.

²⁷¹ DeLoughrey, *Caribbean Literature and the Environment*, 11.

this violence. Connecting Anacaona's body to the land reinforces misogynistic gendered tropes of women's bodies and island spaces as conflicting with sovereignty. Her 'fertile' and 'innocent' but 'exotic' female body represents the 'untouched' precolonial Hispaniola that is unprotected and thus violated.

The pattern of identifying and describing the landscape of the Caribbean with women's bodies relates to a long history of sexualization of Amerindian women. The first encounters between Spanish conquistadors and Amerindians set precedents that continue in policy and literary imaginaries for generations. Representations of Anacaona exemplify continued racism and misogyny in the treatment of Amerindian women but also an investment in addressing a history and connection to the land. Although problematic in their use of sexist and racist tropes, the poems do manage to link the country Haiti with images of Taïno culture. Through these depictions, Haitian culture becomes an extension of Taïno culture: Haitian claims for authority, legitimacy, and sovereignty by the appropriation of Anacaona and Taïno culture.

Several of the nineteenth and early twentieth century Haitian poets construct an image of beauty and innocence ignoring the encounter narrative to capture an idyllic primitive Eden. Playing off of the meaning of her name, these poets describe her as a flower or landscape. The Haitian poet Coriolan Ardouin (1812-1835) presents Anacaona as a beautiful naive virgin surrounded by a calm and pristine nature.²⁷² Ardouin appears to assume the reader's familiarity with the Anacaona narrative. Thus, his extensive description of nature offers a contrast to the known impending doom of Anacaona. Interestingly, his descriptions tend to paint an image of Europe rather than a typical Haitian landscape. Although he mentions the blue waves of the

²⁷² Coriolan Ardouin, "Floranna La Fiancée," *Anthologie d'un siècle de poésie haïtienne*, 53-55.

ocean, the scene also includes roses, jasmine, and willow trees but avoids mentioning any flora native to the Caribbean. The description of a pre-Columbian island features heavily in Haitian poems written in the beginning of the twentieth century, particularly after the U.S. Occupation of Haiti. Evoking a melancholic paradise lost imagery, poets such as Oswald Durand envision a tragic but untouched Quisqueya.²⁷³ Tertullien Guilbaud's poem *Anacaona* presents an example of the ultimate beautiful youthful exotic yet innocent female body who was slaughtered by Spanish greed and lust. The insistence on youth, innocence, and naiveté, conflicts with the historical evidence that suggests Anacaona was not only a powerful political figure but also a celebrated priestess and mother.²⁷⁴

By the 1920s the poems of Anacaona evolve to accentuate the role of the Spanish. The U.S. Occupation shifted the Haitian literary scene, prompting a surge in activist journalism and literary critique of the occupation. Earlier literary works presented a malaise due to the occupation that later became a more specific and aggravated attack. "In this early writing one has the impression of a deeply felt resentment that has been carefully ordered into harmonious and erudite literary forms – indeed, effectively undermined." However, this shifts into what Dash describes a "barely suppressed hysteria" in the late 1920s.²⁷⁵ Anacaona appears differently after the occupation. Earlier works emphasize her romanticized role as a 'noble savage' paying particular attention to the themes of innocence and female bodies depicted as flowers. Although these themes do not disappear in later works, a new emphasis on the cruelty of the Spanish takes focus. The narrative served to critique the U.S. presence while maintaining the 'cultured'

²⁷³ Oswald Durand, "Dans L'implacable Azur" *Histoire de la littérature haïtienne*, 47.

²⁷⁴ Wilson, *Hispaniola*, 112-134.

²⁷⁵ Dash, *Literature and Ideology in Haiti*, 54.

distanced from active political discussions previously adopted by the Haitian elite. Frédéric Burr-Reynaud who later co-wrote a play about Anacaona describes her physical beauty, the beauty of the island, and hints at her impending doom in his poetry. Unlike the earlier poets, Burr-Reynaud actually references the island, instead of conflating European flora with the Caribbean landscape. Mentioning “l’ombre du mapou” he marks Anacaona’s land as Haitian.²⁷⁶ The poetry seems to shift from interest in replicating a European romantic aesthetic to representation of Anacaona as a reflection of contemporary politics. “The analogy was particularly apt since both the American intervention and the Spanish conquest used the pretext of a civilizing mission to mask their quest for empire. The poems which invoked this analogy uniformly presented the image of a glorious, serene, autochthonous culture brutally disrupted by alien military strength.”²⁷⁷ Christian Werleigh’s work exemplifies this change as he contextualized Anacaona as not only Haitian history but also Haitian legend. “Et ton nom, Anacaona, quand je le vois,/ C’est l’histoire qui s’ouvre à mes yeux toute grande,/ C’est le Conquistador lâche et traître à la fois,/ Qui brise sous des morts les Fleurs de la Légende.”²⁷⁸ Werleigh’s poems are indicative of a broader trend in representing Anacaona as a figure of resistance to colonialism rather than a local emblem of a romanticized idyllic past.

The role of a Taïno past changed from a source for the romantic poet as an ‘Other’ to a source for Haitian nationalism as a contributor to a Haitian ‘Self.’ This shift was particularly clear in the theater. Prior to the twentieth century most Haitian playwrights directly emulated

²⁷⁶ The mapou is a tree found in Haiti that is central to Haitian Vodou celebrations. Frédéric Burr-Reynaud, “La Reine” *Anthologie d’un siècle de poésie haïtienne*, 283.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁷⁸ Christian Werleigh, “Anacaona” *Literature and Ideology in Haiti*, 56.

European works. The rise of a politically conscious elite largely spurred by the U.S. occupation strongly influenced Haitian theater. According to Edouard Glissant, folklore and theater are both crucial parts of nation building. Due to the occupation, Haitian writers were particularly interested in defending and thus defining the nation. Theater served as a means to produce a collective history and character or as Benedict Anderson defines it: an ‘imagined community.’²⁷⁹ Although Anderson focuses on the significance of the newspaper, in nineteenth and twentieth century Haiti, in which all but a select elite were illiterate, oral folklore and theater acted a vital device in establishing community.²⁸⁰ The theater translated the popular image of Anacaona found in oral folklore into a literary symbol of the elite, exemplifying Glissant’s claim that, “Le folklore “manifeste” et le théâtre « réfléchit » la visée.”²⁸¹ In short, the goal of the twentieth century theatrical depictions of Anacaona expanded her more limited image found in nineteenth-century poetry.

Instead of only crafting an image of the beautiful Anacaona, the theater pieces included a focus on the story of encounter and cruelty as a way to define the Haitian experience. Most of the texts go to great lengths to describe the villainy of the Spanish. Over the course of the next century portraying Anacaona’s beauty became equally as important as illustrating colonial violence. The representations correspond to a larger question of Haitian sovereignty. The plays offer a response to periods in history when Haitian sovereignty is in political crisis. Anacaona becomes particularly significant during the U.S. occupation and the Duvalier dictatorship. For

²⁷⁹ Benedict Anderson. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Verso Books, 2006).

²⁸⁰ Today in Haiti, nearly half of Haitians are illiterate. See: “Statistics” *UNICEF* (Dec 2013), www.unicef.org/infobycountry/haiti_statistics.html#117.

²⁸¹ Édouard Glissant. *Le discours antillais* (Paris : Gallimard, 1997), 684.

the plays responding to politics, *Anacaona* serves as means to define Haitians as both subscribing to a mentality of resistance and claiming a connection and ownership of the land. This does not always indicate an abandonment of French aesthetics or erase problematic representations of race and gender. In fact, several of the plays attempt to distinguish the Spanish as a particular case, which could inherently prevent presumed criticism of France. Separating the cruelty of the Spanish from the Spanish priests, the plays shield Catholicism from blame, which shields a history of French Catholicism.

Playwright St. Arnaud Numa uses a reversal of racist European tropes for indigenous peoples in his play *Anacaona, reine martyre* written during the Duvalier regime in 1981. Numa depicts the Spanish as the uncivilized savage as opposed to the Amerindian characters. The treachery of the Spanish is revealed in the very last scene when *Anacaona* questions the Spanish soldiers and their leader Ovando: “ Messieurs les civilisés, vous n’avez point honte de tuer une pauvre femme sans défense ?” Ovando is unsympathetic to *Anacaona*’s pleas for mercy, leading the Amerindians to call Ovando “savage” and “barbarian,” language historically used to describe Amerindians by Europeans. The text even accuses the Spanish of being “cannibals” and “monsters”, referencing the sixteenth century European Caribe/cannibal trope. *Anacaona* specifically proposes the comparison asking the soldiers “de nous deux, Indiens et Espagnols, qui sont les plus sauvages, les plus barbares?”²⁸² Numa critique of the Spanish proposes the concept that violence, specifically colonial violence, is antithetical to a civilized society. Within the context of the brutal Duvalier regime, Numa’s statement becomes particularly poignant.

²⁸² St Arnaud Numa. "Anacaona, reine martyre: tragédie en 3 actes." (1981).

Linking the violence and uncivilized behavior, the play suggests that violence has no legitimate claim to sovereignty. According the play, sovereignty should (if not always is) be part of a culture of civility.

The intent to redefine, and in some cases reverse, the concept of civilized as a means to produce a specific culture for sovereignty appears in several of the plays. Although written several decades earlier and in response to the U.S. occupation rather than the Duvalier dictatorship, Frédéric Burr-Reynaud and Dominique Hippolyte employ similar reversals of stereotypes in their play *Anacaona, poème dramatique, en vers, en trois actes et un tableau* (1927). By repeating the words ‘barbarian’ and ‘barbaric’ to describe the actions of the Spanish, the text clearly labels the Spanish as uncivilized, thus undeserving of authority. The most extreme example of this depiction of ‘uncivilized’ behavior appears in the final scene. After Ovando has murdered Anacaona because she has refused his offer to be his concubine, Ovando kisses Anacaona’s corpse. The act suggests necrophilia, creating an extreme image of the horrors of the Spanish. Until this point, the play has closely followed a French neoclassical aesthetic. The play is written in Alexandrian, the verse celebrated by the neoclassicists. The playwrights respect the unities and the concept of *bienséance*. Suddenly, the text upends the consistent aesthetic with the depiction of this grotesque kiss. The scene establishes an extreme image of the Spanish, linking colonizers with monsters. The portrayal is striking given that the implications of the U.S. occupation. During the 1920s and 30s the U.S. marines stationed in Haiti committed horrific acts of violence against Haitians.²⁸³ To address U.S. companies demand for roads and infrastructure, the U.S. government revived an ancient law known as *Corvée* to establish

²⁸³ During the U.S. occupation, marines established slavery and ruled certain regions of Haiti in a manner that has been compared to the novel *Heart of Darkness*. See Renda, *Taking Haiti*.

mandatory unpaid (slave) labor, leading to abductions, chain gangs, and extreme violence.²⁸⁴ As DeLoughrey explains, representations of indigeneity often worked to displace images of whiteness in Caribbean literature, creating a “native nationalism as a counternarrative to U.S. corporate imperialism.”²⁸⁵ Because the U.S. outlawed free speech and public protest, veiled artistic critiques became a tool of the resistance. For Burr-Reynaud and Dominique the representation of Anacaona not only displaced whiteness but also worked to reverse the association between whiteness and civilization. Depicting the Spanish as inhumane undermined the official claim that invasion by military powers corresponded to a civilizing mission and a more legitimate claim for sovereignty. The traditional narrative of indigenous people as barbaric is reversed.

The dangers of open political resistance lead to the formation of secret organizations and an emphasis on artistic expression. Either due to linguistic barriers or naivete, Marines censored and closed newspapers but largely ignored artistic works.²⁸⁶ Thinly veiled critiques of the U.S. presence appeared in poems, novels, songs, and plays. The theater offered an attractive space to spread anti-U.S. messages. The Haitian elite tended to be fond of the theater and was not quick to have U.S. marines close down their entertainment. Consequently, the Haitian theater experienced a significant revival in which many new plays were written and performed. Anti-American sentiment could be disguised as anti-French or anti-Spanish colonialism. Among these new

²⁸⁴ Prior to the U.S. occupation of Haiti, all Haitian constitutions stated that only Haitian citizens could own land in Haiti in order to limit foreign influence. U.S. corporations wanted to be able to own land in Haiti. See: Renda, *Taking Haiti*.

²⁸⁵ DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots*, 231.

²⁸⁶ It is possible that the largely anglophone Marine population was not capable of successful censorship without the support of local Haitians. Although some Haitians supported with the U.S., the Haitian taboo of censoring art may have prevented Haitian assistance in censoring theatrical and literary works.

plays, a new theme of Haitian nationalism emerged. Alongside Haitian revolutionary figures, Anacaona took to the stage.

Part of the appeal of Anacaona was the narrative's ability to speak to many political contexts but the authors and playwrights were also following a trend articulated by Jean Price-Mars. He advocates in his text *Ainsi, Parla l'oncle* for the use of Haitian folk culture, explaining that "this immense reservoir of folk-lore in which the motive for our decisions are compressed after centuries, in which the elements of our sensibility are elaborated, in which the fabric of our popular character, our national mind, is structured," is an important resource.²⁸⁷ His critique that Haitians had been undervaluing local culture and history in favor of European sources is useful in considering the shift in the role of the Anacaona myth. Nineteenth-century Haitian poetry tended to treat her as a means to replicate European poetry. Over the course of the twentieth century representations of the myth in literature attempted to develop the narrative from folk culture. Furthermore, these representations employed her as a symbol of the nation. Incorporating pre-colonial legend into Haitian nationalism validated a distinctly non-European component of Haitian (or at least island) history. Price-Mars laments in the introduction to his book:

Through a disconcerting paradox, these people who have, if not the most beautiful, at least the most appealing, the most moving history in the world – one of transplantation of a race of humans to a strange land under the worst physical conditions – these people feel a barely concealed discomfort, even shame, in hearing of their distant past.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ Price-Mars. *Ainsi parla l'oncle*, 178.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

As with many postcolonial nations, colonial legacies influenced the evaluation of cultural production in favor of everything European and French, devaluing local culture, especially any link to West Africa. Racism and an ambivalent relationship with Haiti's slave history supported the continued disregard for Haitian folk culture. The brutal conditions of the U.S. American occupation made many Haitians sympathetic to Price-Mars's argument. By 1930, a new interest in Haitian history and Haitian folk culture surfaced in many circles. In spite of this new appreciation for Haitian history and culture, stories, plays, and representations of Haitian women remained scarce. Contemporary women were largely excluded from political life and the predominantly male writers and artists preferred to retell historical narratives of political heroes rather than recount the lives of peasant women. For this reason, the Anacaona myth stands out as an interesting case. Not only a woman but a woman in a position of power, Anacaona presents a place for women in Haitian history and possibly Haitian politics. Although earlier poems and plays confine Anacaona with gendered descriptions of her beauty or choose to define her by her male family members, plays written in the later twentieth century propose more feminist readings of the myth. Specifically, Jean Métellus, a successful Haitian playwright and novelist, offers a more complex portrayal of Anacaona.

Jean Métellus emphasizes the role of language, not simply as a reversal of stereotypes, but as a tool of sovereignty. In this play, Anacaona's act of resistance becomes akin to a performative speech act by which Métellus prioritizes the role of language. Written during the Duvalier dictatorship, the play addresses a specific threat to Haitian sovereignty that is not a product of colonization in the traditional sense but does relate to an erosion of humane policy and a need for resistance to brutality. The nationalism that Métellus proposes in response to the Duvalier regime differs from the national consciousness that was required to combat the U.S.

occupation. Rather than unify against a foreign power, Haitians rallied against a violent version of power. Métellus questioned what leadership and sovereignty should look like. The play features the themes of resistance and barbarity; however, the intention is not only to depict negative representations but also positive ones, offering a more complex understanding of character. Métellus does not emphasize stereotypes in the manner of Burr-Reynaud and Hippolyte. Instead the Amerindian narrator refers to the Spanish as “horri­fying monsters vomited up by the sea.”²⁸⁹ Violence and inhumane actions are presented as universal problems. Métellus responds to the justification for the Duvalier dictatorship that claims Haiti is unique and extreme rather than a product of global conditions and common circumstances.

Even though this Anacaona repeats many of the themes of barbarity and colonialism, the general tone seems to incite rather than pacify certain groups, particularly in the case of the church. Interestingly, Burr-Reynaud and Hippolyte’s and Numa’s texts make a distinction between Catholicism and the Spanish. Many of the representations avoid criticizing Catholicism alongside colonialism. In Numa’s play, the priest insults the Spanish conquistadors as frequently as any of the other characters. By calling the Spanish leader Ovando “human trash,” the priest claims a superiority for Catholicism over other colonists. The repeated labeling of the Spanish as violent and uncivilized undermines the identity of the Spanish as Catholics or possibly even Europeans. Interestingly, the image of the benevolent priest (supported by Las Casas) insists upon a distinction between Catholicism and the culture of Spanish colonialism. Possibly this characterization of Catholicism in many of the literary works reveals a symbolic gesture to acknowledge Las Casas’s role in recording Anacaona’s story. More likely, the favorable depiction of the priest reflects the desire to eliminate divisive elements from the national

²⁸⁹ Jean Métellus, *Anacaona: théâtre* (Hatier, 1986), epilogue.

narrative. By including the positive portrayal of the priest, the plays can clearly illustrate the cruelty of colonialism without classifying it as inherently Catholic or European. Again, colonialism can be disassociated from the use of the French language or culture. The role of the priest promotes the unification of Catholics and Vodouists in Haiti. Additionally, the priest's accusation of the colonists as 'not really' Catholic could correspond to the US occupation that introduced proselytizing American protestants to Haiti. Given that Haitian theater was attended primarily by the Francophile Catholic elite, distinguishing the violence of colonialism from Catholicism might have helped the commercial appeal of the plays.

In contrast to the other plays, novels, and poems I have discussed, Métellus's adaptation alters the role of the priest. Less critical of the Spanish, Métellus's priest reveals the ways Catholic priests were complicit in colonialism. In a lengthy monologue Frère Buyl instructs the Spanish governor on the value of cultural hegemony. Frère Buyl explains that by replacing Taïno culture with Spanish culture, the governor will gain sovereignty of the Amerindians.²⁹⁰ Métellus explicitly links cultural hegemony with colonial violence, suggesting the importance of culture in maintaining sovereignty. The play argues for the importance of rhetoric and culture as a means to obtain and maintain sovereignty. This argument helps to highlight the significance of Anacaona's speech as a representation of a powerful act but also an important example of integrity.

With her call repeated by her people and at the end of the play, "Aya bombé" meaning 'better dead' referring to death being better than slavery, Anacaona rallies the Taïno people. In the context of the play, the words become an act of resistance and a commentary on the culture

²⁹⁰ Métellus, *Anacaona*, 52-53.

of sovereignty. In the context of Haiti, the cry unmistakably signals the Haitian Revolution, a fundamental aspect of Haitian culture. Thus, the play implies that sovereignty is defined by culture. Sovereignty, even in its most brutal forms, does not exist without cultural conditions to support it. As a critique of the Duvalier regime who used fear and violence to maintain control, this philosophy is pertinent. Métellus penned *Anacaona* while in exile in Paris, meaning that words were his weapon against Duvalier. The significance of words and culture become more important when writing from exile. Citizenship can no longer be defined by location. Frequently, culture signifies nationality. By claiming *Anacaona* as a symbol for Haiti, Métellus comments on the ability to take back Haitian culture, as a means to fight Duvalier. He invites Haitians to define their nation through the concept of independence at the same time that he contextualizes violence as universal. Unlike many of the earlier playwrights and poets, Métellus's use of Neoclassical aesthetics is important to his argument. He asks the reader to compare both *Anacaona* and his contemporary Haiti to a global history of violence and oppression.

The play largely respects the rules of French neoclassical drama even as it produces a provocative message. Following the tradition of *bienséance*, no violence is depicted on stage. Métellus adheres to the convention of using characters as witnesses who recall previous off-stage action. The convention signals a French tradition but also emphasizes the emotional and psychological narrative of the characters. The character *Anacaona* must make decisions based on secondhand information, which produces an image of a twentieth century leader rather than a warrior fighting in battle. This characterization stresses the role of thought, intellect, and rhetoric over that of physical strength. Her scenes with her confident mirror that of a sovereign and advisors. *Anacaona* is an intellectual who analyzes advice from the gods, her council, and her warriors; she weighs and calculates. Even her religious position, which serves as a meaningful

connection to the earth in most versions of the narrative, does not overshadow her intellectual reasoning. For Métellus, her position as a priestess offers Anacaona a humanist intellectual advantage, not a zealous signal-minded naiveté.

Like in the neoclassical texts, the conclusion is foreshadowed from the beginning of the play. Visions from the gods promise that the greed of the Spanish will not be satiated, leading to the ruin of the Taïno people. With no other options Caonabo and Anacaona continue to resist the Spanish despite the knowledge that they will most likely fail. The refrain of “de l’or, de l’or, de l’or” haunts the text suggesting that the materialist greed will continue to threaten Haiti. The theme of greed and materialism offers a critique of the Duvalier policies that left Haitians starving while the dictator’s family lived in luxury. In contrast to the Spanish force and materialism, Métellus illustrates the strength of Anacaona through both her dialogue and the descriptions of her from other characters. In the text she uses her beauty, performing abilities, and religion to provide a symbol for her people but she is equally active in making decisions and arranging diplomacy. Métellus portrays a savvy politician who understands the complex role of governing. The success of her actions is revealed through the dialogue of both Taïno and Spanish characters. Unnamed Amerindian characters admire her qualities, claiming she “fut reine dès le berceau.”²⁹¹ Métellus emphasizes her facility with language as a primary source of her success. Anacaona describes herself as “la bouche de la victoire, de la joie, de la gloire,” who will lead her people to victory.²⁹²

²⁹¹ Métellus, *Anacaona*, 25.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 37.

For Burr-Reynaud, Hippolyte, Numa, and Métellus, Anacaona provided a generic symbol or a useful critique of colonial violence, but the plays made explicit the role of Anacaona as a symbol of nationalism. Consequently, the playwrights linked Anacaona with the Haitian revolution. Métellus claimed in an interview that he was inspired by Haitian revolutionaries to write about Anacaona.²⁹³ Revolutionary and later emperor Jean-Jacques Dessalines was said to have proclaimed that in his fight against the French, he was avenging the deaths of the many indigenous Taïno from centuries earlier.²⁹⁴ When choosing to name the new country Haiti, revolutionaries cited the history of Taïno resistance. According to Haitian folklore, the phrase “Aya Bombé” circulated during the Revolution. Playwrights continued Dessalines’s gesture of validating Haitian sovereignty through a citation of a Taïno history. The gesture makes a claim for heritage, authority, and legitimacy. Dessalines and Métellus recognized the importance of relating their struggles to the land. Declaring a precolonial relationship with the land helps to undermine French, U.S., or even Duvalier’s claims. Predating these colonial powers, Taïno heritage authorizes Haitian sovereignty. Linking contemporary colonial struggles with island history is a central theme in each play, however, the meaning and not the style of the plays emphasize this connection.

All of the plays discussed reproduce French Neoclassical form and aesthetics. Prior to 1915 most Haitian art and literature directly mimicked French styles and subject matter even if the content of the play raised anti-colonial themes. In general, nineteenth and even early twentieth century theater remained a privilege of a very small elite who tended to be extremely

²⁹³ Mohamed B Taleb-Khyar. "Jean Metellus." *Callaloo* 15, no. 2 (1992): 339.

²⁹⁴ Nesbitt, “The Naming of Haiti.”

politically and culturally conservative. Styles and conventions were slow to change until the U.S. occupation inspired a new generation of playwrights.²⁹⁵ For Burr-Reynaud and Hippolyte who carefully respect the unities of time, place, and action, staging the entire story at the home of Anacaona, the theatrical and literary aesthetic are consistent with Haitian playwrights of the period. However, Numa and Métellus both wrote in the 1980s, after many innovations in Haitian theatrical style became popular. Nevertheless, all three plays generally comply with the concept of *bienséance*, which dictates that more than simply representing events that appear logical, a play must not depict actions that are upsetting or distasteful. Considering the graphic nature of Anacaona's story, Neoclassical form seems to be an illogical and possibly inconvenient choice. Having the violence and death occur off-stage makes several of the pivotal moments appear anticlimactic. Narration of off-stage events emphasizes the lyricism over the dramatic action of the plays.

Marie-Agnes Sourieau argues that both the neoclassical aesthetic and the choice to represent Anacaona on the Haitian stage reflects a simple extension of a preexisting Haitian literary tradition in which the noble Haitian figure is presented in a style imposed by the colonizer. Conversely, Régis Antoine explains that texts featuring Anacaona illustrate a straightforward anti-colonial representation reminiscent of other Latin American and Haitian historical figures.

Dans le panthéon de l'anticolonialisme, Anacaona se range naturellement auprès de l'aztèque Moctezuma, du zoulou Chaka, de la Kahéna berbère. Son existence de souveraine tragique annonce celle du roi haïtien Christophe et de l'empereur Dessalines ; abusée par la perfidie du conquistador, elle se trouve dans une situation proche du piège où devait tomber Toussaint-Louverture : c'est assez dire qu'en choisissant une figure de profération transéthnique et transhistorique, en ajoutant

²⁹⁵ Dash, *Literature and Ideology in Haiti*.

des valeurs de sensibilité et de luxe délicat aux valeurs de virilité militante des grands chefs nègres, les écrivains d'Haiti [ont] conscience de perpétuer et d'enrichir une affirmation nationale.

In the pantheon of anti-colonialism, Anacaona fits naturally beside the Aztec Moctezuma, the Zoulu Chaka, and the North African Kahena. Her tragic existence as sovereign foreshadows the story of the Haitian king Christophe and the emperor Dessalines; abused by the conquistador's treachery, she finds herself in a situation similar to the trap that felled Toussaint Louverture: this is to say that in choosing a figure that represents the transethnic and transhistoric, by adding the values of sensitivity and delicate luxury to the values of military virility of their great black leaders, Haitian writers understand that they are perpetuating and enriching an affirmation of nationalism. (My translation)²⁹⁶

Either the aesthetic or the figure are taken as the primary take away at the exclusion of the other.

Both of these interpretations ignore the vibrant Haitian theater that was already forming by the 1940s and continued throughout the twentieth century.²⁹⁷ Although these analyses of the representations of Anacaona rightly situate Anacaona as a useful figure in signaling resistance and anti-colonial sentiment, they ignore complicated effects of style in the historical moment, lumping a over a century worth of representations together. Sourieau describes the style as imposed, implying that playwrights suffered from a lack of choice. Yet, before Métellus wrote *Anacaona*, playwrights like Morisseau-Léroy and Franktienne were experimenting with non-linear plots, postmodern form, and incorporation of music and dance to reflect Haitian folklore and storytelling traditions. In some cases, playwrights wrote entirely in Kreyòl. Even contemporaries of Burr-Reynaud and Hippolyte, who wrote much earlier, experimented with style, writing in prose and including Kreyòl words and phrases in their texts. I contend that imitating a French Neoclassical style of theater did not reflect a cultural restriction but rather a choice. In most cases the use of neoclassical aesthetics reflected a pushing back on the narrative

²⁹⁶ Régis Antoine. *La littérature franco-antillaise* (Paris : Gallimard, 1988), 24.

²⁹⁷ Clark, "When Womb Waters Break."

of Haitian exceptionalism. For some of the early nineteenth century playwrights, mimicking French aesthetics was a way to respond to the U.S. racist characterization of Haitians. Claiming access to French culture undermined the rhetoric of primitivism and paternalism that the U.S. used to justify the occupation. Haitians tended to view U.S. Americans as materialistic, vulgar, and uncultured. French Neoclassicism and to some extent Romanticism represented ‘high’ culture. Much later in the case of Jean Metellus, Haitian playwrights had already challenged theatrical forms and artistic aesthetics to prove that Haitian art was more than an imitation of French culture. Even Métellus wrote plays that addressed themes of everyday Haitian life, using prose and Haitian storytelling techniques. Neoclassicism served as a particular commentary on violence in the 1980s. By using a traditional French aesthetic, Métellus asserted a claim for an elite cultured cosmopolitanism that transcended Haiti and the Caribbean. In short, Métellus used Anacaona to contextualize Duvalier and universalize his terror.

All of these representations and aesthetic choices inform the construction of Haitian nationalism. Antoine explains that Anacaona enriches Haitian nationalism simply as a precolonial figure. Although I agree that her presence extends the concept of the nation in terms of temporality, I argue that the manner in which she is represented is as influential as her general presence. As the nationalist project evolves, so does the role of representation of Anacaona. Eighteenth century depictions highlight her beauty and innocence, ignoring her participation in battles and her status as a religious leader and mother. Later nineteenth century representations tend to emphasize her skills with language, her leadership, and her integrity. In some cases, her role as an artist and creator are featured. Haitian nationalism has a complicated past, in which different conflicting narratives have surfaced at different historical moments and among different classes of Haitians. Anacaona functions as a flexible figure, particularly due to her racial

identity. The ambiguity of her racial identity frees writers from addressing complications of blackness. Frequently in early twentieth century writing, Anacaona is anachronistically linked to the Revolution, but she symbolizes none of the radical black politics that was later linked to Haitian revolutionaries.²⁹⁸ As both non-white but also non-black, light skinned Haitians have access to Anacaona and Taïno narratives. The separation of centuries helps to eliminate questions of cultural appropriation. The myth of Anacaona offers protection for writers, in the same way that revolutionary historical figures provided safety for artists during the censorship of the U.S. occupation. Historical narratives become allegories for contemporary politics.

In spite of these advantages, the choice of a Taïno subject as a national figure seems problematic. The complete genocide of the Taïno people on the island has left scarce presence on contemporary Haitians. Unlike other Caribbean islands where Amerindian populations survived for several centuries alongside plantation slavery and communities still exist today. The influence of Taïno culture in Haiti has not had a continuous history. Instead it frequently appears in stops and starts as traditions and knowledge are researched, remembered, or excavated. Nevertheless, Haitians have used Taïno names and stories to represent Haiti and Haitian identity.²⁹⁹ Writing about Amerindians, playwrights can be both political active in that these stories generally critique the concept of an occupying power but also socially neutral in that the source material does not play into the class and cultural divisions that plague Haitian society. Anacaona offers a seemingly non-controversial means of linking all Haitians to the land.

²⁹⁸ Vénus Duverneau. *Haiti: Colomb, Colons and Co.* (Editions les Chemins de l'espérance, 1998), 22.

²⁹⁹ Geggus. "The Naming of Haiti."

However, representations of Anacaona frequently ignore complications of blackness and gender that are inherently tied to Haitian sovereignty.

Anacaona's relationship to the island becomes more complex when we consider her as not specifically a Haitian figure but a part of shared island history. Images of Quisqueya, a Taïno name for the island meaning 'big island,' surface in Dominican writing. Although like in Haiti, Dominicans have a complex relationship to the Taïno, due to the early mass genocide, references to Taïno appear in literature in particular poetry to suggest a Utopian past, helping to promote a national rather than island history.³⁰⁰ Romantic literature of nineteenth-century relies on representations of indigenous peoples to produce a politically advantageous image of history in Post-independence Dominican Republic. However, the absence of indigenous communities in 19th century Dominican Republic leads to inventive and idealized representations. Aesthetically, many of these descriptions of Taïno often reproduce European images of the 'noble savage.' "The beauty and innocence of the young Anacaona are undeniably modeled after European cultural preferences, and as such she represents the traditional predominant European image of the primitive and paradisiacal conquered lands."³⁰¹ Although Dominican poets depict Taïno men diversely and sometimes in contrast to European descriptions of Amerindians, in the case of women such as Anacaona many twentieth century poets reiterate European tropes. Anacaona becomes indistinguishable from the tropical island that she inhabits. José Joaquín Pérez and Salomé Ureña's poetry portrays Anacaona as a childlike innocent in spite of her historical role as a warrior and sovereign.³⁰² By the 20th century, representations of Taïno in Dominican poetry

³⁰⁰ Fumagalli. *On the Edge*.

³⁰¹ M. J. Fenwick. "Images of Quisqueya in Dominican poetry." *Confluencia* (1994): 17.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 18.

emerge as symbolic of the destruction of civilizations, poorly veiled critiques of US presence in the Dominican Republic.

The depiction of Anacaona as Dominican rather than Haitian or emblematic of an island rather than national history speaks to the desire to distinguish the Dominican Republic from Haiti. Reflecting a racist agenda, Dominican nation building ideology post-independence promoted an unsubstantiated indigenous heritage. Representations of Taíno history functioned as a “denial of the possibility of having African blood...a ‘prefiguration’ of the way in which the discourse of indigenism or the myth of the ‘Dominican Indio’ was later embraced by the Dominican elites in the process of fashioning a national identity after independence from Spain was declared in 1865.”³⁰³ The role of Anacaona in Dominican literature reflects many of the same cultural and historical complications felt in Haiti; however, writers from both countries rarely acknowledge Anacaona as a shared heritage. DeLoughrey explains that “[o]n the one hand, globalization invokes a specifically unnatural formulation of fractured, heterogeneous, and hierarchical social spaces that are constituted by the logic of transnational capital. Discourses of indigeneity, on the other hand, seem inextricably bound to natural, rooted, precapitalist, and communal formations that are at once constituted by the objectives of national sovereignty while simultaneously suppressed and romanticized by the nation-state.”³⁰⁴ Anacaona, for both Haiti and the Dominican Republic, serves as a means to configure the ‘nation’ as a product of the local in the context of the Western colonialism. Using global references, tropes, and ideology, the representations define the ‘land,’ meanwhile the concept of ‘land’ and rooted space

³⁰³ Fumagalli. *On the Edge*, 92.

³⁰⁴ DeLoughery, *Routes and Roots*, 196.

simultaneously represented the concept of 'local' in the national discourse. Interestingly, while each nation seems to regard Anacaona similarly, they also share a disavowal of the other country's claim to her.

Even the contemporary Haitian author Edwidge Dandicat who has advocated for improved relations between the two countries unambiguously identifies Anacaona as an exclusively Haitian figure. In her young-adult historical novel *Anacaona: Golden Flower: Haiti 1490* Dandicat reminds the reader in the title that Anacaona belongs to a Haitian history. Blurring the names Haiti and Ayiti, Dandicat suggests an inter-changeability that rewrites Taïno as well as Haitian history. This situating of Anacaona contradicts the larger context of Dandicat's writings about the Haitian-Dominican border, in which she has problematized boarder relations and hostility. However, rather than acknowledge Anacaona as part of a shared history, Dandicat makes clear moves to appropriate her as solely Haitian. As Maria Fumagalli points out, Anacaona becomes a site for larger tensions between Haitians and Dominicans. Represented as either Haitian or Dominican, rarely do writers depict her as part of a shared island history.

During the later twentieth century and the twenty-first century, some representations of Anacaona have expanded her influence, depicting her as Taïno and a shared Caribbean heritage rather than emphasizes her relationship to any given nation. In part, this reflects the role of precolonial figures in Caribbean literature but also a broader trend in postcolonial literature.

Models of decolonization lead us to expect the process to include celebration of the pristine precolonial past. But in the West Indies this move is rare (outside of Guyana) for a couple of reasons. In the absence of much concrete information about Amerindian societies, West Indian poets tend to depict them in poetry only after they have encountered colonization; for example, Walcott dramatizes the story of hunted Caribs leaping off the cliff at Sauteurs in *Another Life* and Eric Roach in "The Legend of Anacaona" (1955) depicts the cacica Anacaona in the midst of being defeated by the Spanish. Another factor is a consequence of dominance of "black consciousness" during

the roll out of independence. There was indeed strenuous effort to look back to a time before the colonial era, but the pristine world being celebrated was usually located in Africa, not in the Caribbean.³⁰⁵

When Anacaona and Taino are no longer ‘pristine’ figures from an idyllic past, as seen in nineteenth century Haitian poetry, the representations open up to signal different identity politics or power structures. U.S. American performance artist and scholar Gabrielle Civil posed some of these questions in her 2003 performance “Anacaona” at the University of Puerto Rico. Self identifying as a Black Feminist artist, Civil approaches Haiti and the Caribbean from both an academic and artistic perspective. Her solo performance pieces tend to investigate questions of Black Feminism, thus her foray into the Anacaona narrative hints at the way Anacaona and Taïno culture have come into contact with contemporary socio-political movements. Originally from Detroit and working mainly in the United States, Civil’s interest in Anacaona suggests a questioning of how past narratives influence contemporary conditions rather than an exploration of personal heritage. Performing as Anacaona, Civil’s performance unpacks the largely undiscussed role of hostess in the narrative. Staging a ‘party,’ spectators were invited to participate in a meal. Civil described the performance as a “fantasia.” “I danced, gnawed corn, told stories over a background of projections, and, at a key moment, passed out handfuls of corn and instructed the audience to pelt me with it.”³⁰⁶ The performance investigates the concept of the feminized ‘party’ space and the associated vulnerability of the role of hostess. Her use of storytelling and projected images references the role of Anacaona as an on-going symbol. By inviting the audience to ‘pelt’ her with corn, she questions the undiscussed invitation of being violated that is present but ignored in the representations of Anacaona. As a U.S. American artist

³⁰⁵ Laurence A Breiner. "Postcolonial Caribbean Poetry." *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Poetry* (2017): 20.

³⁰⁶ Gabrielle Civil, and Rosamond S. King. "Behind the Orange Door." *Small Axe* 21, no. 1 (2017): 96.

performing in Puerto Rico, Civil proposes that Anacaona speaks to something other than nationalism. Questioning the implication in many of the versions of the myth that her role as hostess was her fatal flaw, Civil performs the role of hostess as well as the vulnerability. Civil's performance highlights the role of gender in previous representations, specifically the implications of the 'invited' violence that is generally undiscussed. Foregrounding gender over colonialism invites a discussion of intersectionality that is not always present in representations of Anacaona. Through the lens of this contemporary performance, the myth of Anacaona changes to fit the needs of twenty-first century artists.

The flexibility of the myth has consistently offered possibilities for artists and writers. Commenting on colonial violence, constructing narrative or sovereignty and nationalism, even addressing gender in the Caribbean, Anacaona accommodates multiple agendas. However, despite her popularity in oral and literary tradition on the island, the narrative rarely appears beyond the Caribbean. She is not featured in Euro/American scholarship. Her absence in these spaces leads to erroneous observations such as scholar Theodore Cachey's statements that Anacaona unlike other female Amerindian interpreter figures is never discussed.³⁰⁷ Comments like Cachey's point to a history of poor incorporation of Haitian and Caribbean scholarship and artistic practice into Euro/American discourse that reinforces the role and image of Haiti as a mysterious and unknowable space. At the same time, Anacaona's very narrative and the representations that explore her story push back against this 'unknowability' and 'exceptionalism' that marks the Caribbean, in particular Haiti. The creolized production of culture that not only adopts the narrative but reinterprets and revitalizes this narrative claims Anacaona as both

³⁰⁷ Theodore J Cachey. "Between Humanism and New Historicism: Rewriting the New World Encounter." *Annali d'Italianistica* 10 (1992): 28-46.

knowable and relevant. The myth incorporates a woman of color into a masculine rhetoric of power and sovereignty. Few stories written by Haitian men feature female protagonists. Even after Haitian intellectuals campaigned for artists and writers to use Haitian rather than European history and culture as inspiration for their work, the common response was to look to male historical figures from the Haitian revolution. Yet Anacaona consistently participates in this dialogue as a way to reconfigure questions of sovereignty and nationalism.

In Léogâne the new statue of Anacaona signals both a past and future. She reminds residents of a heritage and a belief in resistance to oppression. At the same time, she represents loss and the complexities of a national narrative that is constructed from inclusions as well as omissions. Anacaona did not self-identify as from the city of Léogâne, Haiti, or the Dominican Republic because she lived and died long before these modern definitions of the space existed. Even the anti-colonial symbolism of Anacaona is complicated. Her people were slaughtered by the Spanish, leading to the colonization of the island. Five hundred years later, the space is organized and funded by neocolonial powers. As part of a creolized national narrative, the representations of the Anacaona myth reveal the challenges of contemporary Haiti. The sovereignty of Haiti is constantly threatened by foreign governments and the growing economic power of non-governmental organizations. The complexity opacity of the narrative that easily adapts to the changing conditions of sovereignty as well as changing discourses of power. The unveiling of the statue in Léogâne marks a continued role for Anacaona, even while the unveiling is captured on video by mobile phones and uploaded to YouTube. During the unveiling ceremony, local politicians address a crowd asking them to be proud of their history. As a part of a process of both remembering and forgetting, Anacaona is claimed by Haiti to signify the significance of culture even in the absence of military strength or economic capital.

Li pale Kreyòl: Ertha Pascal-Trouillot performing Creole

On March 13, 1990, Ertha Pascal-Trouillot stood before a crowd in front of the Presidential Palace to accept the appointment of interim president of Haiti. After years of violence, the ceremony was historic as both a peaceful transfer of power and as the inauguration of the first and thus far only female president of Haiti. Tasked with running democratic elections, Pascal-Trouillot's eleven-month term initially appeared to be an unrealistic attempt to stem the political chaos. Yet in spite of numerous barriers, she oversaw the first free elections in decades. Like Antigone and Anacaona, Pascal-Trouillot acts as an ambivalent figure for Haitian women. Within different contexts her actions can be understood as either radical or conservative, such as her life-long fight for women's rights whose efficacy was severely limited by divisions of class. Her presence in the archive suffers from the on-going practice of silencing, where women's stories are omitted or underwritten in favor of their male counterparts. Her presidency and legacy highlight the tension between gender codes and sovereignty, played out in discourse of Haitian Feminism and Haitian Creolité. This chapter aims to unpack Pascal-Trouillot's presidency in order to articulate her performances as creolizing. Focusing on her inaugural address, I argue that Pascal-Trouillot's performance creolized the image of the Haitian sovereign, specifically through her challenge of gender codes. By investigating the representation and absence of Ertha Pascal-Trouillot in the written archive, I consider the ways Haitian narratives of sovereignty and power have worked with Haitian narratives of gender to obscure Pascal-Trouillot's successes and overdetermine her failures. Using her inaugural acceptance speech as focal point, I argue that gendered notions of creolité and sovereignty shape her performance as president and her

reception. Reading Pascal-Trouillot's presidency as a performance – arguably failed performance - of a controversial creole agenda helps to contextualize the reception and success of her presidency.

Pascal-Trouillot's career reveals the role of gender in Haitian narratives of the nation. For example, all evidence suggests that the elections were a true democratic success; however, Ertha Pascal-Trouillot has largely been written out of the histories of this period. When mentioned, she appears as a footnote, associated with military violence and corruption. Meanwhile, her male counterparts receive ample attention. Specifically, for many Haitians during the 1990 election, Pascal-Trouillot could not be both from the elite class and revolutionary; supportive of western influence and Haitian culture; and feminine and powerful.³⁰⁸ This binary understanding of identity ultimately restricted her access to power and disrupted her use of an aesthetic of revolution in her political performances. In contrast, her successor Jean-Bertrand Aristide read as revolutionary, black, and powerful to the Haitian masses, with masculinity reinforcing this image. Gender broadly influenced not only the political practice but also the ways this practice was and has been constructed in theoretical discourse. The belief that women are not suited for government marked every step of Pascal-Trouillot's career, influencing how fellow politicians treated her, how the public perceived her, and how she identified herself. To understand the restrictions placed upon Pascal-Trouillot, we must consider how race, gender, and class intersect in Haiti. Frequently, discussions of Pascal-Trouillot take a limited approach, defining her actions

³⁰⁸ A strict understanding of revolutionary as being inconsistent with being upper-class or having sympathies with the U.S. is a perspective that was born as a reaction against Duvalierism. Aristide further articulated this sentiment that the elite and upper-classes were not and would not be supportive of the poor and therefore, radical. The concept of radical as a part of identity politics shaped from race and class is a longstanding idea that dates back to the Revolution. It is evident in the articles of the earlier Haitian constitution. Originally in his campaign to become president François Duvalier built upon this sentiment by depicting color and race as a signifier of Revolution and nationalism. The Kreyol proverb, *Li pale franse*, (He speaks French) hints at the complex role of class. The proverb suggests that speaking French indicates deception.

and achievements solely by her gender or her socio-economic class, or her race. However, an intersectional lens enables a reading of Pascal-Trouillot's performance that helps to explain her poor popularity as well as the (mis)readings of her legacy.

Pascal-Trouillot attempted many of the same political tactics as her contemporaries, except for her notable emphasis on women. The dictator François Duvalier and the radical priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide established precedents for public performances that transformed the look of politics. More conservative figures, such as the neo-duvalierist Roger Lafontant, ignored many of the trends in favor of nineteenth-century language and posturing. In contrast, Pascal-Trouillot embraced a more liberal and modern political style. Although Pascal-Trouillot adopted some of these practices, her focus on women distinguishes her from the politicians during the 1990 election. She attempted a balanced performance of vastly different nineteenth and late twentieth-century political rhetoric. Her primary strategy was to offer hope for a new order of non-violence, specifically the security of women and families, underscoring her authenticity by speaking in Kreyol, referencing Kreyol culture, and presenting herself as an 'every-woman'. Ultimately, Pascal-Trouillot's public persona reflects both the precarious conditions of her presidency and her attempt to reconcile or at least perform reconciliation for opposing political factions.

Nearly twenty years of the Duvalier regime had normalized a style of overt political violence that reshaped both the nation and the relationship between nationalism and gender. After the departure of Jean-Claude, several attempts to stage democratic elections failed due to ongoing violence. When certain Neo-Duvalier candidates were barred from running for president due to their participation in the Duvalier regime, "[i]t then became clear that the CNG [Conseil National de Gouvernement, the Neo-Duvalier Party] intended to sabotage the elections scheduled

for November 29. In addition to refusing all logistical and other support to the CEP, the CNG allowed soldiers and *makouts* to unleash a wave of terror throughout the month.”³⁰⁹ The violence produced the intended results, halting the elections. Again in 1988, a similar scenario kept people from running for office and voters from the polls. Makout violence and corruption meant few trusted the legitimacy of the election results. Within this context of violence and illegitimacy, it is hardly surprising that Pascal-Trouillot continued her habit of moderate inconspicuous behavior even if it was completely unappreciated by the public.

Pascal-Trouillot’s presidency followed a period of extreme political and economic crisis creating upheaval that undermined traditional power structures and hinted at the possibility of creative solutions and specifically Feminist involvement.³¹⁰ For Haitian women the turmoil created by the Duvalier policies produced a new image for the Feminist movement. Prior to the late nineteen-seventies and eighties, Feminism, or at least what has been commonly labeled as Feminism, remained an urban bourgeois enterprise.³¹¹ However, violence and economic instability inspired a grassroots Feminism that transcended class and location. A failing economy pushed all classes of Haitian workers to flee the country in search of employment.³¹² The mass exodus of able-bodied men and women restructured family hierarchies, frequently leaving

³⁰⁹ The CEP (Conseil Electoral Provisoire) was an organization specifically created in 1987 to run elections. Alex Dupuy. *The Prophet and Power*. 63.

³¹⁰ I am using Feminism (versus feminism) to identify the work and activism that self-identified as feminist and partnered with feminist organizations outside of Haiti. In contrast, significant work was done to support women by individuals and organizations who did not publicly claim the title or movement.

³¹¹ Activism by Haitian women was not isolated to Port-au-Prince. Women organized to protest the U.S. occupation; however, this work is frequently not narrated as Feminism. In fact, the silencing of women in the archive suggests that generations of women have participated in Haitian politics, but their contributions are rarely acknowledged or recorded, producing a narrative masculine nationalism. See Myriam Chancy and Grace Johnson.

³¹² See Alex Dupuy, *The prophet and power: Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the international community, and Haiti*, (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 42-55.

women in charge of households. Upper and middle-class women emigrating to the United States and Canada accessed wage work that enabled economic independence from traditional patriarchal structures. In 1990 46% of households were headed by women.³¹³ Although women have always been crucial to the political and economic climate of the nation, they were generally not officially acknowledged as such.³¹⁴ Meanwhile, widespread and indiscriminate violence meant that political inactivity could not shield anyone from the threat of the Duvalier regime. François Duvalier, and later Jean-Claude Duvalier, persecuted women, children, and the elderly, ignoring taboos of inflicting violence against those deemed ‘non-political.’ Although political violence was hardly new to Haitians, many families belonging to the elite classes had historically been able to shield women, children, and elderly from physical harm. François Duvalier used this to his advantage when destabilizing existing institutions, such as the elite class, transforming the way women from the educated elite were narrated as political agents independent of their fathers and husbands. The loss of men, desperate conditions, and violence drove women to mobilize outside the home. Women formed women’s groups that offered support structures and political agency as an alternative to the patriarchal family model. Therefore, when Pascal-Trouillot addressed women, she was speaking to women in general but also to recently formed organizations.

Despite Pascal-Trouillot’s emphasis on women, her relationship with Feminism was fraught. As I explain in the following chapter, her writing focuses on solving problems facing Haitian women but at times has limited reach. Furthermore, the politics of self-identifying as a

³¹³ Charles, "Feminist Action and Research in Haiti." 65.

³¹⁴ Several Haitian proverbs proclaim the centrality of women in Haitian society, but legal rights and political access have not matched this sentiment.

Feminist conflict with her goal of unification of opposing political factions. Nevertheless, the historical and contemporary narratives of Feminism in Haiti help to unpack Pascal-Trouillot's public persona and the actions of her detractors. In turn, like Feminism, Creole and Creolization share a polarizing history in Haiti that create both opportunities and roadblocks for Pascal-Trouillot.

By examining Pascal-Trouillot in terms of Créolité and Creolization, the complexities of Haitian creole culture become apparent. Creole and Creolization are not stable concepts in Haiti, but instead reflect different historical practices, and theoretical and literary debates. Although a complex and shifting signifier, in the politics of the 1980s and 90s, creole generally referred to a set of aesthetics and practices of the Haitian lower-classes. Separate from the more generic creole, Créolité referenced a masculinist representation of Creole that reflected a discourse from a 1980s Caribbean literary circle. As explained by James Arnold, Créolité assumes a masculine access to creole culture that ultimately silences the contributions of women.³¹⁵ Literary theorists Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant conceived of the discourse to advocate for storytelling as an emancipatory strategy that creates 'mixed' creole culture. However, Créolité prioritizes the masculine image of the contour, excluding the Francophone female authors who were simultaneously exploring the possibilities of a creole aesthetic and imaginary.³¹⁶ Unlike Créolité, Creolization addresses a process or practice rather than a

³¹⁵ James Arnold, "The erotics of colonialism in contemporary French West Indian literary culture" *NWIG: New West Indian Guide/Nieuwe West-Indische Gids*, 68, no. 1/2 (1994): 5-22.

³¹⁶ Créolité was a reaction to the Pan-Africanist aesthetic proposed by Negritude and part of an on-going desire to articulate a non-European Caribbean aesthetic. Arnold understands the exclusivity and masculinist project as not a simple reflection of Caribbean society but more as a carefully crafted écriture marketed for the French metropole literary circles. See James Arnold, "Créolité: Power, mimicry, and dependence," *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas* 37, no. 1 (2004): 19-26.

completed aesthetic. Moreover, multiple theorists from Francophone and Anglophone circles have articulated creolization as both a poetic discourse and a sociocultural process. As an open-ended sociocultural process of negotiating oppressive power structures, creolization helps to understand the cultural invention that Haitians use as a survival strategy. Although seemingly separate from this theoretical and literary debate, the case of Ertha Pascal-Trouillot relates to Creolité as an example of the problematic relationship between discourses of gender and the representation of creole. She was unsuccessful at accessing the sentiments of Créolité due to her insistence on the importance of women. Her incorporation of Creole imagery and rhetoric read as disingenuous to some due to her experience as upper-class. Whereas male politicians were more able to manipulate their performance of class, Pascal-Trouillot registered as upper-class through her history, appearance, and behavior. Even when Pascal-Trouillot adopted behavior codes that typically understood as creole, the strict gender codes for upper-class women overshadowed her performance. Pulled in opposite directions, Pascal-Trouillot attempted to appease international and national audiences but frequently disappointed her constituents with her moderate and sometimes equivocal performance. Moreover, Pascal-Trouillot's actions were structured by gender, specifically the strict behavior codes for women of the elite. Combining references to Kreyol with gendered codes from the elite, she creolized representations of Kreyol. Her explicit inclusion of women and her incorporation of codes of femininity complicated the often-unchallenged representation of Kreyol as masculine. By foregrounding gender in her performance, she creolized the standard image of sovereignty as masculine.

Instead of a standard exhibition of creole culture, Pascal-Trouillot's combination of differing aesthetics and vocabularies worked as a creolization of existing political performances to produce a new image of a Haitian woman politician. Conditioned by the restrictive Haitian

gender codes and an absence of successful models of Haitian female politicians, her public performances relied upon combining and rearticulated codes to suit her needs. Although Creolization does not explicitly articulate the effects of gender, as an open-ended theory, it offers space to include gender as a factor. Borrowing from both Francophone and Anglophone discourses, I use creolization as a tool to understand the aesthetic nuances of performance as well as the social structures of certain political movements of the 1990s. Pascal-Trouillot's career, presidency, and inaugural address reveal her gendered struggle to perform 'creole', activist, and sovereign. Within the power structures of gender and class, she combined different political registers, drawing from local and global vocabulary, to produce a thus far undefined representation of a female Haitian politician. I identify her performances, in which she uses syncretic meaning making, as creolization. In short, Pascal-Trouillot's presidency illustrates the limitations of discourses of Creolité and the possibilities of creolization which can be used to mobilize an intersectional and syncretic position.

Although Haitian women have always engaged in politics, women have been barred from public office and often not been considered politicians, particularly in the archive. The public image of woman as political changed dramatically in post-Duvalier Haiti. The most publicized shift was the formation of women's groups that originated as a support network in response to oppressive living conditions, but overtime became politically powerful constituents. Haitian politicians had to negotiate between a conservative military hoping to reinstate a new oligarchy, a global audience with a variety of agendas (the implicit offer of aid and threat of intervention) and the public demand for democratic representation. Although less discussed in academic work, women also gained significant legal rights. Under Jean-Claude, specifically because of the actions of Pascal-Trouillot, new legislation granted women more legal protections, property

rights, protections against marital abuse, and parental rights.³¹⁷ Despite having technically won suffrage in 1950, voter suppression and later rigged elections meant that the right to vote was almost irrelevant until the election in 1990. Grass-roots Feminism mobilized women across Haiti to vote. Pascal-Trouillot attempted to address this new voting block during her presidency; however, her class and political associations hindered her efforts. The negative reception and neglect in academic discourse of Pascal-Trouillot's presidency reveals the intersection of gender and class in Haiti. Rather than considering her as solely a failure, creolization offers a way to understand her presidency as creating something new. She pushed the back against the standard image of creole and of an upper-class woman. By focusing on the restrictive role of gender rather than just class or race which tend to be the primary focal points in discussions of creolization, I position creolization as a tool to examine the syncretization of gender codes and the role of gender norms in the discourse of creolization. Pascal-Trouillot's use of differing registers and symbolism creolizes the social codes for the upper-class Haitian woman in order to construct an image of a female president.

The Nomination

Although a short period of only eleven months, Pascal-Trouillot's time as president marked a turning point in Haitian politics that tested the possibility of Haitian democracy. Patterns of violence, military control, and US strong-arming produced a crisis of sovereignty that the elections and Pascal-Trouillot's presidency was meant to resolve. Consequently, Pascal-

³¹⁷ Unfortunately having legal rights and protections does not always mean that laws are enforced or that many classes of women have access to legal representation. In Haiti having laws in the Civil code is only the first step needed to support women.

Trouillot faced immense pressure, compounded by the weakness of her position. Almost all of the political players attempted to weaken Pascal-Trouillot's position, either to sabotage or protect the elections. Fearing the outcome of the elections, many Neo-Duvalierists preferred a military dictatorship and sought to undermine Pascal-Trouillot when polls suggested a Duvalierist was unlikely to win. On the other hand, those in favor of the elections feared that empowering Pascal-Trouillot would prompt her to seize control for herself. The recent history indicated that temporary appointments did not produce democratic elections only military dictatorships. Thus, Pascal-Trouillot's presidential appointment was precarious from beginning to end.

Although on opposing sides, military leaders and the newly formed Council of State agreed upon Pascal-Trouillot as a suitable candidate. Formally selected by the legislative body after the ousting of military dictator Prosper Avril, Pascal-Trouillot was equally unsupported by the council, the military, and the public which made her a neutral choice. Without an obvious ally or previous experience as a public elected official, she was perceived as non-threatening but more importantly was expected to organize elections despite the repeated failures of more experienced politicians. Together with the Council of State, a diverse group of representatives from all of the newly formed political parties, Pascal-Trouillot signed an accord on March 4, agreeing to share power. Immediately, conflicts arose between Pascal-Trouillot and the Council of State. Pascal-Trouillot nominated cabinet positions without the council's approval. All independent actions by Pascal-Trouillot stoked fears that she would attempt to prolong her position or hand power over to Duvalierists. Past transitional governments had proven this to be a real threat. The Council of State, the press, and international observers all expressed concern over her ambitions and possible support of Duvalierists. Moreover, violence on the street,

generally perpetrated by former Macoutes³¹⁸, hinted at Pascal-Trouillot's poor control over the country or as her detractors claimed, her continued support of Duvalierism. The tension between Pascal-Trouillot and the council ballooned over the return of exiled Macoutes Roger Lafontant and Gen. Williams Regala. Accused of torture and complicity in the massacre of voters in 1987, the arrival of these men threatened the success of the promised elections. Pascal-Trouillot left the enforcement of their arrest warrants to the courts, who passed the task to the police, who in turn did nothing. In fact, Pascal-Trouillot's ability to control violence was directly impeded by the lack of an independent police force. The military functioned as the police. In many instances the military leaders had their own agenda. In some cases, the military itself was not unified and represented differing political positions.

The lack of a clear chain of command alongside the independence and unpredictability of the military illustrated the uncertainty of Haitian sovereignty. The tension between Pascal-Trouillot, the Council of State, and the military was most clear in the treatment of Lafontant. When Lafontant arrived in Haiti from exile, he largely flaunted his invulnerability. "He spoke openly to the press, proclaiming, 'I'm here for good and the only way I'll leave is in a coffin.' He was embraced and whisked through the international airport by military officers, despite an order from the Interior Minister Joseph Maxi to quarantine him at the airport."³¹⁹ For months Lafontant evaded arrest. Lafontant ignored court issued summons to appear before the chief government prosecutor in regard to allegations of a plot against the government. "Lafontant contested the

³¹⁸ The Haitian dictator François Duvalier created a special police force that he used to terrorize anyone who disagreed with him. The force was popularly known as the Tonton Macoutes, referencing a Haitian mythical boogeyman figure who steals children away in his satchel. The Macoutes committed horrific violent crimes against Haitian citizens, disappearing people, and cultivating an image of their namesake.

³¹⁹ Anne Fuller and Jocelyn McCalla, *In the Army's Hands: Human Rights in Haiti on the Eve of the Election* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1990), 8-9.

means used to issue the summons and a judge concurred. The Trouillot government dismissed the judge, and Vincent [the prosecutor] issued a second summons after securing the consent of another judge.”³²⁰ However, with the support of his legal team, Lanfontant publicly rejected the summons. Critics of Pascal-Trouillot accused her of condoning Lafontant’s behavior, claiming that she should be more aggressive in her pursuit of him. Having failed to organize an independent police force, it is unclear how the Pascal-Trouillot administration could have realistically secured Lafontant’s arrest. Although the criticism rightly addresses the flaws of the administration, the ability of any administration to secure sovereignty is questionable. How without a powerful constituent or a well-established structure can sovereignty be exercised? As evidenced in the following months, Aristide required the support (maybe even the violent support) of the people to gain and maintain authority. Successful politicians needed either the people, the military, or the U.S. monetary/military support to secure political power. Pascal-Trouillot lacked all of these potential supporters. Her shaky position existed as a product of the power struggle between these three groups.

Despite all of the threats the election did take place in December 1990. The election, according to all sources, was legitimate. Jean-Bertrand Aristide won by a vast majority, giving many Haitians hope for the future of their country. However, the election did not put an immediate stop to the continued violence. In January 1991 before president-elect Aristide took office, Lafontant surrounded the National Palace, taking Pascal-Trouillot hostage. Lafontant forced Pascal-Trouillot to proclaim publicly Lafontant as the next president and immediately step down. Broadcast over the radio and Haitian television network, Pascal-Trouillot announced her resignation. Lafontant took full advantage of Pascal-Trouillot’s publicized concession with his

³²⁰ Fuller and McCalla, *In the Army’s Hands*,” 8-9.

own performance, a lengthy televised speech accepting the presidency. Before the day was out, rioting and demonstrations on the streets led by Aristide supporters prompted the military to end the brief coup and arrest Lafontant. Both Lafontant and Pascal-Trouillot relied upon public performances backed by violence to claim authority. Each side challenged the legitimacy of Haitian sovereignty. With the international community watching, Pascal-Trouillot continued her appointment until Aristide officially took office in February 1991.

Lafontant's brief coup begs the examination of Pascal-Trouillot's earlier conduct. The army tasked with keeping the peace was in fact assisting in the violence that threatened the sovereignty of the country. Without the support of the military, the Council of State and the president held ceremonial rather than practical authority. Moreover, the U.S. used the chaos that was a result of the conflicts between the governmental institutions and the army as an excuse to continually intervene in Haitian politics. Aristide dealt with this dilemma by supplying his own makeshift army: the mobilized masses of the urban and rural poor who readily went to protest in the streets on his behalf. Pascal-Trouillot had no base of support. She tried to speak to Haitian women, using gender to gain and unite supporters, but for many women her public performances did little to mitigate the clear markers of her class. In contrast, Haitian men frequently foregrounded Pascal-Trouillot's gender as a marker of her suitability or capabilities as president.

The Inauguration

On the evening of March 14th, Pascal-Trouillot officially took office during a ceremony in front of the Presidential Palace. Standing on a stage crowded with the members of the Council of State, General Abraham stood before a podium to introduce Pascal-Trouillot. The raised stage

was small and backed with a thick golden curtain. Pascal-Trouillot sat in a chair beside the podium as all the men stood, packed tightly together on the small stage. The constant flashing of cameras interrupted the speeches. In the background, a chorus of men shifted uncomfortably, hinting at their anxiety. The men fanned papers and dabbed handkerchiefs to their foreheads, hinting at the heat of the evening. Pascal-Trouillot watched stoically, unmoving, and with an intensity as the general introduced her. An elegant white suit coat and white skirt with a square 1980s cut paired with a strand of pearls and pearl earrings gave her an elegant feminine look, contrasting strongly with the men in dark blue, black, and green suits. Wearing large 1980s aviator glasses as she stood at the podium, Pascal-Trouillot read her speech with confidence, punctuating her message from time to time by looking out into the audience. Her message was clear: Haitians must unite, and she would do everything in her power to secure the elections. Although local and foreign media attended the event, descriptions of the historic inauguration were sparse. Instead, articles discussed the hopes for Haiti or the on-going instability.³²¹ Video footage from Tele Kreyol, a programming station produced in Boston, captured the majority of Pascal-Trouillot's acceptance speech.³²² The manner of coverage of the inauguration illustrates that the focus remained on the elections and the actions of the military and not Pascal-Trouillot.

Pascal-Trouillot addressed women but even though her gender defined her presidency, she had difficulty in promoting her own definition of the role of gender. She performed a creolized version of the Haitian woman that combined aesthetics from different Haitian classes and U.S. politics. However, the inaugural address and her televised resignation reveal restrictions

³²¹ See the New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times articles from March 15 1990

³²² Junior Mengual, "President Ertha Pascale Trouillot and Election of 1990," YouTube video, 12:21, posted by Junior Mengual, Jun 8, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WX3gewwQoGY>

that arose from the intersection of class and gender in Haiti. Rather than reading her creolized performance as a means to unite the fractured country or an invention of what a Haitian female politician looks like, critics complained that her actions were not genuine but instead a poor attempt to pander to the public.³²³ She did not outline specific strategies to prevent violence or control the military. Instead, she promises to “work without taking a breath” to lead the country on the right path.³²⁴ Her brief speech mentions unity and hope, addressing the problems and solutions in broad strokes.³²⁵ She claims that her government represents “aspirations and hope” but she has no ambitions in “entering the home of the public, the national palace.”³²⁶ Furthermore, her performance and the critiques of her presidency were continually framed by violence and threats of violence from the military, Duvalierists, and even the United States. Critics blamed her for the on-going domestic terrorism and the behavior of the military, although no politician in the previous four years had been able to maintain order and peace. Notably, her actions and inaction did not shield her from violence from all political sides. Rather than read her performance and public opinion as Pascal-Trouillot’s personal failure, I argue that her presidency should be articulated within the context of the cultural hegemony in Haiti during the late 1980s and earlier 1990s. I believe that her inaction and the continued violence reflect a more complex

³²³ In particular the newspaper *Le Petit Samedi Soir* but also *Le Matin* and *Le Nouvelliste* criticized Pascal-Trouillot for her weak position. Her words were considered hollow.

³²⁴ Junior Mengual, “President Ertha Pascale Trouillot and Election of 1990,” YouTube video, 12:21, posted by Junior Mengual, Jun 8, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WX3gewwQoGY>. My translation.

³²⁵ Pascal-Trouillot’s speech that cited brotherhood and unity was compared to the well quoted speeches by Aristide who also used Kreyol to discuss brotherhood and unity but had a different history and relationship with his audience. Known for his work in *Cité de Soleil* and different poor neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince, his speeches carried the weight of his continual presence and work in these spaces.

³²⁶ Junior Mengual, “President Ertha Pascale Trouillot and Election of 1990,” YouTube video, 12:21, posted by Junior Mengual, Jun 8, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WX3gewwQoGY>. My translation.

crisis of sovereignty. Conflicts over the conditions of sovereignty have an extensive history that dates back to the colonial period. Additionally, the norms of politics, specifically the trend of ‘one-manism’, hindered efforts to reshape the political landscape in the 1990s. Finally, the latent sexism of nationalism and Haitian politics further constricted Pascal-Trouillot’s ability to control the military who perpetuated violence and was the most significant threat to the success of the elections.

All throughout her presidency, the Haitian media questioned her competency, frequently through gendered critiques, blaming Pascal-Trouillot personally for large scale on-going structural failures of the government. The two public addresses, one planned and one unplanned, offer insight into Pascal-Trouillot’s negotiations between Haitian construction of gender, class, and sovereignty. Reading these speeches in terms of class and gender as well as a product of ongoing violence helps to decode the relationship between women and sovereignty in Haiti. ‘Class defines everything’ is a commonly held premise advocated by Aristide and many discussions of this period. Although class is critical to understanding the historical moment and crisis of sovereignty, solely emphasizing class ignores the ways gender structures and produces class. The insistence of class as a structuring category that supersedes all else, masks power dynamics and silences certain voices. Moreover, blaming Pascal-Trouillot for slow organization and poor policing of violence works a way to ignore the systematic way the institution of government was and had been failing Haiti.

Haitian politics, as seen in other parts of the Caribbean, promoted a vision of ‘one-manism’. In other words, one politician (one man) is responsible for everything. This vision of politics undercuts the role of the many parts of government, making it difficult to support and discuss government as a complex system. Both Duvalier and Aristide followed and promoted this

vision of government. In the case of François Duvalier, he was the state. Destroying other institutions, embodying all aspects of government helped him to consolidate power and spread terror. On the other hand, Aristide constructed his politics around his mythic divine Christ-like image of resistance that relied upon his own magnetism rather than comprehensive policy and institutional structure.

One-manism leaves the state extremely vulnerable. The concept promotes extreme and iconic politicians rather than moderate individuals. Effective politicians without charisma are overshadowed by showmanship. Additionally, emphasizing the man rather than the policy encourages a dangerous neglect of policy. This system does not help to foster political parties, being overly reliant on one person. For Pascal-Trouillot, this political perspective meant that critics judged her harshly on her public performances and tended to overlook her administration as a whole. Journalists and historians alike tend to discuss actions and statements from her administration as from individuals, herself or different ministers, rather than as a product of her larger administration. In reality, successes and failures from this period reflect the collaborations between individuals and organizations. The relationship of different military figures at the time illustrates the complexity of leadership. Fractured leadership both helped secure the new administration and simultaneously produce domestic terrorism. The crisis of sovereignty existed due to a breakdown of collaborations, precedents, and procedures. Expecting one man or woman to reinstate institutional and bureaucratic structure overnight was unrealistic.

Pascal-Trouillot's inaugural speech suggests her interest in promoting broad-based support for her administration. In her acceptance speech given in Haitian Kreyòl rather than the traditional French, Pascal-Trouillot embraces gender as a framework for her presidency. She boldly promises to respect and fulfill her responsibilities in the name of all Haitian women. By

emphasizing women, she attempts to cultivate an image as the every-woman that directly undercuts the trend of 'one-manism'. Not only is she promoting women as political leaders and voters, but she depicts herself as ordinary. She self-identifies as the emblematic Haitian women, who has long suffered under the previous administrations. She suggests counting her appointment as a win for all Haitian women, but the speech lacks specifics about her agenda, other than the importance of elections. Her general statements follow the model of 'one-manism' by deemphasizing policy over rhetoric. Pascal-Trouillot does not manage to draw the same loyalty or admiration. She attempts to relate to her audience and inspire faith in her success; however, the speech falls short of rallying and offers no radical solutions.

The presence of the military underscores the violent role of gender in Haitian politics. Pascal-Trouillot accepted the position of interim president of Haiti in front of the Presidential Palace surrounded by men. Although the army as a whole was specifically not invited to the ceremony, military leaders graced the stage in uniform. In a brief speech, General Herard Abraham, who had been in power for three days following protests and widespread opposition ending Prosper Avril's brief dictatorship, introduced Pascal-Trouillot. Dressed in a dark green military uniform, speaking in French, he outlined the purview of this presidency. He explains in a formal manner that all Haitian agencies, including religious institutions, rest under the domain of the president, but in this instance, he assures the crowd, Pascal-Trouillot will have no veto power. Through this explanation he reminds the audience that although she will technically act as president, Pascal-Trouillot will not function as a 'real' head of state. Next, he pledges the support of the military to this presidency. A longstanding characteristic of Haitian sovereignty but particularly since the end of the Duvalier regime in 1986, the military dictated the length and

success of regimes.³²⁷ However, the actual support of Abraham was uncertain at best, given that he was forced by the Council of State and the on-going unrest on the streets to relinquish power to Pascal-Trouillot. Thus, in outlining the limits of her presidency and hinting at the need of the military, Abraham laces his speech with threats. His performance builds from a history of masculine violence that relies on terror and rape to secure power all the while performing an image of military nationalism.

Abraham's introduction illustrates the conditions of violence and sexism in Haitian politics. Over the sixty years from the US occupation of Haiti, gendered military violence had been painfully normalized.³²⁸ His uniform, patronizing tone, and implicit threats remind Pascal-Trouillot and the audience of the capabilities of the military, the vulnerability of Pascal-Trouillot as a woman, and the vulnerability of Haitian sovereignty. In fact, he spent most of his time praising the military, largely ignoring the significance of the actual transfer of power. Without any compliments for Pascal-Trouillot, his introduction offered misogyny and veiled threats of military retaliation. Abraham spoke to Pascal-Trouillot and the audience, reminding everyone that, "[a]s Haiti's first woman judge and the first woman president of the Republic of Haiti, you more than anyone else are called on to draw from the national patrimony the resources necessary to exercise the high office to which you have just acceded."³²⁹ Following his suggestion of her

³²⁷ For a more thorough discussion see Trouillot, *Haiti: State Against Nation*; Paul Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1994).

³²⁸ Many historians argue that the horrific military violence of the U.S. occupation started new precedents for the widespread use of gendered violence by the military.

³²⁹ "Trouillot Installed as Provisional President," *Port-au-Prince Radio Nationale*, (Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 1990), 13.

incompetence, Abraham alludes to his control over the military that he holds “back”. Overall, the speech clarifies the precarity of Pascal-Trouillot’s presidency.

The visual image of the sea of men emphasized the singularity of Pascal-Trouillot’s position. Men filled the stage, standing shoulder to shoulder, creating a wall of dark colored suits. In contrast, Pascal-Trouillot dressed in white remained seated. She appeared contemplative and possibly nervous during Abraham’s introduction. Her demeanor indicates that she was well aware of the insecurity of her new appointment. Unlike Aristide who proudly flaunted his failed assassination attempts, reminding the public of his divine support, in true ‘one-manism’ fashion, Pascal-Trouillot attempts to play off the vulnerability of her situation, claiming that it is no different than the danger all Haitian women face. She seems to strive for stoicism during the introduction and throughout most of her speech, scanning the crowd rather than visibly reacting to the shouts and cheers from the audience. However, from time to time, her face betrays her brave words, reminding the audience of the constant danger. Seated in her white skirt suit, Pascal-Trouillot looked out of place on stage, reflecting the unusual nature of her presidency and the absence of other women in political office.

For the Council of State, who required a presidential candidate, a female president offered some advantages. Despite the passage of new rights for women under Duvalier, a female president was both unprecedented and considered less powerful, therefore, less threatening. Choosing Pascal-Trouillot meant choosing a weak and unaffiliated candidate who was unlikely to demand or scheme to stay in power. According to Paul Farmer, Pascal-Trouillot “a previously unknown judge, was deemed the least offensive candidate.”³³⁰ Farmer’s description of Pascal-Trouillot hints at the condition of women’s participation in government. Farmer, like other

³³⁰ Paul Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti*, 127.

academics who study this tumultuous period, leaves Pascal-Trouillot and the participation of women uninvestigated.³³¹ The selection was hardly a celebration of women. No one appeared (even Pascal-Trouillot) to be thrilled by the choice. The generally accepted belief that women did not belong in politics or at least had little talent in government was openly acknowledged during the inauguration. Abraham illustrated this assumption in his speech, mentioning the concept of “cultural patrimony,” meaning the masculine and patriarchal nature of sovereignty.

Politicians, journalists, and historians seem frequently to conflate discussions of sovereignty and patriarchy. The Haitian rhetoric of patriarchy as synonymous with sovereignty relates to the repeated imagery of the revolutionary heroes, who are resurrected to support contemporary male politicians and remind the public that ‘men father the nation.’ Myriam Chancy describes this patriarchal understanding of the nation as a tradition in which “Haitian women have been subsumed under an overtly male-identified national identity.”³³² All of Haitian women’s contributions become absorbed into the vague unspecific ‘work of the people’. Meanwhile, male contributions retain the authorship of the individual man, fostering a narrative of a few powerful men leading the unnamed people. For Pascal-Trouillot, this gendered narrative means that her achievements as one of the only female lawyers, first female supreme court justice, and architect of extensive legislation protecting Haitian women were eclipsed by her invisibility as a woman in Haitian politics. She can be included in the achievements of the illustrious Trouillot family, but her achievements are rarely articulated as personal. The irony of her situation, both ‘the first’ yet still largely invisible, are made apparent in the tableau of Pascal-Trouillot seated in front of the many standing male government officials.

³³¹ See Dupuy, *The prophet and power*.

³³² Chancy, *Framing Silence*, 13.

To counter the narrative of the strange and isolated female in politics, Pascal-Trouillot emphasizes her connection to Haiti. She rejects her successes as anomalous by claiming herself as a representative for Haitian women. “I accept your charge on behalf of all Haitian women.”³³³ Moreover, she performs an image of Haitian nationalism that foregrounds women. The text of her speech insists upon her shared experience with Haitian women. “We, Haitian women, know the sacrifice our mothers made for us.” Although the text, language choice, and even at times rhetoric of the speech claim a national female experience and agenda, aspects of the performance undercut her identity claim.

Like her use of Kreyol and rhetorical symbolism, Pascal-Trouillot’s clothing during her inaugural address illustrated the complex subtlety of her representation of creolization. On stage Pascal-Trouillot’s performance blended European and local aesthetics by wearing the cut and style of a fashionable cosmopolitan dress in a symbolic white. Wearing white, rather than the dark blues, browns and greens worn by the men on the stage, cited the traditional Mambo dress. Mambos, Vodou priestess, are one of the few positions of power for rural Haitian women. The embroidered detail on the collar of her otherwise completely white suit, hints at the intricate embroidery and patterned fabric of Haitian fashion. In the tailoring of her white suit skirt she presents a cosmopolitan style at the same time that she cites Haitian folk culture with the color and detail of her dress. A single strand of pearls lends her appearance a conservative style that contrasts with the images of Michele Bennett Duvalier whose flamboyant expensive Paris fashion appeared frequently in the Haitian media. Without clear models, other than former first ladies, the image of the Haitian female politician was ill-defined. Pascal-Trouillot settled upon a conservative elegant but predominately Euro-American image with subtle references to Haitian

³³³ Junior Menguel. *President Ertha Pascale Trouillot and Election of 1990*. YouTube video. (June 8, 2012), www.youtube.com/watch?v=WX3gewwQoGY.

culture. Her creoleness is not a simple repetition of folk or French culture but reflection of the Haitian elite's cosmopolitanism and the possibilities of a feminist creoleness.

Fundamentally, Pascal-Trouillot attempts to speak to an essentialist vision of the Haitian experience. Without using a relational perspective, she ignores the nuances of both the experience of Haitian women. In fact, her performance unwittingly highlights the differences between her experience and many Haitians. At times her poised and reserved demeanor marks her as belonging to the elite class and diminishes the message of her speech. But more frequently, it is not the limitations of an essentialist representation of Haitians but her inability to read as universal that hinders her performance.

Haitian Feminism

Conflicting narratives of Haitian Feminism reflect the on-going tension surrounding the ideology and work of Feminists in Haiti producing a hostile environment for women's advocates like Pascal-Trouillot. Feminism is frequently a loaded term in Haiti that activists equally adopt and reject in order to advance their work. Conflicts are exacerbated by a paucity of archival records and restricted communication that help to keep generations from knowing about the work of their predecessors. Silencing in the archive prevents the circulation of representations of powerful women, reinforcing the message that women are not powerful. Mythic stories, like those about Anacaona, become more significant as they circulate in an oral tradition that is more resistive to patriarchal censorship. However, mythic images can sometimes perpetuate unrealistic expectations for Haitian women who must combat very real threats. For Pascal-Trouillot, the lack of well-known Feminist models and conflict over Feminist narratives impeded her ability to

dictate her own image. The on-going political crisis and threats from her political opponents meant that the stakes for her presidency and managing her image remained high for the nation but also for her safety.

The scarcity of women in politics means few precedents for how a female president should perform, creating difficulties but also possibilities. In general, because educated women were expected to remain at home and politics tended to bar anyone without a certain level of education, women did not participate in Haitian government. Even before her appointment, Pascal-Trouillot acknowledged her experience as anomalous. In an interview for a Haitian newspaper in 1978, Pascal-Trouillot admitted that she was one of only three practicing female lawyers in Haiti.³³⁴ Although a widow when appointed president, most of her career was supported and driven by her husband. Twenty years her senior, Ernest Trouillot acted as mentor. Because until the late 1970s women legally needed permission from their husbands to work outside the home, women frequently required the support of fathers and husbands to succeed. Cultural and legal barriers helped to confirm sexist ideology. Consequently, Pascal-Trouillot's earlier achievements are sometimes narrated as simple extensions of her husband's work. In reality, Pascal-Trouillot was an exception at every stage of her career. The absence of women in law and politics meant that she had to craft her own image of a female politician.

Although no other Haitian politicians' situation corresponded precisely to Pascal-Trouillot's situation, mythic images, and politically active First ladies provided some context for her presidency. As mentioned in chapter one, stories of Haitian women leading armies into battle remain alive in Haitian oral tradition. Maybe more significant than women fighting during the Revolution, the female spirits of Haitian Vodou actively engage in Haitians lives, representing

³³⁴ Ertha Pascal-Trouillot, *Rétrospectives Horizons*, (Impr. Des Antilles, 1980), 282.

different ways of exerting agency. Additionally, many first ladies participated in politics, sometimes with the goal of helping women. However, first ladies were always articulated in terms of their husbands, promoting a binary discussion of gender in which women play a supporting role. In some instances, such as Michèle Bennett Duvalier, Haitian women reified the stereotype of the frivolous infantile woman, reinforcing the divide between women of different social classes. Michèle Bennett, as other elite women before her, threw lavish parties while many Haitians suffered from extreme poverty and starvation. As much as mythic and historical women provided models for behavior, they also furthered unrealistic expectations or harmful stereotypes. A lack of money, political allies, and public trust defined Pascal-Trouillot's experience.

Depictions of Pascal-Trouillot tended to emphasize her inexperience or her class. Pascal-Trouillot was not known for being a charismatic leader but a careful and conscientious lawyer and academic. Her legal work and legal writings did not circulate beyond an immediate group of lawyers and academics. Consequently, following the inauguration the newspapers emphasized her obscurity above everything else.³³⁵ Skepticism of Pascal-Trouillot's chances at successfully staging elections, probably nourished by the repeated failures of subsequent administrations, framed the descriptions of Pascal-Trouillot. The 1990 political cartoons from *Le Petit Samedi Soir* depicted her as polished upper class and unapproachable with hair neatly coifed in a tight low bun, a large strand of pearls, and a polished dress suit. The image hardly seems to be an exaggeration when compared to her attire during the inauguration. The cartoons criticizing Pascal-Trouillot reveal that her fault was not in having an extreme position or outrageous behavior; rather, the cartoons accused her of being an upper-class Haitian woman. The critique carried the implication that upper-class Haitian women perform as hostesses not politicians, do

³³⁵ In national and international newspapers, reporters repeatedly described her as 'obscure,' 'inexperienced,' and 'unknown.'

not directly get their hands dirty, and know little of the suffering of most Haitians. Pascal-Trouillot did not repudiate these critiques but chose to specifically affirm her gender, emphasizing gender to downplay class. Speaking in Kreyol and claiming solidarity with other women, she made a progressive call for Haitian women's alliance in order to move forward. By specifically addressing women, Pascal-Trouillot's performance exposed both Pascal-Trouillot's particular situation and the place of women in Haiti's political landscape.

To understand fully the perception of Pascal-Trouillot's speech, we must consider the role of class. It is not only gender that determined Pascal-Trouillot's access to emotional appeals, but more specifically the intersection of her gender and class. Haiti has always been a nation defined by class.³³⁶ Colonial society structured class divisions that were strictly enforced long after Haitian independence, resulting in a small minority of elite Haitians who thrived off the exploitation of the majority. Linguistic, religious, and cultural divisions along with walls and guns maintained extreme inequality, creating parallel but vastly different societies. Gender defined an individual's means and freedom to traverse class boundaries. As was true in colonial societies, sexual liaisons offered an avenue to transgress strict class boundaries. However, likely in response to this possible slippage and transgression, these same relationships impacted cultural and legal discourses that closely restricted women's position in society.

Pascal-Trouillot's relationship with class informed her treatment of the intersection of class and gender in her speeches. She left the poor working class in which she was raised to enter the elite intelligentsia of Haiti when she married Ernest Trouillot who was her teacher and twenty years her senior.³³⁷ Marrying into the Trouillot family opened doors for Pascal. As Ernest's

³³⁶ See Peter Hallward, *Damming the Flood*. (New York: Verso, 2007).

protégé, she attended law school, joined the Trouillot family firm, and socialized with the wealthy elite such as Michelle Bennett and Jean-Claude Duvalier. However, even as her relationship offered certain advantages, by marrying Pascal-Trouillot she lost several rights. Throughout most of the twentieth century Haitian law treated women as minors, restricting their ability to make legal and economic decisions. Surrendering their property to their husbands, married women had even fewer rights than unmarried women. Pascal-Trouillot directly discussed the unequal treatment of married women in her legal writing as part of her fight to change the legal code.³³⁸ An advocate for family law, she very systematically articulates the negative effects on the family when married women have limited legal rights. However, because marriage remained prohibitively expensive for the majority of Haitians, marriage illustrated the ways gender and class intersected.

In reality the debate surrounding the legal rights of married women was really a conflict over the longstanding understanding of class, race, and gender determining citizenship. Dating back to colonial Saint Domingue, citizenship relied upon understanding of race, class, and gender in what Donnette Francis describes as *racialized relational difference*. Colonial relations were derived from European travel writers who depicted “black women as ‘untamed,’ white European women as ‘chastened,’ white creole women as ‘ravenous,’ mulatto women as ‘wanton,’

³³⁷ Although officially Haiti provides universal public education, in practice education is not free in Haiti. Tuition and fees limit the accessibility to all levels of education. Poorer families with multiple children often prioritize the education of one of the children. Consequently, many girls receive significantly less formal schooling than their brothers. As the youngest of ten children, it is unlikely that Pascal-Trouillot would have had access to higher education without the support of her husband.

³³⁸ Pascal-Trouillot discusses the need to reform the legal code in almost all of her writing but in particular in her analysis of the legislation regarding women. See Ertha Pascal-Trouillot, *Statut juridique de l’Haïtienne dans la législation sociale* (Impr. des Antilles, 1973) ; Pascal-Trouillot, *Retrospectives...Horizons*

Indian women as ‘policed,’ and Chinese women as ‘protected.’”³³⁹ In Haiti the legacy of this *racialized relational difference* can be found in the legal code. The depiction and expectation of the elite woman as ‘chastened’ continued to restrict the twentieth century upper class Haitian women who represented the majority of married Haitian women. Even as bourgeois women created women’s organizations to lobby for suffrage and other rights, expectations of ‘propriety’ as well as concerns over security limited the movement of these women.

The end of the US occupation brought about widespread feminist momentum in Haiti; however, the work was complicated by the function of class in Haiti. Established in 1934, *Ligue Feminine d’Action Sociale*, the oldest women’s organizations, fought for women’s suffrage, legal rights, and new cultural attitudes towards women. Although successful at lobbying for the expanse of rights for all women, the organization was largely made up of upper-class women from Port-au-Prince. In 1950, LFAS organized the first Haitian Women’s National Congress as part of the Bi-Centennial Exposition, which included women from all regions of the country and abroad, illustrating the official but also widespread reach of the group. The first lady and LFAS member Lucienne Estimé hosted the event.³⁴⁰ According to Grace Sanders, the social class conflicts in Haitian politics determined the history of the organization. “In particular, within the women’s movement the gap between poor and elite women was vast, and while the leaders espoused a universal feminist rhetoric, elite women remained the architects and leaders of the movement.”³⁴¹ For decades, LFAS was one of the few feminist organizations in Haiti. The

³³⁹ Donette Francis, *Fictions of Feminine Citizenship* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 17.

³⁴⁰ Grace Louise Sanders, “La Voix des Femmes: Haitian Women’s Rights, National Politics, and Black Activism in Port-au-Prince and Montreal” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2013).

³⁴¹ Sanders, “La Voix des Femmes,” 37.

oppression and violence of François Duvalier's regime made any kind of organizing extremely dangerous. Not until decades later under Jean-Claude, did Haitians manage to organize on a larger scale. In the 1980s as more women formed groups, the work became more decentralized. Conditions under Duvalier which pushed many Haitians to leave, also created a strong network between Haiti and the Diaspora. Women from the Haitian diaspora brought to Haiti their experience in North American feminist movements as well as new sources of funding.³⁴² Initially designed to address literacy or health care among women, these organizations became active participants in the struggle to oust Jean-Claude and later in the campaign for Aristide. The clout of these organizations helped to make women a recognizable and important voting demographic. In comparison to LFAS, these later groups were fundamentally more decentralized, partly due to the participation of the Diaspora, and less homogeneous, including women from rural and urban regions.

Although feminist organizations like the *Ligue féminine d'action sociale* are by definition political in their campaign for women's rights, the relationship between women's groups and "politics" remained precarious. The initial attempt to form LFAS failed when the Haitian President Vincent denied the women's petition for authorization despite his personal friendship with many of the families of the founding members and the women's previous commitment to the anti-occupation movement.³⁴³ Ultimately, the women's agenda appeared too radical and socialist to an administration that felt threatened by the general rise of Marxist politics in Haiti. Decades later during François Duvalier's rule, after LFAS had a long-established history, the

³⁴² Charles, "Gender and politics in contemporary Haiti," 149.

³⁴³ *Ligue féminine d'action sociale* originated from the relationships and work that Haitian women had done during the U.S occupation. See Sanders, "La Voix féminine"

group's office was ransacked by Macoutes who destroyed most of the women's documents and confiscated the office. The tenuous relationship continued. The model of charity practiced by LFAS did not fit with the role of politics after 1987. Paulette Poujol Oriol describes the politics of the early 1990s as disruptive. "[U]ntil my year when I took on [as President in 1987], we were still going to prisons but we were not welcomed anymore. Politicians wanted to see some political actions in that charity. We had to take permits... to be escorted by two, three cops. It was not pleasant anymore. So, we stopped... maybe 2 years after I took over. 1990, the politics spoiled everything."³⁴⁴ Several times in an interview, Oriol mentions politics as though it exists outside and separate from LFAS's work. Her description of politics is complex and sometimes inconsistent. She lists the achievements of LFAS, which include charitable operations and the passing of legislation. Citing Pascal-Trouillot, she claims that women have achieved equality, even as she complains of the continued discrimination against women. "Of course, we have had a great satisfaction to see a woman, Mrs. Ertha Pascal-Trouillot become President. That means we have achieved a complete equality, political equality. But still there is plenty to do because up to now we don't have equality in salaries."³⁴⁵ Interestingly, Oriol does not interrogate the conditions (poor approval and an appointment not an election) surrounding Pascal-Trouillot's presidency, only the symbolism of her position and title. In a way, she articulates politics as something pertaining only to those who actively seek the title 'politician.' Ultimately, 'politics' remain outside of Oriol's definition of LFAS's work and fundamentally destructive because as Oriol explains: "in Haiti, you cannot work really the way you would like to because politics rots

³⁴⁴ Chantalle F. Verna and Paulette Poujol Oriol, "The Ligue Feminine d'Action Sociale: An Interview with Paulette Poujol Oriol," *Journal of Haitian Studies* 17, no. 1 (2011), 248-249.

³⁴⁵ Verna and Oriol, "The Ligue Feminine d'Action Sociale," 250.

everything.”³⁴⁶ This characterization of both LFAS and politics reflects a broader discourse of Haitian feminism.

Scholars disagree over the interpretation of the history twentieth-century Haitian feminism. Although the work of LFAS is well known and generally acknowledged, many Haitian scholars identify the late nineteen-eighties as the beginning of a feminist movement in Haiti. Carolle Charles argues that the rise of grass-roots organizations after the Duvalier regime mark the birth of feminist action. She credits the indiscriminate violence of the Duvalier regime for erasing previous protections for women and thus instilling a new political consciousness among Haitian women. In her estimation, LFAS, an elite club with agendas and projects that largely served other elite women, remained distinctly separate from the majority of Haitian women. In contrast, Myriam Chancy takes issue with Charles’ characterization of both LFAS and Haitian feminism. She questions the idea that the passage of legal rights, in particular women’s suffrage, did not help all Haitian women and that elite women can be so neatly separated from the majority of Haitian women. Specifically, she rejects Charles’ argument that violence perpetrated by the Duvalier regime produced a new gender equality and feminist consciousness. Balancing these two perspectives, Grace Sanders acknowledges both perspectives and offers the rising role of the Diaspora as a means to understand the relationship between the elite and the majority of women. Nevertheless, among the few scholars who address this history the debate remains polarizing.

Although I tend to align my interpretation of Haitian feminism more with Chancy, Charles’ history is not surprising. LFAS did have mainly members who were well connected and

³⁴⁶ Verna and Oriol, “The Ligue Feminine d’Action Sociale,” 255.

light-skinned. Even if the accomplishments of these women positively impacted the majority of Haitian women (I believe they did), the class and attitude of the members of LFAS helped to create a narrative of this activism as both elite and largely self-serving. Not only did this narrative of LFAS as detached and elitist appear in scholarly work but also among the public. Class more than gender qualified LFAS's work for many Haitians. As Sanders explained in a footnote, many Haitian and Canadian feminists she encountered described LFAS as "elite and unattached." In reference to LFAS, one activist from Montreal said, "Oh yes, my aunt knew them. The ladies who got dressed up and had tea."³⁴⁷ The performance of propriety and charity of the members along with the significance of class in Haiti helped to produce the image of 'ladies' who dressed for tea, despite the impressive legal achievements of the organization.

The narrative of elite Haitian women activists as neither revolutionary nor radical sheds light on Pascal-Trouillot's situation. Like members of LFAS, Pascal-Trouillot strove to present a public performance of propriety and sophistication that marked her as separate from the radical (in some cases Marxist) feminist movement of the late eighties and early nineties. She spent her career fighting for rights for Haitian women but she fought while adhering to the codes of decorum that corresponded to her gender and class. She performed a measured pragmatism when most Haitians hungered for the fiery radical approach of Aristide. Pascal-Trouillot resisted the label of radical throughout her career. In an interview from 1988, she rejects the label feminist. Attempting to side step the question, she claims to be for "ni homme, ni femme, mais Homme, avec un grand H"³⁴⁸ Afterwards, she even undercuts her rejection of feminism, explaining that

³⁴⁷ Sanders, "La Voix Feminine," 12.

³⁴⁸ Pascal-Trouillot, *Retrospectives... Horizons*. 287.

although she works with feminists, she does not have the time to campaign for feminist associations. In this way, she avoids the potential stigma associated with the label of feminism. This performance of ambivalence, resistance to taking a strong political position, and desire to be conciliatory are apparent throughout her career, in her speech and presidency.

At the same time that Pascal-Trouillot adhered to the rules of ‘propriety’ as determined by her social class, she adopted a performance of nationalism that was radical for her gender and class. Pascal-Trouillot worked outside of the home, entered a male dominated field, and openly challenged patriarchal sexist policies that disadvantaged women. Twentieth-century elite Haitian women were expected to follow nineteenth-century French codes of behavior, meaning women should not work outside the home and remain sexually conservative. Fouron and Schiller explain that an idealized image of France produced specific gender and class norms in Haiti. “The Haitian interpretation of French culture brought together a France imagined through the reading of periodicals and literature and glimpses of French practices and attitudes brought home by elite Haitians who completed their education in France or traveled there. The result was a set of familial and social practices that accorded the highest status to families with legal marriage, patriarchal authority, and women who did not work outside the household.”³⁴⁹ Within her social circle, Pascal-Trouillot’s entire career, in particular her tenure as president, was a transgression. However, radical for her was not necessarily radical for most Haitians whose class dictated very different codes of behavior.

Conditions of class determine the role feminism and the usefulness of the label. Poor Haitian women had worked outside the home for generations and frequently ran households in

³⁴⁹ George Fouron and Nina Glick Schiller, “All in the Family: Gender, Transnational Migration, and the Nation-State,” *Identities Global Studies in Culture and Power* 7 no. 4 (2001), 551.

the absence of men who had migrated to find work. Not only did poor women live with different gender codes than elites, but they often lived outside the legal system that Pascal-Trouillot sought to change. Many poor women did not legally marry due to the prohibitive church and state fees but formed unofficial unions. Employment was often informal as market women or domestic workers. Even property in rural areas lacked formal documentation, meaning that ownership was complicated and reflected a local understanding rather than legal formal definition.³⁵⁰ The absence of formal legal structures influenced men as well as women. Although men had the right to vote since the country's beginning, literacy, fraud, and violence kept most poor men from voting. Class was just as significant of a barrier to civic participation as gender. Formal laws did not seem to touch the lives of many Haitians who lived largely in informal networks. Therefore, the legal work of Pascal-Trouillot was not marked as an achievement by most Haitian women.

The narrative of feminism as the work of working-class and poor Haitians contributed to the selection and rejection of Pascal-Trouillot. Although Haitians and Haitian scholars frequently articulate class as the defining influence in Haitian society, gender defines the look and function of class. The legal code reflected these norms. Working-class and poorer women exercise more mobility and autonomy at the cost of social status. "In Haiti, women are seen as sexually accessible if they live on their own."³⁵¹ This makes poorer women vulnerable in different ways than married women who are restricted by their husbands and society. Entering into the workforce, acting as a public figure, and speaking Kreyol all diverge from the standard

³⁵⁰ The absence of formal documentation has historically left both men and women vulnerable to land grabs by powerful individuals and corporations.

³⁵¹ Fouron and Schiller, "All in the Family," 556.

expectations for upper-class Haitian women. In short, Pascal-Trouillot's 'radical' performance indicates her desire to forge a solidarity across class boundaries for Haitian women, even if her message did not successfully transcend the restrictions of class.

Pascal-Trouillot's attempt to bridge barriers of class was not unprecedented, only more public. Although the narrative of the disconnected elite women prevailed, relationships that transcended class became very common due to the increase in diasporic trans-migrant Haitians. The lives of elite and bourgeois women changed in France, the United States, and Canada. These women who had previously been largely confined to the home could now find employment and engage in activities outside the home. The social system shifts in the diaspora. Migrants can "participate in the Haitian status and class system, but [they] no longer embody it. Women who emigrate and then maintain transnational networks do not leave the status hierarchy that constitutes the gender, family and nation; rather they find themselves in a position to raise their status in the family and to raise the status of their family."³⁵² Because members of the diaspora continue to participate in local Haitian society, class divisions are both blurred and maintained by transnational relationships. Within this system of gender and class, these transnational relationships contributed to the growth of the women's movement that arose in the 1980s in Haiti. Formerly elite women become working-class in the diaspora. Their contributions to Haitian society looked different and were often no longer narrated in terms of their class but in terms of their 'dyas' status.³⁵³

³⁵² Fouron and Schiller, "All in the Family," 559.

³⁵³ Dyas is a slag term for members of the Haitian diaspora. See Ulysse, "Papa, Patriarchy, and Power."

Leaving Haiti altered the social status of Haitian families, particularly for women, which in turn changed the makeup of Feminism in Haiti. Elite families that moved to the United States and Canada Diaspora found themselves middle class in the diaspora, changing family dynamics and codes of behavior.³⁵⁴ Becoming middle class in the diaspora meant no longer being able to afford domestic help and often the need for women to work outside the home. Careers meant women gained independence. Lower class women in Haiti moved to the diaspora where they gained social status back home as providers by sending remittances that supported extended families. Frequently women found work more easily than men in the service or healthcare industries, making integration into new communities quicker and obtaining visas easier. The importance of remittances blurred the rigid class structure in Haiti.³⁵⁵ Additionally, Haitians' relationship with race shifted as they immigrated to communities where they became a racial minority. Women forged new relationships and alliances, bringing different ideas of Feminism and new sources of money to Haiti. Pascal-Trouillot had first hand experience with the effects of migration through siblings and step-children who lived abroad in the United States. In her career, relationships in the Haitian diaspora and international community supplied inspiration and solidarity for her fight to change women's legal status in Haiti.

Pascal-Trouillot's career and presidency was shaped by the changes in Haiti at the same time that she helped to affect change. The previous decades of extreme political conditions which contributed to a shift in women's roles in Haiti did not instantly change social norms. The social

³⁵⁴ For a more thorough discussion of code shifting in the Haitian diaspora see Ulysse, "Papa, Patriarchy, and Power"

³⁵⁵ Several scholars have discussed the relationship between Haitians living abroad and those who remained in Haiti. I found Karen McCarthy Brown's *Mama Lola* and Karen Richman's *Migration and Vodou* to offer a useful discussion of the role and effects of Haitian migration.

stigma of politics meant that even as women gained legal rights and became more visibly engaged in politics, they often faced more backlash. Although women became more of a political constituent, they were not always unified, nor did they necessarily identify as women first. Class dictated most political affiliations, supporting the narrative of two separate and distinct threads of Feminism. Addressing Haitian women as a homogeneous audience, Pascal-Trouillot downplayed the role of class, which was widely acknowledged as the one of the most significant factors in the election. As an attempt to unite Haitians across social classes, emphasizing gender and national identity did little to assuage fears of renewed violence. Overall, Pascal-Trouillot's effort to present a nationalist discourse unified around gender was not well received but did create an interesting new precedent.

Pascal-Trouillot's writings

Pascal-Trouillot's perspective on gender and her relationship to Feminism is most clearly presented through her published work. As the author of multiple books and many articles, Pascal-Trouillot thoroughly articulated her interpretations and critiques of the law, which reveal both her work as a lawyer and judge as well as her perspective on Haiti, Haitian law, and the conditions for Haitian women. She published four texts that specifically analyze and present Haitian law with respect to women, a collection of essays and interviews about Haitian law and her career, and a text that considers her experience abroad and different legal systems. Additionally, she co-wrote two texts with her husband Ernest Trouillot, one of which was an encyclopedia of significant Haitians published after his death. In general, her work addresses a narrow audience already familiar with Haitian law. More specifically, the texts reveal Pascal-Trouillot's interest in

women's rights and her pragmatic approach to law. The writing clarifies her complex relationship to Feminism and the Duvaliers.

Pascal-Trouillot's writing reveal her negotiation between the gendered restrictions of her class and a progressive, sometimes feminist, agenda. In general, her writing presents the contradictions of her position. Although advocating for rights for women, she worked within oppressive structures, praising the Duvaliers who enabled her career. Pascal-Trouillot benefited from François Duvaliers's acceptance of women in politics as well as Jean-Claude's relaxation of political control. Her husband's family belonged to the same social class as Jean-Claude's wife's family, socializing in the same elite circles. The social connections through Trouillot's family helped Pascal-Trouillot overcome much of the stigma of being a woman in a male-dominated environment. Interestingly, she still maintained an air of neutrality despite her associations, which made her a viable choice for interim president. Pascal-Trouillot's writing articulates the contradictions of her career and the added negotiations of being a woman in politics. In her comprehensive critique of the Haitian legal code (under the Duvalier regime) that negatively impacts women, she dedicates the text to Simone Duvalier, "the first among us." Is the dedication an earnest tribute, a necessary appeasement, or a subtle critique of Simone's lack of support of women? Given the frank uncompromising message of the text, I doubt the dedication is a simple compliment. However, the ambiguity of dedication along with her with the contradictions embedded in her writing hint at the added restrictions placed on Haitian women. Chancy describes Haitian women writers as having been "forced to articulate their marginalization on multiple fronts: the experience of the Haitian woman is defined by exile within her own country, for she is alienated from the means to assert at once feminine and feminist identities at the same time that she undergoes the same colonial experiences of her male

counterparts.”³⁵⁶ For Pascal-Trouillot, the compounded marginalization prompted her to deny a feminist identity at the same time that she pushed a feminist agenda. Her writing illustrates how Pascal-Trouillot attempted to work within and around instead of outside the existing systems of power.

Pascal-Trouillot’s writing reveal the complexity of gender and class, particularly for women who openly advocated for women’s rights. She campaigns for legal equality or at least more agency for women in legal exchanges. The nineteenth and early twentieth-century Code Civil, stripped women of agency in performative moments, effectively encouraging women to perform social interactions outside institutional models. In her text *Retrospective Horizons*, a collection of older articles and newer writing that addresses the legal difficulties facing Haitian women, she exposes her privilege as well as her progressive politics. In particular, her attempts to help Haitian women still differentiate between women made visible by Haitian law and those who are silenced or obscured by classist assumptions. Pascal-Trouillot focuses much of her attention on marriage, a classist institution that excludes a large portion of the population in Haiti. Because weddings and official legal arrangements are costly, cohabitation and unofficial understandings are common among lower classes. The emphasis on marriage reflects the disconnect of the elite class. Whole sections of the text that consider the change of surname of married women appear absurd given that most Haitian women’s groups were demanding basic personal safety, food security, access to basic education and health care. She frames the discussion of names as a consideration of the public image of Haiti and historic legacy, in an academic tone recounting historical anecdotes of changes in surnames for personal gain. The academic essay on names recounts historical anecdotes to explain how individuals historically

³⁵⁶ Chancy, *Framing Silence*, 13.

and contemporarily violate the Code Civil in retaining surnames after divorce or adapting names to suit particular accounts of family histories. Although the essay offers an interesting and informative history of naming and the Code Civil, the social implications for most Haitians who due to illiteracy, classist structures, and poor infrastructure live outside written records are almost nonexistent. Pascal-Trouillot performs a feminist agenda for a white French feminist audience rather than the majority of Haitian women.

The contradictions of Pascal-Trouillot's work raise the question of efficacy when political socioeconomic conditions keep the legal code from applying to most citizens. Many Haitians effectively lived outside the laws. In many communities the performative authority of the law was usurped by less formal authority of kinship and Vodou. Poverty kept Haitians from participating in some legal practices like marriage. By co-habiting publically, couples performatively became acknowledged as 'plaçage,' a tradition of civil union that recognizes the relationship and children from the union. Cultural practice defined many social interactions that for upper-class Haitians were organized by the legal system. Largely, the system is not designed for most Haitians. Laws are enforced irregularly. Illiteracy and poverty prevent Haitians from using the system as a resource. Moreover, the Duvalier regime ruled predominately independently of both the constitution and the civil code, leaving the legal system without any practical authority. In this context of questionable efficacy of the legal code, Pascal-Trouillot managed to make clear improvements to the written legal status of women. She acknowledges the discrepancies and inefficacy of the law but rarely blames the government for lack of enforcement : "les lois sur le travail sont les mêmes pour les hommes et les femmes... en théorie du moins, la femme a droit au même salaire pour le même rendements ; mais en fait, les lois souvent ne sont pas respectées car on n'efface pas d'un trait des siècles de coutume et de

supr matie masculine.”³⁵⁷ She calls out the patriarchy that ignores the law and supports unequal treatment of men and women. However, Pascal-Trouillot does not extend this logic to a critique of the Duvaliers. Although most likely out of personal preservation rather than actual affection, her treatment of the Duvaliers haunted her presidency.

With forceful language, Pascal-Trouillot writes a critique and analysis of Haitian laws vacillating between a formal legal analysis and a feminist manifesto. Her introduction to the text accuses the patriarchy of producing legislation “with the sole concern of eternal domination in the name of a more and more anachronous phallocracy”.³⁵⁸ She reiterates again and again that her goals are for helping women. In fact, she acknowledges the need for laws to extend beyond the realm of the elite. In a speech given in 1978 at a Francophone Law conference in Port-au-Prince, she identifies the lack of legal recognition for domestic partnership as a serious problem for Haiti. Her argument displays sympathy for Haitian women rather than judgement.³⁵⁹ Moreover, when asked in an interview, why she is drawn to family law, she cites concubinage. Rather than taking a righteous moral stance often cited by the elite, she argues that women must be protected legally. “ Qu’on ne dise pas que le concubinage est immoral, c’est une institution aussi ancienne que le mariage en Haiti et une r alit  sociale qui a toujours subsist  parall lement : il faut compter avec elle.”³⁶⁰ However, this perspective is at times overshadowed by her essays that only consider issues such as surnames that primarily affect women of the elite. Nevertheless, Pascal-Trouillot’s work reiterates the contradictions of her career with her

³⁵⁷ Pascal-Trouillot, *Retrospectives Horizons*, 284.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 167-183.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 285.

later essays undercutting her seemingly strong feminist position. She begins her text with the claim that the wishes of Haitian women are almost completely satisfied. She applauds the recent Presidential decree of October 8th 1982 for eliminating sexism through the elimination of oppressive laws granting fathers and husbands rights over women. Contextualizing her statement, she sketches the history of women's legal rights in Haiti, noting women's newly granted right to hold property, conduct commercial business, and act as a legal guardian. In her praise of the decree, she outlines the limitations of the legislation, even as she labels the decree a complete victory. The 1982 decree does not rectify past discrimination but grants future wives more rights than existing ones. Laws still excuse the murder of adulterous wives. Legally domestic partnerships remain largely unrecognized. The unequivocal celebration of the legislation seems strange given the critical analysis of the legal code that follows.

Published after the dictatorship, her encyclopedia illustrates the contradictions and complexity of her relationship with the Duvaliers and in turn the patriarchy. Pascal-Trouillot and her husband published an encyclopedia of important figures in Haitian history. Published in 2001, the text only covers deceased individuals from A to G, therefore omitting many possible entries such as Jean-Claude Duvalier and Jean Bertrand Aristide.³⁶¹ However, the text does include François and Simone Duvalier. By far the longest of the entries, the section on Duvalier reveals an ambivalence about the dictatorship. The first part of the entry lists facts, decrees, and political acts without analysis. Approximately half way through the entry, the voice and tone of the text shift. Pascal-Trouillot introduces commentary and critique of the violence of Duvalier's government. She explains that dissention was frequently washed in blood, and "Duvalier réagit souvent de façon rigoureuse, voire impitoyable."³⁶² Positive achievements of the dictatorship are

³⁶¹ Unfortunately, there are few women included in the entries. When women are included, the information is spotty.

mentioned alongside criticism. Overall, the entry presents a contradictory image of Duvalier. In one of the final paragraphs, the text claims that he will never be forgiven for the terrifying acts that he ordered or at least tolerated. Nevertheless, the reluctance to assign blame strictly to François Duvalier seems to inform the entire entry.

In addition to the telling entry on Duvalier, the encyclopedia illustrates certain gendered dynamics in the volume's biography of the husband and wife co-authors, Ernest and Ertha. Both biographies list the authors' scholarly achievements, but Ertha's biography includes additional personal details. Specifically, Ertha's biography names her child. Ernest's does not list his children. This distinction reminds the reader of the presumption of motherhood as an essential qualification for Haitian women. The double standard is particularly striking because Ernest was the father of several successful Haitian scholars. Moreover, after her husband's death, Ertha was responsible for the text.

Constrained by expectations that upper-class women do not participate outside their private domestic sphere and the real threat of violence from the Duvaliers, Pascal-Trouillot attempts in her legal writing to advocate for a progressive message without provoking dangerous reactions. Carefully, she proposes feminist agendas as modest and reasonable policy changes. Her strategy could not be more different from Aristide's fiery provocative accusatory addresses. She performs a conservative politics and decorum of the elite even if the specifics of her politics happen to be more liberal and progressive than typically voiced by her peers. Her cautious discursive performance reflects her attempt to navigate the complex and shifting role of gender in narratives of nationalism. In Haiti, the relationship between gender and nationalism highly depends upon class. National narratives claim that women support the nation by supporting men,

³⁶² Ertha Pascal-Trouillot. *Encyclopédie biographique d'Haiti*. (Montreal: Editions SEMIS, 2001), 356.

a substitute for the nation; therefore, the image of support varies greatly based on socioeconomics of the individuals. François Duvalier attempted to alter this image, replacing ‘men’ with himself as the proxy for the nation. His explicit inclusion of women as revolutionary agents was novel but also mediated by his excessive use of rape to instill fear and submission. for Haiti. Consequently, the regime altered the narrative of women and the nation through victimization and (in a certain sense) empowerment. Pascal-Trouillot’s writing and later her public performance reflect these conditions in which women were encouraged to participate but at great personal risk.

Designed for a select audience, Pascal-Trouillot’s writing reveals just as much about her as her audience. Written in French in an academic style, her work was intended for elite Haitians who ran Haiti and were familiar with European legal and academic discourse. She attempted to frame the push for gender equality as non-threatening cosmopolitan trend that would make Haiti appear more European and less primitive. She specifically avoid discussing the United States whose reputation as crass and uncultured made American politics less appealing to Haitian elites. Although Haiti’s rich literary tradition often rehearsed idealism and theoretical discourses, gender tended to be neglected. Pascal-Trouillot’s position gave her entry into this tradition but it did not eliminate the sexism and gender codes enforced by her social class. Even as she challenged sexist laws and the expectations that fostered them, she had to navigate them carefully. Contradictions in her writing highlight her attempt to balance her agenda with the complex and often restrictive expectations of her social class.

Pascal-Trouillot’s Kreyolness

Like Feminism, creole, as a cultural marker, remains divisive in Haiti. Officially, superficial signifiers of creole culture have been used to celebrate Haitian nationalism. In practice, the tension between social classes and crises of sovereignty often have been played out as conflicts between French and Kreyol. During the 1990 election, the future of Haitian sovereignty was truly in question. Was democracy possible? Would the Haitian elite and foreign interests dictate the direction of the country? Would the military relinquish enough control to enable the success of a civilian government? Often, the language Kreyol and signifiers of Kreyol culture served to represent the progressive populist perspective. In Haiti, creole has not been a completely stable historical marker, partly because a central component to Haitian Kreyol culture is its adaptability. Despite the emphasis on flexibility and creativity as a tool of survival, continuity within the language, Vodou religion, and music from early nineteenth century practice to the twenty-first century has established an aesthetic and shared understanding of Kreyol culture. In the case of Pascal-Trouillot, her presidential performance tried to strike a balance between performing the established Kreyol and adapting Kreyol to suit her particular situation. Both François Duvalier and Bertrand Aristide offer models for performing Kreyol as a political tool; however, in each case, their performances are strongly linked to their interpretation and performance of masculinity. Pascal-Trouillot interprets Kreyol as feminine which produces a creolized version of Kreyol.

Class, gender, and location shape the look of Haitian creoleness. Both scholars and Haitians frequently narrate class as divided between French and African. In reality, the division is not so neat. As explained earlier, the elite aspire to follow an image of French culture that is far from a direct replica of their contemporary France. In turn, Kreyol culture is not a strict extension of West African culture. Adaptable and resilient, Kreyol culture changes to reflect the

daily needs of Haitians, incorporating Indigenous, Spanish, US American, and invented aspects along the way. Consequently, Haitians practice Kreyol culture differently depending upon their class, gender, and location. Even the elite who strive to be French practice aspects of Kreyol culture. In the diaspora new social, economic, and geographic conditions necessitate new practices. Because Kreyol culture is best defined by the strategic and inventive process of creolization, new practices expand the reach of Kreyol culture rather than diverge from it. I am using creolization to name a process of invention and syncretism that negotiates and circumvents oppressive power structures making new modes of survival and new meaning. From this definition, I read Pascal-Trouillot's performance as president as an addition to Kreyol culture instead of a poor imitation. Her performance of Kreyol culture was strategic, a synthesis of different practices, as a means to negotiate restrictions placed on women. I argue that her access and performance of Kreyol culture is an example of on-going creolization that acknowledges and tactically deploys gendered discourses and practices.

As a woman in Haitian politics, Pascal-Trouillot's career illustrates the contradictions and omissions within the discussion of creole culture. A product of colonial racism and plantation slavery, power in Haiti is frequently narrated primarily in terms of class, a simplification of the complex conditions in the country. Pascal-Trouillot was born into the petit bourgeoisie and later married into the elite, marking her as privileged. Without considering the significance of gender, popular discourse frequently dismisses her struggles and her relationship to Kreyol culture. Despite the unsophisticated narration of career as privileged, Pascal-Trouillot did seem to recognize the importance of the intersection of class and gender, as evidenced by her legal writing. Although her personal struggles arose mostly from her gender, she did not ignore class in her legal work. Her career resembles early Haitian feminism of the elite, work done to help all

women regardless of class but done in the language of the elite. On the other hand, in her position as president, she attempts a different approach. She incorporates linguistic signifiers of the masses to address the grassroots movements of the 1990s. She tries to access and perform the new creoleness of the post-Duvalier era even when gender and class overdetermine what is accepted as creole culture. Pascal-Trouillot embraces her gender in her performance of creole culture to create a progressive resistant identity, advocating for a new creoleness based on the on-going process of creolization rather than a historically fixed notion of creole. Because the restrictions of gender remained vastly unacknowledged, her inclusion of gender was overlooked by her peers, journalists, and historians.

Despite her public position on gender, her politics remained relatively moderate. Above all, she advocates for solidarity. Over her legal career, she fought for protections for women from domestic abuse, rights to own property, and rights to have legal authority over their children. Her goals were hardly radical. Likewise, her public performance of Kreyol culture remained conservative. She spoke in Kreyol, made general references to Kreyol culture and the importance of unity, and performed subtle aspects of culture in her public appearances. In spite of her efforts, her performance of Kreyol culture was dismissed by the public. Critics would justify this dismissal by explaining that class above all else defines Haitian politics; therefore, as a member of the elite class, she cannot perform Kreyol culture.³⁶³ This explanation ignores the access male politicians have had to Kreyol culture. Although most Haitian men of the elite who enter politics still represent only their elite class, in several cases, men have traversed the boundaries of class

³⁶³ Activists and members of Lavalas, particularly Aristide, publicly articulated this perspective. See Dupuy, *The Prophet and Power*; Famer, *The Uses of Haiti*; Hallward, *Damming the Flood*; Charles, "Gender and politics in contemporary Haiti"

to present themselves as representatives of Kreyol culture. Gender prevented Pascal-Trouillot from succeeding at this performance.

Historically, masculinity has been strongly associated with the nation, helping men more easily manipulate local representations of national/Kreyol identity and understandings of class. A famous example, François Duvalier articulated national identity and nationalism in terms of race and class as a means to destabilize his detractors and craft his own image of heroism. He used his attire and his body to signify the ideal Haitian. Thus, the original Duvalierist was dark skinned and working class.³⁶⁴ By foregrounding race, Duvalier controlled the discourse of class, making race equate to nationalism. Aristide took a different approach, advocating for class to signify nationalism. Aristide depicted nationalism as synonymous with Kreyolness and the lower classes. He represented nationalism as the uneducated, unemployed, and Kreyol speaking Haitian man, who was incidentally dark skinned and not incidentally living amidst violence. In a Marxist fashion, Aristide approached class as a product of violence and capitalism. Both Duvalier and Aristide claimed to address all Haitians irrespective of gender but largely ignored the ways gender structured violence against women in Haiti. Furthermore, their successful performances of kreyolness relied upon their access to the patriarchy. Pascal-Trouillot, barred from benefiting from the same power structures, could less easily transcend class barriers.

Without the advantages of masculinity, Pascal-Trouillot relied upon rhetoric to perform Kreyol culture and nationalism. Propriety restricted her performance as well as her reception, which could explain her moderate approach. Specifically, Pascal-Trouillot spoke in Kreyol and performed Kreyol speech patterns. Not even an official Haitian language until 1987, Kreyol was

³⁶⁴ The depiction of nationalism as embodied by the black working class or noirist Haitian faded under Jean-Claude Duvalier, who aligned himself with the light skinned elite and foreign interests.

not standard in political addresses. Throughout her presidency, Pascal-Trouillot spoke in both French and Kreyol. However, she gave her most significant speeches, her inaugural address and her resignation under duress, in Kreyol. At her inauguration when she finally stood before the podium to speak, she appeared determined and focused, immediately changing the tone of the ceremony by speaking in Kreyòl. Unlike all of the speeches that preceded hers, she began with the words ‘my brothers and sisters.’ Maintaining a steady rhythmic speech pattern, she abandoned the rhetoric typically used in formal Haitian speeches, a legacy of an older style mimicking French discourse. Pascal-Trouillot attempted to perform a French republicanism that relied upon the idea of a universal subject/citizen by using a Haitian cultural vocabulary. She repeated the words ‘we,’ ‘us,’ and ‘ours,’ constantly positioning herself as a member of the Haitian public rather than an outsider. Historically, Haiti has not promoted the concept of a universal subject; in fact, class division have remained central and visible in public policy through regulation of language and religion. Particularly in the post-Duvalier years, the question of how to treat class divisions was at the forefront but controversial. Ignoring the divisions by addressing a ‘universal’ Haitian subject undermined her message. Too general, her language designed to signal community misfired. With no public persona before her inauguration, she had no previously established constituents, leaving her without a clearly defined audience. Moreover, she lacked the charisma in her performance to inspire her audience to follow her in envisioning universal Haitian subject.

Music and Kreyol rhetoric feature strongly in Haitian politics. In Kreyol Haitians tend to integrate history, popular culture, and politics. Throughout the capital on buildings all over Port-au-Prince, graffiti covers national politics, articulating different political positions with art, slogans, and poetry. Popular music tends to address national politics. In the style of American

hip-hop, Caribbean rasta, meringue, and Haitian kompa, musicians voice thorough political critiques of the government. In rural areas local musicians write protest songs to perform in the streets during the centuries-old tradition of Rara. Beginning on Ash Wednesday and concluding on Easter weekend, Rara participants parade through the streets performing music and skits blending of Vodoun and Catholic practice.³⁶⁵ Most of these artistic political performances use the Haitian practice *pwen*. Both a power and a symbol, *pwen* refers to the essence of, or commentary on a situation or person that when articulated and performed well gains cultural/spiritual capital. Speakers or performers throw *pwen* to critique or voice ‘truth.’ Within the context of Vodou, *pwen* serves as a message and/or a magical resource.³⁶⁶ Pascal-Trouillot struggles to send *pwen* in her speeches. Her inaugural address articulated her position in a clear and straightforward manner without the characteristic double-entendres or metaphors that distinguish the artfully crafted lyrical critiques known as *pwen*. In fact, Pascal-Trouillot’s style seems bland in comparison to the metaphorically rich speeches made by François Duvalier and Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Both Duvalier and Aristide relied upon music, *pwen*, and imagery to support their rhetoric. Both men relied upon patriarchal symbols, performing the ‘papa’ or ‘father’ of Haiti to reinforce the image of them leading the nation, tapping into the common analogy of the family to describe the nation.

Duvalier, known as ‘Papa Doc’, used music, performance, and spectacle to enforce the image of him as the father of the nation. Through speaking Kreyol, he performed his paternal

³⁶⁵ During moments of political or social unrest, Haitians, including Haitian elites, have harnessed the influence of music to further their political agendas. Nevertheless, when the Haitian elite has found it to be politically advantageous, they have adopted and appropriated aspects and symbols from Haitian Vodou in order to align themselves with the larger middle class and peasant populations. Folk music which is often inseparable from religious music becomes a primary tool in establishing this link

³⁶⁶ Karen Richman, *Migration and Vodou* (University Press of Florida, 2005).

relationship to the Black bourgeois and a refutation of the Haitian elite and the white U.S. neocolonialism. Duvalier incorporated Vodoun symbolism in his public performances using the ominous image of Bawon Samedi to remind the public of his omnipotent control over life and death. He relied upon Catholic and Vodou symbols to support his image of power and legitimacy. “A famous portrait of Duvalier showed him seated at a desk with Jesus standing behind him.”³⁶⁷ He preferred to have others make more aggressive and inflammatory statements. Consequently, pwen was frequently used by those on his payroll. Through spectacle, he articulated his own political capital and his thinly veiled threats against his enemies. He funded Koudayay, superficially military celebrations, but in practice, events paid for by the government to pacify and garner support from the middle class and poor. At his insistence the popular musicians in Port-au-Prince performed primarily pro-Duvalier songs at Carnival. The songs commissioned by the regime and performed at state-sponsored celebrations and following speeches included religious and patriarchal imagery.³⁶⁸ Religion and paternalism played alongside an image of power defined by masculinity. Additionally, representations of masculine and violent sexuality emphasized these power relationships. In many ways Duvalier used this popular conflation or ‘betiz’ that equates sexual aggression with sovereignty in his brutal Macoute tactics.³⁶⁹ Admittedly, the attempt to control the arts and performance was not always successful; however, Duvalier’s cultural messages were always supported by violence. Nemours Jean-

³⁶⁷ Gage Averill, *A day for the hunter, a day for the prey: Popular music and power in Haiti* (University of Chicago Press, 2008), 74.

³⁶⁸ Duvalier commissioned the most popular artists to write and perform songs such as “Bonjou Duvalier, Papa Moin” (trans. Hello Duvalier, My father) as well as songs that openly threatened his political opponents with violence. See Gage Averill.

³⁶⁹ The Makoutes used rape as a means to control and terrorize the population.

Baptiste, one of the most successful kompa-dirèk band leaders admitted that although his fans expected him to resist Duvalier, he believed he had no choice but to perform for the regime.³⁷⁰

Like Duvalier, Aristide used symbolism to support his message. He released doves at rallies. He reinforced the suggestion that his survival of assassination attempts indicated his divine support. His sermons incorporated pwen, when following the assassination attempt, Aristide claimed: “Thus would God have us walk through the valley of death and find ourselves, our voyage at the end, at the sunlit crossroads of life; so would God have us travel nightmarish highways of rain and gloom and murder only to pull into a carefree village at sunrise in our exhausted car with four tires flat...”³⁷¹ He frames his experiences as tests but also throws pwen at his opponents, stripping them of agency by transforming them into a divine trial. Aristide embraced his paternal relationship to the public as a priest, but unlike Duvalier, he defined his public as the disenfranchised poor, not the working class. Aristide spoke to his followers in Kreyol as he had during his sermons. Peter Hallward explains that Kreyol serves as an essential component to Aristide’s overall aim for simplicity and transparency. “With his every Kreyol sermon and his every Kreyol speech, Aristide sets about breaking up the monopoly of discourse that has long served to protect the ‘natural’ dominance of the cosmopolitan class.”³⁷² Consequently, Aristide adopts Kreyol metaphors and proverbs to substitute for common political jargon. “For Aristide, simplicity is an essential political virtue.”³⁷³ However, the emphasis on

³⁷⁰ Averill, *A day for the hunter, a day for the prey*, 91.

³⁷¹ Jean-Bertrand Aristide, *In the parish of the poor: Writings from Haiti*. Translated and edited by Amy Wilentz (Maryknoll, NY, Orbis, 1990), 60.

³⁷² Hallward, *Damming the Flood*, 23.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 22.

simplicity ultimately functioned as a performance of nationalist belonging. Aristide fostered the idea among his supporters that speaking in French, using complex rhetoric or vocabulary indicated a deceitful intention. Furthermore, this non-conforming rhetoric that so ingratiated him with his supporters, made the Haitian bourgeois and elite class more suspicious of his ‘radical’ agenda. While prioritizing clarity, the rhetoric also risked the tendency to produce an overly simplistic binary discourse: right/wrong, with us/against us. Before being elected, Aristide’s speech was consistently direct in its accusations in complete contrast to the general and sometimes vague remarks made by Pascal-Trouillot.

Pascal-Trouillot did not evoke the same affective ‘emotional’ appeal, a key element of Duvalier and Aristide’s speeches. Maybe a conscious choice or an unconscious consequence of gendered socialization, her performance of emotion touches on the long history of articulating emotions and affect as gendered. Her stoic demeanor can be understood as a reaction against the excessive negative stereotype of the overly emotional woman. Moreover, in Haiti affective displays are perceived as a marker of class with the elite enacting a reserved and conservative affect and the lower-classes enacting a louder, more colorful, and more ribald aesthetic performance associated with Vodou practice and Carnival. Pascal-Trouillot’s reserve marks her as a member of the elite class, even though she actively counters this classification by speaking in Kreyol. As Sara Ahmed explains, “[e]motions shape the surfaces of bodies, which take shape through the repetition of actions over time, as well as through orientations towards and away from others.”³⁷⁴ For Haitian women, emotional affect connotes weakness and sexuality. Because sexual availability corresponds to class in Haiti, public displays of emotion mark women as sexually available and lower-class. The perceived ‘porous’ (penetrable) and ‘soft’ nature of

³⁷⁴ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 4.

women's bodies works as to support the discourse of women as emotional and thus, weak and ineffectual leaders. On the other hand, men can access an emotional performance of patriotic passion that is neither emasculating nor classist. Therefore, emotion enabled a performance of nationalism for Duvalier and Aristide that was inaccessible to Pascal-Trouillot. Duvalier cultivated fear. Aristide promoted hope. Both inspired anger through their speeches. Neither were perceived as feminine or weak for discussing, performing, and soliciting emotions. Possibly, Pascal-Trouillot, like many successful women, adopted stoicism to counter narratives of women as 'overly' emotion and weak. In fact, critics described Pascal-Trouillot as 'emotional' regardless of her performance. She was rendered 'naturally' emotional by her gender. In her inaugural address, she maintained a steady voice, a serious face, and stood tall and calm. Her affect may have been an attempt to portray empowerment and commitment to the task; however, audiences understood her stoicism as fake and indicative of her general deceit.³⁷⁵

Rather than emotional appeal, the focus of the inaugural speech was the unification of Haitians, specifically Haitian women. She cites the importance of women multiple times, insisting that 'we' must choose to change the nation, she accepts her task 'with courage' on behalf of all Haitian women. She peppers her speech with references to family, calling on brothers, sisters, and mothers, all the while promising security for families. By framing the election as a family issue, she articulates the political moment as pertinent to women. Pascal-Trouillot encourages an emotional response, identifying it as appropriate; yet, she seems to avoid outward displays of emotion. Her performance belies her message. Even as she declares her presidency to be a win for Haitian women, who begin to reenter the 'history of this black nation,' her affect creates a dissonance with her words. She does not appear celebratory or overcome with

³⁷⁵ See articles from *Le Petit Samedi Soir*.

grief or anger. In effect, her performance highlights class divisions. Pascal-Trouillot attempts to address women as a united group, ignoring the strict socioeconomic hierarchies that have divided women. Historically social class not gender has defined political movements. During colonial rule, social structures pitted women from different classes against each other, vying for economic stability. Persistent class divisions resulted in extreme differences between codes between classes. Pascal-Trouillot ignored this history to envision a ‘universal’ Haitian woman. By neglecting an explicit acknowledgement of class as an oppressive system, instead emphasizing political corruption and violence, she disenfranchises her audience. Despite her use of Kreyol and references to unity, her performance does not erase the damning stamp of privileged. As Aristide mobilized the poor to demand a voice in the up-coming election, he unified the majority of Haitians around the issue of class. The rhetoric of his party Lavalas³⁷⁶ articulated the greed of the elite as a primary cause of the nation’s suffering, calling for the metaphorical flood to wash away the sinners and start fresh.

Regardless of Pascal-Trouillot’s success, her attempt to perform creole culture rather than an image of the French statesman reveals the increasing political clout of ‘creoleness’ in Haiti. Openly deriding or even dismissing Kreyol culture was no longer practical for the elite Haitians who had a historically fickle relationship with Kreyolness. Since the exile of Jean-Claude Duvalier, the mobilization on the street of the lower classes became common. Maybe due to the increased political freedom after the fall of the dictator, the belief that this was a critical moment for the nation, or the support from the extensive diaspora communities in the US and Canada, the people produced very vocal and visible displays of political involvement. The widespread use of

³⁷⁶ Lavalas, meaning the flood waters, was a constant refrain in Aristide’s speeches demanding for change. Eventually, Lavalas became the name of Aristide’s political party.

the radio meant that the Kreyol public could unite across the nation. Politicians could market themselves on the radio to an illiterate public. The slow pacing of Pascal-Trouillot's speech hints that she designed her address specifically for the radio. Through the radio, Kreyolness, a cultural marker and aesthetic that has been fluid and adaptable by design, had a mechanism to be distributed and reified. Media could push a version of Kreyol culture, defining and regulating it. Consequently, Pascal-Trouillot's performance of Kreyol could be more uniformly rejected. Her critics blamed her association with Duvalier, her class, and her personal incompetence for her poor performance, ignoring the way gender and violence worked to structure her presidency.

In many senses, violence defined Pascal-Trouillot's presidency. The national crisis of sovereignty left violence as the most successful means of political efficacy. Duvalierists threatened and enacted violence. Members of Lavalas retaliated with their own violence. The organized state sanctioned assaults of the Duvalier dictatorship transformed into chaotic bloodshed concentrated around the elections. Just prior to the 1990 election, the National Coalition for Haitian Refugees Americas Watch published a review of the conditions in Haiti, one of the more straightforward descriptions of crisis. "In 1987, [the Haitian army] not only failed to protect voters from marauding bands of terrorists, but actually assisted in the carnage. Because none of those responsible for the 1987 violence has ever been brought to justice, or even disciplined by the army, many have feared that such actions could recur during the 1990 elections."³⁷⁷ Although the military established committee to oversee the election and promised to end unrest, public displays of violence persisted undercutting their claims. On July 7, union leader Jean-Marie Montès and Council of State Member Serge Villard were assassinated in broad

³⁷⁷ Fuller and McCalla, *In the Army's Hands*, 10-11.

daylight on the street. Incidents of vandalism increased.³⁷⁸ The papers and the Council of State blamed Pascal-Trouillot for the unrest. Meanwhile, Pascal-Trouillot was threatened by similar violence, arrested during the coup, and later arrested by Aristide. Pascal-Trouillot fled to the US, fearing for her life. Whether due to inability or disinterest, Pascal-Trouillot appeared to have no control over the military. Without an independent police force or a supportive military, the declarations of the president and the council were irrelevant. Violence persisted.

In the streets people openly mocked Pascal-Trouillot popularizing the newly written *pwen* song *Manman poul-la* (Mama Chicken). Using birds to describe political leaders was trendy prior to the election. By calling Pascal-Trouillot a chicken, the song directly compares her to the other leaders.

Manman Poul-La Trouillot	Chicken mama Trouillot
Manman Poul-la	Chicken mama
Gade pintad-yo	Look at the guinea hens
Ki te antre nan kòlòj-mwen	Who were let into my cage

Manman poul is a common insult, calling someone a fool. As a symbol of the Duvalier family, the guinea hen reference accuses Pascal-Trouillot of being a Duvalierist and not simply unable to control the violence but encouraging it. The *pwen* song blamed Pascal-Trouillot for the murders and ultimately the attempted coup.³⁷⁹ More vulgar variations of the song circulated, including sexual ‘betiz’. Music narrated the entire year with songs encouraging Haitians to vote as well as

³⁷⁸ Sauveur Pierre Etienne, *Haiti: Misère de la Démocratie* (Paris, L’Harmattan, 1999), 131.

³⁷⁹ Birds were commonly used to reference politicians in the popular slang prior to, during, and following the election. Furthermore, manaman poul is an insult meaning fool. See Averil, *A day for the hunter*, 192.

promoting or critiquing different candidates. *Pwen* and music emboldened political commentary and action despite the rampant violence. For most Haitians and historians, the *pwen* songs represented authentic creolization, in contrast to Pascal-Trouillot's performances.

For many, the political commentary and music exemplified the powerful role of creolization. Performing subversive songs or painting Port-au-Prince in subversive graffiti art illustrated the role of creolization in political resistance. Consequently, creolization belonged to the underprivileged classes. Elites like Pascal-Trouillot could not (or at least should not) embody creolized practice or performance. However, this perspective completely disregards the powerful way gender structures this type of political resistance. The musicians weaving through the streets of the capital were men. The journalists, writers, and artists who managed to widely circulate their work were predominantly men. By design, women were excluded from these activities. In the case of Rara, the music festival, women are strictly barred from participation. In other cases, the extra burden of running a household in addition to working outside the home leaves little room for artistic and sometimes even civic participation. The lack of an intersectional discussion of privilege means that the radicalism of nominating a woman as president remained largely unacknowledged. As a woman from the elite, Pascal-Trouillot's image was incongruent with the standard understanding of creole. Instead, the 'creole' songs narrate her in sexist language, calling her the whore of the Duvaliers.³⁸⁰ To identify aspects of her as creolized is a subversive reading of the standard masculine narrative of creole even as it risks down playing the immensely significant role of class in the politics of the 1990 election.

³⁸⁰ Averil, *A Day for the Hunter*, 193.

Ultimately, Vodou shapes creole culture, even when the influence remains sometimes inconspicuous. Unlike many Western religions, the notion of separating the sacred from the secular does not exist in Vodou. Consequently, even for Haitians who publicly reject Vodou, Vodou practices and aesthetics influence their experiences. Claudine Michel describes Vodou as much more than a belief system but instead as a daily practice that defines human's relation to the cosmos. Vodou has directly shaped what it means to be Haitian. Similar to many west African practices, Vodou prioritizes the community and the collective. "Human connection is the assumption in the Haitian worldview: there is suppression of unique life history in favor of a collective personhood from which energy is derived."³⁸¹ The significance of community and balance influences the understanding of responsibility. Individuals share responsibility with others from their family, group, or community. Furthermore, "[m]orality in the absolute sense can never be placed above the welfare of the collectivity."³⁸² Vodou influences Haitian morality, the concept of community, and the process of decoding meaning. Haitians transmit the knowledge and wisdom of their religion, culture, and history through oral practice; however, meaning is conveyed through the performance of language not simply the abstract significance of words. They style, setting, and delivery of speech relay meaning. Michel explains that "the spoken language has very little meaning and practically no influence in itself; images, metaphors, contradictions, irony, humor, tone, are what give life and significance to the message behind the words." Therefore, Vodou offers tools to decode performance. Using Vodou to read

³⁸¹ Michel, *Vodou in Haiti*, 102.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 103.

Pascal-Trouillot's speech is not only useful but almost necessary due to the role of Vodou in the period before and after the election.

Vodou aesthetics offered politicians a complex system of communication that enabled layered messages. Although Aristide was a Catholic priest who followed liberation theology, he frequently incorporated Vodou aesthetics into his performances. Because Vodou functions in a syncretic way alongside other religions, Haitians do not consider this practice hypocritical but a common practical approach to life: use what you need when you need it. Aristide's liberation theology, which argues for a Marxist emancipation of the poor, easily blended with the Vodou prioritizing of the community. Blending his image with the divine and suggesting that the three failed assassination attempts indicated his divine support easily complemented the function of Vodou spirits who actively support and protect practitioners. By performing the role of savior and prophet, Aristide combined his philosophy of community with a seemingly contradictory promotion of 'one-manism' politics. His famous slogan "Yon sèl nou fèb; ansanm nou fò; ansanm, ansanm nou sé Lavalas" (Alone we are weak; united we are strong; united, united we are the Flood) in Vodou fashion relayed not only the literal message but also the dynamism of his personal performance. In promoting himself as a *savoir*, Aristide relied upon paternalistic rhetoric, in which the 'father' helps the 'children.'³⁸³ His contradictory image of community/individual was legible in the Haitian creole syncretic culture of Vodou and Catholicism. Like Aristide, Duvalier openly relied upon Vodou aesthetics although he officially practiced Catholicism. Greatly influenced by the writings of Jean Price-Mars, Duvalier approached Vodou like an untapped resource. Rather than rejecting or legitimizing Vodou, Duvalier exploited the deviant reputation of Vodou due to decades of policy outlawing Vodou

³⁸³ Dupuy. *The Prophet and Power*, 92-97.

practice as sorcery. Referencing Vodou offered Duvalier a not so subtle means of threatening the public.

Although not inherently an exclusive religion, the desire of the elite to emulate French society has reinforced the division of elite Haitians and Vodou practice. Moreover, even though Vodou affects Haitian society on such a grand scale, the nature of Vodou ritual aesthetics appear in direct conflict with the expected comportment of the elite, particularly elite women. Because Vodou strives to interpret and manage rather than just restrict daily life, sex features prominently in Vodou. Vodou offers a space to express and explore gender and sexuality. This does not mean that Vodou provides freedom from social restrictions of sexuality and gender. Instead, Vodou decodes behavior. Although sometimes leaving room to subvert social structures, more often Vodou uses caricature and excess to reify existing notions of gender, sexuality, and class. Frequently, Vodou employs sensational and hyperbolic performance to present a realist not idealist version of life. Consequently, upper class men have had more success borrowing Vodou aesthetics when it was convenient. The strict codes of behavior for elite women, emphasizing chastity, barring public displays, stressing composure and restraint make Vodou more inaccessible for women than men. Therefore, Pascal-Trouillot's subtle references to Vodou are radical even as they are conservative.

Traditionally, Kreyol is articulated as an aesthetic and practice common among lower-class rural Haitians. However, the history of Kreyol as a language and cultural practice is more complex than this definition implies since from time to time, different classes have adopted Kreyol as a symbol of Haitian nationalism. As more Haitians relocated to urban areas, the concept of a 'pure' rural culture as quintessentially Haitian became even more of a fiction. Historically, both urban and rural Haitians influenced the development of Kreyol. Furthermore,

migration and technology have connected urban and rural spaces, blurring cultural divisions. Kreyol culture is not static but a fluid practice with a focus on utility, shifting to accommodate the needs of different times and spaces. Therefore, Pascal-Trouillot's performance of Kreyol, an interpretation of Kreyol aesthetics and practice suited to her unique situation, fits well with Kreyol's adaptive history. She creolizes tropes of Kreyol culture in a way that respects the flexible nature of Kreyol.

Conclusion

Choosing to read Pascal-Trouillot's speech as creolizing is not an assertion that her performance as president was necessarily astute or effective. Instead, I aim to question why some political performances are quickly labeled as 'creole' or 'creolizing' while hers was not. As with the other figures discussed in the dissertation, I want to address what it is that invites or discourages the label of both 'creole' (as a cultural signifier) and 'creolizing' (a creative process). Although gender plays the most significant role in determining the accessibility of these labels, gender should not be considered without outside of socioeconomic class. As a woman and a member of the Haitian elite, Pascal-Trouillot hardly represented the average Haitian women. Her interpretation of Kreyol reflected her unique circumstance but also a broader tension between sovereignty and gender.

As president, Pascal-Trouillot inhabited a position in between Roger Lafontant and Jean-Bertrand Aristide: the power of the establishment versus the masses. Lafontant and Aristide waged a war through rhetoric, protesters, terrorism, and mob violence on the streets of Port-au-Prince. The men used similar rhetoric of war. Aristide referred to his agenda and the movement

surrounding him as Lavalas, the floods. The biblical imagery of the flood waters washing away the filth and sin helped promote his image of prophet. Interestingly, Lafontant drew upon a similar yet different image, calling the outcome of the (what he claimed to be fraudulent) election an apocalypse.³⁸⁴ The two competing images, floods and apocalypse, circulated in the media. Using these two polarizing figures, there were many attempts to destabilize and delegitimize the election by associating Pascal-Trouillot with Duvalier. “Taking the offensive, the neo-Duvalierists attempted to deepen the rift between President Pascal-Trouillot and the Council of State by reviving the ‘color question’ and depicting Pascal-Trouillot as an heiress to Papa Doc Duvalier, and the Council of State as the representative of the reactionary mulatto bourgeoisie.”³⁸⁵ Given the turbulence, Pascal-Trouillot’s conservative demeanor seems hardly surprising. In one of her final acts as president, Pascal-Trouillot read a speech granting power to Lafontant. She trips over her words. Her eyes do not stray from the page. Very different from her inaugural address, the speech prepared by Lafontant, and broadcast nationally are the words for which Pascal-Trouillot is most remembered. These words lead to her imprisonment under Aristide. Framed by the actions of Lafontant and Aristide, the contributions of Pascal-Trouillot become invisible.

Pascal-Trouillot’s role follows a long history of silencing. As a footnote in histories of the period, her eleven months as the first and only Haitian woman president are barely documented. Instead, she is remembered for the being the weak woman who “se laisser embobiner par le baron duvaliériste Dr Roger Lafontant.”³⁸⁶ Although deemed by many to be a groundbreaking

³⁸⁴ “Lafontant Criticizes Speech,” *Port-au-Prince Radio Soleil*, (Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 1991).

³⁸⁵ Dupuy. *The Prophet and Power*, 73.

³⁸⁶ Haiti en marche July 9 2008, p 2. <http://www.dloc.com/UF00098809/00311/2?search=pascal-trouillot>

election, the archive becomes sparse concerning Pascal-Trouillot with historians content to leave her role uninterrogated: “coup d’état pilotée par le même Roger Lafontant avec la complicité directe ou indirecte de la présidente sortante Ertha Pascal Trouillot.”³⁸⁷ Myriam Chancy explains this phenomenon in terms of her mother’s high school graduation speech. Identifying the feminist message of the speech, she simultaneously admits that the effects of the speech are stunted by the perception of her mother as fundamentally non-political. “Her word-acts are uttered but go unheard. In a manner of speaking, the author-speaker is not perceived by the governing audience as an actor, and therefore, her tempered yet bold statements voiced on behalf of female emancipation are emptied of their revolutionary impact. In true hegemonic form, the oppressive powers render revolution impossible in denying the existence of the oppressed as an active participant in the world around them.”³⁸⁸ Chancy describes how her mother’s words are subtly rewritten when they are recorded into the archive, a means of preserving the hegemonic discourse. Pascal-Trouillot suffers from the same structure that presumes her to be as a woman apolitical. The absolute absurdity of considering a supreme court justice and president as apolitical or at the very least insignificant illustrates the acute influence of patriarchy in producing gendered narratives of power, sovereignty and the nation.

Regardless of the severe erasure in the written archive, Ertha Pascal-Trouillot’s presidency exemplified an actual change in women’s status in Haiti. Across all demographics, Haitian women achieved more representation than previous generations through suffrage, women’s organizations, and women running for office. Pascal-Trouillot’s entire career of firsts

³⁸⁷ Mélodie Marcus. “Marc Bazin : un parcours pas sans fautes mais terminé avec bonheur ” *Haiti en Marche*, June 23 2010. P 2 <http://www.dloc.com/UF00098809/00409/2?search=pascal-trouillot> Vol XXIV No 22

³⁸⁸ Chancy, *Framing Silence*, loc 417.

illustrates this change. Moreover, her performance highlights the subtle yet significant role of creole for women's political agency. as well as a change in the status of creoleness. Language and aesthetics of creole as well as the creative practice of creolization provide strategies to Haitian women who find themselves ostracized by a patriarchal system. If not helped to promote, Pascal-Trouillot's presidency at least demonstrates the creoleness of Haitian women.

To understand Ertha Pascal-Trouillot as revolutionary, we must understand resistance and revolution as relational rather than part of a binary structure. She negotiated various power structures without being directly oppositional. For more than a century after the revolution, Haitian law classified women as minors; however, over the course of Pascal-Trouillot's lifetime and in some cases due to her involvement, the rights of women improved. She presided over many of the positive legal changes but also worked alongside the extreme violence of the Duvalier regime creating a paradoxical relationship with the emerging feminist movement. Attempting to position herself as cosmopolitan and Haitian, she marks both her international travel and her dedication to producing Haitian history. Pascal-Trouillot's performance of creoleness represented the gaining influence of women in politics and how this new role influences creole culture.

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