Zombies, Slatterns, Rakes and Ne'er-do-wells: Representations of the Creole in the French XVIII Century

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Abstract

Post-colonial studies for the past thirty years have explored representations of the other: the other as slave, as marginalized, as native and as the colonized other. This study turns attention to the fictional representations of the colonizer. The different representationsof the Creole have one thing in common, they draw in one way or another on tropes established in Le Zombi du grand Pérou (1697) by Paul-Alexis Blesse bois. Period texts, unconsciously or deliberately, demonstrate how ideologies of conquest, of domination et of exploitation color not only description and portraits of different "races" and ethnicities, but also buttress politics of colonialism. This study examines representations of the colonizers and of the creole from well-established colonial families, to the newly arrived, French from France and French colonial born. The creole, tainted by proximity to the enslaved, figured in colonial myths circulating, directly and indirectly, in French novels in the XVIII century.

Keywords: Creole, Colonialism, Slavery, French Novels, Sentimental Novels, Stereotypes

Introduction

The colonial enterprise is a creative and transformational one that takes control of raw material–peoples, geography, resources–and fashions it into something else. Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, in *Thiefing Sugar,* writes of the "African bodies claimed and altered by colonialism" and the conscription of these bodies to transform the colonized landscape in order to "create monoculture plantations that would fulfill European nations' capitalist and imperial desires" [1]. In the same way, through travel journals, paintings and natural histories, observers labored to record, invent, and master a unified Caribbean "nature." The reworking geographical, physical, descriptive and moral was an ongoing process, and "an imaginary way of organizing these into a 'whole'" [2]. The colonist was the active transformational agent in the realization of that imperialist totality. The figure of the colonist with respect to the colonizing nation has not been as well studied although relations between and representations of masters and slaves have figured large in postcolonial studies. The colonial dynamic of domination, which at first glace seems like a binary one white master/ black enslaved is in fact a ternary one as not all whites were privileged slave owners and not all blacks and people of color enslaved. Varying levels of economic, social and political power come into play[3]. However, representations of colonists born in the colonies as a whole—high born or low are stereotyped equally. What does the colonist, then, look like not from the viewpoint of the relation with the other, but from that of the *métropole*?

The crafted representations of an imperial "whole" described in various genres, made their way into fictional elaborations of the colonial world. In fact, we find in novels, for most of the eighteenth century, that colonists were portrayed as tainted by their proximity to slaves and corrupted by the commercial enterprise that powered colonialism. They were the public face of the profitable if unsavory enterprise. Colonists had a foot in two worlds one civilized, the one savage but lived in an intermediary one of their making. Colonial culture was hybrid, looked at with suspicion, distain, and contempt for the most part by their metropolitan countrymen and women.

[1]Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, *Thiefing Sugar: Eroticism between Women in Caribbean Literature* (Duke University Press, 2010), 16.
[2]Ibid.
[3]Chantal Maignan-Claverie, *Le métissagedans la littérature des Antilles françaises: le complexed'Ariel* (Karthala Editions, 2005), 152.

They were neither fish nor fowl, their culture is not quite white, but not quite black but rather suspended between the two.[4]If we can say that for most of the eighteenth-century, authors were careful to mask their criticisms of French culture through recourse to an outsider, a native and a foreigner, in sort of literary version of theatrical black face, then we can say that colonists were figured as natives in white face: the former virtuous and intelligent, the latter vulgar and sexualized. Later in the century, this conventional portrayal retreats in the wake of a sympathetic and virtuous version.

In early nineteenth-century novels dealing with issues of race and ethnicity such as *Le Mulâtre* (1824), written by Balzac in collaboration with Le Poitevin writing as Aurore Cloteaux as well as Balzac's early unproduced play, *Le Négre* (1822), Gabrielle de Paban's *Le Nègre et la créoleouménoiresd'Eulalie D**** (1825) and other texts written during the transitional period of the first decades of the nineteenth century, a distinct shift occurs in how colonists were portrayed compared to the turn of the seventeenth century. What was a clearly disdainful stance towards colonists shifts towards a more positive image and there is a perceptible softening in attitudes towards colonists as portrayed in novels in the 1780s. This shift becomes the norm in the wake of the revolt in Saint-Domingue (1791-1803) founding the Haitian State as colonists are recast as persecuted. In this article then, I trace representations of colonists, of the well established and the newly arrived, of the French from France and of the French colonial born, known as Creoles in a selection of novels of the period. I examine diverse colonial myths circulating, directly and indirectly, in French novels in the XVIII century and explore the ideological shift in these myths at the turn of the XVIII century. Images of colonists shifted between the dystopia reality of colonialism, where Creoles incarnated the distasteful, vulgar, unclean but profitable colonial enterprise and the utopia indigenized European at one with nature of the latter eighteenth century.

Creole

First there is a terminological issue, Creole is a multi-valenced term that evolved over time. White colonists born in the colony were called "creole" but free people of mixed race are also known as Creoles. For some, it means born in the colonies, for others a mixing of "races". Here, I am using the term to mean a white colonist born in the colony. For the most part, Europeans considered the mixing of Africans and Europeans a danger to racial purity. The European obsession with shades of skin color, levels of hybridity and "racial" purity is increasingly evident in legal documents, travel journals and scientific studies. The *Code noir* (1685), which regulated slavery but was more concerned with marriage between free and enslaved, eventually evolved into theorizations such as Moreau de Saint-Méry's obsessively detailed racial nomenclature in *Description de la partiefrançaise de Saint-Domingue* (1797), which demonstrated the growing anxiety about racial purity and hybridity. In the late nineteenth century, this obsession comes to the fore in Charles Gayarré in "The Creoles of History and The Creoles of Romance" (1885)in which he defines creole as "the issue of European parents in Spanish or French colonies. It was first invented by the Spaniards to distinguish their children, natives of their conquered colonial possessions, from the original natives whom they found in those newly discovered regions of the earth."Criollo, he explains, is a title of honor and one that indicated one's superiority and whose "blood was never to be assimilated to the baser liquid that ran in the veins of the Indian and African native."[5]There are many period definitions of creole but this one is particularly interesting it points to what the term "creole" carries in most of its uses: the notion of superiority.

Creole, for Gayarré, functions as marker of social class and as a signifier of race. This definition above sets out the parameters of "creole" as a marker of racial purity as opposed to creole as hybridity. He goes on to complain that the word "creole" was used to describe all sorts of things other than people, such as any and all natural goods and foodstuffs from Louisiana, and that it was "impossible to comprehend how so many intelligent people should have so completely reversed the meaning of the word *creole,* when any one of the numerous dictionaries within their easy reach could have given them correct information on the subject." It is clear that Gayarré is exasperated and defensive about what he considers a misuse of the term "creole" in the blithe equation of produce, products and people.

[4]Stuart Hall discusses the hybrid nature of Creole society, "Creolization [is] the process of indigenization, which prevents any of the constitutive elements—either colonizing or colonized—from preserving their purity or authenticity; the critical interruption of hybridity, the rupture which breaks or interrupts the lines that connect the different *présences* to their original pasts." Cited in Dominique Laporte, *L'autre en mémoire* (Presses Université Laval, 2006), 164.

[5]"The Creoles of History and the Creoles of Romance. A Lecture Delivered in the Hall of the Tulane University, New Orleans : Gayarré, Charles, 1805-1895 : Free Download & Streaming," *Internet Archive*, 1–2, accessed May 18, 2015, https://archive.org/details/creolesofhistory00gayarich.

In his history, he casts the *Code noir* as a bulwark against miscegenation and "a wall between the blacks, or colored, and the natives of France, as well as the natives of Louisiana, or Creoles"[6]. He cites an article from a 1751 decree issued by the French governor, the Marquis de Vaudreuil, "Any Frenchman so infamous as to harbor a black slave forthe purpose of inducing him or her to lead a scandalous life, shall be whipped by the public executioner, and without mercy sentenced to the galleys for life."[7] He also upholds the reputation of the founding mothers of the Creoles who, Gayarré insists, were not transported "house of correction girls" or "French prostitute jail birds" but, in the main, women "ascertained to be virtuous."[8]He continues, No new country has ever been stocked with none but entirely virtuous and refined people, and, even in the oldest, vice occupies but too large a space. There is everywhere an inevitable compound of the bad and the good, and it is not fair to Judge of the character of a whole imputation from some of the peculiarities of its component parts."[9]

What this small history reveals is twofold: the first is the defensive stance of a Creole with respect to his social and racial status, the second is France's attitude towards the colonial born visible in the stereotypes of Creoles in circulation as "low and degraded" against which Gayarré argues.[10]In addition, he makes it clear in his narrative that literature in the form scurrilous texts in this particular case written by a "certain literary dime speculator" or "a certain well known writer" or "a modern sentimentalist", plays a role in the circulation of stereotypes.[11]Gayarré makes specific reference to George Washington Cable who wrote *Grandsires: a Story of Creole Life* (1880) full of "monstrous absurdities" with respect to Creole culture and paints an "audacious mutilation of what is truth".[12] His summary judgment: "Suffice it to say that, from the beginning to the end, this work represents the whole Creole population as the basest and the most stupid that ever crawled in the mud of this earth."[13]Gayarré writes sarcastically that it is impossible to believe that dignitaries of high rank would ally themselves to an "abject population" best described by a "literary dime speculator" as "bullies, knaves and fools" and "whose best women, born of lawful wedlock, are inferior in every respect, to the colored bastard issue of libertinism and concubinage!"[14]The same accusations—idleness, incontinence and libertinism—are used to describe free "negro, mulatto, and quadroon women."[15] Although this particular text by Gayarée is an apology for the Creole social and racial class as separate and distinct from mixed race Creoles, it argues against longstanding prejudices against colonists by the colonizing country due to colonists' proximity to slaves and lax mores attributable to, in Gayarré words, "a fusion of their social relations."[16]

Eighteenth Century Novels

These stereotypes were established early on and circulated in novels throughout the eighteenth century. Some texts such as Madame de Monbart's*Les Lettres taïtiennes* (1786) and Diderot's *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* (1772) trace French colonists from the point of view of the colonized or subjugated peoples. Other texts such as Riccobboni's *Lettres de madame de Sancerre* (1767) cast a disdainful eye in passing on the returned colonist who often serves as an uncouth if obscenely wealthy foil to the more refined citizens of *lamèrepatrie* or *e*.[17] The portrait they weave into their narrative is far from flattering. All of these texts, however, in one way or another, draw on tropes of colonizers and the Creoles established in one of the first —if not the first short French colonial "novel" by Paul-Alexis Blessebois (Garraway 2).[18] These texts, unconsciously or deliberately, demonstrate how ideologies of conquest, of domination and exploitation color not only the descriptions and the portraits of others peoples and ethnicities but how they transfer over to the colonists themselves and weave and buttress the politics of colonization into their narratives. On Feb. 15, 1697, a strangely rude libertine text targeting

[6]Ibid., 6.
[7]Ibid., 7.
[8]Ibid., 8.
[9]Ibid., 9.
[10]Ibid., 8.
[11]Ibid., 8, 11.
[12]Ibid., 18.
[13]Ibid., 30.
[14]Ibid., 9.
[15]Ibid., 12.
[16]Ibid., 11.
[17]The *Centre national de ressourcestextuelles et lexicales* dates the usage of *métropole* with respect to its colonies to 1748 in «Étatconsidéré par rapport à ses colonies» of Montesquieu's Esprit des lois (livre 21, chap. 21). [http://www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie/métropole].
[18]Doris L. Garraway, *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2005), 2.

French colonial culture appeared for sale in Rouen. Published anonymously, it has been attributed to the pen of the outlaw writer Paul-Alexis Blessebois who took the name Pierre de Corneille Blessebois (1646?) and whose trace is lost after the publication of this novella.[19]Blesseblois was in and out of prison, condemned to the galleys and deported to Guadeloupe. The *historiette*or novella *Le Zombi du Grand Pérouou la comtesse de Cocagne*, set in the Antilles, is a dubious auto-fiction and *roman à clé*. The narrator, Monsieur de C, recounts the story of a woman who negotiates a deal with him in which he would use his occult powers to help her get her lover to marry her and take revenge on others who lack respect for her. She, erroneously according to the narrator, believes him adept in the magic arts. In exchange for her favors, she will become invisible and be able to penetrate into the intimate domestic spaces of people to do what she will. Monsieur de C exploits the woman's credulity in acruel practical joke gone wrong. The brutal sexcapade takes a violent turn when the gullible countess becomes the victim of her intended targets. The story ends with the narrator arrested, thrown into prison with his life hanging in the balance.[20]The novella opens with these lines:

La femme belle et insensée, est comme un anneau d'or au museau d'une Truye: Ces paroles de Salomon conviennent très bien à la Comtesse de Cocagne. Tout le monde sçait qu'elle ne manqué points d'attraits pour une Créole, mais que sa beauté n'est point ornée de chasteté, de pudeur, ni de modestie; Elle a une si furieuse haine pour la sagesse, qu'elle n'aime pas même ceux des hommes qui en ont un peu: C'est une truye parée de l'or de sa beauté, et qui se plait uniquement dans la boue et dans l'indignité de ses actions: Elle est toujours prête à prostituer son honneur à ses mollesses, et tous ceux qui l'en veulent croire, sont les instruments de ses débauches de tous les jours.[21] In this presentation of a Creole—a French woman born in the colonies not of mixed parentage—she is the portrayed as the opposite of the ideal French woman (reserved, modest, chaste and decorous). She is a "blanche indigénisme.[22]Her reputation as highly sexualized, immodest, and indolent (not to say violent) matches that of the reputation of Africans and *sang mêlés* who are considered "exemplum of waste, treachery and barbarism as well as "cowardly, thievish and sullen."[23]Despite her indolence, she actively seeks to corrupt others, to bring them down to the mud where she wallows. The first comparison harks back to biblical origins (Proverbs 11.22) in which the *comtesse* is compared to a useless gold ring in a sows' nose. By the third sentence, the comparison becomes a metaphor in which she *is* the sow and her beauty the gold ring.The narrative alternates between prose and verse. The latter comments on the events described in prose sections. The above passage is followed by these verses:Ce seroit vainement que cette jeune femme Voudroit déguiser son ardeur;Sa Folie est liée à son débile Cœur,Son Cœur l'a communiqué à sa Malheureuse âme;Son âme la répand à gros flots au dehors, Elle en forge des fers à son dangereux corps,Son corps obéit en esclave, Et cet esclave est brutal,Envers Dieu qu'il hait et qu'il brave.Qu'en se jouantil fait le mal.[24]

In this passage the countess's "ardeur" (heat or passion) links with her "folie," a word whose semantic field includes madness, but also outrageousness, aberration, alienation, unbalance, and extravagance. This madness stems from her weak (*débile*) heart and unhappy soul. The spread of unhappiness broadcasted by her soul is the sum of the *ardeur*, weakness and *folie*, in other words, corruption. The pronoun "elle" whose grammatical referent in the text is "l'âme," a feminine noun, offers a polysemous interpretation as it could refer to the countess as a woman. Her gendered body then, is the source of madness and contagion. The dominated feminized body in this passage is dangerous, rebellious and hateful. The author borrows words from the lexicon of slavery: forger les fers, dangereux corps, obeir en esclave, l'esclaveest brutal, hair et braver, faire le mal. The colonized body of the countess cannot hide its corruption ("vainementdéguiser") for it is corporatized in her very being.

[19]This novella, lost for many years, was rediscovered in the nineteenth century. FrédéricLechèvre, in his brief biography of Blessebois, recounts that the slim volume caught the notice of Charles Nodier and Paul Lacroix at the sale of their friend, Guilbert de Pixérécourt's library in 1829. FrédéricLachèvre, *Pierre Corneille Blessebois* (Slatkine, 1968), 56.

[20]Sophie Houdard, "Les figures de l'auteur-escroc chez Paul-Alexis Blesseboisdit Pierre Corneille Blessebois (1646 ?-1697 ?)," *Les Cahiers du centre de rechercheshistoriques. Archives*, no. 39 (April 2, 2007): 141–59, doi:10.4000/ccrh.3356; Pierre-Corneille Blessebois and Marc de Montifaud, *Le Zombi du Grand Pérou: précédéd'une notice sur les harems noirs, ou les moeursgalantes aux colonies* (A. Lacroix et Cie, 1860); Lachèvre, *Pierre Corneille Blessebois.*

[21]Blessebois and Montifaud, *Le Zombi du Grand Pérou*, 1.

[22]Des Rosiers, Joël, *Métaspora : essaisur les patriesintimes* (Quebèque: Tryptique, 2013), 317.

[23]Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 190–91.Moreau de Saint-Méry describes the character of a mulâtresse as "livrée à la volupté" with "l'imagination la plus enflammée" and a dangerous greater capacity for pleasure than others (I. 104).

[24]Pierre-Corneille Blessebois, *Le zombi du grand Pérou, ou la comtesse de Cocagne / (par P.-C. Blessebois)* ([s.n.], 1697), 3, http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8610826t.

The lexical field leads to a reading of the Creole woman's beatings as a mirror of slave owner's treatment of slaves through the use of situational irony in which she subjects "the master's body to the corporeal torments suffered by slaves."[25]In a poem included at the end of the slim volume, Blessebois includes a "Portrait de La comtesse de Cocagneversirreguliers" in which her features are a reflection of her essence. The signs are there to be read.[26]Although Joël Des Rosiers lauds Blessebois's courage in depicting Creole mores in his unflinching portrait set in the *îles à sucre*,[27] the descriptions and condescending attitudes we find in Blessebois's tale with regard to the colonists in the Antilles were commonplace. Representations of the *colon* find their source in treatises like those of Jacques Bouton (1640), Père Labat (1722) and Moreau Saint-Mery (1796-1798)at a time when racial theories were being elaborated by Francois Bernier, Linnaeus, Henri de Boulainvilliers, Buffon. The accepted truth of the female Creole body as seen by the French in the XVII to XIX centuries was indolent, hypersexual, morally lax and languorous and, if not beautiful, then monstrous. Although rarely as overtly misogynist as Blesseblois' text, the Creole woman was portrayed to type. Nicolas-Germain Léonard, a Creole born in Guadaloupe in 1744but who lived the majority of his life in Europe, offers a description of the Creole woman in "Lettressur un voyage aux Antilles" (1790)in which he damns her with faint praise.[28]While on the one hand he states that there was not a more tender or better mother, he undermines the positive traits he evokesin a series of rhetorical questions.He writes, "Serait-ce qu'elles ne prennent pas assez de soin pour fixer un époux? Dira-t-on qu'elles négligent de plaire? Que trop de nonchalance nuit à leur grâce, et que trop de despotisme à leur pouvoir?"[29]He continues the description with a series of qualificationsthat undermine the virtues that he evokes when he writes, for example, "leur accent quand n'est point traînant, quand elles n'y mettent point d'afféteries, respire la candeur.[30]In another travel account, we find accounts of former servants passing as elderly rich who chase after younger men alongside descriptions of noble women who demonstrate their lackpropriety when they go to the docks to chose her own slaves to purchase from newly arrived ships. These women are, according to the observer, "sans mœurs."(Voyage du comte de ***, 122). [31]

The Creole male did not escape the stereotype either. Included inNougaret and Bourgeois's *Voyages intéressansdansdifferences colonies* (1787),is a narrative, "Voyage du comte de *** à Saint-Domingue en 1730,"written by the pseudonymous Chevalier des ****, who, obliged to flee France for an affair of honor, decides not to explore the courts of Europe with which he is familiar, but rather the new world. Arriving in Saint-Domingue, he finds himself "dans un pays inconnu, dont les habitants n'étaient Français que par le langage" [32]in which money is the topic of all conversation: how much one has, how to get more, how to keep it, how to get it out of another. The narrator describes one particular couple as representative of all. The colonists as hospitable, but overly familiar, loud, rude, mean, concerned with riches, easily angered and moved to violence. The wife is found reclining on a couch, indolent and japping like a lap dog, "La maîtresse du logis, presque sexagénaire, était étendue sur un vieux canapé. 'Ah ! mon cher petit époux, vous voilà, dit cette femme d'une voix glapissante. Vous m'avez bien fait attendre !'".[33]Both are ambitious, greedy and conniving.[34]The colonist brags about his holdings and tells the narrator that he planned "bientôt jouir du fruit de ses travaux et de repasser en France pour s'y voir dans la considération que sa fortune méritait."

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[25]Garraway, *The Libertine Colony*, 191.

[26]In the Gallica 1697 edition of Blessebois' historiette, the portrait comes after the main text. In subsequent ninetenth and early twentieth-century editions, the portrait precedes the main text.

[27]Des Rosiers, *Métaspora : essaisur les patriesintimes* (Quebèque: Tryptique, 2013), 315.

[28]N. G. Léonard, *Oeuvres de Léonard*, ed. V. Campenon, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Didotjeune, 1797), https://books.google.com/books?id=Uic0AAAAMAAJ.

[29]Ibid., 1:49.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Chevalier des ***, "Voyage Du Comte de *** à Saint-Domingue en 1730," in *Voyages intéressantsdansdifférentes colonies françaises, espagnoles, anglaises, Etc. : contenant des observations importantes relatives à cescontréeset un mémoiresur les maladies les plus communes à Saint-Domingue, leursremèdes... / Le Tout mis au jour d'après un grand nombre de Ms. (de Bourgeois), Par M. N... [P.-J.-B. Nougaret]*, ed. Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Nougaret and Nicolas-Louis Bourgeois (J.-F. Bastien (Londres), 1788), 122.

[32]Ibid., 86.

[33]Nicolas-Louis Bourgeois and Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Nougaret, *Voyages intéressantsdansdifférentes colonies françaises, espagnoles, anglaises, etc. : contenant des observations importantes relatives à cescontréeset un mémoiresur les maladies les plus communes à Saint-Domingue, leursremèdes... / le tout mis au jour d'après un grand nombre de ms. (de Bourgeois), par M. N... [P.-J.-B. Nougaret]* (J.-F. Bastien (Londres), 1788), 98, http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k83039c.

[34]Ibid., 101.

[35] He wonders if his new acquaintance, "mon riche bourgeois" understood his irony and the fact that the narrator is making fun of his pretentions. In this particular account, the narrator stresses the unreliable social hierarchy in the colonies through multiple stories of actors passing as marquis while noblemen disguise themselves as commoners and servants as their betters.The pseudonymous chevalier follows his description of this Creole couple with the generalization: "Ce que je viens de raconter est l'histoire naturelle de ce qui se passe chez beaucoup d'habitans de Saint-Domingue. Il n'y a de différence entre eux que du plus au moins."[36]His account may be exaggerated for narrative effect but it reflects the instability and unreliability of Creole society. Liliane Chauleau refers to two noblemen, for example, who were forbidden to register their titles in Martinique due to their lax mores: "En 1703, le Conseil Souverain de la Martinique refuse d'enregistrer les titres de deux nobles : sur ce que depuis qu'ils sont dans les Isles, ils ont mené une vie bien opposée à celle de gentilshommes et que, par surcroît, ils ont l'un et l'autre épousé des Mulâtresses.[37]This misalliance between black and white, then, is a symptom of a moral deformation that, according to Baudry Deslosiers "would attack in France the very heart of the nations."[38]If blacks were considered "fiers, cachés, méchantsetcapables des plus grands crimes, » so were colonial whites in the eyes of their metropolitan brothers.[39]

One can find references to returning colonists in novels such as Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni's *Lettresd'Adélaïde de Dammartin, comtesse de Sancerre à M. le comte de Nancé son Ami* (1766) in which the author describesa father and a son who come back to France. In so doing she opposes two types of colonists: the father represents French from France–courteous, loving, hardworking, *sensible*–while the son, whom the father describes as a "sujet sans Esperance, grossier dans ses idées, brusque, farouche, opiniâtre; aucun égard l'arrête, aucun frein le retient; il sacrifie tout à ses moindres fantaisies; les caresses, les menaces, la condescendance, la rigueur, rien ne change, rien n'adoucit un naturel fougueux, hardi, indomptable," represents the Creole born in the colonies.[40] The father continues comments "Je ne puis me consoler d'avoir donné la vie à un sauvage capable d'avilir mon nom, de le déshonorer, peut-être le rendre odieux," which was a faire prediction of what was to happen.[41]

In these sorts of novels, the Creole most often serves as a foil for the more sophisticated main characters. Baron de Wimpffen, in his account of Saint-Domingue, criticized the subordination of every aspect of Creole life to money and property.[42]Creoles in other words prostituted themselves figuratively and everyone under their power literally for money. "Money, sexual intrigue, and despotic display" were the basis for Creole society and "infected white Creole men and women" as well as "free coloreds."[43] In letter XXX, Wimpffen explains that avarice was the great leveler between all classes and races.[44]In her novel, Gabrielle de Paban describes the cupidity of a Creole family that refuses to recognize a family member survivor of the 1791 massacres in Saint-Domingue and separated from them for decades in order to avoid sharing the father's estate.[45]So while fictional characters of different ethnicities (African, Tahitian, Arab, Native American, Indian, etc.) increasingly became figures of political or sentimental discourse in novels in the second half of the XVIII century, the colonist was vilified.

Shifting Perceptions

Towards the end of the century, the literary success of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1788), which proposed a new type of Creole, an indigenized European at one with nature and benevolent in contrast to the stereotypical cruel, avaricious and lascivious one, combined with the growing interest in *les droits de*

[35]Ibid., 95.
[36]Ibid., 101.
[37]Cited in Maignan-Claverie, *Le métissagedans la littérature des Antilles françaises*, 64.
[38]Cited in Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, 240.
[39]Maryse Condé, *La civilisation du bossale: réflexionssur la littératureorale de la Guadeloupe et de la Martinique* (ÉditionsL'Harmattan, 1978), 23.
[40]Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni, *Oeuvres complètes de Madame Riccoboni nouvelle édition*, vol. 6 (Paris, France: Desray, 1790), 39.
[41]Ibid., 6:40.
[42]Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, 196.
[43]Ibid., 197.
[44]Wimpffen, Alexandre-Stanislas, baron de, "Voyage a Saint-Domingue, Pendant Les Années 1788, 1789 et 1790; Par Le Baron de Wimpffen. ; Tome Premier [-Second] : Wimpffen, Alexandre-Stanislas, Baron de : Free Download & Streaming," *Internet Archive*, 88–98, accessed June 3, 2015, https://archive.org/details/voyagesaintdomin01wimp.
[45]Gabrielle de Paban, *Le Nègreet la Créole - oumémoiresd'Eulalie D*** - Gabrielle de Paban, Présentation de Marshall C. Olds*, ed. Marshall C. Olds, *AutrementMêmes* (Paris: Harmattan, 1825), 205.

*l'homme*toturn attention toward the plight of slaves.[46]The author draws upon his own observations of colonial life written in a series of letters and published as *Voyages à l'île-de-France, à l'île Bourbon et au cap de Bonne-Espérance* (1773). Bernardin de Saint-Pierre paints a scathing portrait of the colonists these letters. In Letter XI the voyager depicts the original founding colonists as people who brought with them "une grande simplicité de mœurs, de la bonne foi, l'amour de l'hospitalité et même de l'indifférence pour les richesses." [47] Any "mauvaissujets" that ended up in the colony were forced into usefulness. In sum, Bernardin qualifies the varied population of investors, sailors, soldiers in service to the *Compagnie des Indes* as "braves gens."[48] However, colonial society is figured as a compressed model of Rousseau's devolution of society; the wave of impoverished merchants, ruined libertines, rogues and criminals that arrived in the wake of what Bernardin de Saint Pierre calls "la guerre d'Inde" changed for worse its tenor.[49]He writes, "il n'y eut plus de femme chaste ni d'homme honnête; toute confiance fut éteinte, tout estime détruite. Ils parvinrent ainsi à décrier tout le monde, pour mettre tout le monde à leur niveau [….] La discorde règne dans toutes les classes, et a banni de cette île l'amour de la société, qui semble devoir régner parmi des Français exiles au milieu des mers, aux extrémités du monde."[50]

Indifference, neglect, and insensitivity replaced natural virtues in the colonists.[51]Bernardin de Saint-Pierre notes that Europeans considered themselves superior to Creoles who, in turn, considered Europeans all adventurers. He is critical of the general lack of education in the colonial population, most notably for women, and comments on the precocious sexual maturity of Creole children and their "natural" education. These children, naïve and untutored as they are, acquire vices from "des négresses, qu'ils sucent avec leur lait, et leurs fantaisies, qu'ils exercent avec tyrannie sur les pauvres esclaves, y ajoutent toute la dépravation de la société."[52]When the children are old enough they are sent to France to be schooled only to return to the colony with vices more pleasing and more dangerous than the ones they acquired before they left.[53] However, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's impressions of colonial society are not without contradiction. In following letter XII, he sets up the juxtaposition of Black and White social mores—the humanity of the former and the inhumanity of the latter—with a description of the more civilized social practices of the newly arrived Africans and slaves with their barbaric treatment by the colonists.[54] He closes letter XII with a note explaining his reason for spending much of his time describing women and children, "en parlant des hommes, il me fâche de n'avoir que des satires à faire."[55]The narrative of *Paul et Virginie* contrasts the two colonial models, one built according to the virtuous and benevolent society of the founding members (a lost utopia) and the second, based on the subsequent waves of colonists with their degraded inhumane practices.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century, one can find novels deeply influenced by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's novella. *Le Nègre comme il y a peu de blancs* (1789) by Joseph La Vallée ; Germaine de Staël's *Mirza* (1795) ; various works by Mme de Genlis and the anonymous, *La Mulâtre comme il y a beaucoup de blanches*, an XI (1803) stage oppositions between different types of colonists and introduce the Creole of mixed ancestry as heroic figures. John Garrigus has ably demonstrated in his study, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue*(2006), how the political ideological manipulation of developing racial stereotypes post 1769 in the aftermath of the failed militia revolt divides the different types of colonists: the French from France and white Creole from the Creole of color (regardless of economic status).[56] The division played a large role in setting up the social, cultural and economic dynamic that led to Saint-Domingue's successful rebellion.

These novels participated in a counter discourse demonstrating the innate virtuousness of the slaves, *affranchise*

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[46]Dominique Laporte, *L'autre en mémoire* (Presses Université Laval, 2006), 159-60. Laporte speculates that the concept of an "indiginous European" created by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre could be seen as a product of the anxiety caused by doubt as to the legitimacy of the colonial project.

[47]Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and Louis-Aimé Martin, *Oeuvres Complètes de Jacques-Henri-Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Mises En OrdreetPrécédées de La Vie de L'auteur* (Paris: Méquignon-Marvis, 1818), 141, http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006141768.

[48]Ibid., 142.

[49]Ibid., 143.

[50]Ibid., 144–45.

[51]Ibid., 148.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Ibid., 149.

[54]Ibid., 154.

[55]Ibid., 151.

[56]John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), https://books.google.com/books?id=-tZfBvzpV2gC.

and *mulâtres* as well as the white Creole and in so doing completed "the cycle of revolutionary redemption first activated by men of mixed ancestry."[57]Of course, these sympathetic views radically altered with the changing situation, the outbreak of violence and the final failure to take back Saint-Domingue in 1803. These types of novels soon fell out of favor and all but disappeared for a few decades. In the 1820s, however, Haiti was back in the news and new types of novels were appearing to satisfy growing public interest.[58]During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Haiti was a starting point for quite a few popular novels. The focus is broader than in beginning to mid-eighteenth century texts and includes both types of Creole, white and of color. *Betzioul'infortunéecréole* (an VIII) by Louise Vildé, Adèle Daminois' *Lydieou la Créole* (1824) and MmeGuénard's *Thebaïdeou le diableérmite* (1825) weave the notion of "créolité" (cultural as well as "racial" hybridity) into works of sentiment in different ways.[59]These novels were popular, written quickly to pander to public interest and are of unequal quality to be sure, but they deal with issues of race and equality. The documents discussed in this study are not always great works of art but genre literature such as sentimental novels, adventure tales, sexed up historical tales, travel chronicles, gothic tales, crime stories etc. are often rich in cultural and ideological information that would otherwise be lost. The seams of these rapidly produced texts are often perceptible and reveal the incongruities, breaks, and cracks in a discourse as new (or repressed or suppressed) ideas come into contact with prevailing ideologies. They sometimes reveal a disrupted continuity that that more a well-crafted work naturalizes and hides from view. Shifting views of how Creoles were perceived, and how that perception was disseminated in popular works of fiction as well as in travel literature to create a stereotype can be traced from Blessbois's Comtesse de Cocagne through to Bernardin's St. Pierre's revisions. Nineteenth Century novels draw upon the new and the old in the wake of the rebellion of St. Domingue, uniting in unsettling ways, according to Dayan, the sentimental along with "the social realities of property and possessions." [60]

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[57]John D. Garrigus, *Tropical Temptress to Republican Wife: Gender, Virtue, and Haitian Independence*, 1763-1803 ; Prepared for Delivery at the 1997 Meeting of the Latin American Studies Association ... Guadalajara, Mexico, April 17-19, 1997 (Verf., 1997), 9.

[58]The Haitian king Christophe dies rather spectacularly in 1820. La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt helps initiate La Société de morale chrétienne in 1821, which, starting in 1822, actively works towards the abolition of slavery. In 1822 Haiti invaded their neighboring newly declared República del HaitíEspañol, uniting the island. Starting in 1814, various delegations, both public and clandestine, were being sent back and forth from both nations during negotiations for recognition of Haiti. In 1825, Charles X tentatively granted recognition—at great cost to Haiti— to the new nation contingent upon indemnification for French losses incurred during the fight for independence. In addition, publications such as IssacLouverture's memoires of his father (1825), Moeurs des troiscouleurs aux Antilles (1819, 1822), along with AbbéGrégroire's continual push for abolition kept Haiti and the Caribbean colonies in the public's eye.

[59]L. Vildé, *Betzi, oul'infortunéecréole*, 2 vols. (Chaignieau, 1799); M. de.Boissy [Elisabeth Guénard], *La Thébaïde, ou, le diableermite,* 3 vols. (Paris: Lecointe et Duray, 1825); AdèleHuveyDaminois (dame), *Lydie, ou la Créole*: I-IV (Leterrier, 1824).

[60]Dayan, Haiti, History, and the Gods, 192.

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