

## ABSTRACT

Writing Race in Haiti's Constitutions:  
Synecdoche and Negritude in Post-Revolutionary Haiti

Scott Koslow, M.A.

Mentor: Scott Varda, Ph.D.

All political universals rely on a synecdoche in which a part of the population is taken to represent the whole. Modernity is characterized by a white supremacist synecdoche that selects the white portion of a population to stand in for the whole population. Haiti's early constitutions invert this synecdoche, picking out the black population as representative of the whole. This thesis analyzes Haiti's 1805, 1806, 1807, and 1816 Constitutions for this synecdochal inversion. These synecdoches rearticulate Modernity in a way that frustrates Modernity's white supremacist foundation. Because of this, Haiti's early constitutions are rich resources for *negritude*.

Writing Race in Haiti's Constitutions: Synecdoche and Negritude in Post-Revolutionary Haiti

by

Scott Koslow, B.A.

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Approved by the Department of Communication

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David W. Schlueter, Ph.D., Chairperson

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Approved by the Thesis Committee

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Scott Varda, Ph.D., Chairperson

---

Martin J. Medhurst, Ph.D.

---

James M. SoRelle, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School

August 2015

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J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

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DEDICATION

To Wallace Roberts

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction, Literature Review, and Methods

Throughout Haiti's history, it has been seen as savage, brutal, and volatile. In Haiti's 210 years of existence, it has ratified 28 separate constitutions.<sup>1</sup> From the beginning of the Haitian revolution against France in 1791 through the end of that revolution in 1803, 150,000 of Haiti's 570,000 inhabitants were killed.<sup>2</sup> After independence in 1804, their first Constitution (1805) was wholly replaced within three years. Independence, and the first of these constitutions, were accompanied by additional slaughters of the white inhabitants of the country.<sup>3</sup> And today, Haiti is considered the poorest nation in the western hemisphere.

Such instability should not be surprising. From 1492, when Columbus first landed on the island that would become Haiti and the Dominican Republic, Haiti was subject to European colonization. Over the subsequent 300 years – up to the start of the Haitian revolution in 1791 – Haiti traded hands between Spain and France but remained always subject to foreign powers. Through the enslavement of the local population, and the massive importation of slaves from Africa, these imperial powers were able to reap great profit from Haiti. Saint Domingue (Haiti's name under French colonial rule) was the richest colony in the world, earning the title the “pearl of the Antilles.”<sup>4</sup> In the 1780s, under French rule, Saint Domingue accounted for 40 percent of France's foreign trade, producing two-fifths of the world's sugar and half of the world's coffee.<sup>5</sup> Yet this economic system was unsustainable, reliant upon both cheap labor and the importation of

new workers (slaves) to keep the population stable. It could not function without unsettling Saint Domingue society more and more.<sup>6</sup>

In 1791, two years after the French Revolution, the brutal exploitation of Saint Domingue's slaves (who made up more than 85 percent of the population of Saint Domingue) sparked revolution. The roughly 500,000 black slaves of Saint Domingue turned against the 70,000 free people of the colony.<sup>7</sup> Despite infighting between black and mulatto<sup>8</sup> individuals, the former slaves won out and France withdrew from Saint Domingue in 1801. That year, still officially a colony of France but with *de facto* independence, they passed their first Constitution. "Haiti" discarded the colonial name Saint Dominique and declared official independence in 1804, and more constitutions followed in 1805, 1806, 1807, and 1816.

The Haitian people, most of them recently freed slaves, had been considered property, less than human. They had largely been denied education or even the most basic freedoms and reduced to manual laborers. In 1825, France levied a 150,000,000 franc indemnity against Haiti for France's lost "property" (equivalent to US \$21 billion today).<sup>9</sup> Ongoing United States intervention in Haiti, alternating between destabilization and colonization throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, continued the tyranny and instability of the island nation extending to today.<sup>10</sup> And in recent years Haiti has suffered massive natural disaster.

Despite this, Haiti remains uniquely important among the community of nations. It is the product of arguably the only successful slave revolt in history, and certainly the only slave revolt to directly establish an independent state.<sup>11</sup> It was the "first black republic" and the first state to make the abolition of slavery an explicit tenet of an official



constitution.<sup>12</sup> It was also the first non-European state to gain independence from European colonialism (and after the United States, the first state in general). Given this unique historical position, Haiti, and particularly the Constitutions of Haiti, are a valuable source for reconsidering the “Age of Revolutions” and its production of Modernity, two concepts which have neglected any consideration of the island nation. This thesis argues that Haiti’s early constitutions make use of a synecdochal inversion to reverse the dominant definition of a “people.” Where European culture and Modernity<sup>13</sup> define “the people,” “the general will,” the universal, and so on, as fundamentally white, Haiti’s early constitutions engage in a struggle with and against this definition, to define these same universals as “black.” In this way, they offered a starting-point for *negritude* and black nationalism, and more broadly offer a corrective to Modernity as it has been over-determined by whiteness. This chapter proceeds by first considering the historical and scholarly silence on Haiti. It then explains the materialist rhetorical frame that will guide this thesis, considers the extant literature on Haiti’s constitutions and why they prove inadequate, and offers a brief summary of the layout of this thesis.

### *The Silence on Haiti*

Despite all the unique features embodied by Haiti, it continues to be neglected in the literature on revolution, African-American studies, post-coloniality, and the like.<sup>14</sup> Given Haiti’s unprecedented origin, the theoretical and historical aporia surrounding post-colonial Haiti should be telling. Discussions of Haiti generally center on the bloody Haitian Revolution and project forward through more than 200 years of Haitian instability and coups. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, this violence was frequently cited by foreign newspapers to provoke racial panic and cement the necessity of slavery, as well

as buttress perceptions of black people as barbaric and uncivilized.<sup>15</sup> Even in recent years, media outside Haiti tend to discuss the nation only in times of disaster and unrest (e.g. the François and Jean-Claude Duvalier presidencies, the coup overthrowing President Jean-Bertrand Aristides, the Haitian earthquake in 2010). Currently, Haiti is again receiving much media attention owing to the efforts of the Dominican Republic to ethnically cleanse its population of citizens possessing Haitian ancestry.<sup>16</sup> Because of this focus on Haitian crisis, and a near total inattention to Haiti at other times, those outside the nation primarily construct Haiti through a broad narrative of instability and violence.<sup>17</sup> Robert Fatton Jr. diagnoses this focus as a product of racist beliefs about primitive, African, black culture.<sup>18</sup> The racist narrative of a chaotic black nation comes to overwhelm all other understandings, particularly those which recognize Haiti's instability as largely a product of Spanish and French colonization, French slavery, French indemnity demands, United States colonization, international embargoes on trade, extermination of the native Arawak population, and so on.<sup>19</sup>

This scholarly focus on violence, and emphasis on Haitian violence rather than previous French and Spanish abuses, has contributed to a systematic suppression of Haiti's influence in Western historiography.<sup>20</sup> While the past two decades have seen many efforts to challenge this willed forgetting of Haiti, these works almost exclusively focus on the Haitian Revolution and extend only as far as 1804. This area of academic study, in fact, is often titled Haitian Revolutionary Studies.<sup>21</sup> They are concerned with the anarchic break, not with the act of nation-building that follows. Haiti is thus seen as an example of black resistance or of abolitionism, not of creation. This focus maintains the trend of considering only violence which they purportedly want to fight against, and has

contributed to a definition of *negritude* (the uniquely black phenomenology and identity) purely in negative terms.<sup>22</sup>

The focus on violent revolution is just as much a silencing of Haiti's history as the earlier aporia. Michel-Rolph Trouillot identifies two different strains of silencing in the European and Euro-American reception of Haiti. Trouillot names the first "formulas of erasure" and the second "formulas of banalization." Formulas of erasure ignore or forget the events that occurred in Haiti, while formulas of banalization rob Haitian events of any revolutionary content, reducing them to trivial facts with no fundamental significance. The latter enforces silence just as much as the former.<sup>23</sup> While Haitian Revolutionary Studies have sought to contest the formulas of erasure, they have left the formulas of banalization intact. Haiti is remembered, but only to insist *this in fact happened!* The content of Haitian political thought, and the reasons why Haiti is significant to enlightenment or black thought, are ignored, except to list precisely those banal facts – that Haiti was the first *this* or *that*. Talk is allowed – enough historical evidence has been accumulated that it would now be impossible to suppress talk – but only banal talk. Trouillot analogizes this to debate over the Holocaust, in which Holocaust deniers no longer claim the event never happened, but instead debate endlessly about the number killed or the degree to which the "final solution" was pre-meditated. In reducing the Holocaust to a question of the number slaughtered, anything radical or challenging about the event is lost; it joins the encyclopedic list of mass slaughters, placed alongside Stalin's Gulag and Japan's war crimes against China in World War II.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, the singularity and exceptional nature of Haiti is lost without a discussion of the ideology of the Haitian state.

In part, this willed blindness is because violent black revolution – while literally threatening to the security of white slave owners – fits well into racist understandings of black people. Images of black revolutionaries violently slaughtering white planters were used to feed beliefs that black people were violent, barbaric and uncivilized.<sup>25</sup> White observers throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century “found the discipline and republicanism of free blacks more disturbing than the unruliness of slaves.”<sup>26</sup> Unruliness could be easily explained, but a white worldview could not admit to a functioning black government. This explains in part why the United States, for example, supported Haiti in seeking independence from France yet immediately imposed an embargo on free Haiti.<sup>27</sup> Black violence, particularly when geo-politically beneficial to the United States, was easy to celebrate. Black governance was a fundamental threat to white ideology at the foundation of Modernity.

Haiti’s constitutions emphasize that which was most upsetting at the time, and what is still most upsetting – the viability of black self-rule. Whereas the revolution could be explained away as one more in a series of slave revolts, Haiti’s constitution represents the creation of the first truly postcolonial racial state. Hence, it is important to shift our focus to the constitutions created in the aftermath of revolution.

This silence makes any study of Haiti itself an intensely rhetorical act. Which events one chooses to focus on, what is left out, the adjectives used (chaotic, violent, or animalistic as opposed to reasoned, legal, or intentional), all serve to feed or contest the ideological coding of Haiti. Henri Namphy, the military general-cum-dictator who ruled Haiti from 1986 through 1988, repealed the then-Constitution and said “Constitutions are not for Haiti.”<sup>28</sup> If scholarship on Haiti were our guide, we might conclude he was right.

But study of Haitian constitutions carries the rhetorical force to challenge this understanding. The history of the nation home to the first successful slave revolt ever, which birthed *negritude*, should not be defined entirely as unstable, conflictual, or in terms of a genocidal rupture. In addition to making arguments about Haiti's constitutions and *negritude*, this thesis aims to contest this scholarly silence/banalization in practice.

### *Methodology*

This analysis will be rhetorical in nature rather than political. After independence, the people of Haiti found themselves trapped in a Modernist international arena in which those with black skin were not even considered political subjects (in the sense of exercising subjectivity or deserving recognition) or fully human. The Haitian people had to perform the rhetorical action of subjectifying themselves. The centrality of subjectification leads me to draw upon constitutive rhetoric and the interpellation into ideology/subject-hood. In Haiti's constitutions, that subjectification was done by means of synecdochal inversion. Kenneth Burke and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's arguments about synecdoche articulate this, and how this produces a new conception of Modernity.

Kenneth Burke offers the key understanding of synecdoche. He explains there are four "master tropes" governing figural language: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony. There is a great deal of overlap between them, but each primarily dictates a distinct form of literal representation: "For *metaphor* we could substitute *perspective*; For *metonymy* we could substitute *reduction*; For *synecdoche* we could substitute *representation*; For *irony* we could substitute *dialectic*."<sup>29</sup> Metaphor imagines a matter in terms of something else – from the perspective of something else. Burke says it "brings out the thisness of a that" so we can understand an object from a different perspective.<sup>30</sup>

For example, if a driver moved up a racetrack as a fish through a stream, we can understand the driver through the perspective of a fish swimming. Metonymy overlaps with metaphor (explaining a *this* in terms of a *that*), and is used to understand the intangible in tangible terms, by reducing it to that tangible object; e.g., drawing on metonymy, we discuss “the heart” instead of emotions. As metonymy overlaps with metaphor, so synecdoche overlaps with metonymy in terms of reduction. Synecdoche is literally a reduction of a whole to a part or a signified to a sign, such as referring to “the throne” to stand in for the entire edifice of a king’s authority. Synecdoche functions through representation because it posits the part as a representation of the whole. Finally, irony is identified with dialectic because it involves the co-constitution of opposites. In irony, a thing signifies its opposite. For example, medicine, he says, ironically perpetuates the effects of disease, and disease ironically leads to the refinement of medicine.

Burke explains political representation always functions in a synecdochal way. Political representation projects a “socius” which is never fully coterminous with the population of a state. Burke writes:

[S]ome part of the social body (either traditionally established, or elected, or coming into authority by revolution) is held to be “representative” of the society as a whole. The pattern is essential to Rousseau’s theory of the *volonté générale*, for instance. And though there are many disagreements within a society as to what part should represent the whole and how this representation should be accomplished, in a complex civilization any act of representation automatically implies a synecdochic relationship (insofar as the act is, or is held to be, “truly representative”).<sup>31</sup>

If we look at the United States Constitution, “the people” (as in “we the people”) meant propertied, white, adult, males at the founding, and that part (the propertied, white, adult, male part of the population) was made to synecdochally stand in for the entire population

as “the people.” The borders of “the people” were later expanded to include those without property, non-whites, and women in turn, but this progressive inclusion is always a minor expansion which does not change the fundamentally synecdochic nature of representation. Even today in the United States, “the people” allowed to participate in the *socius* through voting, running for office, or other forms of direct political participation generally refers only to adult citizens without a felony conviction.

This synecdochal function is further enshrined through the principle of *jus gentium*, the “law of peoples.” The Natural Rights doctrine, as enshrined in the United States and French Constitutions of the Age of Revolutions, held all people were granted freedom by virtue of their humanity. But *jus gentium* limited this liberty to those participating in a “people,” which meant an organized political body. Slaves were never a part of the “people,” they were denied political membership, and so they had no liberty regardless of the universality of rights, humanity, freedom, or any other 18<sup>th</sup> century Modern virtue.<sup>32</sup> This was borne out from 1789 through 1792, when French Revolutionaries affirmed universal freedom and equality, yet refused to recognize slaves or abolish slavery.<sup>33</sup> All these collected principles – humanity, *jus gentium*, universal rights, “the people” – operate by the same synecdochal function and only ever refer to a part of the population.

The synecdochal construction of “the people” has two important implications. The first is every appeal to “the people,” “the general will,” or any concept of a universal body encompassing all can only possess a *faux*-universality. We never really refer to all, we are only referring to a part of the named entity. How we read a constitution is thus always based on the aegis of those subject to it. Terms like “liberty” or “equality,”

thought to be timeless, are really temporally bounded and ideological and so mean very different things in different times and places.<sup>34</sup>

The second implication is that representation cannot be understood in purely empirical terms. Understood as such, “the people” is a function of metonymy – the reduction of an intangible thing to another tangible thing – rather than synecdoche. As mentioned above, there is a great deal of overlap between synecdoche and metonymy. Burke says synecdoche involves representing the quality of a thing while metonymy involves expressing quality in terms of quantity. In terms of our present discussion of Haiti, this is the difference between defining blackness as a characteristic of the *socius* versus counting the number of black persons and calling the *socius* black if the majority of its members are black. Synecdoche makes a metaphysical claim about identity, while metonymy makes a quantitative claim about proportional composition, as is done in “the almost fabulous amassing of statistical surveys in the name of ‘sociology’.”<sup>35</sup> This can be paralleled to Michael C. McGee’s description of “the people.” We traditionally understand “the people” to be a collection of public individuals. In fact, “the people” is an ideological construction assigning a quality to the whole.<sup>36</sup> Hence, while metonymy is a reduction to quantity, synecdoche is an enlargement in the sense that the part *contains* the whole, and the whole, reciprocally, contains the part or is characterized by the qualities of the part.

Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak elaborates on this distinction.<sup>37</sup> She makes the same argument as Burke that metonymy constructs “an empirical collective” and synecdoche is preferable. She considers the relationship between the particular/universal dyad (metonymy) and the singular/collective dyad (synecdoche). The particular/universal



relationship enables groups to lay claim to agency in the mode of, for example, voting. Particular individuals are included in the universal, and so they *count* – they matter toward the expression of the universal. But this is only by an empirical abstraction. A government institution counts up the number of votes as in statistical population analysis. Individuals count, the government counts them, but nothing *about them* counts except their numbers on either side of a vote.<sup>38</sup> And given the Eurocentric nature of Modernity, black individuals *count* only to the degree that they statistically count toward a white supremacist whole. Nothing about their blackness or about blackness itself counts. Or, as Spivak puts it, “Making something count is not counting things, on the way to quantification.”<sup>39</sup>

Synecdoche, in contrast, does not efface the singularity of members in this way. Synecdoche allows one to draw on singularity as “difference-in-repetition.” Difference-in-repetition means humans are all copies of each other, are all biological humans, but in the repetition of human to human to human, there are always differences. She explains this through her experience of teacher-training for subaltern groups in India. In reality, she is dissimilar from the people she is teaching. But she is able to put aside her differences of Columbia professor, upper-middle class income, upper-caste birth, and synecdochalize herself as “nothing but a citizen of India.”<sup>40</sup> Because her students were all also citizens of India, this allowed them to “form a collectivity, in search of agency.”<sup>41</sup> This does not mean putting aside difference, however. Instead, it is to identify inequality brought about by the use of difference and synecdochalize those differences. This allows a privileged Indian women from the United States to work with subaltern Indians in rural India to challenge oppression. She also stresses this does not lead to ignoring differences

and singularity, because the synecdoche is not confused with identity in the way metonymy is often confused with identity (demonstrated in the slogan “One person, one vote”). Chapter Three’s discussion of blackness will illustrate why this is true.

Spivak says, “I see agency as the play of self-synecdochising in a metonym. To ‘restore rights to the people’ without laying the groundwork for this (political) will can be well-intentioned but only well-intentioned, and only at best.”<sup>42</sup> Only by taking this metonymy – the empirical collective which can be counted up and analyzed, as in an election – and synecdochalizing it – attaching it to a specific part, which assumes the character of the whole – can one foster political will in a meaningful sense. Simply granting voting rights (“restor[ing] rights to the people”) falls far short of any meaningful change.

In Burke and Spivak, synecdoche is always a two-way relationship. It is not just part for whole but always, simultaneously, whole for part. It is expanding a specific person or people to stand in for “the people” (expanding from concrete individuals to a universal), while also “enacting the universal within the concrete.”<sup>43</sup> If, as in the 1805 Constitution, “the people” is defined as “black,” there is an inseparable movement both from “people”/“black” to particular black individuals, and also a movement from those concrete black individuals to a notion of “people” *qua* universal. This is another distinction between synecdoche and metonymy, as metonymy, in reducing the intangible to the tangible, is only ever a one way operation.

Although this thesis will be drawing on Burke’s theory of tropes, I will divorce this from his larger dramatist schema. In “The Negro’s Pattern of Life,” Burke himself attempts to apply dramatism to contemporary (in 1941) black life, and concludes the

dramatic form is inadequate to the reality of systemic racism (“these nasty times”<sup>44</sup>). An adequate response to racism requires black activists “stamp out” and “distrust” the dramatic approach to life and adopt “forms of scheming more serviceable to our era.”<sup>45</sup> While Burke’s phrasing, and his biological understanding of race throughout the essay, reveals his indebtedness to the racism of his time, he is correct about the inadequacy of dramatism to address systemic oppression. Severe racial oppression demands an emphasis on survival as a prerequisite to any other action, while dramatism is more suited to a “commercial” society in which “the struggle for life has changed into a struggle for livelihood.”<sup>46</sup> Burke distinguishes “*necessitous*” and “*symbolic*” labor, in which *necessitous* labor works toward the satisfaction of physical needs, and *symbolic* labor is the undergoing of hardship in the process of guilt, redemption, and purification.<sup>47</sup> *Symbolic* labor – the realm of the dramatic – deals with pious suffering, in which “dangers are not merely *endured*, they are *courted*,” because they eventually lead toward redemption.<sup>48</sup> While there are certainly elements of *symbolic* labor, guilt, redemption, and purification in many racial struggles, to the extent such struggles are struggles for survival, they fall outside the *symbolic* and into *necessitous* labor. Few slaves, for example, could be described as “courting” the hardships they undergo or finding redemptive value in their work. Hence, dramatism is an insufficient methodology for approaching post-revolutionary Haiti or responses to racial oppression more broadly.

Instead of dramatism, this thesis draws on Maurice Charland’s combination of Burkean “identification” and Louis Althusser’s interpellation.<sup>49</sup> The problem with adopting Burke’s system whole cloth is it risks taking the subject of rhetoric as a given. Charland notes traditional accounts of rhetoric, focused on persuasion, assumes a subject

who can be persuaded to choose one option or another.<sup>50</sup> This assumption is rendered problematic by the racial constitution of slaves as objects rather than subjects.<sup>51</sup> Black individuals had to be subjectified before they could understand themselves dramatically, whether through interpellation into Republicanism, blackness via the *Code Noir*, blackness via Haiti's constitutions, an indigenous Arawak identity, or some other identity. By any account, this subjectification is always already occurring within an ideology, and the move from slave to subject represents a unique moment to pinpoint this subjectification. An analysis of Haiti must therefore look at how different constitutions serve to subjectify black individuals.

To continue slavery in colonial Saint Domingue, colonial society had to reproduce the conditions of slavery. Just as a planter had to replenish his or her stock of seeds and arable land to continue producing crops, he or she also had to reproduce a work force of docile slaves (the conditions of production).<sup>52</sup> This was the purpose of the French *Code Noir* – to take a group of people, from a diverse range of tribes and ethnicities, and graft a unified “black” identity onto them, teach them they are inferior, and beat and regulate them until they accept their inferior status. Where this identification fails – either because those individuals do not accept they are undifferentiatedly “black” or do not accept that blackness signifies inferiority – they violently resist their submission and production breaks down.

This process of subjectification defined ideology. Althusser defines ideology as “the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.”<sup>53</sup> But “imaginary” does not mean made up, untrue, or false, in the sense of “false consciousness.”<sup>54</sup> Rather, ideology names any imaginative frame by which we make

sense of experience. So a slave in Saint Domingue could make sense of her/his experience through a 19<sup>th</sup> century Christian ideology, which offers salvation in the afterlife for remaining in her or his lowly position in this life. Or she or he could understand it through Republican ideology, in which she or he is due equality and liberty. Or she or he could understand it through radical abolitionist ideology, in which slavery is an injustice to fight against. Because subjects must make sense of their experience and their possibilities of agency, they must impose an ideological frame which is fictive – not present in the things themselves. So ideology is not imposed by a despot (it can be, as in propaganda, but need not be), but embodied by a subject, and we have no choice not to embody an ideology (there can be no untainted, true consciousness).<sup>55</sup>

This automatic enrollment in ideology occurs through interpellation. To explain interpellation, Althusser imagines a confrontation in the street, in which a police officer shouts, “Hey, you there!” The hailed individual turns around, because she/he recognizes “it was *really him*” who the officer was hailing. Althusser says in that turn, the individual “becomes a *subject*.”<sup>56</sup> In that turn, the individual becomes both *subject to* the law, and a subject capable of understanding the hail and possessing the agency to respond to it.<sup>57</sup>

This may make more sense in terms of more specific hailings, such as when a boss hails her/his workers:

[I]f it interpellates them in such a way that the subject responds: ‘*Yes, it really is me!*’ if it obtains from them the *recognition* that they really do occupy the place it designates for them as theirs in the world, a fixed residence: ‘It really is me, I am here, a worker, a boss or a soldier!’<sup>58</sup>

Each hailing is specific and hails the individual as already residing in a specific location in ideology (worker/boss/soldier), and answering the hail is recognizing that position as one’s own. Hence, when a Haitian responds to the term “black” they are recognizing

black describes them, and accepting “black” as a subject position they inhabit (even if they consciously disagree with it, like a worker who desires to quit yet answers the hail *as worker*).

Charland inflects interpellation through Burke’s concept of identification. Burke begins, if an orator is praising Athenians, it would be easier for that orator to persuade an audience of Athenians than an audience of Lacedaemonians. The orator might praise precisely those things Athenians already consider virtues (justice, liberality, magnificence, prudence, wisdom). In so doing, the orator allows the audience to *identify* their own beliefs about virtue with the speaker’s belief (the speaker is praising precisely that which they already believe ought be praised). Hence, it allows identification between audience and speaker.<sup>59</sup> The speaker must yield to the audience’s opinions. So while oratory is often directed at persuasion in the sense of swaying an audience to one’s own position, a speaker must reflect the audience’s pre-existing beliefs and invite their identification with her or him for persuasion to succeed.<sup>60</sup> Burke says as both speaker and audience we “*spontaneously, intuitively, even unconsciously persuade ourselves*” in the act of speaking or listening.<sup>61</sup> To the extent our own identity aligns with the ideology of the speech, we may spontaneously form identifications. And, as with Althusser’s hail, this spontaneous identification can serve to enroll us in an ideology. So, we could imagine someone *becoming* Athenian in listening to praise of Athens, in the same mode of “Yes, it really is me!” (about whom the orator is speaking).

This moves us to Charland’s discussion of the creation of the *Peuple Québécois* in Quebec. Prior to 1967, the people of Quebec were termed “Canadiens-français” (French Canadians). In 1967, the *Mouvement Souveraineté-Association* (MSA) declared “*Nous*

*sommes des Québécois*” (“We are *Québécois*”) and called for *Québécois* sovereignty and independence from Canada. This represents an intentional and willed creation of a new political identity, and argued for Quebec’s secession on the basis that this newly imagined identity was in fact a distinct group long oppressed by Canada (the group with whom those same individuals had previously identified).<sup>62</sup> Opponents of *Québécois* independence called this, not without justification, a “semantic fraud.”<sup>63</sup>

This constitutive act offers a new “narrative representation of history.”<sup>64</sup> This narrative representation “lead us to construct and fill in coherent unified subjects out of temporally and spatially separate events.”<sup>65</sup> In this sense, the constituting act travels backwards through time. It offers a lens through which to read those past events such that they fit within the new frame of *Québécois*. In this sense, Althusser claims “*ideology has no history*.”<sup>66</sup> It posits itself as trans-historical, a natural and objective account of the past already present in those past events rather than something created and temporally located as the product of specific interests. The MSA white paper described a history of the *Peuple Québécois* extending back to the original colonization of Canada, long before the invention of the term in 1967. *Québécois* individuals are to retroactively refashion the past such that they have always been *Québécois*. And to the extent those past events fit the MSA narrative, they understand themselves as always already having been *Québécois*.

While interpellation produces a real subject, it is not a “free subject.” The subject is positioned within and constrained by the narrative. Narratives do not merely project backward into the past but also forward into the future. They take a teleological form, with defined beginning, middle, and end, and they move inexorably toward their

conclusion.<sup>67</sup> While the narrative does not wholly constrain subject's choices, they possess a "narrative probability" which is "a formal and ideological constraint upon the subject's possibilities for being."<sup>68</sup> Thus, a *Québécois* is to move toward *Québécois* sovereignty, or a Haitian defined as a French republican is to move toward universal political equality.

Charland points out embodied subjects never function quite so simply. First, there are many contradictory subject positions. We all live within various narratives simultaneously based on our distinct interpellations – into a gender, a religion, a nationality, a familial role, an occupation, and so on – and each projects different ranges of narrative probability. Second, no narrative fits the events of a subject's life perfectly, producing a "recalcitrance" to the *telos* of the narrative.<sup>69</sup>

McGee stresses the entity at issue – the *Québécois* in Charland, "the people" in Burke, "black" peoples in Haiti – is fictive. There is no object one could point to as embodying it.<sup>70</sup> But despite being fictive it is simultaneously material or real. It is materially embodied in actions. McGee describes a successful interpellation as "dragging 'the people' into objective reality" so it is manifested in the actions of individual subjects.<sup>71</sup> The ideology one adopts creates subjective motivations and entails certain material actions. Althusser argues this point emphatically: "[a subject's] *ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that subject.*"<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, every political myth assumes a "people" capable of acting so as to realize that myth.<sup>73</sup> Or, to use Charland's narrative terms, every narrative assumes a protagonist who can act to bring the narrative to its conclusion. This



ideological construction is also material in that it is not simply floating in the aether of ideas, but is transmitted and embodied in rhetoric, in specific speeches, documents, and practices.<sup>74</sup> And constitutions are particularly enlightening in this respect, serving as they do to literally constitute the state if not the nation.<sup>75</sup> There is always a “Constitution-beneath-the-Constitution,” an ideology, which constitutions both draw upon and rearticulate.<sup>76</sup> Hence, the means to get at ideology is through the study of documents like Haiti’s early constitutions.

Furthermore, rhetoric is a concrete reflection of a society’s ideology. Ernest J. Wrage argues that public address serves as a mirror of or window on the audience it is being addressed to, because to sway its audience it must appeal to the values of that audience.<sup>77</sup> Haiti’s early constitutions had to draw upon cultural strains in this newly free black nation if they were to resonate with their audience. One can argue, given the abbreviated life of each of these constitutions, they never did resonate, and perhaps were not an accurate reflection of Haiti’s political culture. But Julia Gaffield explains they were at least a reflection of the culture of Haiti’s elites – the class from which the architects and signers of Haiti’s Constitutions came.<sup>78</sup>

Rhetoric is also the only insight into Haiti’s early national ideology, or even the ideology of the Haitian Revolution. And as founding documents, constitutions are the best means to this insight. Benedict Anderson observes, “the model of official nationalism assumes its relevance alone all at the moment when revolutionaries successfully take control of the state, and are for the first time in a position to use the power of the state in pursuit of their vision.”<sup>79</sup> While many critics attempt to psychoanalyze the Haitian Revolution, such insight into the minds and intentions of the

revolutionaries are ultimately unattainable. It is not even possible to grasp the true intention or psychological dispositions of individual leaders. But those constitutions reveal the vision Haiti's revolutionaries sought to make actual. Hence they are a privileged site of insight not just for early Haiti, but also for the Haitian Revolution.

Combining the insights of Burke and Spivak on synecdoche and Charland on constitutive rhetoric leads me to focus on how Haiti's early constitutions selected out a political subject and narrativized that subject. This is fitting, as Burke stresses constitutions "to be truly representative, must be synecdochic rather than metonymic; or, in other words, in must be a *part for the whole* rather than a *reduction of the mental to the physical*."<sup>80</sup> These early Haitian constitutions function by an inversion of Modernity's general synecdochal construction. They select out the abjected part, and elevate it to embody the ideal political subject. This involves an inversion of the narrativization of blackness – from property to be transferred, or as on a journey toward liberation as in Republicanism, to an inherent marker of liberty. Charland is particularly instructive here,

To be constituted as a *Québécois* in the terms of this narrative is to be constituted such that sovereignty is not only possible, but necessary. Without sovereignty, this constitutive rhetoric would ultimately die and those it has constituted would cease to be subjects, or at least would remain, like children, partial and stunted subjects, lacking maturity, responsibility, and autonomy. In consequences, true *Québécois* could not vote NON. Only a OUI vote would be in harmony with their being and their collective identity[.]<sup>81</sup>

This was a simpler move for the MSA in Quebec than the leaders of early Haiti. Haitians had long been subject to an ideology defining them as child-like, as partial and stunted subjects. Only through an inversion of this ideology could the new narrative of the Haitian subject have effect.

This thesis is concerned here not with the political effects of these founding documents, but with their rhetorical force. As political documents, they were almost all abject failures. The 1805 Constitution lasted only a year. The 1806 Constitution was partially rejected after a year, and fully replaced after ten years. The 1807 Constitution was greatly emended in four years. Only the 1816 Constitution could be considered a political success, but even that is equivocal. Describing the disparity between the ideals of Haiti's constitutions and actual political practices in the state, Frédéric Marcelin describes Haitian politics as a “comic clash between dream and reality.”<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, Sibylle Fischer advises, though the vision of government in these constitutions are fictions, they are “foundational fictions” providing precisely the types of narrative Charland describes (and they are certainly less “fictional” than the white paper of the MSA in Quebec). While they failed as legal codes, they expressed a telos and desire.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, constitutions establish a grammar and a basic logic of justification upon which the laws and society should be based.<sup>84</sup> Haiti's early constitutions do unique work in rhetorically constructing “the people” and blackness in a way that few other documents do. They both illustrate the synecdochal inversion discussed in this thesis and offer a potential resource for reconsidering Modernity.

### *Review of Haitian Constitutional Literature*

There is an extreme paucity of writing on Haiti's early constitutions. Only four such accounts have been printed, and of these only one is a (portion of a) book. These are the works of Sibylle Fischer, Ada Ferrer, Julia Gaffield, and Anne W. Gulick. Although the later three all cite Fischer, there exists almost no sustained development between the works. So, this thesis will draw on each in a piecemeal fashion.

Sibylle Fischer gives the most sustained analysis of Haiti's early constitutions in her 2004 book *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Culture of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*. Her argument is "Modernity" has been defined in such a way it must exclude discussions of slavery, and therefore Haiti.<sup>85</sup> Her emphasis is on Caribbean art surrounding the Haitian Revolution, but she devotes the last few chapters of this work to the 1805 and 1807/1811 Constitutions, in an effort to relocate both the Haitian Revolution and Haiti's constitutions as a part of "Modernity." She considers the ideology behind each constitution and how that intersected with and contested the idea of Modernity constructed in the "Age of Revolution" (as defined by the United States and French revolutions).

She considers each constitution to be drawing upon and then radicalizing many concepts from France and the United States, so they carry within them a critique of Modernity to which we must attend. Haiti's post-revolutionary period becomes a resource we can draw upon to refashion a vision of Modernity which can account for racial inequality. She begins from the feature that is widely noted of Haiti's constitutions, and what makes them distinct from other constitutions of the time: each includes as one of its first articles that slavery is abolished.<sup>86</sup> However, Fischer notes this alone falls far short of the racial equality which makes these constitutions truly radical. What is radical first appears in the 1805 Constitution. Here, all Haitian citizens, even those with white skin, are defined as "black." Fischer reads this as recoding "black" from a racial to a political term. Not only that, but blackness is privileged over whiteness. Fischer explains this through the dialectic of particular and universal. Where the other revolutions and constitutions of the Modern era begin at the universal – as in "all men," "the citizen," and

similar appellations – this Constitution begins from the particular – “black” – and extends blackness to encompass the universal. This “performs one of the most troubling paradoxes of Modern universalist politics ... it both asserts egalitarian and universalist intuitions and puts them to the test by using the previously subordinated term of the opposition as the universal term.”<sup>87</sup> By testing our Modern universalism in this way, it can achieve universal status in a way that the canonical Modern constitutions (which Fischer posits are those of France and the United States) fail to do.

Fischer devotes some limited discussion to the 1801, 1806, and 1816 Constitution, but from the 1805 Constitution, Fischer primarily moves to the Constitution of 1807 and its 1811 amendment. She invokes Benedict Anderson’s argument that the nation is an “imagined community” and argues this Constitution consciously works to imagine a community for the people.<sup>88</sup> Specifically, they attempt to foment a political, cultural, and national unity around the personage of Henri Christophe, the then ruler of Haiti, as an “epic hero of liberation.”<sup>89</sup> While it is futile to mandate the cultural zeitgeist through legislation, Fischer sees this attention to the culture of Haiti as another key to challenging Modernity. By centering Haitian culture around a black figure – one holding a position (king) defined as exclusively white everywhere else – the 1807 and 1811 constitutional documents move toward racial equality.<sup>90</sup> It would be impossible to demonstrate that a given legal decree directly caused a cultural change, but Fischer cites many in Britain and France who understood that Constitution as a strong challenge to their Modernist sensibility.<sup>91</sup>

Fischer also analyzes many of the gendered traits in these constitutions. All of Haiti’s early constitutions enshrine a rigid gender hierarchy, with men above women.

They each define lineage, sovereignty, and citizenship in male terms. The ruler, whether president, emperor, governor-general, or king, is defined as male, and the line of succession may only include males. An upstanding citizen is to be “a good father, a good son, a good husband, and, above all, a good soldier.”<sup>92</sup> Gender discrimination appears in many other places as well, whether in definitions of marriage, requirements of mandatory labor, or ability to hold office. In one area women even receive preferential treatment,<sup>93</sup> but are still singled out as possessing a different set of rights than men. Thus, even given this reconfiguration of Modernity, Haiti leaves patriarchal aspects of Modernity in place. While Fischer’s analysis here is quite insightful, it falls outside the area of this thesis.

The movement from particular to universal in these constitutions requires the 1816 Constitution as a supplement. Where the 1805 Constitution declared all Haitians are black, the 1816 Constitution inverted this to declare that all black peoples (anywhere in the world) are Haitians. In 2012, Ada Ferrer offered a partial analysis of Haiti’s 1816 Constitution, and concerns herself exclusively with Article 44, offering automatic citizenship to any black or Indian immigrant to Haiti. She considers the European doctrine of “free soil,” soil on which no one could be enslaved. “Free soil” had long existed in parts of England, France, Portugal, Spain, Denmark, and other countries, where any slave who stepped into that country could claim sanctuary and would be freed from bondage. This legal claim, however, was only available to white slaves, and largely disappeared with the racialization of slavery in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Article 44 of this Constitution states any black or Indian person in Haiti can make claim to Haitian citizenship and is therefore free. Ferrer describes this as a radicalization of the “free soil” doctrine. Though earlier Haitian constitutions had outlawed slavery and offered rights to

black subjects, she argues this was tempered by a non-interference doctrine by which Haiti refused to interfere with slavery in any other country. Article 44 of the 1816 Constitution is the first instance of extending Haiti's promise of freedom beyond those currently living in the nation, to imagine a universal black humanity who all possess a claim to rights and freedom. To use Charland's narrative terms, before 1816 the telos of Haitian identity – the conclusion of the story – was Haitian freedom. After 1816 that telos became a global end to slavery.<sup>94</sup>

Julia Gaffield, inspired by Fischer, aims to explain how Haiti's political elite worked to overcome the deep racial divisions in Haiti (between black and mulatto people). They did this by imagining a unified community out of the diverse peoples of Haiti. She writes a 2007 article spanning the 1801, 1805, 1806, and 1807 Constitutions. The 1801 Constitution, in her reading, simply mirrors the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. Many articles are direct copies of that French document, the plantation system is maintained, and it even provided explicit protections for white planters who had fled Saint Domingue during the revolution. Thus, the community they envisioned was one that mirrored France, and even Saint Domingue pre-revolution.<sup>95</sup>

Gaffield explains the 1805 Constitution as oriented around strengthening the state and national unity. This Constitution stripped away citizens' identities – their religion (defined by the 1801 Constitution as Catholic), their racial identity, and any foreign citizenship – to define them all as black, without religious affiliation, and possessing sole citizenship with Haiti. And individuals were obligated to the state through monetary debt, agricultural labor, and military service. Most telling for Gaffield is article 28, which states: “at the firing of the alarm gun, the cities will disappear and the nation rise.”<sup>96</sup>

Gaffield argues all these are not simply attempts to create a strong state, but to constitute a strong community with the nation as its sole point of identification, above city, family, race, or religion.<sup>97</sup>

The 1806 Constitution, she says, primarily differs in that “the ‘imagined community’ is to be ‘Haitian’ rather than ‘black’” (unlike the 1805 Constitution, where all citizens are, by definition, black), orienting the people around the state rather than race.<sup>98</sup> The second major difference she identifies is, whereas the 1801 and 1805 Constitutions defined the Haitian economy as agricultural, the 1806 Constitution defined the economy in terms of commerce and trade.<sup>99</sup> The 1807 Constitution continues the trend toward greater centralization of ideology on the state.<sup>100</sup> Hence, Gaffield gives an account of progressively greater emphasis on the state in Haitian political, cultural, and social life. She sees each constitution as a refinement of the effort to promote unity and conformity. While this seems accurate, it leaves unanswered the question: unity *to what end?* The Haitian constitutions certainly seek to imagine a community, but how do they do so and what does this imagined community look like? Gaffield’s study should foreground these questions, which this thesis attempts to answer.

The final constitutional reader, Anne W. Gulick, attempts to answer this question. She focuses exclusively on the 1805 Constitution. She writes in 2006, and like Gaffield she draws on Fischer’s work in *Modernity Disavowed*. She argues the 1805 Constitution rendered Haiti legible and legitimate as a black Republic. Gulick focuses on the same element as Gaffield and Fischer – the redefinition of all Haitians as “black.” But she reads it through the familial metaphors, and the laws literally governing the constitution of families, to illustrate how the Constitution constructs Haiti as one national family. She



answers “to what end?” to the end of a “post-negritude, pan-African, and Black Power” black family.<sup>101</sup>

It is worth noting two of these accounts – those of Fischer and Gulick – are located in the English discipline, concerning themselves with postcoloniality and taking a literary approach to the texts. The other two – Ferrer and Gaffield – are located in the discipline of history, and are largely concerned with correcting historical oversights. Both approaches are necessary but insufficient (the same can be said of a rhetorical approach). Only by supplementing these accounts with an attention to the nature of constitutive rhetoric and the function of interpellation can one fully account for the function of much in these constitutions. This is particularly true given the sudden break from a mostly slave population to a population of free peoples. This is the work Gaffield attempts to do with her use of Anderson’s “imagined community.” But her use of the “imagined community” can only tell us that and how the community existed. Gulick comes close to the argument this thesis attempts to make, but her “narratological perspective” stops short after identifying a narrative, and does not illuminate the rhetorical agency and constraints created by this narrative.<sup>102</sup>

### *Summary of Chapters*

The thesis is divided into this introductory chapter, three chapters of analysis, and a conclusion. Each analysis chapter will deal with one or more of the constitutions of Haiti between 1805 and 1816. The first analysis chapter will focus on the 1805 Constitution, the second on both the 1806 and 1807 Constitutions, and the final analysis chapter will address the 1816 Constitution. Each chapter will focus on the synecdochal inversion of Modernity at play in these Constitutions.

Chapter Two investigates the 1805 Constitution, where this synecdoche was most explicit. Modernity's construction of the people was generally an implicit and unstated one. France's *Code Noir*, enacted in 1685, made explicit the preference for white citizens and the exclusion of black individuals from the body politic as chattel slaves – property, rather than full human beings. But following the French Revolution's Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, France adopted an ideology which claimed its values were universal, extending to all, so such outright statements of racial distinction faded away, while the white supremacy undergirding them remained. This situation created a rhetorical context in which non-white individuals were simultaneously interpellated as less than human, and as fully human. The 1805 Constitution responded by reversing the binary which privileged whiteness and devalued blackness, and made this inversion avowed law. After declaring universal rights for all, this Constitution then revoked those rights for white individuals and defined the default political subject as inherently black. It picked out the black portion of the population to synecdochally stand in for the whole population. In doing so, this rhetorical reimagining disrupted the functioning of white supremacy by asserting the full humanity of black individuals, and the less-than-human status of white individuals.

The 1805 Constitution also constructed the people of Haiti as a unified black family. Where Modernity had the presumption of whiteness as a universal, unmarked, state, this Constitution rendered blackness as a universal state. It also fashioned the nation as a black family, and emphasized said importance throughout. All subjects were hailed as “black,” with white individuals possessing limited rights, and being marked as aberrant. This marked a rescripting of Modernity's definition of the subject. Finally, this

thesis explains the implications of this reworking as redefining blackness, including demonstrating the fluidity of both “the people” and “race.”

Chapter Three considers both the 1806 Constitution and the 1807 Constitution. Where the 1805 Constitution attempted to play with the Republican and Modernist tradition inherited from the United States and France, the 1806 Constitution embraced Republicanism without this explicit inversion, and the 1807 Constitution fled to a pre-Modern social arrangement. The 1806 Constitution maintained restrictions on white rights, implying the exclusion of white individuals from humanity, and the preference for black individuals. But it dropped the definition of “the people” as black, that was operative in the 1805 Constitution, and emphasized its Republican influences. The inversion of “the people” remained, but because the nature of “the people” was unstated rather than outright, its functioning fell closer to Spivak’s notion of metonymy than to synecdoche. There was no explicit hail to blackness; the character of the nation as black could only be inferred from that “empirical collective,” in which we count up the number of black, mulatto, and white individuals and see that the majority is non-white. But this metonymic relationship did not assert any metaphysical identity to the whole as synecdoche would have. Blackness did not, in itself, count for anything. As Spivak says, “Making something count is not counting things, on the way to quantification.”<sup>103</sup> And, as Republicanism had a presumption of whiteness as signifying neutrality, the 1806 Constitution’s strong Republican strains over-determined subjects as white. There were restrictions on whites, but those restrictions could offer nothing but the thrill of *ressentiment*.<sup>104</sup>

While the 1806 Constitution embraced Modernity, the 1807 Constitution moved in the opposite direction and rejected Modernity. It adopted a Pre-Modern system of governance, monarchical and despotic. Gone were most Republican rights and protections for citizens, as well as checks on the King. Henri Christophe – the King under the 1807 Constitution and its 1811 supplement – had almost absolute power. As in the 1806 Constitution, the 1807 Constitution retains a synecdochal inversion, but as in 1806 it fell far short of the rescripting of Modernity enacted in 1805. The 1807 Constitution did not even deal with a construction of “the people.” In rejecting Modernity, Christophe rejects the centrality of “the people” as a political concept, and does nothing to address its meaning. Instead, Christophe synecdochalized himself, so that his personage stood in for Haiti as a nation. But this lay far short of what Burke terms the “noblest synecdoche,” that of “the people.”<sup>105</sup> Any resistant effects of this synecdoche came from asserting black nobility and a black king in place of Europe’s white nobility and royalty. While this did frustrate white supremacist logic to a degree, it invited no change or reevaluation of Modernity and it did not change the interpellation of black subjects in Haiti. Hence, this thesis argues that both efforts, to embrace Modernity in 1806 or flee from Modernity in 1807, rhetorically left Modernity unchallenged.

The last analysis chapter examines the 1816 Constitution. This constitution returned to the synecdochal construction at play in the 1805 Constitution, but it internationalized the effects of the synecdoche. The rights of white subjects of Haiti were still restricted, and a preference was given to black subjects. But new in the 1816 Constitution was that any black or Indian immigrant, by setting foot in Haiti, was granted automatic citizenship. The default status of “the people” as black was therefore extended

beyond national borders. All black and Indian individuals were included in this new understanding of blackness. Where the 1805 Constitution said all Haitians were black, the 1816 Constitution said all black and Indian persons worldwide were (potentially) Haitian. It offered them all full humanity and citizenship and interpellated them as such. The 1805 Constitution was productive in revising the ideology of Modernity, as it manifested within Haiti, but it spoke only to political rights. The 1816 Constitution moved beyond national borders to speak to an idea of human rights or universal humanity. Of these documents, only in 1816 did Haiti's early constitutions truly speak to an idea of the universal. This makes the 1816 Constitution the most radical of these documents, and the most productive to a rethinking of Modernity.

Finally, in the conclusion, this thesis considers how these documents can and have been used as a resource to *negritude*. Together, they offer a never-before-seen vision of blackness. This goes beyond the redefinition of "black" and "white" in non-genetic terms. Through explicit inversion of many of the concepts of Modernity, they allow a reevaluation of *negritude* on its own terms rather than those of whiteness. Important here is that *negritude* neither flee from Europe to a pre-colonial African past, nor that it embrace Europe unreservedly. The vision produced by these documents together is one which works as an exile within Modernity, abjected but able to renegotiate that abjection to produce an affirmative vision of itself. Specifically, Frederick Douglass and Aimé Césaire – two early advocates in *negritude*, although in different forms – both draw on this distinctly Haitian and Caribbean vision of blackness as the key to creating something from within Modernity to allow black subjects to live in white supremacist society.

This thesis also attempts to historicize many aspects of Haiti's early years and documents, to consider them more fully than is generally done. As Trouillot advised, this historicization is necessary to contest the dominant framing of Haiti as chaotic and undeserving of attention. This effort, however, is one which can only be enacted, and so it should not be expected as a stand alone enterprise, but rather, an implicit aspect of the entire project.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Anne W. Gulick, "We Are Not the People: The 1805 Haitian Constitution's Challenge to Political Legibility in the Age of Revolution," *American Literature* 78 (2006): 811.; Steve Coupeau, *The History of Haiti* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008). 30-31.

<sup>2</sup> James G. Leyburn, *The Haitian People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941). 34.

<sup>3</sup> Philippe G. Girard, "Caribbean Genocide: Racial War in Haiti 1802-1804," *Patterns of Prejudice* 39.2 (2005): 142.

<sup>4</sup> David Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue 1793-1798* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982). 383.

<sup>5</sup> Franklin W. Knight, "The Haitian Revolution and the Notion of Human Rights," *The Journal of the Historical Society* 3 (2005): 398.

<sup>6</sup> Philippe G. Girard, "Jean-Jacques Dessalines and the Atlantic System: A Reappraisal," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 69 (2013): 552.

<sup>7</sup> Alex Dupuy, "Class, Race, and Nation: Unresolved Contradictions of the Saint-Domingue Revolution," *Journal of Haitian Studies* 10.1 (Spring 2004): 9.

<sup>8</sup> Although "mulatto" is often considered a derogatory term today, it was a politically salient term widely used in Haiti/Saint Domingue. The term was used in some early Haitian laws, and even a common term of self-identification. Given that "mulatto" referred to biology and parentage, and biological accounts of race have since been widely discredited, there exist no modern equivalents that could be used in place of "mulatto." Thus, while the term is highly problematic given its history and current usage, it is the most accurate word to describe that specific group in Haitian society.

<sup>9</sup> Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, "The Specter of Saint-Domingue: American and French Reactions to the Haitian Revolution," *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, ed. David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009): 327.

<sup>10</sup> Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon, "Fever and Fret: The Haitian Revolution and African American Responses," *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution: Selected Essays and Historical Documents*, ed. Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon (New York: Routledge, 2010): 12.

<sup>11</sup> Thabo Mbeki, "Thabo Mbeki on Haiti," *Times Live*, January 24, 2010, <http://www.timeslive.co.za/opinion/2010/01/24/thabo-mbeki-on-haiti>.

<sup>12</sup> Mbeki, "Thabo Mbeki on Haiti."

<sup>13</sup> The term "Modernity" has many different, contradictory, meanings. In this thesis, I will use "Modernity" to mean "the Age of Revolutions," which refers to the United States and French revolutions and the period that followed them, arguably extending to today. Systematically excluded from the Age of Revolutions is the Haitian Revolution, which is never considered in this literature. "Modernity" in this sense is also based on the post-revolutionary documents of those states, primarily the United States Constitution and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. Hence, Modernity is defined in terms of a Eurocentric vision of rights, liberty, equality, and republican governance. This definition of Modernity and the Age of Revolutions is best explicated (excepting its virtual silence on Haiti) by Eric Hobsbawm in *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

<sup>14</sup> It is, of course, impossible to document an absence of scholarship, a few telling examples will suffice as evidence. Hannah Arendt, in her book *On Revolution*, writes 368 pages on the American Revolution (the first revolution against Europe in the Western hemisphere, where Haiti was the second) and the French Revolution (a direct and immediate pre-cursor to the Haiti Revolution), yet in those 368 pages never once mentions Haiti. See Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin Classics, 1965). Achille Mbembé, an author who has spent 28 years studying and published six books on black post-colonial states, has mentioned Haiti exactly once in print, and that was in an interview when explicitly asked to comment on Haiti. Both are leading figures on revolution, blackness, or post-coloniality. C. L. R. James' *The Black Jacobins* is almost the only English language book prior to 1990 to consider the Haitian Revolution at length. See C. L. R. James. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

<sup>15</sup> Brian Gabriel, "From Haiti to Nat Turner: Racial Panic Discourse during the Nineteenth Century Partisan Press Era," *American Journalism* 30.3 (2013): 336-364.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Scott Brookshire III, "Black lives under attack in the Dominican Republic: Why this crisis deserves our attention" *The Grio*, (June 19, 2015). Retrieved from <<http://thegrio.com/2015/06/19/black-lives-haiti-dominican-republic/>> Jun 22, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Gulick, "We Are Not the People," 800.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Fattouh Jr., "The Haiti Authoritarian *Habitus* and the Contradictory Legacy of 1804," *The Journal of Haitian Studies* 10 (2004): 22-43.

<sup>19</sup> Gulick, "We Are Not the People," 801.

<sup>20</sup> Celucien L. Joseph, "'The Haitian Turn': An Appraisal of Recent Literary and Histiographical Works on the Haitian Revolution," *The Journal of Pan-African Studies* 5.6 (September 2012): 40.

<sup>21</sup> While numerous works could be cited, some of the most prominent include: David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering, *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009).; Geggus, *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution*; Alfred Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).; Matthew Clavin, *Toussaint L'Ouverture and the American Civil War: The Promise and Peril of a Second Haitian Revolution* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).; Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2010). Celucien L. Joseph offers a survey of this recent work in: Joseph, "'The Haitian Turn.'" In contrast, Jackson and Bacon cite the few exceptions to this trend, almost exclusively from 19<sup>th</sup> century abolitionists (Jackson and Bacon, "Fever and Fret").

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Wilderson, who defines blackness entirely in terms of resistance, and as critical rather than constitutive: Frank B. Wilderson, III, *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

<sup>23</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995), 96.

<sup>24</sup> Jean Baudrillard, "Holocaust," *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Lansing, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), 49-52.

<sup>25</sup> Gabriel, "From Haiti to Nat Turner."

<sup>26</sup> Robin Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Democratic Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63 (2006): 657.

<sup>27</sup> Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Democratic Revolution."



- <sup>28</sup> Robert I. Rothberg, "Haiti's Past Mortgages its Future," *Foreign Affairs* 67.1 (Fall 1988): 93.
- <sup>29</sup> Kenneth Burke, "Four Master Tropes," *The Kenyon Review* 3 (1941): 421.
- <sup>30</sup> Burke, "Four Master Tropes," 421.
- <sup>31</sup> Burke, "Four Master Tropes," 427.
- <sup>32</sup> Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Democratic Revolution," 649.
- <sup>33</sup> Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Democratic Revolution," 650-651.
- <sup>34</sup> Henry L. Ewbank, "The Constitution: Burkeian, Brandeisian, and Borkian Perspectives," *The Southern Communication Journal* 61.3 (1996): 223.
- <sup>35</sup> Burke, "Four Master Tropes," 430.
- <sup>36</sup> Michael C. McGee, "In Search of 'The People': A Rhetorical Alternative," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61.3 (October 1975): 236.
- <sup>37</sup> Spivak writes in terms of "reproductive heteronormativity," "the broadest and oldest global institution." While Spivak could be correct that reproductive heteronormativity is more fundamental or all encompassing than white supremacy, I will suffice to note the heuristic of synecdoche she explains applies equally to white supremacy.
- She also is writing about "the subaltern," and would almost certainly exclude L'Ouverture, Dessalines, Christophe, and Pétion from that group. But, again, the heuristic still applies, as demonstrated by Spivak's use of her own self-synecdoche as a citizen of India, despite her privileged status. (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular," *Postcolonial Studies* 8 [2005]: 481.)
- <sup>38</sup> Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular," 477-478.
- <sup>39</sup> Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular," 480.
- <sup>40</sup> Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular," 481.
- <sup>41</sup> Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular," 481.
- <sup>42</sup> Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular," 481.
- <sup>43</sup> Thomas Rosteck, "Synecdoche and Audience in *See It Now's* 'The Case of Milo Radulovich,'" *Southern Communication Journal* 57 (1992): 239.
- <sup>44</sup> Kenneth Burke, "The Negro's Pattern of Life," *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973): 367.
- <sup>45</sup> Burke, "The Negro's Pattern of Life," 367.
- <sup>46</sup> Burke, "The Negro's Pattern of Life," 366.
- <sup>47</sup> Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 82-84.
- <sup>48</sup> Burke, *Permanence and Change*, 82.

<sup>49</sup> Althusser is explicit that interpellation and specific ideologies “only have meaning from the point of view of the class struggle.” See Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 184. However, his own theory, as will be explicated below, clearly extends beyond class struggle, to the extent he claims ideology can have no outside. Even if interpellation is limited to class struggle, Althusser explains it in terms of its functioning in both Leninist socialism and agrarian capitalism. Hence, we can reasonably extend his concepts beyond the modern capitalist problematic with which Marxism and his own work was so concerned.

<sup>50</sup> Maurice Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Québécois*,” *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (1987): 133.

<sup>51</sup> Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of Black Radical Thought* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 14.

<sup>52</sup> Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, 130-131.

<sup>53</sup> Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, 162.

<sup>54</sup> Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, 165.

<sup>55</sup> Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, 173.

<sup>56</sup> Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, 174.

<sup>57</sup> The key part of this hailing is not the literal one-hundred-and-eighty-degree turn, despite Althusser’s insistence otherwise. Althusser merely focuses on the turn because of his attempt to entirely do away with mental events, such as mental recognition, so only material practices remain. The key element is the recognition “it was *really him* who was hailed.” If, upon hearing the police officer’s hail, a subject responds by running away from the officer, that person just as surely recognizes her-/himself as the subject of the hail and responds as subject to the officer. The individual is just as surely interpellated into a subject position, subject to the law. If they were not in that moment both subject and subject *to* law, there would be no reason to flee. Or, to take a less obvious example, if an individual responds to the officer’s hail by trying to blend in and evade the officer, that is still a response, recognizing they are subject to the hail. The only way to escape interpellation is to literally fail to realize “it was *really him* who was hailed.” But this literal failure to understand a hail is not something that can be subjectively chosen. You cannot choose not to understand a command, you can only either fail to understand it (which is not a choice) or refuse to acknowledge it (which still interpellates you). See Brett Levinson, “Sex Without Sex, Queering the Market, the Collapse of the Political, the Death of Difference, and AIDS: Hailing Judith Butler,” *Diacritics* 29.3 (Fall 1999): 81-101.

This means a slave in Saint Domingue who revolts against her/his owner is still ideologically *subject to* that owner. If they did not understand themselves in such terms, direct resistance would be meaningless and unnecessary. If there was no ideological investment in her/his subjection, she/he would simply wander off like an animal (I say “like an animal” not to compare slaves to animals, but because no human being is outside of ideology, so such a response would only truly be possible if one were not human). Hence, while Althusser’s example seems to offer a simple route out of ideology, such an option is not possible.

<sup>58</sup> Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, 178.

<sup>59</sup> Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), 55.

<sup>60</sup> Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 56.

<sup>61</sup> Kenneth Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1966), 301.

- <sup>62</sup> Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric," 134.
- <sup>63</sup> Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric," 136.
- <sup>64</sup> Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric," 138.
- <sup>65</sup> Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric," 139.
- <sup>66</sup> Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, 159.
- <sup>67</sup> William V. Spanos, *The Errant Art of Moby Dick: The Canon, the Cold War, and the Struggle for American Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 132.
- <sup>68</sup> Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric," 140.
- <sup>69</sup> Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric," 142.
- <sup>70</sup> McGee, "In Search of 'The People'," 241.
- <sup>71</sup> McGee, "In Search of 'The People'," 242.
- <sup>72</sup> Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, 169.
- <sup>73</sup> McGee, "In Search of 'The People'," 245.
- <sup>74</sup> Michael C. McGee, "A Materialist's Conception of Rhetoric," *Explorations in Rhetoric: Studies in Honor of Douglas Ehninger*, ed. Ray E. McKerrow (Glenville, IL: Scott, 1982): 29.
- <sup>75</sup> Ewbank, "The Constitution," 220.
- <sup>76</sup> Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), 373.
- <sup>77</sup> Ernest J. Wrage, "Public Address: A Study in Social and Intellectual History," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 33 (1947): 451-457.
- <sup>78</sup> Julia Gaffield, "Complexities of Imagining Haiti: A Study of National Constitutions 1801-1807," *Journal of Social History* 41.1 (Fall 2007): 84.
- <sup>79</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 145.
- <sup>80</sup> Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 326.
- <sup>81</sup> Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric," 146.
- <sup>82</sup> Quoted in: Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Culture of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 228.
- <sup>83</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 229.
- <sup>84</sup> Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 323.
- <sup>85</sup> She draws this argument from Hannah Arendt's analysis of the American and French revolutions. Arendt contrasts the American Revolution – centered on "the political question" of what system of government they desired – with the French Revolution – centered on "the social question" of

how to combat (economic) inequality. Slavery, which cannot be neatly fit into either political or social but is instead both political *and* social, is effaced by the frame of either revolutions, and was in fact ignored by both. The Age of Modernity was founded on these revolutions, so “Modernity” is defined such that slavery cannot even be thought or questioned. This, combined with a Eurocentric culture and canon, ensure slavery is a peripheral concern for those within “Modernity.” It is both an anomaly and an aporia on the margins of history, which cannot be fit into the historical progression explained by G. F. W. Hegel or Karl Marx. (Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 9-10.)

<sup>86</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 227.

<sup>87</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 233.

<sup>88</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 259.

<sup>89</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 250.

<sup>90</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 249-251.

<sup>91</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 254-255.

<sup>92</sup> Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805, art. 9.

<sup>93</sup> In the 1805 Constitution, white women who marry Haitian men are entitled to Haitian citizenship. White men who marry Haitian women are not offered the same privilege. This is perhaps an outgrowth of *femme covert*, whereby women are the property of their husbands rather than their own person, so that women were not actually being granted special rights, but were seen as superfluous or the property of her husband, with the male in a marriage always defining the status of both. Only the citizenship of the husband mattered and by default extended to his wife as his subordinate, rather than recognizing the woman’s own citizenship. See Kelly A. Ryan, *Regulating Passion: Sexuality and Patriarchal Rule in Massachusetts 1700-1830* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 20.

<sup>94</sup> Ada Ferrer, “Haiti, Free Soil, and Antislavery in the Revolutionary Atlantic,” *American Historical Review* 117 (2012): 40-66.

<sup>95</sup> Gaffield, “Complexities of Imagining Haiti,” 86-88.

<sup>96</sup> Gaffield, “Complexities of Imagining Haiti,” 93.

<sup>97</sup> Gaffield, “Complexities of Imagining Haiti,” 88-93.

<sup>98</sup> Gaffield, “Complexities of Imagining Haiti,” 94.

<sup>99</sup> Gaffield, “Complexities of Imagining Haiti,” 95.

<sup>100</sup> Gaffield, “Complexities of Imagining Haiti,” 93-97.

<sup>101</sup> Gulick, “We Are Not the People,” 809.

<sup>102</sup> Gulick, “We Are Not the People,” 812.

<sup>103</sup> Spivak, “Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular,” 480.

<sup>104</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Janis Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 115-117.

<sup>105</sup> Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 508.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805 and the New Black

Haiti's first constitution as an independent state was enacted on May 20, 1805. This Constitution – *The Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805* – was unique for the time. After the United States, Haiti was the first state to throw off European colonization. And unlike the United States, where the rulers were exclusively white men, Haiti had to contend with the white supremacy of the Modernist world in which it found itself. In grappling with this problem, the 1805 Constitution did something which no other constitution had done or has since done. It defined the people of Haiti as a unified black family. This inverted the white supremacist hierarchy of Modernity, and synecdochalized the abject part – blackness – to stand in for “the people.” In doing so, it presented a novel approach which allowed it to contest Modernity in a way few others have successfully done.

This chapter begins by examining the Haitian Revolution and the social, political, and economic reality it produced in Haiti. Next, it focuses on three expressions of synecdochal inversion in the 1805 Constitution of Haiti. First, the Constitution establishes a narrative link drawn between the original Arawak inhabitants of Hispaniola and the people of Haiti. Second, it defines the Haitian people as inherently “black.” Third, it posits all Haitians as a family and the government as a father. These elements allowed Dessalines to refashion the definition of this diasporic group in a way that built upon, but was not defined by, its unhomed status. The Constitution attempted to define “the people” in Haiti, and these three features narrated “the people.” This forms the basis

for the challenge Haiti and Haiti constitutions pose to white supremacist aspects of Modernity.

### *The Haitian Revolution and Aftermath*

On the eve of 1791, Saint Domingue society was extremely stratified and unsustainable, not only for black individuals but for white individuals as well. At the top resided the ruling class of *grands blancs* (“large whites”). These were, for the most part, wealthy planters owning large plantations. They owned the majority of the roughly 800 plantations and 500,000 slaves in the colony. Of the then 570,000 inhabitants of Saint Domingue, this group made up only a couple thousand.<sup>1</sup>

Immediately below this was a middle class made up of small planters and professionals. The middle class was primarily white (*petits blancs* or “petty whites”), but also included *affranchise* (freed people of color). They – even *affranchise* – sometimes owned smaller plantations. In fact, in 1791, one fourth of slaves and one third of plantations (though a far smaller share of plantations by acreage) were owned by *affranchise*.<sup>2</sup> *Petits blancs* numbered about 40,000, while *affranchise* numbered about 28,000.<sup>3</sup> This middle class was further divided, with *petits blancs* positioned above *affranchise*. The slave system, especially the *Code Noir*, reinforced an “aristocracy of the skin” by which any white person could assert superiority over any black or mulatto person.<sup>4</sup>

At the bottom rung were the 500,000 slaves of the colony. There were, of course, some lower-class white individuals, but the racial schema of Saint Domingue aligned them with *petits blancs* against the mass of black slaves. An elaborate system of racial classification was invented to turn *affranchise* – who were predominantly mulatto –

against slaves – who are almost entirely first-generation black Africans. People were broken down into eleven different categories, going back eight generations and assessing 128 “units” of inheritance for relative levels of whiteness versus blackness.<sup>5</sup> Rising levels of whiteness earned a higher position on the social hierarchy, and this turned mulatto people against black people to the extent that many *affranchise* actively defended the slave system.<sup>6</sup>

But even with *affranchise* in support of slavery, the overwhelming number of slaves in Saint Domingue made the situation inherently unstable (500,000 slaves and 70,000 free people of color and white people, as opposed, for example, to the United States at the time with 400,000 slaves and 1,850,000 white people).<sup>7</sup> This was made worse by the extreme conditions in Haiti, where slaves were treated even more harshly than most other sites of chattel slavery. The *grands blancs* had calculated it was cheaper to import slaves from Africa than to sustain the slave population through “natural increase” (maintaining slaves in good health long enough for them to reproduce and raise their children) so it was common to work slaves to death, and the average life expectancy of a slave in Saint Domingue was ten years.<sup>8</sup>

In 1791, provoked by the French Revolution, the conditions finally precipitated into the inevitable revolution. The French Revolution, and the downfall of the monarchy, had already weakened the Saint Domingue government. The Revolution had pitted *grands blancs* against *petits blancs*, with *grands blancs* on the side of the French aristocracy, and *petits blancs* on the side of the revolutionary forces. And in May 1791, French revolutionary soldiers – in an attempt to win the support of non-white subjects against the aristocracy – arrived in Saint Domingue to declare the freedom of mulattoes

from slavery in exchange for those freed mulattoes' support of the French Revolution. These three simultaneous factors made the situation ripe for revolution.<sup>9</sup> The last event – the freeing of mulatto slaves – earned particular outrage. In response, Saint Domingue supporters of the aristocracy lynched hundreds of mulatto *affranchise*, internal fighting between *grands blancs* and *petits blancs* was intensified even more, and planters began to push for independence from France.<sup>10</sup>

On August 22, 1791, a maroon<sup>11</sup> leader named Boukman ordered all slaves to murder their masters and burn down their plantations. Over the next three days, half the plantations along the northern coast were destroyed, and those “black jacobins” continued on aiming to destroy every vestige of slavery.<sup>12</sup> The slave revolt, like earlier revolts in Saint Domingue, would likely have been quickly put down by French troops. But because of infighting among white colonists, it continued on where previous efforts had failed.<sup>13</sup> In July 1793, after two years of conflict, the local government had lost control of large portions of northern Saint Domingue and had offered concessions to black individuals in an attempt to placate them, such as equal rights for all *affranchise*. Simultaneously, *grand blancs* – who feared both the black revolutionaries and a diminution of white supremacy – enlisted the aid of Spain (who controlled the eastern half of the island, Santo Domingo, today the Dominican Republic) and Britain. Both countries wanted to claim Saint Domingue and re-solidify slavery. In 1793, Spain and Britain had each captured large tracts of the colony, and many white planters threatened to secede from France, even starting a counter-insurgency against France. This left Saint Domingue in 1793 divided among France, Spain, Britain, and non-white insurgents.<sup>14</sup>



The situation prompted Léger Félicité Sonthonax – the commissioner on Saint Domingue, a Jacobin supporting the French Revolution, and a member of the *Société des Amis des Noirs* (Society of Friends of the Blacks, an abolitionist group in revolutionary France) – to seek non-white aid. He viewed *grand blancs* working with Spain and England as conspirators and traitors and actively formed black battalions to fight for France, offering freedom to any black soldier who joined the French.<sup>15</sup> Sonthonax employed three main strategies to win non-white support. First, he promoted black commanders to key military positions in Saint Domingue. Second, he formed alliances with black insurgency leaders against Spain and Britain. Third, he pushed for general emancipation.<sup>16</sup> This allowed for a redefinition of national interest such that black troops, fighting against white planters, Spain, and England were defined almost by default as French patriots and a strong alliance formed between France and the “rebellious slaves.”<sup>17</sup>

On February 4, 1794, mainland France adopted Sonthonax’s approach to secure the support of black people in Saint Domingue, and so wrest control from Spain and Britain. The newly formed National Convention in Paris abolished slavery throughout the French colonies. Some consider this part and parcel of French Republican ideology, as it seems to be dictated by the French Revolution’s Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, in its promises of universal and inalienable freedom, self-control, property, and so on. Yet the French Jacobins had left slavery intact for two years. France’s new “Rights of Man” extended only to white men, and the National Convention only acted on slavery because Sonthonax argued this was the only way to lure black revolutionaries to the side of France and expel the other imperial powers from the island.<sup>18</sup> Even amongst the

*Société des Amis des Noirs* few had ever argued for racial equality, or even liberty for black people.<sup>19</sup>

Following the declaration, in April 1794, a Spanish army led by the black General Toussaint L'Ouverture deserted its Spanish patron and joined France. L'Ouverture proved a capable strategist, and French commanders in Saint Domingue promoted him until in 1796 he was commander in chief of France's forces in Saint Domingue. Two years later, in 1798, France succeeded in repelling Spain and Britain from Saint Domingue (although Spain remained on Hispanola, controlling Santo Domingo).<sup>20</sup>

L'Ouverture retained control of Saint Domingue, and in 1801, France withdrew its armed forces from Saint Domingue. That same year, L'Ouverture enacted the 1801 Constitution. This document did not declare independence; in contrast, it described itself as having "laid out the constitutional foundation of the regime of the French colony of Saint Domingue."<sup>21</sup> Yet L'Ouverture did assert that independence in practice.<sup>22</sup> The definition of Saint Domingue as a French colony was quickly qualified: "Saint Domingue in its entirety ... is part of the French empire, but submitted to particular laws."<sup>23</sup> L'Ouverture also had all representatives of the French government deported. And in February of 1801 he wrote Bonaparte and "bluntly" stated that, although formal relations with France would remain unchanged, L'Ouverture was now effective ruler of Saint Domingue. It was a *coup d'état* in everything but name.<sup>24</sup>

There were two asserted ties to France in this Constitution. The first was the naming of the state as a colony of France, and retaining the name Saint Domingue. The second was all citizens were defined as "French."<sup>25</sup> By maintaining the status of French colony, and the people of Haiti as French citizens, L'Ouverture was locating the people

of Saint Domingue among those subject to the promises of the French Revolution and particularly the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. Many French abolitionists, in fact, had strongly argued against Saint Domingue's independence for precisely this reason: it was *grand blancs* who had initially pushed for independence, fearing that France would inevitably extend rights to non-white people. France had strategically offered some piecemeal rights to *affranchise* and even slaves, and it seemed to some that the expansion of rights would continue until slavery and white supremacy were overturned. Thus, many saw tension between Saint Domingue's independence (as sought by the *grand blancs*) and abolition.<sup>26</sup> Thus, Saint Domingue remained, in name, a part of the empire of France.

Article 3, outlawing slavery, bore this connection out. It stated: "There can be no slaves in this territory; servitude is abolished within it forever. All men who are born here live and die free and French."<sup>27</sup> The characteristics "free" and "French" were in parallel construction, and inherently linked, in the wording of this Constitution.<sup>28</sup>

Although slavery was outlawed, Saint Domingue faced the same economic conditions post-1801 that France had pre-1801, and which led France to draw so prolifically on chattel slavery. Saint Domingue's challenges were even greater, as 150,000 of 550,000 inhabitants had been killed in the ten year revolution<sup>29</sup> and even more had emigrated, leaving less than half the 1791 population.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, L'Ouverture rightfully feared the return of French forces to re-subjugate Haiti, and so had to draft a large standing army from the already diminished population.<sup>31</sup> Without a pool of cheap, agricultural labor he was unable to maintain trade and governance. So, L'Ouverture reinstated a system of forced labor.<sup>32</sup>

The 1801 Constitution performed three tasks re-establishing slavery. First, it described the necessity of agriculture: “Since the colony is essentially agricultural, it cannot be allowed to suffer even the slightest interruption in the work of cultivation.”<sup>33</sup> Second, it empowered the government to act to “encourage” workers to perform agricultural labor by any means:

Since the introduction of cultivators is indispensable to the reestablishment and the growth of crops ... the Constitution charges the governor to take appropriate measures to encourage and favor this increase in the number of hands, to stipulate and balance various interests, and to assure and guarantee the execution of the respective obligations that will be the result of this introduction.<sup>34</sup>

Third, it asserted the patriarchal authority of plantation owners over their plantations’ workers: “Each plantation is a factory that requires the union of cultivators and workers; it is the peaceful refuge of an active and faithful family, where the owner of the property or his representative is of necessity the father.”<sup>35</sup> What is more, L’Overture believed in the necessity of the return of the white planters who had previously owned the plantations of Saint Domingue.<sup>36</sup> These white planters, especially the *grands blancs*, possessed the capital, market connections, knowledge, and experience which would be necessary for Saint Domingue’s population to meet the economic demands of the colony.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the 1801 Constitution explicitly affirmed the rights of those white planters to return to Saint Domingue and reclaim their plantations:

Absent owners, for whatever cause, preserve their rights over the goods belonging to them situated in the colony. In order to have the seizure lifted, it will suffice for them to present their titles of ownership or, lacking titles, supplicative acts whose formula the law determines.<sup>38</sup>

Only those planters who were deemed traitorous to France were excluded from the ability to reclaim their land, and even those individuals were given the opportunity to re-patriate.

The recently freed slaves were predictably reluctant to return to the fields they had just left, thus – driven by the imperative to maintain agriculture and the authority to take any means to do so – the “liberating” army often used military force to compel former slaves to return to their plantations and work under their former masters.<sup>39</sup> This was, in every meaningful sense, a continuation of slavery – slavery in the name of the abolition of slavery. Many of the same restrictions of the *Code Noir* still applied, such as confinement of workers to plantations, brutal disciplinary measures, and the like. The only substantive change was now the workers were paid (though not paid well).<sup>40</sup> In the words of Laurent Dubois, Toussaint “maintained and perfected” the system of plantation slavery.<sup>41</sup>

This perpetuation of forced labor fed on and worsened existing antagonism between *affranchise* and *nouvelle libres*. *Nouvelle libres* perceived L’Ouverture and most government officials as concerned solely with *affranchise* well-being. *Affranchise* controlled most government positions and took over many of the plantations where *nouvelle libres* were forced to work. It also mirrored the earlier divide in which *affranchise* simply sought to extend the rights of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen. Many articles of this constitution were color-blind in a way that preserved the type of faux-universality seen in French Republicanism. Article 4 explicitly disavowed any distinctions of color: “All men, whatever their color, are eligible for all positions.”<sup>42</sup> And Article 5 affirmed meritocracy: “There exist no distinctions other than those based on virtues and talents[.] ... The Law is the same for all, whether it punishes or protects.”<sup>43</sup> The effect of this aporia to skin color could be seen directly in the preservation of property rights for white planters. Without distinctions of color, they had

equal right to their land – alienated in the Haitian Revolution – that any non-white Haitian had to her or his own property, and reclaimed ownership of their plantations. Furthermore, the Republican notion of meritocracy more broadly ignored that achievement may be curtailed by historical inequality. Those who began at a disadvantage would tend to remain at a disadvantage, absent legal intervention.<sup>44</sup> Hence, this ensured the hierarchal ordering of white over mulatto over black, in which white remained privileged and black remained debased.

All this should illustrate that the Haitian Revolution was never simply a war against French colonialism. From 1793-1799, most black forces were fighting on the side of France. And after the cessation of conflict, Saint Domingue was still officially a client state of France. It was more accurately a war between two different emancipatory strategies – one rooted in the universal rights of Republicanism and Modernity, and one rooted in Pre-Modern (Pre-Modern in the sense of the dominant ideology prior to the Age of Revolution, as defined in Chapter One) forms of white supremacy. The 1801 Constitution demonstrated the failure of the former approach. The *grand blancs* demonstrated the failure of the latter.

In early 1802, Napoleon Bonaparte ordered the reinvasion of Saint Domingue to reassert control. This was a brutal campaign; David P. Geggus describes it as “a war of genocide” waged against non-white Haitians.<sup>45</sup> French forces quickly captured and deported L’Ouverture. But that summer, the French forces were struck with yellow fever, and by November 24,000 of France’s 34,000 troops had died in combat or of disease and their wounds.<sup>46</sup> France, fearing defeat, sent an additional 20,000 troops and resorted to more and more brutal practices, but it was futile.<sup>47</sup> By November of 1803, a French loss

seemed inevitable. And on January 1, 1804, Jean Jacques Dessalines, who had succeeded in taking L'Ouverture's place, issued a Declaration of Independence renaming Saint Domingue as "Haiti." Soon after French forces withdrew entirely.<sup>48</sup>

Dessalines had been known for his brutality and self-interest. He was a strict and severe commander during the Haitian Revolution, often punishing his own soldiers as harshly as French soldiers.<sup>49</sup> And in 1801 – after L'Ouverture's Constitution when many plantation laborers revolted at the continuation of forced labor – Dessalines enthusiastically volunteered to lead the battalion which suppressed the uprising and killed 3,000 poor black workers in the process.<sup>50</sup> He had even fought on the side of France in 1802 and was instrumental to the capture of L'Ouverture, because he hoped to replace him as president (and succeeded).<sup>51</sup>

On writing the Declaration of Independence, Dessalines instructed his assistant: "To prepare the independence act, we need the skin of a white man for parchment, his skull for a desk, his blood for ink, and a bayonet for a pen."<sup>52</sup> The declaration itself was not so violent, and Dessalines' assistant failed to secure the preferred raw materials, but it still made the intentions of Dessalines quite clear. He proclaimed: "[L]et this be our cry: 'Anathema to the French name! Eternal hatred of France!'"<sup>53</sup> The problem facing Haiti, he said, was: "There are still French in our island, ... if they find refuge among us, they will plot again to trouble and divide us."<sup>54</sup> Thus, his solution was to kill them all: "Let them tremble when they approach our coast ... from the terrible resolution that we will have made to put to death anyone born French whose profane foot soils the land of liberty."<sup>55</sup> He castigated those "lukewarm hearts" among the non-whites of Saint Domingue who would not fight to the death to repel France.<sup>56</sup> "If ever you refused or

grumbled while receiving those laws that the spirit guarding your fate dictates to me for your own good, you would deserve the fate of an ungrateful people.”<sup>57</sup> Hence, anyone who did not enthusiastically take up Dessalines’ exterminationism deserved deprivation.

This presaged a massacre of the white population on the island in April 1804. 30,000 white planters, children, women, and ex-soldiers were slaughtered. Only a token presence of about 500 remained, composed of white wives of black men and white professionals holding critical occupations such as doctor or minister.<sup>58</sup> This anti-French violence was perhaps thought a necessary step toward the creation of “the people” which Dessalines would take the next year. According to Kenneth Burke, every act of identification carries with it an act of division or alienation. Identification can only be “affirmed with earnestness” because there is a prior division.<sup>59</sup> If there was total unity, no act of identification would be necessary, identification would be automatic. But also, no identification could result in a total identification. It takes people at odds with one another and identifies them into distinct, opposing groups, such that every identification both requires and results in “*war*.”<sup>60</sup>

The Declaration of Independence was the first Haitian document to perform the inversion which was enacted through all of Haiti’s early constitutions. It declared, “We have paid these true cannibals back in full; war for war, crime for crime, outrage for outrage. ... I have avenged America.”<sup>61</sup> Europeans were the perpetrators of war/crime/outrage, while non-white Haitians were responding with justified force, flipping the colonial script which said white colonization was necessary and justified to control the violent, criminal black slaves. And “true cannibals” was a reference to the



Spanish genocide of the indigenous Taino Arawak people justified by claims the Taino were cannibalistic.<sup>62</sup>

There is another inversion here in the way white people were being described. A slave was not considered fully human, but a piece of raw material, an object to be bought, sold, and used to achieve a planter's ends.<sup>63</sup> But to write his Declaration of Independence, Dessalines wanted to literally turn the body of a white colonist into raw material – skin into parchment, bones into a desk, and blood into ink. Furthermore, writing was a skill generally denied to slaves, and even most *affranchise*. So writing any Declaration was wresting away the tools of the masters. It was this symbolic inversion – black as writer and white as fungible resource – not the violence it called for, that challenged colonialism at the level of ideology.<sup>64</sup>

This was also a self-conscious appropriation of the European view that non-white populations in general and Haitians in particular were “savages.”<sup>65</sup> Rather than attempt to reject or contest this naming, they adopted it and lived up to the name, to embody violence and horror itself such that any French “tremble when they approach our coasts.”<sup>66</sup> They accepted the European narrative of Saint Domingue, of a savage, violent, population; they only change the telos – the conclusion – of that story, from white people benevolently enslaving black people, who are incapable of reason or caring for themselves, to the savage Arawak revenging themselves by slaughtering white colonizers as a means to self-governance.

It is important to note that two months prior, on February 22, 1804, Dessalines issued another proclamation ordering the military to collect any individuals, even black and mulatto individuals, known to have collaborated with Leclerc's French forces in

1802. While this first purge primarily targeted white planters and colonists, many mulatto soldiers who had fought on the side of France also were killed.<sup>67</sup> The object of slaughter was not white individuals; many white individuals were even allowed to live through both genocides. Instead, it was colonizers. We can thus understand these two genocides as primarily anti-colonial, and only secondarily as racial.<sup>68</sup>

On May 20, 1805, the Senate passed the first constitution of independent Haiti. Haiti's early constitutional period was plagued by violence and failed to live up to its promises of liberation. In addition to the two genocides of Haiti's white and French-sympathizing population, there were also authoritarian strains running through the Constitution. For example, Dessalines gave himself total powers as Emperor to address national challenges by whatever means necessary.<sup>69</sup> And, strangest from the rebellious slaves, the institution of slavery was continued.

The 1805 Constitution, like its 1801 predecessor, maintained slavery. Article 2 of the Constitution declared: "Slavery is abolished forever." Second only to Saint Domingue's 1801 Constitution, this is the earliest Constitution to make the abolition of slavery one of its founding tenets. But Dessalines found himself facing those same challenges that had led Toussiant to preserve slavery. The economic challenges remained the same; Dessalines maintained the standing army to repel future French encroachment, and after a French invasion and two mass slaughters, the population was even more reduced. These economic trials stood as the greatest hurdle to the new Haiti, and Dessalines had to compromise the restriction on slavery to address a grim economic reality. The 1805 Constitution affirmed "Agriculture shall be honored and protected as the first, and most noble, and most useful among the trades."<sup>70</sup> While he softened the

demand for forced labor from Toussaint's Constitution, he made labor a requirement of citizenship. Articles 8 and 11 read "Every citizen must have a trade" and "Citizenship is suspended as a result of insolvency and bankruptcy." So although slavery was formally eliminated, Dessalines preserved an inducement to working to serve the nation.<sup>71</sup> Also fearing foreign levies or a refusal to trade, the Constitution stipulated Haiti would not challenge nations with slavery or encourage unrest against slavery abroad.<sup>72</sup> Dessalines expelled (or killed) the white planters, but in most respects he preserved a reformulated version of the plantation system under new, black, owners.<sup>73</sup>

These shortfalls – genocide, slavery, authoritarianism – should clearly not be forgiven, but must be understood in terms of the exploitation of the non-white inhabitants of Haiti, which had devastated the country. Under French rule, non-white people were at best second class citizens, and more often slaves who were worked to death in Haiti in record numbers.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, colonial slavery had created an economy that was difficult to maintain sans compulsory labor. The violence of Haiti must be linked back to this earlier violence of French colonial slavery to be understood. We cannot wholesale condemn the Haitian government or its people any more than we can condemn the Jacobins of the French Revolution (and probably less so).

Dessalines was able to ease the conditions of forced labor compared to those in Saint Domingue. First, he actively encouraged slave traders or pirates with captured slaves to bring those slaves to Haiti for \$40 reimbursement.<sup>75</sup> The slaves were then officially "freed," but compelled to work Haiti's plantations. This helped Haiti to sustain its population and workforce.<sup>76</sup> Second and more importantly, Dessalines created a psychic investment in the nation of Haiti. He did so through recruiting identification, or

more specifically by the synecdochal inversion which has been alluded to above and will be fleshed out in the next three sections.

### *Indigeneity*

The Declaration of Independence, and many post-colonial states and especially post-colonial deployments of blackness, was rooted in a reactionary rejection of colonization and Modernity which reduces down to colonial resentment.<sup>77</sup> In this respect, these anti-colonial texts were caught up in a reactive orientation which could do nothing more than negate and disavow the metropole. The Declaration of Independence lacked much substantive content, and centered on whiteness, French rule, and the like (in the rejection of those concepts). It offered points of contradistinction – to identify against – but because it offered nothing to identify *with*, the identification failed.<sup>78</sup>

The Declaration of Independence embodied that reactive rejection of anything associated with Modernity which must, inevitably, fail. Burke illustrates this by imagining a statue of two fencers. In Burke's statue, one fencer is lunging to stab the other in the shoulder with his sword. The second fencer is raising his sword to block the thrust. Over time, the first fencer is removed, or replaced with a gunman, leaving only the second half of the statue intact, frozen forever parrying a blow which is no longer coming. In reactive founding documents, Burke says we are left "attempting to see in the memorialized parry an *eternal* parry, a *universal* parry."<sup>79</sup> Such a universality parry is impossible, so such a move in national founding documents ultimately leads to a disjunct between the law, identity, and reality. All we are left with is a statue locked perpetually in defense against a non-existent blow, unable to do anything else, and unable to respond to any actual attack.

This trap posed a particular dilemma for the people of former-Saint Domingue. Interpellation into a new identity that is not merely oppositional (a parry) but offers positive content – of the sort Maurice Charland describes – requires a shared identification to draw upon. The audience must be able to recognize “Yes, it really is me!” being hailed. But this requires a shared national past and shared experiences to draw on.<sup>80</sup> The people of Haiti lacked such a history. The 1805 Constitution moved to avoid this trap in the three ways that will be argued in the remainder of this chapter: First, by asserting a connection to the indigenous inhabitants of the island. Second, by describing citizens as “blacks.” And third, by defining the Haitian people as a family. This section focuses on the first.

The link to indigenous inhabitants was begun before even the Declaration of Independence. While trying to find a national narrative in 1803, the leaders of Haiti first dubbed the people “Incas” and the government the “Government of the Incas.”<sup>81</sup> But “Inca” referred to a specific people who had never actually lived on Hispaniola. So instead the leaders of Haiti sought to assert connections to the Taino Arawak ancestry of the island.<sup>82</sup>

Article 1 of the 1805 Constitution’s prefatory Declaration stated “The people who live on the island formerly called Saint Domingue agree to constitute themselves in a free and sovereign State independent from all other powers of the universe, under the name ‘Empire of Haiti.’” “Haiti,” meant “mountainous, rugged” in Arawak and was used by the Arawak to refer to Hispaniola.<sup>83</sup> This was paired with the identification of the people of Haiti as “*indigène*.”<sup>84</sup>

The re-naming of Saint Domingue as Haiti, and an additional move by Haitians to identify themselves as *indigène*, represented an inversion of Modernity as it was practiced through colonialism in Saint Domingue.<sup>85</sup> If there was a continuity between the people of Haiti and the original Arawak inhabitants of Hispaniola, this meant Haitians were the proper inheritors of the state. Spain and France, therefore, were never proper owners of Saint Domingue. Saint Domingue was never even a legitimate entity, the colonizers were criminal, oppressing the *indigène* in the *indigène*'s own home, and Saint Domingue was only an aberration from a narrative tying an Arawak past to an Arawak future. *Indigène* in this context was used as a political, rather than ethnic or racial term. No claim was made to genetic or inherited indigeneity. And factually almost no Haitians were descendants of the original Arawak population, who had been nearly exterminated.<sup>86</sup> The issue was not one of lineage or descent, but instead reaffirming that inversion in which black citizens had rightful claim to property in Haiti, and white foreigners did not.

This inversion of French colonialism was made clear in many other articles of the Constitution, which deployed French terms in direct contradiction to their original colonialist meaning. Two brief examples are instructive: First, the French drew heavily on the metaphor of the "tree of liberty," both in the French Revolution, its celebration, and even in Saint Domingue.<sup>87</sup> In the United States, Thomas Jefferson used this same metaphor and said this tree must be refreshed with the blood of patriots and tyrants.<sup>88</sup> Dessalines cited and inverted this metaphor, recasting it as the French "tree of slavery and prejudice."<sup>89</sup> He claimed in the slaughter of the white colonists and the liberation of Haiti, the Haitian people had not served the tree of liberty or even refreshed it with blood.

Instead, they had “brought the axe upon the ancient tree of slavery and prejudices.”<sup>90</sup>

What was in France a tree of liberty was in Haiti only one of prejudice. Where the French had championed the Rights of Man, Dessalines recast them as the “implacable enemies of the rights of man.”<sup>91</sup> So the 1805 Constitution was not an attempt to reclaim French rights previously denied – as in the Republicanism of the 1801 Constitution – but a fundamental inversion of those rights as conceived by the French.<sup>92</sup>

Second, the 1805 Constitution is the “imperial” Constitution, Haiti is the “empire of Haiti,” and Dessalines is “emperor.”<sup>93</sup> This was a response to Napoleon Bonaparte in France. In the summer of 1804, Bonaparte was to declare himself Emperor of France. In response, Dessalines declared himself Emperor of Haiti and renamed the Constitution the “Imperial” Constitution. Dessalines was positioning himself as the equal and antagonist to Napoleon.<sup>94</sup> If Napoleon would be emperor then Dessalines would be emperor to spite him.

These inversions did not function by the sort of synecdochal inversion that makes up a key theoretical concept in this thesis because they do not deal directly with (political) representation. But they do offer a related “perspective by incongruity” which is characteristic of many black abolitionist’s arguments, especially those of Frederick Douglass.<sup>95</sup> This functioned by drawing upon metaphor rather than synecdoche – *perspective* rather than *representation*. The key difference was that rather than dealing with inclusion and exclusion, as with the choice of who to include in “the people,” this dealt with hierarchy. Instead of reversing the included and excluded groups, it reversed the privileged and denigrated concepts. Specifically, it rearticulated French concepts through a black perspective in which, for example, “liberty” had empirically meant

slavery. Burke emphasizes such hierarchies of superior and inferior are inevitable. So all that can be done is rearrange those hierarchies.<sup>96</sup>

While hierarchy is inevitable, the *indigène* identification was rooted solely in rejection. It rejected anything that was associated with France or European culture, rooted as they were in white supremacy. The narrative it imagined was rooted in the pre-colonial past, and asserted that any European influence was a temporary aberration between an Arawak past and an *indigene* future. Hence, it became locked in the perpetual parry Burke warned against. A more productive, and the more dominant, form of identification in the 1805 Constitution was with blackness, which maneuvered Haiti's European linkages more deftly.

### *Blackness*

The 1805 Constitution deployed the identity "black" through synecdochal inversion. Unlike the 1801 Constitution and the Declaration of Independence – the former embracing French Republicanism and the later rejecting it – this moved toward a more affirmative relationship toward Europe and identity. Hence, it uniquely invited identification in a way that worked more smoothly than *indigène*. The Constitution deployed blackness to refer not to a racial category, but to a shared experience. This shared experience provided the basis to narrate identity.

The Constitution was in many respects a Modernist document. It enshrined many of the same freedoms enumerated in the United States and French Constitutions which preceded it by sixteen and fourteen years respectively. It prohibited the government from establishing a religion, ensured a right to fair trial, provided against quartering soldiers and violations of privacy, outlawed *ex post facto* application of laws, and most



importantly affirmed inviolable rights to liberty and property.<sup>97</sup> Like the French Constitution and the United States Declaration of Independence, the Haitian preamble explained the document as a natural, just, and necessary response to tyranny. The Constitution even enshrined the right to property which, under Haiti's 1801 Constitution, was used to return Haitian plantations to white planters. Article 6 of Haiti's 1805 Constitution announced: "Property is sacred; any violation thereof will be rigorously prosecuted."

In this sense, the 1805 Constitution was in line with L'Ouverture's 1801 Republicanism, not even a response to French rule but a continuation of it. Unlike the 1801 Constitution, however, all these rights were then inflected and limited by a language of "white" and "black." Articles 12, 13, and 14 of the Constitution's "Prefatory Declaration" stated:

Article 12. No white person, of whatever nationality, shall set foot on this territory with the title of master or proprietor nor, in the future, acquire property here.

Article 13. The preceding article shall not have any effect on white women who have been naturalized by the government, nor on their present or future children. Included in the present article are the Germans and Poles who have been naturalized by the Government.

Article 14. All distinctions of color will by necessity disappear among the children of one and the same family where the Head of State is the father; Haitians shall be known from now on by the generic denomination of blacks.<sup>98</sup>

Thus, all these rights which had just been declared to be both universal and universally protected, were in fact defined to extend only to black citizens. Each article must be considered in turn, and then together.

Article 12, in isolation, embodied the same reactionary stance to whiteness as the Haitian Declaration of Independence. But this article had two more important effects: one practical and one rhetorical. On a practical level, this was necessary to change the

structure of slavery. Because the 1801 Constitution contained no limitation on property, the *grands blancs* who had previously owned Saint Domingue's plantations were able to return and assert their constitutional right to the land they had previously owned. Article 12, in addition to claiming much land and many resources for the economically strained Haitian government, prevented former white planters from making such claims.

On a rhetorical level, this made explicit the synecdoche of "the people" and the faux-universality of French rights. The French, the United States, and Haitian Constitutions all open with expressions of universal rights. But in France and the United States, the "universal" in fact excluded black persons, who were not counted among general humanity and were instead considered as property. To be black was to be property, to be white was to be human. Thus "universal" – those characteristics belonging to all humans – meant white.<sup>99</sup> Those with black skin were at best *black* humans, or junior partners in humanity, because they were marked off from the white norm by their skin.<sup>100</sup> In both the United States and France, the universality of rights stretched only as far as the edge of whiteness.<sup>101</sup> Universality in the 1805 Constitution was equally a faux-universality, but it was explicitly so. As soon as rights were granted, asserted as absolute and applying to all equally, they were revoked for some. Equality was "indisputably recognized,"<sup>102</sup> unless the subject of the law is white. Property was sacred, unless the property-owner was white. The Constitution asserted universality, then in a stroke excluded whiteness from the universal as blackness had been excluded. Thus, all three deployed the synecdoche in which "the people" only referred to some people (as Burke explains above, this is a necessary feature of Modernity's universalism), but this was

explicit in the Haitian Constitution in contrast to being implicit in the United States and French Constitutions.

The next article, 13, inflected how we should understand “white” in the previous article. Article 12 was explicit: “no white person, of whatever nationality” was included. It allowed no exceptions. Article 13 said two nationalities – “Germans and Poles who have been naturalized by the Government” – as well as white women and their children, were exceptions. The exclusion of white people therefore did not extend to all individuals traditionally understood as “white.” This was made further explicit in Article 12 of the “General Dispositions”: “All property that formerly belonged to a white Frenchman is incontestably and by law confiscated for the benefit of the state.” At the very least, there were internal differentiations within phenotypical white people, where Frenchmen were absolutely excluded, but French women and those of other nationalities may be included. This also makes sense in terms of the 1804 genocide of (phenotypical) white individuals and the earlier genocide, which largely targeted white people but in fact targeted all those on the side of France. In these exterminations, some white-skinned individuals were allowed to live, while some darker-skinned individuals were killed. The first slaughter demonstrated the key distinction was not white skin, but those who enacted and supported colonization. Under this understanding, “white” referred even to those with black skin who supported the French colonial project.

Article 14 also served both practical and rhetorical functions. Practically, it attempted to address the antagonism between black and mulatto subjects in Haiti – who were still largely divided as they had been in Saint Domingue.<sup>103</sup> If they were all, without distinction, black, then such antagonism was meaningless (though a legal assertion that

there is no social divide has little effect). Rhetorically, it defined citizenship not in terms of Haitian identity but in terms of blackness. But “black” meant something fundamentally different than colonial designations when spoken by Haitian lips.

“Black,” used as a racial category, is an ideological fiction created to produce compliant workers. The slave trade had picked Ibos, Aradas, Mandingas, Yorubas, Achantis, Hausas, and more from Africa, with little biological unity and no united ethnic identity, and in Saint Domingue these were all added to the native Creole under the umbrella term “black.” “Black” as an identity had no meaning prior to chattel slavery, it was only invented as a phenotypal category to single out a group for exploitation and classify/distinguish slaves, fungible pieces of property.<sup>104</sup> As Frank Wilderson expresses it, “Africans went into the [slave] ships and came out as black.”<sup>105</sup> Althusser writes “All ideological State apparatuses, whatever they are, contribute to the same result: the reproduction of the relations of production.”<sup>106</sup> And reproducing colonial production required the reproduction of an internally colonized group. This was most clear in the *Code Noir* (Black Code), a system of rules established by the French King Louis XIV in 1685 to preserve the relations of production by making slavery more efficient and profitable – by perfecting slavery.<sup>107</sup> This worked primarily by creating a people that were (interpellated as) slaves.<sup>108</sup> The success of plantation culture required not just isolating black individuals as a distinct group, but that black individuals be trained to act as slaves – that they be perfected *as* slaves.

Modernity and Republicanism maintained the interpellation of black individuals as inferior. And because it remained silent on race and the Modern definition of “the people,” L’Ouverture’s extension of Republicanism did nothing to challenge the ideology

which allowed the subordination of black persons. Inimically, it drew upon a system which defined black people as inherently inferior such that they could only ever achieve the status of second-class citizens.<sup>109</sup> While it presumed black individuals were a part of “the people” it spoke to, and hence extended rights to them, it is important to note the *Code Noir* also granted unprecedented rights to slaves – the right to sue for maltreatment, a six-day work week, a right to sufficient food and shelter, and more.<sup>110</sup> This extension of rights was part and parcel of the ideological recruitment which Althusser says continues the system of production, because laying claim to those rights is accepting “Yes, it really is me!” being hailed (as black/slave/property/sub-human). And this ideological recruitment was into a French Republican system which, in its reticence to discuss race, interpellated subjects as “citizens” rather than “blacks” but did not change the abstract nature of the identity “citizen” which made it by default white. The effects of this could be seen in the 1801 Constitution’s continuation of slavery under a new name, ensuring any reforms were only a further perfection of slavery in line with the *Code Noir*.

The inclusion of “black” appears to be more in line with the logic of the *Code Noir* – a system of laws specific to black subjects, which addresses “blacks” rather than “citizens.” Yet Dessalines articulated a “new black” which rendered the *Code Noir* inoperative.<sup>111</sup> Jean Casimir states,

The success of plantation depended on getting the captives to behave like ‘Negroes’ – that is, like people born to be slaves. The unforeseen consequences of this achievement was that to protect themselves and to survive, prisoners formed themselves into a new community unrelated to the legal fiction outlined by Louis XIV.<sup>112</sup>

Put otherwise, L'Ouverture, in line with Enlightenment liberalism, attempted to extend Republican rights to integrate black people into a system without distinctions of color. In contrast, Dessalines tried to activate this "new community" through its blackness.

This action was necessary to contest the existing understanding of blackness. The people of Haiti had already been interpolated as black. They were already labeled. And, as mentioned above, to merely ignore this label or wish it away through legislative fiat would be impossible. Their only option was to renegotiate that label. As Gulick explains, "Merely changing or erasing the descriptive language of race and skin color cannot erase its potency; this Constitution methodically exposes the political constructedness of these concepts in order to then pull them apart and dissolve their efficacy."<sup>113</sup> Remaining silent on race would only reproduce the racial problems of the United States and French Constitutions. Denying the name "black" would, at best, allow white supremacist ideology to continue unchallenged, as in L'Ouverture's government where black subjects held governmental office but little changed about Haitian society. Only this pulling apart of the meaning of "black" had any transformative potential.<sup>114</sup>

The use of "black" in Articles 12, 13, and 14 reconceptualized it as a legal – rather than racial, ethnic, or biological – category. Blackness was included as a legal fiction. All citizens of Haiti, a group which included more than 100 different ethnicities and even select white individuals enumerated in Article 13, were described as black solely on the basis of their citizenship. All distinctions between *creole* (native Haitian) and *congo* (a generic term for African), *affranchise* and *nouvelle libres*, black and mulatto, even white and black, were effaced, made secondary to the question of citizenship. Any citizen, even one with white skin, was "black." This represented a

radical break from any extant racial or phenotypal system and frustrated biological notions of racism. “Black” could not signify biological inferiority if it didn’t already signify a biological trait or shared ancestry.<sup>115</sup>

The meaning of “white” was similarly rescripted. In colonial Saint Domingue, the French term “*les blancs*” most closely meant rulers and indistinguishably referred to either French or white.<sup>116</sup> These meanings were all tied up with skin color, but also lent themselves to appropriation. The progression of Articles 12, 13, and 14 meant many with white skin were “black” and exempt from the restrictions on “white persons.” “White,” therefore, did not refer to phenotype or light skin, but should instead be read as referring to “oppressors” or those who had enacted colonial violence. Later constitutions support such a reading. Haiti’s later constitutions maintain the prohibition on ownership by non-black groups, but starting in 1867 they name those groups as “foreigners” rather than “whites.”<sup>117</sup> Even in modern Haiti, “white” is used to refer to foreigners, including many immigrants with a dark complexion.<sup>118</sup>

We should read “white” and “black” in this context as meaning “oppressor” and “oppressed.” All the people of Haiti – black, mulatto, *affranchise*, *nouvelle libres*, indigenous, and even Germans, Poles, and some white women – had experienced violence at the hands of the French. All had been *made* black under the colonial definition by which blackness equated to dereliction. This shared experience of oppression allowed for a sense of shared identity and shared participation in a black Haitian narrative, despite internal color distinctions.<sup>119</sup> Doris L. Garraway says this replaces references to race, phenotype, or even origin, with “an unconditional resistance to slavery, colonialism, and white supremacy.”<sup>120</sup>

Synecdoche is inevitable under Modernity, but by making it explicit the 1805 Constitution paradoxically disarmed it. As described by Burke, every political universal is necessarily a synecdoche. It is at best a faux-universality formed by abstracting from one particular group. Garraway argues this is what allowed the French Revolution's "universal rights" to actually "impose uniformity, legitimate oppression, [and] mask inequality."<sup>121</sup> "Man" or "citizen" in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen were synecdochal expansions of white men and white citizens. But Haiti's constitutional universals did not authorize uniformity, oppression, and inequality in this way. Because it made the synecdoche explicit, it "may be read as paradoxical in the truest sense of the term. That is, together they evidence the profound antinomies of the discourse of universality itself."<sup>122</sup> Given that universality is always limited, the paramount question is where the border of the universal is located.<sup>123</sup> But the Constitution did not simply differ from France's and the United States' in drawing the border around blackness rather than whiteness. By explicitly citing "black" and "white" as legal fictions, Haiti was able to escape this system in which human-ness was defined by phenotype.

Despite Dessalines' genocides, this synecdoche was inherently more benign than the standard Modernist one. Rather than outright excluding whiteness, it expanded "the people" to make Modernity's faux-universality more porous. The European and colonial world, pervaded with Modernist ideology, always used "human," "the people," "universal," and so on, to signify "white." The 1805 Constitution could not exclude (phenotypical) white subjects from humanity even had it wanted to. In this broader ideological frame, white individuals were always already known to be human, only the humanity of non-white people was in question.<sup>124</sup> This was demonstrated in Article 36,



which guaranteed non-interference with foreign powers maintaining white supremacy and slavery, the respect shown to white traders (even those with slaves) at the height of the 1804 genocides, and the protection granted to white people who did not themselves engage in oppression. Thus, the inversion of this synecdoche (valuing black over white rather than white over black) did not, and likely could not, reduce white people to property or less-than-human as black people had been reduced. Instead, in the words of Sibylle Fischer: “it both asserts egalitarian and universal intuitions and puts them to a test by using the previously subordinated term of the opposition as the universal term.”<sup>125</sup> Blackness was excluded from Modernity and thus had to be synecdochalized to challenge Modernity’s construction of the whole.<sup>126</sup> We can understand why this better approximates universality through the following reasoning, at play in the Constitution’s opening articles: All black individuals have the right to property; all citizens are black; therefore, all citizens have a right to property. Through shared blackness, all these concepts were expanded toward true universality, conditioned only by legality rather than race, ethnicity, or phenotype.

This redefinition frustrated any hierarchal racial logic. Racial hierarchy requires a logic of exclusivity – if one is black, one is not white; if one is white, one is not black. If individuals could be both white and black, it would be possible that some white individuals stood above black individuals and some black individuals stood above white individuals. This would undermine a system which attempted to assert dominance on the basis of race alone. Furthermore, if white signifies humanity and black signifies non-human property, then there can be no overlap or middle. Non-human must, by definition, lie outside the human. And property is, by definition, non-human. Ideologically speaking,

there can be no median group which is both human and non-human. But under Articles 12, 13, and 14, citizens could be phenotypically white and yet defined as black. Even in the language of the Constitution, individuals could be simultaneously “white” and “black.” This is demonstrated by the progression of Articles 12, 13, and 14. Article 14 on face appeared to render Article 13 superfluous. If someone (such as a German, Pole, or white woman) was a Haitian, they were by definition black, and so should have been exempted from Article 12 restrictions on “whites.” But under this resignified meaning of black, being black did not preclude being white and vice versa. Thus, the Constitution was a repudiation of any hierarchal racial logic. Only those who engaged in colonization were excluded.

This was a definition of a black nation rather than a black race. According to Benedict Anderson, “the nation was conceived in language, not in blood, and one could be ‘invited into’ the imagined community.”<sup>127</sup> In contrast, “racism dreams of eternal contaminations, transmitted from the origins of time through an endless sequence of loathsome copulations: outside history.”<sup>128</sup> If one had a single drop of black blood, one was contaminated to white supremacist society. But if blackness had no biological referent, it was inherently shifted from the racial register to a historical register. It was instantly robbed of its taint and its destiny. Those Germans, Poles, and white wives were not “black” due to some eternal contamination, but a historical, individual choice to ally with/marry one side/person rather than another. Racism is exclusive; nationality is inclusive – it allows for this inviting in through naturalization, and many white individuals were invited in. To return to Burke’s distinction between synecdoche and metonymy: under metonymy we have a simple statistical measurement of a population.

The population is black if, statistically, its population is overwhelmingly black. Under synecdoche, blackness is an attribute which is expanded from a smaller group to “the people” as a whole. So the black nation need not be composed of purely black individuals and need not exclude white individuals. Rather, blackness is a feature added to members after their acceptance into the community, regardless of their biological traits or genetic inheritance.

To the extent rhetoric is a mirror of its social milieu, this anti-racist argument should give us pause. The 1805 Constitution, after all, followed just months after a massacre of 30,000 white people. Under Burke’s schema, war is the “constitutive anecdote” of the 1805 Constitution.<sup>129</sup> In the 1805 Constitution, war delineated a break from the past and gave substance to the injunction against slavery. But while Burke identifies this “war” metaphor as problematic, he says it is productive as well. As Burke puts it: “[W]ar draws things to a head as thoroughly as a suppurating abscess, and is usually, like revolution, the dramatic moment of explosion after an infinity of minute preparatory charges. Being a crisis, it helps criticism.”<sup>130</sup> Given the massively oppressive culture of Saint Domingue, crisis and criticism were desperately needed. So, from a rhetorical standpoint, we must recognize its success not just in creating a counter-identification with blackness, but as effectuating criticism of ideological racism.

### *Family*

The synecdochal inversion was further fleshed out through a related metaphoric comparison between the nation and a family. As Burke explains it, the function of metaphor is to play on perspective, it “brings out the thisness of a that.”<sup>131</sup> This metaphoric equivalence brings in ideas of familial obligation, of belonging, of

submission to patriarchal authority. All serve to strengthen the synecdochal construction of “the people” and the obligation of individual citizens to the people. It further invites identification with that synecdoche.

The 1805 Constitution established a strong paternalistic relationship. In the preamble of the 1805 Constitution, black people were first cast as the “disowned children” of creation. They had been ignored by Modernity, ignored by civilization, dispossessed of their homeland in Africa, exploited by European colonial powers, and so on. This placed the citizenry in an abject position, as children adrift without protectors, which was reinforced throughout the remainder of the preamble. It eschewed the United States Constitution’s “we the people,” instead listing the thirteen authors who are “Acting in [the name of] the people of Haiti.”<sup>132</sup> This meant “the people” were not drafting the laws for themselves, they were not asserting their own rights. Instead, they need “we,” the signers, taking up a paternal position to deliver them liberty and independence.<sup>133</sup> This suggested a protector relationship between the rulers – those thirteen signatories – and ruled – the people of Haiti. Those signers were expressing “our hearts and ... the general will of our fellow citizens,” further inserting a disconnect between themselves and the actual citizens of Haiti.<sup>134</sup> They expressed their own “heart” but the people’s “general will.” And the expression of their “heart” was synonymous with “the general will.” They were distinct from the people, yet their own beliefs were innately an expression of the people. This was perhaps the most problematic aspect of the Constitution, and inculcated a paternalistic strain of governance which we can see even today.<sup>135</sup>

Continuing this paternalistic strain, the nation was defined as a family with the head of state as father.<sup>136</sup> The head of state was constructed as the benevolent protector, guiding the people of Haiti (children) through the colonial wilderness to salvation. Dessalines' authority was total, and (according to this logic) justly so. He was "His majesty the Emperor Jacques Dessalines, our liberator," "Emperor and Commander in Chief of the armed forces ... avenger and liberator of his fellow citizens," whose power was "sacred and inviolable."<sup>137</sup> As father, he was owed this much. Dessalines was the father and Haiti the mother(land), and both had struggled and spilled much blood to protect and raise their children. The children had to pay back to the nation this succor. And, they were to do so through the perfection of slavery mentioned above – through agricultural labor, compelled if not freely chosen.

The construction of nation as family independently carried communal implications. Within a family boons and hardships are shared. Through Haiti's struggles, the nation-as-family was characterized by shared sacrifices. The people had to sacrifice to serve the state, and therefore the nation. The individual Haitian was subservient to the nation, as during the pre-revolution period they were subservient to their white masters, but now their subservience was posited as just and owed to the collective. And that collective was under the paternal authority of the "sacred and inviolable" Emperor who was its liberator.

More textual traces of this family metaphor run throughout the 1805 Constitution. Haitian citizens were "brothers to each other."<sup>138</sup> To be deserving of citizenship, one had to be a "good father, a good son, [and] a good husband."<sup>139</sup> Parents could not disinherit their children (as the Haitian people – those "disowned children" – had been disinherited

by creation).<sup>140</sup> Citizens were under the protection of “the magistrates, the fathers and mothers of families, the citizens, and the armed forces.”<sup>141</sup> Explicit provisions were made for marriage, divorce, and children born out of wedlock.<sup>142</sup> And citizens’ equality, liberty, and independence derived from their brotherhood.<sup>143</sup> This all served to recast the freedoms and liberties described in the mode of communal duties.

This strengthened the interpellation into the synecdoche, into “the people.” To the extent the familial metaphor recruited the identification of citizens, the nation came to stand alongside the family as a natural and unquestioned part of its subjects’ identity. And from this arose a love of and obedience toward the nation in the mode of familial love.<sup>144</sup> With this we see a move from exploitation from slave-owners to exploitation by the state itself.<sup>145</sup> This explains the shift from traditional slavery, under the 1801 Constitution, to compulsory labor for the state under the 1805 Constitution. This patriarchal and familial mode also carried over into strong gendered and sexist connotations, but that falls outside the scope of this thesis.<sup>146</sup>

Read together with Article 13, this further strengthened the synecdoche of blackness and frustrated racial logics. Article 13 granted citizenship to white women and their children (but not white men excepting Germans and Poles). In practice, this covered those women who had intermarried with (phenotypically) black Haitians. In this sense, we can read the familial trope as an affirmation of racial hybridity and of miscegenation, bolstering the inclusiveness of the definition “black.” There was already a large mulatto population in 1805 and some intermarriage between white and black. Article 13 said, if the Haitian people were a black family, all members of that family were welcome, including mulatto people and intermarried white people.<sup>147</sup> Whiteness could be forgiven

in the mother of a Haitian child, the wife of a Haitian man, or the child of a white parent.<sup>148</sup> By interpreting “black” through a familial lens, the borders of blackness were made even more porous and open to the inclusion of white Haitians. To assert that all Haitians were a family meant all, even those who were white, were equal in their blackness.

The familial metaphor was also an explicit part of the synecdoche in Article 14. The justification offered in Article 14 was “All distinctions of color will by necessity disappear among the children of one and the same family where the Head of State is the father.” This links up the idea of universal blackness with familiarity, and citations of this “new black” were explicitly also citations of universal black family-hood. That is, all black Haitians were joined in a family under the same logic compelling Haitian nationalism, constructing a sense of black nationalism. If all black Haitians were part of one family, then they were interrelated and depend upon each other. Black Haitians should concern themselves with their entire black family.

European Modernist understandings of the family were inverted in this construction. While language of the state as a family was hardly unique to Haiti, it had unique implications for the black, post-colonial state. Like “black,” “emperor,” and the other terms discussed, the term “family” meant something different when spoken by Haitian mouths. Arising from a state of slavery, in which marriage was strongly discouraged among slaves and husbands, wives, or children could be freely sold off, marriage and family life was in a sorry state in early Haiti. Marriage was uncommon and not much valued. The majority of children were born out of wedlock.<sup>149</sup> Multiple articles of the Constitution promoted marriage.<sup>150</sup> But some also encouraged family life outside

of marriage, for example by reversing French restrictions on inheritance to children born to unwed parents.<sup>151</sup> In contrast, according to this Constitution, “Fathers and mothers cannot disinherit their children.”<sup>152</sup> And the Constitution required laws be passed governing inheritance and treatment of children outside marriage.<sup>153</sup> Under the standards of French Catholic law such children were illegitimate; the Constitution reversed this devaluation. According to James Leyburn, “Dessalines argues that the revolution had legitimized all Haitians ... since all Haitians had come out of slavery and degradation into freedom no new inequalities should be instituted.”<sup>154</sup> We can thus read this familial language as another response to the deprivation by colonial rule, specifically the break-up of family life through the slave trade. Although French standards of family were not met, the Constitution set about to refashion the family for the affirmation of Haitian kinship. It emphasized the legitimacy of Haitian families, even though they fell short of the Eurocentric standards. If black people were “disowned children,” as the Constitution’s preamble stated, this reconceptualized notion of family offered them a rightful place within a national black family.

The conclusion of the Constitution stated that Haiti lay under the protection of “the magistrates, the fathers and mothers of families, the citizens, and the armed forces.”<sup>155</sup> Family was placed equal to the law, to citizenship, and to the military as a founding institution of Haiti. During this year, Haiti often fell short of this ideal. Most notably, Dessalines attempted to organize a genocide of the mulatto population in 1806 (and was assassinated because of it).<sup>156</sup> Yet the substantive equality of white people remaining in Haiti spoke volumes. In many ways, Haiti *did* treat itself as a family, in ways both laudable and oppressive, but in ways that can serve as a productive model.



## *Conclusion*

The 1805 Constitution offers the first and best example of synecdochal inversion. Haiti was caught between two self-defeating possibilities. On the one-hand, the Constitution could reject all of Republicanism and Modernity with a more simple inversion. This was the stance of the earliest efforts to affirm Haitians as *indigène*, or to altogether efface the “French name.” This would lock them into the stance of Burke’s parrier – frozen forever trying to parry a blow that is no longer coming, unable to move forward or to find their own, unique, identity. Burke suggests we would have to reconceptualize the statue to make it meaningful. We would remove it from that original context and instead make it non-specific.<sup>157</sup> On the other hand, Haiti could embrace Modernity, appealing to universality in the mode of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen or the US Constitution. This is the stance of the 1801 Constitution. It asserted the formal equality of all people but covered over more fundamental inequalities in social standing, resources, education, and so on carried forward through ideology and historical inequalities. It would negate a colonial past, but allow the colonial features of the past to continue to define Haiti, so white supremacy and even slavery could continue unabated.

In any post-colonial context, either of these options will define an independent people wholly in terms of the past. They are either ex-slaves, defined in contradistinction to slave status, or they allow the deprivations of slavery to continue on unabated. Deborah Jenson finds these two stances endemic in black Atlantic texts.<sup>158</sup> They define their subjects entirely in terms of a past state of slavery – as ex-slaves, but still defined by a racial logic and never fully human beings. On such a basis, the law can be abolitionist in content – it can grant rights or abolish slavery – but never in form – never upsetting the

fundamental inequality defining the nation.<sup>159</sup> Yet this formal, abolitionist, approach is exactly that which most post-colonial states take.<sup>160</sup>

Instead, what was necessary, and what the ideals of blackness and family affirmed, was the synecdochal inversion by which that ideological frame could be reinterpreted in an affirmative way. There are two related concepts which make this synecdochal inversion not only rhetorically powerful, but also necessary to Haiti's claim to equality. First, Jacqueline Bacon demonstrates rights, freedom, and equality cannot simply be granted to black subjects by a group of elite white saviors – as was the predominant form of rights offered to black populations during the Age of Revolution. This would maintain a racist model in which white people are superior, but extend rights as benevolent protectors of black people. It is, in fact, one of the dominant justifications for slavery – that black people are too primitive to care for themselves, and so require the aid and protection of white masters. Bacon identifies this logic with the American Colonization Society, which attempted to “help” freed black individuals in the United States by offering residence in Liberia or Haiti. As mentioned above, those same efforts were pursued by the political elite of Haiti (and some black leaders in the United States), but when white Americans imagined rights based on benevolence and aid – rather than the humanity of black people – those rights could be (and often were) repealed the moment the elites thought black subjects were exercising their rights poorly. Bacon says, to be meaningful, black individuals must claim rights and create those rights for themselves, as the embodiment and inheritors of Modernity.<sup>161</sup>

Second, Jacques Rancière explains that any group that emerges and lays claim to rights will always be external to “the people.” They are “the part of those who have no

part,” who are theoretically included in “all” or “men” or “people” but in fact have no part in the whole, in the sense that they do not possess an identity that is included in the whole (adult white propertied male, adult white male, adult white female, or other such identities).<sup>162</sup> Their only recourse is to lay claim to humanity as such. They must present their own emancipation as equivalent to the emancipation of all, or their continued slavery as the enslavement of all.<sup>163</sup> Thus, the only path to meaningful rights for Haitians was by granting rights to “the people” *qua* blackness.

This chapter argues that synecdochal inversion is precisely what the 1805 Constitution sets out to construct, and explains why that document became radically anti-colonial in a way that earlier Haitian and Saint Domingue documents failed to do. Rather than remove the institution of slavery or repel France, it affirmed blackness. For Dessalines, slavery was the “sacrifice” of the Haitian people to the “idol” of French prejudice. Liberation from that sacrifice thus entailed more than the dissolution of slavery; it required the ruination of the entire system of colonial prejudice. Dessalines even claimed liberation would be empty if it came at the hands of Haiti’s colonial rulers; this would only reinscribe the inequity of racial discrimination in new clothes.<sup>164</sup> Dessalines would only accept liberation as it came from and affirmed the colonized people. It is meaningless to declare black freedom if black people are not *acting* freely – that is, working toward liberation themselves as a free and equal agent of the political sphere.<sup>165</sup> Dessalines was not interested in the abolition of slavery as a prior demand (which may in part be why he allowed a problematic system of functional slavery which simply replaced white masters with black masters), but with the assertion by black subjects of their freedom, equality, and subjectivity.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Alex Dupuy, "Class, Race, and Nation: Unresolved Contradictions of the Saint-Domingue Revolution," *Journal of Haitian Studies* 10.1 (Spring 2004): 8.

<sup>2</sup> Dupuy, "Class, Race, and Nation," 8.

<sup>3</sup> Dupuy, "Class, Race, and Nation," 9.

<sup>4</sup> John Connor, *Children of Guinea Voodoo: The 1793 Haitian Revolution and After* (London: Green Anarchist Books, 2003), 15.

<sup>5</sup> This racial schema was recorded by historian Moreau de Saint-Méry in the 1780s, but probably long predated that time. At the ends of the scale stood pure-blooded Europeans and Africans. In between were nine categories of mulatto, differentiated by counting their number of white and black ancestors up to eight generations back to produce 128 "parts" of whiteness/blackness. A *quarteron*, for example, had between 71 and 96 white "parts" and between 32 and 57 black "parts." John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 158-159.

<sup>6</sup> Dupuy, "Class, Race, and Nation," 10.

<sup>7</sup> Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Culture of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 8.

<sup>8</sup> Connor, *Children of Guinea Voodoo*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> C. L. R. James. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 82-84.

<sup>10</sup> James, *The Black Jacobins*, 84.

<sup>11</sup> "Maroon" refers to former slaves who had fled slavery to establish independent outlaw communities in the sparsely populated areas of Hispaniola.

<sup>12</sup> James, *The Black Jacobins*, 87-88.

<sup>13</sup> James, *The Black Jacobins*, 89-90.

<sup>14</sup> Robin Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Democratic Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63 (2006): 646.

<sup>15</sup> Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Democratic Revolution," 655-656.

<sup>16</sup> Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Democratic Revolution," 656.

<sup>17</sup> David P. Geggus *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 2001): 8.

<sup>18</sup> Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Democratic Revolution," 646.

<sup>19</sup> Susan Buck-Morss, "Hegel and Haiti," *Critical Inquiry* 26 (2000): 828.

<sup>20</sup> Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Democratic Revolution," 647.

<sup>21</sup> Citations of the 1801 Constitution will come from: Toussaint Louverture, "From *Constitution of the French Colony of Saint Domingue*," *Slave Revolt in the Caribbean 1789-1804: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Laurent Dubois and John D. Garrus (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 167-170.

<sup>22</sup> Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Democratic Revolution," 647.

<sup>23</sup> Constitution of the French Colony of Saint-Domingue, tit. 1, art. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Dupuy, "Class, Race, and Nation," 13.

<sup>25</sup> Constitution of the French Colony of Saint-Domingue, tit. 2, art. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Yves B  not, *La R  volution Fran  aise et la Fin des Colonies* (Paris: Editions La D  couverte, 1988), 190.

<sup>27</sup> Constitution of the French Colony of Saint-Domingue, tit. 2, art. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 229.

<sup>29</sup> Leyburn, *The Haitian People*, 34.

<sup>30</sup> Girard, "Caribbean Genocide," 142.

<sup>31</sup> Leyburn, *The Haitian People*, 34.

<sup>32</sup> Philippe G. Girard, "The Haitian Revolution, History's New Frontier: State of the Scholarship and Archival Sources," *Slavery & Abolition* 34 (2013): 487.

<sup>33</sup> Constitution of the French Colony of Saint-Domingue, tit. 6, art. 14.

<sup>34</sup> Constitution of the French Colony of Saint-Domingue, tit. 6, art. 17.

<sup>35</sup> Constitution of the French Colony of Saint-Domingue, tit. 6, art. 15.

<sup>36</sup> Julia Gaffield, "Complexities of Imagining Haiti: A Study of National Constitutions 1801-1807," *Journal of Social History* 41.1 (Fall 2007): 86.

<sup>37</sup> Dupuy, "Class, Race, and Nation," 14.

<sup>38</sup> Constitution of the French Colony of Saint-Domingue, tit. 13, art. 73.

<sup>39</sup> Gaffield, "Complexities of Imagining Haiti," 87-88.

<sup>40</sup> Dupuy, "Class, Race, and Nation," 14.

<sup>41</sup> Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2004), 4.

<sup>42</sup> Constitution of the French Colony of Saint-Domingue, tit. 2, art. 4.

<sup>43</sup> Constitution of the French Colony of Saint-Domingue, tit. 2, art. 5.

<sup>44</sup> David Zarefsky, "Lyndon Johnson Redefines 'Equal Opportunity': The Beginning of Affirmative Action," *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980): 85-94.

<sup>45</sup> David P. Geggus, "Slavery, War, and Revolution in the Greater Caribbean," *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean* ed. David Barry Gaspar and David P. Geggus (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 22.

<sup>46</sup> James, *The Black Jacobins*, 355.

<sup>47</sup> James, *The Black Jacobins*, 359-361.

<sup>48</sup> James, *The Black Jacobins*, 362.

<sup>49</sup> Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Democratic Revolution," 669.

<sup>50</sup> Girard, "Jean-Jacques Dessalines and the Atlantic System," 555-556.

<sup>51</sup> Jean-Jacques Dessalines, *Dessalines to Pierre Quantin*, October 24, 1802, letter. Rochambeau Papers.

<sup>52</sup> Translated by and cited in: Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 202.

<sup>53</sup> "The Haitian Declaration of Independence, January 1, 1804," *Slave Revolt in the Caribbean 1789-1804: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Laurent Dubois and John D. Garrus (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): 190.

<sup>54</sup> "The Haitian Declaration of Independence," 189.

<sup>55</sup> "The Haitian Declaration of Independence," 189.

<sup>56</sup> "The Haitian Declaration of Independence," 190.

<sup>57</sup> "The Haitian Declaration of Independence," 191.

<sup>58</sup> Philippe G. Girard, "Caribbean Genocide: Racial War in Haiti 1802-1804," *Patterns of Prejudice* 39.2 (2005), 142.

<sup>59</sup> Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), 22.

<sup>60</sup> Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 22.

<sup>61</sup> Doris L. Garraway, "Empire of Freedom, Kingdom of Civilization: Henry Christophe, the Baron de Vastey, and the Paradoxes of Universalism in Postrevolutionary Haiti," *Small Axe* 16.3 (November 2012): 1.

<sup>62</sup> Garraway, "Empire of Freedom, Kingdom of Civilization," 2.

<sup>63</sup> Nadine Ehlers, *Racial Imperatives: Discipline, Performativity, and Struggles against Subjection* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), 34.

<sup>64</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 203.

<sup>65</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 202.

<sup>66</sup> "The Haitian Declaration of Independence," 189.

<sup>67</sup> Julia Gaffield, "Haiti and Jamaica in the Remaking of the Early Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 69 (2012): 605.

- <sup>68</sup> Girard, "Jean-Jacques Dessalines and the Atlantic System," 579.
- <sup>69</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 266-271.
- <sup>70</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, "General Dispositions," art. 21.
- <sup>71</sup> Girard, "Jan-Jacques Dessalines," 553-554.
- <sup>72</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, "Of the Government," art. 36.
- <sup>73</sup> Girard, "Jan-Jacques Dessalines," 553-554.
- <sup>74</sup> Gulick, "We Are Not the People," 801.
- <sup>75</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 240.
- <sup>76</sup> Girard, "Jan-Jacques Dessalines," 575-576.
- <sup>77</sup> Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (London: Routledge, 2004), 51.
- <sup>78</sup> Gaffield, "Complexities of Imagining Haiti," 86-87.
- <sup>79</sup> Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 365.
- <sup>80</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 195-199.
- <sup>81</sup> David Geggus, "The Naming of Haiti," *New West India Guide* 71 (1997): 51.
- <sup>82</sup> Geggus, "The Naming of Haiti," 51-52.
- <sup>83</sup> Geggus, "The Naming of Haiti," 51-52.
- <sup>84</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 242.
- <sup>85</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 242.
- <sup>86</sup> Geggus, "The Naming of Haiti," 48-49
- <sup>87</sup> J. David Harden, "A Casebook for Regicide," in *Symbols, Myths, and Images of the French Revolution*, ed. Jan Germani and Robin Swales (Regina, Saskatchewan: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1998): 173.
- <sup>88</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Writings* (Washington, DC: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1905), 373.
- <sup>89</sup> "Liberty or Death. Proclamation. Jean Jacques Dessalines," *Connecticut Herald* 12 June 1804: 2. Cited in: Julia Gaffield. "I have Avenged America." Haiti and the Atlantic World: Sources and Resources for Discussions about Haiti and Haiti History. < <http://haitidoi.com/2013/08/02/i-have-avenged-america/>>.
- <sup>90</sup> "Liberty or Death. Proclamation. Jean Jacques Dessalines."
- <sup>91</sup> "Liberty or Death. Proclamation. Jean Jacques Dessalines."

<sup>92</sup> See also the book collecting essays largely devoted to this topic: Doris L. Garraway, ed., *Tree of Liberty: Cultural Legacies of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2008).

<sup>93</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Preamble.”

<sup>94</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 231.

<sup>95</sup> Gary S. Shelby, “Mocking the Sacred: Frederick Douglass’s ‘Slaveholder Sermon’ and the Antebellum Debate over Religion and Slavery,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002): 326-341.

<sup>96</sup> Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 141.

<sup>97</sup> Religion: *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, art. 50, 51, 52; Fair Trial: *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, art. 5; Privacy: *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, art. 6; *Ex Post Facto* laws: *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, art. 5; Right to liberty: *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, art. 3; Rights to property: *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, art. 6.

<sup>98</sup> This exemption was due to many white Poles and Germans fighting for independence on the side of the “rebellious slaves” See David Nichols, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour, and National Independence in Haiti* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 3.

<sup>99</sup> Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

<sup>100</sup> Thomas K. Nakayama and Robert L. Krizek, “Whiteness: A Strategic Rhetoric,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 292-293.

<sup>101</sup> Franklin W. Knight. “The Haitian Revolution and the Notion of Human Rights.” *The Journal of the Historical Society* 3 (2005): 411.

<sup>102</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “General Dispositions,” art. 3.

<sup>103</sup> Carolyn Fick, “Emancipation in Haiti: From Plantation Labor to Peasant Proprietorship,” *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 21.2 (200): 22.

<sup>104</sup> Jean Casimir, “From Saint-Domingue to Haiti: To Live Again or to Live at Last!” *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, ed. David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), xiv.

<sup>105</sup> Frank B. Wilderson, III. *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 38.

<sup>106</sup> Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 154.

<sup>107</sup> Casimir, “From Saint-Domingue to Haiti,” xi.

<sup>108</sup> Casimir, “From Saint-Domingue to Haiti,” xiv.

<sup>109</sup> Casimir, “From Saint-Domingue to Haiti,” xiv.

<sup>110</sup> Philippe R. Girard, “Code Noir,” *Africa and the Americas: Culture, Politics, and History*, ed. Richard M. Juang and Noelle Morrisette (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 277-278.

<sup>111</sup> Casimir, “From Saint-Domingue to Haiti,” xv.



- <sup>112</sup> Casimir, "From Saint-Domingue to Haiti," xiv.
- <sup>113</sup> Anne W. Gulick, "We Are Not the People: The 1805 Haitian Constitution's Challenge to Political Legibility in the Age of Revolution," *American Literature* 78 (2006): 808.
- <sup>114</sup> Judith Butler, "Critically Queer," *GLQ* 1 (1993): 17-32.
- <sup>115</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 233.
- <sup>116</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 153.
- <sup>117</sup> Gaffield, "Complexities of Imagining Haiti," 89.
- <sup>118</sup> Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Democratic Revolution," 648.; Casimir, "From Saint-Domingue to Haiti," xv.
- <sup>119</sup> Gaffield, "Complexities of Imagining Haiti," 83.
- <sup>120</sup> Garraway, "Empire of Freedom, Kingdom of Civilization," 6.
- <sup>121</sup> Garraway, "Empire of Freedom, Kingdom of Civilization," 4.
- <sup>122</sup> Garraway, "Empire of Freedom, Kingdom of Civilization," 4.
- <sup>123</sup> Nick Nesbitt, "Alter-Rights: Haiti and the Singularization of Universal Human Rights," *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 12.1 (2009): 97.
- <sup>124</sup> Wilderson, *Red, White & Black*, 55.
- <sup>125</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 233.
- <sup>126</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular," *Postcolonial Studies* 8 (2005): 482.
- <sup>127</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 145.
- <sup>128</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 149.
- <sup>129</sup> Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 330.
- <sup>130</sup> Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 329.
- <sup>131</sup> Kenneth Burke, "Four Master Tropes," *The Kenyon Review* 3 (1941): 421.
- <sup>132</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, "Preamble."
- <sup>133</sup> Gulick, "We Are Not the People."
- <sup>134</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, "Preamble."
- <sup>135</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Haiti, State Against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990), 20-21.
- <sup>136</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, "Prefatory Declaration," art. 14.

<sup>137</sup> “His Majesty”: *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*. “Preamble.”; “Emperor and Commander”: *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Of the Government,” art. 20.; “Sacred and inviolable”: *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Of the Government,” art. 21.

<sup>138</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Prefatory Declaration,” art. 3.

<sup>139</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Prefatory Declaration,” art. 9.

<sup>140</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Prefatory Declaration,” art. 10.

<sup>141</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Of the Government,” art. 28.

<sup>142</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, art. 14, 15, 16.

<sup>143</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Prefatory Declaration,” art. 3.

<sup>144</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 143-144.

<sup>145</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 95.

<sup>146</sup> Anne Gulick has expertly addressed the gendered elements of the Constitution elsewhere. See Gulick, “We Are Not the People,” 809-811.

<sup>147</sup> Gulick, “We Are Not the People,” 808.

<sup>148</sup> Gulick, “We Are Not the People,” 809-810.

<sup>149</sup> Leyburn, *The Haitian People*, 181.

<sup>150</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “General Dispositions,” art. 14, 15.

<sup>151</sup> Leyburn, *The Haitian People*, 177-185.

<sup>152</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Prefatory Declaration,” art. 10.

<sup>153</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “General Dispositions,” art. 16.

<sup>154</sup> Leyburn, *The Haitian People*, 183.

<sup>155</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “General Dispositions,” art. 28.

<sup>156</sup> Girard, “Caribbean Genocide.”

<sup>157</sup> Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 365.

<sup>158</sup> Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, 23.

<sup>159</sup> Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, 1-42.

<sup>160</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 153-154.

<sup>161</sup> Jacqueline Bacon, “‘Acting As Freedom’: Rhetoric, Race, and Reform in the Debate over Colonization in *Freedom’s Journal*, 1827-1828,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93 (2007): 58-83.

<sup>162</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. Steven Cororan (London: Continuum International, 2010), 60.

<sup>163</sup> Rancière, *Dissensus*, 33-35.

<sup>164</sup> Dessalines, cited in Deborah Jenson, “Before Malcolm X, Dessalines: A ‘French’ Tradition of Black Atlantic Radicalism,” *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 10.3 (2007): 336.

<sup>165</sup> Bacon, “Acting as Freeman,” 76-78.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Versions of Synecdoche in the 1806 and 1807 Constitutions

Chapter Two described how Dessalines and the other drafters of the *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805* attempted to transform “the people” by identifying it as inherently black. But the nature of the construction “the people” means we cannot take such synecdochal assertions at face value. Spivak warns that previously oppressed groups often jump at identifying themselves as a “people” to detrimental ends: “Subaltern content takes on identity, names itself ‘people.’ ‘People’ becomes a slogan too quickly.”<sup>1</sup> The maintenance of plantation culture and forced labor under the 1805 Constitution demonstrated how “the people” was still used to compel obedience and restrict rights. And Sibylle Fischer devotes many pages to outlining the sexism enshrined by that construction of “the people.”<sup>2</sup>

Haiti’s Constitutions of 1806 and 1807 both drew directly from its 1805 Constitution and deployed similar synecdoches, but to two opposite ends. They therefore set the stage for a direct comparison of synecdochal strategies. The 1806 Constitution picked out only the Republican elements of the 1805 Constitution. It embraced Modernity and formed a black state that none-the-less deploys the synecdochal construction of “the people” as defined by the white supremacist ideology of Modernity. The 1807 Constitution rejected Modernity, and synecdochalized its black king rather than a black people. Neither strategy could challenge the essential synecdoche of Modernity. Instead, both engage in what Kenneth Burke and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak would term metonymy – a reduction to an empirical collective rather than a metaphysical relationship

of identity. As in Chapter Two, this chapter will describe the historical causes which produced the two simultaneous and opposed constitutions, the 1806 Constitution in depth, and finally the 1807 Constitution and its 1811 addendum.

### *The Split into Northern and Southern Haiti*

Just as Jean Jacques Dessalines had been a brutal military commander, he was an equally brutal ruler. Antoine Métral, in an 1825 history of France's re-invasion of Saint Domingue, said Dessalines was known to "stain his hands with the blood both of the blacks and the whites."<sup>3</sup> After Dessalines assumed rule in 1805, he planned a massacre of the mulatto population with his council of advisers – which was primarily composed of mulatto citizens.<sup>4</sup> His administration – including Alexandre Pétion and Henri Christophe – quickly began a conspiracy to overthrow him, and on October 17, 1806 Dessalines was killed. By some accounts, he was killed by his own troops, who then proclaimed "mort au tyran!" ("Death to the tyrant!")<sup>5</sup>

Dessalines had done much work to unite the country, but there remained a strong division between *nouvelle libres* and *affranchise*.<sup>6</sup> This antagonistic relationship had already been building before the start of the Haitian Revolution in 1791. In Saint Domingue, *affranchise* possessed some degree of freedom and enfranchisement, and so aligned with France. In the years between the French Revolution in 1789 and the Haitian Revolution in 1791, *affranchise* demanded France extend The Rights of Man and Citizen to all "free classes," a group excluding enslaved black individuals. Raymond Julien, a spokesperson for *affranchise* interests, offered that in exchange for greater *affranchise* rights, the *affranchise* of Saint Domingue would work with the white population to preserve slavery. He argued such an alliance would prevent an otherwise inevitable slave

uprising.<sup>7</sup> Many *affranchise* had even owned slaves, and fully one fourth of the slaves of Saint Domingue were the property of *affranchise*.<sup>8</sup> While the *affranchise* were sympathetic to the French, *nouvelle libres* were strongly opposed to France.<sup>9</sup> *Nouvelle libres* literally meant “newly freed,” and referred to those who were enslaved in colonial Saint Domingue and only freed in the Haitian Revolution. Where *affranchise* sought the extension of French rights to include non-white individuals, *nouvelle libres* bore the worst oppression under that system of rights, and were strongly opposed to any French influence. This began the troubled relationship between *affranchise* and *nouvelle libres*.

This division was starkly illustrated in the “War of Knives” in 1799-1800. Chapter Two discussed how the Haitian Revolution was not a war against France, but a war between two different approaches to Modernity. The War of Knives was an internal conflict between *affranchise* and *nouvelle libres*. André Rigaud, a mulatto *affranchise* general, had won significant victories in the south, and leveraged that success to claim leadership over France’s forces in Haiti. L’Ouverture was the then-commander of France’s troops in Saint Domingue, and struggled with Rigaud for dominance. Rigaud, representing *affranchise* interests, controlled most of the troops throughout southern Saint Domingue, while L’Ouverture, representing *nouvelle libres* interests, controlled most of the troops throughout northern Saint Domingue. The conflict only ended when the United States – hoping to end French influence in the Caribbean – secretly supplied, armed, and transported L’Ouverture’s troops.<sup>10</sup> In March 1800, L’Ouverture defeated Rigaud, who then fled to France many of his *affranchise* deputies.<sup>11</sup>

After the assassination of Dessalines, there was a power struggle between Alexandre Pétion and Henri Christophe that closely mirrored the War of Knives.<sup>12</sup>

Christophe was black and *nouvelle libres* and had served under L'Ouverture in the war of Knives, controlling North Saint Domingue.<sup>13</sup> Pétion was mulatto and *affranchise* and had served under Rigaud in the War of Knives, controlling South Saint Domingue.<sup>14</sup>

Christophe's sympathies lay with Dessalines. He was Dessalines' second in command, and both were anti-French. Pétion, in contrast, had chafed under Dessalines, and was closer to L'Ouverture in his Republican tendencies. Chilled by the experience of "Emperor" Dessalines, Pétion pushed to adopt a democratic-republican system of government. Christophe, in contrast, thought Dessalines' more autocratic system was desirable.<sup>15</sup>

That year Pétion wrote a new constitution closely modeled after the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen and the United States Constitution. In December 1806, this constitution was adopted by the Constituent Assembly of Haiti, and on December 28, 1806, Christophe was democratically elected president under Pétion's constitution. But Christophe found democracy too constricting, so he withdrew to northern Haiti and on February 17, 1807 declared a new Constitution. The Senate impeached Christophe on March 11, 1807, and elected Pétion to replace him.<sup>16</sup> Christophe refused to cede power. These two presidents – Pétion in the south and Christophe in the north – both laid claim to the entirety of Haiti. A brief civil war resulted, but in 1811 Pétion was reelected in southern Haiti, and Christophe gave up his claim to the Republic of Haiti in the south.<sup>17</sup>

The division into North and South Haiti reflected a pre-existing division between black and mulatto Haitians and between *nouvelle libres* and *affranchise*. *Nouvelle libres* were predominantly black and resided in the North, ruled by the *nouvelle libres* Christophe. *Affranchise* were predominantly mulatto and resided in the South, ruled by

the *affranchise* Pétion. So all three of these divisions – racial, social, and political – aligned. North Haiti (the State of Haiti, renamed the Kingdom of Haiti in 1811) had a black, *nouvelle libres*, anti-French population, while South Haiti (the Republic of Haiti) had a mulatto, *affranchise*, Republican population.<sup>18</sup>

### *The Republic of Haiti, Constitution of Haiti, 1806*

The *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, was drafted before the divide between the Republic of Haiti and the State of Haiti. But it was written almost entirely by Pétion, and strongly reflected the French Republican position that characterized *affranchise* Haitians. This Constitution fully embraced Republicanism, on par with L'Ouverture's 1801 Constitution. It used the 1805 Constitution as a model, but removed many elements from that Constitution which conflicted with French Modernity. While it retained elements of the 1805 synecdoche, its outright embrace of Modernity prevented it from having the same effect to frustrate Modernity's white supremacy. This section discusses the altered nature of synecdoche deployed in this document as compared to the 1805 Constitution and then elaborates on the Republicanism in the 1806 Constitution and the shortcomings it represented for post-colonial Haitians.

While some elements of the 1805 Constitution's synecdochal construction were included in 1806's, others were removed. The key element of that 1805 synecdoche was articles 12, 13, and 14. Article 12 restricted the rights previously declared due to all and inviolable and said some were not protected for white individuals living in Haiti. Article 13 exempted certain groups – Germans, Poles, women who had intermarried with Haitians, and those women's children, all regardless of skin color – from Article 12. In other words, some white people received equal rights and could claim full Haitian



citizenship. Article 14 declared that all Haitians, even white individuals, were by definition black – “All distinctions of color will by necessity disappear ... Haitians shall be known from now on by the generic denomination of blacks.” This engendered two primary effects: first, it created the “new black” category described in Chapter One, which was defined as a legal status rather than a phenotypical or racial category; second, it defined blackness as the norm, in opposition to the prevailing ideology in which whiteness was understood as the norm. That is, the subject of rights was a priori defined as black.

This change to the subject of rights was aided by a vagueness about the subject of rights in many preliminary articles in the 1805 Constitution. Under the 1805 Constitution, while rights were declared inviolable, the subject possessing those rights was largely undefined except in Articles 12, 13, and 14. For example, “equality in the eyes of the law is incontestably acknowledged[.]”<sup>19</sup> “Property is sacred, its violation shall be severely prosecuted.”<sup>20</sup> Rights were discussed in the abstract, and the only descriptions of the subject of rights, excepting references to “citizens,” were “all mankind are equal” before God and “The law is the same to all, whether it punishes, or whether it protects.”<sup>21</sup> Because the subject of rights was unstated, there was no tension when that subject was later defined to be “black.”

The same vagueness did not exist in the 1806 Constitution; its articles explicitly referred to all people. Article 3 stated: “The rights of the human society are freedom, equality, security, property.”<sup>22</sup> Hence, the subject of rights was any member of “human society.” Article 12 disavowed any synecdochal focus on a part of the population: “The sovereignty resides essentially in the universality of citizens; no individual, no part of

citizens meeting can assume sovereignty.”<sup>23</sup> That is, no one part of the citizenry could stand for the entire body of the people. In addition, there was no mention of “black” or “blackness” in the 1806 Constitution. Chapter Two discusses how any claim to universality will be partial. It can only ever refer to a part of the citizenry/people/universal. Hence, this appeal to “the universality of citizens” was a return to the normal framing of “the people” discussed by Burke, where it is imagined to be universal, so the synecdoche is maintained in fact but is covered over. This returned the 1806 Constitution to the same banal universalism of the United States Constitution or the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.

In two respects the 1806 Constitution maintained synecdochal logic. First, some elements of Articles 12, 13, and 14 of the 1805 Constitution were preserved in modified form. Second, the same appeals to the family existed. The first of these two was done in Articles 27 and 28:

Article 27. - No white, whatever his nationality, will set foot in that territory as a master or proprietor.

Article 28. - The following are recognized Haitians: whites that are part of the army, those who exercise civil functions and those admitted in the Republic at the publication of this Constitution.<sup>24</sup>

With slightly different wording, these mirrored the earlier Article 12 and 13. Article 27 almost exactly reproduced the 1805 Constitution’s Article 12. There were some meaningful differences between Article 28 and Article 13, but these two similarly overlap in most ways. Article 28 removed the emphasis on those white citizens who had intermarried with Haitians, so it was a step away from the familial frame of the 1805 document. It also removed mention of Germany and Poland, who were explicitly mentioned in 1805 due to Germany and Poland’s aid during the Haitian Revolution. In

terms of application of laws, though, because all white immigrants already admitted in 1806 were recognized as Haitians, all those individuals (who had chosen to live in Haiti) were protected. So in terms of application of the law, there was little change from 1805 to 1806.

Of these, the 1806 version of Article 27 was more powerful than 1805's Article 12. Chapter Two identifies both a practical and rhetorical effect of Article 12 of the 1805 Constitution. In practical terms, it ensured that *grands blancs* who had previously owned plantations in Saint Domingue could not return to Haiti and reclaim those lands. Article 27 accomplished the same practical purpose. The rhetorical purpose of Article 12 was to limit who was included in the universal. In this respect, because the Constitution of 1806 lacked the ambiguity regarding its subject the earlier constitution had, this article becomes even more biting. Property was "inviolable and sacred" as one of "the rights of human society."<sup>25</sup> While the 1805 Constitution only purported to define what a Haitian citizen or subject was, the 1806 Constitution was explicitly speaking to "human society" and excluded white individuals from full participation in human society.

This redefinition of humanity was particularly called for in the case of Haiti, where the population was often seen as literally non-human. Joanna Bourke writes of post-revolutionary Haiti:

[P]opular opinion in the West continued (and continues) to denigrate the Haitian face. The Haitian is defaced as contorted by some inexplicable voodoo mania, ravaged by poverty and (in recent decades) Aids [sic], and dehumanized by secret poisons that render the human nothing more than a zombie. These zombies retained a human physiology yet the evidence of their vacant faces showed that they had been stripped of any human 'essence' or soul.<sup>26</sup>

Bourke documents numerous representative cases of European and United States' accounts of Haiti from Haiti's early years (through today) in which the standard frame of

reference described Haitians as demons, zombies, or animals.<sup>27</sup> Just as Burke argues that the construction “the general will” or any political universal functions as a synecdoche, so does the broader ethical construction of “humanity” function as a synecdoche and depend upon the same ideological borders. Bourke continues: “Haitians were routinely excluded from humanity. ... They were creatures able to be endlessly exploited on the grounds they were nothing more (or less) than dogs. True humans did not owe them any ethics of care.”<sup>28</sup> This gets at the root of this construction of the human as an ideological justification for slavery. If Haitians are not human, then their brutal exploitation by Spain and France was not unethical.

But because the 1806 Constitution lacked the definition of “the people” as “black,” the ban on white ownership becomes reactive against whiteness rather than affirmative of blackness’ humanity. The practical effect remained the same – former planters could not re-assert their property rights from prior to 1804. But this restriction became frozen in time, with Haiti perpetually trying to ward off a danger – the return of white planters, many of whom had been killed in 1804 – that was no longer real. The rhetorical effect was similarly reactive. Without defining the people as “black” with the “new black” identity it produced, Article 27 only served to restrict white individuals. This was an inversion – the universals of the United States’ Constitution and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen only in fact extended to the borders of whiteness, and the rights of the 1806 Constitution only extended to the borders of whiteness, but with whiteness excluded rather than included. But there is no non-white identity being elevated above whiteness. Or, rather, the identity being elevated above whiteness was literally “non-whiteness.” The Constitution defined it only implicitly and

only in contra-distinction to whiteness. This meant it could not offer full humanity to black people, as was so solely needed in Haiti. It could only offer negation, like a real world manifestation of Friedrich Nietzsche's "slave revolt in morality."<sup>29</sup>

Article 28 similarly lagged behind the 1805 Constitution in some ways and exceeded it in others. Most notably, it removed the emphasis from the 1805 Constitution's Article 13 on Germans and Poles. Article 12 and 13 of the 1805 Constitution, when read together, created an interesting contradiction. Article 12 specified no white "of whatever nationality" would be fully included, then Article 13 said two nationalities – German and Polish – would, in fact, be included. This juxtaposition forced a rereading of the term "white" in non-phenotypical terms as described in Chapter Two. White had to be assumed to have two different meanings, one broader phenotypical meaning which did not require exclusion, and one narrower non-phenotypical meaning which demanded exclusion, such that some phenotypical white individuals may be included. But the contradiction was removed from Articles 27 and 28. Articles 12 and 13 illustrated not just that there were internal differentiations between white individuals, but that there were inherent distinctions between metaphysical categories of white populations, with white Frenchmen being most despised and Germans, Poles, and women having access to full inclusion. Article 28, rather than focusing on any inherent qualities of white populations such as sex or nationality, emphasized the actions of individuals. White individuals could earn inclusion through serving in the military or exercising civic functions. This mirrors the form of free black life throughout slave territories, where the dominant means to inclusion was through individual self-advancement – military service or economic success to claim some measure of rights for oneself, rather than

advancement of black people or slaves as a class. And this self-advancement extended up to black subjects buying black slaves to serve them.<sup>30</sup> This was true in Saint Domingue, and particularly so of the *affranchise* elite crafting the 1806 Constitution. Thus, article 28 cast white immigrants to Haiti in much the same mode as *affranchise* in Saint Domingue.

In this way, Article 28 exemplified Modernist logic, but deployed it to more productive ends. In Saint Domingue, *affranchise* advancement did little to challenge white supremacy. *Affranchise* achievement was seen as individual. At best, successful *affranchise* were seen as exceptional, the exception that proved the rule (the rule of general black mediocrity). But because the demand for individual achievement was placed on white people rather than black people, this could be understood in terms similar to “white privilege.”<sup>31</sup> White individuals – especially those living in a former slave colony – had benefitted from their skin color, and often retained some of those benefits relative to their black compatriots. Because white Haitians were structurally advantaged, they were obligated to pay back some of those advantages in the form of military service or civic duty to a black nation.<sup>32</sup> This was the demand made by Article 28.

Article 28 was a move toward Modernist equality, so it was ideologically facile, but for that same reason it was practically useful. Many have deployed “white privilege” within Modernity’s logic by appealing to abstract equality. Affirmative action, for example, is premised on correcting an inequality in the present to produce a future equality. This equality is often one where, having achieved it, racial equality and race itself become no longer salient political terms.<sup>33</sup> So race is only a temporary feature to be dealt with, overcome, and assimilated into Modernity. Practically speaking, however,

there was great inequality in early Haiti. So this reformist demand (like affirmative action more broadly) was a move toward equality, even if it rhetorically fed into whiteness.

In considering these two articles, we must also address the exclusion of Article 14 of the 1805 Constitution. This exclusion should be considered both in terms of its practical and rhetorical effects. Practically speaking, there was a huge degree of antagonism between black and mulatto people in Haiti which was only magnified by the split into North and South Haiti.<sup>34</sup> By declaring all Haitians “black,” with no internal differentiation, all Haitians were invited to overcome this antagonism. The legal elite of 1806, however, were from the privileged group (mulatto) in the racial split between black and mulatto. So, such attempts risked eroding their racial benefits, and Article 14 proved undesirable. The rhetorical effect of Article 14 was to make explicit the synecdoche of “black” for “people” or “the universal.” The removal of Article 14, despite the positive developments of Articles 27 and 28 discussed above, undermined that synecdochal inversion. It returned the 1806 Constitution in many ways to the ideology of color-blind Republicanism dominant throughout the Age of Revolutions, which will be described in depth below.

The other primary element in the synecdoche in the 1805 Constitution – the comparison of the nation to a family – was preserved much closer to its appearance in 1805, but like 1805’s Articles 12, 13, and 14 it was tempered in its later formulation to remove speed-bumps to the functioning of Republicanism. The nation-family comparison was a metaphor rather than synecdoche, defined by Burke as asserting an equivalence between two things, to view something from a different perspective and “[bring] out the thisness of a that.”<sup>35</sup> The metaphor of the nation as a family served to strengthen the

synecdoche operative in 1805 and 1806. Synecdoche, in both Spivak and Burke, cannot be reduced to a mere empirical collective (metonymy). Instead, it makes a metaphysical claim about the identity of the whole. This requires not just political affiliation, but also identification and a sense of belonging. The familial metaphor thus played a key role in both constitutions' synecdoches.

Many of the most stark examples of this metaphor were preserved almost exactly. Article 9 of the 1805 Constitution said "No person is worthy of being a Haitian who is not a good father, good son, a good husband, and especially a good soldier."<sup>36</sup> Article 18 of the 1806 Constitution stated: "No one is a good citizen unless he is a good son, a good father, a good brother, a good friend, and a good husband."<sup>37</sup> Also preserved was the stress placed on marriage and promoting family life and its centrality to the nation. Article 38 stated: "Marriage, by its civic and religious institution to purity of morals, those spouses who practice the virtues required by their condition shall always be distinguished and especially protected by the government."<sup>38</sup> Article 39 stated: "The rights of children born outside marriage shall be determined by the laws, which will tend to expand the social virtues, encourage and cement the bonds of families."<sup>39</sup> The law was to ensure the protection of marriage, the family, and familial roles and duties.

The element of communalism and familial obligation survived into the 1806 Constitution, complete with its justifications for continuing forced labor. Like the 1805 Constitution's emphasis on agriculture, Article 22 asserted: "All productions, all means of labor and all social order is based on the maintenance of the properties through land cultivation."<sup>40</sup> Then, Article 17 said "Everyone's obligations to society are to defend it, to serve, to live subject to the laws and to respect those who are its organs."<sup>41</sup> Article 23



said: “Every citizen owes his services to the country and the maintenance of freedom, equality and property every time the law calls him to defend them.”<sup>42</sup> And Article 34 suspended citizenship for any debtor or one who declares bankruptcy. These all reflected the constitutional provisions from 1805 used to justify forced labor. And indeed, forced labor was continued under the Republic of Haiti, though it was less widespread and workers were treated less poorly.<sup>43</sup>

The familial metaphors removed were those that grated on Republicanism. Where most Modernist constitutional documents spoke from the voice of “we the people,” the 1805 Constitution instead described the Haitian people as the “disowned children” of creation, and the drafters of the Constitution as acting in their name and for their benefit, rather than directly representing them.<sup>44</sup> The Haitian people were later called “the children of one and the same family where the Head of State is the father,” and many words were spent praising Dessalines as a benevolent autocrat.<sup>45</sup> These references were all removed from the 1806 Constitution, again bringing it more in line with Republicanism, which, as inherited from the French Revolution, was opposed to the fatherly rule of a benevolent despot, preferring more representative government.

In these respects, the 1806 Constitution maintained the synecdochal inversion from the earlier Constitution, but tempered them with Republicanism. Like the 1801 and 1805 Constitutions, the Constitution of 1806 began with the declaration: “There can be no slaves in the territory of the Republic; Slavery is forever abolished.”<sup>46</sup> Excepting this article, which at the time was unique to Haiti’s Constitutions, the 1806 Constitution limned the United States’ and French Constitutions even more closely than the 1801

Constitution. This was made particularly clear in the first few lines of the Constitution.

Articles 3 through 7 read:

Article 3. - The rights of the human society are freedom, equality, security, property.

Article 4 - Liberty consists in being able to do what does not harm the rights of others.

Article 5 - Equality is that the law is the same for all, whether it protects or punishes.

Article 6. - The safety results from the cooperation of all to ensure the rights of everyone.

Article 7. - The property has the right to enjoy and dispose of his assets, income, the fruit of his labor and industry.<sup>47</sup>

Such definitions of fundamental rights could have been taken almost directly from the United States Constitution, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, from the political philosophy of John Locke, or other touchstones of Modernity. Even more, this Constitution reproduced many articles from the United States Constitution. Like the United States Constitution, it called for a ban on *ex post facto* application of laws, democratic governance, protection of the home and person *a la* the Third and Fourth Amendments of the United States Constitution, freedom of speech and press, freedom of religion, a tripartite government, representative governance with legislative authority vested in a senate (with strictly delineated duties mirroring those enumerated in the United States Constitution, many identical internal procedures, and even the same age requirement – that representatives must be 30 years of age), executive power located in a president (again mirroring the United States Constitution, who is Commander in Chief of the armed forces, with choice of president through a group of electors, serving a four year term, who must be 35 years of age), and an independent judiciary.<sup>48</sup>

But without the synecdochal inversion of the 1805 Constitution, Republicanism was fundamentally unsuited for Haiti. Republicanism defined itself through appeals to

universality – universal rights, the people, the general will, humanity, and the like.<sup>49</sup>

These universals were always formed synecdochally, and given the white supremacy of Modernity and Republicanism, this synecdoche was drawn from white individuals, who were taken to be the unmarked norm, signifying the universal itself. The exclusion of black individuals from these universals was not a matter of particular laws of this or that state, to be addressed through institutional reform. It had deeper ideological roots. And embracing the logic of Modernity ensured that ideological root remained unaddressed.

The basic questions Modernity posed left race and slavery unaddressed. Hannah Arendt explains these as “the political question” of political representation – at the root of the United States Revolutionary War – and “the social question” of class inequality – at the root of the French Revolution.<sup>50</sup> Both demanded a change in the organization of society, but, as Bourke argued, black individuals were positioned outside humanity itself, outside the realm of legitimate concerns, so these questions’ inquiry extended only to the edge of whiteness. The social question, in particular, was based on sympathy and fellow-feeling, yet totally ignored the conditions of even-more-destitute slaves. Here, it is worth quoting Hannah Arendt at length:

History tells us that it is by no means a matter of course for the spectacle of misery to move men to pity ... Yet we deal here with men of the eighteenth century, when this age-old indifference was about to disappear, and when, in the words of Rousseau, an ‘innate repugnance at seeing a fellow creature suffer’ had become common in certain strata of European society and precisely among those who made the French Revolution. Since then, the passion of compassion has haunted and driven the best men of all revolutions ... [W]e are tempted to ask ourselves if the goodness of the poor white man’s country did not depend to a considerable degree upon black labour and black misery – there lived roughly 400,000 Negroes along with approximately 1,850,000 white men in America in the middle of the eighteenth century, and even in the absence of reliable statistical data we may be sure that the percentage of complete destitution and misery was considerably lower in the countries of the Old World. From this, we can only conclude that the institution of slavery carries an obscurity even blacker than the

obscurity of poverty; the slave, not the poor man, was ‘wholly overlooked.’ For if Jefferson, and others to a lesser degree, were aware of the primordial crime upon which the fabric of American society rested, if they ‘trembled when [they] thought that God is just’ (Jefferson), they did so because they were convinced of the incompatibility of the institution of slavery with the foundation of freedom, not because they were moved by pity or by a feeling of solidarity with their fellow men. And this indifference, difficult for us to understand, was not peculiar to Americans and hence must be blamed on slavery rather than on any perversion of the heart or upon the dominance of self-interest. For European witnesses in the eighteenth century, who were moved to compassion by the spectacle of European social conditions, did not react differently. ... Slavery was no more part of the social question for Europeans than it was for Americans, so that the social question, whether genuinely absent or only hidden in darkness, was non-existent for all practical purposes, and with it, the most powerful and perhaps most devastating passion motivating revolutionaries, the passion of compassion.<sup>51</sup>

This was not an issue of policies or rights. No law can make people ignore suffering. It was instead an issue of who was considered human and what was considered a relevant concern. “The social question” was the question of how to remedy social inequality, yet slaves were excluded from the social itself. Slaves were not even granted compassion, because white supremacist ideology prevented any feeling of solidarity or identification with black slaves. The 1806 Constitution dropped the article (Article 14 in the 1805 Constitution) which would have redefined “the social.” So in the Republic of Haiti, where the first article of the Constitution banned slavery, and yet where functional slavery continued, “the social question” continued to exclude non-white individuals.

The key issue here is illustrated by Spivak’s distinction between synecdoche and metonymy. Even without the statement that Haitian people were “black,” international observers certainly perceived Haiti as a black nation. But they likely did so on the basis of Haiti’s overwhelming black population, its status as a former slave colony, and its actions against white individuals. This collection of facts amounted to a metonymic reduction, in which an intangible quality (blackness) was understood as “an empirical

collective” that can be counted and statistically analyzed.<sup>52</sup> Haiti was majority black, for example, so they could count up the numbers of various racial groups in Haiti and label the nation as a whole black, in the manner that a political pollster might dub a population “pro-life” or “democrat.” Synecdoche asserts a metaphysical property to “the people” but metonymy only offers descriptive facts. Each individual becomes one of an abstract universal. But given the white supremacy dominating Modernity, that universal was only a faux-universality that was in fact white. At best, a Haitian citizen was a *black* citizen or a *black* human, participating in an ideological whole overcoded as white. The 1806 Constitution took some steps against this, such as Article 27 limiting the access of white individuals to membership in “human society,” but it never took the next step of synecdochalizing blackness to redefine the universal. Hence, because of the 1806 Constitution’s predominating Republicanism, it left the (white) universality of Modernity fundamentally unchanged and unchallenged.

#### *The State/Kingdom of Haiti, Constitution of 1807*

In 1806, Christophe was elected the first President of the Republic of Haiti under the 1806 Constitution, but chafed under the Republican constraints of that Constitution. He wanted a more centralized power structure, so just three months after his election he declared a new constitution of which he was the primary crafter. Like the 1806 Constitution, Christophe’s 1807 Constitution drew strongly on the 1805 Constitution as a source. But as the 1806 Constitution, driven by *affranchise* embrace of French rights, picked out the Republican, Modernist elements of that document, the 1807 Constitution, driven by *nouvelle libres*’ rejection of France, picked out the autocratic, Pre-Modern elements. This constitution did away with the senate, placed the legislative and judicial

branches under the direct authority of Christophe, and eliminated most rights and protections for citizens. Only five articles – 74 words in total – directly dealt with citizen’s rights.<sup>53</sup> Most institutional regulations on the government were revoked, replaced with a granting of near-total authority to the President. April 6, 1811 Christophe enacted a constitutional addendum titled *Constitutional Law of the Council of State, Which Establishes Royalty in Hayti*.<sup>54</sup> This document dealt almost exclusively with creating a class of hereditary nobility and the administration of this class.

These two documents centered on synecdoche, but of a different type than the 1805 or 1806 Constitutions. Rather than focusing on “the people,” the 1807 Constitution focused on Christophe as an individual representing the nation in the manner of Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte or King Louis XVII representing France. Because this Constitution fled from Modernity, which “the people” and universality were central to, it ignored the construction “the people” and failed to offer any meaningful response to Modernity. This section will focus on the manner of this synecdoche.

The 1807 Constitution shared the autocratic aspects of the 1805 Constitution, but aside from that is dissimilar to all other Haitian constitutions. Most details of government were ignored in the 1807 Constitution – instead left up to the prerogative of the President. It was the only Haitian Constitution until 1915 that did not ban white ownership of land.<sup>55</sup> Aside from those autocratic strains, there were some other similarities with the 1805 Constitution, particularly the regulations on marriage and the promotion of families, but the metaphor of the nation as a family was lost.<sup>56</sup> A few protections of citizens remained, though nearly all considerations of rights were dropped. Included was a ban on *ex post facto* application of law, abolition of slavery, protection of property, and a right to asylum

in one's home.<sup>57</sup> Removed was every other right or protection of citizens, excepting the perfunctory assertion from the preamble that citizens should enjoy the "sacred, imprescriptible, and inalienable rights of man."<sup>58</sup> Given the meager degree of rights granted, these sacred, imprescriptible, and inalienable rights could not be understood in the mode of Republican rights – liberty to pursue one's own course of life or to flourish. Instead, they could only be understood negatively, as a restriction on specific violations – freedom from slavery, from trespass, and so on – and not general protections or entitlements.

Even those specific, negative, freedoms were not upheld. Preserved in the 1807 Constitution was the emphasis on agriculture which had been used to continue the system of forced labor: "Agriculture, as the first, noblest, and most useful of all the crafts, shall be fostered and protected."<sup>59</sup> This was supplemented with an authorized draft of all citizens, age 10 to 50, of both sexes, into the armed forces whenever it was deemed necessary, and a suspension of the constitution and all laws whenever there was a "disturbance."<sup>60</sup> Thus, like L'Ouverture, Dessalines, and Pétion, Christophe implemented a system of forced labor that was similar to slavery in everything but name, this time with all laborers under his direct authority and control as president and generalissimo.<sup>61</sup> Christophe proved himself to be a harsh taskmaster, even worse than Dessalines. He enforced strict discipline on plantations and even employed firing squads for minor infractions. He also forced workers to erect an opulent palace for himself, Sans Souci – with such luxuries as water pumped in from a nearby river through copper pipes to heat Sans Souci's marble floors – and hundreds died in its construction.<sup>62</sup>

The main overlap with earlier constitutions lay in the autocratic strains taken from the 1805 Constitution. In the 1805 Constitution, Dessalines was called “His Majesty the Emperor Jacques Dessalines our deliverer,” “Emperor and commander in Chief of the Army,” and “the avenger and deliverer of his fellow citizens.”<sup>63</sup> The Constitution had articles specific to Dessalines as ruler, making the document specific to him rather than a more timeless governing document and bestowed “[t]he title of Majesty” upon him and “his august spouse.”<sup>64</sup> It declared “The person of their majesties are sacred and inviolable.”<sup>65</sup> It secured an annual payment to Dessalines’ wife and children even after Dessalines’ death.<sup>66</sup> Dessalines’ and his wife’s birthdays were national holidays.<sup>67</sup> The emperor was given ultimate authority over the government:

The Emperor makes seals and promulgates the laws; appoints and revokes at will, the Ministers, the General in Chief for the Army, the Counselors of State, the Generals and other agents of the Empire, the sea offices, the members of the local administrations, the Commissaries of Government near the Tribunals, the judges, and other public functionaries.<sup>68</sup>

Finally, every act of law was to be signed and authorized as if coming directly from the emperor: “Every public act shall be made in these terms: ‘THE EMPEROR I. OF HAYTI, AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE ARMY BY THE GRACE OF GOD, AND THE CONSTITUTIONAL LAW OF THE STATE.’”<sup>69</sup>

All these were used as a resource which Christophe drew upon in establishing his own autocracy. The 1807 Constitution explicitly named Christophe as “General-in-Chief,” “President,” and “Generalissimo of the forces of land and sea.”<sup>70</sup> He was secured that position for life.<sup>71</sup> The Constitution was specific to Christophe as ruler and not a timeless legal document. And the birthday of Christophe and his wife were both national holidays.<sup>72</sup> While the 1805 articles investing in the personage of Dessalines were largely



missing, the 1807 Constitution moved even more strongly toward granting the president absolute power. The president was First Magistrate, commander of the armed forces, director of finances, he chose his successor, could unilaterally adopt treaties and commercial relationships with other nations, could declare war, could “suggest the means that favor the augmentation of the population,” and appointed members of the legislative body – the Council of States.<sup>73</sup> And wherever “disturbances” took place, the President could suspend what few restrictions and rights the Constitution provided to restore order.<sup>74</sup>

According to Julia Gaffield, this last article was particularly troubling. Wherever Christophe identified a “disturbance,” he could exert military force to supersede the Constitution and any other law.<sup>75</sup> “Disturbance” was undefined, and Christophe had unchecked power to declare a disturbance and exception to the law and constitution at any time. This meant constitutional restrictions on Christophe had force only at the whim of Christophe himself. So, in practice, if one challenged or impeded Christophe’s will, there were no protections. Any constitutional protections became meaningless wherever Christophe disagreed with them.<sup>76</sup>

The government consisted of only two bodies – the President and the Council of states.<sup>77</sup> While the Council of States was identified as a separate body, it could only act by and through the will of the president. The president “proposes laws to the Council of State, which, after having adopted them and transcribed them, returned them for his sanction, without which they cannot be executed.”<sup>78</sup> And, even more: “The functions of the Council of State consist of receiving the bills presented by the President, and of transcribing them in the manner which he judges advisable.”<sup>79</sup> So the Council of States –

whose members were chosen by the president – could only act on bills the president submitted and required the sanction of the president for any bills they passed. While the council had some other functions, even those could only be performed “on the initiative of the president.”<sup>80</sup>

The 1811 addendum, in addition to centralizing power even more, moved toward creating a cult of personality around Christophe. It began by praising the success of Christophe by every metric:

Considering, that at the present period, thanks to the genius of the supreme Magistrate who holds the reins of government, whose elevated conceptions and brilliant valor have prevailed in restoring order, happiness, all prosperity; the flourishing state of cultivation, of trade and navigation, the re-establishment of manners, religion, and morality; the high discipline observed in the army and the fleet; seem to promise a lasting duration to the state.<sup>81</sup>

It was Christophe (now “King Henri I of Haiti”<sup>82</sup>) “who has rescued [Haiti] from that abyss in which its most inveterate enemies would extinguish it, to him who governs it with so much glory, that this nation has nothing to fear for its liberty, its independence, and its happiness.”<sup>83</sup> The document then avowed its purpose was to “invest the sovereign authority with a character great and august so as to convey an idea of the supremacy of power.”<sup>84</sup> And fully one-fourth of the 1811 document was devoted to justifying Christophe’s role as a benevolent despot.<sup>85</sup> Literally every article of the document increased or affirmed the power of the King.

Given that Christophe already had nearly unchecked power, the necessity of this constitutional addendum – which, aside from creating hereditary nobility, only reaffirmed Christophe’s power – seemed questionable. The document gave two justifications for replacing the office of President with King. First, it was necessary to “establish a fixed order of things, a mode of government calculated to rule at all times.” Second, “it is

urgently necessary to invest the sovereign authority with a character great and august, so as to convey an idea of the majesty of power.” Both gesture toward synecdoche.

The first – establishing a fixed government to rule forever – could only be a symbolic move. No regime can last forever, and in the ten years since 1801, Haiti had seen two regimes established and overthrown, and a third split in half. So the expectation was likely far shorter than eternity. The appeal to eternity was symbolic. It posited an ahistorical Haitian state constant across all time, like Charland locates in the MSA white papers. This appeal imagined a narrative that does not just go backward, but extended forward unchanging through time. This meant that the conclusion of the narrative was not something to be reached in the future, it was already present. Michael Leff, drawing on Mircea Eliade, calls this “sacred time” as opposed to “secular time.” Secular time is the traditional narrative structure, linear and one-directional from beginning through the middle to the end of the story. In contrast, sacred time “calls us to a moment of origins; it is a ‘primordial mythic time made present,’ and this presence effects an immediate and total unification of the field of experience.”<sup>86</sup> The 1811 document posited an eternal now time, in which “primal truths emerge in a changeless pattern.”<sup>87</sup> According to this framing, the Kingdom of Haiti was identical with the island of Haiti or the proper rule of Haiti. That is, a synecdochal identity was established between Christophe’s government and the appropriate rule of Haiti or the island itself.

Like the 1806 Constitution, this defined Haiti in purely negative or reactive terms. Christophe’s government was not particularly desirable and did not embody positive values such as liberty, justice, or prosperity (despite the assertion that Christophe had, between 1807 and 1811, fixed every problem ailing Haiti). The nation was impoverished,

there remained a *de facto* system of slavery and almost no real rights, and the nation had just been violently divided and was in the denouement of a civil war. The only sense in which Haiti was free was that French colonization had been thrown off and (most) white people had been expelled or slaughtered. This defined the ideal state of Haiti not in terms of rights, freedom, prosperity, or any other affirmative value, but in contradistinction to Europe, in a fundamentally reactive mood. This is best demonstrated by the meaning of “liberty” discussed earlier, which did not mean positive liberty, *freedom to*, but only the absence of slavery, *freedom from*.

The second justification – to invest Christophe with “august” and “majestic” power – was similarly symbolic. It attempted to create Christophe as a world-historical savior figure.<sup>88</sup> This was another synecdochal relationship. The document sought to close the gap between the abstract locus of power – the presidency – and the actual embodiment of power – Christophe himself. The people were called upon to identify with Christophe as a personality rather than the immediate agent of an office. Sovereignty, under the monarchy of 1811, was “inseparable from royal power.”<sup>89</sup> Combined with the earlier point, not only was black freedom embodied in North Haiti, it was embodied in the figure of Christophe. He became the telos of the Haitian narrative of liberation. And he was a black, *nouvelle libres*, anti-French ruler.

According to Fischer, this attempt to create a cult of personality was an effort to make Haiti’s narratological effects functional for a population that was 90 percent illiterate.<sup>90</sup> L’Ouverture, Dessalines, Pétion, and Christophe had all worked to translate and disseminate copies of Haiti’s assorted constitutions. But if the people could not read those documents, they could not form the implied identification with the narrative. To use

Althusser's metaphor of the police officer's hail: if the subject is deaf – unable to hear the hail – then the subject does not even realize there was a hail and does not turn, and so is not constituted as subject-to-the-officer. Presenting Christophe as the embodiment of Haiti and ideology, rather than written documents, expanded the audience to the hail to include even those who cannot read.

But, again, as in the 1806 Constitution, this was more properly metonymy than synecdoche. It was synecdoche “in the usual range of dictionary sense,” as Burke puts it, or metonymy as a type of synecdoche, not that “noblest synecdoche” as is found in political representation.<sup>91</sup> The “noblest synecdoche,” the type being discussed up to now, is based on a bidirectional relationship. Burke writes:

Metonymy may be treated as a special application of synecdoche. If ... we selected quality and quantity as a “synecdochically related pair,” then we might propose to treat as synecdoche the substitution of either quantity for quality or quality for quantity (since either side could be considered as the sign, or symptom, of the other). But only *one* of these, the substitution of quantity for quality, would be a metonymy. We might say that representation (synecdoche) stresses a *relationship* or *connectedness* between two sides of an equation, a connectedness that, like a road, extends in either direction, from quantity to quality or from quality to quantity; but reduction follows along this road in only *one* direction, from quality to quantity.<sup>92</sup>

In the 1805 Constitution, for example, “the people” was identified with blackness, and blackness was identified with “the people.” Above, this was contrasted with the metonymic function of voting, which moves from quantity to quality or vice versa, but can only move in one direction. This would be counting the number of people and finding a greater number of them black than any other race (quantity), and asserting the people are therefore black (quality). But such a relationship is a reduction – it loses information – so it only works in one direction. One could not reverse the relationship and say the people are black, therefore an individual or group is black.

This relationship, in which Christophe stood for (the Kingdom of) Haiti, similarly only worked in one direction. While Christophe could become a figure-head for the nation, Haiti was not simultaneously a representation of Christophe, nor was any individual Haitian a representation of Christophe. One could try to use Haiti as a representation of Christophe – by judging him on the basis of conditions in Haiti – but this representation would be a reduction in which much is lost of both Christophe and Haiti. Rather than establishing a metaphysical claim to identity, as in synecdoche, it would be a quantitative/qualitative metric for judgment, as in metonymy.

This renaming of Christophe from president to king did realize one positive end. In the eyes of the European world, it introduced a disjunct between their notion of royalty and white supremacy. One British observer of Christophe's coronation, W. W. Harvey, wrote, "Whether it arose from prejudice, or from any other feeling, Englishmen ... felt a reluctance to address a negro as his *Lordship*, or a mulatto as his *Grace*, which neither custom nor constraint could overcome."<sup>93</sup> Particularly notable was Harvey's realization that this feeling arose from racial prejudice. The concept of king, rooted in heredity descent and embodying white genetic hegemony, made a black king unthinkable to a British person. Hence, injecting Christophe into the pantheon of kings may have disrupted white supremacy in other ways, by injecting a black voice into the white chorus of nobility.

This limited synecdoche did nothing to address the Modernist trap in which Haiti found itself. The key question raised by the Haitian Revolution was the (non)belonging of a black people within the universal/humanity/"the people." The 1807 Constitution's synecdoches, from Christophe or his government to Haiti, may have elevated his

position, and so in some way frustrated white supremacy. But they did nothing to address the meaning of “the people” which fundamentally excluded blackness. Christophe merely became one more exceptional black individual who did not reflect upon blackness or “the people” writ large. Even if Christophe were to stand for “the people” as a black exemplar, Christophe himself did not stand for any higher ideal – universal justice, equality, liberty, or any universality whatsoever – and was a rather brutal and despotic ruler. Identification with Christophe was not simultaneously identification with any universal value. Because the 1807 Constitution fled from Modernity, it did not even speak to “the people.” The concept of “people” or “general will” were anachronistic to its Pre-Modern ideology. Limited arguments can be made about the effects of this upon white supremacy, but it could do nothing to address the white supremacist character of Modernity itself.

### *Conclusion*

Both Christophe and Pétion were signatories of the 1805 Constitution, and both took their preferred elements from that Constitution. Pétion’s Constitution drew out and emphasized the Republican strains, while Christophe’s Constitution drew upon the autocratic strains, resulting in two polarized versions of that document. Both employed synecdoche. But both in fact functioned metonymically and failed to reconfigure the universal, Modernity, “the people,” or the like. As an illustration, over the two state period in Haiti, “liberty” itself came to mean two very different things. In southern Haiti, liberty was expanded beyond the liberation accomplished by the Haitian Revolution to stand for a positive right to self-determination.<sup>94</sup> But this liberty was not tied to blackness; it was part and parcel of the white supremacist ideology of Modernity.<sup>95</sup> In northern Haiti, “liberty” simply meant the abolition of slavery – one of the few freedoms

granted to the Haitian people in the Kingdom of Haiti's Constitution (and revoked in practice).<sup>96</sup>

It is, therefore, unsurprising Christophe and Pétion both maintained the same plantation system which Dessalines had refined. Pétion was said to have “republicanized the soil,” but really all this meant was that the spoil system (which granted plantations mostly to military officers) was less divided in terms of race, and some black people joined the ranks of mulatto planters.<sup>97</sup> And Christophe made slavery even more vicious than it already had been.

Between the two of them, Pétion was the more successful and more liked. His rule continued until 1818 when he died of natural causes, making him the first of Haiti's rulers to live out his term. The final constitution Pétion crafted before his death will be the topic of the next chapter. Christophe, on the other hand, was a widely unpopular autocrat. In 1820, seeing a coup was imminent, he killed himself to avoid being overthrown and murdered. His son replaced him, and was himself assassinated just ten days later. And within a few weeks, Jean-Pierre Boyer – the president of southern Haiti who replaced Pétion after Pétion's death – reunited North and South Haiti.<sup>98</sup>



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular," *Postcolonial Studies* 8 (2005): 477.

<sup>2</sup> Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Culture of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 227-244.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in: Deborah Jenson, "Jean-Jacques Dessalines and the African Character of the Haitian Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 69 (2012): 637-638.

<sup>4</sup> Philippe G. Girard, "Caribbean Genocide: Racial War in Haiti 1802-1804," *Patterns of Prejudice* 39.2 (2005).

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Madiou, *Histoire D'Haiti* (Port-au-Prince: J. Courtois, 1848), 308.

<sup>6</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Haiti, State Against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990), 113.

<sup>7</sup> The colonial government refused the alliance, until two years later when conflict broke out and it made that exact offer to try and turn *affranchise* against the slave insurrection. Alex Dupuy, "Class, Race, and Nation: Unresolved Contradictions of the Saint-Domingue Revolution," *Journal of Haitian Studies* 10.1 (Spring 2004): 11.

<sup>8</sup> Dupuy, "Class, Race, and Nation," 8.

<sup>9</sup> Julia Gaffield, "Complexities of Imagining Haiti: A Study of National Constitutions 1801-1807," *Journal of Social History* 41.1 (Fall 2007): 81.

<sup>10</sup> David Brion Davis, "Impact of the French and Haitian Revolutions," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. David P. Geggus (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 2001): 8. Davis refers to this as "America's first venture in CIA-Contra-like intervention."

<sup>11</sup> Steve Coupeau, *The History of Haiti* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 8.

<sup>12</sup> Coupeau, *The History of Haiti*, 28.

<sup>13</sup> Bellegarde, "Alexandre Pétion," 167.

<sup>14</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 247.

<sup>15</sup> Doris L. Garraway, "Empire of Freedom, Kingdom of Civilization: Henry Christophe, the Baron de Vastey, and the Paradoxes of Universalism in Postrevolutionary Haiti," *Small Axe* 16.3 (November 2012): 8.

<sup>16</sup> Dantes Bellegarde, "Alexandre Pétion: The Founder of Rural Democracy in Haiti," *Caribbean Quarterly* 3.3 (December, 1953): 170.

<sup>17</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 248.

<sup>18</sup> Bellegarde, "Alexandre Pétion," 170.

<sup>19</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, "Prefatory Declaration," art. 3.

<sup>20</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Prefatory Declaration,” art. 6.

<sup>21</sup> “all mankind are equal”: *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Preamble.”; “The law is ...”: *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Prefatory Declaration,” art. 4.

<sup>22</sup> *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 1, art. 3.

<sup>23</sup> *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 1, art. 12.

<sup>24</sup> *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 1, art. 27, 28.

<sup>25</sup> *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 1, art. 8, 3.

<sup>26</sup> Joanna Bourke, *What it Means to be Human* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint Press, 2011), 260.

<sup>27</sup> Bourke, *What it Means to be Human*, 258-274.

<sup>28</sup> Bourke, *What it Means to be Human*, 266.

<sup>29</sup> In the “slave revolt in morality” everything associate with the masters is decried as “evil” and that which has been freed of the master’s influence is, by default, “good.” Hence, with the French gone, anything can be “good”, even slavery, so long as it is not French. According to Nietzsche, such a system of valuation can never locate any positive value. Its adherents can only get the pleasure of schadenfreude and negation. Particularly located in sacred time, this “slave revolt” is insufficient to ground either a subject, a system of government, or even any possibility of self-affirmation. It can only ever say what is bad and has no idea what is good aside from not-the-masters. This provides poor foundation for a country.

Nietzsche’s “slave revolt in morality” does not refer to a literal slave revolt nor to literal masters or slaves. Yet what is metaphorical in Nietzsche was in some ways made literal in Haiti. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Vol. X A Genealogy of Morals*, ed. Alexander Tille, trans. William A. Hausmann and John Gray (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1997), 31.

<sup>30</sup> Paul Finkelman, ed., *Encyclopedia of African American History: 1619-1895, From the Colonial Period to the Age of Frederick Douglas*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 438-439.

<sup>31</sup> The term “white privilege” was only coined in 1965. (Ted Allen, “A Call ... John Brown Memorial Pilgrimage ... December 4, 1965,” John Brown Commemoration Committee, 1965.) Yet we can only imagine it was utterly apparent to black individuals living in a former slave colony that white individuals had benefitted from their skin color. And it would have been equally apparent that equality demanded some redistribution of wealth and rights, as each of these constitutions attest to.

<sup>32</sup> See, more broadly Paula S. Rothenberg, ed., *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism* (New York: Worth Publishers, 2005).

<sup>33</sup> David Zarefsky, “Lyndon Johnson Redefines ‘Equal Opportunity:’ The Beginning of Affirmative Action,” *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980): 85-94.

<sup>34</sup> Fick, “Emancipation in Haiti,” 22.

<sup>35</sup> Kenneth Burke, “Four Master Tropes,” *The Kenyon Review* 3 (1941): 421.

<sup>36</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Prefatory Declaration,” art. 9.

<sup>37</sup> *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 1, art. 18.

<sup>38</sup> *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 4, art. 38.

- <sup>39</sup> *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 4, art. 39.
- <sup>40</sup> *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 1, art. 22.
- <sup>41</sup> *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 1, art. 17.
- <sup>42</sup> *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 1, art. 23.
- <sup>43</sup> Alex Dupuy, *Haiti: From Revolutionary Slaves to Powerless Citizens, Essays on Politics and Economics of Underdevelopment, 1804-2013* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 55.
- <sup>44</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Preamble.”
- <sup>45</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Prefatory Declaration,” art. 14.
- <sup>46</sup> *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 1, art. 1.
- <sup>47</sup> *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 1, art. 3-7.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ex post facto* laws: *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 1, art. 11.; democratic governance: *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 1, art. 12.; protection of home of privacy: *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 1, art. 24, 25.; freedom of speech: *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 1, art. 26.; freedom of religion: *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 4, art. 37.; legislative authority: *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 5.; executive authority: *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 7.; judiciary: *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 8.
- <sup>49</sup> Kenneth Burke, “Four Master Tropes,” *The Kenyon Review* 3 (1941): 427.
- <sup>50</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, ed. Peter Baehr (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 247-277.
- <sup>51</sup> Arendt, *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, 253-254. Bracketed portions are Arendt’s addition.
- <sup>52</sup> Spivak, “Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular,” 480.
- <sup>53</sup> *Constitution of 1807*, Tit. 1.
- <sup>54</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 248.
- <sup>55</sup> The 1915 Constitution was crafted by the United States after invading Haiti, and pushed upon the Haitian people by military force, so the ban on white ownership may have otherwise extended even longer. Philippe Girard, *Haiti: The Tumultuous History From Pearl of the Caribbean to Broken Nation* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 64.
- <sup>56</sup> *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 10, art. 46, 47, 48.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ex post Facto* law: *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 10, art. 51.; abolition of slavery: *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 1, art. 2.; property: *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 1, art. 4.; asylum: *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 1, art. 3.
- <sup>58</sup> *Constitution of 1807*, “Preamble.”
- <sup>59</sup> *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 10, art. 49.
- <sup>60</sup> *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 10, art. 40, 44.
- <sup>61</sup> Christophe himself dictated the *code rural* which defined the details of everyday agricultural work. This mandated the workday begin at 3 AM when workers would gather to have breakfast and pray,

and they would then work from 4:30 AM to sundown with a two hour break at noon. After sunset, they would gather for dinner and to pray again. Any deviation or infraction was punished harshly by the military police. Any idleness would be punished by flogging on the spot. The one meaningful deviation from slavery was some restrictions were placed on owners. Specifically, owners had to provide access to a nurse, midwife, and physician; owners had to fund the education to orphans of their workers; and owners had to pay their workers 25 percent of their income. Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 255-256.

<sup>62</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 35.

<sup>63</sup> “His Majesty...”: *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Preamble.”; “Emperor and...”: *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Of the Government,” art. 20.; “the avenger...”: *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Of the Government,” art. 20.

<sup>64</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Of the Government,” art. 20.

<sup>65</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Of the Government,” art. 21.

<sup>66</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Of the Government,” art. 22, 24.

<sup>67</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Of the Government,” art. 27.

<sup>68</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Of the Government,” art. 30.

<sup>69</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Of the Government,” art. 37.

<sup>70</sup> *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 2, art. 7.

<sup>71</sup> *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 2, art. 8.

<sup>72</sup> *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 10, art. 50.

<sup>73</sup> First Magistrate: *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 2, art. 6.; commander of the armed forces: *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 2, art. 10.; director of finances: *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 2, art. 10.; choose successor: *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 2, art. 9.; treaties and commercial relationships: *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 2, art. 11.; declare war: *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 2, art. 12.; “suggest the means...”: *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 2, art. 13.; Council of States: *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 3, art. 16.

<sup>74</sup> *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 10, art. 44.

<sup>75</sup> Gaffield, “Complexities of Imagining Haiti,” 96.

<sup>76</sup> The law can be suspended at any moment, such that, as Rainer Maria Kiesow puts it, “The state of exception becomes the norm, the norm becomes the state of exception. ... ‘Absolute indistinction’ everywhere.” Rainer Maria Kiesow, “Law and Life,” *Politics, Metaphysics, and Death: Essays on Giorgio Agamben’s Homo Sacer*, ed. Andrew Norris (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005): 256.

<sup>77</sup> *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 2, art. 6.

<sup>78</sup> *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 2, art. 14.

<sup>79</sup> *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 3, art. 17.

<sup>80</sup> *Constitution of 1807*, tit. 3, art. 18.

<sup>81</sup> *Constitutional Law of the Council of State, April 6, 1811, Which Establishes Royalty in Hayti*, “Preamble.”

<sup>82</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 253.

<sup>83</sup> *Constitutional Law of the Council of State, April 6, 1811, Which Establishes Royalty in Hayti*, “Preamble.”

<sup>84</sup> *Constitutional Law of the Council of State, April 6, 1811, Which Establishes Royalty in Hayti*, “Preamble.”

<sup>85</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 250.

<sup>86</sup> Michael Leff, “Dimensions of Temporality in Lincoln’s Second Inaugural,” *Communication Reports* 1.1 (Winter 1988): 29.

<sup>87</sup> Leff, “Dimensions of Temporality in Lincoln’s Second Inaugural,” 29.

<sup>88</sup> *Constitutional Law of the Council of State, April 6, 1811, Which Establishes Royalty in Hayti*, “Preamble.”

<sup>89</sup> *Constitutional Law of the Council of State, April 6, 1811, Which Establishes Royalty in Hayti*, “Preamble.”

<sup>90</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 253.

<sup>91</sup> Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), 507.

<sup>92</sup> Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 509.

<sup>93</sup> W. W. Harvey, *Sketches of Hayti, from the Expulsion of the French, to the Death of Christophe* (London: Seeley, 1827), 144.

<sup>94</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 258.

<sup>95</sup> Spivak, “Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular,” 477-478.

<sup>96</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 258.

<sup>97</sup> Mimi Sheller, “‘You Signed my Name, but not my Feet’: Paradoxes of Peasant Resistance and State Control in Post-Revolutionary Haiti,” *Journal of Haitian Studies* 10.1 (Spring 2004): 75.

<sup>98</sup> Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, “Independent Haiti in a Hostile World: Haiti in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Haitian History: New Perspectives*, ed. Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall (New York: Routledge, 2013): 104.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Extending Haiti's Synecdoche Internationally

On June 2, 1816, the Haitian Senate ratified the *Revision to the Haitian Constitution of 1816*.<sup>1</sup> At this time, Haiti was still divided into the northern Kingdom of Haiti and the southern Republic of Haiti, with the north embracing monarchy and the south Republicanism. The 1816 Constitution, rather than rejecting Modernity or embracing it fully, as the 1807 and 1806 Constitutions had respectively done, returned to the more moderated Republicanism of the 1805 Constitution. This incorporated both Modernist and Pre-Modern strains, and combined them to produce a black-inflected form of Modernity which could grapple with Modernity's white supremacist tendencies better than any other of Haiti's early constitutions.

This Constitution was characterized by a transcendence of borders, literally, metaphorically, and rhetorically. Literally, the 1816 Constitution opened its borders to any African or Indian individuals. Metaphorically, the Constitution called for a constant consideration of the perspective of the other, and incorporated diverse perspectives in its articles. And rhetorically, the Constitution moved toward concepts of humanity, universal freedom, and the like, in a way that no longer stopped at the edge of Haiti. Modernity was defined by its appeals to universality. Through this international perspective, the 1816 Constitution was able to deploy synecdochal inversion in a universalist way that could finally contest Modernity itself. In this chapter, I will first consider the synecdochal

inversion deployed by this Constitution. I will then consider how that synecdoche was extended internationally.

*Reinvigorating “The People”*

The 1816 Constitution returned to a synecdochal construction much closer to the 1805 Constitution than to the 1806 or 1807 Constitutions. This Constitution explicitly privileged African and Indian individuals for inclusion in the people, while marking white individuals for exclusion. This redefinition of “the people” was even more strict than the 1805 Constitution, as white and African/Indian were defined as two essential and opposed groups. This risked manifesting in violence, but was tempered by a demand to always do unto others as you would have them do unto you. This imperative demanded a consideration of the perspective of the other which prevented the sort of violence practiced by Dessalines or Christophe.

The 1816 Constitution contained a permutation of the synecdochal inversion found in Articles 12, 13, and 14 of the 1805 Constitution, or Articles 27 and 28 in the 1806 Constitution. The article banning white ownership of land remained the same as the 1806 version. But the following article – granting exceptions such that some white people were entitled to full rights and citizenship – in the 1806 Constitution read, “The following are recognized Haitians: whites that are part of the army, those who exercise civil functions and those admitted in the Republic at the publication of this Constitution.”<sup>2</sup> The equivalent article in the 1816 Constitution, Article 39, read:

[The following] are recognized Haitians, the whites who make up part of the army, those who exercise civil office, and those who were admitted into the Republic by the publication of the Constitution of 27 December 1806; and none other, in the future, after the publication of the present Revision, shall be able to

pretend to the same right, nor to be employed, nor to enjoy the right of citizenship, nor to acquire property in the Republic.<sup>3</sup>

The first half of this article was identical to the 1806 formulation (aside from minor differences in translation). The second half constructed “whiteness” as an intrinsic category. This was true for two reasons: First, it sets an absolute limit on white citizenship. Only those white people who were already citizens by 1816 were to be granted citizenship; no white arriving after 1816 could gain full rights. Because the first half remained the same, citizenship was not revoked for any existing white citizen, but it removed the meritocratic logic by which white immigrants could redeem themselves through service to the nation and earn citizenship in the future. White Haitians had no means to citizenship, moving the 1816 Constitution closer to the 1805 provision by which citizenship was granted or revoked based on (semi)intrinsic characteristics (whether one was German or Polish, a woman married to a Haitian man, or the child of a woman married to a Haitian man).

Second, it enumerated a few rights denied to white immigrants to Haiti. In the 1805 and 1806 Constitutions, the only explicit restriction was no white individual may “set foot on this territory with the title of master or proprietor.”<sup>4</sup> This implied a corresponding inequality (between the group who may own property and the group who may not), restriction on freedom, and thus lack of full citizenship, but these further restrictions were not made explicit. Because only the restriction on ownership was overtly stated, and because that restriction was so directly tied to pragmatic restrictions on white planters (preventing white ownership of slave plantations), those restrictions in earlier constitutions could be read as *merely* pragmatic rather than constitutive of “white” and “black” as inferior and superior. But Article 39 restricted rights not directly linked to



pragmatic concerns. In fact, given Haiti's need to attract foreign colonists, this article was directly counter to Haiti's pragmatic interests. So it strengthened the idea white and black are intrinsically, not just pragmatically or contingently, distinct.

This Constitution then contrasted white exclusion with black inclusion. This Constitution, like the 1806 Constitution, excluded Article 14 of the 1805 Constitution, declaring all citizens black. But Article 44 in the 1816 Constitution accomplished a similar purpose. It stated: "All Africans and Indians, and the descendants of their blood, born in the colonies or in foreign countries, who come to reside in the Republic will be recognized as Haitians, but will enjoy the rights of citizenship only after one year of residence."<sup>5</sup> This granted privileged status to black and Indian immigrants. After 1816, any black or Indian immigrant was guaranteed inclusion and eventual citizenship, while no white immigrant could ever enjoy citizenship. Black and Indian individuals were literally included, while white individuals were literally excluded. This was an evolution of the 1805 Constitution's synecdoche. Kept intact was the definition of "the people." Blacks (and Indians) were by default a part of "the people," and "the people" only extended as far as the borders of whiteness. But where the 1805 Constitution forwent biological understandings of race and blackness, Article 44 specified that African-ness and Indian-ness could be transmitted through blood. Thus, blackness returns to describing an intrinsic, rather than political, property.

Articles 39 and 44 construct both white and black as essential identities. This strengthens the force of the synecdochal inversion, but risks licensing greater violence. One key distinction between synecdoche and metonymy is that synecdoche creates a metaphysical relationship while metonymy only asserts an empirical relationship.

Synecdoche imputes a necessary quality to “the people.”<sup>6</sup> Metonymy derives a quality from the quantification of material facts.<sup>7</sup> Modernity’s white supremacist synecdoche was founded on the definition of “the people” as white as a metaphysical truth. To a degree, this could be altered through individual advancement, such as an *affranchise* winning freedom and inclusion. But non-white individuals would always be marked off from the white norm of “the people.” A direct reversal of this required that black and white be similarly immutable. Chapter Two argues that the 1805 Constitution constructed a “new black” where blackness more nearly signified “oppressed” than dark skin color. This made the borders of “the people” more porous than the white supremacist construction. But it also lessened the degree to which black skin, which ensured devaluation *qua* blackness under Modernity, ensued valuation in Haiti. By returning an essential character to those identities, Article 44 and 39 ensured that black skin was constructed as the norm and white skin as the aberration. But this return to a phenotypical understanding risked justifying the sort of violence seen in the 1804 genocide of white inhabitants of Haiti.

Article 20 of the 1816 Constitution tempered this risk of violence. It called upon Haitians to always consider the position of the excluded other. Article 20 stated:

All the duties of man and of citizenship derive from these two principles engraved by nature into all hearts: Do not unto others that which you do not wish them to do unto you. Do constantly unto others all the good which you might wish to receive yourself.<sup>8</sup>

Robert E. Terrill examines a similar construction as it appears in the March 18, 2008 speech by Barack Obama, also about racial differences between black and white people, “A More Perfect Union.” In this speech, Obama referenced the “Golden Rule” as it appears in Christianity – “that we do unto others as we would have them do unto us.”<sup>9</sup> Terrill argues this draws upon *chiasmus*, and more broadly upon reciprocity. It invites us

to imagine a turn in which “we” who act become “us” who are acted upon, and our own actions ultimately return to us. He writes: “Obama does not advise us to *become* our brothers or sisters, or even become *like* them; he urges us to recognize our ‘common stake’ in one another, and to experience the sometimes uncomfortable sensation of seeing ourselves through their eyes.”<sup>10</sup> That is, the difference between white and black was not effaced. We weren’t to imagine, banally, we are all just human beings and the same. Structural differences between the positions of black and white individuals would have made that a fantasy, at best. But we were called to consider the perspective of opposing perspective (black, if the listener was white; white, if the listener was black).

The Constitution’s use of the Golden Rule disavowed racially motivated violence. Jeffrey Wattles, tracing the Golden Rule back to Isocrates, furthers the view that this maxim is inherently opposed to factionalism in that every person, friend or enemy, should be understood as comparable to oneself.<sup>11</sup> Wattles contrasts Isocrates’ formulation with the “repayment thinking” or the search for transcendental truth of Plato. Rather than responding to those who are antagonistic to us with antagonism – either the tit-for-tat “maxim of prudence” which would foremost have us defend our self-interest or repaying harm with fantastic justice (fantastic in the sense both of excellent, divine, but also cataclysmic) – we should imagine the position of the other party and act as we wish they would. This was in stark contrast with the genocidal actions of earlier Haiti. The slaughter of most white inhabitants of Haiti, for example, certainly could not be justified under the Golden Rule. It seems peculiar, then, this maxim was not only the source of “all the duties of man and of citizenship,” but also “engraved by nature into all hearts.”

That the Golden Rule was engraved in all hearts could be interpreted in two diametrically opposed ways. The first interpretation would say the colonists of Saint Domingue – and likely also Toussaint, Dessalines, Christophe, and those serving under them, all who had failed to live up to the maxim – were acting in bad faith or had quieted their hearts or were deficient in some way. This would be partially in line with the synecdochal inversion which excluded white individuals from humanity. For example, as the white planters of Saint Domingue had mistreated the black population of the island, so the white population was itself mistreated, and their actions returned to them through that structure of *chiasmus*. But this is actually more in line with the factional logic which says wrong-doing must be repaid. As Terrill argues, the Golden Rule “cannot be reduced to a simple mimetic mirroring, in which one gives to another precisely what has been given[.]”<sup>12</sup> The Golden Rule calls for us to see ourselves through the eyes of the other, rather than become like them or act as they act. The second interpretation would stress the necessity of this reciprocal understanding. This interpretation would bolster the claims of Sibylle Fischer in Chapter Two that Haiti’s synecdochal inversion could not manifest in the sort of racial hierarchy or violence Modernity’s white supremacy did.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, Terrill argues the Golden Rule demands the sort of double consciousness W. E. B. Du Bois described, in which black individuals constantly see themselves both as they are and as they are perceived by a white world. This requires subjects to take a “double attitude” in which they recognize the comparability and legitimacy of others’ perspectives.<sup>14</sup> It, thus, would counsel against any violent or exterminationist forms of inversion.

The Golden Rule also required an end to forced labor, making 1816 the first Constitution to truly outlaw slavery. That the Golden Rule was the source of duties to the state and to fellow persons demanded a reevaluation of the articles which had been used to justify forced labor in earlier constitutions. All those same articles from the 1806 Constitution existed in the 1816 Constitution. Emphasis on family remains, as does the forfeiture of citizenship of debtors, the necessity of preserving agriculture, as well as the obligation of all to serve the nation.<sup>15</sup> But not doing unto others as you'd not wish them do unto you would clearly prohibit forced labor. A wealthy general, compelling labor on his plantation, for example, could not claim he was doing as he wished done to himself. If the Golden Rule was the root of citizens' obligations to the state, then those obligations could not manifest in functional slavery, as they had under each government from 1801 through 1816. Instead, the obligation had to be manifested in a more egalitarian way. And this is stated in the 1816 Constitution. Where this Constitution affirmed the necessity of agricultural labor, this imperative centered on the reciprocity of the Golden Rule: "Agriculture ... depend[s] uniquely on the confidence and on the justice which should reciprocally exist between the Landowner and the Cultivator."<sup>16</sup> And under the 1816 Constitution, Pétion did effectively end forced labor. Pétion replaced the spoil system – which granted large plantations to political and military elites, to be managed by the military – with the proliferation of small grants of land to the peasantry.<sup>17</sup>

### *Internationalization*

With the division of Haiti into north and south, the forms of government also divided into Pre-Modern and Modern Republican. These stances reflected the distinct position of the two dominant groups in Haiti – *affranchise* and *nouvelle libres*. Article 14

of the 1805 Constitution had asserted the unity of those groups, that “All distinctions of color will by necessity disappear ... Haitians shall be known from now on by the generic denomination of blacks.” But when *affranchise* split to the south and *nouvelle libres* to the north, attempts at unification were left behind. The 1816 Constitution returned to the attempt to reconcile these non-white groups. But rather than defining Haitians as members of one undifferentiated population, this Constitution offered automatic citizenship to all individuals of black and Indian lineage. This was an attempt to universalize the synecdoche of the 1805 Constitution so it applied to all people, not only Haitians. Simultaneous with this effort to welcome in diverse non-white populations, the 1816 Constitution incorporated many distinct governmental ideologies, in contrast to the 1806 or 1807 Constitutions which had each attempted to codify a unified, purified ideological position.

Like many earlier constitutional articles, this move toward inclusiveness was at least partially motivated by practical concerns. Haiti at this time was still facing a dearth in population. Between the Haitian Revolution, the emigration of white planters, and the slaughter of white Haitians and French sympathizers, the population of Haiti had been reduced from 550,000 to less than 225,000.<sup>18</sup> While there had been some growth in the population since independence in 1804, it remained greatly depleted, and so Haiti’s workforce (and, subsequently, economy) continued to struggle.<sup>19</sup> Unlike under earlier constitutions, Pétion had eliminated the plantation system, further increasing the need for more workers.

Earlier constitutions had disavowed internationalism to avoid evoking the fears of white observers. Haiti – then the only state in the world that had officially abolished

slavery and the site of the only fully successful slave revolt – was still an object of fear and contempt for most white nations. As early as 1800, there were widespread rumors L'Ouverture planned to expand beyond Haiti to conquer all of the Caribbean and disrupt European colonialism.<sup>20</sup> In that year, a leader of the Cuban slave uprising<sup>21</sup> wrote a letter to the governor of Cuba saying:

Appetite comes with eating, my friend, and Toussaint [ L'Ouverture], who before did not desire more than the Ysland of Santo Domingo for his rule, is now planning to successively incorporate the neighboring Ysland of Jamaica ... then Cuba, then Puerto-Rico, and finally the whole globe.<sup>22</sup>

Haiti was imagined to be setting out to conquer the globe. Attempting to assuage this white paranoia, most of Haiti's early documents repeatedly insist on Haiti's respect for other nations, and even non-interference with slavery in those other nations. The Declaration of independence, in 1804, stated:

Let us ensure, however, that a missionary spirit does not destroy our work; let us allow our neighbors to breathe in peace; may they live quietly under the laws that they have made for themselves, and let us not, as revolutionary firebrands, declare ourselves the lawgivers of the Caribbean, not let our glory consist in troubling the peace of the neighboring islands. Unlike that which we inhabit, theirs has not been drenched in the innocent blood of its inhabitants; they have no vengeance to claim from the authority that protects them.<sup>23</sup>

And the 1801, 1805, 1806, and 1807 Constitutions all made the same promise not to interfere in the affairs of other nations, whom Haiti depended upon for trade. While there were limited exceptions to this non-interference, 1804-1815 Haiti had largely abided by that rule.<sup>24</sup> Haiti had worked vehemently *not* to be the example of black liberation or black transnationalism that some consider it today. However, in 1816 the need to attract immigrants became dire enough that the 1816 Constitution moderated this isolationism.

Many aspects of the 1816 Constitution were specifically crafted to attract black populations from the United States and Europe. Measures like free, universal education, a

welfare fund, religious tolerance, and statements of color pride sought to make the nation more appealing.<sup>25</sup> Leaders of the Republic of Haiti disseminated copies of this Constitution, translated into English, to black and indigenous American populations in the United States and Europe under the header: “For the Information of the People of Color.”<sup>26</sup> Haiti also published and circulated documents stating the expected income for immigrants to Haiti (2-4 dollars a week for farmers, 6-12 dollars a week for skilled laborers), dispatched Prince Saunders (as a direct minister for Pétion) on speaking tours of the United States, established the international group (the American Convention for the Abolition of Slavery) to argue for emigration to Haiti, and set aside \$25,000 and most of its fleet for aiding black immigrants.<sup>27</sup>

The most important of the 1816 Constitution’s immigration measures was to extend its synecdochal inversion internationally. Article 44 ensured that all African and Indian individuals would be greeted in Haiti as Haitians, due full citizenship. This had two immediate, practical effects: First, since 1801, Haitian constitutions had explicitly banned slavery, but had allowed traders to bring slaves to Haiti. So there was always, paradoxically, a small slave population in Haiti’s port cities. As of 1816, no merchants could bring slaves to Haiti. Second, Haiti offered itself as a haven to any former slave, who would be officially free upon landing in Haiti. Pétion insisted all black and indigenous Americans were welcomed to Haiti “with open arms.”<sup>28</sup> This was quickly put to the test.

In January 1817, seven enslaved men on a merchant ship mutinied and set sail for Haiti.<sup>29</sup> They successfully arrived in Haiti, and a few days later their former master, James McKowen, followed them to reclaim his “property” – both the ship and the former



slaves. McKowen was unable to locate the seven, but met personally with Pétion in Port-au-Prince to negotiate the return of the men. Pétion refused to return the men to bondage, claiming he was bound not to by Article 44 of the new Constitution. He said the men were “recognized to be Haitians by the 44<sup>th</sup> article of the Constitution of the Republic from the moment they set foot on its territory.”<sup>30</sup> Slavery was banned in Haiti, and under the new Constitution the men were now Haitians residing in Haiti. Hence, McKowen had no property rights over them.

This event demonstrated how the 1816 Constitution expanded Haiti’s liberatory impulse. Up to this point, Haiti’s unique synecdoche for “the people” defined “black” as the universal norm, to be privileged, but this definition ended at Haiti’s borders. Article 44 extended this inversion and put it in conversation with Modernity in general. Black and indigenous Americans, excluded from “the people” in the United States, Europe, and its colonies, were granted inclusion in at least one manifestation of “the people,” even if not their own, and possessed privileged status above their white compatriots in their home countries.

The effect of this was to establish Haiti as “free soil.”<sup>31</sup> The “free soil principle” was a legal doctrine in many municipalities throughout Europe. It played on the legal ambiguity of bringing slaves from jurisdictions where slavery was law to jurisdictions where slavery was outlawed. One widely noted case, the Somerset case in 1772 England, will serve as illustration. In this case, slaves were brought from colonial America to England. England at that time had no positive law governing slavery – that is, no law enunciated the idea a person could be property. Somerset argued there should be a legal presumption for the slaves such that they were governed by the laws of the people of

England rather than some separate set of property laws, and those former slaves could not be legally coerced to return to bondage. The judge decided for Somerset, declaring England “free soil.” This meant a slave, by merely setting foot on English soil, could claim their freedom.<sup>32</sup> There are a number of early- and mid-18<sup>th</sup> century “free soil” cases from the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, England, France, and Germany, as well as many 19<sup>th</sup> century American cases in Canada, Haiti, Mexico, Uruguay, Argentina, and even some United States border states.<sup>33</sup>

The “free soil” principle, however, was white supremacist in Europe. In practice, “free soil” only offered freedom to enslaved white individuals. Gillian Weiss explains the free soil principle originated prior to the racialization of slavery. In France until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, “free soil” could only be claimed by white slaves of French descent fleeing slavery in foreign nations, and was denied to non-white Muslim and Arab slaves making the same claims to freedom.<sup>34</sup> Many other states with “free soil” laws passed edicts explicitly or implicitly preventing black slaves from drawing on the “free soil” principle.<sup>35</sup> Like the French Revolution’s declaration of universal humanity, liberty, equality, and brotherhood, “free soil” was only actually free for white slaves (except in England). Free soil, ironically, only further cemented the ties between blackness and slave/property status and between whiteness and freedom/personhood.

Like the broader synecdochal inversions discussed, this 1816 declaration of Haiti as “free soil” is an inversion of European and United States law which illustrated the hypocrisy of that law. In Haiti, any black individual became free simply by entering the nation, while white individuals lost freedoms by entry. Pétion even explained this granting of freedom to black slaves entering Haiti as a form of asylum.<sup>36</sup> This was, Ada

Ferrer explains, “to recognize enslavement as a form of persecution that obligated the granting of asylum.”<sup>37</sup>

Article 44 of the 1816 Constitution internationalized Haiti’s granting of rights for the first time. The construction in the 1805 Constitution only extended to “the people” of Haiti. This was the most literal manifestation of Kenneth Burke’s “noblest synecdoche.”<sup>38</sup> With the 1806 Constitution, this was expanded through the language of “human society,” but the mandates of that Constitution still only extended to the people of Haiti.<sup>39</sup> The 1816 Constitution made it explicit these rights extended beyond the borders of Haiti. Haiti was posited as a site for the freedom of all black and Indian people of all nations. Where the 1805 Constitution said “All Haitians are black,” this Constitution said “All black people are Haitian,” or at least are potentially so and can make claim to Haitian identity should they so desire.<sup>40</sup> Whereas the 1805 Constitution declared all the people of Haiti are one undifferentiated black family, the 1816 Constitution declared all black and Indian individuals are one undifferentiated group, removing any territorial restriction. With the adoption of the “free soil doctrine” and automatic citizenship for black and Indian people, Haiti embodied the universality (and the inversion of the universal) appealed to by the 1805 Constitution.

This is the closest mirror yet of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s elucidation of synecdoche. The 1805 Constitution embodied Spivak’s notion of “self-synecdochizing in a metonymy,” in which the empirical collective – the plurality of black citizens – synecdochalize themselves to create a meaningful notion of the people or rights.<sup>41</sup> But, because it was limited to the category of citizenship and those rights which were granted to citizens, it dealt only with political rights. The example Spivak gives is of herself, as a

United States citizen, forming shared identification with rural Indian<sup>42</sup> women by synecdochalizing the shared aspect of their identity, their Indianness.<sup>43</sup> The 1816 Constitution – through the combined privileging of black immigrants and discussion of “human society” – constructed its synecdoche out of the entirety of (black and Indian) humanity. It established a human right to freedom, due to any black or Indian migrant in Haiti. It also established the same sort of solidarity across national borders Spivak spoke to, irrespective of citizenship.

The welcoming in of foreign people was mirrored with a welcoming in of foreign perspectives. In general, there was the doubling of perspective produced by the Golden Rule, as discussed above. In particular, the Republic of Haiti’s nearest neighbor was the Kingdom of Haiti to the north. There was a combination of North Haiti’s autocratic approach with the Republican approach. The Constitution of 1816 represented a moderated form of Republicanism, much like the 1805 Constitution. Pétion had crafted the 1806 Constitution with the aim of hamstringing the president. He knew Christophe was the most likely candidate to be elected president, and knew Christophe was a brutal military general with autocratic tendencies. Pétion thus feared Christophe becoming despotic, and intentionally minimized the president’s role while placing real power in the hands of the Senate.<sup>44</sup> But, by 1816, Pétion had been elected in 1807 and reelected in 1811 and 1815 and seemed secure in his spot as president. He no longer feared a tyrant like Christophe claiming the presidency. Instead, in 1812, Pétion had been faced with a rogue general, and realized as president he was too weak and had no authority to curtail the general.<sup>45</sup> Hence, Pétion feared not an abundance of presidential power, but a lack of it. Motivated by this concern, Pétion integrated into the 1816 Constitution many

autocratic strains present in the 1805 and 1807/1811 Constitutions, but conspicuously absent from the 1806 Constitution. The presidency became a life appointment, rather than serving a four-year term.<sup>46</sup> The president had the sole authority to choose his successor.<sup>47</sup> Proposed laws only came before the legislature if proposed by the president (excepting laws relating to taxation).<sup>48</sup> The president was given the power over all treaties made with foreign nations, and in fact all foreign relations.<sup>49</sup> The president appointed all civil and military officers, as well as the secretary of state.<sup>50</sup> Coining of money was the purview of the president.<sup>51</sup> Even included are some of the demagogic elements of earlier constitutions. For example, the birthday of Pétion – officially designated as “Alexandre Pétion, President of Haiti” – was made a national holiday every April 2.<sup>52</sup> The president had none of these powers under the 1806 Constitution.

Simultaneously, most of the Republican strains of the 1806 Constitution were strengthened. The foremost of these – Articles three through eight, defining the rights of “human society” as freedom, equality, security, and property – remained unchanged in the 1816 Constitution.<sup>53</sup> And nearly all the similarities enumerated in Chapter Three between the 1806 Constitution and the United States’ Constitution remained. In fact, more similarities were introduced. The 1816 Constitution established a bicameral legislature which mirrored the legislative branch of the United States even more closely.<sup>54</sup> With this move, Haiti’s general system of government almost entirely mirrored that of the United States, with an executive, judiciary, and bicameral legislature, and each branch granted most of the same powers and limited by most of the same restrictions.

This blending of Republicanism with the demagoguery of a non-white autocrat (Pétion) captured and improved on the positives of the 1807/1811 synecdoche. That

synecdoche remained metonymic, in the sense in which Burke identifies metonymy as a subtype of synecdoche, because it is only one directional – one can only use Pétion as a stand-in for Haiti and not Haiti as a stand-in for Pétion without losing information. But, like the 1807 Constitution, by explicitly identifying a non-white (mulatto) ruler of a Republic, this Constitution pointed to a non-white individual as its Republican exemplar. In doing so, it injected a discordant voice into the chorus of white Republicanism to reshape it. But, because this Constitution combined autocratic strains with Republican, it was made more effective than the 1807/1811 version. Pétion alone wasn't the sole Republican exemplar. The 1816 Constitution gave particular attention to education to transform all the people of Haiti into Republican citizens.<sup>55</sup> This Constitution mandated free elementary education to every citizen of Haiti, as well as establishing institutions of secondary and higher education.<sup>56</sup> Pétion held Haitian education uniquely important because, as Dantes Bellegarde puts it, “the partisans of slavery still continue to proclaim ... that Negroes and descendants of Negroes are incapable of any mental development.”<sup>57</sup> Pétion believed education “raises man to the dignity of his being” and so education was the key step to combat the racist construction of black people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>58</sup> This, he felt, would both transform the people of Haiti into Republicans, but also create a black, Haitian intellectual and cultural elite which would allow Haiti to rival any white nation and which would stand as a precedent against anyone who would deny the intellectual ability of black individuals.<sup>59</sup> As Pétion was to be a metonymic stand in, so the people of Haiti were constructed as finally educated and worthy of the metonymy of Republican citizenry.

The 1816 Constitution thus produced the first instance of a “black republic.” Haiti was already often considered a “black republic” before 1816, but when compared to the 1816 Constitution it becomes clear that early Haitian constitutions could not be called both black and Republican. The 1805 Constitution declared Haiti an Empire, and was motivated by a reactive desire to challenge Napoleon Bonaparte. The 1806 Constitution was Republican but not black. Its presidency was intentionally crafted to constrain the powers of any black leader, who Pétion feared would be violent and abuse his power. The 1807 Constitution declared Haiti a hereditary monarchy, something common in Africa and even used to demonstrate the delayed progress of black governance.<sup>60</sup> Of these early constitutions, only the 1816 Constitution celebrates black Republicanism and its citizens as black Republicans. These black citizens were to serve as an example to the world. And given the replacement of the isolationism of the 1805, 1806, and 1807 Constitutions with the internationalism of the 1816 constitution, Haiti finally could become an international symbol of black freedom.

### *Conclusion*

The 1816 Constitution combined the synecdochal strains of all three Constitutions discussed thus far. The 1805 Constitution defined “the people” as black, and the 1816 Constitution extended full rights only to black individuals. The 1806 Constitution gave black citizens privileged access to “human society,” and the 1816 Constitution declares all black (and Indian), and almost no white, people have privileged access to humanity and only they are free. The 1807 Constitution posited Christophe as a representative of Haiti and of blackness, and the 1816 Constitution posited Pétion and the people of Haiti as representatives of black Republicanism. All three, together, embody and buttress the

synecdochal inversion at play in each. It also drew on the Golden Rule, which both promoted this combination of approaches/perspectives and checked against any violent manifestation of that synecdochal inversion. Together, these elements disarm the white supremacy of Modernity. Finally, the 1816 Constitution extended this synecdochal construction internationally, allowing it for the first time to speak to the universality of Modernity. The 1816 Constitution remains grounded in a Modernist, Republican ideology, but it alters the fundamental synecdoche of Modernity to counter Modernity's white supremacy.

Under the 1816 Constitution, Pétion was elected president for life on October 9, 1816. But soon afterwards, on March 22, 1817, he succumbed to fever. He suffered through his ill health before passing away March 29, 1818, and was replaced by Jean-Pierre Boyer.<sup>61</sup> But in that short time, Haiti dismantled the spoils system, plantations, and forced labor. Haiti also attracted as many as 13,000 black immigrants from the United States.<sup>62</sup> This was, both rhetorically and practically, the most successful of Haiti's early Constitutions.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 171.

<sup>2</sup> *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 1, art. 28.

<sup>3</sup> *Revision of the Haitian Constitution of 1806*, tit. 1, art. 39.

<sup>4</sup> *Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805*, “Prefatory Declaration,” art. 12.

<sup>5</sup> *Revision of the Haitian Constitution of 1806*, tit. 1, art. 44.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), 507.

<sup>7</sup> Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 509.

<sup>8</sup> In the 1816 Constitution: *Revision of the Haitian Constitution of 1806*, tit. 1, art. 20.; in the 1806 Constitution: *Constitution of Haiti of December 27, 1806*, tit. 1, art. 16.

<sup>9</sup> “Barack Obama: A More Perfect Union,” *American Rhetoric*, trans. Robert E. Terrill, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobamaperfectunion.htm>. 37.

<sup>10</sup> Robert E. Terrill, “Unity and Duality in Barack Obama’s ‘A More Perfect Union,’” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 95 (2009): 374.

<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey Wattles, *The Golden Rule* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 27.

<sup>12</sup> Terrill, “Unity and Duality in Barack Obama’s ‘A More Perfect Union,’” 374.

<sup>13</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 233.

<sup>14</sup> Terrill, “Unity and Duality in Barack Obama’s ‘A More Perfect Union,’” 375.

<sup>15</sup> Family: *Revision of the Haitian Constitution of 1806*, tit. 1, art. 22.; forfeiture of citizenship: *Revision of the Haitian Constitution of 1806*, tit. 3, art. 47.; agriculture: *Revision of the Haitian Constitution of 1806*, tit. 10, art. 211.; obligation to serve society: *Revision of the Haitian Constitution of 1806*, tit. 1, art. 21, 27.

<sup>16</sup> *Revision of the Haitian Constitution of 1806*, tit. 10, art. 211.

<sup>17</sup> Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, 166.

<sup>18</sup> James G. Leyburn, *The Haitian People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), 34.

<sup>19</sup> Leslie M. Alexander, “‘The Black Republic’: The Influence of the Haitian Revolution on Northern Black Political Consciousness, 1816-1862,” *Haitian History: New Perspectives*, ed. Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall (New York: Routledge, 2013): 199.

<sup>20</sup> Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Culture of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 5.

<sup>21</sup> The authorship of this letter is doubtful, but regardless of the author, it gained a great deal of attention, reflecting widespread fears internationally.

<sup>22</sup> José Luciano Franco, *Documentos para la Historia de Haiti en el Archivo Nacional* (Havana: Publicaciones del Archivo Nacional de Cuba, 1954), 131. Translated by Sibylle Fischer in Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 6.

<sup>23</sup> “The Haitian Declaration of Independence, January 1, 1804,” *Slave Revolt in the Caribbean 1789-1804: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Laurent Dubois and John D. Garrus (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 190.

<sup>24</sup> In 1810, Christophe gave aid to anti-colonial rebels in Santo Domingo, and Pétion later gave aid to a few Latin American independence movements. (Ada Ferrer, “Haiti, Free Soil, and Antislavery in the Revolutionary Atlantic,” *American Historical Review* 117 [2012]: 41.)

<sup>25</sup> Sara C. Fanning, “The Roots of Early Black Nationalism: Northern African Americans’ Invocations of Haiti in the Early Nineteenth Century,” *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution: Selected Essays and Historical Documents*, ed. Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon (New York: Routledge, 2010), 39-55.

<sup>26</sup> Fanning, “The Roots of Early Black Nationalism,” 47.

<sup>27</sup> Fanning, “The Roots of Early Black Nationalism,” 47-48.

<sup>28</sup> Fanning, “The Roots of Early Black Nationalism,” 47.

<sup>29</sup> Ferrer, “Haiti, Free Soil, and Antislavery in the Revolutionary Atlantic,” 43-44.

<sup>30</sup> Cited in: Ferrer, “Haiti, Free Soil, and Antislavery in the Revolutionary Atlantic,” 45.

<sup>31</sup> Ferrer, “Haiti, Free Soil, and Antislavery in the Revolutionary Atlantic,” 47.

<sup>32</sup> There still exists much debate over the extent of Lord Mansfield’s ruling and whether it can be used as broader precedent for “free soil.” (Sue Peabody and Keila Grinberg, “Free Soil: The Generation and Circulation of an Atlantic Legal Principle,” *Slavery & Abolition* 32.3 [September 2011]: 331-332.)

<sup>33</sup> Peabody and Grinberg, “Free Soil.”

<sup>34</sup> Gillian Weiss, “Infidels at the Oar: A Mediterranean Exception to France’s Free Soil Principle,” *Slavery & Abolition* 32.3 (September 2011): 397-412.

<sup>35</sup> Peabody and Grinberg, “Free Soil,” 334.

<sup>36</sup> Ferrer, “Haiti, Free Soil, and Antislavery in the Revolutionary Atlantic,” 48.

<sup>37</sup> Ferrer, “Haiti, Free Soil, and Antislavery in the Revolutionary Atlantic,” 54.

<sup>38</sup> Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 507.

<sup>39</sup> *Constitution of Haiti, 1806*, tit. 1, art. 3.

<sup>40</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 239.

<sup>41</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular,” *Postcolonial Studies* 8 (2005): 481.

<sup>42</sup> Indian here refers to someone from the nation of India, not an indigenous American as is meant in the 1816 Constitution and as it is used throughout the rest of this chapter.

<sup>43</sup> Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular," 481.

<sup>44</sup> Sibylle Fischer, "Bolivar in Haiti: Republicanism in the Revolutionary Atlantic," *Haiti and the Americas*, ed. Carla Calgaré, Raphael Dalleo, Luis Duno-Gottberg, and Clevis Headley (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 44.

<sup>45</sup> Colin Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 166.

<sup>46</sup> *Revision of the Haitian Constitution of 1806*, tit. 7, art. 142.

<sup>47</sup> *Revision of the Haitian Constitution of 1806*, tit. 7, art. 164.

<sup>48</sup> *Revision of the Haitian Constitution of 1806*, tit. 7, art. 153.

<sup>49</sup> *Revision of the Haitian Constitution of 1806*, tit. 7, art. 155, 158.

<sup>50</sup> Civil and military officers: *Revision of the Haitian Constitution of 1806*, tit. 7, art. 157.; Secretary of state: *Revision of the Haitian Constitution of 1806*, tit. 11, art. 215.

<sup>51</sup> *Revision of the Haitian Constitution of 1806*, tit. 7, art. 162.

<sup>52</sup> *Revision of the Haitian Constitution of 1806*, tit. 1, art. 34.

<sup>53</sup> *Revision of the Haitian Constitution of 1806*, tit. 1, art. 6-11.

<sup>54</sup> *Revision of the Haitian Constitution of 1806*, tit. 5.

<sup>55</sup> Dantes Bellegarde, "Alexandre Pétion: The Founder of Rural Democracy in Haiti," *Caribbean Quarterly* 3.3 (December, 1953): 172.

<sup>56</sup> *Revision of the Haitian Constitution of 1806*, tit. 1, art. 36.

<sup>57</sup> Bellegarde, "Alexandre Pétion," 172.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in: Bellegarde, "Alexandre Pétion," 172.

<sup>59</sup> Bellegarde, "Alexandre Pétion," 172. This commitment to education is also a large part of why he is today celebrated as a hero in Haiti, despite fighting for the French to recolonize and re-enslave Haiti 1801-1802.

<sup>60</sup> Nathaniel Harris, *Systems of Government: Monarchy* (London: Evans Brothers Limited, 2005), 33.

<sup>61</sup> Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, 172.

<sup>62</sup> Fanning, "The Roots of Early Black Nationalism," 39-55. 39.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusion: The Impact of Haiti on *Negritude*

Politically speaking, the impact of these constitutions are paradoxical. Under them, Haiti was instrumental to the independence of Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Trinidad, Columbia, and many more countries throughout the Caribbean and South America.<sup>1</sup> Yet the situation in Haiti itself was far from one those nations would want to emulate. Haiti went from being the “pearl of the Antilles” to having one of the worst economies in the region, until today it has the worst economy of the Western Hemisphere.<sup>2</sup> It has faced frequent insurrections and coups; and most of its constitutions strictly curtailed rights.<sup>3</sup>

But when viewed rhetorically, Haiti’s early constitutions invert the image of “the people” in a way never seen in a constitution before or since. The French and the United States revolutions inaugurated what Hannah Arendt dubbed the “Age of Revolution” and the beginning of “Modernity,” defined by what she terms “the social question” and “the political question” these two revolutions raised. When the non-white population of Saint Domingue attempted to import these revolutionary, Modernist rights and government, they found that the answers France and the United States had offered for those questions fundamentally missed the point. The reality in Saint Domingue proved those rights were not as universal or inalienable as was claimed. Just as those revolutions raised the question of monarchy and a Pre-Modern system of government, the Haitian Revolution raised the question of Modernity itself. In Haiti’s constitutions of 1805, 1806, 1807, and

1816, the Haitian people offer some tentative answers to those questions. These constitutions employ synecdochal inversion to recreate those Modernist rights to make them truly meaningful. This represents a revision of Modernity and Republicanism from within. This conclusion offers a brief summary of the preceding chapters, and then looks at how those constitutional strains have been rhetorically carried forward, especially by Aimé Césaire and Frederick Douglass. Finally, it describes the ideology of *negritude* produced by this synecdochal inversion.

### *Summary of Preceding Chapters*

Kenneth Burke argues that any formation of “the people,” “the general will,” or any similar construction, operates by a synecdoche, in which a part is taken to represent the whole. “We the people,” in the United States’ Constitution, for example, does not encompass the entire population of the United States, but only the signers. Only they are literally speaking through that constitutional document. As Michael Calvin McGee puts it, this purportedly universal body of the people “is not universal at all, but rather a series of intellectual elites which do no more than ‘stand as the vanguard of humanity.’”<sup>4</sup> Even taken broadly, considering “the people” as it is intended to refer to the population in general, it is still always synecdochal. In that document, “the people” referred to white, propertied, non-felon males above 21 years old. Even today, in the most liberal of nations, “the people” almost always excludes children and felons. So “the people” only ever refers to a part of the people, and the universality it lays claims to is always a false universality.

Considering the Age of Revolution and Modernity, the universality of the United States’ Constitution and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen only

ever extended to white individuals. Black and most non-white individuals were not part of the “people” or “humanity” they defined. After the French Revolution in 1789, the non-white inhabitants of Saint Domingue appealed to these “universal” rights and found they fell outside the rubric of human beings due inalienable, God-given rights. This forced a reevaluation of that fundamental synecdoche which forms the people.

The earliest constitution discussed – the Constitution of the French Colony of Saint Domingue, passed in 1801 – established Saint Domingue as a federated state of France. Saint Domingue remained a French colony, Republicanism was adopted whole-cloth, and the plantation system was maintained unchanged. The only alteration made to the ideology of Republicanism or Modernity, which had maintained white supremacy and slavery, was: “There cannot exist slaves on this territory, servitude is therein forever abolished. All men are born, live and die free and French.”<sup>5</sup> While this was, in some sense, radical at the time, it did little to change the inherited Republicanism, as was demonstrated by the continuation of forced labor.

The 1801 Constitution was a redefinition of Saint Domingue within Republican ideology inherited from France. The Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805 worked to change that ideology. Most importantly, where every governing document implicitly presumed a synecdochal definition of “the people,” this Constitution made that synecdoche explicit and inverted it. Under every other Modern state, that synecdoche was white supremacist. White individuals were included in “the people,” and non-white individuals were excluded. In the 1805 Constitution, this was reversed in two ways. First, Articles 12, 13, and 14 define the people of Haiti as black, and prioritize black over white. Article 12 excluded white individuals from owning property in Haiti, making them

unequal and inferior to the default subject who possesses the inalienable right to property, equality, and so on. Article 13 exempted some white-skinned individuals from Article 12, offering those individuals full rights and equality in Haiti, and Article 14 stated all Haitians were to be known by the appellation “black.” Article 12 marked off whiteness from the default, while Article 14 aligned blackness with that default subject. Hence, there was an explicit and direct inversion of the logic which defined “human” as naturally white and blackness as a deviation.

Second, the people of Haiti were constituted as a unified family. The citizens of Haiti were a diverse group made up of over 100 different ethnic groups, freed African slaves, native Arawak, and even select white individuals. Yet the Constitution defined all these groups as co-equal members of a national black family transcending any genetic, ethnic, or phenotypal groupings; even those few white individuals were included as “black.” “Black,” in this understanding, could not be defined phenotypically. Instead, black came to signify “oppressed,” or even better, “human,” the default state of a human being or subject. Simultaneously, this meant the denigrated “white” population also could not be understood phenotypically, and meant something closer to “oppressor.” This hailing inculcated a “new black” identity which affirmed blackness in contradistinction to nearly all of Modernity and Republicanism which negated blackness as falling outside humanity itself. This “new black” shaped and continues to shape the identification of Haitians.<sup>6</sup> According to Sibylle Fischer, these two together put universality and rights to a test. Because “black” was understood to be furthest from humanity, by making the subject of rights/humanity black, Haiti stretched those concepts to potentially cover everyone.

The 1806 and 1807 Constitutions divided the nation into North and South Haiti. This split not only divided the nation geographically but also ethnically and by system of government. Each was based on and drew from different elements of the 1805 Constitution. Both drew on a variation of the 1805 Constitution's synecdoche which allowed them to call white supremacy into question, but both fell short of offering an affirmative notion of blackness to answer that question.

The 1807 Constitution was Pre-Modern, retaining mostly autocratic strains from the 1805 Constitution. North Haiti was ruled and primarily populated by *nouvelle libres* – newly freed slaves who had only gained their freedom with the Haitian Revolution. This state was organized as a monarchy under the leadership of Henri Christophe as monarch-for-life. They responded to Modernity by retreating from it. Yet, in doing so, they retreated also from the rights and equality which Modernity had offered. The notion of “the people” as a salient term faded away, and with it that synecdochal inversion was weakened. Kenneth Burke describes the synecdochal formation of the people as the “noblest synecdoche.”<sup>7</sup> This Constitution maintained a synecdoche, but of a lesser sort. In the 1807 Constitution, a synecdoche is formed from Christophe himself to Haiti as a nation. This is metonymy as a particular sub-type of synecdoche. Christophe personifies Haiti, as a tangible object standing in for the intangible nation. And Christophe, a black man, was asserted to be a King alongside the royalty of Europe. This alone injected a black voice in the white supremacist chorus of global rulership and so calls white supremacy into question. That “noblest synecdoche,” however, functions by imputing an ontological character to the people. A metaphysical identity is asserted between “the people” and blackness (or whiteness, in France and the United States). Because the



concept of “the people” was missing from this ideologically Pre-Modern document, such a relationship could not be formed. So while this Constitution could provoke the question of Modernity’s white supremacy, it could not answer that question in any way that affirmed blackness.

The 1806 Constitution, in contrast, aligned itself with Modernity and Republicanism almost to the degree of the 1801 Constitution. South Haiti was primarily populated by *affranchise* - richer, largely literate black and mulatto people who had earned their freedom prior to the revolution. They had benefitted from French colonial rule and so felt some sympathy for France and its government. South Haiti was organized as a democracy much more in line with the character of the French Revolution. Where North Haiti fled from Modernity, South Haiti embraced it. This Constitution retained many of the synecdochal features of the 1805 Constitution. White ownership of property remained outlawed. Some select groups of white citizens were still included. The nation continued to be conceived of as a family. But the 1806 Constitution eliminated identification of “the people” with blackness. This combination, however, produced a weird variation on Modernity. As in the 1805 Constitution, the subject of rights and humanity was defined to have inalienable rights to property, equality, and so on, but these rights were denied to white inhabitants. This challenged the equation of whiteness with humanity, but without an explicit equation of blackness with humanity, the synecdoche was not inverted. “The People” had no character imputed to it. It challenged the privileging of whiteness, but did not replace it with anything. This is what Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak terms metonymy in the sense of an empirical collective. If whiteness was no longer privileged, then everyone could be counted. For example, all races would

be able to vote and have their votes counted equally. But Spivak says counting everyone to form an empirical collective is not the same as making everyone count. Nothing about blackness has any inherent value to it under this metonymy. Like the 1807 Constitution, the 1806 Constitution could raise the question of Modernity but could not offer a satisfactory answer.

The last constitution discussed was the 1816 Constitution of South Haiti. This Constitution continued the prioritization of blackness over whiteness, and the coding of “the people” as black, as seen in the 1805 Constitution. The Constitution of 1816 was particularly notable in the assertion that all black populations are by definition Haitian citizens. Where the 1805 Constitution declared all citizens black, the 1816 Constitution declared all black individuals citizens. It moved beyond the national synecdoche of “the people” as black to assert a truly universal notion of blackness and humanity. This expanded the definition of “black” in the 1805 Constitution to become truly universal, and to most fully embody the ideals of black internationalism. This also functioned on the level of the 1805 Constitution’s familial metaphor. While in 1805 it was claimed all Haitians are black and therefore a family, in 1816 they inverted this to say all black people in any country are a family, and thus all were Haitian.<sup>8</sup>

The expansion was put to the test in 1817, when seven Jamaican slaves commandeered the ship they were held on and sailed to southern Haiti. Because the law banned slavery and offered citizenship to all non-white foreigners, they were immediately freed and granted citizenship upon landing. When the Jamaican men’s former owner followed them to Haiti to reclaim them, he was turned away. He asserted they were his property but was denied, as the Constitution prohibited slavery in Haiti so, by law, the

men could not be property. In this move, the state summarily dismissed any question of their legal status prior to arriving in Haiti. Here, Haiti most fully offered a haven for those excluded from humanity.<sup>9</sup>

The analysis thus far indicates Modernity projects a universal notion of humanity, but this is only a faux-universality. Humanity is defined along the lines of white supremacy such that black individuals were not even considered human. Modernity, ala Arendt, was based on raising “the political question” and “the social question.” Both exclude slavery or race from consideration and black slaves from the realm of morally relevant subjects. Haiti’s 1806 and 1807 Constitutions demonstrate it is insufficient to call out this myopia. One withdrew from Modernity, while the other reactively castigated white people; neither attempt – to escape Modernity or merely critique it – are sufficient. While both include versions of the synecdoche discussed throughout this thesis, both fail to open a positive relationship to blackness. Such a positive relationship was introduced in the 1805 Constitution and developed in the 1816 Constitution. The 1805 Constitution offered a vision of a unified black family, which was taken to its conclusion when extended internationally in the 1816 Constitution. This synecdochal inversion offers a unique framing of blackness and invites a more affirmative relationship to blackness.

Together, these aspects offer one potential answer (of many) to the question of race and slavery which many have raised regarding Modernity. This is an answer which has since been drawn upon as a resource by many thinkers in the United States and France. The next section considers how this reorientation of Modernity through synecdochal inversion offers an affirmative stance on blackness that disrupts white supremacy.

### *Influence of Haiti Internationally*

The most fruitful and obvious vein of influence from Haiti lies in Black Nationalism. While many authors link Black Nationalism to Haiti, they are almost exclusively concerned with the Haitian Revolution and ignore the post-revolutionary period.<sup>10</sup> As mentioned in the introduction, the recent explosion of work on Haiti has extended only as far as 1804, when Haiti declared independence. Scholars discuss the example of revolution that Haiti provided for other colonies in the Caribbean and South America or the importance of violent resistance to anti-black racism, but rarely Haiti's particular responses codified in its laws. As discussed above, this ignores half the matter. The Haitian Revolution raised questions about Modernity to which Haiti's constitutions offer tentative answers. A rhetorical approach can parse that constitution to draw out those answers by first looking at some of the general and immediate impacts of Haiti's constitutions. This is followed by tracing Frederick Douglass and Aimé Césaire's use of Haiti's constitutions as a rhetorical resource.

Prior to Haitian independence, black individuals living in the West had few alternatives to life in white supremacist society. Slaves and free black people could flee to maroon colonies, but this was a difficult and dangerous option. Some slaves chose to kill themselves rather than remain enslaved. The only other alternative was "succession" back to "primitive" Africa.<sup>11</sup> This was the aim of the American Colonization Society – the 19<sup>th</sup> century group promoting the emigration of freed black Americans to Liberia. Freed black people were thought not to belong in Euro-American society, and so were to be removed to Africa. With the 1816 Constitution, Haiti offered itself as a haven for the enslaved black peoples of the world. This was quickly taken up by black nationalists in

the United States as an alternative to the American Colonization Society's efforts to relocate Black Americans to Africa. And despite white fears of Haiti, even the American Colonization Society took up Haiti as an ideal destination after only a few years.<sup>12</sup> Haiti was widely painted as a "mother," and arrival in Haiti was described as being welcomed as a "brother."<sup>13</sup> This was in contradistinction to Africa, which had been "rendered altogether a foreign country" by "our civilization."<sup>14</sup>

Haiti also adopted laws designed to promote internationalism. In the 1820s, all school children in Haiti were instructed in both French and English, and the nation flirted with adopting English as its official language and Protestantism (rather than Roman Catholicism) as its official religion to make Haiti more appealing to migrants from the United States.<sup>15</sup> This, combined with Haiti's active efforts to attract black émigrés, led to an influx of 6,000 to 13,000 black Americans from the US to Haiti in the 1820s.<sup>16</sup>

Beyond offering a sanctuary, Haiti was also able to directly improve the conditions for many working black people. The cases of black immigrants granted citizenship under the 1816 Constitution, as discussed in Chapter Four, and the concomitant threats of mutiny, were used by black sailors to demand better treatment. Any enslaved black individual had a chance at freedom, and black sailors had the means to grasp it should they be denied rights by their captains.<sup>17</sup> If nothing else, Haiti served as a counter-example to racist conceptions of blackness, especially those of slave-holders who justified slavery by claiming black people were incapable of self-rule. Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon, as well as Leslie M. Alexander, describe how 19<sup>th</sup> century abolitionists used Haiti in precisely this way.<sup>18</sup>

Despite this attention from United States abolitionists, Haiti inspired little political agitation or celebration in the United States. While some scholars cite the accounts of the “rebellious slaves” of Haiti as proof of influence, these accounts rarely translated into action. Mitch Kachun reviews both scholarly and primary accounts and finds the actual historical evidence of such agitation is almost entirely lacking in the United States, and where it exists it is equivocal. Because citation of Haiti often inspired racial panic – and corresponding violence – in white observers, the risk of drawing on Haiti outweighed the potential enthusiasm for the nation. Kachun writes, “Black leaders consciously tried to avoid being connected to the images of blood and violence the mention of Haiti tended to generate in the public mind of white America.”<sup>19</sup> Hence, we again see that the memory of Haitian revolutionary violence overwhelmed attention to Haitian governance. Any mention of Haiti was greeted by white observers conjuring the image of the “dance of death” in 1804 when Haiti revolutionaries indiscriminately killed white former slave-owners.<sup>20</sup> While there was limited celebration of Haiti in the United States – and three slave revolts appealed to Haiti, including Nat Turner’s and two minor outbreaks of violence – these did not extend into the political sphere. They were either private events (celebrations, held in private homes or churches) or they eschewed politics as traditionally understood (employing instead violent revolt). Kachun is again illuminating, “[B]lacks would have been *privately*, among themselves, expressing their admiration and identification with Haitian revolutionaries, while consciously avoiding any *public* demonstrations that would associate them with the Haitian Revolution.”<sup>21</sup>

Kachun also cautions that we must remain skeptical of historical documents claiming the influence of Haiti. He says it is on face illogical that black people living in

the United States, even freed black people in the North, would publicly celebrate a bloody rebellion that so terrified their white compatriots. The only reason so many scholars uncritically accept the idea of black celebration of Haiti in the United States is because it fits neatly into their general world-view of black abolitionism, particularly a “celebratory tendency” of those writing about marginalized groups.<sup>22</sup>

To address Kachun’s warning, it is necessary to distinguish *negritude* from pan-Africanism – the emphasis on black individuals’ return to a wholly black nation. 19<sup>th</sup> century agitators for black emigration took up Haiti as a destination for freed black Americans. They made many arguments that were explicitly pan-African in their justification. But Kechun demonstrates it had little direct political effect aside from attracting some migrants. Furthermore, in the 1860s during the United States’ Civil War these activists (outside of those in the predominantly-white American Colonization Society) switched their focus from migration to abolition. With this shift, they gave up their focus on Haiti. So while Haiti may have had some influence on the roots of pan-Africanism, that influence has long faded away. In fact, Matthew J. Clavin considers the shift in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century away from African nationalism and pan-Africanism among black people in the United States and contrasts it with an increase in “transatlantic consciousness.” With the decline in focus on Africa, black Americans increased their focus on Afro-Caribbean states like Haiti, establishing a split between pan-Africanism and Haiti.<sup>23</sup> Instead, we can find the lasting influence of Haiti in the notion of *negritude*, which draws on precisely the synecdochal inversion discussed throughout this thesis.

The key element here is the rhetorical reinvigoration of “blackness.” Aimé Césaire – the founder of *negritude* as an artistic movement – described Haiti as “where

*negritude* rose for the first time and stated that it believed in its humanity[.]”<sup>24</sup> *Negritude* arose as a response to the United States’ military intervention in 1913. Then, Haitian writers and artists began drawing heavily on African culture and *vodun* (voodoo) as it was uniquely realized in Haitian life. It was this literary elite which led the successful effort to repel the United States.<sup>25</sup>

At the end of the Haitian Revolution, two thirds of the inhabitants of Haiti had personally undergone the Middle Passage, but this was 109 years later, and this African culture had adopted a unique Haitian inflection. C. L. R. James traces this Haitian inflection back to sugar plantations and chattel slavery. The sugar industry was “the most civilizing as well as the most demoralizing influence in West Indian development.”<sup>26</sup> Sugar production meant slaves were rapidly imported to plantations, placed into a modern and attenuated production chain, forced into closer social relations than any other proletariat in the world, and nearly everything they produced was exported while nearly everything they consumed (even most clothing and food) was imported. Simultaneously, the institution of slavery meant slaves lived destitute lives in close proximity to their masters’ life of ease. And the only thing saving poor white colonists from work on the sugar plantation was skin color, securely linking the strong sense of separation and inferiority this produced to race. This combination produced a distinct form of life “not European, not African, not a part of the American main, not native in any conceivable sense of that word, but West Indian, *sui generis*, with no parallel anywhere else.”<sup>27</sup> This distinct form of life required its own thought, neither European nor African, but which could re-value the abject position of black slaves.



According to C. L. R. James, it was *negritude* that primarily informed the thinking of Marcus Garvey. Garvey was the founder of the Black Star Line and worked from 1921 to 1926 urging the emigration of black people in the United States to Africa. He believed Africa had once had a great civilization and would again with the aid of American black émigrés. Garvey, however, was from Jamaica, not Africa, had never been to Africa, and had no first hand experience of African culture. “His conception of Africa seemed to be a West Indian island ... multiplied a thousand times over.”<sup>28</sup> So while Garvey’s affinities lay with Africa, his thoughts were closer to the uniquely Caribbean *negritude*.

“*Negritude*” was coined as a distinct concept and movement in 1933. Three black students from French colonies, teaching in the mainland France university system – Aimé Césaire from Martinique, Léopold Sédar Senghor from Senegal, and Léon Damas from French Guiana – founded *L’Etudiant Noir* to write on the position of black students in France. They focused on how black individuals could find their identity, and a collective identity as “black,” living in a white world. In this incarnation, *negritude* was largely reactionary to the perceived abstract intellectualism of the French academy, which was thought to separate its thinkers from sensual experience. It sought to return to that sensual experience in art, primarily through a return to African artistic traditions. It also claimed black individuals had a greater access to the sensual, while white individuals suffered from an inherent remove from reality.<sup>29</sup>

They chose the term *negritude* as a play on the French pejorative *négre*, which meant something closer to “dirty black” than just “black.” Césaire, Senghor, and Damas wanted to transform the term into something affirmative, and to affirm a black world

within the larger white world they were inhabiting. Senghor emphasized a return to African mysticism. Césaire, in contrast, focused on Afro-Caribbean culture, and particularly on the Haiti Revolution. Pan-Africanism, as articulated by Garvey, for example, predated *negritude*. Yet *negritude* – after being formalized into this literary movement, especially as *negritude* had been articulated by Senghor, ultimately gave rise to the Pan-African literary movement and especially Afrocentricity. Senghor’s thinking emphasized mysticism, the inherent superiority of black over white artists, the unity of African culture, and the other features generally associated with Pan-Africanism. But, like Garvey, Césaire and Damas had never visited Africa, and focused instead on “the anguish of being black in a white man’s world” and finding a means to self-affirmation. Their writing (including poetry, plays, and theoretical works) was rooted in the experience of social and economic deprivation rather than essentialist beliefs about Africa.<sup>30</sup>

Césaire, who was often described in Pan-African terms, is particularly insistent he does not want a return to a Pre-Modern African past:

[T]hey pretend to have discovered in me an “enemy of Europe” and a prophet of the return to the pre-European past. For my part, I search in vain for the place where I could have expressed such views; where I ever underestimated the importance of Europe in the history of human thought; where I ever preached a *return* of any kind; where I ever claimed there could be a *return*.<sup>31</sup>

Once again, I systematically defend our old Negro civilizations: they were courteous civilizations. So the real problem, you say, is to return to them. No, I repeat. We are not men for whom it is a question of “either-or.” For us, the problem is not to make a utopian and sterile attempt to repeat the past, but to go beyond. It is not a dead society that we want to revive. We leave that to those who go in for exoticism.<sup>32</sup>

He refused either autochthonous African culture or imposed European culture. Instead, in the model of Hegelian thesis (a return to African culture), anti-thesis (assimilation into

French culture), and synthesis, he said there was a burden on “black men of culture” to bring about a new black renaissance, which could not be defined or prepared a priori.<sup>33</sup> Starting in the 1950s, Césaire focused on Martinique autonomy on the model of L’Ouverture, and even served in Martinique political office. Here, he saw Martinique’s options as assimilation into Colonial France, secession from France, or a new federal system of government, which the people of Martinique had to “imagine or die.”<sup>34</sup> He never pursued political (or intellectual) projects on the model of Africa, and always – while asserting an affinity with Africa – distinguished African and Caribbean thought/politics in his political writing.<sup>35</sup>

In 1960, Césaire published *Toussaint Louverture: The French Revolution and the Colonial Problem*. In it, he describes L’Ouverture as “the precursor” – precursor not just of Haitian sovereignty, but of the sovereignty of all the Caribbean, including Martinique, and of all colonized people.<sup>36</sup> This was partially due to L’Ouverture’s 1801 Constitution naming Saint Domingue a federal state of France, but more broadly due to the new form of black Republicanism L’Ouverture (along with others) imagined.

While Césaire’s theoretical writing on Haiti centers on L’Ouverture, he also wrote plays about Henri Christophe, *The Tragedy of King Christophe*, and Jean Jacques Dessalines, *And the Dogs were Silent*, and his wider philosophy and *negritude* in general reflect the developments in post-revolutionary Haiti and the synecdochal inversion elaborated in this thesis. The preference for black over white in Haiti’s early constitutions can find its partner in the “anti-racist racism” of *negritude*.<sup>37</sup> Césaire goes even further than a preference for African culture in terms of this “racism.” He claims “Europe is indefensible” – it is “decadent,” “sick,” “dying,” and “morally, spiritually indefensible” –

because it cannot deal with the very problem it has created, namely colonialism.<sup>38</sup> *Negritude* privileged black over white as an intentional response to the exilic status of black inhabitants of France, and according to Jean Paul Sartre this “racism” was a necessary step toward the overcoming of racism, through allowing black writers like Césaire or Senghor to find themselves as human beings.<sup>39</sup> This is in close parallel with the redefinition of “white” as “oppressor.” That which is European is that which has colonized and is unable to deal with the oppression it has created. Where Césaire does speak of Africa, he describes it as “Negro-African civilization,” which “tends to universality,” in contradistinction to Haitian, or Martinique, or any particular national “culture.”<sup>40</sup> This is not a literal appeal to Africa, but to the “new black,” as produced by the 1805 Constitution, as the figure of the universal. While Senghor emphasized genetics, and tracing lineage back to Africa, Césaire was more concerned with the experience of objectification in a white supremacist world. The *negritude* Césaire arrives at, having closely studied Haiti’s early period, is not a refusal of Modernity, but a re-crafting of Modernity within the terms of the black experience. It would make “Negro-African” the privileged category, standing in for universal humanity and open to all oppressed peoples, while “European” was degraded.

There is one notable exception to the political silence on Haiti in the 19<sup>th</sup> century United States. From 1889-1891, Frederick Douglass served as the minister resident and consul general to Haiti and occasionally spoke publicly on Haiti.<sup>41</sup> Douglass spoke frequently about Haiti’s government, but there are two particular speeches, both presented on January 2, 1893, where Douglass took Haiti as his sole object. The first was in the morning, dedicating the Haiti Pavilion at the Chicago World’s Columbian

Exposition. This speech was given to a small, predominantly white audience composed mostly of middle and upper class citizens of Chicago and exposition officials. This speech emphasized that Haiti was peaceful now, and sought directly to contest the violent frame imposed on Haiti. He delivered the second speech that evening at Quinn Chapel in Chicago. This speech was delivered to an overflowing hall of almost exclusively black listeners, and focused on black unity. The two distinct audiences highlight two distinct questions addressed in this thesis. The first is the representation of Haiti in the majority-white academy. The second is the symbolic role of Haiti for *negritude*.

Douglass' exposition speech illustrates how he chose to present Haiti to white elites. Prior to the exposition, Douglass had loudly criticized the exclusion of black presenters from the fair. Administrators had denied attempts to include a pavilion representing United States black culture, and black Americans had been largely excluded from the fair administration in general.<sup>42</sup> He avoided, however, mention of this in his Pavillion oration. Instead, he presented a speech that would be palatable to his white audience, and which mirrored the attempts to rescue Haiti in the academy. The entire first half of Douglass' speech is treacle praising both the exposition and Haiti. The second half analogizes the fighters of the United States' Revolutionary War – a “herculean” feat, led by “statement [sic] and heroes” – and contrasts this with the Haiti's – “slaves accustomed to stand and tremble in the presence of haughty masters,” who “As a race . . . stood before the world as the most abject, helpless and degraded of mankind.” Douglass alludes to Haiti's racial denigration by the United States and Europe. He says “The world was all against them.” Yet he quickly amends this charge, locating all evil agency in Napoleon Bonaparte.<sup>43</sup> The re-centering of racism in the person of Bonaparte resolves any anxiety

felt by the audience. Where Douglass discusses the violence of Haitian revolutionaries, it is always as a justified response to French violence carried out by those “helpless” men more accustomed to trembling than fighting.<sup>44</sup>

The thrust of Douglass’ speech invites a reassessment of Haiti in the minds of his white audience. He began the speech by praising the “brave men” of the Haitian Revolution and spoke at length about redeeming the manhood of the people of Haiti.<sup>45</sup> One of the main difficulties Douglass faced in constructing this speech was black masculinity was cast as inherently threatening, such that “Many Afro-American authors saw no easy way to make their black male characters deserving of sympathy and at the same time to celebrate their manhood.”<sup>46</sup> Black manhood had to be downplayed or it would appear as violent. Rather than viewing the Haitian Revolution as an isolated act of brutality, he invited his audience to locate it in a history of colonial violence and to focus on Haiti’s government rather than its revolution. Only the government was caused by the Haitian people, while the revolution was a necessary response to external conditions. This account invites a reassessment in the minds of his white listeners, but still casts Haiti in terms of violence – justified rather than unjustified violence. If we turn to his Quinn Chapel lecture, he is much more illuminating, and deploys the very synecdochal inversion argued in this section.

The speech Douglass delivered in Quinn Chapel speaks to Douglass’ vision of Haiti for *negritude*. Unlike the exposition oration, this speech begins by recognizing the racism of the United States: “Haiti is black, and we have not yet forgiven Haiti for being black or forgiven the Almighty for making her black.”<sup>47</sup> Douglass argues Haiti should stand among the best of nations – “if Haiti could be kept free from revolutions, she might

easily become ... the richest country in the world” – yet Haiti is impoverished.<sup>48</sup>

Douglass says Haiti, the Haitian people, and Haiti’s blackness are not to blame. At issue is Haiti’s aristocracy, and the “men in [the United States] who, to accomplish their personal and selfish ends, will ... assist in setting revolutions afoot.”<sup>49</sup> The Haiti of Douglass’ Quinn Chapel oration is still subject to manipulation by white elites:

To their shame be it spoken, men in high American quarters have boasted to me of their ability to start a revolution in Haiti at pleasure. They have only to raise sufficient money, they say, with which to arm and otherwise equip the malcontents, of either faction, to effect their object. Men who have old munitions of war or old ships to sell; ships that will go down in the first storm, have an interest in stirring up strife in Haiti. It gives them a market for their worthless wares. Others of a speculative turn of mind and who have money to lend at high rates of interest are glad to conspire with revolutionary chiefs of either faction, to enable them to start a bloody insurrection. To them, the welfare of Haiti is nothing; the shedding of human blood is nothing; the success of free institutions is nothing, and the ruin of neighboring country is nothing. They are sharks, pirates and Shylocks, greedy for money, no matter at what cost of life and misery to mankind.<sup>50</sup>

Beyond serving the political and economic ends of some in the United States, Douglass explains Haiti’s frequent revolutions reflect poorly on black people everywhere. Those who would judge Haiti capable or successful “as compelled ... to bow their heads in doubt and despair.”<sup>51</sup> As long as such revolutions continue, Haiti will be considered a junior partner among nations, its economy will languish, and its people will suffer “sorrow, pain, and death.”<sup>52</sup>

After documenting this hardship, as briefly recounting the colonization of Haiti and the slaughter of its indigenous people by the Spanish, Douglass explains the sort of *negritude* which Haiti so motivates. He says the color of black people’s skin makes them “distinct from the rest of mankind.”<sup>53</sup> Given this, the world in general, and black Americans in particular, should follow Haiti. “She has taught the world,” Douglass

claims, “the danger of slavery and the value of liberty. In this respect she has been the greatest of all our modern teachers.”<sup>54</sup> He says Haiti is representative of “the Negro’s manhood” and “the black man’s character.”<sup>55</sup> It has taught the Christian world that black men and women were not docile and sheep-like, and is the “one brave example” of blackness to the world. It is a symbol of “Negro manhood,” “Negro bravery,” “Negro military genius and skill,” “Negro’s courage” and intelligence.<sup>56</sup>

Put otherwise, Haitian black individuals have a unique relationship to humanity, and should be accorded a privileged relationship to humanity. It is only the encroachment into Haiti by white foreigners that has diminished Haiti’s prosperity, civilization, and peace, and those white foreigners who should be barred from Haiti. Douglass posits Haiti as both a corrective to white Christianity (not Christianity as such, but the European empire justified through Christian proselytizing), and as far more sophisticated and peaceful than Prussia, France, England, Italy, or Spain at the same stage in each nation’s respective history.<sup>57</sup>

Here we have the synecdochal inversion, in which Haiti offers an example of a new blackness, one which can inform the entire globe. This new blackness possesses a privileged relationship to humanity, in contradistinction to those white foreigners (and in early Haiti, “white,” “foreigner,” and “oppressor” were all synonymous) who should not be allowed to enter Haiti and meddle in its affairs for their own economic benefit, as almost all of Haiti’s early constitutions barred white individuals from entering Haiti as “master or proprietor.”

Simultaneously, Douglass refuses Pan-African influence. Douglass’ framing is less in terms of Africa (which is mentioned in this speech only as a historical referent or



to decry emigration to Africa) than a global class of oppressed people, even those with no African ancestry, beset by the white Christian world.<sup>58</sup> And while Douglass asserts continuity among black populations, he denies Africa possesses the sort of moral or spiritual redeeming force assumed by Pan-Africanism.<sup>59</sup> Douglass also does not reject Modernity. Instead, he offers a Modern vision of a global blackness, one which is echoed in Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Langston Hughes, all of whom will later cite Haiti as an exemplar.<sup>60</sup> But it should be remembered that Haiti's constitutions up to 1893, aside from the 1807 Constitution and 1811 addendum, also embrace a revised, black, vision of Modernity. Hopefully, the historical and ideological linkage between early Haiti and these thinkers has been demonstrated. The next section explains why Haiti's early constitutions proved so fruitful as a rhetorical resource.

### *The Ideology of Negritude*

Anne W. Gulick argues, “[N]egritude’s radical assessment of the political nature of race is linked to the work of revolution and constitution making. As a persistent antagonism to what Enlightenment thought and the colonial project have worked to exclude from their history, *negritude* appears to be central to the development of Modernity.”<sup>61</sup> It is important to understand *negritude*, and Haiti’s early constitutions, as a contestatory part of Modernity. They are not outside-, pre-, or post-Modernity, but “a-part” of Modernity, both a part of Modernity and apart from Modernity, “a stranger in it.”<sup>62</sup> They draw strongly on Modernist Republicanism while simultaneously critiquing it. And, in this way, they offer a necessary corrective to Modernity which opens a space for blackness.

In the Age of Revolutions, Haiti was almost singularly situated. It was both a colony, where Modernity could not reach, but a colony of France, where news of Modernity's upheaval in the French Revolution was quickly disseminated. Homi Bhabha says Saint Domingue was caught in a "signifying lag" where in the enunciation of liberty, equality, fraternity ran ahead of their realization, and even buttressed against that realization.<sup>63</sup> This was literally the case. News of the French Revolution drew Léger Félicité Sonthonax to offer freedom only to those black soldiers who fought for France, while mainland France offered more rights to *affranchise* to further turn them against slaves, and England and Spain sent colonial forces to recapture Saint Domingue. The news of revolution directly produced the attempts to quash revolution. News of Republicanism was used to prevent the realization of Republicanism.

In Saint Domingue, "where progress is only heard (of) and not seen," the enunciation of Modernity only illustrated Modernity's contradictions, its reliance on slavery and unfreedom.<sup>64</sup> Its very enunciation called itself into question. Eduardo Grüner writes: "the first and *most radical* answer to all the false philosophical-political 'universalisms' entailed by Enlightenment thought ... was given by the Haitian revolution."<sup>65</sup> Or, as Bhabha puts it, "This is the space in which the question of Modernity *emerges as a form of interrogation*: what do I belong to in the present? In what terms do I identify with the 'we', the intersubjective realm of society?"<sup>66</sup> The Haitian Revolution raised these questions, and Haiti's early political documents attempt to answer them. The Haitian Revolution allowed what Bhabha termed a "countermodernity" to emerge. In this, these questions of identity, intersubjectivity, and

belonging are reconstructed, and Haiti's early constitutions bear witness to these reconstructions.

The synecdochal inversion of Haiti's early constitutions offer the best appeal to an answer to these questions – how to produce a “we” and an “I” who belonged in Haitian society. For many black slaves in Saint Domingue, and potentially even for *affranchise*, there literally was no “I” and “we” in a meaningful sense. They were excluded from humanity. Fischer argues that synecdochal inversion produced those identities where there had been none before, by explicitly hailing black Haitians – or in 1816 all black and indigenous Americans – as political subjects, over and against the white planters who had long subjugated them as sub-human. Fischer claims only this truly inspires the universality Modernity appeals to, because “it both asserts egalitarian and universal intuitions and puts them to a test by using the previously subordinated term of the opposition as the universal term.”<sup>67</sup> Grüner adds, “it is the *Haitian revolution* what [sic] forces the French revolution to be fully *consistent* with its own statements, and not the other way round.”<sup>68</sup> It served to “enlighten the enlightenment.”<sup>69</sup> And because Modernity encompassed Republicanism and the Enlightenment but also white supremacy, an explicit inversion in the formation of “the people” was necessary.

This should be understood in contrast to Pan-Africanism or the Afrocentricity of Molefi Kete Asante.<sup>70</sup> Paul Gilroy rails against this attempt to locate black culture in “African antiquity.”<sup>71</sup> Such a focus, he argues, is fundamentally revisionist, seeking to return to a time “frozen at the point where blacks boarded the ships” that brought them to slavery. It projects a narrative from the African roots of civilization through inevitable African advancement, from which slavery was only a minor aberration to be forgotten as

nothing but “the site of black victimage” and “a cluster of negative associations that are best left behind.”<sup>72</sup> Asante, Gilroy writes, is utterly ahistorical, writing only about a transhistorical and undifferentiated African figure which is unchanged from the United States to Brazil to Africa, and encouraging an imagined history of African biological superiority.<sup>73</sup> Even if one disagrees with Gilroy’s larger point, this narrative necessarily excludes Haiti, given the intra-black divisions within Haiti and the rejection of phenotypal (and, therefore, biological) race, and especially the centrality of slavery to any understanding of Haiti’s origin and development.

Instead of “anti-modern” Afrocentricity, Gilroy calls for us to focus on the “flows, exchanges, and in-between elements” that arise from a historical reading.<sup>74</sup> This requires a recognition of the “Colonial experience,” and how that experience gave rise to “national(ist) consciousness(es) charged with colonialism’s negation.”<sup>75</sup> *Negritude*, derived “from the Harlem Renaissance movement, but also from the ‘indigenist’ movement in Haiti” and emphasizing the development of double-consciousness and blackness out of racism and slavery, can provide this historicization.<sup>76</sup> In fact, a full recognition of slavery grants black peoples a power unavailable to the master. They possess double-consciousness, in which they are aware of both their own black experience, as well as the white perspective imposed upon them by racist society, like the Haitians who possessed both French (racist) ideals and their own experience of oppression by those ideals. This offers a unique power of insight and critique.<sup>77</sup> Hence, Gilroy claims any Pan-African narrative must trace its lineage back through *Negritude* rather than aiming forward toward Afrocentricity.<sup>78</sup>

At best, the return to origins these philosophies offer could only ever speak to a part of the population. As was discussed in Chapters Two and Three, the appeal to an *indigene* past was one performed only by the black *nouvelle libres*, while most mulatto *affranchise* identified more closely with Republicanism. Such an Afrocentric hail would ring hollow for a large part of the population, including most political and military elite (and most constitutional architects). The *negritude* of Haiti is, as Césaire and Douglass both state, neither African nor European, but a synthesis informed by both.

This means Haiti must be one stopping point, if not a key site of analysis. Yet Fischer notes, ironically, that even Gilroy offers near-silence on Haiti. The assets Gilroy attributes to diasporic black peoples – “memory, double consciousness, critique of regulatory regimes, and so forth” – means their position is fundamentally one of “recoil,” merely reactive to the oppression of white Modernity.<sup>79</sup> So slavery is retained as a memory, but it is “the site of black victimage [and nothing else]” just as in Afrocentricity. The slave was dragged into Modernity by European colonization, and “The slave’s relation to history is that of insertion, not that of construction.”<sup>80</sup>

This emphasis on the history of slavery must also be distinguished from the genre of “slave narrative,” as is drawn on by Orlando Patterson in *Slavery and Social Death*.<sup>81</sup> The form of “slave narrative” is fundamentally inapplicable to Haiti.<sup>82</sup> Dessalines, Pétion, and Christophe all avoided narrating their experience prior to the Haitian Revolution. Almost no slaves disclosed an auto-biographical account of slavery in Saint Domingue, and almost all records we have are journalistic or military rather than from those with personal experience. Deborah Jenson describes this as the inverse of the Anglophone tradition of slave narratives – where the traditional genre demands disclosure, Haitians

expressed only a willed silence. Jenson identifies the slave narrative as a demand of abolitionists, who sought to publish and circulate the narratives to inspire empathy among white readers. But the Haitian people, who liberated themselves, and cut off almost all white immigration in 1816, had little interest in attracting white abolitionists.<sup>83</sup>

Dwight McBride claims slave narrative has become the frame through which we re-interpret any account of slavery.<sup>84</sup> It is the sole medium through which we understand “the voice of the socially voiceless.”<sup>85</sup> The general form of this genre begins with testimony of “becoming the legal property of another human being,” either through capture or upbringing for those born into slavery. It then follows with a joint process of “*un-becoming* the legal property of another human being” and “*becoming ... brigands*” (outlaws, either through fleeing to maroon colonies or slave revolt).<sup>86</sup> Slave narrative is understood entirely in terms of the dialectic enslavement/emancipation, and emancipation is intractably tied up with enslavement. Even after emancipation, the slave is preeminently defined as “subaltern.”<sup>87</sup> This is why Patterson titled the relevant book *Slavery and Social Death* – for him, the slave is subalterity itself, “socially dead.” McBride claims, “The slave is the material – the real, raw material – of abolitionist discourse. The slave is the referent, the point, the very body around which abolitionist discourse coheres and ‘makes sense.’”<sup>88</sup> Simultaneously, the slave’s experience is translated and injected into a pre-determined narrative frame such that a particular type of witnessing and a particular type of slave – that which can be exploited by white abolitionists – is privileged. This ensures “the real” is banished in favor of an abolitionist echo-chamber, with slave narratives considered as objects to be used rather than

expressions of agency. Thus, the rhetorical mode of slavery, premised on denying subject-hood to the slave, is reproduced.

Jenson also bemoans the transhistorical image of a “slave” produced by this narrative.<sup>89</sup> Such an abstract slave never existed. There was little in common between the experiences of slavery of L’Ouvverture – a mulatto *affranchise* – and Dessalines – a black *nouvelle libres*. There is even less in common between them and, for example, Frederick Douglass. Our imagining of this ideal Slave only fuels the forgetting of actual slaves who often shared few unifying features. The genre is often even justified through claims there was a transnational and cosmopolitan form to both slave narrative and slave experience. Yet L’Ouvverture, the one Haitian leader to write an autobiography, is excluded from the canon of slave narrative authors because his account and experience doesn’t fit that generic form.<sup>90</sup> Rather than writing about the violence of slavery, he emphasized his attempts to wrest power from colonial planters and the metropolitan authority. He was anything but subaltern; hence, he is ignored.

The people of Haiti, who claimed humanity for themselves, narrated their own experiences in their own ways. Jenson claims this speaks to “a literary tradition that sprang directly from the Haitian Revolution,” birthed in “the first Haitians speaking publicly and potently for their culture in the revolutionary era, and becoming authorial voices whose words left a profound mark on the Western world.”<sup>91</sup> She continues: “If slavery involved social death, a successful slave insurrection, and eventually national independence for the slave colony involving reanimation – a reanimation to which the literature of the Haitian Revolution bears witness.”<sup>92</sup> And, ironically, this reanimated voice is incoherent to modern white readers of abolitionist literature, who privilege the

genre of autobiographical slave narratives. Louis Sals-Molins, for example, wrote in 1987, “We have at our disposal not a single written testimony of the reality of slavery coming from a slave [of the French slave-holding colonies].”<sup>93</sup> This is despite the proliferation of Haitian poetry, plays, argumentative essays, and legal documents such as these constitutions, many written by former-slaves. Jenson counsels that we attend to “[e]arly texts by blacks devoted to state-building in a racialized world,” particularly those of L’Ouverture and Dessalines, as well as Haitian poetry, which is her main focus.<sup>94</sup>

Thus, we have two contrary approaches to Haiti. The Afrocentric or Pan-African approach begins history in 1804, and ignores everything that came before as causal factor. The “slave narrative” approach understands Haiti only as a product of slavery and colonization. To navigate between the two, Jenson draws on the works of Spivak’s famous essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Her answer is a qualified “no,” because any attempt by a former slave of Haiti to speak would be what Spivak terms a “native informant” account.<sup>95</sup>

It is this which the reading of Haiti’s early constitutions can contest, and where the rhetorical force of those documents lie. Unlike existing focus on “the horror of Saint-Domingue,” or correctives which consider *only* European domination or *only* African liberation, Haiti’s early constitutions represent former slaves acting to reconstruct Modernity, wedding Europe and Africa. And *negritude* requires this perspective as a resource.

Two dangers lie in drawing upon Haiti as a resource for *negritude*. The first is the collapse into what Michel-Rolph Trouillot dubs “Haitian exceptionalism.”<sup>96</sup> The second is applying the insights of Haiti to dissimilar situations. On Haitian exceptionalism:



Trouillot is a Haitian historian and one of the key scholars leading the revival of Haiti studies. He diagnoses the silence on Haiti and finds the nation is routinely ignored except to emphasize its status as a negative exception, either the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, the target of a devastating earthquake, a site of political upheaval and despotism, or the perpetrators of a genocide of white people. It replaces the actually existing Haiti with a mythic account of a singularly abject nation. He traces this back to the racism of 19<sup>th</sup> century academics who are the source of most historical information about the island, as well as current racism in media accounts. He also finds, however, a positive exceptionalism in Haiti scholars, including many of those cited in this thesis, who stress the affirmative uniqueness of Haiti. Such a response is usually an attempt to combat Haiti's negative exceptionalism, but still ensures we only deal with a mythical and ahistorical Haiti. Trouillot warns: "When we are told over and over again that Haiti is unique, bizarre, unnatural, odd, queer, freakish, or grotesque, we are also being told in varying degrees that it is unnatural, erratic, and therefore unexplainable."<sup>97</sup> Trouillot advises we move beyond Haitian exceptionalism to locate Haiti in its actual history.<sup>98</sup> Asselin Charles similarly warns that Haitian exceptionalism is rooted in an "isolationist ethos" which abstracts it from wider developments in the Caribbean.<sup>99</sup>

Yet the claim of Haitian exceptionalism begs two questions. The first question is: Is Haiti exceptional? Both the positive and negative exceptionalism have a strong basis in fact. Haiti was the site of the first successful slave revolt, still the only slave revolt to establish an independent nation. It was the first non-white state to gain independence from European colonization. It was the "first black republic."<sup>100</sup> Many aspects of its early constitutions were unique. It is also today the poorest country in the Western

Hemisphere, has been through more revolutions than almost any other state in the world, and did brutally slaughter most of its white inhabitants in 1804. The second question is: Can one simultaneously historicize Haiti and describe it as exceptional? If we answer the first question yes, the answer is clearly yes. Nadège T. Clitandre advises, by locating Haiti historically, emphasizing the causes of its exceptionalism (both positive and negative), we can combat the demonization of Haiti and also draw on Haiti as an insight for Afro-diasporic people.<sup>101</sup> It should be clear that Haiti was no island paradise, nor were its rulers free of blame. Yet Haiti's early rulers – soldiers fighting against slavery and colonialism for liberation, some of whom became corrupted by power – and its tribulations were shaped by the economic and political position of the state.<sup>102</sup> I have aimed to locate Haiti historically as a first step to draw out insights for *negritude*.

The second danger is we might apply the insights of Haiti's early constitutions to dissimilar nations or circumstances, where such insights do not apply or may even have the opposite effect. It is important to note, ala Louis Althusser's materialist thinking, the constitutions of early Haiti arose out of and were over-determined by the material conditions in Saint Domingue and Haiti. In the French or United States metropolises, where very similar constitutions were being passed, Haiti's synecdochal inversion would have been unthinkable. It is obvious they would not declare themselves black – given both the reigning white supremacy but also the simple fact of their leaders' white skin. But, more meaningfully, the synecdochal inversion of Haiti's constitutions arose from the disjunct between the articulation of Modernity and its reality in the colony and especially for black colonial subjects.

It is too easy to view the synecdoches discussed here as symbolic gestures to be exported as symbolic tools. But without this material over-determination, such incorporation would only be assimilation and fail to change anything fundamental about the ideology of Modernity. The clearest example of this is Articles 12, 13, and 14 of the 1805 Constitution. White inhabitants are excluded from ownership, and then “blackness” and “whiteness” are redefined such that some with white skin are “black” rather than “white,” and “white” is made to mean oppressor/colonizer. Should a predominantly (phenotypically) white nation like the United States attempt to add such an amendment to its constitution, those in power would only define themselves as the *good, non-oppressive* white people. Even without incorporating Haiti’s constitutional move, this very same logic is operative in the present United States, and throughout Enlightenment thought and Modernity. White individuals often assert their distance from overt racism to paint themselves as the *good, white liberal* and excuse more subtle and often more nefarious forms of “color-blind” racism.<sup>103</sup> The inclusion of the 1805 Constitution’s Articles 12, 13, and 14 would offer an even better means to avoid blame and assuage guilt. If *good* (phenotypical) white individuals are, by definition, “black,” they can disarm any criticism by claiming they, themselves, are black, and therefore cannot discriminate against black people. It would further allow the direct co-optation of any identitarian claims.

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva claims this very rhetorical move is one of the most effective tools in the maintenance of anti-black racism in the United States, and that its propagation in media and government are the primary means of racism’s continuing force.<sup>104</sup> Rey Chow argues such an attempt would only repeat the ideology it attempts to overthrow – making claims to a “solidarity” possessing no real weight and, in fact,

removing any weight solidarity could have had. Chow says in such efforts the oppressed “are robbed twice,” first through the original deprivation (the colonization of Haiti and enslavement of Haitians), and second through “robbing the terms of oppression of their critical and oppositional import, and thus depriving the oppressed of even the vocabulary of protest and rightful demand.”<sup>105</sup> To illustrate, if white skinned people in the United States – now branded as “black” – began to freely use the terms “nigger/nigga,” those terms would immediately lose any resistant power they currently possess. Hence, over-applying Haiti’s synecdochal inversion may invite the very same problems it would address.

While the form of this synecdochal inversion offers great rhetorical potential, this potential lies only in those sites where the inversion is over-determined by material conditions, which produce it with a certain meaning and resonance. Only in such locals can it function properly as an inversion, rather than simply a redefinition in which the privileged group remains on top but under a different moniker. What is more, Grüner says this synecdoche is unique to blackness, which is *the* unrepresentable and unthinkable element of Modernity – absolutely excluded from both the “political question” and the “social question” because not even human, as the Hannah Arendt quotation articulated in Chapter Three.<sup>106</sup> Thus, this discussion does not translate into the endorsement of a political strategy, but only a rhetorical strategy that is “endlessly posed by the material and resistant singularity of the object.”<sup>107</sup> It is that object, and the site of *negritude*, which can productively draw upon Haiti’s early constitutions as a re-writing of Modernity.

### *Conclusion*

The nature of the literature on Haiti – sporadic outside Haiti itself, and almost exclusively focused on the Haiti Revolution – highlights an ideology which has systematically excluded the nation. It also illustrates that criticism is itself rhetorical, and a thesis on Haiti must itself either align with or contest that ideological frame. Hence, my argument in this conclusion is not simply descriptive, that the synecdochal inversions in Haiti's early constitutions offer a resource for *Negritude* and Pan-Africanism. There is also a prescriptive argument that scholars who are concerned with Haiti ought to attend more to post-revolutionary Haiti, rather than narrowly focusing in on 1791-1804. Such a shift offers an unprecedented insight on Modernity, as well as a resource for Afro-diasporic people.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> David P. Geggus, ed., *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> David Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue 1793-1798* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 383.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted, however, from 1791 to 1875, France – considered an exemplar of Western civilization – went through 13 constitutions, more than Haiti (James G. Leyburn, *The Haitian People* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941], 237). And despite their poverty, the Haitian people were widely noted for their low rates of crime, with murder, rape, and arson particularly rare. Charles Mackenzie, the British consul to Haiti from 1826-1827 and one of Haiti's harshest critics, noted only one murder on the island during those years (Leyburn, *The Haitian People*, 245).

<sup>4</sup> Michael C. McGee, "In Search of 'The People': A Rhetorical Alternative," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61.3 (October 1975): 238.

<sup>5</sup> *Constitution of the French Colony of Saint-Domingue*, tit. 2, art. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Jean Casimir, "From Saint-Domingue to Haiti: To Live Again or to Live at Last!" *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, ed. David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), xv.

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), 507.

<sup>8</sup> Leslie M. Alexander, "'The Black Republic': The Influence of the Haitian Revolution on Northern Black Political Consciousness 1816-1862." *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution: Selected Essays and Historical Documents*. Eds. Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon (New York: Routledge, 2013), 59-61.

<sup>9</sup> Ada Ferrer, "Haiti, Free Soil, and Antislavery in the Revolutionary Atlantic," *American Historical Review* 117 (2012): 42-47.

<sup>10</sup> Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon, "Introduction," *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution: Selected Essays and Historical Documents*, ed. Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon (New York: Routledge, 2010), 2-3.

<sup>11</sup> Sara C. Fanning, "The Roots of Early Black Nationalism: Northern African Americans' Invocations of Haiti in the Early Nineteenth Century," *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution: Selected Essays and Historical Documents*, ed. Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon (New York: Routledge, 2010), 40.

<sup>12</sup> Carl Patrick Burrowes, "Caught in the Crosswinds of the Atlantic: John Brown Russwurm (1799-1851), *Freedom's Journal*, and African Colonization." *Journalism History* 37.3 (Fall 2011): 130-141.

<sup>13</sup> Fanning, Sara C. "The Roots of Early Black Nationalism: Northern African Americas' Invocations of Haiti in the Early Nineteenth Century." *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution: Selected Essays and Historical Documents*. Ed. Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon (New York: Routledge, 2010), 50.

<sup>14</sup> Pétion, Alexandre. Quoted in: Fanning, "The Roots of Early Black Nationalism," 47.

- <sup>15</sup> Fanning, "The Roots of Early Black Nationalism," 46.
- <sup>16</sup> Fanning, "The Roots of Early Black Nationalism," 39.
- <sup>17</sup> Fanning, "The Roots of Early Black Nationalism," 44.
- <sup>18</sup> Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon, "Fever and Fret: The Haitian Revolution and African American Responses," *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution: Selected Essays and Historical Documents*, ed. Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon (New York: Routledge, 2010), 9-23.; Alexander, "'The Black Republic.'"
- <sup>19</sup> Mitch Kachun, "Antebellum African Americans, Public Commemoration, and the Haitian Revolution: A Problem of Historical Mythmaking," *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution: Selected Essays and Historical Documents*, ed. Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon (New York: Routledge, 2010), 95.
- <sup>20</sup> Kachun, "Antebellum African Americans, Public Commemoration, and the Haitian Revolution," 95-96.
- <sup>21</sup> Kachun, "Antebellum African Americans, Public Commemoration, and the Haitian Revolution," 101.
- <sup>22</sup> Kachun, "Antebellum African Americans, Public Commemoration, and the Haitian Revolution."
- <sup>23</sup> Matthew J. Clavin, "American Toussaints: Symbol, Subversion, and the Black Atlantic Tradition in the American Civil War," *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution: Selected Essays and Historical Documents*, ed. Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon (New York: Routledge, 2010), 117.
- <sup>24</sup> Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, trans. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 15.
- <sup>25</sup> C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 394-395.
- <sup>26</sup> James, *The Black Jacobins*, 393.
- <sup>27</sup> James, *The Black Jacobins*, 391-392.
- <sup>28</sup> James, *The Black Jacobins*, 396.
- <sup>29</sup> Ellen Kennedy and Paulette J. Trout, "The Roots of Negritude," *Africa Report* (May 1966): 61-62.
- <sup>30</sup> Kennedy and Trout, "The Roots of Negritude."
- <sup>31</sup> Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 44-45.
- <sup>32</sup> Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 51-52.
- <sup>33</sup> Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 169.
- <sup>34</sup> Wilder, *Freedom Time*, 178.

<sup>35</sup> Aimé Césaire, “Letter to Maurice Thorez,” trans. Chike Jeffers, *Social Text* 28.2 (Summer 2010): 150.

<sup>36</sup> Wilder, *Freedom Time*, 192.

<sup>37</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, *Black Orpheus*, trans. S. W. Allen (New York: French and European Publications, Inc., 1976), 18.

<sup>38</sup> Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 31-32.

<sup>39</sup> Sartre, *Black Orpheus*, 18.

<sup>40</sup> Aimé Césaire, “Culture and Colonization,” trans. Brent Hayes Edwards, *Social Text* 28.2 (Summer 2010): 128.

<sup>41</sup> Glen McClish, “‘The Spirit of Human Brotherhood,’ ‘The Sisterhood of Nations,’ and ‘Perfect Manhood’: Frederick Douglass and the Political Significance of the Haitian Revolution,” *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution: Selected Essays and Historical Documents*, ed. Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon (New York: Routledge, 2010), 123.

<sup>42</sup> McClish, “‘The Spirit of Human Brotherhood,’ ‘The Sisterhood of Nations,’ and ‘Perfect Manhood,’” 125.

<sup>43</sup> Frederick Douglass, “The Haitian Pavilion Dedication Ceremonies” (speech delivered at the World’s Fair, in Jackson Park, Chicago, January 2, 1893), <http://www2.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti/history/1844-1915/douglass.htm>.

<sup>44</sup> Douglass, “The Haitian Pavilion Dedication Ceremonies.”

<sup>45</sup> It is unclear from the speech whether he is literally referring to males or if he is using “men” as a neutral term for both men and women. Either way, casting his description in terms of “men of the negro race” ensured images of black masculinity were conjured up, and such images would have been applied to both men and women regardless of whether Douglass referred to women or men in his speech, though perhaps to a lesser degree if he had spoken about women.

<sup>46</sup> Richard Yarborough, “Race, Violence, and Manhood: The Masculine Ideal in Frederick Douglass’s ‘The Heroic Slave,’” *Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 174.

<sup>47</sup> Frederick Douglass, “Lecture on Haiti” (speech delivered at Quinn Chapel, Chicago, January 2, 1893), <http://www2.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti/history/1844-1915/douglass.htm>.

<sup>48</sup> Douglass, “Lecture on Haiti.”

<sup>49</sup> Douglass, “Lecture on Haiti.” This fear on Douglass’ part is proleptic, given the United States invasion of Haiti in 1913.

<sup>50</sup> Douglass, “Lecture on Haiti.”

<sup>51</sup> Douglass, “Lecture on Haiti.”

<sup>52</sup> Douglass, “Lecture on Haiti.”

<sup>53</sup> Douglass, “Lecture on Haiti.”

<sup>54</sup> Douglass, “Lecture on Haiti.”



- <sup>55</sup> Douglass, "Lecture on Haiti."
- <sup>56</sup> Douglass, "Lecture on Haiti."
- <sup>57</sup> Douglass, "Lecture on Haiti."
- <sup>58</sup> McClish, "'The Spirit of Human Brotherhood,' 'The Sisterhood of Nations,' and 'Perfect Manhood,'" 132.
- <sup>59</sup> Douglass, "Lecture on Haiti."
- <sup>60</sup> Maurice Jackson, "No Man Could Hinder Him: Remembering Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution in the History and Culture of the African American People," *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution: Selected Essays and Historical Documents*, ed. Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon (New York: Routledge, 2010), 141-164.
- <sup>61</sup> Anne W. Gulick. "We Are Not the People: The 1805 Haitian Constitution's Challenge to Political Legibility in the Age of Revolution." *American Literature* 78 (2006): 813.
- <sup>62</sup> William V. Spanos, "Pierre's Extraordinary Emergence: Melville and 'the Voice of Silence,' Part 1," *boundary 2* 28.2 (2001): 109.
- <sup>63</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 350.
- <sup>64</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 351.
- <sup>65</sup> Eduardo Grüner, "Haiti: A (Forgotten) Philosophical Revolution," trans. Agostina Marchi, *Sociedad* 28 (2008).
- <sup>66</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 351.
- <sup>67</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 233.
- <sup>68</sup> Grüner, "Haiti."
- <sup>69</sup> Grüner, "Haiti."
- <sup>70</sup> For an elaboration of Afrocentricity, see: Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* (Chicago: African American Images, 2003).
- <sup>71</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (New York: Verso, 1993), 189.
- <sup>72</sup> Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 189.
- <sup>73</sup> Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 189.
- <sup>74</sup> Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 190.
- <sup>75</sup> Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 195.
- <sup>76</sup> Léopold Senghor, "Edward Wilmot Blyden: Precursor of Negritude," *Selected Letters of Edward Wilmot Blyden*, ed. Hollis R. Lynch (Millwood, NJ: Kraus Thomas International, 1976), xix-xx.
- <sup>77</sup> For a full discussion of double-consciousness, see: W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folks* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1994).

- <sup>78</sup> Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 211.
- <sup>79</sup> Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Culture of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 36.
- <sup>80</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 36.
- <sup>81</sup> Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).
- <sup>82</sup> Deborah Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex, and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 39.
- <sup>83</sup> Deborah Jenson, "Jean-Jacques Dessalines and the African Character of the Haitian Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 69 (2012): 617.
- <sup>84</sup> Dwight McBride, *Impossible Witnesses: Truth, Abolitionism, and Slave Testimony* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 3.
- <sup>85</sup> Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, 2.
- <sup>86</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Classic Slave Narratives* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), ix.
- <sup>87</sup> Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, 28.
- <sup>88</sup> McBride, *Impossible Witnesses*, 6.
- <sup>89</sup> Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, 8.
- <sup>90</sup> Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, 23.
- <sup>91</sup> Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, 1.
- <sup>92</sup> Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, 29.
- <sup>93</sup> Cited in: Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, 2.
- <sup>94</sup> Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, 1.
- <sup>95</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 285.
- <sup>96</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "The Odd and the Ordinary: Haiti, the Caribbean, and the World," *Cimarron* 2 (1990): 3.
- <sup>97</sup> Trouillot, "The Odd and the Ordinary," 6.
- <sup>98</sup> Trouillot, "The Odd and the Ordinary," 11.
- <sup>99</sup> Asselin Charles, "Haitian Exceptionalism and the Caribbean Consciousness," *Journal of Caribbean Literature* 3.2 (Spring 2002): 115-130.
- <sup>100</sup> Thabo Mbeki, "Thabo Mbeki on Haiti," *Times Live*, January 24, 2010, <http://www.timeslive.co.za/opinion/2010/01/24/thabo-mbeki-on-haiti>.

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<sup>102</sup> Robert Fatton Jr., "The Haiti Authoritarian *Habitus* and the Contradictory Legacy of 1804," *The Journal of Haitian Studies* 10 (2004): 22-43.

<sup>103</sup> Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America* (Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2014), 140-143.

<sup>104</sup> Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 145-147.

<sup>105</sup> Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 13.

<sup>106</sup> Grüner, "Haiti."

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