IMPERIAL EXILES:
EMIGRATION AND COUNTERREVOLUTION
IN THE COLONIAL ATLANTIC

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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The crisis of French colonial society during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras produced fragmentation along factional and racial lines and the displacement of more than 30,000 people around the Atlantic World. Émigrés, refugees, and other assorted displaced people became central to debates about the future of the colonial system, and they forged new transimperial ties of interest and ideology. This dissertation explores the experience and consequences of colonial exile and its connections to the broader questions of property, race, and imperial mission for both revolutionary France and its imperial rival, Britain. It argues that exile and counterrevolution helped to transform the relationship between European empires at turn of the nineteenth century, cementing a more pan-European conception of imperial rule over the non-European world.

Attempts to classify, monitor, and regulate displaced people by a jostling assortment of colonial, metropolitan, and diplomatic actors became central to the politics of revolution in the Caribbean, while the economic ventures of both exiles and the property they left behind became inextricable from the fate of the slave-based plantation economy. The British occupation of French colonies and alliance with colonial counterrevolutionaries newly entangled the British empire with French problems and
perspectives surrounding racial hierarchy and colonial law and governance. Meanwhile, exiles played a vital role in shaping historical understandings of the colonial crisis, above all the successful challenge to slavery by the Haitian Revolution. In all these respects, the reactions to and against the revolutionary upheavals in the colonial world helped to shape the global order that would succeed them.
Acknowledgements

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To my father Scott I can credit much of the inspiration for pursuing history as a vocation, and I know no one has ever been prouder of me for it. I owe my mother Sharon unending
gratitude for tireless support both moral and practical; both she and my mother-in-law Jana Grose helped make the indispensable “village” for my family during the writing process. My daughters, Lena and Rosalind, both made their appearances during that process, and I can only offer them thanks—which I hope they will someday read—for their patience and indulgence. Whatever the merits of this dissertation, they are the far better creations.

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife Sara. I have properly offered many accolades for those who helped make a historian of me, but to her I owe the man that I am. Without her I would be cast adrift from the truest home in the world I have ever known.

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Archival Abbreviations in Footnotes

AN- Archives Nationales, Paris
AD- Archives Diplomatique, Nantes
BL- British Library, London
NA- National Archives, Kew, London

National Archives Sub-collections:
WO- War Office
CO- Colonial Office*
T- Treasury

* Note that the British Colonial Office did not exist under that name during much of the period covered in this work; much of the correspondence cited was originally held by the Home Office or other entities.
En vain nous fuyons sur l'aile rapide des vents, aucun objet nouveau ne s'offre à nos regards.
Quoi! l'univers ne seroit-il plus qu'une masse fluide?

Pierre Victor Malouet
*Les quatre parties du jour à la mer*, 1783
Introduction

When the sun rose over Cap Français on June 24, 1793, those who witnessed the scene from the harbor could scarcely believe their eyes. Just a few days before, there had stood the largest and most elegant settlement in the richest European colony in the world. It had once boasted hundreds of whitewashed stone houses, fountains, churches, a convent, a circulation library, and salons where local philosophical societies debated the causes of yellow fever or the fantastical claims of mesmerism.¹ Now it lay in ashes. A pall hung overhead from the fires that had run wild overnight, a pyre for the 3,000 corpses that filled the town. Le Cap, as it was commonly known, had for several days played host to every form of violence and confusion: houses leveled by point-blank artillery fire, midnight fusillades between bands of militia who turned out to be on the same side, fleeing crowds of terrified townsfolk, and widespread plundering. The renowned local playhouse, the Comédie du Cap, was incinerated, but not before its colorful costumes found their way onto the backs of a few of the armed black men patrolling what was left of the town. It was an absurd detail that recurred in several colonists’ written accounts and engravings of Le Cap's fall, one that succinctly conveyed their sense of a world turned upside down.²

Something new had indeed emerged amid the destruction of the "Paris of the Antilles." The battle for Le Cap had begun as a rebellion led by the Governor of Saint

Domingue, General François-Thomas Galbaud, against

the republican Commissioners Léger-Félicité Sonthonax and Étienne Polverel. Galbaud, recently arrested and ordered deported by the commissioners, had instead returned to raise an insurrection of soldiers, sailors, and local white colonists. Many of Galbaud's supporters had welcomed the French Revolution and the fall of the colony's old royal government; what they could not accept was the 1792 decree of civil equality between whites and free men of color that the commissioners had been tasked with implementing. Galbaud's forces came ashore on the afternoon of June 20. Bloody street fighting followed between the rebels and the mix of free-colored and white troops loyal to the commissioners. The ill-disciplined sailors began to burn and loot, joined in some cases by local enslaved people who had seized the moment to make a break for freedom.

Then came the turning point. Galbaud's attack, though poorly led and piecemeal, was pressing the commissioners hard enough that they feared disaster. Their solution was to turn to a new ally:

We, Étienne Polverel and Léger-Félicité Sonthonax…declare that the will of the French Republic and of its delegates is to grant freedom to all the black warriors who will fight for the republic…all the slaves declared free by the delegates of the Republic will be the equal of all other free men, white or of other color. They will enjoy all the rights of French citizens.\(^3\)

Within a day of this proclamation, thousands of former slaves rallied to the republican cause and flooded into Le Cap to join the commissioners’ counteroffensive, driving Galbaud’s panicked forces back to their ships. They came from several

independent armed bands that had taken to the countryside since the 1791 uprising of
enslaved people in the North province. Hitherto they had more-or-less fought against all
white and free-colored factions. Now they had made their liberation an official part of the
republican agenda. This was a halting and contingent realignment: only some of the black
leaders had responded to the proclamation, and some of those who had—notably the
Kongolese-born Macaya—would shortly thereafter repudiate the republic to declare their
allegiance to a king, whether French or Spanish. But Sonthonax and Polverel’s decree
was only the first of several acts of emancipation, driven by their increasing reliance on
black military strength. In October the commissioners declared slavery dead in Saint
Domingue, a fait accompli that impelled the French Republic toward the abolition of
slavery in all its domains the following year. This chain of events proved a milestone
toward the establishment of an independent black republic in the former Saint Domingue.
The recapture of Le Cap was in this sense a watershed moment: the intersection of the
Africans’ struggle for freedom with the republic’s civic egalitarianism transformed the
promise of the French Revolution into something more radical and more universal than
ever before. It was a journée to match any in Robespierre’s Paris.4

There was another, different, but nonetheless crucial way in which the fall of Le Cap marked an inflection point for the future of the French colonial world and beyond.
To see it, one must turn from the landward scene of triumph to a seaward tableau of
defeat and desperation. By that morning of June 24, the harbor was crowded with
hundreds of military and civilian vessels teeming with as many as 10,000 colonists.5

5 Ibid.
Many had become separated from family members in the chaotic flight from Le Cap and the surrounding areas to the waterfront; others had lost them to combat or massacre. Some had escaped the burning city with little but the clothes on their backs, while a fortunate few had made it offshore with considerable property, often including enslaved people. The mass of refugees was mostly white, though it included a number of free people of color who had opposed the commissioners or had simply sought to flee the violence. Most of Galbaud’s fleet would sail in convoy for the eastern seaboard of the United States, where cities like Norfolk, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York would receive the single largest influx of French colonial exiles in the revolutionary era. Some of the refugee ships would meanwhile fall victim to British privateers lurking in the waters off of Saint Domingue, consigning their passengers to uncertain fates in the Bahamas, Bermuda, or Nova Scotia. The emigrants of summer 1793 were not the first to brave these routes. They had been preceded by thousands of displaced people, not only from Saint Domingue but from the other French colonies that were undergoing their own upheavals: Martinique, Guadeloupe, Saint Lucia, and more. Thousands more would follow them, heading to the USA, Spanish Louisiana, Jamaica, Cuba, Trinidad, or metropolitan France and Britain. But Le Cap was not just another locale in the wider geography of exile. Its dramatic fall crystallized, for many colonists, their sense of the loss they had suffered, and the culprits they blamed for their dispossession. Its smoking ruins became a literal and symbolic point of departure from the old order.

The outward voyage of the convoy was not merely a result of the destruction of something old, however. The flight from Le Cap, and the wider shift of people, political forces and ideas of which it became an emblem, had a critical impact on what the
colonial world was becoming. Beaten, buffeted, and banished, the French colonial exiles did not recede over the historical horizon. Exiles played a central role in the chaotic politics of the revolutionary Caribbean, as well as debates over race, slavery, and colonialism on both sides of the Atlantic. In fact, in key respects these losers of the revolutionary upheaval became the winners of the unfolding struggle over the nature of European empire and global order. Cast adrift by crisis of slave society in the Caribbean, émigrés helped to shape a larger pattern of political, economic, and intellectual reinvestment in European empire on a global scale. To explain this paradox, it is necessary to follow their geographic, political, and intellectual voyages through a colonial world in crisis.

What do these journeys reveal about the relationship between empire and revolution in the Atlantic World? Three overarching claims emerge from this study. First, the history of colonial exile underscores the entanglement of empires—most importantly that of France and Britain, the chief rivals in the maritime-colonial domain—in the course and consequences of the Caribbean revolutions at the close of the eighteenth century. The colonial societies of the Old Regime were already highly mobile and multicultural, but the revolutions that violently disrupted them also transformed their global connections. These conflicts were simultaneously multi-sided French civil wars and inter-imperial contests, clashes of national interests in strategic primacy as well as transnational interests of caste and class. Emigration and counterrevolution were consequently transimperial phenomena—that is, not simply crossing imperial boundaries but encompassing specifically imperial problems, practices and discourses that blurred or transcended national divides. British, French, and other colonial societies had never been
hermetically sealed from one another, of course. However, novel revolutionary conditions, and in particular the reactions and adaptations to those conditions by imperial actors, increased the interpenetration of French and British colonial life in political, economic, and intellectual spheres even as they raised the stakes of imperial conflict.

Second, these alignments of forces arose in response to revolutionary conditions but cannot be understood as purely backward-looking, even when they sought to restore some version of the old colonial order. They were, in their way, quite as novel as the colonial revolutions themselves, and had their own diverse and sometimes conflicting constructive projects. Counterrevolution was itself a force for change, sometimes unintentionally but often self-consciously. Despite the sense of dispossession and nostalgia nurtured by many colonial exiles, they also sought to contribute to a new imperial order, often in ways that blended the politics and ideologies of reaction, reform, and revolution. It was, moreover, the transimperial dimension of the flight from and struggle against revolution that generated many of these attempts to reorder the colonial world.

Third, one of the chief legacies of this transimperial mélange was the concept of “the colonial system,” and the set of understandings of global order that this term implied. Colonial exiles and counterrevolutionaries, driven from their homes and/or the institutional space of mainstream French politics into the interstices of empire, increasingly understood the exploitation of the non-European world as a joint European enterprise governed by common understandings of race, property, and progress. This consensus helped to shape a shared pattern of reinvestment in empire and in white
supremacy that ultimately diminished Anglo-French rivalry in the post-revolutionary world of the 19th century.

This project stands at the confluence of several historiographical streams, from the more focused scholarship of French exiles to broader questions about slavery, Atlantic racial capitalism, and the long-term trajectories of European empire. One of these streams lies in the historical reevaluation of the significance of the French emigration that traces its roots to Donald Greer’s 1951 *The Incidence of the Emigration during the French Revolution*. Through a careful data-driven approach, Greer’s work established the social and political diversity of the emigration in contrast to the traditional stereotype of émigrés as primarily aristocratic or clerical reactionaries, “the white and the black”—a stereotype that, like much of the currents of French historiography, had its ultimate origins in the turbulent politics of the revolution itself. Greer demonstrated *inter alia* that by far the greater part of the emigration occurred after the fall of the monarchy in 1792, particularly during the Terror, and that at least half of the émigrés were members of the Third Estate (though, as Greer himself notes, the “consecrated anachronism” of the Estates system obscures far more diversity than it reveals). His demographic detective work helped to unsettle old prejudices while ostensibly side-stepping the entrenched ideological oppositions common to the broader historiography of the Revolution. The legacy of Greer’s approach is evident in more contemporary studies of the emigration, particularly Kirsty Carpenters’ *Refugees of the French Revolution*. Carpenter’s work is

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liberally supplemented with graphs, tables, and pie-charts intended to explicate the full range of émigré origins, backgrounds, and experiences. The historiographical and normative stakes of this emphasis on disaggregation and diversity are clear for Carpenter. By rescuing the “émigré” label from an exclusive association with a handful of elite monarchists, she proposes to work for the day when the émigrés “get their rightful share of the historians’ ink.” Carpenter’s work, alongside that of other Anglophone historians such as Simon Burrows, has itself proven influential for a new generation of emigration studies that has emphasized the intellectual, cultural, and political diversity and creativity of French émigré communities and their reciprocal exchanges with host countries. This strand of scholarship sometimes carries with it a rehabilitative tone that most historians would not care to extend to many of the subjects of this dissertation; moreover, the white planters who formed the most visible (and disproportionately large) echelon of the colonial diaspora do play a central role in the argument. Nonetheless, modern histories of French emigration remain an important substantive and methodological point of reference for understanding the internal divisions of the colonial diaspora, its complex patterns of global interaction, particularly with the British Empire, and its political dynamism in facially marginalized circumstances.

8 Kirsty Carpenter, Refugees of the French Revolution, 180
Other scholars working outside the subfield of émigré historiography as such have also shed light on the relationship of French exiles to larger histories of migration, humanitarianism, and political modernity. Caroline Shaw, for instance, has documented their role in transforming the category of refugee in Britain from a previously Protestant-confessional model into a more ecumenical humanitarian conception.\(^\text{10}\) Within the historiography of France itself, Jennifer Heuer sees the emergence of the émigré as a category as a key site of uncertainty on the part of revolutionary authorities attempting to define the relation between marriage, family, and new republican conceptions of citizenship and national belonging.\(^\text{11}\) In highlighting the stories of women who emigrated or were married to exiles, and their legal battles against state repression, Heuer’s emphasis is not on the experience of emigration itself, however, but rather on the ramifications of the construction of émigrés as a class for the Revolution’s internal dynamics.

Colonial emigration as such has received no dedicated treatment at length by historians. This is not to say that French colonial exiles have been totally ignored. The intrigues and motivations of elite colonial counterrevolutionaries amidst the Haitian Revolution were explored several decades ago by Charles Frostin and David Geggus, among others, while more recently Americanists such as Ashli White and François Furstenberg have sought to deprovincialize the history of the early United States by


following the movements of the Saint Dominguan diaspora there.\textsuperscript{12} From a different angle, emphasizing connections with Europe, Miranda Spieler has shown how the French Revolution’s logic of territorial citizenship operated on the colonial frontier in French Guiana, albeit largely on deportees and exiles of metropolitan origin.\textsuperscript{13} However, as with Shaw and Heuer’s histories of emigration in Europe, these works largely speak to separate historiographical conversations segregated by geographic and conceptual boundaries. What remains missing, as Maya Jasanoff observes, is any full-scale study encompassing the global dimensions of French colonial and metropolitan emigration.\textsuperscript{14} In other words, there is nothing to match Jasanoff’s own account of the global and imperial legacy of the American Loyalist diaspora in \textit{Liberty’s Exiles}. In that work, Jasanoff explores the social, economic, political, and racial diversity of the Loyalist exiles, an operation that poses just as much a challenge to old stereotypes of her subjects in American historical memory as comparable scholarship has done for the émigré “legend.” Not content to rest there, however, Jasanoff traces the global trajectories of


\textsuperscript{13} Miranda Spieler, \textit{Empire and Underworld: Captivity in French Guiana} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

Loyalists to portray them as crucial agents in the reconsolidation and expansion of the British Empire along liberal lines, a trend she pithily dubs “the Spirit of 1783.”

What happens when Jasanoff’s provocation is taken as a starting point? Was there an exilic “spirit of 1793”? While this dissertation does not attempt to capture the full global extent of French revolutionary exile, it does assess the transimperial legacies of colonial exile across the Atlantic world, which in turn intersects with ongoing historiographical debates about race, slavery and capitalism in the age of Revolutions. Trevor Burnhard and John Garrigus’ comparative study of Jamaican and Dominguant plantation societies and Paul Cheney’s more focused exploration of the world of slaveholders and their agents in Saint Domingue, for example, have carried forward and reinvigorated a longstanding debate over the nature of Caribbean slavery at the close of the eighteenth century, and its relative fragility or strength. This study builds on these economically and socially-focused histories of slavery, but in a forward-looking direction, showing how the revolutionary crisis and partial collapse of the French colonial system created new opportunities—some transient, others more enduring—for the adaptation and expansion of the slave-based colonial model. In this respect it also amplifies and complements the seminal work of historians of the revolutionary Caribbean and the Haitian Revolution over the last several decades—Robin Blackburn, Julius Scott,

and Laurent Dubois, among others— who have placed the black liberation struggle in Saint Domingue and across the African diaspora at the center of the revolutionary story in the Atlantic. As Ada Ferrer has shown in her study of the contemporary Cuban plantation complex, the distant reverberations of this emancipatory struggle generated its antithesis: renewed investments—political, economic, and intellectual—in colonialism and white supremacy. The convergence of exile and counterrevolution, and the pan-European racial and imperial vision they fostered, became a fecund space for this antithesis to grow and adapt.

Exile and counterrevolution are each problematic and multifaceted categories; indeed, the complexity and instability of these formations was a key driver of political developments in the colonial world throughout the revolutionary decades. The outflow of tens of thousands of people from the French colonies during the revolutionary period occurred under diverse circumstances and for diverse reasons: planter elites who left by choice for British territory to rally counterrevolutionary forces, republicans deported by the British from their occupation zones or by political opponents in French-held areas, colonists of all backgrounds fleeing the slave uprisings and civil war in Saint Domingue, and enslaved people brought from one scene of bondage to another. As a result, the “emigration” referenced in the title of this study can be taken in several senses. Only a

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subset of these displaced people were included in the legal category of “émigrés” by the French Republic, and indeed some colonists labelled émigrés were not forcibly displaced at all; some had left French territory for ordinary reasons and were later criminalized for it, while some émigrés *stayed* in the colonies in counterrevolutionary and/or British-held territory. Among those who *were* displaced, many avidly rejected the title of émigré and proclaimed their revolutionary sympathies. The fall of Le Cap, for instance, was precipitated by a rebellion of white soi-disant patriots, not royalists, although some historians would later gloss over this distinction. The movements of colonial exiles, moreover, were not simply a matter of displacement from the colonies to a refuge in foreign territory. Rather, the colonial revolutions, together with upheaval in hexagonal France, produced a much more complex set of multidirectional trajectories, in which exiles circulated among different French colonies, between the colonies and the metropole, and in many cases back to the colonies from metropolitan France, Britain, and exile communities throughout the Americas. Some of the prominent émigrés most associated with the colonies, such as Moreau de Saint-Méry or Pierre-Victor Malouet, never actually set foot in them during the revolutionary period. Other French émigrés travelled to the colonies for the first time as a result of their displacement from the metropole, and many ended up as double-exiles, forced to flee twice over. There was no single pattern of colonial exile, any more than there was for metropolitan emigration.

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19 C.L.R. James, who only devoted a page and a half to the fall of Le Cap, called Galbaud’s forces “royalist” and “of the counterrevolution,” for example. C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint l’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938), 136-137.
At the same time, while the figure of the émigré in republican discourse—elite royalists who abandoned France to intrigue with foreign powers—never captured the reality of all or indeed most colonial exiles, the intersection of emigration, counterrevolution, and inter-imperial warfare proved critically important in the Caribbean. This convergence was most potent in the decade from 1791 to 1802, the timeframe that occupies the majority of this dissertation. Successive regime changes in Paris coincided with the fragmentation of French Caribbean politics along factional and racial lines, and beginning in 1793, a global war with Great Britain. Contacts between the British government and French colonists and émigrés helped to drive the empires toward conflict in the first place—when word of the 1791 slave uprising in Saint Domingue reached the metropole, many in Paris were less concerned by the uprising itself than by the fact that the colonists had sent entreaties to Jamaica for assistance.\footnote{Blackburn, \textit{The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery}, 133.} French colonial clients went on to play a significant role in British military and political strategy in the West Indies throughout the turbulent years leading to temporary cessation of hostilities between Britain and France with the Treaty of Amiens in 1802. The February 1793 Treaty of Whitehall, concluded between Britain and representatives of the counterrevolutionary planters of Saint Domingue, Martinique, and Guadeloupe, gave political cover for the British invasion and occupation of French colonies—and for French colonial support of that effort—as a restoration of legitimate governance in the face of revolutionary usurpation.

However, the royalism of the colonial representatives was highly attenuated; indeed, the exiled Bourbon court played no role in the negotiations, preferring the
“Spanish solution” of allying with their dynastic cousins in Madrid to secure France’s colonial possessions against the republicans.\textsuperscript{21} For the colonial representatives in London, rallying to the British standard was first and foremost a means to promote the interests of the planter class. Exactly what political form that enterprise would take was an open question, particularly in the case of Saint Domingue: independence, British annexation, and restoration to post-revolutionary France were all viable possibilities.

Counterrevolutionaries in the Western hemisphere—many of them liberal and autonomist in their own leanings—were usually more invested in the racial and social order of plantation society than they were in any single constitutional arrangement, or in some cases in any particular national loyalty.

By the same token, the British war against the French Republic in the West Indies presented itself not as a project of imperial conquest, but as a vindication of legitimate governance and the shared colonial order. One anonymous donor to the Jamaican relief fund for Saint Domingue exiles captured this spirit when he signed the roll of benefactors as “An Enemy to Anarchy.”\textsuperscript{22} The British invaded Saint Domingue in the summer of 1793 under the belief that the colonists would welcome them with open arms, commencing one of the great quagmires of British military and imperial history. In the Windward Islands, principally Martinique, British occupation from 1794 onward precariously strove to maintain the institutions and hierarchies of the Old Regime. The strategic and ideological underpinnings of the Anglo-Émigré alliance thus required the

British to cultivate French colonial partners, both on the ground in the colonies and in the wider Atlantic émigré diaspora. So too did the British government’s imperative to minimize the costs of war by enlisting French collaborators, as well as the desire of numerous British merchants and financiers to profit from newfound access to French colonies and exiles. The cumulative effect of these developments was to forge and intensify social, political and economic ties between Britain and the divided French colonial empire in a way that would not have been possible before the Revolution. Even after most émigrés reconciled with France after the Peace of Amiens, these exchanges contributed to a cosmopolitanizing of imperial discourse and policy that would outlast the widespread alignment of French colonists with a foreign power.

The available sources for understanding colonial emigration and counterrevolution are rich in many respects, limited in others. As subjects intensely-scrutinized by multiple governments, French colonial exiles generated an extensive paper trail preserved chiefly in metropolitan state archives: residency declarations, petitions for safe passage or financial assistance, surveillance reports, sequestration records, administrative decrees, and high-level correspondence between ministers, generals, and émigré leaders. Exiled authors also left a voluminous body of pamphlets, histories, memoirs, and fictional works. As one might expect, there is an overwhelming slant in this corpus toward the viewpoints of white male planters, and an outsized influence even of the upper crust of politically-connected elites within that group (though it should be noted that whites, men, and property-owners were all numerically overrepresented in the colonial diaspora as well). The women, children, poorer whites, and black and colored individuals who made up much of the population shifts across the colonial world do
appear in the source base, but usually in the third person—in reading an émigré planter’s complaints about enslaved people seized by privateers from refugee ships, for example, one is left to imagine what the experience must have been like for them! People in these categories do sometimes appear speaking on their own behalf, but typically within fairly narrow constraints of interaction with the state.

A few well-defined personalities who do not fit the dominant émigré mold nonetheless emerge from the archive: the Dominguan slave-turned-counterrevolutionary Jean Kina, for instance. But Kina is very much the exception to the rule. In a broader sense, the state-centric nature of the archival source base and the highly-politicized nature of the broader field of colonial exilic literature foregrounds some aspects of the colonial diaspora above others. With all of these caveats, however, the trail left behind by these transimperial subjects is sufficient to reconstruct something of complex, creative, and violent exilic world straddling black, white, and colored as well as multiple nations, continents, and empires.

The successive chapters of this dissertation differ in scope, theme, geography, and chronology, but each shows the interaction of exile and counterrevolution and the novel problems and opportunities this transimperial convergence presented for both French colonists and the dueling empires they were caught between. Chapter One examines the phenomena of wartime colonial migration as a policy problem for both Britain and republican France, showing how each side developed a transatlantic patchwork of regulations to constrain their movements and screen exiles for political risks. From the uneasy refugee haven of Jamaica to the French consulates in the United States, Britain and France reacted to the flood of colonial exile with a sometimes-incoherent mix of
exclusive and inclusive impulses. The boundaries and significance of categories such as “refugee” and “émigré” were unstable and contested by different state actors, whether colonial governors, military commanders, metropolitan ministers, as well as by the exiles themselves. Shared ambivalence reflected shared strategic imperatives, as both empires sought to vet an ideologically and racially diverse colonial diaspora and to leverage migration policy to preserve or transform plantation society. Migration and exile—in particular the “white flight” of planters, as well as the property they left behind—consequently became the external question for French colonial society, always closely linked to the internal question of slavery.

Chapter Two shifts focus to the economic impact of British collaboration with the émigré diaspora and with French colonists in the occupied zones of the Caribbean in the crucial period of 1791-1802. It argues that the colonial counterrevolution produced a transimperial “bubble”: a surge of activity in property speculation, trade, lending, and government jobbery that attracted both French colonists and exiles and private British business interests. This speculative frenzy had an ambivalent relationship with the success of counterrevolutionary goals. It tied French colonists to Britain and strengthened the British constituency for maintaining a commitment to the occupied colonies. However, the profit-driven interests of private actors did not always align with British military and political strategy. Rampant corruption and waste—often facilitated by these same Anglo-French contacts—were a constant thorn in the side of the British war effort that helped to doom the Saint Domingue expedition in particular. All the same, the experiment in economic integration that accompanied the Anglo-planter relationship demonstrate that counterrevolution was not merely a backward looking enterprise, but
instead encompassed many impulses for both French and British actors seeking new opportunities and advantages amid the breakdown of the old colonial order.

Chapter Three carries forward the theme of mobile actors and counterrevolutionary change in examining the transimperial history of one island, Martinique, and one singular figure: Colonel Jean Kina. Kina rose from slavery in Saint Domingue to considerable success as a commander of black and colored troops for the Dominguian planters later for the British Army. He was valued by his superiors for both his military talents and vocal royalism and attachment to white rule. After arriving in British-occupied Martinique, however, Kina helped to spark a political crisis when he led a bloodless revolt against local efforts to crack down on the manumission of slaves. Kina’s rebellion as well as the subsequent controversy over how he and his followers should be treated were a product of the internal tensions of a British occupation strategy in Martinique that sought to freeze the island in a pre-revolutionary state, but had brought its own forms of disruption to colonial society. Competing legal regimes—British and French—and competing jurisdictions—civil and military—created persistent conflicts during the occupation that Kina both reacted to and exploited for his own goals. Kina’s loyalty to Britain, its army, and its king, itself a product of the transimperial counterrevolutionary alliance, ultimately became a means of leverage against white planter hegemony in Martinique. The history of the Kina affair shows how counterrevolution contained multiple political possibilities and how fraught and ambivalent the relationship between British imperial power and the French colonial elite could be, even in the midst of a war against slave liberation.
Chapter Four turns to the intellectual legacy of colonial exile and counterrevolution by tracing the development of historical accounts of the Haitian Revolution in English and French throughout the Revolutionary, Napoleonic, and early Restoration periods. The longstanding historiographical “silencing” of the Haitian achievement identified by Michel-Rolph Trouillot is well-known to students of the field. How did this silencing come about when colonial authors of the revolutionary generation were producing numerous competing histories about Saint Domingue? What function did the role of the historian play for these writers? This chapter explores how historical discourse about Saint Dominugue/Haiti served as a transimperial battleground for debates about slavery, colonialism, emigration, and the authority to represent them. The high personal and partisan stakes of writing history paralleled the shifting political situation from the outbreak of the Revolution to the end of efforts to recover Haiti for France a generation later. At the same time, across often bitter divides, colonial historical discourse shared key assumptions and sensibilities of a late-Enlightenment progressive historicism that predated the revolution and was closely tied to the struggle of the planter class for epistemological authority. Exiles, from their position of marginality (in some respects at least), would ultimately become the definitive interpreters of what had happened in Haiti for decades afterward. The “unthinkability” of those extraordinary events derived in large part from the robust body of historical thought they bequeathed.

While these chapters explore to varying degrees of depth the political, economic, legal, and military dimensions of the colonial emigration and counterrevolution, in a larger sense they comprise a project in the intellectual history of race and empire. They seek to account for how the revolutionary challenge to the slavery-based colonial order of
the eighteenth century spurred the evolution of models of and justifications for imperial rule. In the process these connected transimperial histories bring to the fore the diversity, flexibility, and cosmopolitanism of colonial exilic and counterrevolutionary ideas. One misunderstands the response to the colonial revolutions by interpreting them merely as reactionary, backward-looking, or parochial, though they were often all of those things.

This tale can hardly be told in a heroic register. Much of it is sordid, and even when actors of relative principle and courage appear, they are usually devoted to bad or at best ambiguous ends. There is real humanity and pathos in the exiles’ predicament, as contemporaries were quick to see—but it was a predicament derived from the crisis of a system with profound inhumanity at its heart. If, however, one hopes to understand how colonialism and racial capitalism would shape a post-revolutionary global order whose legacies are still bearing fruit, these far-flung actors and their experiences demand attention.

A single cannon shot boomed from Le Cap’s harbor on that strange summer morning in 1793. It signaled the ramshackle armada to depart, even as desperate refugees were still rowing overloaded skiffs out toward the ships. That shot would be remembered as the death knell of a world that had been—a dynamic, rich, and cruel one. Yet it also marked the start of something else, and its reverberations would be felt far beyond the war-torn island. The ships turned from the fallen city toward an empty blue horizon. Beyond it, as on the shore, new worlds were being shaped.
Chapter 1

“The Greatest Rascals in the Universe”: Regulating Transimperial Exiles in the Revolutionary Caribbean

On October 12, 1795, an American merchant ship, the _Luckey_, lay anchored in the commune of Fraternité in the war-torn colony of Saint Domingue, when one of its sailors was hauled off the ship for questioning by French authorities. Their suspicions had been raised by the presence aboard of a parcel of letters bound for Martinique, then an occupied island in the hands of the British and their counterrevolutionary French allies. The sailor claimed to be British himself, but under interrogation he confessed he had joined the crew under an assumed identity and was in fact French. His real name was Michel Montral, and he had been born in the Spanish colony of Trinidad. After interviewing him and the other sailors, the communal administrators determined that Montral had lived in Martinique prior to leaving for Massachusetts in 1791. Two years later, he had allegedly sworn allegiance to the republic while back in Martinique. His subsequent return to New England was thus an illegal act of emigration. The letters to Martinique may well have been innocuous, but Montral’s movements rendered him a presumptive enemy of the state. He was arrested and sent to Guadeloupe, and no record remains of him thereafter.¹

Six years later a more august French colonial émigré, the Comte de la Touche, found himself in similar trouble because of a brief journey he had allegedly made into enemy territory. His plantation in Martinique was seized and he was ordered deported to the United States. In this

¹ Archives Nationales, AF/II/303, Dossier 2514, 27-29.
case, however, he was barred from British-held territory, and his deportation justified by the Comte’s previous fleeting presence on French soil. The nobleman found a second refuge in Philadelphia, whence he pled through intermediaries with the War Office in London for his return and for the restoration of his property.2

Both men had in different ways fallen afoul of one of the chief legacies of the French Revolution: its reconfiguration of the relationship between territory, sovereignty, and citizenship. One product of this transformation was a new kind of exile: the émigré, whose definition through a series of increasingly severe laws from 1792 onwards equated the physical frontiers of the republic with the bounds of republican citizenship and unauthorized migration with treason and civil death. The figure of the émigré, “ideologically and juridically linked with foreign enemies,”3 became the anti-type of the republican citizen under the ideal of republican territorial nationhood—a uniform set of laws, duties, and rights operating over every inch of French soil.4 Yet the question of emigration became most pressing for revolutionaries on the colonial periphery, precisely where the republican ideal of a unitary nation-state of equal citizens confronted a system predicated on extremes of hierarchized difference, and where the category “émigré” itself was acutely uncertain and contested in its operation.

Demographically, economically, and politically, mass exile had a notably greater impact on the revolutionary Caribbean than it did on hexagonal France. Relative to the size of the populations involved, the scale of displacement in the colonies was much bigger—even discounting the exceptional case of Saint Domingue. The seizure of émigré property provided

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2 National Archives, WO 1/66, 619-621.
3 Heuer, The Family and the Nation, 29.
4 On the theme of the republican linkage between territory and citizenship, see Peter Sahlins, Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Spieler, Empire and Underworld.
much of the economic basis for France’s war against its imperial rivals in the Caribbean from 1793 to 1802, and proved essential to republican attempts to manage and mobilize first the enslaved, then the newly freed black population of the colonies; exile and emancipation, and the politics of both, were closely linked phenomena. Moreover, the chaos and mobility of the wartime Caribbean made the question “who is an émigré” simultaneously more urgent and more difficult to answer. The Atlantic world was awash with human jetsam assigned with several, often hotly-disputed labels: émigrés, refugiés, déportés. The unstable application of these categories to displaced people by a jostling assortment of colonial, metropolitan, and diplomatic actors was central to debates about the future of the colonial system.

Despite the importance of emigration to the unfolding of the colonial revolutions, the global and imperial dimension of the revolutionary French emigration have as yet received little dedicated historiographical treatment. To be sure, historians of the Caribbean revolutions have noted the role that the displacement and eventual return of white planters played in the emancipatory projects of republican France and independent Haiti, while others have examined the reception and influence of colonial exiles, especially those from Saint Domingue, in particular national or local contexts elsewhere in the Caribbean and Atlantic world. Miranda Spieler’s study of deportations to French Guiana anatomizes the paradoxes of republican conceptions of territoriality and citizenship in the colonies, conceived by successive regimes as both integrally French and exceptional spaces beyond the reach of metropolitan law. However, a fuller appreciation of the role that exile, and the republic’s role in generating and responding to

5 Maya Jasanoff notes this historiographical lacuna in a comparative overview of the American Loyalists and French émigrés. See Jasanoff, “Revolutionary Exiles”
6 Dubois, A Colony of Citizens; White, Encountering Revolution; Ferrer, Freedom’s Mirror.
7 Spieler, Empire and Underworld, 25.
it, played in the creation of an “imperial nation state” requires a perspective that looks beyond the metropole-colony dyad and beyond the French Empire itself, following the routes of exile across islands and national frontiers.\textsuperscript{9}

As the tribulations of the Comte de la Touche suggest, France’s imperial rival Britain was itself keenly interested in the surveillance and control of wartime colonial migration, and sought to regulate it through often-similar means. For both French republicans seeking to defend and further the revolution, and for the British seeking to contain and reverse it, attitudes toward displaced colonials were ambivalent and divided. Throughout the revolutionary decades, colonial migration policy on both sides was marked by a mix of inclusive and exclusive impulses driven by the perceived need to distinguish between desirable and undesirable migrants. Depending on the circumstances, both sides responded to the problem with everything from humanitarian assistance and political cooption to surveillance, ideological vetting, mass confiscations and deportations. The sometimes-incoherent flux of migration policy developed in parallel to the fluid political and military situation in the Caribbean, but it also reflected a persistent set of strategic imperatives shared by both empires: the need to capitalize on and safeguard against the divided loyalties of the politically and racially heterogenous French colonial diaspora, the importance of émigré property for both the war effort and the long-term prospects for the plantation economy, and, ultimately, competing answers to the vexed question of what role the displaced colonists themselves would play in the future colonial system.

The regulation by both empires of exiles and exile property was not merely a set of actions taken in parallel; rather, it was part of an interactive system of intra- and inter-imperial violence, population movement, and competing projects of remaking or retrenchment of the Caribbean plantation complex. Seen through this lens, the problem of the émigré appears as something more than a mere emanation of republican ideology or a product of revolutionary political culture. Rather, French colonial exiles became transimperial actors and transimperial objects of policy. Their movements, and the attempt of state actors on either side to regulate them, both reflected and helped to transform the entanglement of British and French imperial projects, intensifying conflict between the two nations even as they forged new cross-border ties of interest and ideology. These connected transimperial histories reveal the complex relationship between the question of emigration and that of slavery—two very different conditions of marginality, but problems that became inextricably linked within the revolutionary crisis of the colonial Atlantic.

**Accounting for Absence in the Transatlantic Revolution**

For both the French and British Empires, the displacement of French colonists became a political and administrative headache with a transatlantic scope. Sheer numbers formed part of this challenge. As many as 30,000 French citizens were dispersed around the Caribbean and North America during the revolutionary decades.\(^{10}\) The Haitian Revolution’s near-total ejection of white society from the former Saint Domingue was by far the largest episode of forced migration, but displacement from other colonies was widespread. In Guadeloupe, where the best

\(^{10}\) Meadows, “Engineering Exile,” 67.
records were kept, more than 3,000 people had fled or been deported from the island by 1796. In proportional terms, this figure was five to six times the number of émigrés from metropolitan France during the Revolution. Roughly 20 percent of the pre-revolutionary free population was gone. Some communities receiving displaced colonists, meanwhile, were swamped: as early as April 1792, a Spanish visitor observed as many Frenchmen as Englishmen in the chief Jamaican city of Kingston. Three years later there were reported to be 1,000 French emigrants in Antigua and 4,000 in British-occupied Martinique, islands where the peacetime white population numbered only 7,000 and 10,000 respectively. The waves of mass exile that roiled the colonial world in the 1790’s constituted a singular demographic shock.

This remarkably high rate of displacement stemmed both from a chaotic and fragmented political environment and from the natural and human geography of the region. Donald Greer, in his seminal survey *The Incidence of the Emigration during the French Revolution*, notes that, in

11 AN F/II/303, Dossier 2516, 1-25, 33-34. I have determined this figure by counting listed names as well as unnamed family members (“his spouse, their two daughters, etc.”), but it is likely a low estimate due to inconsistent methods of counting young children and other dependents. Some slaves also appear to have been included on the émigré lists, but servile status is not explicitly noted, so it is impossible to make an exact count.

12 A commonly cited figure is that about one half of one percent of the population of the metropole became émigrés. See Jasanoff, “Revolutionary Exiles,” 38.

13 For overall population figures, see Archives Nationales d’Outre-mer, G1 497, Recensement de la population de 1790.


15 Sir Robert Milnes to the Colonial Office, November 7, 1795, CO 166/3, f. 25; for pre-revolutionary population figures for Antigua and Martinique, see Charles Elliot, *History of the Great Secession from the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Year 1845, Eventuating in the Organization of the New Church, Entitled the “Methodist Episcopal Church, South”* (Cincinnati: Swormstedt & Poe, 1855): 2; William B. Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans: White Response to Blacks, 1530-1880* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009): 55. N.b. while the greater part of the colonial emigration consisted of white exiles and their families, it is unclear to what extent these particular emigration figures include *gens de couleur libres* or slaves owned by émigrés.
the metropole, most of the members of the Third Estate who were listed as émigrés (a group that made up the majority of the emigration, though not its counterrevolutionary elite) hailed from the periphery of France, especially in the North and East. These areas were repeatedly subjected to the ravages of revolutionary and foreign armies, and were not-coincidentally located near border crossings that facilitated escape from war or persecution.\textsuperscript{16} On the other side of the Atlantic, nearly the entirety of the French Caribbean constituted a similar zone: wracked by multiple forms of violent conflict but possessing relatively easy maritime access to foreign soil in the Caribbean and beyond. These conditions proved a perfect formula for mass exile.

The trajectories of this exodus were many and complex. The wave of revolutionary upheavals in 1789-1791 produced the initial wave of exiles and the first attempts to criminalize them. In April, 1790, for instance, when Jacobin forces seized control of Saint Pierre, the principal city of Martinique, the revolutionaries issued a demand that all male residents who had fled the city return within sixty hours, under penalty of loss of citizenship and property.\textsuperscript{17} The outbreak of a massive slave uprising in the Northern Province of Saint Domingue in 1791, along with smaller revolts in the Windward Islands, produced a much larger—though often temporary—contingent of displaced people. These events produced the first large-scale arrival of French colonists to the British colonies, above all Jamaica. French colonists began to circulate between the British West Indies and émigré communities in London as well as the United States, which eventually received the greater part of the Dominguans. The outbreak of war with France in 1793, and the subsequent alliance between Britain and counterrevolutionary colonists proclaimed by the Treaty of Whitehall, accelerated this multidirectional traffic across the

\textsuperscript{16} Greer, \textit{The Incidence of the Emigration During the French Revolution}, 69.
\textsuperscript{17} William Knox, Note to Home Office, 30 April 1790, NA CO 166/1: 396.
Atlantic and within the Caribbean. Then, as the British assailed the French islands, occupying Martinique, large parts of Saint Domingue, and (abortively) Guadeloupe, more exiles flowed into British colonies or British-occupied territory, while large numbers of republicans (at least 700 from Guadeloupe alone)\(^\text{18}\) were deported by the British from occupied zones. Factional struggles within the republican camp, especially in Saint Domingue, resulted in additional deportations, while the see-sawing military fortunes of both empires led more colonists to flee, return, and perhaps flee again over the ensuing decade. The result of these upheavals was a French colonial diaspora made up of people displaced at diverse times under diverse circumstances, many with multi-part itineraries of exile.

Under such conditions, one of the chief problems for French or British state actors seeking to monitor and regulate wartime migration was not simply its size, but its heterogeneous composition. French émigré laws effectively equated unauthorized departure with disloyalty, but from an early stage revolutionary leaders in the Caribbean and the metropole recognized that the reality on the ground was more complex. Even after the outbreak of war with Britain, when many émigrés aligned with France’s enemies and French colonial migration policies tightened, republicans still recognized the need to vet displaced people and to facilitate the return of loyal refugees to French soil where possible. By the same token, if the French could not count all colonial exiles as enemies, neither could the British count them all allies. Both sides had to contend with a transimperial and transatlantic sphere of exilic politics, where loyalties were ambiguous and shifting, and in which the fact of displacement, the counterrevolutionary cause, and opposition to emancipation intersected in unstable and unpredictable ways.

\(^{18}\) AN F/II/303, Dossier 2516, 1-25, 33-34.
As the ultimatum of the Jacobins in Saint Pierre suggest, the basic political logic underpinning the emigration laws—the claim of the republic on all citizens, expressed by the geographic bounds of French soil—was present in the colonies at an early stage. But many revolutionary leaders also recognized that indiscriminate enforcement of the émigré laws was an impossibility in the colonies, particularly in the wake of the slave uprising in Saint Domingue, which threatened the white population of the colony wholesale. Thus, in August 1792, the Legislative Assembly provided exceptions for Caribbean colonists who had fled to foreign islands or to the United States to escape factional conflicts or revolts by the enslaved population.\(^\text{19}\) Moreover, in the face of both these revolts and looming foreign threats, colonial administrators made attempts to smooth over the factional antipathies of the early revolutionary years, and migration policy reflected this impulse. In January 1793, for instance, the French administration in Martinique issued a call for refugees to return to the island, declaring that internal strife was finished and that differences of political opinion should not prevent citizens from rallying to the *patrie*.\(^\text{20}\) This proclamation was explicitly addressed to “émigrés,” who were not, as yet, seen as beyond reconciliation with the republic. That summer and autumn, however, as colonial royalist forces joined with the British to wage war on the Republic in Saint Domingue and the Windward Islands, emigration policies hardened. Absent colonists who had not returned to defend the colonies, along with anyone who left without authorization in the future, were to be placed on émigré lists and were liable to expulsion or worse if they returned.\(^\text{21}\)

\(^{19}\) Message addressed from the Executive Directory to the Council of 500, meeting of 15 pluvoise Year IV, AN AF/III/*/2, 89-90.

\(^{20}\) “Proclamation de l’Assemblée coloniale de la Martinique aux émigrés pour leur annoncer le ralliement de l’île à la République et les inviter à y rentrer,” 13 janvier 1793, ANOM MI 211MIOM/69.

\(^{21}\) “Proclamation de Rochambeau ordonnant l’expulsion de tous les emigres qui tenteraient de regagner l’île,” 8 aout 1793, ANOM MI 211MIOM/69.
magnanimity and severity continued to mark republican policy toward colonial émigrés for the next decade.

“Republican policy,” however, may be something of a misnomer, for there were in fact a wide range of sometimes conflicting policies towards exiles enacted by a range of actors on both sides of the Atlantic. To a greater degree than their metropolitan counterparts, republic colonial migration policies had both a negative and a positive aim: to exclude counterrevolutionaries, certainly, but also to facilitate the return of desirable refugees to French territory. Republican attempts to control wartime migration flows were continually pulled between these conflicting imperatives, but the exact balance to be struck was contested and subject to revision. Indeed, it is impossible to disentangle the history of colonial émigrés “proper” from the wider story of displacement during the colonial revolution, precisely because contemporaries themselves were so often unable to do so.

Paperwork offers a crucial site to analyze both the ways various republican actors sought to address this question and the ways that exiles sought to navigate their predicament. Émigré lists held the greatest life-and-death import, though they were only one small part of the bureaucratic edifice that emerged to impose order on colonial migrant flows. Aside from the Liste Général des Émigrés maintained in Paris, colonial governments maintained their own émigré lists at the departmental level. Removal from a list (or keeping one’s name off it in the first place, if one’s status was in doubt) generally required a certificate of residence. These were not standardized forms, but rather longform attestations of one’s place of abode (and relevant, excusable circumstances of one’s departure from it), certified by the endorsement of some competent authority. Aside from appeals for removal from émigré lists, exiles, many of them destitute, also sought repatriation assistance from the French government or aid for their daily
needs. Several criteria appear in the way all of these claims were made and adjudicated: necessity, loyalty, and sympathy.

The need to vet displaced colonists became particularly pressing for French consular officials in the United States as fighting in Saint Domingue intensified in 1793 and 1794, and the ensuing response is revealing of the pressures facing “men on the spot” as they made French colonial migration policy. The New York consulate, among others, was deluged with colons fleeing the fall of Cap-Français as well as paroled French prisoners of war, and responded to the crisis by chartering several vessels to carry refugees to the metropole under flag of truce (parlementaires, in maritime parlance). The consular officials were wary, nonetheless, of the risk of admitting “enemies of the state who have escaped our surveillance,” and in January 1794 they formed a Comité de vérification to vet the applicants for one of the parlementaires.\(^{22}\) The consul-general’s instructions to the committee were clear: “It is necessary that every expatriated Frenchmen give an accounting of his absence from the Republic.”\(^{23}\) Only those whose exile was an “involuntary misfortune” were to be readmitted.

The committee accordingly sought to classify refugees according to the different circumstances under which they reached the United States: some had arrived directly from Saint Domingue, many directly from Cap Français, which had been captured and burned by black rebels in June 1793. Others had left the colony under less pressing circumstances but had been captured at sea by British privateers and afterwards released, often after a spell of imprisonment in the Bahamas.\(^{24}\) The committee’s records reveal a desire by the consular officials not to apply

\(^{22}\) Rapport fait au comité de Vérification, AD 473PO/1, Boite 63.
\(^{23}\) AD 473PO/1, Boite 63.
\(^{24}\) At one point in the summer of 1793, more than 600 Dominguais colonists were held prisoner on the island of New Providence, reportedly bringing the island close to famine. AD 518PO/1/123.
to the letter of the law too stringently against refugees in either of these categories. More problematic were colonists who had reached the US aboard Bermudan pirate vessels, and were hence seen as criminals or at least as complicit in criminality. While the committee report noted that the “purification” of this class would be more difficult, they were still deemed less “odious” than true counterrevolutionaries.

Identifying genuine enemies would require a good deal of individual discretion on the part of consular officials, the committee believed. Nonetheless, it also devised several guidelines to facilitate the sifting of loyalties. Female, elderly, and child refugees from Saint Domingue would only require an oath from a witness testifying to their circumstances for the consulate to cover the costs of their repatriation. Younger men were additionally required to take an oath expressing “horror at the enterprises of the friends of royalism” and swearing that their return was for the purpose of “the defense of my country.”

The hundreds of Dominguans requesting safe passage or other assistance from the consular officials in New York and elsewhere used a wide range of documents, as well as a few rhetorical flourishes to make their cases. A Mme. Mouillé submitted an affidavit from a witness testifying that she had been widowed during the slave insurrection and forced to flee the burning of Le Cap with her sister Suzanne, noting that they left the city with only the clothes on their backs. Several colonists recounted their capture by British corsairs and subsequent imprisonment before they arrived in the United States; one of them wrote to the Philadelphia consulate in doleful tones, declaring that “your heart citizen, cannot be indifferent, cannot be indifferent, cannot be indifferent.”

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25 Rapport fait au comité de Vérification, AD 473PO/1, Boite 63.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid., 26.
“insensible” to the fate of the captured colonists, while incidentally asking for compensation for enslaved people that had been seized. Supplicants who had departed under less dangerous circumstances submitted travel passes issued by colonial officials, or even doctor’s notes testifying to their need to leave the colony for health reasons; others submitted receipts for their living expenses in the United States, hoping for reimbursement. Jean Bonnemaison, a colonist who had been away from Martinique when his father’s property there was seized, wrote to the Ambassador Edmond Charles Genêt asking for protection and safe passage to the island. He had a “natural right” to reclaim his inheritance, he wrote, and would provide references to vouch for his civisme. All of these missives sought to piece together narratives which would establish their authors as loyal republicans who had fled under compulsion and only desired, as a recurring formula in these documents put it, “retourner à la paix.”

Establishing these credentials with one organ of the French republic, however, was no guarantee of safety. Breakdowns in communication or political enmities between different republican institutions and leaders ensured that some colonists who were regarded as citizens in good standing in one colony or in the metropole were proscribed elsewhere. Jacques Macduff and Jacques Darafie, two Guadeloupeans living in Norfolk, managed to secure residence papers from the French consulate there in 1795. Macduff then forwarded their certificates along with a friendly letter to the mayor of his home commune of Le Moule, to ensure they were struck from the local émigré list. Macduff told the mayor that he had wanted to return to Guadeloupe but was unwilling to risk his family’s being seized at sea, fearing they would be incarcerated in the

29 AD 518PO/1/123.
30 Ibid.
31 AD 473PO/1, Boite 63, 38.
notorious British naval prison at Halifax. However, the municipal administrators rejected their appeal, noting that both men had fled the island to Saint Barthélemy in 1793. The shifting currents of war and revolution made an individual’s status a matter of timelines: determinations of loyalty depended to a great extent on which colony an exile had left and at what time they had done so, and the two men’s history confirmed them as émigrés. Nonetheless, other colonists with politically suspect backgrounds had better luck: in 1797 a Madame LeBlond and her brother, in exile in London, secured the right from metropolitan authorities to travel to Paris to request their removal from the general émigré list. This news came much to the chagrin of Victor Hugues, the civil commissioner in Guadeloupe, who pointed out that the pair had absconded from the colony, where LeBlond had owned a plantation. In another case a man placed on the émigré list in Guadeloupe fled to Saint Domingue, where he received an officer’s commission in the republican forces. At least one of Hugue’s other tales of administrative oversight was even more remarkable: a marquis who had owned property in Guadeloupe managed to secure his removal from the metropolitan émigré list and planned to leave for France by way of Saint Thomas—all while still officially a captain in a British regiment stationed in Martinique.

Hugues developed a grudge against the republic’s consular agents in the United States in particular, whom he saw as condoning illicit reentry to both the colonies and the metropole. Martin Oster, vice-consul in Norfolk who had presumably signed off on Macduff and Darafie’s residency papers, came under censure from municipal authorities in Guadeloupe on multiple

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32 AN AF/II/303, Do. 2515, 37.
34 Victor Hugues to Étienne Lavaux, 19 messidor an III, ANOM C7A48 F 17.
occasions on these grounds. Hugues repeatedly complained to the Ministry of the Colonies that such officials were providing residence papers to émigrés who had served with British forces against the republic—émigrés who then became vocal critics of his administration.

Given the politically ambiguous nature of the French colonial diaspora, metropolitan as well as colonial leaders feared that the comparative leniency afforded to colonial exiles was being abused for the purposes of counterrevolutionary intrigue. A 1796 address from the Directory to the Council of Five Hundred denounced colonists who had used loopholes in emigration laws to “hatch plans of counterrevolution” in the United States, where it was alleged (quite reasonably) that émigrés were in contact with British consular officials and other agents. Such colonists only confirmed their duplicity by “abusing the credulity of their former slaves,” who in some cases were brought from French colonies where they were legally free and sold in the United States. According to Étienne Desforneaux, Victor Hugues’ successor in Guadeloupe, the émigrés were more to be feared for their “perfidies, intelligences, and corruption than for their arms.” The unauthorized circulation of someone like Montral through the colonial Atlantic not only *ipso facto* constituted a treasonous abandonment of the republic, but also made him a potential vector of counterrevolutionary conspiracy.

The uncertain blend of loyalties and intentions among French colonists abroad also meant that the politics of the colonial revolution extended onto foreign territory. This was the assumption underlying several attempts by French authorities to rally displaced citizens to the republic. The 1793 appeal to Martiniquais exiles has been noted; the following year, a planter

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36 AN AF/II/303/2515, 13-14, 37-38.
37 Victor Hugues, 29 brumaire an IV; ANOM C7A48 F37.
38 AN AF/III/#2, 89-90.
39 AN AF/III/209, Do. 954, 10.
named Vereuil, who had been deported to France from Saint Domingue by Léger-Félicité Sonthonax, managed to secure the backing of the Committee for Public Safety to travel to New England, not only to retrieve his family who had fled there, but also to spread information and propaganda among the French exile community. Victor Hugues also hoped to find allies in the colonial diaspora. In December 1794 he secured the arrival of 2,000 republican volunteers to Guadeloupe from the United States, most of them soldiers whom had been deported from Martinique and other islands after the British occupation. The next year Hugues issued a proclamation to Guadeloupeans in the United States, promising that those who had not borne arms against the Republic would be welcomed back into the colony. He roundly condemned the counterrevolutionary emigres, hoping to divide politically more palatable refugees from the former group:

"Citoyens, l’instant n’est pas éloigné où la justice nationale… distinguerà ceux qui ont mis le poignard dans les mains des colons pour s’entr’égorger, d’avec ceux qui le leur ont arraché, y ont substitué la branche d’olivier, et en ont fait une famille de frères."

Hugues’ appeal to the refugees depended not only on patriotism and republican idealism, but also on a defense of the highly regimented form of emancipation that he had enacted in Guadeloupe. He aimed to persuade republican-leaning exiles that Guadeloupe remained a disciplined and prosperous colony, one that would not see a repeat of Saint Domingue with its “théâtre du carnage, de l’incendie et de la devastation.” Not coincidentally, attacks on the racial policies of Hugues’ administration had partly motivated his grievances regarding the improper

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40 AN AF/III/209, Do. 955, 10.
41 Vaughan to Dundas, January 27, 1795, WO 1/31, 95.
43 Ibid.
readmission of émigrés from the United States. In the United States itself, Ambassador Genêt’s attempts to squelch counterrevolutionary conspiracies among the Saint Domingue exiles played a significant, if underappreciated role in the breach in Franco-American relations that became known to Americans as the Citizen Genêt Affair. The uncertain boundaries of the colonial emigration were thus not merely a matter of external security for the French state. They also directly impinged upon the internal politics of the colonial revolution itself, which were not always so internal after all.

The question of how to categorize exiles was accordingly not simply a concern for individuals and for the state actors vetting them, but for broader political debates that connected exile communities with the metropole and the colonies they left behind. Colonial exiles not only sought to remedy their own predicament, but mobilized in favor of shared interests both within and without the boundaries of republican politics. As early as 1793, a group of colonials in New York petitioned the consulate to declare their attachment to the republic and protest against the “libel” of their indifference to it. At political meetings and in French and English newspapers across the United States, colonists insisted that they were refugees, not émigrés; some even argued that their presence in the United States proved their republican sympathies, as they would otherwise remained in the colonies or in Britain for the purposes of royalist intrigue. But the exiles were in fact very much divided, complicating such efforts at refashioning their collective image. Dozens of them publicly disavowed a reported memorial service held for Louis XVI held in Philadelphia in 1794, while admitting that some “senseless royalists” were among the

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45 AD 518PO/1/123.
46 White, Encountering Revolution, 98.
Antilleans in the country. These inter-diasporic disputes did not always remain peaceful: in December 1793 a mob of refugees attacked and nearly lynched a fellow Frenchman, whom they alleged had committed crimes in Saint Domingue, on a vessel in Philadelphia’s harbor.

The struggle to define the wartime colonial diaspora was likewise carried on in the metropole. Pierre François Page and Augustin-Jean Brulley, pro-slavery deputies from Saint Domingue who were the foremost exponents of the colonial lobby under the republic, sought to distinguish between the aristocratic reactionaries and the democratic republican exiles, contending that the latter were penniless in contrast to the former, who had “brought their loot with them.” Page and Brulley claimed that the republicans had separated themselves from the counterrevolutionaries and should not be blamed for the actions of a few.

In a similar vein, a deputy in Martinique named Fourniol prepared a 1796 report for a special legislative commission on the colonial emigration, arguing that it required a different set of classifications than its metropolitan counterpart. Like the verification committee in New York, Fourniol produced a loose taxonomy of Caribbean exiles. Since Britain had seized Martinique, he pointed out, the “real émigrés” were the counterrevolutionary forces on the island itself, while most Martiniquais exiles elsewhere were loyal republicans. Fourniol dwelt at length on the misfortunes of this paradoxical group, many of whom were languishing in British prisons or living destitute in the United States or metropolitan France, having brought “nothing but their misery and their patriotism” with them.

While mechanisms were already in place to make legal exceptions and

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50 AN AF/III/208/952, 3.
to provide monetary support for loyal colonial refugees, Fourniol’s eagerness to defend the honor of the Martiniquais republicans suggests the contradiction between revolutionary discourse surrounding emigration and the realities of Caribbean politics, where the exception was often the rule.

Protestations of loyalty did not, however, preclude even many avowedly republican exiles from attacking the polices of racial equality and emancipation enacted in the colonies, and Victor Hugues had good reason to fear their influence. The fate of Polverel and Sonthonax illustrate the political volatility of the issue at its height. The commissioners were recalled to the metropole and impeached in 1795, in large part through the lobbying efforts of Dominguan planters in the United States and their allies in Paris. Polverel died while inquest was ongoing, but Sonthonax was eventually exonerated and reinstated, allowing him to pursue his revenge. In 1796, he banned all exiles from returning to the colony, issuing a proclamation forbidding the French consuls in the United States from issuing passports to these “eternal enemies of the principles of France and of its sacred laws.” This sweeping measure did not, in of itself, explicitly define all Dominguans abroad as émigrés, but returning to the metropole without official endorsement was dangerous: when the proslavery writer Moreau de St. Méry arrived in Paris in 1798 after years of exile in Philadelphia, he was denounced as an émigré and had to quickly assemble official documentation to avoid arrest and possible execution. Migration controls and categories became tools in a transnational battle over emancipation, in which stark dividing lines between revolution and counterrevolution were not much in evidence.

51 New York Journal and Patriotic Register, June 14, 1796, quoted in White, Encountering Revolution, 118.
52 White, Encountering Revolution, 117-121.
Race, Ideology, and British Ambivalence

While the label of “émigré” lacked the singular ideological and legal importance for Britain that it held for the French Republic, in practice the tangle of laws and directives governing movement controls applied by British colonial administrators, military commanders, and ministers in London sought to address similar (though not identical) problems from the opposite side of the revolutionary divide. Most of these actors perceived uncontrolled mobility and the politically mixed nature of the emigration as a threat to British colonial interests even as they sought to exploit ties with counterrevolutionary émigrés to advance those same interests. The result was an unsteady mix of inclusive and exclusive policies presided over by multiple nodes of policymaking on both sides of Atlantic, just as it was for French republicans. Despite close political and military cooperation between the British government and Caribbean émigrés, disdain toward the latter was common; they were, in one British general’s view, “a doubtful race.”

The fundamental impulse behind British ambivalence was not national difference, however, but a perception of the fundamental similarity between British and French slave societies and the forces that threatened them. The result was a system of policies characterized less by xenophobia than by the drive to defend the shared Caribbean plantation complex against revolutionary contagion from politically and (especially) racially heterogeneous French migrants.

A keen sense of vulnerability in British colonial society was evident even before French colonials began to flee to British territory in large numbers. In November of 1791, not long after news of the uprising in Saint-Domingue would have reached Europe, the General Meeting of West India Planters and Merchants huddled together in a London tavern to discuss the revolt. They blamed events in Saint Domingue, along with contemporary enslaved unrest in Dominica.

53 Sir Ralph Abercombie to the Home Office, April 9th, 1796, CO 319/6, 9.
and the French Windward Islands, on the abolitionists in both Britain and France who had “industriously promoted” a “mutinous disposition among the Negroes.” The association went on to petition the Crown for greater military protection, proclaiming their attachment to the mother country and noting the ample fiscal contribution of the planters to the Treasury. Fiscal-military tensions between center and periphery along with the spread of anti-slavery politics (both transimperial phenomena), meant that the French exiles arrived on British islands whose elites already suffered an acute case of frayed nerves.

Even though white society within the British Caribbean had not fractured, as it had in Saint Domingue, the British planters felt increasingly isolated. The ongoing campaign for the abolition of the slave trade had, in the words of the Jamaican Assembly, rendered them “odious in the eyes of their fellow subjects,” and events in the French colonies lent some credence to the idea that transatlantic “philanthropy” was inspiring revolt. A month after the outbreak of the uprising in the North Province of Saint Domingue, word reached Jamaica of a slain rebel leader who was found with a medallion of Saint Gregory around his neck, supposedly in honor of the luminary of French abolitionism, the Abbé Grégoire. The medallion itself found its way into the hands of the Jamaican planter and politician Bryan Edwards, who was visiting Saint Domingue. It was a gift from the Dominguan General Assembly, and if it did not dispositively show the links between French abolitionists and black rebels, it surely proved the ties of fear and interest between the plantocracies on both islands.

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54 “Extract from the Minutes of the General Meeting of the West India Planters and Merchants,” November 3, 1791. BNL Add MS 38351, 101-102.
55 “At a General Meeting of the West India Planters and Merchants,” November 8, 1791. BNL Add MS 38351, 103-104.
56 Jamaica House of Assembly Resolution, November 8, 1792, CO 137/91, 11-12.
At the same time, the progress of the abolitionists in Parliament had incentivized a mad rush to bring as many enslaved people into the colonies as possible while the trade remained legal. Annual imports by slaving ships to Jamaica tripled between 1788 and 1792, and the total enslaved population rose by fifth in the same period. A letter to the Colonial Secretary Henry Dundas in early 1793 claimed that “people will buy for any price, even to their ruin, or the destruction of half the negroes from want of provisions.” Both a larger “unseasoned” African-born population and the consequent strains on food supplies were risk factors for revolt. The Jamaican plantation complex was thus in the process of a major demographic expansion that threatened its already-dubious stability at the same moment as crowds of refugees of all colors were arriving there from Saint Domingue. The affinity of British planters for their fellow racial aristocrats was tempered by fear of revolutionary contagion and more mundane worries of the economic impact of hosting thousands of refugees and their human property.

In these volatile circumstances, a crackdown on foreigners began before most of the exiles ever arrived. Jamaica had a sizeable existing population of French origin, and as in the metropole, all foreigners, not simply the latest arrivals, came to be associated with the revolutionary threat. The Jamaican assembly instituted new vetting requirements for both new arrivals at the ports as well as foreigners who already lived on the island. Free colored people with French backgrounds were supposed to provide two householders on the island to vouch for their character, under pain of deportation. This was only the first of a serious of expulsions undertaken by the colonial administration over the next decade-and-a-half. As the refugee

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58 “Extract of a letter from Jamaica,” February 20, 1793, CO 137/91, 11-12. The slave population figures are jotted on the same document, though their provenance is unclear.
population swelled, parish-level registration was required for all migrants. The requirement that residency permits be presented in Kingston every fifteen days aimed to keep most newcomers tethered to the city, where they could be more easily monitored by the vigilance committees that had sprung up in the wake of the uprising in Saint Domingue.61 This policy of concentration, along with the sheer numbers of refugees, made Kingston a quasi-francophone city by the spring of 1792.

The Caribbean was not the only locus of colonial émigré activity under the British aegis. By the end of 1792 a loose French colonial circle had formed in London. Its leaders were composed on the one hand of émigrés from the continent with West Indian connections, like the moderate monarchist Pierre-Victor Malouet, and on the other of representatives from the anti-Jacobin assemblies of the French islands themselves, such as Louis de Curt of Guadeloupe, Louis-François du Buc of Martinique, and Pierre-François Venault de Charmilly of Saint Domingue. The contacts with the Pitt Ministry formed by these émigrés culminated in the Treaty of Whitehall in February 1793, which promised British protection of the French colonies in exchange for the colons’ loyalty. For French colonial émigrés, whether creoles or metropolitan exiles with colonial connections, the Anglo-planter alliance provided an institutional highway between Britain and the Antilles. The colonial elites ensconced in London constituted an influential lobby for hundreds of émigrés seeking safe passage to serve the colonial counterrevolution (or at least themselves). Requests for passports or travel subsidies circulated through the hands of key figures like De Curt and Malouet to the upper levels of the Colonial Office or War Office. Among the petitions that reached Whitehall were those of planters seeking to join the British expeditions in order to safeguard their property, while others concerned

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military officers and noblemen from the metropole who wished to join “proprietors of their acquaintance” in sailing for the West Indies. In February 1793 there were said to be 2,000 émigrés then serving in the Army of the Princes in Germany who wished to join the British attack. Dozens of non-juring French priests also embarked from England for the French colonies, aiming to replace revolutionary clergy under a restored royalist administration. Appeals for patronage reached London from the United States, too, where some French colonists aimed to return to the Caribbean to fight. Three years before the ill-fated Quiberon expedition of 1796, the British intervention in the Antilles became a major outlet for the political and martial energies of the French emigration as a whole.

Other circumstances of travel were more individualized. Some colonials arrived in England as prisoners of British privateers and were subsequently released through the intercession of émigrés or British merchant contacts. Other exiles tried to reach the colonies from London (or vice versa) for reasons of health, business or family—with accompanying reams of supporting documentation not unlike that presented to the French consuls and commissioners. The Aliens Act of 1793 required all foreigners to carry passports for the first time in British history, though, in the genteel mode of much of the papershuffling of the period, many émigrés were permitted to write their own passports. Nonetheless, given fears of revolutionary infiltration and the limited scope of the British ministerial bureaucracy, the

62 WO 1/58, 645-650.
63 Blackburn, _Overthrow of Colonial Slavery_, 204.
64 WO 1/58, 223-231, 405.
65 Lacombe, “Note au nom des habitants de Saint Domingue,” October 14, 1793, WO 1/58, 397-400.
68 Reboul, _French Emigration to Great Britain in Response to the French Revolution_, 68.
personal endorsement of trusted brokers was crucial to secure permission to travel, as with one Guadeloupean whom De Curt attested had “toujours servi la Bonne Cause.” As in French contexts, claims of destitution, ill health, and patriotic fervor all served to bolster requests for passage or patronage.

Among the petitioners was Louis Aselin, “a free mulatto,” who had taken an oath of loyalty to King George and wished to return home to Martinique. Aselin was fortunate that he was in London and had the ear of well-connected émigrés like De Curt. Had he sought refuge in the British West Indies, as a much greater number of French colonists did, his situation might have been much more precarious—especially given his race—precisely because British colonists were conscious of the precarity of their own societies in the face of reformist and revolutionary currents. British colonial migration policies reflected the geographic and social proximity of the French colonies to their British counterparts, which encouraged race-and-class based solidarity for some exiles and simultaneously provoked fears of emigrants as agents of an island-hopping apocalypse.

To be sure, ideological threats among white French colons were not taken lightly by the British. Paroled French prisoners, who moved freely among their exiled countrymen, were alleged to have sported republican cockades and swords and sung revolutionary ditties in the streets of Kingston, and colonial administrators moved to deport them at the first opportunity. They were not the only disruptive elements among the French exile community in the Caribbean. The fractious and violent internal politics of Saint Domingue produced multiple successive groups of exiles, some of them quite antagonistic to others. Pro-slavery patriotes like the

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69 Louis de Curt to the Colonial Office, July 14, 1794. CO 166: 440.
National Guard commandant Auguste Borel, who had embraced the revolution as a means of promoting colonial autonomy, were anathema to committed royalists.\textsuperscript{72} When Borel and his associates were forced out of Port-au-Prince after rebelling against the republican commissioners, they fled to Jamaica. He had his share of enemies there as well. Angry letters percolated through the transatlantic French emigration and reached Dundas in London, warning of Borel’s corruption and republican sympathies, and urging that he be surveilled and preferably deported to Europe.\textsuperscript{73} Governor Adam Williamson seems to have been charmed by Borel, however: while admitting the Frenchman was an “avowed democrat,” Williamson noted with approval that Borel had resisted the commissioners because of their efforts to extend further privileges to the\textit{ gens de couleur}. In the end, Williamson issued Borel a passport and sent him to New York, relieving both the émigrés and himself of a political liability.\textsuperscript{74}

The Borel affair underscores that while white French exiles might fall under suspicion of revolutionary contamination, the politics of race tended to trump other concerns. As a French colonist wrote to the Jamaican planter Edward Shirley in March of 1793, “It is no longer a matter of aristocrats or democrats; the question has changed: is one a white man or a man of color?”\textsuperscript{75} The conflict in Saint Domingue at this stage was largely interpreted by outside observers as a struggle between whites and the\textit{ gens de couleur}, who formed the support base of the republican commissioners, with the uprising explained as a result of the machinations of one party or the other. Free men of color consequently bore the worst of British fear and hostility toward French colonial exiles. Their reception was all the chillier for the fact that the racial hierarchy of Jamaica

\textsuperscript{72} Frostin, “L'intervention britannique,” 309.
\textsuperscript{73} Dundas to Williamson, July 5, 1793; CO 137/91, 197-202.
\textsuperscript{74} Williamson to Dundas, September 5, 1793; CO 137/91: 272-273.
\textsuperscript{75} Unsigned letter to Edward Shirley, March 2, 1793; WO 1/58: 207.
was already being challenged, albeit peaceably: a petition of grievances was drawn up by a free colored Methodist minister in October 1792, which at least some of the local whites thought carried an implied threat to rouse the island’s enslaved population in revolt.\textsuperscript{76} The Dominguan \textit{gens de couleur} were more numerous and wealthy than their Jamaican counterparts, and the white establishment saw their example to the latter as destabilizing. Their efforts to organize mutual aid societies for indigent compatriots, and even social gatherings like balls and dances, were also seen as potential fronts for subversion.\textsuperscript{77} All of these factors intensified existing political tensions in Jamaica and made the free colored exiles’ presence on British soil tenuous. As of April 1793, they were only to be admitted to British colonies if they first traveled to metropolitan Britain and received passports there, though it is unclear how effective this prohibition really was.\textsuperscript{78}

At least as great anxiety attended the arrival of people who could not properly be called exiles at all: enslaved people brought to the British colonies by their French masters. The British were concerned not only with the “French blacks” as a source of revolutionary contagion, but also with their sheer demographic weight. With the existing enslaved population already at an all-time high, the disruption of commercial traffic from North America by the war deprived Jamaica of the staples needed to feed them. In the autumn of 1793 word reached London that “Negroes are starving all over the island.”\textsuperscript{79} The influx of enslaved Dominaguans represented thousands of new mouths as well as thousands of potential rebels.

\textsuperscript{76} CO 137/91, 37-42.
\textsuperscript{78} Adam Williamson to Henry Dundas, April 13, 1793, CO 137/91, 174-175.
\textsuperscript{79} Stephen Fuller to Henry Dundas, September 8 and November 4, 1793, CO 137/91, 407-409.
These fears were redoubled from early February 1794 onwards, as the French Republic was now committed to a policy of general emancipation. To prevent the conjunction of internal and external enemies, the British authorities sought to limit the numbers of “French blacks” on British soil. In Jamaica, at least, they also took measures to confine them to Kingston and keep them away from the rural plantations. This policy directly collided with the interests of the exiled French planters as well as some of their British business partners, who hoped to use the skills of the enslaved Dominguans in developing Jamaica’s nascent coffee industry. A prominent mulatto counterrevolutionary, Jean-Baptiste Lapointe, ran into trouble for importing 160 Africans, many of whom, it was alleged, were not legally his, while another French planter, Edward Montaganc, brought 65 to a plantation property he had acquired, where they were seized. Given the sheer numbers of “French blacks” reaching the island, the colonial government also struggled to verify whether some of these arrivals were indeed enslaved, and, if so, to whom they belonged. Unauthorized or unattached enslaved people were detained under wretched conditions in the prison at Bath, where, as contemporaries noted with trepidation, many of the prison guards were also black.

From the perspective of British planters and administrators, the presence of both enslaved and free colored Dominguans threatened to inflame a series of interlinked challenges to the colonies and to slave society: aggression by France, anti-slavery agitation in England, racial and class tension in Jamaica, and economic instability. The year 1795 saw the apparent confirmation of these fears, with pro-French rebellions by black and colored forces in Grenada and Saint Lucia, as well as a brief uprising by some of Jamaica’s Maroon communities. There was some

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81 Ibid.
evidence that the French Republic had attempted to support the Maroons, and had used free colored agents to do so: one French prisoner of war claimed in a deposition that the French consul in Philadelphia had sent fifty bilingual men of color to Jamaica, and several *gens de couleur* were captured in the island’s mountainous interior. Documents from the republican side suggest the French were indeed interested in fomenting revolt in Jamaica, though to what degree these plans were carried out is unclear.82 Whatever the true extent of the threat, however, these events provided ample encouragement for the British governor, the Earl of Balcarres, to take more drastic steps against the francophone black and colored populations. Balcarres sent the greater part of the colored exiles in Jamaica, along with a large number of “French blacks”, to Saint Domingue—this time, as part of the British occupation forces.83 The British war effort had given Balcarres an expedient to rid himself of what called “the greatest rascals in the universe.”84

Wartime imperatives thus moved displaced people both towards and away from the British colonies. Britain’s conquests further complicated matters by entangling its military and civil authorities in the management of people circulating between French islands and between those islands and the broader Atlantic world. The British occupations produced both new routes of migration and new strategic motives for attempting to regulate them. British occupiers also had to manage local and inter-colonial refugee flows in the French Caribbean, often as a direct consequence of their interventions. When British forces seized the strategic naval base of Mole Saint-Nicolas in Saint Domingue, they were deluged with displaced people from the surrounding countryside. By October 1793 the small garrison was responsible for over a thousand refugees of

82 Cauna, “La diaspora des colons de Saint-Domingue,” 347.
83 Ibid., 345.
84 Balcarres to Portland, October 27, 1796, CO 137/96.
all colors, sexes, and ages, a considerable strain on their supplies.\textsuperscript{85} Two years later, there were
4,000 emigrants in Martinique, many of whom had followed the British forces when they
withdrew from Guadeloupe at the end of 1794.\textsuperscript{86}

As with many a refugee crisis since, different jurisdictions often vied to limit their intake
and to make the exiles someone else’s’ problem. Of the émigrés in Martinique, only a tenth were
reportedly receiving government aid, but the cost was evidently thought onerous enough that the
civil governor Robert Milnes refused a request from his military counterpart to devote part of the
proceeds of officially sequestered properties to relief efforts.\textsuperscript{87} As in the British colonies, there
were also security risks: shortly afterward French agents from Saint Lucia landed in Martinique
and attempted to spark a revolt.\textsuperscript{88} Unsurprisingly, then, Milnes rejected a proposal from Antigua
to permit French emigrants there to travel to Martinique if they wished. Given the burden of the
existing exile population, “the most respectable residents” of the island were against it, Milnes
noted.\textsuperscript{89} Alongside the immediate financial and military considerations, Milnes needed to
maintain the cooperation of Martinican elites, and French colonial solidarity had its limits.

A similar dynamic was repeated on a larger scale after the British evacuation from Saint Domingue in 1798. The collapse of the British occupation there doubled the émigré population
of Jamaica, with consequences throughout the Antilles as the British sought to distribute the
émigrés elsewhere.\textsuperscript{90} Dominguan planters with sufficient resources were given land grants in the
recently annexed colony of Trinidad, but numerous others, including widows and orphans of

\textsuperscript{85} Lt. Col. Dansey to Adam Williamson, October 18, 1793, CO 137/91, 348.
\textsuperscript{86} Sir Robert Milnes to the Colonial Office, November 7, 1795, CO 166/3, 25.
\textsuperscript{87} Milnes to Colonial Office, August 7, 1795, CO 166/3, 20.
\textsuperscript{88} Milnes to Colonial Office, August 20, 1795; CO 166/3, 21.
\textsuperscript{89} Sir Robert Milnes to the Colonial Office, November 7, 1795, CO 166/3, 25.
\textsuperscript{90} Cauna, “La diaspora des colons de Saint-Domingue,” 339.
émigrés who died under the British colors, were dependent on government relief. Though the Jamaican government stepped up deportations of all suspect exiles, it was foreign enslaved people who once again formed the focus of the crackdown. More than 3,000 “French blacks” had arrived in Jamaica with the British evacuation, many of whom had carried arms for one party or another. In July 1799 the Colonial Office directed the Jamaicans to buy at least 1,600 of them (of whom 900 were female) with the intent of drafting some into the West India Regiment and selling the rest to planters in Martinique.

The civil occupation government in Martinique was dubious of this policy, however, again raising the anticipated fears of the inhabitants. Though offering his assurances of the loyalty of the black Dominguans, and claiming that planters would be eager to purchase them, Portland insisted that the “laws and particular circumstances” of the British West Indies required their removal. To assuage the Martinicans’ concerns, Portland modified the plan by sending some of the “French blacks” to Saint Lucia, where there was reportedly a shortage. Their expulsion was delayed into the spring of 1800 due to the perennial difficulty in sailing from the Western to Eastern Caribbean, by which time Governor Keppel of Martinique still had objections. Portland added Trinidad to the list of destinations, but reiterated that the rest of the enslaved deportees had to be accommodated in Martinique or Saint Lucia. Under no circumstances were they to return to Jamaica.

Events in the interim had reinforced the logic behind the expulsion policy: in the Sasportas-Dubuisson plot at the end of 1799, republican infiltrators had attempted to employ

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91 Note to Portland, (June 1797?), WO 1/66, 355.
93 Portland to Keppel, July 17, 1799, CO 166/5, 77-79.
94 Portland to Keppel, July 4, 1799, CO 166/5, 87-89.
95 Portland to Keppel, April 28, 1800, CO 166/5, 112-113.
exile networks and French-speaking enslaved people to trigger a revolt that would have coincided with a French landing in Jamaica. The conspiracy was broken up when it was betrayed by Toussaint Louverture, who aimed to maintain his fragile truce with the British. It nonetheless underscored the potential of emigrants or the enslaved people that accompanied them to serve as a fifth column. Despite, or perhaps because of this climate of fear, Portland continued to tout the loyalty of the enslaved people he was foisting on the francophone islands, claiming they would be “highly valuable” anywhere but Jamaica. The British military commander-in-chief in Martinique, Lieutanant-General Thomas Trigge, did accept a number of the deportees into his black corps, notwithstanding the objections of the locals and the British civil administration. Trigge was looking for every spare body he could find for his understrength forces, including Africans direct from the Middle Passage. Once again, wartime exigencies became both the cause of and the solution to mass displacement on the imperial frontier.

The more explicit racialization of British migration controls relative to their French equivalents reflected the overwhelming imperative to avoid a catastrophic revolt like that of Saint Domingue. In a larger sense, however, the soldiers, civil servants, planters, and grandees of both empires were attempting to grapple with the same problem: a revolution and counterrevolution that were both borderless and both ambivalently implicated with the cause of white supremacy in the colonial world.

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97 Portland to Keppel, April 28, 1800, CO 166/5, 112-113.
98 Portland to Keppel, July 4, 1799; CO 166/5, 87-89; Trigge to Dundas, November 23, 1800, CO 319/6, 141.
The Economic Consequences of Exile

The consequences of mass exile were not simply a matter of people in motion, but also of property—natural, artificial, and human—left behind. For both the British and French migration controls were closely linked to fate of thousands of plantations, many of them either abandoned by their owners or owned by absentees. Since the plantation was in many respects the center of colonial society, the question of who was entitled to own or operate it was of social, economic, political, and military importance. The principal state actors involved in adjudicating questions of exile property were French colonial administrators on the one hand, and British civil and military occupation officials in the French islands on the other, though metropolitan officials in both empires were concerned as well. From 1794 until the rise of the Napoleonic consulate, French republicans were committed, in principle at least, to the transformation of plantation society through emancipation; the British, of course, were not. But as regards exile property, as with other aspects of migration policy, ideological, legal, and institutional differences between the French and British belied broad functional similarities in strategic logic.

The importance of émigré property for the development of colonial republicanism is readily apparent. The disappearance of the masters of thousands of estates through flight or death constituted an unprecedented disruption to economic life and mechanisms of social control as they had existed in the colonies. It also left the French Republic as by far the biggest landlord in the Caribbean, setting the stage for its subsequent experiments in emancipation and coercion. All émigrés forfeited their property, which was collectively labelled the *biens nationaux*—the same term applied to the expropriated church property that formed the basis of the assignat currency (plantations belonging to mere absentees were given a less permanent sequestered status).99

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Émigré properties were, if anything, more important to the fate of the colonial revolution than their metropolitan namesakes. The new multiracial citizen armies that the republic raised during the 1790’s were funded by the biens nationaux: the sale of émigré goods and products derived from émigré plantations covered as much as fifty million livres in military expenses in the Windward Islands alone between 1793 and 1796.\textsuperscript{100} Given this economic importance, it is perhaps unsurprising that some of the very first measures publicly decreed after the arrival of the republic’s civil commissioners in Martinique concerned the sequestration and supervision of émigré property—notably coming just before orders to disarm enslaved people.\textsuperscript{101} Under Victor Hugues in Guadeloupe, crimes against property became subject to military tribunals as crimes against the state—a draconian measure that reflected not only the practical necessities of the island economy in wartime, but also the status of the biens nationaux as a kind of totem of collective progress, sacred to the nation.\textsuperscript{102}

Both the ideological and fiscal necessity for republican colonial leaders of exploiting confiscated property to the fullest drove them towards more coercive approaches toward enslaved people—or, after emancipation, cultivateurs.\textsuperscript{103} Shortly after his arrival in Guadeloupe in 1794, Hugues noted that there was “a huge quantity of coffee plantations seized from the émigrés, which promised a huge harvest,” but both labor and management were missing. As Hugues saw it, “most of the citizens of the countryside have deserted their plantations to take refuge in the city, where, unconcerned about the public good, they wallow in laziness, hide from

\textsuperscript{100} Lion, Letter to the Executive Directory, brumaire an IV, AN AF/III/209, Do. 956, 14.
\textsuperscript{101} AN AF/III/209, Do. 953, 11.
\textsuperscript{102} Dubois, \textit{A Colony of Citizens}, 201-203.
\textsuperscript{103} Dubois, \textit{A Colony of Citizens} 203-209.
public authorities, and give themselves up to all kind of secret bandity to survive.”

The drive to eradicate “laziness,” which republicans associated with both slavery and aristocracy, became an ideological leitmotif of Hugues’ administration. But it is significant that the “desertion” of the plantation by its black workforce was a direct consequence of its abandonment by its white owners; illicit mobility on both ends of the social scale, both inside and outside the colony, reinforced one another. Hugues’ zeal against both émigrés and recalcitrant cultivateurs was of a piece, in this sense—neither were where they were supposed to be.

British management of sequestered plantation property has received only minimal attention in Caribbean revolutionary historiography, understandably enough—the British were not self-consciously engaged in any world-historical egalitarian experiments. Yet virtually no subject occupies more extant correspondence from the occupied zones of the French Caribbean during the 1790’s. The chief drivers of this intense concern with plantations were, again, fiscal and military: the proceeds of the sequestered estates helped to defray the dizzying costs of Britain’s West Indian campaigns. However, the circumstances of the Revolutionary Wars in the Caribbean, with unprecedented numbers of migrants of divided and uncertain loyalties, created peculiar and contradictory pressures on the development of the policy.

Sequestration itself was not a novelty. The British used Old Regime legal mechanisms to handle the confiscation and management of abandoned or confiscated estates, placing the properties on an official list known as the Régie du Roi. However, the means of administering the list quickly became more complex and far-reaching in response to the fragmented state of French

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colonial society. The British initially sequestered only the properties of owners known to be resident on enemy territory, but later added the estates of any proprietor who had not quit republican France after 1794 or who had borne arms against Britain. As time passed after the British invasions of Saint Domingue and the Windward Islands, numerous émigré proprietors attempted to regain control of their estates, either in person by returning to the colonies or via proxies. Addressing these claims ultimately required British commanders and officials to adjudicate the movements and loyalties of foreign subjects across the entire Atlantic world.

The Comte de la Touche, as noted, lost his property in Martinique by virtue of a journey to France, and promptly complained to the British government via the émigré envoy De Curt in London while the Comte himself was resident in Philadelphia. In another instance, an émigré officer who had returned to France (for the needs of his family, it was noted) subsequently acquired a plantation in Saint Domingue by inheritance, and requested its removal from the Régie. Evidently some appeals of this sort were successful, since the Colonial Secretary the Duke of Portland chided the governor of Martinique for his laxity in this regard in 1799. Portland mandated that future requests for the restoration of sequestered property be sent to London. With émigré leaders such as Malouet and De Curt complaining that the sequestrations were far too strict, however, British officials in the West Indies were caught between competing constituencies.

Sequestration policy was further complicated by the fact that some property claims involved multiple countries, including continental European states where absentee proprietors

106 Malouet to War Office, 1797, WO 1/66, 573-575.
107 De Curt to Portland, September 29, 1801, WO 1/36, 615.
108 WO 1/66, 619-621.
109 Portland to Keppel, August 26, 1799, CO 166/5, 93-97.
110 E.g, Malouet to War Office, 1797, WO 1/66, 573-575.
had taken refuge. One disputed plantation in Saint Domingue, for instance, was leased by an émigré resident in England from an owner in Switzerland. Yet another émigré inherited a plantation in Martinique from his mother in France while living in Altona in Denmark, and traveled to London to establish residency there and claim the Caribbean property. Absentee owners were theoretically permitted to retain their property if they could prove their residence in British or neutral territory, a provision that offered a ready-made way to skirt the rules. Proprietors in Europe might either simply submit fraudulent residency documents, or they might set up house in a neutral location such as Hamburg just long enough to obtain certification from a British consulate before returning to France. Other exiles avoided running afoul of the sequestration laws by selling their properties to French or British straw buyers. The Marquis de Ferronays, “sold” his plantation in Saint Domingue through an agent to the merchant George Thellusson for a tidy sum that was in reality a loan, while continuing to enjoy the proceeds of the property in Switzerland. Ironically, this maneuver ensured that the property was later confiscated by Toussaint Louverture’s government—which itself was beginning to welcome the return of white colonists to plantations, as managers if not proprietors.

British sequestration policies, like those of the French, aimed to feed military and administrative budgets and to punish political undesirables; however, the connection between them was deeper. The measures for vetting proprietors in the occupied islands were the closest British colonial refugee policy came to the mirror image of the French émigré laws. The past or present fact of presence on republican-controlled soil became a basis for confiscation of property

111 WO 1/66, 673-693.
112 Pierre Coudère, Petition to Portland, WO 1/36, 549-551.
113 Portland to Keppel, October 31, 1800; CO 166/5, 120-123.
114 Cheney, Cul de Sac, 204-205.
and, in some cases, expulsion of individuals. These regulations did not constitute as far-reaching a civic and ideological project as republican émigré legislation did: the occupying administrations never formally equated illicit travel or residence with treason per se. Nonetheless, attempts to manage wide-ranging mobility, divided loyalties, and the lucrative but fragile plantation economy produced shared patterns of policy in both republican and Anglo-Royalist areas. On both sides, the bounds of colonial revolution and counterrevolution were defined in territorial terms.

Reconciliation and Colonial Restoration

Not all displaced colonists were slaveholders. Nonetheless, as Sonthonax’s feud with the soi-disant refugees of Saint Domingue indicates, the central political question tied to the ultimate fate of colonial exiles was the future of plantation society in the Caribbean. Accordingly, French efforts beginning in the later 1790’s to relax emigration and sequestration laws coincided with changing attitudes toward colonial slavery.

The policy shift was anticipated by abortive legislative efforts in 1798 to subsidize the return of colonists to Saint Domingue, as well as by Toussaint Louverture, who similarly aimed to reconstitute the plantation economy by welcoming the exiled planters (Sonthonax’s objection to which fittingly provoked his final exile from the colony).\textsuperscript{115} By 1801, the French administration under Jean-Baptiste Lacrosse in Guadeloupe—by that time the most important colony in French hands, with Martinique and Saint Domingue under the control of the British and Toussaint, respectively—was allowing widespread readmission of émigrés to the colony. “Those who have proven themselves constantly the enemies of the Republican government”

\textsuperscript{115} White, \textit{Encountering Revolution}, 119-120.
were still to be excluded, but others could regain their homes and even some compensation for lost property by petitioning the administration and submitting to police surveillance.\footnote{116} Despite Lacrosse’s reputation as a revolutionary firebrand, émigrés began to trickle back into the colony from British and neutral territory, especially the poorest or those with the least fear from their past political activity.\footnote{117}

At the same time, colonial authorities were conscious that the amnesty could destabilize the post-emancipation racial politics of the island. They sought to reassure the free black \textit{cultivateurs} that any compensation for exiles would not be to their disadvantage. Citizens currently in possession of land would retain it, and the obligations of the colonial state toward the \textit{cultivateurs} were to remain unchanged.\footnote{118} That notional form of equipoise did not endure. After the Treaty of Amiens in March 1802, whose terms included a broad amnesty for most émigrés, the Napoleonic Consulate moved decisively toward the reestablishment of French colonial society on the basis of slavery. Though the turn toward amnesty was not unique to the colonial context, migration policy would prove integral to this policy of retrenchment in the New World.

The Consulate first tightened movement controls over non-whites. A June decree forbade bringing any blacks or \textit{gens de couleur} from the Antilles into the Louisiana territory without government approval: violators were to be arrested and deported.\footnote{119} The government next turned its attention to exiled planters. According to a decree from that September, “the reestablishment

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{116} Lacrosse, proclamation de 7 Messidor an 9, AD 473PO/1, Boite 59.
\item \footnote{117} Keppel to Portland, July 17, 1801, WO 1/36, 203-205.
\item \footnote{118} Lacrosse, proclamation de 7 Messidor an 9, AD 473PO/1, Boite 59.
\item \footnote{119} “Arrete du 13 Messidor, An 10” AD 473PO/1, Boite 59.
\end{itemize}}
of order...depends principally on the presence of proprietors on their property.\textsuperscript{120} Displaced planters from Saint Domingue (where a French expedition had seemingly restored the colony to metropolitan control, for the moment) as well as Guadeloupe were to return to the colonies “with the shortest delay,” under penalty of the continued sequestration of their estates. Once there, they were required to obtain certification of residence as well as provide proof of non-emigration or removal from the émigré list. In return, their property would be restored. A subsequent decree sweetened the deal by suspending the collection of debts from Saint Domingue proprietors.\textsuperscript{121}

Through both coercion and incentives, the Consulate aimed to help rebuild the colonial empire through an engineered reversal of a decade of displacement of the slave-owning class. While Bonaparte’s designs for Saint Domingue failed, the decision to restore the slave system meant that the tension between the exclusive and inclusive impulses in republican colonial migration policy was essentially resolved in favor of the latter—for white colonists, at least.

The Peace of Amiens did not entirely end the influx or influence of French colonial exiles in British territory. Their reception and management by the British reflected previous patterns of ambivalence. Prior to the handover of Martinique to the Napoleonic consulate, colonists whose collaboration with the British had rendered them fearful of the new regime were offered land grants in Trinidad, whose virgin soil and existing Francophone population had already made it a choice destination for the refuse of the Caribbean revolutions.\textsuperscript{122} Jamaica, meanwhile, received a further wave of refugees from Saint Domingue with the failure of LeClerc’s attempted reconquest in 1803. The colonial House of Assembly demanded that exiles of “almost every

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\item \textsuperscript{120} “Arrête des consuls de la République, concernant des colons de St. Domingue,” AD 473PO/1, Boîte 59.
\item \textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{122} Keppel to Hobart, December 11, 1801, WO 1/36, 347-348.
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\end{footnotesize}
description” be removed, and by 1805 most of them were. Another group of Dominguans who were expelled from Cuba in 1808 were given a similarly unfriendly welcome by the Jamaicans. Ultimately most of the French of any color left the island, voluntarily or otherwise, though a small number of émigrés integrated into Jamaican society.

Anxieties of revolutionary contamination left a long legacy, however. As late as 1824, Lescesnes and Escoffrey, two Jamaican-born men of colored Dominguan descent, were banished from the island as “aliens and dangerous persons” for their advocacy for colored rights, which was construed by the authorities as a conspiracy to reenact the Saint Domingue uprising. Local reactions largely broke down around racial rather than national lines, with white French émigrés testifying against the pair. The question “is one a white man or a man of color” had not lost its salience a generation after the colonial exodus began.

Conclusion

Peter Sahlins, in his account of the formation of the integral territorial nation of France along the border with Spain, observes that “it was only by abolishing privilege as the basis of private and administrative law that the revolutionary government could institute a direct link between power and territory.” If the attempt to impose this link in the colonies through (among other means) controls on movement was particularly intense and fraught with contradictions, it was in part because the colonial world was the site of the most totalizing form of private law—slavery. The fate of that institution and its beneficiaries and victims—their location inside or

123 Bryan, “Conflict and Reconciliation,” 16.
125 Bryan, “Conflict and Reconciliation,” 16.
outside the frontiers of sovereignty and citizenship—became inextricably bound with that of the emigration and its own challenges to the project of imperial nationhood. The crossing of borders and the breaking of chains were interpenetrating test cases of the limits of the universal republic.

Yet the interplay between them was far more than just a story of the revolution’s internal contradictions, for there was no strictly internal revolution—a general truth, perhaps, but an especially vital one for understanding the nature and stakes of the upheavals in the colonial Atlantic. Exiles became transimperial actors, not merely in the sense that they crossed imperial boundaries, but in that they served as vectors and accelerants of specifically imperial problems, debates, and practices that circulated across the French and British Empires and beyond. Mass exile operated in many ways as the opposite pole of enslaved resistance within the crisis of what contemporaries increasingly recognized as the “colonial system.”

In the Francophone zone of that system of racial capitalism, both labor and capital were in flight or revolt. Each pole of the crisis created a set of strategic problems for the two empires that drove entangled—not simply parallel—approaches to the migration policy, which assumed an increasingly territorialized logic despite the gulf of ideology and interest between them. The protean mobility of the wartime Caribbean threatened to upend any particular arrangement of territory, citizenship, property, and race in colonial society, as revolution and counterrevolution shadowed one another across the routes of exile. It was this transimperial predicament that made exile a central component of the revolutionary experience in the New World.

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Chapter 2

The Counterrevolutionary Bubble:

Sequestration, Speculation and Graft in the Wartime Caribbean

“We the undersigned Merchants & Ship Owners interested in the affairs of Saint Domingo, by advances made to the Proprietors of Plantations in the Island, Engagements entered into with them, & by considerable adventures from hence—being made acquainted with the Memorial presented by the Proprietors to Your Grace, whereby they request a sufficient Military Force from His Majesty in order to preserve the recent conquests made in that Island, those which are further to be made, & also to maintain tranquility & to exterminate those Hords of Banditti that will seek shelter in the interior parts of the Island. We beg leave to unite ourselves to second the Request of the said Proprietors, & take the Liberty to suggest that not only their personal interests are concerned, but also those of the commerce of Great Britain, & particularly of a number of Individuals in this metropolis.”¹

In July of 1794, seventeen trading companies signed the above petition to the Duke of Portland, urging the government to press its intervention in Saint Domingue against French republicans and slave uprisings. Their appeal emphasized the interests that united British merchant houses with émigré planters. Many of the latter had fled from metropolitan France but retained intact plantation property in the West Indies, which they leveraged to support themselves in exile. Far-off plantation assets made the French planter circle in London influential out of proportion to its numbers and gave the British merchants a major stake in the war-torn French colonies. The merchants became the creditors, investors, and trading partners of émigrés, both in Europe and in the Americas, and opened new commercial branches in the British-occupied portions of the French islands. By 1797 one merchant lobbying the Home Office estimated at least £300,000 of investments by British firms in Saint Domingue and noted that commerce with Martinique was greater still.²

exiles out of French colonial territory, and it followed the forward march of British troops within it.

Not all of the opportunities the Caribbean counterrevolution afforded were on such a grand scale. The next year the Duke received another petition from a M. de la Huproye, asking for a small advance of money and free passage aboard a ship from London to Saint Domingue. Unlike many of the business partners of the merchants, this émigré was penniless, but he hoped to obtain a government post in the colony and, as he put it, “pay off my debt to society.” In defense of his request, Huproye noted that over 1,000 émigré planters had set sail for Saint Domingue the year before and had been given similar accommodations by the British government. Many of these exiles hoped to recover plantation property on the island. Others would have to content themselves, like Huproye, with salaried positions in the occupation’s civil administration or in one of the British Army’s émigré regiments. Thousands of exiles who had lost their fortunes in Europe strove to make them anew in the French colonies under British sponsorship. Captains of commerce, plantation magnates, and humbler job-seekers like Huproye all lent to the Caribbean counterrevolution a decidedly entrepreneurial flavor. The fragmentation of the colonial Old Regime amid factional, racial, and international warfare created new opportunities as well as new dangers.

At the heart of these colonial enterprises was the land, and the continued capacity of enslaved labor to generate profits from it. The tremendous wealth of the French Caribbean plantation complex, ravaged as it was by revolution and war, provided the basis for a web of new commercial connections on the counterrevolutionary side. It also helped to sustain the British war effort, both by providing resources to support the heavy burden of military and

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3 Mr. de la Huproye to the Duke of Portland, 12 July 1795, CO 245/1, 114.
administrative expenses and by creating political pressure from exiles and British subjects in favor of maintaining Britain’s military commitments. As a M. Lambert, another émigré correspondent, argued to Portland in 1797, “The current riches of St. Domingue could be destroyed, but the soil will remain. The former monarchy of France has disappeared, but France still remains. Policy dictates that England acquire and conserve St. Domingue.”

As Lambert’s appeal suggests, the counterrevolution encompassed not only a defense of the colonial status quo, but also expansionist impulses that appealed to a wide range of acquisitive actors on both sides of the Atlantic. The opportunities they sought were to a great degree speculative: both the system of plantation slavery and the wider political and commercial order under which it operated were in violent flux, and much of the effort to profit from these conditions depended on the expectation of a favorable resolution from the perspective of counterrevolutionaries, slaveholders, or both. This uncertainty was especially acute in the case of Saint Domingue, the largest and richest French colony, where British annexation, independence under a planter regime, or return to France were all considered possible outcomes at various times, alongside the eventual reality of the overthrow of European authority. But the fate of the occupied Windward Islands—Martinique, St. Lucia, and various smaller territories—was likewise uncertain. Despite some arguments in favor of annexation, the British expected to return their conquests in the lesser Antilles to France, but when and under what political circumstances remained an open question for the better part of a decade. Both British and French actors were making plans around a model of colonial life whose very existence was in question.

4 Lambert to Portland, October 24, 1797, WO/166, 589-602.
5 Geographic note: the English term Windward Islands does not precisely overlap with the French Iles du Vent, but throughout I refer to the latter islands by the former expression in alignment with historiographical convention.
In the interim, however, there was still money to be made, whether from commodity trading, lending, property investments, civil and military employment and contracting, or simply corruption. While some profit-seeking ventures depended on the projected success of British intervention, others simply sought to take advantage of it in the short term, at times to the expense of British military and political goals. As a result, the economic dimension of the transimperial counterrevolution had in many respects the character of a bubble: great hopes of future riches coupled with frantic efforts to cash in before those hopes were dashed.

This chapter sketches the outlines of the transient goldrush that accompanied the revolutionary wars in the colonial world. It does not seek to provide a comprehensive economic history of the wartime Caribbean. Rather, it aims to qualitatively account for how profit-driven activities shaped the realities of war and occupation in the Caribbean, political decision-making in Britain, and the choices of individuals in the vast spaces of exile in between. It first considers the sequestration of property and the heavy burden that the administration of seized estates imposed on the British occupying forces, as well as how individuals across the French colonial diaspora sought to navigate the sequestration system for their own survival and profit. From the economic hub of the slaveholding plantation, it then turns to other transimperial enterprises that revolved around it, like spokes on a wheel: debt and borrowing, trade and investment, and civil and military employment. Each of these fields demonstrated the same bubble-like character, in which grand counterrevolutionary designs coexisted with an on-the-ground reality that was often something of a racket.

This blended atmosphere of optimism and cynicism contributed to British distaste for émigré allies and was in many respects a drain on Britain’s ability to wage its war against revolution in the colonies. In a wider sense, understanding the counterrevolutionary bubble
serves to broaden historians’ perspective of the counterrevolutionary response to colonial emancipatory movements in the 1790’s and beyond. Racial paranoia and catastrophism were of course salient features of this response, and the ideas and practices of white colonial reaction were spread around the Atlantic world by the counterrevolutionary press and by the movements of émigrés. But as much as the crisis of the French colonial system inspired profound fears on the counterrevolutionary side, it also attracted a motley cast of characters who welcomed the chance to turn the upheaval to their own ends, whether that meant a new imperial order or simply a quick payday. Likewise, the speculative economics of the counterrevolution has a clarifying effect on the historiographical debate over whether the colonial slave system was fundamentally fragile and perhaps doomed—a cul de sac, as Paul Cheney suggests in his toponymic title—or more resilient and dynamic than is sometimes supposed, as Trevor Burnhard and John Garrigus argue. The transimperial bubble produced by British intervention reveals both the profound weaknesses of French colonial society and the persistence of its allure as a place where fortunes could be made, even in the midst of collapse.

Sequestration

Pierre Victor Malouet, the Saint Domingue planters’ man in London, recalled in his memoirs the contingent logic by which French colonial counterrevolutionaries aligned themselves with Britain:

…proscribed in Europe as royalists, we had gotten the right to come ask for exile and protection from a foreign power… proscribed by the same title in Saint-Domingue, we had the same rights and the same obligations in contracting the protection which would be accorded in this colony to our persons and our property; but…we could not undertake any perpetual engagement. It was for the treaty of peace which

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would arise between the two nations to pronounce our fate; until then, the colony could be considered as put in sequester and under the protection of the English government.”

While many planters were more eager than Malouet to conclude a “perpetual engagement” in which Britain took possession of Saint Domingue, the colony’s final political status remained unresolved throughout the British occupation. Malouet’s choice of words in defining the British intervention as an attempt to “sequester” the colony is of interest, as it describes the fate of both the occupied French colonies as a whole and that of a large fraction of their most valuable assets: land and plantation estates. Like their republican adversaries, British and royalist forces took possession of extensive amounts of property, real and otherwise, wherever they advanced. Like the seized colonies, the seized properties within them lay in a political and legal limbo for years at a time.

Property confiscation and the state management of colonial plantations has been explored in depth in the historiography of the French and Haitian revolutionary governments. The economic dynamics of the colonial counterrevolution likewise cannot be understood absent the state custodianship of thousands of properties worth millions of pounds, as well as tens of thousands of enslaved people. Sequestration by the British, however, has only received passing attention by most scholars of the era. Yet it was central to the functioning (or lack thereof) of the British occupation and the relationship between Britain’s military and civil leadership and colonial émigrés. No civil policy matter fills as many pages in the surviving correspondence of

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9 E.g., Dubois, A Colony of Citizens, Part II passim; Cheney, Cul de Sac, especially Ch. 7.
10 Cheney, Cul de Sac has some brief commentary on sequestration under the British in Saint Domingue; Kieran Russell Kleczewski, “Martinique and the British Occupation: 1794-1802,” (Unpublished Dissertation, Georgetown University, 1988) contains the most primary research on the subject in the Windward Islands. Geggus, Slavery, War, and Revolution, is the most notable exception and remains the definitive text on the British occupation in Saint Domingue.
the occupying British authorities, both in the Windwards and (especially) Saint Domingue. This concern reflects the strategic importance of the seized properties as well as the troubled attempts to manage them. The occupying forces were confronted with policy disagreements over which properties to seize, continual difficulties in making such properties profitable, and a barrage of genuine and fraudulent property claims stretching across both sides of the Atlantic. For French colonists and exiles, meanwhile, navigating the system of sequestration was a high-stakes affair that could spell ruin or security in the midst of a chaotic wartime environment. The promise of riches from sequestered property was closely linked with the question of the viability of British intervention and of the French colonial economy as a whole. In the event, such promises often far outstripped reality, even as they mobilized considerable acquisitive energies, licit or illicit, of both state and private actors.

Sequestrations under British occupation encompassed property that had been abandoned due to fighting or the death or exile of an owner, property seized from owners who were deemed hostile or politically suspect, property of absentee planters resident in Europe, and property previously sequestered by French republicans as part of the biens nationaux. Seized properties were added to the Régie du Roi, a list inherited from the Old Regime that placed vacant property under temporary public administration (though the Régie system as such would be abandoned late in the occupation of Saint Domingue, as noted below). Once on the Régie, these properties were either managed directly or leased out to third parties for the benefit of the state but were not to be sold. Final dispositions of property claims were to be resolved in peacetime. Until then, the British government would remain by far the largest landlord in the occupied areas.

The motivations for this practice were several, and largely paralleled those of republicans. First, British commanders and administrators were under considerable pressure to
defray the costs of war and occupation. Managing or leasing sequestered estates promised a vital source of revenue to that end. Second, the British desired to keep estates running to maintain the health of the plantation economy in general, and thereby generate tax and tariff revenues, create opportunities for British mercantile interests, and ensure some level of social and political stability in the colonies. Third, sequestration served as a punishment and a means to deprive adversaries of financial and human resources. Fourth (and this goal was quite different than French republican aims, particularly after emancipation in 1794), the British hoped to maintain good relations with absentee counterrevolutionary planters and their local and émigré families and allies by ensuring their property remained intact. Lastly, neglected or seized properties were home to tens of thousands of enslaved people feared as potential revolutionaries, lending an additional strategic significance to the management of these estates. These various goals were not always in alignment, and the range of stakeholders involved in sequestration policy—local administrators, the army, Whitehall, merchants, colonists, and émigrés—ensured that it remained hotly contested.

The peculiarities of a counterrevolutionary war made the question especially difficult to navigate, though this fact that did not register immediately for all parties. Sir Charles Grey, who oversaw the initial occupation of Martinique, considered abandoned property legitimate spoils of war for the British—since the island was taken by force, Grey argued that the capitulation agreement between Britain and the émigré leaders did not apply.\[11\] In his proclamation establishing the Régie for the new administration in May 1794, he ordered that all colonists who had fought against the British in the invasion, those resident in France, prisoners of war, and those who had left the island after January of that year were to be stripped of their property.

\[11\] Kleczewski, “Martinique and the British Occupation,” 163.
though exceptions were made for absent proprietors whose family members lived on their estates, provided that revenues were not repatriated to France. Alongside these sweeping confiscations, Grey permitted the auctioning off of moveable property—slaves, animals, tools, and so on—with few safeguards to ensure probity by the small army of administrators in charge of the Régie. All revenues and property were at the disposal of the manager or renter, and in some cases this meant families were turned out from their sequestered homes. These measures were harsh even by pre-revolutionary customs of war, and were all the more inflammatory for colonists who were promised protection as British subjects under the terms of the Treaty of Whitehall. While some colons stood to gain from the confiscations, many proprietors were troubled by the seizure of estates belonging to friends, neighbors, or family members, and more generally concerned with the security of property rights under the occupation. Absence from the colony or residence in France, they argued, did not necessarily entail political hostility. Grey’s sequestration system was structured to maximize revenue rather than to maintain estates or to ensure honest administration, and ultimately this approach was his downfall.

The harsher elements of Grey’s sequestration policy were rejected by the Crown’s lawyers, and Grey himself was recalled from the island in 1795 amid accusations of illegal confiscations. He would not be the last British colonial governor to fall under a cloud concerning the administration of sequestered property. Grey’s tenure in Martinique is indicative of both the problem of systemic corruption and the difficulty of squaring military necessity with Britain’s commitments to its new subjects, who retained social and economic ties to France and the emigration even in the midst of a global war.

12 Ibid. 282; 285-286.
13 Ibid. 279.
14 Ibid., 163-165; 287
Though sequestration would remain a persistent source of political controversy in Martinique, its direct impact on plantation agriculture was limited. Absenteeism was uncommon there before the Revolution, and stable British control of the island from 1794 onward meant that relatively few planters emigrated. Only about one in twenty Martinican plantations were sequestered, and in fact the most valuable portion of the Régie consisted of urban residential property.\(^\text{15}\) In Saint Domingue, by contrast, the British arrived in late 1793 and early 1794 to find “the properties of the country but very few proprietors.”\(^\text{16}\) The British-occupied portions of that colony ultimately had a much greater incidence of sequestration than Martinique did, both due to greater planter absenteeism in peacetime and the seizure or abandonment of estates amid the ravages of war. Sequestration policy would therefore assume an outsized importance for efforts to recuperate Saint Domingue’s slave-based economy. Sequestration was not only desirable for the British occupiers: many absentee proprietors were wary of the plantation agents and attorneys left in charge of their estates in Saint Domingue—“mercenaries and in general very unfaithful,” as an early draft of the Treaty of Whitehall put it.\(^\text{17}\) British oversight of these properties, it was hoped, would prevent their despoilment or neglect. The size and difficult geography of the colony, the ongoing multi-sided conflict, and the range of competing interests involved would make implementing sequestration an enormous undertaking.

As in Martinique, sequestration policy proved both politically controversial with Britain’s colonial and émigré allies and a nest of corruption from an early stage. The British administration under Governor Adam Williamson initially sought to seize the property of all absentees, but after a muddled series of revisions developed a policy in September 1794 that was

\(^{15}\) Ibid. 308  
\(^{16}\) Louis Vendryés to General Gordon Forbes, June 10 1796. T 64/30, 9.  
\(^{17}\) Draft of Propositions of Capitulation, CO 245/1, 128.
friendlier to the absent proprietors: estates whose managers could prove the legality of their possession of the property and that their employers were not resident in France were to be left alone. If the proprietor’s place of residence could not be established, the estate’s revenues were to be frozen until the facts were known. Government inspectors fanned out across the colony to determine the legal status of absentee property, sometimes ejecting squatters (many of them refugees) from abandoned properties. Sequestered plantations, meanwhile, were put directly under managers hired by the government or leased out. All of these provisions were deeply unpopular with one constituency or another: many colonists opposed the practice of leasing, which had long been avoided in Saint Domingue because of its propensity for graft and the mismanagement. Others, especially longtime residents who resented the wealthy absentee planters and those who stood to gain from serving as managers or lessors, argued for sequestering the property of all absentee. Colonists of all classes resented the intrusiveness and often-arbitrary action of the Régie administrators, as did many British soldiers and officers who were haphazardly quartered in abandoned homes. At least one colon was arrested for assaulting one of the inspectors in the course of their duties. Meanwhile, Williamson found it difficult to ensure that properties were placed on the Régie in the first place, due to the shortcomings of the inspectors as well as the inaccessible and dangerous conditions of the countryside. For those properties that were sequestered, holding managers accountable enough to ensure a steady

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18 David Geggus, “The British Occupation of Saint Domingue 1793–98” [Unpublished dissertation, York University, 1979], 317. Note that the dissertation is substantially equivalent to the book Slavery, War, and Revolution, but I happened to only have the former available during the writing of this chapter.
19 Ibid., 312
stream of revenue proved an uphill battle—leasing at a fixed rate, whatever its vices, seemed to the government to be the only way to manage to squeeze any money out of the estates.\textsuperscript{20}

Inefficiency and venality in the \textit{Régie} administration led to multiple rounds of reform under successive British governors in both Martinique and Saint Domingue. These efforts encountered entrenched opposition from the beneficiaries of the existing system. Governor Robert Milnes, sent to clean up the administration of Martinique in the summer of 1795, found many of the sequestered properties in disrepair or worse. However, after several months on the island Milnes told the Duke of Portland that he was unable to effect any changes to the sequestration system until more British troops arrived to enforce them. In the meantime, Milnes claimed, the British position in Martinique was dependent on the good will of local power brokers who controlled the \textit{Régie}.\textsuperscript{21} In the following year, as British forces massed for a major offensive in the Windward Islands, Milnes was finally able to overhaul the administration. By all accounts his reforms greatly reduced costs and improved the revenues and upkeep of sequestered properties, but they did not put an end to obstruction from self-interested \textit{colons}. When Milnes left the island due to ill health after a tenure of only eight months, a circle of prominent planters led by an émigré, the Marquis de Bouillé, conspired to roll back the reforms. They aimed to maneuver Milnes’ successor General Sir William Keppel into reappointing Gignod, the Director of the Régie whom Milnes had sacked. They first attempted to argue that Gignod’s dismissal had been illegal, then tried to block the payment of Milnes’ salary by the island’s government as leverage. However, the scheme failed, and Milnes’ reforms remained the basic template for the \textit{Régie} for the remainder of the British occupation. Despite some continued grumbling from

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 317
\textsuperscript{21} Milnes to Portland, October 4, 1795, WO 1/31, 363.
Whitehall about administrative costs, it was a notable success story in British sequestration policy.²²

The more troubled attempts to improve Saint Domingue’s sequestration system demonstrate that tensions between *raison d’état* and private interest were not confined to Britain’s French allies. Even as Bouillé’s confederates sought to frustrate reform in Martinique in the latter part of 1796, the Governor of Saint Domingue, Major General Gordon Forbes, was embroiled in a controversy over his own plans for the *Régie*. The crux of the matter lay in Forbes’ attempts to streamline the sequestration process by arrogating to administrators the ability to fix rents and choose tenants for leased properties. Previously, these leases had been awarded to the highest bidder under the supervision of local courts.²³ The Privy Council, the highest-ranking French officials in the occupation government, strenuously objected to Forbes’ plan. The councilors accepted the failure of the existing system and echoed the governor’s view that many of the regulations affecting the management of the sequestered estates were a waste of time and money. However, they argued that abandoning the use of auctions for leases was a violation of the colony’s laws and an invitation to corruption.²⁴ In his defense of the new policy to Whitehall, Forbes claimed that “he was obliged to consider the mode of leasing estates as political measure” and complained that the Privy Council was “laying a considerable weight on the necessity of preserving some miserable legal forms.” Allowing the British Commissary General to pick leaseholders would facilitate the selection of tenants who would best manage the properties. This approach, Forbes maintained, would be in the interest of both absentee

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²² Kleczewski, “Martinique and the British Occupation,” 292-293.
proprietors and the government—all the more so for plantations that were still intact and producing, which by 1796 were a valuable prize indeed.²⁵

Forbes depicted his new policy as a pragmatic measure in opposition to the Council’s merely procedural scrupulosity. As further support, he cited the agreement with his plan by M. de Rouseray, the colony’s chief judge. The *chef de justice*, however, had observed to Forbes that much would depend on whether the official in charge of the revised *Régie* was “*essentiellment probre*.”²⁶ As it happened, the Privy Council’s fears on this point were not merely theoretical. Forbes’ Commissary General was his private secretary, James Esten. Esten—who, unlike Forbes, spoke French—had already used the *Régie* as a vehicle to enrich himself and his associates in the administration, including Jean-Baptiste Lapointe, a powerful free colored planter,²⁷ and Jean-Suzanne de Léaumont, who had designed the new leasing policy. Esten, Lapointe, Léaumont, and other administrators in their circles took bribes in exchange for undervaluing the estates and leasing them at dubiously low rates to both locals and, in a few cases, British merchants and soldiers. One jurisconsult sent to London reported a property near Port-au-Prince that had been appraised by the local authorities at 18,000 colonial livres, then leased out for merely 6,000.²⁸ In London, Malouet complained to the War Office that some plantations disposed of in this “arbitrary and illegal manner” were being leased at less than one fourth their real value.²⁹ One of the Privy Councilor’s other complaints with Forbes’ proposed reforms was that lease-holders were obliged to pay rent to local deputies rather than directly to the Commissary General.³⁰ This

²⁶ De Rouseray to Forbes, October 1796, WO 1/66, 13-16.
²⁷ Lapointe’s role in the importation of slaves into Jamaica is noted in Chapter One.
²⁸ Notes on a jurisconsult relative to the property of absent proprietors, WO 1/66, 535.
³⁰ Forbes to Portland, October 25, 1796, WO 1/66, 5-6.
created opportunities for low-level graft by the deputies, and Esten’s control over appointments to such positions offered him another means of feathering his nest. Esten and his confrères also held leases to a number of plantations themselves, a clear conflict of interest. Amid such gross self-seeking, the sequestration system as a whole was unsurprisingly unable to raise anything close to the revenues that Whitehall hoped for.

A testament to the failures of the Régie during this period is that Forbes generated more than half of his administration’s income by selling slaves from sequestered estates to the British government as soldiers. This was clearly neither a marginal savings for London nor beneficial for the agricultural production that theoretically still offered the possibility of supporting the occupation. Some colonists also complained of the perceived threat to property rights; according to Malouet, “the inhabitants dread that if the colony is conquered by the English, their slaves will be seized and sold.” Forbes was, in a very literal sense, depleting the human capital needed to sustain the revival of the plantation complex in Saint Domingue.

As Malouet’s complaint suggests, pressure against British sequestration policy came not only from within the occupied colonies but from the wider emigration on both sides of the Atlantic. The occupation governments in Martinique and Saint Domingue were bombarded with appeals from exiled or absentee planters requesting either the restoration of their property or access to its revenues until their claims were adjudicated. Malouet counted twenty four Saint Domingue planters seeking redress at the time of his memorandum to the War Office in 1797. Some of these proprietors were based in England, others in neutral countries in Europe or in the

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32 Ibid., 318-319.  
In some cases people who left the colonies during the British occupation had their property sequestered and later attempted to recover it. The widowed proprietor Louise Darbiens, for instance, left Martinique for London in 1794 but found her plantation seized the following year, and had to return to the island to sue for its recovery. Having proved her residence in London, she finally recovered the estate in November 1797. A number of planters resident in France also pleaded through intermediaries for exceptions to sequestration policy, as with a M. Gamot of Le Havre, whose émigré friends in London petitioned for the rents of his property in Martinique to be released to him on account of his advanced age and poverty (all the worse, they observed, because he was “accustomed to live in opulence”). Malouet himself had pleaded with Portland the year before on behalf of Gentil du Poux, an absentee planter who wished to return to his plantation in Saint Domingue; his “residence in France has not changed his principles,” Malouet claimed. Like the wave of émigré planters who followed the British in the early stages of their intervention in the French islands, these petitioners sought to safeguard their property—they had reason to doubt the ministrations of the Régie, as has been seen—as well as to better their own often-precarious circumstances in the short term. The geographic breadth of the emigration and the often-complex history of ownership of particular properties produced convoluted cases for the government to adjudicate. In one case, an émigré in London named Grandelos petitioned against the sequestration of an estate in Saint Domingue. Ordinarily a proprietor in British territory would have been exempted from sequestration of property, but Grandelos was only leasing the estate from the actual owner, who resided in neutral

34 Malouet, Note on Sequestered Property, 1797, WO 573.
35 Darbiens Case Documents, November 1797, WO 1/35, 397-404.
36 Arthur Adeline to William Hamilton, 1801, WO 1/36, 693-695.
37 Malouet to Portland, January 24, 1796, WO 1/64, 17.
Switzerland. Claims like these presented a policy problem for British administrators attempting to maintain the smoothest and most profitable running of sequestered estates as well as good relations with French royalists.

After Milnes’ reforms the British administration in Martinique took a relatively friendly approach to such claims for redress, allowing proprietors in neutral countries the ability to retain their property if they could provide certification of their residency status to the satisfaction of the island’s courts. About half of those who pressed for the restoration of property under this provision succeeded. However, during the tenure of Milnes’ successor Keppel, the Home Office increasingly worried that this policy was too lax and that some French planters were defrauding the system. In 1799 Portland charged Keppel with ensuring that landowners recovering sequestered property had not borne arms against the British or lived in French territory since the island’s occupation, and required ministerial approval for future removals from the Régie. The following year Portland complained that some proprietors were either submitting bogus certificates or illicitly returning to French territory after obtaining the proper documentation in a neutral locale such as Hamburg. While only one such case of residency fraud was ever substantiated in court in Martinique, the result was further tightening of requirements and eventually the end of any restitution of sequestered property for proprietors in neutral territory, a change which lasted for the remainder of the British occupation. In Saint Domingue, meanwhile, there was no formal mechanism enabling the restitution of sequestered property. In a colony where the British were engaged in an ongoing and crushingly expensive

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38 Grandelos case documentation, WO 1/66, 673-693.
40 Portland to Keppel, August 26, 1799, CO 166/5 93-97.
41 Portland to Keppel, October 31, 1800, CO 166/5, 120-123.
42 Portland to Keppel, October 1800, WO 1/35, 771-773.
war, generating revenue took precedence over accommodating aggrieved proprietors, and Saint Domingue’s Régie, problematic as it was, generated far greater returns than Martinique’s did.\footnote{Kleczewski (309) observes that sequestered properties in Saint Domingue generated in three years nearly four times what Martinique’s Régie yielded in eight; an average level of production more than ten times greater, in other words.} This certainly did not stop planters from trying, however, and a few at least appear to have recovered their property.\footnote{Malouet, Note on Sequestered Property, 1797, WO 573.} Others obtained the right to take over their estates as lessors, though late in the occupation this required the administration to seek approval from Whitehall.\footnote{E.g., Simcoe to Portland, September 17, 1797, CO 245/1, 106.} A number of these petitioners also sought to travel to their colonial properties from Europe or elsewhere, only a small subset of the larger group of colonists who did so during the British intervention in the French Caribbean.

Whether seeking the restoration of property, access to its revenues, or travel permits to reach it, colonists were often assisted by well-placed patrons, both French and British. The former were often prominent émigrés in regular contact with the Pitt administration, the British occupation governments, or both. Malouet wrote to the government to assist the petitions of a number of Saint Domingue planters, for instance, while the Baron de Montesquieu (the philosopher’s grandson) weighed in on behalf of two Martinican proprietors, “men of honour and good principles,” one of whom was a relative. “They solicit an order from government to be maintained in the possession of their plantation, and they hope everything from the justice of their country,” Montesquieu wrote.\footnote{Baron de Montesquieu to Portland, 1801, CO 166/1, f. 598.} The latter, British group largely consisted of merchants and financiers, some of them extremely wealthy and influential. The Thellusson Brothers intervened for a number of émigrés resident in London who desired the return of property or
access to revenues in Martinique. The patriarch of the firm, Peter Thellusson, was a Franco-Swiss Huguenot immigrant who had made his fortune before the Revolution by lending to the British government and speculating in grain, and subsequently became one of the directors of the Bank of England as well as a major sugar refiner. The firm provided supporting letters that were sent along with the petitions of its French clients or their friends in London to the Home Office, and evidently did this often enough that the letters took a standardized form. Likewise, the London-based merchants Aggasiz (another Swiss name) and Wilson lobbied on behalf of the Comte de la Touche (then resident in Philadelphia) and the Marquis de Fitzjames, whose estates were sequestered in Martinique. Other major merchant firms such as Simond and Hankey posted surety for the legitimacy of the residence certificates that were required to prevent or reverse confiscations. As noted in Chapter One, there also appear to have been cases of fraudulent property transactions between British merchants like the Thellussons and French planters meant to skirt the sequestration laws. The efforts of British ministers and administrators to implement sequestration policy were thus complicated not only by the interests of the French planters themselves, but by the wider transimperial social and economic networks that had coalesced around the colonial emigration and occupation.

Despite the great deal of political angst it caused, sequestration never generated lavish returns for the British occupiers. In Martinique, where the management of the Régie was relatively stable and efficient in the last several years of the occupation, revenues from

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47 CO 166/1, 477-481, 494-495, 531.
49 Portland to Keppel, 13 October 13, 1801, WO 1/36, 275-276.
50 Hankey to Portland, May 19, 1801, CO 166/1, 533.
sequestration were far lower than those from tolls, tariffs, and other taxation.\footnote{Kleczewski, “Martinique and the British Occupation,” 310.} In Saint Domingue, the much larger and valuable set of sequestered properties only began to deliver on its potential in the final year of the British intervention—precisely as London was beginning to cut its losses. General John Simcoe, the final British commander in the colony, arrived with a remit to drastically shrink British expenditures on the occupation and to concentrate on holding a few key strategic points in anticipation of a peace deal with France. Simcoe’s economy drive included discarding the corruption-ridden Régie entirely in June 1797, though existing leases remained in force. The new simplified system for managing absentee property produced over three million livres per annum—more revenue than ever before, but still only a fraction of the money needed to support the occupation.\footnote{Geggus, “British Occupation of Saint Domingue,” 321-322.} Meanwhile, Simcoe’s trimming of many of the plum positions offered by the sequestration system led to many former government employees abandoning the colony (see below).

Even at this late hour, colonists, émigrés, and opportunistic Britons continued to press for their own share of the faltering plantation economy. Throughout 1796, even as bitter fighting with Toussaint Louverture’s forces spread, French exiles continued to request passports to Saint Domingue to take possession of estates.\footnote{WO 1/64, 17, 117.} Over the summer of 1797 a British officer, Lt. Col. Hallam, became involved in a protracted dispute with Simcoe over a lease he held on a sequestered property. Simcoe had ordered Hallam to relinquish the lease, possibly because of corruption concerns from the previous Régie administration. Hallam, however, refused, declaring that his lease was “intirely unconnected to my military situation, a property as sacred…as any
man’s estate in England.”\textsuperscript{54} Simcoe’s letter to London reporting this confrontation also contained a request for the merchant Stanlias Foache to administer property of his that had been sequestered.\textsuperscript{55} In October, the noblewoman Elizabeth Charbonnel, who had fled to London after her husband was killed in “the horrible proscription” of the Terror, wrote the Home Office to request the recognition and protection of her other son’s property claim in the colony.\textsuperscript{56} This was mere months before the British lost Port-au-Prince and less than a year from the evacuation of the colony. As the British war effort first stalled and then winded down, individuals on both sides of the Atlantic continued to seek to profit from colonial property while they could, and these private actors continued to complicate questions of policy for British administrators and ministers.

Throughout the occupation period in both Saint Domingue and the Windwards, the political salience of sequestration policy was testament to the great hopes the British government invested in the French colonial plantation economy as well as that economy’s partial resilience under conditions of revolt and war. At the same time, British metropolitan and colonial governments were frequently frustrated in turning sequestered property into a profitable strategic asset. That difficulty reflected the motley transimperial assortment of official and private actors whose interests often ran counter to one another or to government policy, and in some cases were parasitic on the success of the British occupation. As the resulting conflicts demonstrate, the question of colonial property was also implicated in a wider web of debt, trade, jobbery, and patronage, both within and across national and revolutionary divides.

\textsuperscript{54} Hallam to Simcoe, CO 245/1, 107-110.
\textsuperscript{55} Simcoe to John King, September 11, 1797, CO 245/1, 106.
\textsuperscript{56} Dame Elizabeth Marie Charbonnel to Portland, October 2, 1797, WO 1/66, 565.
Debt and Trade

Debt and trade were closely intertwined concerns for all Caribbean colonies. Despite the great fortunes made by many slaveholding proprietors, the slim margins and constant indebtedness of colonial planters along with protectionist laws and tariffs made their merchant partners-cum-creditors the true kings of the early modern Atlantic economy.\(^57\) For a long period prior to the Revolution, French planters resented their economic subordination and speculated as to how it might be cast off. The restrictive trade policy known as the *exclusif* was widely hated by planters and indeed colonists of all stripes, and the profitability of smuggling made it clear how much they stood to gain if the monopoly of the French metropole were eliminated.\(^58\) The advantages of economic affiliation with Britain were also apparent long before 1789. Either annexation by Britain or independence with free trade would free planters from the stranglehold of debt to French merchants and allow more favorable commercial opportunities. As Stanilas Foache, himself a merchant resident in Saint Domingue, put it, “We would rather belong to a nation where sugar sells dearly and we have less to fear from war.”\(^59\)

From an early stage, therefore, the upheaval of the Revolution appeared to planters and other colonists as an opportunity to revolutionize the nature of the economic ties between metropole and colony. Free trade was a goal of all white political factions. One of the first acts of the rebellious local assembly in Gros Morne, Martinique in the heady days of 1790 was to order the port opened to foreign vessels.\(^60\) Even before the British went to war with republican France,

\(^{57}\) Cheney, *Cul de Sac*, 7.
\(^{58}\) Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, 50.
\(^{60}\) Unsigned letter to M. de Malle Veault, Lt. des Vaisseaux du Roi, September 16, 1790, CO 166/1, 385.
the collapse of enforcement of the *exclusif* led to a considerable increase in de facto commercial ties between British and French colonies, with Dominguan coffee and cotton selling in large quantities the harbors of Jamaica. Alexander Lindo, a British merchant of Portuguese Jewish extraction, meanwhile supplied the secessionist assembly in Saint Domingue’s West Province with ammunition and food from Jamaica.  

The revolutionary crisis released pent-up demand for commercial ties with Britain and its colonies as well as generating new demand for strategic resources. These transactions in turn helped to pull Britain into closer alignment with the Caribbean counterrevolutionaries as French colonial politics deteriorated into civil war.

As Britain and France descended into war, leading colonial émigrés began to argue for a suspension of debts in the event of British occupation, which they were likewise seeking. When the counterrevolutionary colonial representatives convened in London in February 1793 to produce the Treaty of Whitehall, they agreed upon a ten year moratorium on debt payments, free trade between Saint Domingue and the United States, and access to British markets on the same terms as the British colonies.  

Martinique obtained similar commercial terms in its own capitulation agreement, although its access to American trade would be temporary. British occupation itself would ensure that debt payments to French metropolitan creditors became impossible for the time being. However, émigré and resident planters continued to lobby for the assurance of debt protections. The planter Jean-Baptiste Dubuc de Saint-Olympe, who held properties in both Martinique and Saint Domingue, contrasted the “cosmopolitans” and “capitalists” who lent at “gross interest” with their debtors, the resident planters, who were the colonies’ “real citizens.” Dubuc deemed the debt the planters labored under as “oppressive,”

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62 Propositions of February 25, 1793, WO 1/58, 533-538.
63 Draft of Articles of Capitulation, January 1794, CO 318/17, 236-245.
noting that in large part it deprived form the high costs of importing slaves. Suspension of debts, he argued, would allow planters to recuperate their losses from the war and further develop the rich agricultural potential of the French colonies, particularly Saint Domingue. For Dubuc, Saint Domingue was “a very robust, but dangerously sick body; a skillful physician is necessary for it, and the English ministry is the only one who can snatch it from death.”

Malouet, hoping to stave off a Spanish takeover of Saint Domingue in late 1793, likewise argued in a memorandum to Whitehall that only commercial links with Britain would enable the colony to recover from its desperate condition. Colonial royalist leaders like Dubuc and Malouet used economic arguments to press for greater British military commitments to Saint Domingue, while also seeking to shape the terms of economic change that would result from the long-awaited invasion. The wartime years would constitute an experiment in partial economic integration between the two colonial empires long hedged about by mercantilist policies.

The counterrevolutionary alliance did not, however, erase the pattern of planter indebtedness to metropolitan creditors. Instead, it created new opportunities for lending by British merchants and financiers to French colonial borrowers. The arrival of émigré planters in London and elsewhere in Britain and continental Europe—either resident colonists fleeing the Caribbean or absentees fleeing France—meant that this lending activity began well before the British joined the conflict in the colonies. Like other émigré elites, the planters required large sums to live in their accustomed style. Unlike most other émigrés, their access to their colonial property—either currently or prospectively—allowed them substantial prospects for repayment.

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64 Jean-Baptiste Dubuc de Saint-Olympe, Mémoire sur l’état actuel de Saint Domingue, December 29, 1793, CO 245/1, 132-138.

and collateral. Indeed, some colonial émigrés had sufficient resources at hand to lend considerable sums to other exiles: as of early 1793 the exiled Bourbon court was in debt to Louis de Curt of Guadeloupe, for instance. More typically, wealthy colonial émigrés lived off of loans secured from British bankers and merchants. Malouet’s account with Simond and Hankey for the year 1793 stood at £490, a sum that he could expect to repay at that time, as his plantation in Saint Domingue was still intact. Étienne-Louis Ferrons de la Ferronays, another absentee planter émigré, borrowed over 30,000 livres tournois from the same firm by his death in 1798. He borrowed an additional 10,000 livres from the Thellusson Brothers in a sham sale in 1796 meant to keep his plantation in Saint Domingue from sequestration. In some cases émigrés had little prospect for repaying their loans, but this fact was itself an opportunity for less scrupulous British lenders, who hoped to take over their debtors’ colonial properties. British creditors may well have been more sharp-elbowed than the merchant bankers of the Old Regime, who, for all the resentment they incurred among the planters, had relatively weak legal and practical means to press their claims against debtors. Much as debt relief had been one of the attractions of the Anglo-émigré alliance, in practice many planters were in an even more dependent position under their new British partners.

In one crucial respect, however, the interests of creditors and debtors were in concert: their economic prospects depended on the survival of the plantation economy in the French colonies. As such, the British merchant houses joined with émigrés and colonists throughout the 1790’s to lobby the Pitt administration to extend and hold its conquests in the Caribbean. In

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66 Blackburn, Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 203-204.  
68 Cheney, Cul de Sac 205.  
1794, after word of the capture of Port-au-Prince reached London, both the Saint Domingue
émigrés led by Malouet and the above-noted seventeen British firms submitted a petition calling
for the government to press its advantage on behalf of the “commerce of Great Britain.” In
November of 1796, as the situation in Saint Domingue deteriorated and peace with France
seemed likely, the city’s merchant houses engaged in trade with Saint Domingue convened in a
London tavern to pass a number of resolutions to communicate to the government. The
lobbying job was given to John Turnbull of Simond and Hankey, who wrote to the Home Office
to argue for the reinstatement of exiled proprietors on their estates and the maintenance of
slavery in the event the colony were returned to France. Without these concessions, the
merchants could hardly hope to recover their outlays to the émigrés or their investments in local
trading branches in the colony. The harbor of Port-au-Prince in that year was described by one
French plantation manager as teeming with British merchant vessels and British gold and silver,
though Dominguan exports were still a fraction of their prerevolutionary levels. Export taxes
made up the majority of government revenue in Saint Domingue. Alongside loans and trading
ventures, the London merchants had also purchased plantation leases and invested in urban real
estate. The Duke of Portland, for his part, promised the merchants that their interests would be
protected if the British withdrew from Saint Domingue. Turnbull wrote to Whitehall again the
next summer with similar intent, claiming that the substantial losses his fellow traders were
facing in the event of a British withdrawal from Saint Domingue and Martinique would make it

75 Cheney, *Cul de Sac*, 204.
76 Portland to Turnbull, December 1796, WO 1/64, 407.
“expedient” and “just” for those colonies to have free trade with Britain for a set period after the peace, in order to allow the merchants to recoup their investments.\textsuperscript{77} Wartime transactions thus gave the merchants and émigrés grounds to press for the extension of transimperial economic ties into a future where the survival of the slave-based economy itself was uncertain. To a newly significant decree, British mercantile interests were implicated in the colonial \textit{system} in the French colonies, irrespective of the flag it operated under.

The large trading houses had significant access to Whitehall to promote their interests, and, if Paul Cheney is to be believed, it was “thanks to merchants’ pressure” that the British remained in Saint Domingue as long as they did.\textsuperscript{78} The government actively sought the input of the merchant interest in policy matters, consulting them regarding racial laws in the occupied colonies for instance.\textsuperscript{79} However, the relative importance of the various motivations behind the government’s overall strategy are not obvious. While British ministers were clearly conscious of the economic possibilities of conquest, the defensive imperative to protect Jamaica and other British colonies from revolutionary contagion appears more often in official correspondence than does any mention of commercial interests. It remains true, however, that the denouement of the British occupation in Saint Domingue coincided with the merchants looking for opportunities elsewhere: by the time of Turnbull’s 1797 letter, for instance, they were eyeing the former Dutch colonies of Demarara and Essequibo (modern Guyana) as better prospects for investment.\textsuperscript{80}

Whatever the efficacy of the merchant lobby, the interests of some of the most powerful

\textsuperscript{78} Cheney, \textit{Cul de Sac}, 204.  
\textsuperscript{79} Malouet to Dundas, May 22, 1793, WO 1/58, 87-90.  
\textsuperscript{80} Turnbull to Portland, June 15, 1797, WO 1/66, 455-457.
economic actors in the empire were deeply enmeshed with the progress of the British intervention.

These newfound mercantile connections contributed not only to debates surrounding grand strategy, but also to more immediate administrative problems for the British occupiers. Merchants lobbied on behalf of their French clients faced with sequestration, and sometimes engaged in legally dubious schemes to prevent it, as noted. Other merchants profited in collusion with Esten’s corrupt management of the Régie in Saint Domingue. In receiving payments from French debtors or business partners or their estates in the colonies, they also complicated British efforts to control colonial capital flows to prevent resources from reaching the enemy. In 1801, for instance, the colonist James Eyma fell under suspicion of remitting money from Martinique to France. James Bordieu, a major player in British Caribbean trade (and presumably Eyma’s creditor and/or trading partner), interceded on Eyma’s behalf, claiming that the funds were in the care of his firm, which had received a special license from the government to transmit a limited amount of bills of exchange to Bordeaux.81 Whatever the particulars of this case, it appears likely that British intermediaries allowed some colons and émigrés to circumvent British laws and maintain financial relationships with French business partners or family members. British traders in Martinique agitated against Old Regime harbor tolls and French legal protections for debtors, and vexed the local government further by importing debased coinage from Europe.82

Revolution and war also intensified the transimperial exchange of human property, a highly sensitive political matter as well as a lucrative opportunity for arbitrage. This

81 James Bordieu to the Duke of Portland, June 2, 1801, CO 166/1, 536; on Bordieu’s earlier career, see Huw David, Trade, Politics, and Revolution: South Carolina and Britain’s Atlantic Commerce, 1730-1790 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2018).
82 Kleczewski, “Martinique and the British Occupation,” 211; See also Chapter 4.
development included the British government’s purchase of at least 18,000 enslaved men for military duties—most imported from Africa, but some native to the French colonies.\textsuperscript{83} It encompassed the capture and sale of slaves taken by British corsairs at sea,\textsuperscript{84} as well as the direct importation of slaves from one French colony to another or to British colonies, where they helped to jumpstart agricultural sectors such as coffee cultivation in Jamaica. As noted in Chapter One, British colonial governments sought to limit the numbers and geographic spread of these potential revolutionary agents, placing the logic of security at odds with that of private profit once again.

While both counterrevolutionary French colonists and British merchants had reason to support the incorporation of the French colonies within Britain’s system of imperial commerce, wartime conditions also placed stress upon that system. The desire for free trade between the French colonies and North America reflected the need for access to essential provisions, without which the islands might be vulnerable to starvation and slave unrest. Prior to the revolution French colonists had envied their British counterparts’ access to foodstuffs and raw materials from Canada and (to a lesser extent) the United States, while such trade to the French islands was largely limited to smuggling.\textsuperscript{85} From 1796 onwards the counterrevolutionary Martinicans were forced to equip a de facto “private navy” to supplement the overstretched British in fighting off the constant attacks of Guadeloupe-based privateers on merchant vessels.\textsuperscript{86} Unsurprisingly, in this context, the United States assumed an even more outsized importance during the British

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\textsuperscript{83} Martin R. Howard, \textit{Death Before Glory: The British Soldier in the West Indies in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars 1793-1815} (Barnesly, South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword, 2015), 13.
\textsuperscript{84} Several such incidents are recounted in Archives Diplomatiques, 518PO/1/123.
\textsuperscript{85} Frostin,” L’Intervention Britannique en Saint Domingue,” 315.
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occupation, as its neutrality allowed its ships to ply all the routes of the Caribbean—at least until steadily increasing French attacks on American shipping culminated in the 1798-1800 Quasi-War, which was provoked in part by Yankee traffic with the British-occupied islands. Despite its strategic importance, colonial trade with America also went beyond the bounds that London preferred: throughout the occupation of Martinique, for instance, the colonial government repeatedly had to ask for the lifting of trade restrictions to allow neutral vessels access to its ports, and lowered harbor fees in an attempt to attract neutral trade. 87 American vessels also carried French colonial cargo—whether from the royalist or republican zones—to metropolitan France, sometimes passing them off as American goods. 88 The upswing in American trade, however, was not unique to the occupied French colonies. Social and economic fragility in wartime was a longstanding problem in all insular plantation colonies. 89 Jamaica, for instance, threatened by shortages, requested and received its own temporary privileges to open its ports to neutrals. 90 Across the Caribbean, the privations and instability of war stretched and weakened longstanding protectionist policies, and consequently it was not only British or French actors who profited from the temporary redrawing of borders and loyalties.

The expansion of trade and credit due to emigration and occupation led to huge losses in Saint Domingue, a result of the British withdrawal in 1798 and the subsequent dismantling of the colonial regime altogether—though some commercial contacts with Britain continued under the independent state of Haiti. The Windward Islands, by contrast, continued to offer transimperial economic opportunities until the Treaty of Amiens, and subsequently throughout overlapping

88 John Huston to Home Office, August 15, 1793, CO 245/1, 156.
89 Cheney, Cul de Sac, 6-7
90 Adam Williamson to Henry Dundas, August 10, 1793, CO 137/91, 250-251.
periods of British occupation in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and other islands during the Napoleonic era. The crucial period from 1790-1803 demands attention, however, for the way in which France’s colonial civil war and emigration played a central role in shaping the intensification of commercial and financial ties across old imperial boundaries. These relationships provided a lifeline to émigrés and embattled colonists and strengthened Britain’s commercial interest in the struggle against revolution. At the same time, as with the struggles surrounding sequestration, transimperial concentrations of economic power generated considerable friction with the British state’s efforts to prosecute and sustain the war—the very war that offered tantalizing promises of profit under a new counterrevolutionary order.

Civil and Military Employment

For all the private or semi-private agricultural, financial, and commercial ventures that took shape under the British imperial aegis, the largest direct economic impact of British intervention likely came in the form of government spending. In Saint Domingue, at least, it was not even close. John Turnbull offered a figure of £ 300,000 in cumulative British loans and investments in the colony at the end of 1796, and he had little reason to estimate conservatively. By contrast, the monthly expenses for the British occupation at the time of General Simcoe’s assumption of command the following spring ran reached the staggering sum of £ 700,000—a figure that London, rather optimistically, tasked Simcoe with trimming by over 96 percent.91 In total the British spent over £ 4,000,000 before their withdrawal.92 A large portion of these expenditures went to French colonists in the forms of military and civil salaries and government

91 CO 245/1,120-6; WO 1/67,545-575, 615-635.
92 Blackburn, Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 292.
contracts. Even in smaller and comparatively peaceful Martinique, personnel costs ran to tens of thousands of pounds per annum and played a significant role in the politics of the island’s administration. The British’s government’s extensive colonial payroll had contrasting effects on the Caribbean counterrevolution. It attached thousands of colonists to the British government, enabled the British to occupy and administer the French colonies with comparatively little manpower, and helped to prop up the “tottering edifice”\textsuperscript{93} of white colonial society by attracting émigrés to the colonies or inducing residents to remain. On the other hand, jobbery more often than not failed to secure lasting or reliable loyalty, and the tremendous expenses involved—licit or otherwise—sapped the political will to maintain British military commitments.

One need not disparage the political conviction of all colonial royalists—though many contemporaries did—to recognize the prospect of stable employment as a key incentive for those who flocked to the counterrevolutionary cause under British sponsorship. This was particularly true for émigrés, or at least those who lacked access to substantial resources in exile. However sincere the émigré job-seeker Huproye may have been in his desire to “pay off my debt to society,” the fact that he needed government funds reach the colonies in the first place suggests that personal need was a more immediate concern.\textsuperscript{94} Prior to the British landings in Saint Domingue, the planter Du Ban complained to Henry Dundas that unless the colonial émigrés were able to join an invasion of the colony, they would be confined to “servile occupations” or else compelled to join the expedition to Brittany.\textsuperscript{95} The migration-within-the-emigration of counterrevolutionaries to the French Caribbean colonies was thus at least as much a matter of necessity as of politics. While many of these exiles sought to profit from plantation property

\textsuperscript{93} See Chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{94} De la Huproye to the Duke of Portland, 12 July 1795, CO 245/1, 114.
\textsuperscript{95} Du Ban to Dundas, December 14, 1793, WO 1/58, 565-571.
owned by themselves, family, or friends, a sizeable number (including many planters) would
draw on His Majesty’s Treasury when they arrived.96

In the event, more than a few government employees leveraged their positions not merely
for subsistence but for considerable self-enrichment. Prominent counterrevolutionaries received
lucrative positions within the British occupation governments, often more on political than
instrumental grounds. In Saint Domingue salaries for government posts were raised considerably
above their Old Regime equivalents—the Attorney General made five times as much as in
1786—in part because of wartime inflation and in part due to weak central control over the
administrative apparatus.97 Not all of the extravagant personnel costs went to Frenchmen—
George Bogle, a Jamaican merchant who served as the Commissary-General in Saint Domingue,
was paid by commission on government expenditures, which netted him a remarkable £ 86,000
in two and a half years (the British governor, by contrast, only drew a £ 5,000 per year salary).98
Régie administrators likewise received commissions on gross receipts in both Saint Domingue
and the Windward Islands. Robert Milnes, in undertaking his fiscal reforms in Martinique, found
that administrator pay was largely devouring the proceeds of the sequestered estates.99

The licit proceeds from civil office were only the tip of the iceberg, however. As the
beleaguered efforts to reform the sequestration system show, government posts great and small
offered considerable scope for graft for both British and French officeholders. In some cases the

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96 Alongside planters and military and civil appointees, several hundred émigré Catholic
clergymen travelled to the occupied colonies to take ecclesiastical posts that had been abandoned
or else vacated by Republican-aligned priests who had consented to the civil constitution of the
clergy. British patronage of the colonial French church was one of the provisions of the Treaty of
Whitehall, and the transfer of émigré clergy to the occupied territories was approved by the
Vatican. See, e.g., WO 1/66, 399-419.
98 Ibid., 164-165.
99 Milnes to Portland, September 1795, WO 1/31, 332-333.
pattern of corruption flowed from the top—in Saint Lucia, the island’s first British governor, Major General Charles Gordon, extorted hundreds of thousands of livres, along with much livestock and other moveable property, from colonists he threatened with deportation for alleged republican sympathies. Gordon was court-martialed and cashiered, and appears to have been something of an outlier in his brazenness. Yet even comparatively honest British governors struggled to contain the acquisitiveness of their subordinates. When Milnes’ predecessor General John Vaughan took over the British administration of Martinique in late 1794, he not only found what he deemed outrageous salaries among the Régie administrators, but also failed to discover any record of the proceeds from the sale of confiscated goods. Vaughan also suspected that the administrators were extorting money from colonists menaced with sequestration and deportation. Sequestration was far from the only area of civil governance where graft was rampant, however: Vaughan also could find no proper documentation for Martinique’s police forces or administrative finances. As with James Esten’s tenure as head of the Saint Domingue Régie, Anglo-French networks of corruption and jobbery emerged in many areas of government. William Shaw, Governor Adam Williamson’s secretary, reportedly sold judicial and military commissions to colonists in Saint Domingue. The well-paid George Bogle may have kept his personal earnings more-or-less above-board, but his deputy, John Rousselette, conspired with local contractors to defraud the Crown of £ 60,000. One of Rousselette’s own assistants in the town

100 Court Martial Records of Major General Gordon, December 22, 1794, WO 1/31, 51-52.
102 Vaughan to Portland, December 22, 1794, WO 1/31, 36-37.
103 Ibid.
105 WO 1/65, 759.
of Saint Marc allegedly embezzled £40,000 in two years. In an anonymous pamphlet on the occupation published years later, Rousselette would reminisce: “Poor Saint Marc, thou hast enriched not a few (now honest) men!”

The military side of the British colonial occupations was likewise an engine of opportunity for colonists and émigrés and a fiscal morass for the government. The British raised more than forty colonial military units in the Caribbean with a total of at least 7,000 men by the end of 1795. These included white and free-colored colonial militias, émigré units, and black contingents normally commanded by white officers, either French or British. French émigré officers were also sometimes given command of mercenary auxiliaries from Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Corsica, and elsewhere in Europe, and other units blended mercenaries with émigrés and colonists in the rank-and-file. The émigré units, such as Montalembert’s Legion and Charmilly’s Dragoons, actively recruited among the French communities in London and other towns in England. Particularly early in the British intervention, the Caribbean was an attractive destination for émigrés who wanted to fight, regardless of whether they had previously lived in the colonies or held property there. The renowned wealth of the colonies, Saint Domingue above all, served as a lure for men who were otherwise dependent on loans or relief from the British government or private interests. As numerous petitions and memorandums to the Pitt government

107 Anonymous, *St. Domingo Review, or, Sketches of character of British principals in office, from ... 1792, to ... 1798* (Kingston: Date Unknown), 2. Geggus (“British Occupation of Saint Domingue,” 431) argues that internal evidence from the tract shows Rousselette to have been the author. Rousselette, very much in character, appears to have attempted to demand a larger share of the profits from the pamphlet than he had at first agreed upon with the publisher, leading to the publication of the work in an unfinished form. (3-4).
contended, these exiles would be able to pay back their British patrons’ generosity once the French colonies and their plantation regime was secured.

The belief that British intervention should pay for itself made a strong impression on policy debates over the Caribbean campaigns and occupations throughout the 1790’s. In practice this goal was usually far out of reach, and the cost of the French auxiliaries was one major factor. The émigré regiments in particular were chronically top-heavy, with many highly paid commissioned officers and relatively few privates. In the summer of 1795, for instance, Charmilly’s regiment had 49 commissioned officers, 40 NCOs, and only 146 privates. Because the regiment had a high turnover at the top, with many officers resigning, transferring, or dying, at least 70 men served as commissioned officers in the unit at one time or another throughout 1794 and 1795.110 This imbalance reflected in part the disproportionate share of émigrés who were former officers under the Old Regime or who came from elite backgrounds as planters or nobility, and consequently sought and expected military rank commensurate with their status.111 The British also allowed an excessive number of small units to proliferate, each with its own chain of command. In Saint Domingue at the end of 1796 there were 1,800 officers and NCOs to 9,600 privates in the colonial units—officially, at least.112 In actuality the surfeit of chiefs was more pronounced in light of the fact that some colonial units kept inflated headcounts, even listing fictitious soldiers, thereby allowing officers to siphon off money intended for wages and upkeep.113 In one colonial corps more than 200 men on the payroll were nowhere to be found.114 On top of pay, colonial units were

110 WO 12/11664.
111 The list of commissioned officers for Montalembert’s Légion Brittanique gives some idea of this pattern. WO 12/11973.
113 Howard, Death Before Glory, 16.
114 WO 1/66, 650-670.
allocated large sums for lodgings and forage, and these expenditures were subject to much abuse at the hands of unscrupulous officers. As with other aspects of the West Indies campaigns, corruption only compounded the broader problem of keeping expenses in check. These shortcomings might have been forgiven if the auxiliaries had been judged effective as soldiers. As it was, despite some notable battlefield successes, the French allies (especially the militia units) were widely derided and mistrusted by British commanders. General Simcoe complained that corruption “sapped the foundations of military discipline,” and that many colonial officers “realized a sufficiency to enable them to live without any further exertions.”

Black soldiers, who formed an increasingly important part of the British Caribbean armies throughout the Revolutionary period, were a comparative bargain for the Treasury, not least because they died of disease at lower rates than metropolitan white troops. However, the West Indies Regiments and other black auxiliary units had their own problems with waste and graft. Whether free or (mostly) enslaved, the rank-and-file of these units suffered considerable fraud at the hands of their white officers. Colonel Jean Kina, for one, complained that officers cheated black soldiers out of their pay, contributing to high rates of desertion. Officers might also pocket funds intended for food and clothing, and black soldiers, due to racial subordination, illiteracy, and (in some cases) language barriers, were more vulnerable to this treatment. Meanwhile, as with white units, the black regiments were often larger on paper than in reality: Lt. Colonel Thomas Maitland reported that some French officers sold or rented their own slaves to the army as soldiers.

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117 Simcoe to Portland, June 7, 1797, WO 1/66, 189-190.
119 See Chapter 3.
and then kept them working on their plantations.\textsuperscript{120} Despite the suspicion that greeted the arming of slaves among many colonists, there were always those willing to take advantage of it.

Contracting was another opportunity for colonists and another source of frustration for economizing commanders and governors. The occupation governments relied on private individuals and firms, both British and French, to provide seaborne transport for troops and supplies, overland supply routes, foodstuffs, animals, medical facilities, construction, fortification, and slaves for military service or labor. General Cornelius Cuyler, the Commander-in-Chief in Martinique for several months 1797-1798, arrived on the island to found large numbers of slaves hired out to army hospitals and supply stores or serving as personal servants for officers.\textsuperscript{121} Cuyler attempted to reduce his enslaved payroll as much as possible, but his cost-cutting measures sometimes backfired. When Cuyler negotiated the purchase of 200 “new slaves” as soldiers at a cut-rate price from a local merchant, most of the slaves delivered under the contract died within a short period—a persistent problem, as it turned out.\textsuperscript{122} In Saint Domingue, the first British governor Adam Williamson allowed individual unit commanders to issue contracts for their own regimental hospitals. The result was the proliferation of such facilities, which became profitable objects of speculation by colonists and a major drain on the occupation’s finances.\textsuperscript{123} In some cases a medical contractor was also a regimental surgeon, and thus was paid twice over.\textsuperscript{124} Military supply contracts were also often ruinously costly, though some of the expense was unavoidable due to prevailing price levels in the colony.\textsuperscript{125} The building of fortifications around Port-au-Prince

\textsuperscript{120} WO 1/66, 650-670.  
\textsuperscript{121} General Cornelius Cuyler to Henry Dundas, September 20, 1797. WO 1/86, 405-431.  
\textsuperscript{122} Chollet to General Kenneth Bowyer, May 19, 1798. WO 1/88, 88; Bowyer to Dundas, September 8, 1798, WO 1/86, 735-736.  
\textsuperscript{123} Geggus, “British Occupation of Saint Domingue,” 165 f.n. 118.  
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 205 f.n. 50.  
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 205-206.
likewise involved a considerable degree of fraud, implicating the colonial corps of engineers and high-level civil officials.\footnote{126 Ibid., 206. f.n. 59.} There were few angles from which the British government was not being bilked.

The costs that jobbery and corruption imposed on the British government motivated increasingly drastic exertions to curtail them, but also created powerful entrenched interests standing athwart any proposed changes. Robert Milnes encountered such obstruction in his ultimately successful policy changes in Martinique, as noted. In Saint Domingue the far larger civil and military apparatus of the occupation was even more resistant to pruning. A 1796 plan by Malouet for the French allies to relieve the British and reduce their expenses by taking over the civilian administration and the greater part of the occupation force was thwarted in its advanced stages of planning: so advanced, in fact, that Malouet’s baggage was already on the docks at Portsmouth awaiting his departure. While the Duke of Portland killed the proposal, his decision was influenced in large part by the lobbying of Dominguian officials who would have lost out from Malouet’s administrative restructuring. The rejection of Malouet’s appointment caused his proposed military counterpart, the Marquis de Bouillé, to resign in protest—ironically, the same Bouillé who had led the attempts to undermine Milnes’ reform of the Régie in Martinique.\footnote{127 Geggus, Slavery, War, and Revolution, 208.} While there were wider dimensions to the dispute concerning the circumstances under which the colony might be returned to France, this episode demonstrates yet again the central place that employment prospects played in transimperial politics. Malouet’s plan might not have had much chance of reviving the fortunes of the counterrevolution in Saint Domingue. What is certain is that the
resistance from the existing administrative faction doomed the occupation to an unsustainable status quo.

The policy of retrenchment in the final stages of the occupation thus confronted some of the same hurdles from the beneficiaries of the government payroll. On the military front, Simcoe shrunk the unwieldy number of colonial units and issued new general orders regulating the size and command structure of regiments, pay, allowances for clothing and supplies, and accounting procedures. Where before colonial and émigré officers had “pillaged with impunity,” his new orders had trimmed their “extraordinary allowances and profits.” The consequence, Simcoe reported, was “little less than a mutiny.” While Simcoe had reason to play up the impact of his economy measures in his report to London, there is little reason to doubt his assessment that “I have a wonderful Chaos of Vice and Folly to wade through.” Simcoe expected to save £ 25,000 per year on candles, oil, and firewood alone by transferring control of supply shipments to the central administration. Cost-cutting, however, had its own costs: a “frenzy of desertion” in the colonial units ensued, and some of the most prominent commanders resigned. Similar reactions greeted Simcoe’s efforts to reduce the expense of the civil government. The wave of French allies leaving British service had severe knock-on effects: plantations could not produce if they could not be protected by the dwindling number of soldiers, and emigration from the colony removed capital from circulation, damaging both near-term British revenues and the colony’s overall economic prospects. The fiscal “chaos” Simcoe had come to tame had been the only thing

129 Simcoe to Portland, June 7, 1797, WO 1/66, 189-190.
130 Simcoe to War Office, 1797, WO 1/66, 73.
131 WO 1/66, 97-104.
132 Ibid. 189-190.
attracting and keeping large numbers of colonists and émigrés in the colony in the first place. Simcoe succeeded in considerably reducing British expenses in Saint Domingue—though not to the degree London sought—but the same policies also helped to seal the fate of the British intervention. The bubble had burst.

The wider paradox of war and occupation in the French Caribbean is that Britain required local allies—in part to avoid committing excessive human and material resources from the metropole. At the same time, however, the resulting military and civil expenditures sapped the political will needed for Britain to remain as well as, in many cases, the practical effectiveness of the British intervention. Jobbery and graft were brought under some control in the Windward Islands, where an eventual handover to France was expected. In Saint Domingue, by contrast, where the ultimate political settlement was much more in doubt, the survival of the counterrevolutionary enterprise proved reliant on levels of government largesse that were unsustainable. The adventuring spirit that led counterrevolutionaries from across the Atlantic world to flock to the British colors had an ambivalent relationship with the success of the war effort, and it ultimately proved fickle.

Conclusion

Even as the British occupation was limping toward its end, French émigrés and British merchant firms continued to lobby the government for the protection of their interests in Saint Domingue, arguing for the promise of the colony’s plantation complex. In the autumn of 1796, both groups lobbied in London for the maintenance of the proprietors on their estates as well as slavery in any peace settlement with France.\textsuperscript{134} In February of 1797 an address from over two hundred of

\textsuperscript{134}Lokke, “London Merchant Interest,” 800.
the island’s proprietors to his majesty pled for continued British government, without which the counterrevolutionary forces would be “paralyzed,” they argued.\textsuperscript{135} Forbes, still governor at that point, supported their letter, pointing to the rebuilding of plantations and sugar refineries then underway in some of the war-ravaged portions of the Cul de Sac plain. These, he promised, would produce “considerable revenue” for the British that would “in some measure diminish the enormous expense” of the war.\textsuperscript{136} As the British position deteriorated that autumn and winter, several extensive memorandums from French émigrés reached Whitehall to make the case for a continued British presence, on both defensive strategic grounds—primarily the security of Jamaica—and on grounds of economic interest.\textsuperscript{137} Lambert, for instance, promoted the prosperous experience of Guadeloupe under British occupation in the Seven Years War as a model for Saint Domingue’s future success, even as he warned of “brigands” bringing “fire and sword… and, what would be still more destructive, the code of liberty and equality” to the British colonies if left unchecked.\textsuperscript{138} Even Simcoe later argued that the maintenance of some remnant of Saint Domingue’s slave economy had wider political implications for the British colonies. The general argued that the last sugar works left in the Archacaye region were of critical importance. “Should this species of labour so peculiarly odious to Negroes be eradicated in St. Domingo,” he argued, “the little probability there is of its long remaining in the British colonies.”\textsuperscript{139}

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\textsuperscript{135} Address from the Saint Domingue Planters to His Majesty George III, February 1797, WO 1/66, 49-50.
\textsuperscript{136} Forbes to Portland, February 18, 1797, WO 1/66, 51-57.
\textsuperscript{138} Lambert to Portland, October 24, 1797. WO/166: 589-602.
\textsuperscript{139} Simcoe to Portland, June 7, 1797, WO 1/66, 189-190.
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In the end, however, neither hopes for the future profitability of the conquest or fears of the consequences of withdrawal were enough to counterbalance the tide of military setbacks and the mounting costs of occupation. Transimperial economic connections may have even cushioned the losses suffered by retreat from Saint Domingue. British merchants were already looking toward new opportunities for trade and investment on the South American mainland. Some colonial counterrevolutionaries meanwhile leveraged their loyalty to Britain to seek new riches in exile. A number of Dominguian planters accepted land grants from the British in the former Spanish territory of Trinidad, which was predominately French-speaking and poised to undergo a major expansion of its plantation economy.\(^\text{140}\) Among this group was the Baron de Montalembert, who had profited immensely from civil and military commissions and their attendant opportunities for bribery and speculation in property. Montalembert promptly reestablished himself as a key power broker between the French planters and the British occupation administration in Trinidad, and would play a prominent role in the scandal over the tyrannical conduct of the British governor, General Thomas Picton.\(^\text{141}\) It can hardly be said, therefore, that counterrevolutionary Anglo-French connections left no material legacy, despite the end of the “sequestration” of the French colonies.

The possibilities that counterrevolutionaries had pursued during that turbulent period, for a fundamental revision of the colonial economic order across imperial boundaries, were largely frustrated. Those very possibilities, however, had shaped the course of the Caribbean counterrevolution in important, albeit contradictory ways. Promises that vast profits were just

\(^{140}\) Note on relief for evacuees (1798?); WO 1/66, 355.

around the corner helped to draw people and capital into the British orbit from the French diaspora and into the French colonies from Britain. Politically, these transimperial connections created constituencies for British occupation as well as resistance to efforts to rationalize economic and administrative policies. In the final analysis, it appears that the transimperial speculative character of Anglo-French connections created at least as many problems as advantages for the progress of the colonial counterrevolution.

The ambivalent effects of the counterrevolutionary bubble demonstrate the simultaneous resilience and fragility of different aspects of French colonial society during its period of crisis. The rampant corruption and waste that marred nearly all facets of the British occupations revealed the limits of ideological and racial solidarity and served to confirm longstanding views of colonial white society as not much of a society at all: atomized, deracinated, and crudely self-interested. This view has long shaped the historiography of the period: Thus Charles Frostin, one of the more notable 20th century francophone historians of Saint Domingue, argues that the colony was “was not a fatherland, only a land of passage where one hoped only to sojourn long enough to make a quick fortune.”

Frostin’s portrait of Old Regime Saint Domingue is not far off from the kleptocracy that characterized the colony under the fragmented conditions of revolution and war. At the same time, however shaky the economic logic of the counterrevolution, its record also shows the collapse of the colonial regime was hardly an all-or-nothing affair, even in Saint Domingue. Plantations and manufactories continued to produce, colonists, émigrés, and merchants continued to seek their fortunes, and British officials and private lobbies continued to entertain an indefinite presence in Saint Domingue even at a very late stage in the occupation. The distinct counterrevolutionary experience in Martinique is

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evidence that other political and institutional circumstances could have produced very different results, even if the odds were long.

In a larger sense the study of the economic dimension of the Caribbean counterrevolution reveals the dynamism of both colonial society and the transimperial mobilization in its defense, which sought to preserve racial hierarchies and privilege but not necessarily the status quo as such. Counterrevolution was not a merely static force of resistance. Even the destruction of the old order in Saint Domingue, the fulcrum of the counterrevolutionary alliance, helped to seed opportunities for its former beneficiaries. Ada Ferrer has recently shown the rippling effects of the Haitian Revolution in entrenching the plantation regime in Cuba; British-sponsored emigration played a comparable role in the expansion of plantation slavery in Jamaica and Trinidad, among other locales. Though the colonial Caribbean had always been a region of cultural diversity and attenuated or blurred national loyalties, the wars and occupations of the revolutionary era fostered newly intense and self-conscious transimperial investments—personal and political—in a shared colonial system. For all the tawdriness of the counterrevolutionary enterprise, it was not a dead end.

143 Ferrer, *Freedom’s Mirror*. 
Chapter 3

The Fall of a Black Anti-Jacobin:

Transimperial Law and Rebellion in Occupied Martinique

“What is to be done with Jean Kina? Wherever he is sent he will do mischief.”¹ In August 1801 a bureaucrat in the British War Office scribbled this lament onto the margins of one of a series of letters that Colonel Jean Kina sent from Newgate Prison to ministers in Whitehall. For this official, the letters were likely curious artifacts. Written in poorly-spelled but grandiloquent French, they contained declarations of the prisoner’s loyalty to his British “masters” and proposals for how he might serve British conquests in the Caribbean. Just ahead of his signature, Kina declared himself “a faithful subject of His Britannic Majesty.”² That claim notwithstanding, Kina had languished in jail for months under the terms of the Aliens Act, which authorized the detention of foreigners at the government’s pleasure.³ His petitions for his release marked the unraveling of a most unusual transimperial career: that of a black anti-Jacobin.

Once an enslaved carpenter on a cotton plantation in Saint Domingue, Jean Kina had become an accomplished military leader in the fight to preserve slavery, first in the service of white French colonists and later for the British army. Both the Dominguian planters and the British valued Kina for his martial prowess as well as for the propaganda use of his vocal attachment to white supremacy and monarchy. As one British officer put it, “the King had not a better friend than Jean Kina, whose attachment to Royalty is as conspicuous as his Honour and

¹ Jean Kina to the Duke of York, August, 1801, WO 1/623, 525-535.
² Jean Kina to the Duke of Portland, March 11, 1801, WO 166/1, 1.
³ Reboul, French Emigration to Great Britain, 68.
Integrity." Kina obtained his freedom—which he made a deft show of declining, for a time—along with command of hundreds of other black soldiers and considerable wealth. The British showered him with gifts ranging from ceremonial swords to a portrait of George III. In 1799, after the British had evacuated Saint Domingue, the colonel visited London, where he met with officials in Whitehall and was fêted by French émigrés. The latter saw him as the exemplary “bon Nègre,” in the words of Pierre-Victor Malouet, who attempted to enlist Kina in a wild scheme to kidnap Toussaint Louverture’s teenaged sons in Paris. Only the next year, however, he was sent back to London under very different circumstances—deported from the British-occupied French island of Martinique amid calls for his execution. His years of service to the Crown spared him from the hangman’s rope, but one officer captured the prevailing sentiment when he wondered whether the British had created “a power that we could not control.” Kina had once been hailed—with some exaggeration—as the mirror image of Toussaint Louverture. Now the same comparison was made by his British superiors, but in fear. How had the “good Negro” become a seemingly insoluble problem for the British government?

Kina’s letters from jail hint at the sources of that reversal: amid his apparently naïve flourishes was a pointed political argument. Kina’s eagerness to assert his “faithful submission to British law,” was the articulation of a claim that had caused a political crisis in Martinique.

4 Colonel Whitelocke to War Office, July 1794, WO 1/59, 219.
7 Colonel Frederick Maitland, Martinique to Colonel Brownrigg, December 12, 1800, CO 166/1, 23-32.
9 Jean Kina to the Duke of Portland, March 11, 1801, WO 166/1, 1; Jean Kina to General Thomas Trigge, May 7, 1801, ibid., 19-2.1
That colony, like the imprisoned Kina, was in a strange legal limbo—occupied and administered by Britain, but governed under Old Regime law, with British sovereignty deemed provisional under the terms of a treaty with the island’s counterrevolutionary planters. Kina’s career in the British army was a result of the same alliance between Britain and the French colons. Yet as events in Martinique were to show, Kina’s loyalist and royalist bonafides helped to define the challenge he posed to the white French establishment. When, in December 1800, Kina rallied armed black and colored men to demand their rights from the island’s government amid a crackdown on illegal manumissions, it was not behalf of universal republicanism. The flag of rebellion he raised was the Union Jack, attached to a smaller banner emblazoned with the words “La Loi Britannique.”

Kina’s attachment to the British Crown became leverage to demand the readjustment, in the interest of people of color, of the complicated tangle of legal and political jurisdictions by which Britain sought to govern Martinique. Kina’s rebellion was small, brief, and bloodless, but it implicated matters vastly larger than itself. Understanding why this soldier of the counterrevolution went rogue, and why the question of what to do with him became so vexing, permits a reexamination of the forces that shaped British imperial governance and law in the revolutionary Caribbean.

The basic facts of Kina’s life have been established in recent historiography by David Geggus and others, but neither his career nor the occupation of Martinique as a whole have appeared in most histories of the revolutionary Caribbean as much more than curious sideshows in the wider story of revolutionary change. This chapter takes Kina’s rebellion as a point of

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10 Witness depositions to the Counseil Souverain of Matinique, WO 1/36, 515-520.
departure to explain how the transimperial counterrevolution shaped the political and legal contest over critical boundaries: the boundaries between slave and free, between British and foreign law, and between military and civil authority. It first sets the scene with the development of Martinique’s peculiar hybrid regime, which sought to freeze the island’s political status, but nonetheless confronted colonial and metropolitan British officials with persistent conflict between the beneficiaries and discontents of the colonial Old Regime. Next, it follows Kina’s trajectory from Saint Domingue to Martinique, exploring how his layered counterrevolutionary commitments—to monarchy, to slaveholding society, and to Britain—both secured his advancement and eventually placed him on a collision course with the government of Martinique. Both the conditions of the occupation and Kina’s individual career set the stage for his abortive revolt and the subsequent controversy over how to respond to the rebels and their grievances, which pitted the military and civil arms of the occupation against each other and revealed broader fault lines in the transatlantic counterrevolution.

The significance of the Kina affair for empire in the Age of Revolutions is both narrowly legal and more broadly political. In the first place, both Kina’s actions and the question of what to do with him were part of a multi-sided dispute over how legal pluralism would operate in an empire at war, one in which new subject-allies fell under British rule—often only temporarily—and circulated across geographical and jurisdictional boundaries. Not simply imperial conquest, but also counterrevolutionary ties of interest and ideology across empires, created composite structures of law and authority that presented Britain with new problems in governing racially, nationally, and politically divided subjects. Kina’s rebellion was only one eruption of these

tensions, and a relatively minor one at that. Yet it reveals the fundamental ambivalence of “British law” in this age of legal ferment, in which different components of the British imperial state aligned with a shifting constellation of colonial and foreign actors in debates about which jurisdictions and forms of subjecthood were to hold sway.

Martinique never became a permanent part of the British Empire, but as an occupied territory from 1794 to 1802, the island was as much a part of what Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford have termed a “polycentric effort to use legal change to order people, places, and transactions,”¹² as anywhere else in the British colonial world. Indeed, the pretense that Martinique’s legal regime had not changed at all from 1789 was itself an artifact of British imperial strategy. The strategy of ostensible stasis in fact created novel problems, not least the collision of colonial racial reaction with the interests of both people of color and the British military. Kina’s rebellion was both provoked by and sought to take advantage of this unsettled mix of legal systems and jurisdictions. In broader political terms, the fact that Kina struck his blow against white authority in the name of God and King—and British ambivalence toward his actions—underscores the diverse agendas and possibilities jostling within the transimperial counterrevolutionary project. If Kina’s revolt contradicted his background as a soldier of the counterrevolution, it was also in many respects a consequence of it. As with Martinique’s legal regime, the pretense of a unified commitment to restoration belied the reality of division and change driven by the counterrevolution itself.

Martinique’s state of legal limbo was several chaotic years in the making. In December 1792, as the revolution in Paris radicalized and civil enfranchisement for free men of color was proclaimed, the governor and the Conseil Souverain, the island’s colonial assembly, repudiated the republic and raised the Bourbon white banner over Martinique. Only a month later, however, the royalist rebellion evaporated when the troops of the garrison and many of the island’s gens de couleur (who formed the backbone of the militia) switched sides. The free men of color had thrown in their lot with the royalists for a time, fearing the consequences of a possible abolition of slavery, but the sudden appearance of the republican commissioner the Baron Lacrosse in St. Lucia, bringing guarantees of both equal citizenship and protection of property, convinced a critical mass that the republic offered a better deal. This volte-face, and the persecution of royalists that followed the republican takeover of the colony, helps explain some of the planters’ hostility toward the free colored population in later years (though colonial whites of all stripes rarely needed much pretext for that hostility). Martinican counterrevolutionaries fled to British colonies such as Saint Vincent and to Spanish Trinidad, where the émigrés began to gather their forces for a “bonne revanche.”

Unaware that the republicans now governed the island, the representatives of the colonial assembly, Louis-François Du Buc and Ignace-Joseph-Philippe de Perpigna, conferred with other colonial envoys in London, including Louis de Curt of Guadeloupe, who would later represent Martinique and played a part in the drama surrounding Kina’s revolt. They drew up the terms of

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13 Alejandro E. Gomez, “‘Vivons suivant la loi, restons en paix; faisons du sucre et payons nos dettes,’ : The revolution in Martinique and royalist migration towards the Spanish mainland (1790-1808)”. Paper presented at the American Historical Association annual conference, 2009: 11-12.
their submission to the British crown, which was at war with France from February 1793 onwards. Under the provisions of the resulting Treaty of Whitehall, the Windward Islands were to be placed under British protection and returned to France in the event of a Bourbon restoration. The republican takeover of the island naturally delayed the planned transfer to British sovereignty. An Anglo-Royalist assault on the island in June 1793 failed amid mutual recriminations, but in the late winter of 1794 a larger British expedition under Sir Charles Grey routed the republicans. Having occupied Martinique, the British were to spend the next eight years governing the colony, in theory at least, not as a conquered territory but as an outpost of the Old Regime under conditional British sovereignty. From the republican perspective, as a Martinican deputy in Paris declared in 1796, those who remained on the island were, paradoxically, in emigration, since voluntary presence in enemy-held territory constituted abandonment of the patrie. In effect, the colony itself had migrated out of republican France, awaiting a change of regime that would allow it to return.

A series of British civil governors were appointed to this émigré island, to rule with the advice of the Conseil Souverain, largely composed of local planter elites. Though in several cases military officers, these governors were effectively to assume the powers of the former French governors and intendants. Whitehall insisted that as little of the legal and governing structure of the island should change as possible: the only taxes to be collected, for example, were those imposed prior to 1789, with additional fiscal levies required to be strictly voluntary.

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14 Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 204.
16 Indeed, Grey was recalled for his role in improper confiscations of property, which he had viewed as licit in light of the British conquest. Kleczewski, “Martinique and the British Occupation, 280.
17 Archives Nationales, AF/III/208/952: 3.
contributions. This restriction caused trouble for successive governors as they strained to keep the occupation and administration solvent. Likewise, harbor duties and custom fees were fixed by French laws, much to the annoyance of British merchants who flocked to the island under the occupation. Even when French colonists in the nearby island of St. Lucia—governed jointly with Martinique—lobbied to be governed under British laws under a military administration, they were rebuffed by Whitehall, which preferred the status quo ante as much as possible.

Aside from the nature of the Anglo-émigré compact, there were compelling reasons for the policy of legal and political stasis. The British administration of Grenada, ceded by France at the conclusion of the Seven Years War, was widely regarded as an object lesson in what not to do. The adoption of English laws and a colonial legislature there had resulted in gross oppression of the Francophone majority by British Protestant settlers. Predictably, the locals had largely welcomed French occupation during the American Revolutionary War. As a result of legal and political discrimination, many French planters sold their property and left the island, leaving the conquest less profitable than it might have otherwise been. That history was cited as having “strongly impressed” Lord Hawkesbury, the president of the Board of Trade, in the notes to the Crown’s instructions relating to the governance of the occupied French colonies in 1794.

If anyone remained unconvinced of the bad precedent of Grenada, Fedon’s Rebellion in 1795—a large, well-organized uprising largely composed of free men of color—nearly succeeded in

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19 Jenkins, “Martinique, the British Occupation,” 35; CO 166/3; Précis of correspondence from General Robert Milnes to the Colonial Office, letter of 22 December, 1794, 7.
20 Précis of Colonial Correspondence, Letters of Dec 22, 1794, February 13 and 15, 1795, CO 166/3, 7-10.
21 Benton and Ford, Rage for Order 42.
22 Candlin, The Last Caribbean Frontier, 10.
23 British Library, Liverpool Papers, Add MS 38351, 202.
handed that island over to the French Republic. The timing of the British occupation of
Martinique in 1794 had also meant that, unlike in other French colonies, slavery was never in
practice abolished there. The government had only to maintain the institution, not to reimpose it
as was being attempted in the British-occupied portions of Saint Domingue, for instance. The
pretense of continuity with the Old Regime was thus intended not only to maintain relations with
free colonists, but also to help forestall any challenge from the enslaved majority.

Yet pretense it was, at least in part. Though the island’s social and racial hierarchy was
intact, circumstances had changed since 1789, and not only because of the revolutionary forces
still threatening the colony from their nearby stronghold of Guadeloupe. As the case of the
disenchanted traders suggest, the success of the counterrevolution had itself brought changes to
colonial life that sat uneasily with the occupation’s policy of turning back the clock. General Sir
William Keppel, who served as governor from 1796 onwards, had a particular distaste for the
British mercantile element, who caused difficulties for the administration by importing debased
coinage to the island. The merchants, when threatened with prosecution, argued that as
Englishmen they could not be tried in the island’s French courts. The new economic ties forged
by the occupation thus militated against the legal fiction that Britain had only assumed the vacant
role of the island’s Old Regime government.

A far more significant problem was the British military presence on the island, which
began to cause friction with the civilian administration from an early stage. In 1795, for instance,
then-governor Robert Milnes, taking the advice of the Conseil Souverain, denied a request from
General Paulus Irving to impose martial law in the face of a possible French invasion. The same

24 Jenkins, “Martinique, the British Occupation,” 36
25 Ibid., 38
month, he refused another request from the general to devote part of the proceeds of properties on the Régie to the relief of refugees from Guadeloupe. However, the arrival of a much larger British military force in Martinique in 1796, while ensuring the security of the colony, created even more jurisdictional conflicts. Martinique became a hub for British military activity in the West Indies, but neither Keppel nor the successive British commanders-in-chief for the region had any authority over one another. This meant that disputes between the civil and military powers in Martinique could only be resolved by months-long exchanges of correspondence with Whitehall. Thus, in the latter half of 1798 the Commander-in-Chief General Kenneth Bowyer sparred with Keppel over the quartering of British troops in colonists’ homes. Keppel wrote to the Colonial Office accusing Bowyer of interfering in civil affairs and with violating the laws and usages of the Old Regime. The Duke of Portland, responsible for the colonies as Home Secretary, sided with Keppel, declaring once again that, under the terms of the island’s capitulation to Britain, all the laws in force before 1789 were to be respected if at all possible. A more consequential quarrel between Keppel and Bowyer occurred around the same time, concerning whether members of the king’s forces were to be subject to French laws or military law. Bowyer was primarily concerned with enslaved soldiers, whom he was disturbed to discover were still being subjected to punishments such as whipping by the civilian authorities under the French Code Noir. He also wanted to ensure the military had the right to manumit the families of enslaved soldiers. In a letter to Secretary of State for War Henry Dundas, Bowyer proposed that the colonial legislatures pass laws exempting the troops from French slave laws.

26 CO 166/3; Précis of correspondence from General Robert Milnes to the Colonial Office, letters of August 7 and August 20, 1795, 20-21.
28 The Duke of Portland to General Sir William Keppel, 26 December, 1798, CO 166/5, 34-36.
29 General Kenneth Bowyer to Colonel Brownrigg, September 6, 1798, WO 1/86 passim.
Keppel meanwhile wrote to the Colonial Office for clarification, and the matter was referred to
the king’s legal counsel for an opinion. The result was unequivocal: British soldiers were subject
to all civil laws of the colony. No person could be exempted “from obedience to the laws that
His Majesty has thought proper to establish there,” which in this case meant those of the French
Old Regime.\textsuperscript{30}

The conflict between the civil and military authorities on Martinique is notable because it
scrambles some of the oppositions seen in many historical narratives of the evolution of imperial
governance in the era bridging the “First” and “Second” British Empires. Christopher Bayly, for
instance, summarizes British imperial policy during the period as “a series of attempts to
establish overseas despotisms,” characterized “by a form of aristocratic military government
supporting viceregal authority” and based on “a well-developed imperial style which emphasized
hierarchy and racial subordination.”\textsuperscript{31} But in Martinique the military and viceregal elements of
government were frequently at odds, with the military seeking, if certainly not to undo racial
hierarchy, then nonetheless to attenuate some of its manifestations for its own purposes. The civil
government hewed much closer to the revanchist racial attitudes and interests of the French
colonial elites who formed its chief constituency on the island. Benton and Ford, on the other
hand, see the turn of the nineteenth century as the dawn of an era of imperial legal
reconfiguration based around the taming of despotism, understood as the arbitrary exercise of
power by lower levels of authority over subjects, unchecked by the Crown.\textsuperscript{32} Insofar as

\textsuperscript{30} Portland to Keppel, 23 November, 1798, CO 166/5, 29-31; King’s Counselors to Portland,
\textsuperscript{31} Christopher Bayly, \textit{Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830} (London:
Routledge, 1989), 8-9; the particular form of the quotation is taken from Epstein, \textit{Scandal of
Colonial Rule}, 91.
\textsuperscript{32} Benton and Ford, \textit{Rage for Order}, 7.
Whitehall’s consistent bias toward civil governance based on Old Regime principles was intended to prevent the recurrence of local despotism under the color of British law, as had occurred in Grenada, the occupation of Martinique accords with this model. Yet the consequences of the island’s legal suspended animation could just as easily be labelled despotic, whether by aggrieved merchants, British military officers, or (as will be seen) the colony’s free people of color. Indeed, in correspondence even men such as Portland and Keppel responsible for this policy freely referred to the pre-revolutionary colonial government they sought to preserve as “despotic.”33 As an exercise in imperial legal pluralism, therefore, the occupation of Martinique was dogged by the specter of tyranny on both sides of the divide between British and foreign law and between military and civilian authority.

The Anglo-Royalist alliance made Martinique a redoubt of the Old Regime, while at the same time subjecting that regime to new forms of conflict distinct from the confrontation with republican universalism. While the Pitt ministry’s position was that there was only one law for Martinique, the island’s old laws and institutions were operating in a novel transimperial social and political field shaped by war and occupation. As the history of civil-military conflict throughout the 1790’s suggests, law became a key front in an unresolved struggle over how to secure and consolidate the colonial restoration. Disputes over French and British law were, at heart, a matter of how far the policy of stasis might extend in changed circumstances, and how it should be balanced with other strategic interests—especially those pertaining to the loyalties of black and colored people, and more particularly, soldiers. These unresolved questions ultimately allowed British law to serve as an avenue for Jean Kina to contest the governance of the island. Matters came to a head in the autumn of 1800, just as Kina came on the scene.

33 Portland to Keppel, 26 December, 1798, CO 166/5, 34-36.
“The King had not a Better Friend”: Jean Kina as Transimperial Counterrevolutionary

Kina landed in a colony that, despite its comparative stability, was riven by dissension between military and civil authority, often pitting French law against British law. Slavery, manumission, and the place of black soldiers in wartime Martinican society were already focal points in these conflicts, presaging some of the central concerns of Kina’s rebellion. However, Kina’s subsequent actions must also be understood in light of his own trajectory from an enslaved carpenter to a British colonel and from Saint Domingue to Martinique. Even before his arrival on the latter island, different elements of Kina’s personal and political commitments were in increasing tension. Although Kina had been incorporated into the British army as an extension of his service on behalf of the Dominguan planters, his new role made him increasingly less beholden, practically and ideologically, to the white French colonists. Kina had built his career on the embrace of both monarchy and white supremacy, but as Kina’s primary loyalty gravitated to the military and to the British crown rather than to the planters, and his distance from his slave origins grew, the synergy between these commitments waned. Kina’s links to Britain and to the army, forged in a war against slave emancipation, became a means of resisting the strictures of white colonial society when they stood in the way of his evolving interests and ambitions.

That an enslaved man bore arms on behalf of slaveholders was nothing unusual; thousands of slaves or ex-slaves fought on all sides of the Caribbean revolutionary conflicts, by coercion or choice. Kina does stand out among his contemporaries, however, both for the success of his military career and for the distinctly ideological dimension of his investment in the counterrevolutionary cause. Both aspects of Kina’s career owe something to his origins in a remote corner of southwestern Saint Domingue, in Tiburon commune of the Grand Anse region. The cotton and coffee plantations of the Grad Anse were relatively small, and conditions were
typically less harsh than on the vast sugar estates that dominated much of Saint Domingue.
Likely due to lower mortality rates and less demand for labor, a larger percentage of the enslaved population was Créole rather than African-born (Kina’s birthplace is unclear; he bore an African surname, but certainly spent most of his life in Saint Domingue\textsuperscript{34}). The ratio of blacks to whites in the Grand Anse was also much lower than in the sugar-producing heartlands of the Northern Plain or the Cul de Sac. All of these factors encouraged French cultural dominance and comparatively stable relationships between masters and slaves.\textsuperscript{35} As a result, planters in the Grand Anse readily resorted to arming slaves as the colony’s political situation deteriorated.

Kina began his military career in early 1792, fighting against free colored insurgents and their own slave militias in Tiburon. He very quickly earned plaudits for his skill and ferocity in irregular fighting, leading several dozen enslaved men barefoot through mountains and brush that white troops found impassable. “This Negro is absolutely feared by all the brigands and non-brigands, mulattoes and blacks; the sight of him makes them tremble,” a French soldier observed.\textsuperscript{36} Kina’s exploits drew sufficient attention that in May the Dominguan colonial assembly voted to manumit him as a reward for his services. However, he made a point of declining the offer of manumission for some time, “conceiving his example of more effect on those of his color in arms,” as the British Captain Colville later reported.\textsuperscript{37} By the summer he was leading more than two hundred men, and further victories against slave rebels led the

\textsuperscript{34} Geggus, “Slave, Soldier, Rebel,” 137.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{37} Captain Colville’s Notebook, Colville of Culross Collection. Quoted in Geggus, “Slave Soldier, Rebel,” 140.
assembly to vote him a pension and medal. The white colonial establishment was keen to recognize the achievements of Kina and other loyal black soldiers, who were not only capable fighters also but also a boon for propaganda on behalf of slave society.

The increasing fragmentation of the island’s politics meant that Kina would have to choose where precisely to commit his much-praised loyalty. That summer, he declined an offer from the Governor the Viscount de Blanchelande to join his retinue, declaring “I have been freed, but I have sworn to defend and never leave this region.” He further declined the governor’s invitation to dinner as “too great an honor.” While this refusal was consistent with Kina’s commitment to racial hierarchy, it also represented a decision by Kina to stick close to the Grand Anse planters, who resented Blanchelande’s efforts to implement the metropolitan government’s decree of racial equality among free men. Not for the last time, Kina made use of his carefully-cultivated posture of deference as a means to define his alignment among competing power blocs. However genuine Kina’s investment in white supremacy may have been, the question remained: which whites?

In the following year Kina went from strength to strength, helping to win a major victory at Les Platons, gaining command of more than 600 more men, and receiving sufficient rewards from grateful colonists to become a landowner. France had meanwhile become a republic. In the summer of 1793 the new administration under the commissioners Sonthonax and Polverel, bitter enemies of the planters, ordered Kina to dissolve his corps and transfer his men to the forces of the free colored General André Rigaud. Kina’s response was to stall until September, when

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38 Geggus, “Slave, Soldier, Rebel,” 133-134; for pension records, see Saint Domingo Claims Commission, Minutes of Council; T/81/7, 26.
39 ANOM F3/141, 370.
40 Geggus, “Slave, Soldier, Rebel,” 133.
British forces landed in the Grand Anse, and Kina and his men deserted to join them.\textsuperscript{41} Kina had again elected to follow the cause of his original masters and patrons, and consequently joined them as subjects of King George. The British embraced Kina and his troops, having received assurances from the planters of Kina’s “great fidelity,” and, by all accounts, seeing it confirmed for themselves.\textsuperscript{42}

It is during Kina’s period of service to the British in Saint Domingue that the clearest evidence of his explicit ideological commitments and propagandistic role emerges. The war now pitted counterrevolutionaries against republicans committed to abolition. Kina was noted not simply for loyalty to the slave regime but for his “attachment to Royalty.”\textsuperscript{43} In a series of letters addressed from Kina to black and free colored revolutionaries besieged at Tiburon in February 1794, the defenders were asked, “Do you remember how a thousand times happier you were when you had a king?” The letters condemned “the error which today blinds a great many blacks, who believe in liberty, children of greed and republican fanaticism.” Kina meanwhile told the ex-slaves among the republicans that “You have been led along with the fine name of free man, when it is only an illusion. It is in fulfilling your duties to your masters that you will become free.”\textsuperscript{44} While it is unlikely that Kina himself was the primary author—he seems to have been minimally literate at most—the fact that these words were issued in his name is significant. Kina had become sufficiently well-known on both sides to serve as a rallying figure of black royalism and slave loyalism.

\textsuperscript{41} Geggus, “Slave, Soldier, Rebel,” 134.
\textsuperscript{42} Captain Colville’s Notebook, Colville of Culross Collection. Quoted in Geggus, “Slave Soldier, Rebel,” 140.
\textsuperscript{43} Colonel Whitelocke to War Office, July 1794, WO 1/59, 219.
\textsuperscript{44} Lettres de Jean Kina, Colonel des Affricains sous les ordres du Roy, AN Dxxv/20, passim.
His ideological role also went beyond that of a figurehead. He was evidently more than capable of applying his considerable charisma to advocate for the cause himself. In the autumn of 1795, for instance, Kina travelled to Jamaica to recruit new soldiers from among black and colored Dominguan prisoners. 166 men agreed to join the British. “After the number enlisted were drawn up by Jean Kina in the high place of the prison yard” a newspaper account records, “they were addressed by him in a speech that teemed with loyalty, and which he concluded with “Vive le Roi.” His band immediately re-echoed it.” The sixty-five prisoners who had refused to enlist countered with shouts of “Vive la République” from inside the prison walls.45

Doubtless many of the new recruits were motivated chiefly by the desire to escape confinement in the notorious Bath prison—all the more so after a long voyage in a leaky prison ship.46 Nonetheless, this episode points to a genuine struggle for the support, if not the “hearts and minds,” of enslaved or free-colored men, one in which Kina’s authoritative position played a key role. As with the propaganda addressed to the defenders of Tiburon, Kina sought to rally these groups to a coherent ideology that wedded royalism to support for white supremacy. It is impossible to fully know the extent to which the private views of Jean Kina, much less the troops under his command, aligned with his sloganeering. Certainly, loyalty to a king was not a foreign concept. As John Thornton argues, the royalist political language expressed by many Haitian revolutionaries drew not only from their acquaintance with the Old Regime, but also from African traditions of kingship, including competing concepts of absolutist or limited monarchy.47

45 St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post (London, England), December 31, 1795 - January 2, 1796; Issue 5933. Reprinted from the Jamaica Royal Gazette, January 2, 1796. 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers. Online. Interestingly, Kina is incorrectly given the title “General” in this article.
46 Ibid.
It is plausible that Kina’s counterrevolutionary appeal resonated with some of these models of authority as much as it did with the desire for pay, food, and the chance for officially-sanctioned freedom. Once under Kina’s command, black troops would find further ideological encouragement; the chaplain of each black unit, for instance, was instructed to end each prayer with three shouts of “Vive le roi!” and to conclude Sunday services with a Latin rendition of “God Save the King.” Thus, Kina and his men served to advance a reasonably robust political program, albeit one grounded in an oath to George III rather than Louis XVI. Through the vehicle of racial subordination and personal loyalty to French slaveholders, Kina had become a transimperial black monarchist. In a shifting landscape of competing national, racial, and factional loyalties, monarchy offered a stable alternative focus of allegiance that encompassed and transcended them.

Kina’s rapid rise had changed his own relationship to slavery considerably, however. Not only was he a free man, but he became a slaveholder himself. Along with personal slaves and estates, from 1796 onwards Kina purchased and owned many of the troops who served under his command. Often veterans of African conflicts, they were imported by the British military via the Middle Passage to replace losses in black regiments. As with white French officers in charge of such troops, the enslaved soldiers’ wages were paid to Kina for their upkeep. Meanwhile, many of the free troops Kina recruited were now mixed-raced members of the prerevolutionary gens de couleur rather than recently manumitted slaves. Several dozen of the men he enlisted in Jamaica were colored deportees, some of them apparently substantial property-holders. Though Kina

48 Decree of December 28, 1795; T/81/14.
49 Geggus, “Slave, Soldier, Rebel,” 139.
50 Ibid.
had begun his career as an opponent of free colored ambitions, he was now legally a member of that class and was increasingly bound to it by his personal interests. He had made a career as the quintessential loyal slave, yet was no longer beholden to French slavemasters in any immediate sense. Kina had instead become, as he described himself in a letter addressed to King George, “the no. 1 Negro…devoted to your government in this island.”

Loyalty to the Crown became prior to local attachments, including, as it turned out, the racial hierarchies Kina had long fought to uphold.

Kina’s displacement from Saint Domingue with the British evacuation in 1798 reinforced his ties to both the British and to free people of color. His ties to the world of the plantation of his youth were now irrevocably severed. According to Governor Keppel (a hostile source, as will be seen), Kina’s arrival in Martinique in September 1800 after his interlude in London occasioned “extreme uneasiness” among local whites, unaccustomed to see a black man in colonel’s uniform and accompanied by an aide-de-camp and secretary. No doubt aware of this, Kina seems to have conducted himself with his customary deference, “behaving in a humble manner, submissive towards the whites, severe with those of his caste who had acted wrongly in the Revolution,” as well as scrupulously exhibiting Catholic piety. Keppel suggested this behavior was a devious mask given Kina’s later actions. It seems more likely that Kina was simply accommodating himself to the dangers of a new environment where colonial whites were suspicious of him. Martinique was not Saint Domingue: on the former island, the slave system was still intact and the greater threat to the plantocracy had thus far come from the free colored community. As such, an ex-slave with rank, wealth, military experience, and no small degree of

51 WO 1/66, 529-530.
52 WO 1/36, 195.
ambition appeared to Martinican whites as a provocation rather than a prop to the established order. According to General Thomas Trigge, the latest Commander-in-Chief for the West Indies, “They saw in him the head of a future insurrection.”

Not long after his arrival in Martinique, Kina courted and married Félicité Adélaïde Quimard, the fourteen-year-old daughter of a stonemason. A British source describes her as a “free black woman,” though there were evidently a number of mixed-race members of the family. Through this marriage, Kina became part of the social world of Martinique’s free-colored independent artisans, even as he was alienated from the island’s white establishment, who looked upon that class with no small measure of fear and contempt. It was this community that Kina would draw on for support when finally pressed to the breaking point.

Broader strategic considerations had also changed the racial landscape Kina navigated as an émigré in British service. With the end of the intervention in Saint Domingue, his usefulness to the British war effort seemed to be less as an exemplar of slave loyalty than as an agent for mobilizing free men of color, many of whom were scattered around the Caribbean by exile and deportation. Notably, Dundas sent Kina to Martinique with the aim of placing him in command of a free colored regiment fighting against “bush negros” in “the back settlements of Suriname,” and Trigge later considered dispatching him to Jamaica to mobilize colored troops for new operations in Saint Domingue. Even after the rebellion and his arrest, Kina himself attempted to convince the Duke of Portland to allow him to lead gens de couleur in attacks on Guadeloupe, Puerto Rico, or Saint Domingue. “All the men of color have confidence in the English,” Kina

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53 General Thomas Trigge to Colonial Office, December 20, 1800, CO 166/1, 44.
54 Colonel Frederick Maitland to Colonel Brownrigg, December 11, 1800. CO 1/66, 22-32; Geggus, “Esclaves et gens de couleur libres” 121.
claimed, and would rally to the cause of “royalty” if given the chance. Kina’s ambitions, even as a prisoner, were wide-ranging. Colored prisoners from Guadeloupe had told him that they would welcome the introduction of British law there, he said, while exiled colored planters who had supported Rigaud would happily join an attack on Toussaint’s regime to avenge their exile and recover their property. Kina made these proposals under desperate circumstances, but they nonetheless indicate where he saw his place: in the mobile trans-Caribbean circles of free colored counterrevolutionaries under British sponsorship. This was a subset of the colonial emigration for which the Martinican colonists had little affection, despite their nominally shared loyalties. Kina, in making the case for mobilizing free colored exiles on the island, noted that the local whites would be glad to see them go. Kina, for his part, declared that “I do not desire the hatred of the French, but so long as the British do not hate me, that is my only interest.”

Even before his arrival in Martinique, Kina also seems to have developed his own grievances against white French colonists that he freely expressed to his British superiors. Colonel Frederick Maitland reported that Kina’s “constant theme was his attachment to the English, whom he regarded as his friends, the French as his enemies. He was always saying that the English had lost St. Domingo by allowing the French to do as they pleased, that they had no public spirit, no attachment to the English.” Kina allegedly claimed that the English had “lavished money on them to no purpose,” and specifically noted the corruption of white French officers, who cheated black troops of their pay and caused them to the desert. “This, and a variety more to the same purport, he was always declaiming upon.” Kina would have known that a dim view of the colons was shared by many among the British forces. Graft in colonial

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56 Jean Kina to the Duke of Portland, May 9, 1801, CO 166/1, 15-18.
57 Ibid., 18.
units, in particular, had become so prevalent late in the Saint Domingue campaign that the British had revised the regulations governing pay and provisioning. British quartermasters directly furnished clothing to black soldiers to keep their officers from pocketing the funds. Kina’s complaints thus may have reflected both his own frustrations and a desire to ingratiate himself with the British at a time when his future in the army was in doubt. Kina’s distrust of the self-interested behavior of white French counterrevolutionaries in 1800 represented a stark departure for a man in whom the plantocracy of Saint Domingue had invested much just a few years prior.

Kina, who had long been keen to project an image of servile fidelity to French and British whites alike, now regarded the French colonists as “enemies.” Yet, as an exile, he continued to serve an empire committed, for the moment, to the preservation of Caribbean slavery. Kina’s military service distanced him geographically, socially, and politically from the plantation society of his origins. Nonetheless, he continued to articulate his goals in the language of a racial subordinate and loyal subject of the king. Kina’s complex and shifting political and ideological stance underscores the fluid and potentially disruptive nature of the Anglo-Émigré alliance for colonial society.

Despite the singular aspects of Kina’s career, therefore, he is not simply a historical curiosity. He is, rather, an exemplar of the instability of what precisely counterrevolution meant for slave society. He reveals how struggle against republicanism depended on transimperial forces with ambiguous political valences: in this case, francophone black troops under the British colors, as well as the loyalist ideologies they embraced. In Martinique, Kina’s racial and political

realignement would intersect with the similarly unsettled transimperial relationship between British and Old Regime law. The mixture proved combustible.

“A Trifling Insurrection”: Kina’s Rebellion and the Jurisdictional Politics of Race

Kina’s rebellion, though it scarcely lasted a single day and left the island’s social and political order largely unchanged, represented the confluence of years of conflict surrounding law and race in Martinique. It arose in response to a policy of racial reaction from the white establishment and civil administration that went far beyond the supposed policy of stasis. In turn, the rebellion showed how attachment to British laws and the British uniform had become leverage for francophone black and colored men to offer resistance in a political idiom very different from but also shadowed by that of Jacobinism. The rebellion, and the British army’s clement response to it, triggered the most severe episode yet of civil-military dissension in occupied Martinique. This conflict exposed the ongoing problem of competing jurisdictions, as well as the uneasy relationship between the British war effort and the colonial plantocracy it was fighting to protect. In all these respects, the controversy that surrounded Kina’s rebellion and its aftermath demonstrated how the occupation and its transimperial style of governance had changed Martinique. It produced new forms of legal and political contestation on the island despite the front of Anglo-Royalist unity and the surface-level continuity of its institutions.

The immediate problem facing the Martinican government at the time of Kina’s arrival concerned the affranchis-sans-être: “amphibious beings, free in appearance, but slaves in reality,” as the Sovereign Council described them.60 Such individuals were sometimes fugitives

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60 Extrait des Registres du Conseil Souverain de la Martinique, November 3, 1800, CO 166/1, 40.
who had made a new life for themselves, but in many cases they had left their masters by the latter’s consent. Under Old Regime law, all manumissions required the approval of the royal governor and intendent. However, some slaveowners freed slaves unofficially, whether by selling them to another master with the understanding that they would be free de facto, freeing them in wills, or simply issuing them with a certificate of manumission in the master’s own name. These manumissions had no legal force, and, like fugitives, individuals freed in this manner could in principle be reclaimed by their former masters or seized and sold by the state. *Affranchis-sans-être* could not marry or be baptized except as slaves, and had no legal recourse except through their nominal owner.\(^\text{61}\) This “amphibious” population, often clustering in the towns and blending with *de jure* free colored communities, was variously perceived as a source of vice, crime, and subversion by a number of West Indian administrations, and the latter saw them as particularly threatening under wartime conditions when white populations were shrinking.\(^\text{62}\)

The problem had become especially acute in Martinique, or at least the civil government thought so. Shortly after the British occupation began, the new administration had enacted a far-reaching measure to shore up white supremacy—strangely enough, through an unprecedented restriction on the power of slavemasters. In 1794 General Sir Charles Grey, acting in a military capacity, had issued an edict stating that no manumissions whatsoever were to be approved in Martinique and Saint Lucia.\(^\text{63}\) According to Frederick Maitland, this prohibition was intended the check the growing numbers of the *gens de couleur*. Whether or not it was successful in that

\(^{61}\) Colonel Frederick Maitland “Thoughts on the situation of the free coloured People in the West Indies and of those who have Pretensions to Freedom,” CO 166/1, 10-13.  
\(^{63}\) Kleczewski, “Martinique and the British Occupation,” 334.
respect, it certainly had the effect of swelling the ranks of the _affranchis-sans-être_, as illegal manumissions continued. The influx to Martinique of non-white refugees from other islands also raised concerns about the validity of enfranchisement. In 1796 the royal attorney complained to the Sovereign Council of “a prodigious quantity of _gens de couleur_ of both sexes who all call themselves free and are treated as such; there are among this number, however, many slaves or at least those whose status is suspect.” Nonetheless, the civil governors prior to Keppel appear to have declined to widely enforce laws subjecting the _affranchis-sans-être_ to re-enslavement. Benign neglect of the illegally-free prevailed for over six years.

On November 3, 1800, that approach changed abruptly. With Keppel’s approval, the Sovereign Council issued a proclamation reiterating Grey’s prohibition of manumissions and decrying the “acts made in fraud of the laws” which were, they said, “multiplying every day.” They went on to issue a legal summons by name to the parties in a manumission of four mixed-race women carried out by the will of a deceased master. They also nullified outright the freedom of two women and child whose masters had filed certificates of manumission with civil notaries in 1799 and 1800, in which the slaves had been sold to themselves. The existence of a legal paper trail for these ostensibly illegal acts suggests that at least some Martinicans had not taken much notice of the prohibition on manumissions, and the Council directed officials in the island’s two judicial seneschalties to comb their records for other cases of unauthorized _affranchisement_. The proclamation cited a long list of legal and administrative precedents.

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64 Maitland, “Thoughts on the situation…,” CO 166/1, 11.
65 “Séance du 10 novembre 1796,” Archives Departementales de Martinique, B 20, 100, quoted in Cormack, _Patriots, Royalists, and Terrorists_, 245.
66 Extrait des Registres du Conseil Souverain de la Martinique, November 3, 1800, CO 166/1: 40.
67 Ibid.
dating back to 1713. In practice, however, the occupying British civil government’s new
determination to enforce them was a shock to the status quo, so widely ignored had the
manumission laws been. Maitland later noted that many men threatened by the proclamation
were members of the island’s militia, suggesting they were well-integrated into Martinique’s free
colored population.\(^{68}\) The proclamation was thus anything but routine: it was, or at least was
received as, a sweeping reactionary policy by a white establishment that remembered the events
of 1793 and still perceived an existential threat from the \textit{gens de couleur}. Reports of poisonings
in May 1799 had already led to tightened security measures and the banning of free colored men
from medical professions.\(^{69}\) In this fearful environment, the civil government viewed muddied
boundaries between slave and free as an intolerable threat to public order.

The planters were not only looking backward, however. By 1800 a peace treaty that
would restore Martinique to France seemed likely, and the future of the island’s slave society as
a whole was in doubt.\(^{70}\) The republic’s 1794 abolition of slavery remained in effect; at the same
time, counterrevolutionaries looked hopefully toward the increasingly conservative turn in
French domestic and colonial politics, beginning in the latter years of the Directory and
continuing under the Consulate after Napoleon’s coup of 1799. In 1798 the Republic began to
subsidize the return of white planters to Saint Domingue, while the following year Victor
Hugues, the “Robespierre” of the Antilles, was replaced as governor of Guadeloupe.\(^ {71}\) The
republic’s commitment to fully restore plantation slavery did not emerge until much later,

\(^{68}\) Colonel Frederick Maitland “Thoughts on the situation…,” CO 166/1, 11.
\(^{69}\) Cormack, \textit{Patriots, Royalists, and Terrorists}, 249.
\(^{70}\) Geggus, “Slave, Soldier, Rebel,” 142.
The manumission crackdown thus appears as an effort to aggressively consolidate white rule over the Martinique to pre-empt whatever political changes might be in the wind.

The targeted communities understandably reacted with dismay, albeit in a subdued form at first. The new policy threatened more than simply the affranchis-sans-être and their families, a contingent hundreds strong. It meant suspicion and petty humiliations for any free black or colored person whose status might be in doubt. Had Jean Kina married Félicité Quimard a week later than he did, for instance, the bride and groom would have been forced to provide proof that they were not slaves.72 Both through his military service alongside other free black and colored soldiers and through his newfound familial connections, Kina was aware of and involved in growing discontent. In the weeks following the proclamation, he was reported to have been seen “attending to some grievances” of free colored men in Fort Royal.73

Kina’s superiors in the army also disapproved of the proclamation. Trigge attempted to negotiate with the civil government to informally prevent its enforcement and to encourage Keppel to begin granting manumissions, particularly to enslaved members of the militia.74 Kina was likely aware of this discontent within the military hierarchy, as he was apparently on good terms with both the commander-in-chief Trigge and his deputy Maitland. Trigge later confessed to having had “a better opinion of him [Kina] than he deserved,” and reported conversing with Kina about the “grievances of the mulattoes and negroes.” Tellingly, he instructed Kina to avoid discussing them with locals, “as in that case the civil magistrates would complain of him.”75 The split between the two arms of the occupation, military commanders like Trigge who saw Kina as

72 Ibid., 144.
73 General Thomas Trigge to the Duke of Portland, December 17, 1800, CO 319/6; Trigge to Colonial Office, CO 166/1, 51.
74 Ibid.
75 Trigge to Colonial Office, CO 166/1, 44.
a valuable asset, and civil officials wary of Kina as a threat to the social order, may have encouraged Kina and other disaffected free men of color to mobilize against the government.

Trigge later recalled that the Sovereign Council followed its proclamation of November 3 with another decree, on December 3, that rescinded the single exception that Grey had made to the blanket ban on manumissions. Grey initially had allowed enslaved men to be freed after seven years of military service. No record of the December 3 decree is otherwise extant.\(^76\) Nonetheless, according to the commander-in-chief, this was the immediate cause of Jean Kina’s uprising. However, if there was such a repeal, whether real or rumored, it was only the latest grievance for the Martinican *gens de couleur*, and one with narrower implications than the enforcement of the manumission ban writ large. It may have been perceived as particularly inflammatory, however, since it exposed black soldiers to re-enslavement. It also likely contributed to the demand for British law by the insurgents, since military manumissions were common throughout the British colonies.\(^77\) Sometime on the evening of December 4, Kina and a small group of followers took up arms.

The portrait of the uprising that emerges from eyewitness accounts, official reports, and from Kina himself is a strange and sometimes jumbled one. It resembled an armed protest more than an attempted revolution and was marked by hesitancy and ambivalence on Kina’s part. Kina gathered a small group: perhaps twenty men initially, with their numbers gradually growing to forty or more, most of them free men of color who served in the island’s militia. Some were

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\(^76\) Cormack, *Patriots, Royalists, and Terrorists*, 249.

\(^77\) Kleczewski, one of the few Anglophone commentators on the affair, somewhat misleadingly indicates this grievance as Kina’s primary motivator, without placing it in the context of the November 3 proclamations. I am indebted to David Geggus for helping to clarify this point in private correspondence.
friends of Kina’s in-laws, and several were probably slaveowners.78 Wearing their uniforms, carrying swords, firearms, and gunpowder, and bearing aloft the banner inscribed with “La Loi Britannique,” they left the town of Fort Royal headed for the high ground of Morne Le Maître, which formed a natural strong point. Along the way Kina recruited more men to his band and engaged in several bloodless confrontations with local whites. When asked on whose authority he acted, he variously cited that of his own strength, Prime Minister Pitt, and God, the king, and the British flag.79 “I do this,” he declared, “to maintain the order of British law and to protect my brothers, because the colonists have been executioners and eaters of flesh; that they will seize all Negroes and set them to work and have decided to sell all free blacks.”80 Some Frenchmen, he claimed, had misled the British by attempting to sell—and thus reenslave—blacks who had been legally free for years.81 Forceful rhetoric aside, Kina and his men harmed no one. At one point he even refused an offer to come in out of the rain, to avoid, he said, being accused of pillaging.82 The restraint shown by the rebels reflected their deliberate emphasis on loyalty to Britain and the vindication of their legal rights.

The appeal to British law was in one sense peculiar: racial restrictions for free people of color were in many respects harsher in the British colonies than they were under the French Old Regime. Indeed, British racial laws had already been extended to Saint Domingue, and the planters had used them to strip civil rights from the gens de couleur that they had previously held.83 On the other hand, Kina, whose ascent had depended on his skills as a soldier, clearly

79 Witness depositions to the Counseil Souverain.WO 1/36, 515-520.
80 Quoted in Kleczewski, “Martinique and the British Occupation,” 337.
81 WO 1/36, 515-520.
82 Geggus, “Slave, Soldier, Rebel,” 144.
83 Geggus, Slavery, War, and Revolution, 327.
knew that military manumissions were countenanced by the laws of the British colonies. He further may have known that slaves deemed of sufficiently light skin color were automatically freed in the British colonies, given that he sought to enlist several mixed-raced slaves who he said ought to have been freed by their “scoundrels of fathers.” A great deal of fear and confusion also prevailed concerning how the proclamation of November 3 would be applied. In a now-lost letter to Trigge sent on the morning of the uprising, Kina expressed the worry that both he and his son would be sold as slaves, even though they had been manumitted years before in another colony. Since the provisions for seizure and sale of the affranchis-sans-être were encoded in the French statutes cited by the Sovereign Council, Kina and his followers may have believed that British law offered their only protection. At any rate, Kina was not constructing a legal deposition. Instead, he wielded the language of British law and subjection to rally resistance against the new manumission decrees without making a definitive break from the occupying forces. His uprising held out some chance of achieving its goals for free people of color if the island’s white power structures were divided—as indeed they were.

In seeming contrast to this limited agenda, however, Kina seems to have more than the grievances of the gens de couleur in mind when he labelled the white colonists “executioners and eaters of flesh.” Witnesses recorded multiple statements by Kina demanding redress for the abuse of slaves. The planters worked pregnant women until they miscarried, Kina told them, and whipped their slaves with abandon. The only punishments for slaves he would permit, he declared, would be two or three blows with the flat of a saber. In what Colonel Maitland called the only “injury” done during the uprising, Kina freed two slaves who had been locked in a

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84 Quoted in Geggus, “Slave, Soldier, Rebel,” 145.
85 Trigge to Colonial Office, December 20, 1800, CO 1/66, 51.
86 WO 1/36, 515-520.
dungeon, a common punishment for those suspected of poisoning. That practice must end as well, Kina demanded.\(^{87}\)

Kina’s motives in this respect are opaque. His litany of complaints shifted fluidly between wrongs done to slaves and free people. Kina thereby left it ambiguous who the “brothers” were he vowed to protect. This ambiguity may have reflected precisely the blurred boundaries between slave and free that were being contested, as well as Kina’s own origins: unlike many of his free colored followers, he was, after all, a former slave and apparently of purely African extraction. He certainly no longer perceived the same duty to the Martinican whites he had once fulfilled for the Dominguan planters. Perhaps Kina was genuinely angered by the mistreatment of slaves, despite his own history of defense of the institution; or, perhaps he sought to increase his own leverage over the colonists by threatening to rally slaves to his banner. However, there is no convincing evidence that Kina sought to inspire a general slave insurrection, though he would be later accused of it. That was a line he remained unwilling to cross. Indeed, doing so would have undermined Kina’s claims of allegiance to Britain and to the protection of its laws.

The nature of Kina’s revolt meant that when a detachment of British troops and local militia arrived to confront Kina’s band on the morning of December 5, the situation was fraught with uncertainty for both sides. Maitland, the British commander on the scene, had only a small force of fifty men. His ability to mobilize a response was constrained by the fact that most of the militia were *gens de couleur* whom he deemed unreliable under the circumstances. According to his later report, he was not confident of his ability to subdue Kina by force, and feared that events would spiral out of control if violence broke out—even if Kina’s men were defeated, they

\(^{87}\) Ibid; Maitland to Brownrigg, December 11, 1800. CO 1/66, 22-32.
could easily escape into the backcountry and begin a guerilla-style conflict. He also, as will be seen, had some measure of sympathy for Kina’s grievances. Maitland consequently sought out a parley with Kina and “rode up to him among his people, reproaching him for his conduct.” In Maitland’s account, Kina appeared apprehensive, even timid, though still protesting his loyalty to the British. “He repeated all about their grievances,” Maitland reported, “protesting that they were all true to the English, that he would obey my orders, though it should cost him his life.” Kina’s men were “distrustful” of Maitland and “afraid of the consequences of what they had done.” It is difficult to say how accurate this picture is, given that Maitland had an interest in subsequently downplaying the gravity of Kina’s actions. For Kina’s part, however, he could hardly fire on the same British flag the rebels had marched under—not at least, without inaugurating a wholly different and more extreme sort of insurrection.

Maitland’s solution, to promise to pardon the rebels if they would lay down their arms, thus might very well have come as a relief to all parties. Kina’s men dispersed, reassured that their grievances would be referred to Generals Keppel and Trigge. Kina himself was sent back to Fort-Royal under guard. In offering the amnesty, Maitland had “told JK that these were my orders;’ to refuse such an order would have unraveled the fragile ideological tissue out of which Kina’s revolt was built. He had staked his political claims on loyalty to the British, and his fate would consequently rest in their hands.

The ensuing political and legal battle concerned three interrelated points: the nature of Kina’s rebellion, the pardon given to the rebels, and the manumission ban and its repeal. These disputes were all enfolded in the larger question of who, in Martinique’s arrangement of civil-military cohabitation, had the authority to decide them. Keppel and the civil government’s case

88 Maitland to Brownrigg, December 11, 1800. CO 1/66, 22-32.
stressed the need for the strict application of local law to maintain order in the face of threats to the colonial racial hierarchy as well the island’s unsettled political status. Trigge and the military, meanwhile, argued for both the pragmatic necessity of conciliating the free people of color and the obligations they believed the British had incurred toward Kina and other black and colored soldiers.

Trigge quickly took several actions to put the affair to rest on his own terms. On the same day the rebellion broke up, he confirmed Maitland’s decision to pardon Kina and his men. In his capacity as commander-in-chief, he also declared his predecessor Grey’s 1794 manumission ban suspended, noting that “circumstances had changed” since the original adoption of the ban, and that it was “contrary to the former ordinances of the kings of France” as well as the “custom of the other English colonies.”

A few days later, he drew up a further proclamation confirming once again Maitland’s pardon of the rebels, taking Keppel’s temporary incapacity due to an illness as grounds for his authority over the matter. The same proclamation declared Grey’s manumission ban, and consequently the Sovereign Council’s reiteration of it, to be void. Since the governor was invested by the Crown with all civil powers, the nullification of Grey’s order meant that the power to confirm manumissions was restored to the governor, something Trigge had been calling for even before Kina’s rebellion. Writing to the island’s Procureur Général, Trigge expressed his regret for publicly embarrassing the Sovereign Council, but stated that he felt his duty was to oppose its decree, and that he would resign rather than see it go into effect. Finally, within a few days of the uprising, Trigge had Kina and his son Zamor placed on a naval

89 Proclamation of Lt. General Thomas Trigge, December 6, 1800, CO 1/66, 482-483.
90 Proclamation, par son Excellence le Lieutenant General Trigge, Commandant en Chef des Troupes de Sa Majesté Britannique dans les Isles du Vent, etc. etc. etc.”, CO 1/66, 85.
91 Trigge to Colonial Office, December 20, 1800, CO 1/66, 56.
vessel bound for Britain. This expedient prevented Kina from causing any further trouble, and also ensured he could not be tried in Martinique for his actions. The immediate threat of violence having abated, the stage was now set for months of rancor between the civil and military powers in Martinique.

A tentative rapprochement seemed possible at first. Keppel returned to Fort-de-France a few days after the uprising, still suffering from a bout of tropical fever but conciliatory in demeanor. He convinced Trigge to withhold publishing his second order annulling the November 3 proclamation, and to allow the Sovereign Council to explain its reasoning. The Council soon issued minutes of its most recent deliberations, providing a thorough brief against Trigge’s position.

The councilors skirted the merits of the manumission ban entirely, instead stressing the dangers of what it argued was the usurpation of civil authority by Maitland and Trigge. In the first place, they contended, the military had no power to issue an amnesty for crimes against the laws of the colony. In practical terms, moreover, it was dangerous to excuse an act of open rebellion; in other colonies, men had been executed for less. Beyond the pardon itself, in publicly recognizing the proclamation of November 3 as the cause of the rebellion, Trigge had come dangerously close to legitimizing Kina’s subversion. Trigge, they wrote, “presents the civil authorities as exercising an oppressive power and military authority according in some manner protection against the laws.” Even if the law in question were oppressive, the confusion produced by such military intervention in civil governance would be worse. “In a country where the civil authority must be continually supported by the presence and prompt use of repressive force… where the consequences of a popular movement are more dangerous than in any other, to pardon

92 Ibid., 57.
those who have exercised force in opposition to the dispositions of the law is to expose the entire machine of government to collapsing in an instant.”⁹³ For the Council, the fragile nature of slave society made leniency and visible dissension among the forces of order an invitation to disaster.

Trigge did not accept the argument that he had no power to annul Grey’s order, but was sufficiently chastened by the councilors’ vehemence that he conceded the issue to Keppel to “avoid further strife,” and decided to drop his challenge to the November 3 proclamations for the time being. However, on one point he remained steadfast. “Nothing can induce me to allow the validity of the pardon to be called into question,” he wrote to the Colonial Office. “On this point the civil power must yield.” For the moment, the compromise held, and both generals promptly sent dispatches to London to ensure their respective sides of the story were heard and to solicit a ministerial opinion.

Keppel was in the awkward position of attempting to reassure London that he had the situation in hand while also expressing dissatisfaction with the military’s handling of the rebellion’s aftermath. He sought to minimize the impact of the uprising itself. “Everything is quiet again,” he wrote in his first letter to the Duke of Portland a few days afterwards, “though our tranquility would be still more secured had they met the fate they deserved.”⁹⁴ In more detailed account written in late December, he dubbed the incident a “trifling insurrection.” However, Keppel also sought to define Kina’s political program as a threat to the bedrock of colonial society, stressing his appeal to slaves rather than to the gens de couleur who actually made up the rank-and-file of the rebellion. Kina had “the example of Toussaint Louverture before his eyes,” Keppel wrote, “whose steps he no doubt intended to follow.” However much

⁹⁴ Keppel to Portland, December 12, 1800, WO 1/36, 9-10.
Kina’s personality, career and ideas sharply distinguished him from Toussaint, he remained a black man with proven talents as a soldier and leader who had challenged the colonial social order. This similarity enabled Keppel to conflate his actions with the wholesale challenge to slavery and white rule that Toussaint represented.

According to Keppel, moreover, Kina told the slaves that he had come from England to “instruct them in their rights,” and that they were “as free as the air that circulated.” This latter charge resonated with longstanding fears among colonial whites and their sympathizers that the contagion of abolitionist and republican ideas from Europe would inspire revolt. The eyewitness accounts of the rebellion, while noting Kina’s verbal attacks on slave-masters, do not lend much credibility to Keppel’s interpretation of Kina as a would-be emancipator. At any rate, Keppel’s portrait of him as an abolitionist and imitator of Louverture clearly aimed to paint the military’s amnesty for the rebels in the worst possible light, while avoiding the thornier issue of the grievances surrounding manumission law. Keppel completely omitted the latter question from his initial dispatches—understandably, since it was the civil administration’s policies that had provoked Kina and his followers.

The real danger to the colony, Keppel argued, had from come from Maitland and Trigge’s clemency. Like the Sovereign Council, he depicted prompt repression as a necessary support for Martinique’s racial power structure. “Your Grace will judge of the impression such a measure naturally produced in a colony where the proportion of blacks is so considerable, and where [a] handful in arms and rebellion has been thus forgiven.” Trigge’s actions, Keppel

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95 Keppel to Portland, December 28, 1800, WO 1/36 13-16.
contended, had unsettled the white inhabitants and set a baleful precedent for Martinican blacks. The unique interests of the free colored population were glossed over.\textsuperscript{96}

Trigge, in his own initial report, accepted some measure of blame for the confrontation with the civil government, but continued to criticize the November 3 proclamations as well as insisting that the pardons be upheld. Someone had needed to defuse the situation, Trigge argued, and since the governor had been absent, and moreover since the civil government was responsible for the policy behind the uproar, that role had fallen to him. He denied overstepping his authority. Feeling himself within his rights to nullify Grey’s order, he claimed that he had not actually interfered with the enforcement of French law. He had merely stated his opposition to any move against the \textit{affranchis sans-être}, not asserted any power over the colony’s laws.

Despite having tempered his initial response, Trigge remained “determined to prevent the application of the \textit{arrêt}, to annul Sir Charles Grey’s order, and to desire General Keppel to grant some freedoms, especially to militia men.”\textsuperscript{97} His consistent emphasis on granting freedom to members of the militia reflected his reliance on black and colored troops. The year before Trigge had accepted a number of French-speaking slaves deported from Jamaica to help replenish his depleted army, slaves that Keppel and the civil government had struggled to keep out of Martinique. He had also supplemented the British forces with slaves imported directly from Africa; in both cases, the ability to manumit them was an important tool to secure their loyalty.\textsuperscript{98}

Like Keppel, therefore, his basic position remained unmoved.

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{97} Trigge to Home Office, December 20, 1800, CO 1/66, 42-73.
\textsuperscript{98} Portland to Keppel, July 4, 1799; CO 166/5: 87-89; Trigge to Dundas, November 23, 1800; CO 319/6: 141
Trigge also forwarded to Whitehall a letter from Maitland explaining his actions in the field. Maitland believed that pardoning the rebels had been the quickest and safest way to resolve the crisis, but he also deemed his approach the honorable one. “We could not, for his past services, have executed J.K., and therefore in Justice, we could not have executed any of his followers—neither was their conduct in my opinion, sufficiently culpable to merit death.”

Kina’s military record, for Maitland, trumped or at least mitigated the threat he posed to the colony, and he also indirectly acknowledged the restrained behavior of Kina and his men.

Maitland did not assert, as the Sovereign Council did, that Kina and his followers had sought to provoke a full-scale racial war. He could scarcely have defended his offer of pardon otherwise. Yet, for Maitland, Kina remained a risk, perhaps a catastrophic one. Though he “might render great services, and I believe would,” his successes had “made him vain, and he believes, able to do great things.” In the fragile political environment of the colonies, Kina might well seek and even achieve “a complete ascendancy over the Blacks in any of these Colonies, and having earned the sweets of Power, and the gratification of Ambition, he himself cannot know where he would rest.” Maitland’s mention of “any of these colonies,” indicates an awareness of the intense interconnectedness of the Caribbean frontier and Kina’s role as a mobile actor in this revolutionary environment. Maitland argued that while Kina could not safely remain in the colonies, the British should not “leave him destitute or break with him altogether,” since this too might result in Kina pursuing a rogue agenda. Maitland, like Keppel, saw Kina as a potential Toussaint-like figure, but his proposed solutions were entirely different, seeking to coopt rather than suppress him.

For both Trigge and Maitland, the problems Kina’s rebellion had raised were symptomatic of the broader necessity of conciliating the *gens de couleur* to Britain, not only in Martinique but throughout the Caribbean. Trigge suggested that while matters of free colored rights and manumission had been far less discussed than the conditions of slavery or the slave trade, “the preservation or loss of the colonies” might depend on the former. It was impossible, Trigge argued, to prevent the growth of the free colored population in numbers and power. The relevant question was whose side they would take. Colonial society was a “tottering edifice,” and the treatment of free people of color might either prevent or accelerate its collapse.\(^{100}\) In this environment, a policy such as the manumission crackdown could only endanger British interests.

Maitland echoed these views in his report and in a separate memorandum dedicated to the problem of the *affranchis-sans-être*. His attack on the manumission ban blended the language of humanitarianism with more pragmatic considerations:

What must be the Passions of a Woman [who,] granted illegal freedom by a Man who acted from Affection possessed of this Liberty for Years—Having children—Is seized by the Heir at Law, or by the Government—Herself and children sold for Slaves—the Catastrophe is left to be drawn in the Breast of every Reader. Can it be believed, that there are Militia composed of People under the Circumstances described.\(^{101}\)

Maitland here shifts his focus from Kina, an aggressive, masculine agent, to the passive sufferings of a feminine object of pity. Characteristically for humanitarian narratives of the era, Maitland intends to “to speak authoritatively for the sufferings of the wronged” in a manner that demands the sympathetic response of the reader.\(^{102}\) Yet while the wronged black mother is his

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\(^{100}\) Trigge to Home Office, December 20, 1800, CO 1/66, 62-63.

\(^{101}\) Maitland, “Thoughts on the situation of the free coloured People in the West Indies…”, CO 1/66, 13.

central sympathetic figure, with the reference to the militia, Maitland underscores the military importance—and potential threat—of black and colored soldiers. Kina, and those like him, are the looming peril if the cries of the women and children are not heeded.

For Maitland, the problem encompassed the free colored class as a whole, not merely in the occupied islands but throughout the West Indies. “We must receive them, and attach them—or we must destroy them,” Maitland wrote. The first is just and polite—the second impossible in Execution and equally so, from its Atrocity.”

The civil government’s confrontational policy was, for Maitland, both a moral and a strategic blunder, one that would leave the gens de couleur as “a spring to be touched by any ambitious man among them, or by our Enemies.” This view was not unique. Alongside Trigge and Maitland’s opinions, one also finds the concurrence of Rear Admiral John Duckworth, the head of the Royal Navy’s Leeward Islands Station, who had been responsible for Kina’s deportation to Britain. Like his counterparts on land, Duckworth blamed Kina’s revolt on the manumission controversy, which he deemed “a very injudicious question to agitate,” and praised Maitland’s amnesty for preventing “the flame from bursting forth to the destruction of the colony.”

Trigge and Maitland depicted colonial society as fragile and endangered, just as Keppel did, but insisted on a response of accommodation and reform rather than the retrenchment of white supremacy as the sole source of power and authority. Where Keppel had downplayed the specific grievances of the free people of color in order to emphasize the threat of slave rebellion, they stressed the crucial role this class played as a social and political fulcrum—the “link

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103 Maitland, “Thoughts on the situation…”, CO 1/66, 13.
104 Maitland to Brownrigg, December 11, 1800. CO 1/66, 32.
105 Duckworth to Portland, December 14, 1800, CO 166/1, 74-76.
between the whites and the slaves,” as Maitland observed.\textsuperscript{106} Without suggesting anything resembling full civil equality, both Trigge and Maitland argued that reducing the legal disabilities under which the \textit{gens de couleur} suffered would keep them tethered to the white establishment. Trigge, for example, attacked the custom of subjecting colored men to the pillory for the crime of striking a white man, no matter the provocation (in some other colonies the normal punishment was the loss of a hand.) He hoped such laws could be reformed, while acknowledging “strongly rooted opinions and prejudices of the whites, who can not bear the idea of the condition of the mulattos and negroes approaching them.”\textsuperscript{107} Maitland similarly noted the “nearly insurmountable” strength of colonial prejudice. He suggested, however, that while British colonial governments, permitted their own legislatures, would only grant concessions to free people of color if “brought to the brink of destruction,” the direct royal governance over the occupied French islands offered a greater opening for reform.\textsuperscript{108} Though adherence to French law—a certain form of it, at least—had provoked the latest unrest in Martinique, the top-down form of governance that the British had inherited from the Old Regime might also empower the Crown to enact changes to racial policy.

Keppel received the ministerial reply by the beginning of May and shared it with Trigge. Measured in tone as the Duke of Portland’s instructions were, they only further inflamed tensions between the governor and the commander-in-chief. The Duke felt that the military had made a “dangerous error,” both in allowing the rebels to go unpunished and in usurping executive power from the civil government. Portland claimed that the French colonists were already inclined to respect military more than civil authority, and that Trigge’s actions were

\textsuperscript{106} Maitland, “Thoughts on the situation…”, CO 1/66, 10.
\textsuperscript{107} Trigge to Home Office, December 20, 1800, CO 1/66, 63-64.
\textsuperscript{108} Maitland to Brownrigg, December 11, 1800. CO 1/66, 31-32.
therefore particularly damaging to the legitimacy of the administration. Under the circumstances, Portland agreed with a prior suggestion by Keppel to have all of the rebels deported to Britain. On the other hand, he agreed with Trigge that Sir Charles Grey’s blanket prohibition should be repealed. He instructed Keppel to grant freedom to slaves subject to exactly the same regulations that had applied under the Old Regime.\footnote{Portland to Keppel, March 6, 1801, CO 166/5, 63-65.}

All of this was consistent with the ministry’s longstanding solicitude for the interests of the white colonists and its insistence on adherence to French law. However, Trigge had been rebuffed on the one point on which he was unwilling to compromise: the validity of the pardons. He and Maitland had both given their word, and the liberty of Kina’s followers was thus a matter of honor, not merely law or policy. Trigge, while wanting to avoid the “evil of an open contest between the civil and military powers,” wrote that if Keppel attempted to arrest the former rebels, he would have them released. He further threatened to resign if Portland persisted in his orders to seize the men.\footnote{Trigge to Keppel, May 10, 1801, WO 1/36, 143-145.} Keppel, in turn, protested that Trigge’s promise would not be broken, since the rebels were not to be tried by the local courts; they would merely be deported as a danger to the colony, just as Kina had been. Nonetheless, he was powerless to do anything other than refer the matter to Portland again, with months more to wait for a reply from across the Atlantic.\footnote{Keppel to Trigge, May 14, 1801, WO 1/36, 147-149.}

In his letter sending word of Trigge’s defiance, Keppel proposed to unite the civil and military powers in Martinique in one person—presumably himself. A treaty with France was in the wind, and the republican government in Guadeloupe was beginning to relax its attitude toward émigrés. Keppel argued that these developments increased threats to the island’s security,
as refugees of all political persuasions (“and what characters!” Keppel interjected) were beginning to return to the Martinique in anticipation of its return to French sovereignty. In these unsteady circumstances, he contended, it was best to preclude any further interference with the island’s civil government. The aftermath of Kina’s rebellion had brought the longstanding conflict between army and administration to an unbridgeable impasse. For Keppel, the solution was to end Martinique’s jurisdictional muddle once and for all.

Ultimately London was in no mood to make any drastic changes, however. In the autumn orders came to Martinique from Lord Hobart at the newly created ministerial post for War and the Colonies that any plans to arrest the former rebels were to be shelved for the time being. Portland (who had meanwhile left the Home Office) had long been inclined toward Keppel’s views on jurisdictional disputes and on the Kina affair in particular, but the new policy was for Keppel and Trigge to put their dispute to rest—even if it meant yielding to the intransigence of the commander-in-chief. The Pitt ministry may have judged the standoff between the two generals more destabilizing for the colony than the presence of a handful of amnestied free colored insurgents. In any event, Trigge’s stubbornness had paid off: the military’s views had trumped those of a civil administration closely aligned with the French planters, reversing the trend of years of British occupation policy.

The pall of uncertainty hanging over the island’s status brought about another transatlantic controversy in the aftermath of the Kina affair. Sometime after news of the rebellion reached Europe earlier in the year, the French government organ *Le Moniteur* published a claim that the British had instigated Kina’s uprising with the object of laying waste to the colony

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112 Keppel to Portland, June 6, 1801, WO 1/36, 139-141.
113 Lord Hobart to Keppel, August 20, 1801, WO 1/36, 151-157.
before handing it over to France. Louis de Curt, the colony’s representative in London, subsequently released a pamphlet addressed to his fellow colonists aimed at dispelling any such rumor. While Kina had always been loyal to the British and French colonists in the past, de Curt admitted—even when “everybody knew he could have been at least the equal of Toussaint Louverture”—his “humiliation” at being treated by the Martinicans as no different than any other freed slave led him to seek revenge. Kina’s vanity lay behind the revolt, de Curt argued, not the British, who had always been reliable allies and protectors.

De Curt generally shared the civil government’s view of the rebellion, criticizing the military’s decision to pardon the rebels—Maitland, he said, had forgotten that “the principles of mercy so happily followed in England cannot be applied without the most dangerous consequences to the revolt of Negroes.” Nonetheless, according to Keppel the pamphlet produced a “very bad impression” among the Martinican colonists, implying as it did that they were ready to suspect their British patrons of plotting against them. A rash of mutual recriminations between the embarrassed colons and their agent stretched through the latter part of 1801, with the Martinicans protesting their loyalty to the British Crown, de Curt defending himself by arguing that there were legitimate concerns about the island’s internal security, and Whitehall attempting to quiet the discontent. The conspiracy theory de Curt attempted to

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116 Ibid., 12.
118 Lord Hobart to Keppel, October 13, 1801, WO 1/36, 215-217; De Curt to John Sullivan, September 10, 1801, WO 1/36, 571-577; De Curt to Sullivan, October 5, 1801, WO 1/36, 625-622.
refute would be repeated as fact by at least one French historian as late as the 1840’s.\textsuperscript{119} There were other rumors about the revolt in circulation as well: in Saint-Domingue it was said that Martinican officials had engineered the revolt as a means of getting rid of Kina.\textsuperscript{120} That little evidence supports these speculations does not diminish the significance and effect of such rumors. As Alan Lester argues, 19\textsuperscript{th} century imperial networks facilitated the spread of panicked rumor that in turn had tangible effects on the working colonial power structures.\textsuperscript{121} The controversy underscores how the transatlantic sphere of print shaped colonial politics across both national boundaries and the ostensible chasm between republicans and émigrés. The swirl of conspiratorial thinking indicates that the Kina affair loomed large for the Martinican whites. It reminded them of their shaky and provisional status as British subjects. It provoked fear that British imperial raison d’état would diverge from a reliable commitment to counterrevolution and white supremacy. The French Republic, itself taking an increasingly repressive turn on racial policy under the Consulate, was only too happy to exploit this fear to destabilize the occupation. At a time when Kina himself was politically impotent in a prison cell in Britain, rumors about him had consequences across the revolutionary Caribbean that threatened to intrude into the high politics of Anglo-French negotiations about the fate of Martinique and its slave society.

Both Kina’s rebellion and the political storm in its wake demonstrate that while the basic forms of Old Regime society prevailed in Martinique, the British war effort in the West Indies generated increasing friction with the French colonial plantocracy. One form of this friction was

\textsuperscript{120} Geggus, “Slave, Soldier, Rebel,” 145.
\textsuperscript{121} Alan Lester, “Empire and the Place of Panic,” in \textit{Empires of Panic: Epidemics and Colonial Anxieties} (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015), 34.
a growing conviction among the British military hierarchy that liberalization of racial laws—or at least refusing to tighten them—would strengthen Britain’s position in occupied territories and its own colonies. In many respects this was a natural consequence of the central importance of free people of color to the social workings of the colonial Caribbean. Even French abolitionists such as Jacques-Pierre Brissot had, prior to the enactment of full emancipation in 1794, made the tactical argument that equality for the “intermediate class” of free men of color was necessary to diminish the threats of slave uprisings and colonial secessionism. But Trigge and other officers came to these conclusions with the goal of defeating an enemy committed, in principle at least, to universal emancipation and racial equality. In so doing, they made a sharp break with the common dogma of the planter class, expounded by Keppel and De Curt, that the unique nature of slave society demanded rigidly repressive measures devoid of “mercy.” Since the occupation of Martinique had been legally and politically crafted to securely attach local white elites to Britain, the result was a sharp internal divide over the nature of British imperial strategy.

At the same time, the military’s dependence on black and colored soldiers created bonds of interest and loyalty that pressed against the strictures of colonial society from below. Kina was an exceptional figure, but the way in which both his prior career and the rebellion played out suggests that there was a wider segment of francophone black and colored people, especially soldiers, who were willing to speak the language of British subjecthood to pursue their individual and collective aims. Moreover, British commanders were to some degree willing to listen to this discourse, not only because of strategic calculations and their more immediate need for warm

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bodies in the rank and file, but also because military structures cultivated a sense of mutual obligation—more, perhaps, than the officers felt for the white *colons,* of whom they often took a dim view. Condescending as much of the praise of Kina may have been, a number of British officers clearly thought highly of his abilities and record of service and sympathized with the predicament of him and his followers—their survival was testament to it.

Kina’s rallying cry of “*la loi Britannique*” was a canny one, for it linked the rebellion to both the jurisdictional clash between army and civil government and the broader claim to British loyalism on the part of free people of color. If French law stood, in principle, for an Anglo-royalist front united behind a vision of colonial society in stasis, British law, or the idea of it, could be wielded for the purposes of change, even while rejecting Jacobinism. Loyalty to the British monarch, by the same token, presented a line of continuity throughout Kina’s counterrevolutionary career—he remained committed to “royalty,” whether French or British—while serving as an rhetorical foil to the French colonists, whom Kina presented as defective British subjects. Though Kina overplayed a weak hand, the rebels avoided punishment and saw their grievances partially vindicated, precisely because their cause struck at the heart of the existing contradictions and divisions among the island’s wartime counterrevolutionary institutions. The question highlighted in Chapter 1, “is one a white man or a man of color?” did not, in the end, exhaust the choices available to political actors in occupied Martinique, even in the midst of a war waged in defense of slavery.
Conclusion

“I do not believe myself, after the steps I took, to be a criminal for his Britannic Majesty. I could be a criminal for the French, [but] not for the English who know my politics.”123 The imprisoned Jean Kina’s self-acquittal testified to the peculiar transimperial blend of actors and objectives that characterized the war against revolution in the New World. The long-running clash between competing jurisdictions on Martinique reached its peak with the Kina affair. This conflict was a byproduct of the attempt to securely manage an alliance between British military and civilian officials and French planters predicated on shared commitments to monarchical legitimacy and the preservation of slave society. Old Regime law, backed up by British firepower, was the response to the existential racial and ideological threats of slave rebellion and Jacobinism. For nearly a decade, Kina lent his gifts as a military leader to fighting those same enemies. Nonetheless in late 1800, he set his politics in opposition to Britain’s French colonial clients, even while appealing to British law and the British king. This reversal underscores that there were multiple political projects under the counterrevolutionary umbrella, advanced by jostling power blocs operating according to different and sometimes starkly opposed logics under rapidly changing circumstances. British law, the British military, and a British king offered real or imagined alternatives to the mere retrenchment of white planter power—not revolutionary alternatives, but ones intelligible within the ideological and institutional framework the transimperial struggle against revolution had produced.

The contemporary case of Trinidad, where the conduct of the British occupation produced a much better-known legal and political controversy, provides an instructive point of comparison. After its seizure in 1797, that colony was also ostensibly governed under local, in

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123 Kina to Portland, March 30, 1801, CO 166/1, 38.
this case Spanish, law and institutions. Like his counterpart Keppel, General Thomas Picton depended on an elite circle of planters to staff and advise his administration, many of them French immigrants or exiles from elsewhere in the Antilles. Picton’s reliance on the émigré slaveholders helped to impel him toward increasingly brutal measures meant to keep the swelling free colored population in check, among them the much-publicized judicial torture of a free colored girl, Luisa Calderon.\(^\text{124}\) As in Martinique, the pervasive fear of poisoning played a prominent part in this official hostility to the *gens de couleur*, as did anxieties surrounding the easy mobility of potential subversives from other parts of the Caribbean. However, in Trinidad the governor possessed the full scope of both military and civil authority from the beginning of his tenure. Picton, lacking any overarching direction as to how Trinidad was to be governed, effectively ruled the island under a permanent state of emergency under color of Spanish law.\(^\text{125}\) As a Trinidadian planter put it to the governor, “You are the supreme political, civil, criminal, and military judge.”\(^\text{126}\) Thus, although discontent with Picton’s dictatorial style had been brewing in Trinidad and in the metropole for some time, only the peacetime arrival of a civilian commission led by Robert Fullarton in 1802-1803 would bring it to an end, leading to a prolonged prosecution of the former governor.

Keppel, conversely, could only aspire to such freedom of action, even if, as David Geggus claims, he projected the image of an authoritarian strongman in Martinique.\(^\text{127}\) Although Whitehall was generally supportive of the civil government’s prerogatives, he was forced to request and patiently await its intervention against his military colleagues. The most

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\(^{126}\) Quoted in Ibid., 100.

\(^{127}\) Geggus, “Slave, Soldier, Rebel,” 144.
straightforward basis for this difference was that Martinique was simply more important than Trinidad: the former island was a regional military strongpoint (one early 18th-century British observer had dubbed Fort Royal the “Gibraltar of the West Indies”\(^{128}\)) with a mature plantation economy, while the latter was remote and underdeveloped backwater, albeit a rapidly growing one.\(^{129}\) The strategic value of the colony helped motivate the careful attempt to coopt the white colons through reliance on Old Regime Law, while at the same time producing greater impositions by the military on Keppel’s administration and the persistent problem of competing centers of authority.

As a result, the confrontation between Keppel and Trigge took on a very different cast than that between Picton and Fullarton. James Epstein notes that Picton’s despotism under “ill-defined demarcations of authority” in a conquered territory thrust into sharp relief the “disjunction between colonial permissibility and the self-image of Britain as a nation of law.”\(^{130}\) In Martinique, despite a more defined master concept of wartime governance, demarcations of authority were likewise problematic. However, the conflict between competing jurisdictions did not reflect a simple opposition between a colonial state of exception and metropolitan norms of the rule of law. Amid the Kina affair, reform-minded and humanitarian criticisms of the civil government’s attack on the gens de couleur were wedded to the pragmatic rhetoric of military necessity. Keppel’s defense, meanwhile, insisted not only on the exceptional dangers of the colonial situation, but also on the lawlessness and usurpation of civilian authority by the military. Arguments of both necessity and legality were arrayed for and against the manumission crackdown. The answer to the question of where the true abuse of power lay in this confrontation


\(^{129}\) Candlin, The Last Caribbean Frontier, 97.

\(^{130}\) Epstein, Scandal of Colonial Rule, 92.
depended on differing strategic goals and differing local constituencies, whether planter elites or black and colored soldiers.

Martinique consequently provides an important case in which to examine the workings of colonial jurisdictional politics—“conflicts over the preservation, creation, nature, and extent of legal forums and authorities,” in Lauren Benton’s definition. The maintenance of Old Regime law on Martinique aimed to cement transimperial racial and legitimist solidarity against the shared threats of slave self-emancipation and republican universalism. In practice, however, the occupation created a novel political environment, with the introduction of institutions and actors—above all the British military—with little interest in subordinating their aims to a civil government that prioritized the interests of the French planter class. Exploiting this divide, Kina sought the protection of British law against French colonial law. However, he did so not so much through any explicit appeal to the universal prerogatives of British subjecthood as through claims of personal loyalty and obligation to his military superiors and the Crown.

Kina’s rebellious loyalism was one reflection of a larger truth: the British occupation, in aligning with the local planter class to secure Martinique’s slave society against revolution, had nonetheless brought its own forms of change and conflict surrounding the island’s racial order. Jurisdictional conflicts over the extent of legal pluralism revealed the disruptive effects of Britain’s war in the West Indies, which moved people—especially free people of color like Kina—across geographic, national and social boundaries despite the efforts of local administrations toward containment. In such an environment, discourses surrounding law and

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despotism were fluid, ambiguous, and apt to be deployed to contrasting purposes by on-the-spot actors each appealing to central authority.

In a wider sense, Kina’s rebellion and its aftermath indicates the diverse and flexible range of political responses by enslaved and free colored colonial subjects, which the binary poles of revolution and counterrevolution fail to fully capture. William Cormack notes that the loyalty of the gens de couleur to different factions in the Windward Island prior to 1794 was “always conditional upon changing assessments of interests,” rather than fixed ideological and racial alignments.\(^{132}\) Much the same assessment applies to the island under British occupation, where a man like Kina who had once fought rebellious gens de couleur on behalf on French planters could then lead the former against the latter. The framework of conditional British sovereignty did not arrest French Caribbean politics, but merely provided a different set of constraints and incentives for its operation. The recognition of this multi-sided sphere of Anglo-Royalist politics cautions against the temptation to treat the occupation of Martinique, and similar instances, as merely aberrational asides in the real story of the realization of the radical possibilities of republican universalism in the New World. Both sides of the revolutionary divide featured fluid combinations of collaboration and resistance among coalitions of local and metropolitan actors.

A curious epilogue to Kina’s career illustrates the unpredictability of these shifting alignments of transimperial forces. The Peace of Amiens in 1802 saw both Martinique’s return to France and the lapse of the Aliens Act, which led to Kina’s release from Newgate. The ex-colonel found his way to France, where the Napoleonic government promptly had him and his

son incarcerated again, first in Paris and then in the Fort de Joux on the Swiss border. He had run afoul of France’s own newly-enacted alien laws, but at a time when the French were moving toward the re-imposition of colonial slavery, any black West Indian was under suspicion, particularly one with Kina’s history as a foreign agent and rebel. As a consequence, unbeknownst to him, he was locked up mere feet away from the cell of a fellow Dominguain and an old enemy, Toussaint Louverture. For all their differences of personality and principle, Kina had been compared to Toussaint on more than one occasion; in the end, the French found the similarities compelling enough to consign them to the same draughty dungeon. Kina was the more fortunate of the two. He survived until his release in 1804, when he and his son were dispatched to the Armée d’Italie as workmen. 5,000 miles from the Grand Anse, he leaves the historical record as he enters it—a carpenter.\footnote{Geggus, “Slave, Soldier, Rebel,” 145-148.} By the end of the year, presumably, he was once again a servant of royalty.
Chapter 4

The Dream of Columbus:

The Uses of History in the Colonial Republic of Letters, 1791-1824

Qui oserait encore plaider la cause des Noirs après les crimes qu’ils ont commis?

Réné Chateaubriand, *Le Génie du christianisme*, 1802

The Haitian Revolution was a unique historical event. The foundation of an independent Black republic on the ashes of a slave-based colonial society was unprecedented by any measure. As most 21st century historians of the Revolutionary era acknowledge, it was also an event whose significance was long suppressed or unrecognized. Michel-Rolph Trouillot argued in his influential 1995 essay collection *Silencing the Past* that a revolution by enslaved people was “unthinkable even as it happened.” This “unthinkability” derived, Trouillot argued, from the assumption of ontological differences between races that had become embedded in Enlightenment anthropology, which even European radicals struggled to shake off. There was, consequently, “no doubt about Western superiority, only about its proper use and effect.” In Trouillot’s account, contemporaries’ lack of a frame of reference for black political self-determination helped to perpetuate the erasure or trivialization of the Haitian achievement in the two centuries since.¹

However, the “silencing” of the Haitian Revolution that Trouillot identified did not originate in an absence of historical discourse. Quite the opposite. As Jeremy Popkin observes,

“if there was a silencing of the Haitian Revolution, it occurred only after the consolidation of black rule on the island.”

It might be better to say that, in the generation following the outbreak of the 1791 uprising in Saint Domingue’s northern plain, there was no silence surrounding the violent transformation of the colony. There was, instead, a cacophonous transimperial conversation, and was not said can only properly contextualized by what was. Throughout this period, metropolitan and (especially) colonial European writers produced a vast body of literature on Saint Dominigue/Haiti. Most of the francophone writers were émigrés, their perspectives colored by expulsion and exile from Saint Domingue, from the metropole, or both. The history of the Haitian Revolution was written first and foremost by the vanquished.

The early writers of historical accounts of revolutionary Saint Domingue were divided along ideological, factional, and national lines, sometimes savagely so. Their appropriation of the mantle of historian—a somewhat nebulous role, in the days before the professionalization of the discipline—was in part a means to claim the authority, over and against their opponents, to define and shape the memory of the colonial crisis. At the same time, these writers were heirs to an 18th century tradition of colonial literature and historiography that preceded that crisis. This tradition was grounded in the efforts of colonial whites—particularly planters—to wrest control over European perceptions of their own societies and peculiar institutions in opposition to critical metropolitan views-from-away.

The colonial print culture to which these planter polemicists

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2 Jeremy D. Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution*, 4

contributed was transatlantic and transnational, and the intense textual production from 1791 onwards both reflected and intensified the interpenetration of French, British and other colonial discourses. Distinct national perspectives and interests never disappeared, but to a greater extent than ever before, European colonists (and particularly the planter elite) found themselves with shared concerns and shared perils. This was a literary field whose key authors (British as well as French) were deeply involved in the events they described, as exiles, politicians, or soldiers. As Jeremy Popkin notes, colonial exiles were among the first creators in French letters of witness literature: “first-person accounts of extraordinary public events that had drastically affected their authors’ private lives in ways that were assumed to be typical of the fate of large numbers of contemporaries.”

Many of these writers sought to vindicate not only their politics or their class, but also themselves as historical actors. Most were elites with the privileges of social class and racial caste, but they were, to varying degrees, precariously situated—scattered, proscribed, tenuously tolerated, in uneasy and unequal alliance with foreign powers, or, in the case of British authors, under looming but as-yet-unrealized threats. The early historians of the Haitian Revolution narrated and interpreted a recent past on which their honor, claims to property, and in some cases their very lives depended.

The extraordinary events in Saint Domingue thus helped to produce the climactic flowering of a particular strand of the colonial late Enlightenment: pragmatic, meliorist, and cosmopolitan in outlook, anxious over the moral and political-economic underpinnings of empire, and preoccupied with questions of authorial subject position and narrative and interpretative authority—a preoccupation in which history as a mode of inquiry played an

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increasingly central role. In accounting for the revolution’s unthinkability, Trouillot emphasized the continuity of eighteenth-century racial thinking with the scientific racism of the nineteenth.\(^5\) However, the contemporary corpus of colonial historiography, which exploded in volume and intensity alongside the Haitian Revolution, reveals that slavery’s defenders did not only seek to naturalize the racial hierarchies of colonial society. They also, often simultaneously, sought to historicize them.

This chapter follows the emergence of early historical writing on the Haitian Revolution in both French and English. It proceeds, in a roughly chronological fashion, from its roots in Old Regime colonial literature through the transimperial proliferation of competing historical narratives throughout the Revolutionary, Napoleonic, and Restoration periods. It shows that a turn toward historicization of the colonial problem was in large part a product of the self-assertion of the planter elite in the face of the revolutionary rupture. Historical writing became a means for these colonists to make sense of that rupture in their shared world. It became a means to contest the authority to define the nature of the colonial crisis and, consequently, what should follow it—questions that, for most of these authors, were of the utmost personal immediacy. Even in defeat and exile, they shaped the assumptions undergirding debates about Saint Domingue, assumptions so pervasive that even revolutionary authors, including, eventually, Haitian writers, made their own arguments within their terms. One must look to this tradition, and the conditions of elite dispossession and recovery that shaped it during and after the revolutionary years, to find a mechanism for the rendering of the Haitian Revolution as a “non-event.”

\(^5\) Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 77.
The early colonial historians of Saint Domingue were not, of course, solely reacting to the discrete chain of events beginning in 1789. They were participants in an ongoing field of colonial discourse stretching across centuries and throughout Europe and its overseas possessions. The generation of writers immediately prior to the French Revolution was particularly notable for several developments that would prove influential throughout the turbulent decades to follow. In historical works as well as other colonial texts, the 1770’s and 1780’s saw mounting scrutiny of slavery, increasing self-conscious attempts at self-representation by colonial writers, and colonial cosmopolitan exchanges among (particularly British and French) writers and reading publics. Colonial historical writing became a battleground in which colonial elites, relative intellectual upstarts, sought to claim from metropolitan writers the right to narrate and interpret the history—and therefore the moral and political character—of their own slave-based societies. At the same time, these works shared an Enlightenment heritage and sensibility that softened their differences and constrained them within a common conceptual frame of reference.

Edward Long’s three-volume *The History of Jamaica*, which appeared in 1774, is both illustrative and highly significant in its own right as a work of history intervening in this discursive ferment. It would ultimately become one of the most important colonial texts of the 18th century. *The History of Jamaica* is perhaps best remembered today for its acutely racist passages, which were caustic even by the standards of Long’s contemporaries. Long attributed to Africans “bestial manners, stupidity and vices,” and “every species of inherent turpitude be found dispersed among all other races of men,” placing their capacities between those of other human races and that of orangutans in the “harmony and order…of the world’s stupendous
fabric.” The grossness of Long’s racial thinking, however, should not obscure the more complex nature of his political vision, or the significance of his methodological approach as a historian, which was closely linked to that vision. At a time when the planter class was beginning to feel increasing external pressure—two years previously, the Court of the King’s Bench had declared in the Somerset case that slave ownership had no legal force in England, a decision that deeply disturbed Long—he sought to defend colonial whites against the charge that they or their society were somehow foreign to Britain or its constitutional order. Unlike some colonial authors who emphasized the exceptional character of colonial institutions, Long argued that Britain’s colonies existed (contra Somerset) in a continuous and coherent political and juridical space with the metropole; the subjection of African slaves was analogous, for him, with that of the laboring classes in Europe. At the same time, Long’s vehement emphasis on the racial chasm between black and white aimed, in another way, to close the gap between metropole and colony, by communicating the colonial racial value system to the metropole in a systematic and robust fashion.

Long’s rear-guard action against the threat of metropolitan interference and political isolation that the Somerset case represented was not purely negative. Conscious of the threat of slave resistance, Long argued that a “slave contract” ought to regulate master-slave relationships by expressions of mutual consent rather than mere force. In the longer term, he proposed “some medium between… liberty and absolute slavery” as a means of limiting plantation society’s

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8 Bird, “18th Century Transformations of the Jamaican Plantocracy,” Ch. 2, 11-12.
excesses while ensuring its viability. These ideas are suggestive of the link between reformist impulses and pro-slavery apologetics that was present in much colonial literature of the period. Planter authors shared many of the Enlightened premises of the critics of colonial society, particularly in their employment of the discourses of contractarianism, improvement, and utility, even as they employed them in ways calculated to the benefit of their class.

Long was rapidly successful at establishing himself as a leading authority on the West Indies, and this success was perhaps more a matter of methodology and positionality than the distinctive ideological content of his work. Long was the first author with a substantial personal connection to Jamaica to narrate its history at length. Other historians of the colonies during the same period, such as Edmund Burke in his *Account of the European Settlements in America*, were part of an older tradition of compilations that synthesized the work of travel writers but involved no firsthand research. The greater part of the *History* was geographically organized, providing an exhaustive account of the landscape, demography, and history of each of the island’s parishes in sequence. This encyclopedic approach reinforced Long’s principal claim to reliability: he knew the colony in a way that authors who remained ensconced in Europe did not. Some of his choicer opinions aside, Long presented himself first and foremost as a historian rather than a political controversialist. This approach would prove influential for later colonial writers, who imitated his empiricist sensibility, ample footnotes, and rhetorical posture of firsthand reliability. Moreau de Saint-Méry, who was already writing his *Description...de Saint Domingue* by the middle of the 1780’s, followed Long’s parish-by-parish model, while Long’s friend Bryan Edwards would follow him in taking up the mantle of homegrown Jamaican

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planter historiography in later years, when British abolitionism had grown into a more coherent and serious threat to the West Indian interest. Long helped to establish a transnational pattern of the use of painstaking historical erudition alongside eyewitness knowledge to shore up colonial planters’ claims to intellectual authority.

Key texts of colonial critique and colonial self-assertion would soon appear within French letters as well. Hilliard d’Auberteuil’s 1776 *Considérations sur l’état présent de Saint Domingue*, though not solely or even primarily a historical work, is notable for falling into both categories. Like many a colonial writer after him, Auberteuil grounded the story of Saint Domingue in the heroic narrative of hardy white pioneers who had “carried the arms of the state to the ends of the earth” and carved out a flourishing colony from the jungle. The chief thrust of the *Considérations*, however, was to propose the reform of Saint Domingue’s government and administration, to reestablish them on the foundation of the “love of humanity.” Like Long, Auberteuil—a lawyer and clerk rather than a planter—was interested in clarifying the compact between colony and metropole to the advantage of both, as he saw it, but particularly that of his fellow colonists who had “contributed so much to the glory of the metropole.” In the process he turned a harshly critical eye not only on Saint Domingue’s colonial government (which resulted in the book’s suppression), but also the planters, the *gens de couleur*, and the *exclusif*. In Gene

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13 Ibid., Volume I, 22.
14 Ibid., 20.
15 Ibid., 25.
Ogle’s words, “there was something in the Considérations to upset anyone who was anyone in colonial society.”"\textsuperscript{16}

Yet Auberteuil’s gaddy approach to colonial institutions did not threaten the bedrock on which they all rested. Indeed, the Considérations would be widely cited by apologists for slavery, as the Abbé Grégoire noted decades later.\textsuperscript{17} Auberteuil proposed to “soften the lot of slaves,” but also to “forbid the confusion of ranks and mixing of classes.”\textsuperscript{18} The work underscores that the growth in colonial self-representation was not merely reactive; virtually all colonial writers—even the arch-racist Long, as noted—saw flaws in the existing social and political order and proposed reforms. As David Brion Davis has noted, the last several decades of the eighteenth century saw ideas of human improvement placing increasing intellectual and moral pressure on slavery—a tendency that slaveholders themselves were not excluded from. Yet the same progressive perspective was “oriented to expediency” from its inception.\textsuperscript{19} Even if it sometimes spooked the authorities, for these authors progressive change was a fundamentally a project of superior management of the existing colonial paradigm of racial capitalism.

Similarly illustrative of the contradictory impulses in colonial literature was the Abbé Raynal’s Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les Deux Indes, published in that same revolutionary year.\textsuperscript{20} The Histoire des deux Indes

\textsuperscript{17}Henri Jean-Baptiste Grégoire, \textit{De La Littérature des Nègres, ou Recherches sur leurs facultés intellectuelles leurs qualités morales et leur littérature, suivies de Notices sur la vie et les ouvrages des Nègres qui se sont distingués dans les Sciences, les Lettres et les Arts}, (Paris: Chez Maradin, 1808), Vol. 1, 57-58.
\textsuperscript{18}Auberteuil, \textit{Considérations} 135, 7.
\textsuperscript{20}Guillaume Thomas François Raynal, \textit{Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les Deux Indes} (Amsterdam: 1770).
was ambitious in scope, starting with the Portuguese Indian Ocean trading posts and covering French, Dutch, British, and Spanish colonial enterprises in both hemispheres. Raynal, like most colonial historians up to that point, had never set foot in the West Indies (a fact that planter apologists were eager to note). The work was a compilation of sometimes-disjointed articles and essays, and a significant portion of the passages covering the Caribbean are believed to have been the work of Denis Diderot. Among the more inflammatory passages criticizing slavery, Raynal/Diderot raised the specter of a “new Spartacus” who would lead slaves to “revenge and to carnage.” Like Auburteuil’s *Considérations*, the *Histoire des deux Indes* was suppressed by the French monarchy, though this did not prevent it from becoming an international sensation, running through thirty reprints and German, Spanish, and English translations.

The book’s political import was not, however, as unambiguously radical as its prophecy of the “new Spartacus” might suggest. As Trouillot observes of this era, “few thinkers had the politics of their philosophy.” Notably, Raynal was a friend of Moreau Saint-Méry and of Pierre Victor Malouet, the latter of whom became one of the foremost opponents of the *Amis des Noirs* in the years immediately preceding the Revolution (his *Mémoire sur l’esclavage des nègres*, a riposte to Condorcet, was published in 1788) as well as perhaps the most important figure involved in brokering the Anglo-planter alliance of 1793. In 1785 Raynal even published two of Malouet’s essays on colonial administration—which included proposals for the regulation and

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21Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 81.
24Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 86.
reform of slavery with some resemblance to Edward Long’s—under his own name. That both Diderot and Malouet were among Raynal’s ghostwriters underscores the relative discursive continuity and commonalities among writers on colonial debates, a pattern that would not disappear even after the revolutionary rupture. By the same token, the fact that Raynal was reportedly one of the most read authors in the holdings of the Bristol Library Society, in one of England’s chief slave-trading ports, suggests both the transimperial resonance of his critique of colonialism and its inherent limits.

These texts and authors composed only a small slice, albeit a particularly influential one, of colonial discourse in the pre-Revolutionary years, and differed from one another markedly in style, methodology, and the immediate political stakes of their narratives. They nonetheless shared the distinctive contours of the transimperial literary tradition that colonial historians of the revolutionary era would inherit. It was broadly Enlightened and pragmatic in sensibility, with a penchant for reformist projects on behalf of, or at least not incompatible with, the existing colonial racial hierarchy. It was also marked by a struggle for epistemic authority in which both the amassment of historical knowledge and firsthand perspectives became key rhetorical tools. These factors would continue to shape the field after 1789, even as transformative events in France and in Saint Domingue lent them new significance and urgency.

27 Cazzola and Ravano, “Plantation Society in the Age of Revolutions,” 235.
The 1790s: First Attempts

The early historiography of the revolutions in Saint Domingue can be divided for convenience into three broad periods of production, with a number of exemplary texts in each. The first, covering the 1790’s through the turn of the nineteenth century, saw the initial outflow of exiles from the colony, providing the immediate setting for the production of many texts by colonial French authors. It also saw the Anglo-Planter alliance in the Caribbean and the consequent intensification of the blending of French and British colonial print discourse. The second period began with the rightward shift of French politics under the Napoleonic consulate, the “return” of many émigrés to metropolitan France, the Peace of Amiens in 1802, and the decision to attempt a reconquest of Saint Domingue. Following the failure of the Leclerc expedition and Haitian independence in 1804, colonial debates continued under the Empire, although with somewhat less urgency. Throughout this second period, historical accounts of Saint Domingue sought to reconcile the planter class with the changing political environment in France, while British attempts to narrate the same events began to diverge, as national boundaries within colonial literature were clarified. The third and perhaps most intensely prolific period of historical literature on Saint Domingue surrounded the Restoration of the Bourbon Monarchy in 1814-1815 and another surge of hope for the recovery of the colony. A full generation after the outbreak of revolution in Saint Domingue, colonial authors (and historians in particular) continued to struggle to define the meaning of the upheaval and its import for their competing visions of empire.

French and foreign writers began attempts to interpret the revolutions in Saint Domingue in historical terms almost as soon as they had happened. One anonymous author in Cap-Français
published a prospectus for a three-volume history of the revolution in Saint Domingue in 1790.\textsuperscript{29} With somewhat less heroic ambition, the abolitionist campaigner Thomas Clarkson offered some of the first published commentary in Great Britain on Saint Domingue’s slave uprising in early 1792, in a slender pamphlet entitled “The True State of the Case, Respecting the Insurrection at Saint Domingo.”\textsuperscript{30} Clarkson sought to rebut the allegation that abolitionist agitation against the slave trade were responsible for the revolt, instead blaming the slave trade itself, by which “thousands are annually poured into the Islands, who have been fraudulently and forcibly deprived of the Rights of Men.” Much of Clarkson’s argument was historically framed, pointing to ancient Greek and Roman slave revolts as well as more recent episodes of slave resistance in the Caribbean throughout the eighteenth century. To support the identification of the slave trade in particular as the source of the conflagration, Clarkson claimed that that African-born slaves, rather than Creoles, had always been the leaders of these revolts, citing Long’s History of Jamaica in support of this contention. A secondary cause, Clarkson argued, was the disruption created by the conflict between colonial whites and the gens de couleur—he particularly emphasized the 1791 rebellion of the free colored leader Vincent Ogé, whom he portrayed sympathetically—which “did afford the Negroes an opportunity… of endeavoring to vindicate for themselves the unalterable rights of men.”\textsuperscript{31} Clarkson’s tract was only one small entry in an explosion of European commentary on Saint Domingue, but it is notable for its foreshadowing of key elements of the debates that would mark historical narratives of the colonial revolutions: a concern with causes of the slave revolt that often took an inquisitorial

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 6-8.
cast, and, not coincidentally, an attempt to define the relationship between colonial events and metropolitan ideological and political influences. Even for an author like Clarkson, who was relatively sympathetic to the enslaved Dominguans, the central question of the uprising was one of assigning blame.

To speak of history as a genre, as opposed to journalism or some other form of literature, requires something of an imposition of present categories on a period when the discipline was not yet well-defined. Nonetheless, if one defines a history as a full-length secondary work covering a chronology of months or years, then the first published histories of revolutionary Saint Domingue began to appear in the middle 1790’s. The earliest authors were émigrés, often publishing in exile in the United States. The economist Guillaume-François Mahy de Corméré’s *Histoire de la Révolution de la partie française de Saint-Domingue* was published in Baltimore in 1794, seems to have been the first, at least of those texts that have survived. Structurally, Mahy’s book is suggestive of the transition from present-oriented commentary toward historical perspective. It consists of a compilation of twelve letters (generously supplemented with footnotes), which Mahy said he had written to a friend before being urged by others to have them printed. The claim of reluctantly publishing works that had not originally been intended for public consumption is a common one in contemporary histories of Saint Domingue. This may, of course, reflect the reality for many writers, particularly those in exile who sought to piece together the chaotic events they had experienced. But as a rhetorical device, it also suggests the attempt of émigré authors to impart a sense of immediacy and eyewitness authenticity to their narratives, even in later works that were much more elaborate in approach. Substantively,

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Mahy’s thesis was as simple as it was vehement: the *Amis des Noirs* were the “sole author of the misfortunes of Saint Domingue and the other colonies,” and their “propaganda” had laid the groundwork for the uprising of the slaves and general emancipation.33 The book’s fixation on the abolitionist “sect” as the almost-monocausal driver of events in Saint Domingue has something of the quality of conspiracy theory. However, it is important to note that Mahy, like many emigrés, sought to make a case for the interests of the planters from within a revolutionary political framework, arguing that his proposals for the preservation of the colony’s social order “derived from the rights of man and the foundations of the [republican] constitution.”34

Other exiled historians were more radical, such as Chôtard ainé, who published his *Précis de la Révolution de Saint-Domingue* in Philadelphia the next year. Chôtard had served on the racially-integrated Intermediary Commission appointed by the republican commissioners.35 However, like many Jacobin accounts of Saint Domingue, the *Précis* responded to the reactionary attack on “philanthropy” by portraying both enslaved and free-colored insurgents as “blind instruments in the hands of the enemies of the revolution.”36 As Trouillot observes, this conspiratorial view of events from across the political spectrum served to diminish the agency of Africans. It also played an important role in political conflict among colonial and metropolitan whites, as competing factions sought to blame one another for an upheaval that was broadly conceived in catastrophic terms—as one of the other early histories, the *Histoire des Désastres de Saint Domingue*, declared from its title.37 If the slave uprising was an aberration put into

33Ibid. 5
34Ibid. 10
motion primarily by white and free-colored factional politics—either revolutionary or counterrevolutionary—then it followed that the foundations of the slave system as such were sound, and that the prerevolutionary racial hierarchy, perhaps in modified form, might easily be reestablished. Mahy and Chôtard’s works underscore the intense partisan stakes of a historiography barely removed from its subject matter alongside the limits of the shared conceptual frameworks of these debates.

Alongside the partisan debates over events in Saint Domingue from 1789 onwards, some of these early historical accounts also interpret the revolutionary cataclysm in light of a deeper view of colonial history. For many colonial writers, the purpose, desirability, and future of colonization as such was at stake. The author of Réflexions sur la Colonie de Saint-Domingue began his overview of the colonial question with a disquisition into the colonial enterprises of the ancient Greeks, Phoenicians, and Romans, demonstrating by contrast what he saw as the peculiar problem of modern colonialism: the essential commercial and military dependence of the colony on the metropole.38 He then turned to a heroic narration of the achievements of the “immortal Christopher Columbus,” noting both “the progress of the human spirit” signaled by Columbus voyages and the resulting “horrible calamities” visited on the indigenous peoples of the new world by “fanaticism and ferocity,”39 one of whose consequences was African slavery. The book likewise struck a contrast between the benefits of the growth of commercial society in Europe, who, “united by commercial ties, had formed a vast and happy family of peoples,” and the

38[François Barbé Marbois?] Réflexions sur la Colonie de Saint-Domingue (Paris: Chez Garnery, 1796): 1-6; Geggus argues that the Histoire des Désastres and the Réflexions have been misattributed to Descourtilz and Barbé-Marbois, respectively, and that both were the work of an obscure émigré planter. Geggus, “Print Culture and the Haitian Revolution,” 301-302, including fn.
39Ibid., 13-14.
accompanying greed, luxury, and corruption of morals.\textsuperscript{40} The French settlers in Saint Domingue, beginning with the swashbuckling \textit{filibustiers} of the 17\textsuperscript{th} century, were presented in some respects as the successors of Columbus’ intrepid genius. Nonetheless, it was an ambivalent legacy to which they lay claim. The \textit{Réflexions}’ author was jealous of the interests of the white colonists and contemptuous of their “calumniators,” but, like many of their apologists, also reformist with regard to slavery and the slave trade. The \textit{Réflexions} encompassed themes that would haunt contemporary French planter writers and their sense of their own history—pride at the “flourishing” of the colonies under the Old Regime, but also a sense that their position as Columbus’ heirs had entrapped them in perilous circumstances not of their making.

\textit{Moreau St. Méry’s Backward Glance}

The process of historicizing Saint Domingue’s hour of crisis thus encompassed competing narrations of recent revolutionary events as well as the use of the more distant past to define the nature of the colonial regime. Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry’s \textit{Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie françaıse de l’isle Saint-Domingue}—perhaps the single most influential text on colonial affairs in French of the revolutionary era—demonstrated the drive by colonial authors, especially émigré planters, to take charge of both projects. However, the massive \textit{Description} was not a history of the revolutionary period at all—not directly, at least. Indeed, most of Moreau’s text already existed in manuscript form by the late 1780’s.\textsuperscript{41} However, by publishing the first volume of the \textit{Description} while in exile in Philadelphia in 1797, Moreau self-consciously made an

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} Geggus, “British Occupation of Saint Domingue,” 382
intervention into the colonial politics of the moment. Moreau’s work was an exhaustive guide to Saint Domingue as it had been. Its relation of events and conditions in the colony stopped abruptly on October 18, 1789, just as word of the early stages of the French Revolution was percolating through the colony. This perspective from a historical precipice was deliberate: “It is…the only way to appreciate the value of the loss that we will have suffered,” Moreau argued in his discours préliminaire. “If there are means of repairing it, nothing is suitable for suggesting it as these very details…we can even judge by the gradual progress which had led it to the degree of utility to which it had reached at the time of the revolution, what we have a reasonable right to hope for in the future.” Moreau had produced a thousand-page historical monument to the colonial Old Regime, which might serve as a benchmark for a program of restoration.

No-one could accuse him of having skimped on the details. The Description is widely known by latter-day scholars as a “milestone in Enlightenment racial theory,” due to its elaborate tables of dozens of “nuances of the skin” between white and black. However, Moreau’s racial typology, remarkable in its own right, is only a small portion of the kaleidoscope of colonial life that the Description presents. The book provided an extensive description of Saint Domingue’s demography, overviews of the island’s weather and climate, infectious disease, and reflections on the character of its inhabitants. Proceeding methodically through each of the colony’s parishes, it blended statistical data with a rich tapestry of anecdotes, from a planter who brought African camels to live on his estate to an ex-slave and soldier who

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42 Moreau, Description, vi-vii.
44 Moreau, Description, 89.
reportedly lived to the age of 120. Moreau’s accounts of the island’s towns like Cap Français—long since burned by the time of publication—provide such a minute account of urban geography and landmarks that they very nearly proceed street by street. One might imagine that the vast majority of Moreau’s readers never read the book from cover to cover. Even as a reference work, however, the effect is that of an entire world preserved a print—a world in the process of disintegration, but, for Moreau, one that might yet be recovered.

The *Description* was the work of a colonial *patriote*—in both senses of the word. Moreau was a double-exile—he fled the metropole in 1793 hoping to return to Saint Domingue, where he had spent much of his career, but was instead shunted to the United States by the chaotic conditions in the colony. His work demonstrates, as well as any contemporary intellectual’s, the practical compatibility between the revolutionary spirit in one hemisphere and the defense of privilege in another. As de-facto leader of the municipal government of Paris in July 1789, he was proud to have taken possession of the keys of the Bastille, even as he was also one of the principal leaders of the pro-slavery *Club Massiac*. He was a partisan of the old order in Saint Domingue. Moreau aimed to show “what the French genius has created two thousand miles away from the metropole…with a superiority that leaves behind far behind what all other nations have similarly undertaken.” From the portrait of Saint Domingue as it had been, Moreau hoped to established to importance of the colonies and the slave system for France’s future prosperity as a “mathematical truth.”

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45Ibid., 146, 224.  
46Ibid., 293.  
48Moreau, *Description*, v.  
49Ibid.
ideology as such, nor even an affirmation of racial hierarchy, essential as the latter was to Moreau’s thinking. Rather, the notion of utilité—a word Moreau uses dozens of times throughout the book, both as standard for judging the colony’s progress and as a description of his own literary project (he had, he said, “no other interest than the usefulness of my country,”)\textsuperscript{50}—appears as the ultimate vindication of the colonial project. In this sense the \textit{Description} was very much in the mainstream of the Old Regime colonial discourse in which it had originally been written, but it assumed a new revanchist edge in light of the transformations overtaking Saint Domingue. As Moreau’s melancholic recollection of the “gradual progress” of the old order suggests, the Haitian Revolution had, in assailing white supremacy, also disrupted many of the specifically progressive visions by which colonial thinkers had sought to both critique and justify their societies over the course of several decades.

The \textit{Description} may have had its roots and its subject matter in the colonial Old Regime, but its publication and circulation were the product of the newly internationalized conditions of exile. Like the book’s predecessor and companion, the \textit{Description topographique et politique de la Partie Espagnole de l’Isle Saint-Domingue}, it was published in Philadelphia, where Moreau operated a printing press and book shop, with the help of dozens of subscribers that included both French colonists and prominent Americans.\textsuperscript{51} The British radical and journalist William Cobbett, himself living in Philadelphia during the same period, translated both works into English, and the two men corresponded extensively.\textsuperscript{52} Cobbett, who was producing his own anti-

\textsuperscript{50}Ibid., viii


\textsuperscript{52}Fumagalli, “Landscaping Hispaniola,” 171.
Jacobin polemics at the time, had been drawn into French literary circles by working as an
English tutor for émigrés. Moreau’s Philadelphia shop became a hub of the exile community,
which helped to ensure the rapid spread of his works. The latter Description was shortly
published in both London and Paris in 1797. This was an indication of the relative political
opening for colonial émigrés under the Directory, as well as the continued relevance of their
ideas even in exile.

The circulation of both texts and people helped to reinforce this influence. Talleyrand
took 200 copies of the Description de la Partie espagnole with him when he returned to France
from the United States in 1796. He had grown close to Moreau during a sojourn in Philadelphia
as he had to Malouet during a previous stay in London, and Talleyrand subsequently became a
conduit for colon influence in France that had been partially suppressed. Talleyrand’s
presentation on colonialism before the Institut National in 1797 was widely acclaimed and
helped to reinvigorate interest in the subject. His personal patronage, meanwhile, would
facilitate the reintegration of colonial exiles into the French elite under the consulate and
directoire, Moreau, for instance, eventually became the official historian of the Ministry of the
Marine and Colonies. As noted in Chapter 1, however, Moreau’s return to France nearly
resulted in his arrest under the emigration laws. It was precisely this unsettled position of the
colonial emigration and the French colonial project more broadly that made Moreau’s portrait of

      Magazine of History and Biography 59, No. 3 (July 1935), 225-227.
54 Moreau, Description, iii.
55 Stewart L. Mims, “The Diary of a Voyage to the United States, by Moreau de Saint-Mery.,”
      Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society 51, No. 205 (July 1912), 249.
56 Tessie P. Liu, “The Secret beyond White Patriarchal Power: Race, Gender, and Freedom in the
the last days of the old Saint Domingue such a potent intervention into the intellectual landscape of empire. Moreau spoke for a marginalized elite whose future depended on propagating an agreeable understanding of its past.

*Edwards v. Charmilly: Transimperial Debates in Counterrevolutionary Historiography*

Ambivalent and changeable attitudes toward the French *colons* were not limited to France however. The ongoing war in the West Indies provided a new focus for the intersection of British and French colonial literature and historical debates in particular. In 1797, the same year Moreau’s *Description* appeared, the Jamaican planter and parliamentarian Bryan Edwards’ published *An Historical Survey of the French Colony in the Island of Saint Domingo*, which would become the single most influential work on Saint Domingue in English—not simply of the era, but arguably until at least the 20th century. Mere months later, a response to the *Survey* appeared in the form of the *Lettre à M. Bryan Edwards* by the Dominguan émigré Pierre François Venault de Charmilly. The latter work, though far more obscure, is no less revealing of the shared discursive space occupied by French and British colonial writers, and of the internal tensions of the transimperial alliance between Britain and the counterrevolutionary planters. These tensions came to a head in the ways Edwards and Charmilly respectively sought to interpret the revolution in Saint Domingue and Britain’s place in it.

Edwards’s thoughts on Saint Domingue were guaranteed a hearing by the enthusiastic reception that had greeted *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, first published in 1793. That work had established Edwards’ reputation as a celebrated British colonial historian and the heir to his friend Edward Long. It ultimately appeared in five
English editions and in five foreign translations.\textsuperscript{58} Like Long, Edwards had spent many years in Jamaica as a slaveholder and leveraged that familiarity to establish his authority as a scholar of the region. As Edwards wrote, “Unless an author has had the benefit of actual experience and personal observation, neither genius nor industry can at all times enable him to guard against the mistakes and misrepresentations of prejudiced, ignorant, or interested men.”\textsuperscript{59} Edwards was also, not coincidentally, a reliable defender of the planter interest. William Wilberforce, who cited Edwards liberally when commenting on West Indian affairs, would describe him as “one of the ablest, and most determined enemies of abolition.”\textsuperscript{60}

That said, Edwards did distinguish himself from Long in both methodological and substantive respects. Edwards’ prose was marked by a moderate and dispassionate tone, a quality that did much to recommend him to subsequent generations of professional historians.\textsuperscript{61} Edwards not only avoided Long’s more grotesque denigrations of Africans, but even claimed in an unpublished preface to the 1793 \textit{History} (shared with Long) that he wanted to defend them as a race, at least in relative terms.\textsuperscript{62} Compared to Long, Edwards’ strove harder to reconcile the defense of slavery with humanistic and progressive impulses (though, as noted, Long had his own ameliorative proposals). “The age itself,” Edwards declared in the \textit{History}, “is hourly improving in humanity.”\textsuperscript{63} True to this spirit, Edwards condemned the more extreme cruelties of the slave trade even as he attempted to shift blame for them to metropolitan merchants, and

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\textsuperscript{58}Devin Leigh, “A Disagreeable Text,” 46.
\textsuperscript{60}William Wilberforce, “A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade, Addressed to the Freeholders and Other Inhabitants of Yorkshire,” (London: Hansard and Sons, 1807), 53.
\textsuperscript{61}Devin Leigh, “A Disagreeable Text,” 46.
\textsuperscript{62}Ibid., 60.
\textsuperscript{63}Edwards, \textit{History, Civil and Commercial}, Vol II, 354.
\end{flushright}
proposed an end to the practice of selling slaves to pay off a planter’s debts, among other reforms. Edwards was also notable for his emphasis on social and political history of the colonies in place of the natural history that had played a dominant role in most previous accounts of the West Indies. This, too, had a political aspect, as many contemporary critiques of slavery and planter society were couched within discourses of the supposed natural degeneracy of the Americas—Raynal, for instance, had held that the torrid climate turned Europeans into savages, following and expanding on the climatological theories of the Comte de Bouffon. This line of argument led Edwards in turn to deploy, strangely enough, what seemingly amount to anti-racist defenses of American Indians, taking examples from Columbus’ encounters with indigenous peoples to rebut the idea that “the poor savages” were uniformly unreasoning, physically weak, or incapable of progress. In this manner Edwards obliquely vindicated the American character in general against the speculations of metropolitan theorists, whom he suggested might be motivated by a desire to whitewash the crimes of the Spanish conquest. Lastly, Edwards payed considerable intention to international source material in his research: in his private notes he criticized Long for his lack of attention to Spanish-language sources in the *History of Jamaica*, and he demonstrated at least some familiarity with major texts in Spanish colonial historiography as well as French. These characteristics of Edwards’ work—the nuanced, reformist defense of the slaveholding establishment against their “envious and illiberal” critics, the emphasis on experiential authority, and a certain colonial cosmopolitanism—would inform his approach as an historian to the unfolding crisis in Saint Domingue.

67 Ibid., 66.
68 Ibid., xiii.
Edwards’ history was in many respects a transimperial product. Edwards had witnessed some of the early stages of the revolution in Saint Domingue himself, albeit briefly: he visited the colony in 1791 on a sort of unofficial “fact-finding mission” at the behest of the president of the Dominguan colonial assembly, Paul Cadusch, who was hoping to secure assistance from Jamaica against uprisings by slaves and the gens de couleur. Edwards reported that he began laying the groundwork for the *Historical Survey* shortly after his return, fearing “that the only memorial of this once flourishing colony would soon be found in the records of history.” Edwards’ fame as a historian and his political influence in Jamaica had its advantages: the Dominguan governor, the Vicomte de Blanchelande, gave him access to government papers to use as sources. Edwards also availed himself of French émigré writers to supplement his limited firsthand knowledge of the colony. Two of these in particular are notable for writing in English. Jacques Délaire composed a historical sketch of the early events in Saint Domingo prior to decamping for Charleston, South Carolina, where he became an ardent advocate for the loyalty of the Dominguan exiles to the republic. Later editions of the *Historical Survey* also featured additional material on Saint Domingue’s political and legal structures drawn from the appendix of *The Coffee Planter of Saint Domingo*.

The latter book merits a digression, standing as it does as a remarkable artifact of the interpenetration of French and British colonial texts and discourses. This widely read handbook

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on coffee cultivation and plantation management was published in Jamaica in 1798 by the exile Pierre Joseph Laborie. Unlike Délaire, Laborie aligned himself with the counterrevolution whole-heartedly, and presented his text as act of gratitude to his British hosts. Laborie’s appendix included a historical narrative of the British occupation and administration in Saint Domingue, which he criticized for its rampant corruption and overturning of Old Regime institutions while still hoping for its success (see Chapter 2). In essence, however, the book was a technical manual for slave owners, with dozens of diagrams of everything from refining machinery to the layout of slave quarters. It was, at the same time, a work of nostalgia. “When I wish to describe a period of success, improvement, plenty, and prosperity, I must go back to the year 1788,” Laborie wrote, in a sentiment worthy of Moreau. “A veil must be drawn over the following times.” Laborie’s praise of the “honest planters of St. Domingo” sometime veered into flights of poetry; he also sought to defend the Old Regime administration, citing Adam Smith’s observation that slaves were better treated under absolute monarchies, and defending the treatment of the gens de couleur. However, Laborie’s work was not confined to the backward glance. Like many another planter writer, he detailed an elaborate code of regulations for slave management—more aspirational than descriptive—that he believed would disarm the “slanders” of “those pretended philanthropists, who have usurped the name of friends to negroes, which, in reality, more truly belongs to us.” Laborie thus participated in an amply-represented tradition of colonial anti-humanitarianism that coexisted with the rhetoric of progress and humanity. More apropos to Edwards, however, Laborie’s text demonstrates the anxiety felt by

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75 Ibid., 55.
76 Ibid., 186.
counterrevolutionary colonists attempting to justify themselves and their society to an audience of their British allies. Transimperial solidarity among slaveholders and counterrevolutionaries was both real and unstable.

Edwards’ *Historical Survey* both reflected and, given the prominence of its author, contributed to these same tensions. Although he might approvingly cite Laborie, Edwards levelled many of the criticisms at Dominguan society that the Frenchman was eager to rebut. The *Survey* had several theses, or at least recurring threads of argumentation. One is Edwards’ condemnation of the French and British abolitionists. Here his customary equanimity deserted him: he decried “the pestilent doctrines of those hot-brained fanaticks, and detestable incendiaries, who, under the vile pretence of philanthropy and zeal of the interests of suffering humanity, preach up rebellion and murder to the contented and orderly negroes in our own territories.”77 On this point Edwards was, of course, in agreement with the vast majority of planter historians. Even as Edwards sounded the alarm against revolutionary contagion, however, he offered decidedly critical views on French colonists and on Britain’s military intervention in Saint Domingue. Indeed, one the *Survey*’s secondary arguments is that the British invasion had been induced and sustained by the influence of émigrés who were, if not dishonest, at least overly “sanguine” and “interested.” This influence, Edwards argued, had led Britain to undertake a war which required far greater resources than it was able or willing to commit. It was, in other words, an early modern instance of the prediction “We will be greeted as liberators.” Edwards took a low view of Britain’s counterrevolutionary allies’ contribution to the struggle; though there were some “whose fidelity was above suspicion,” Edwards wrote, “I am afraid but a very

small number were cordially attached to the English.” This dim assessment recurs throughout Edwards’ narrative of the progress of the war: describing a failed attack on the town of Tiburon in 1794, he lamented, “on this occasion, as on almost every other, the English had a melancholy proof how little dependence can be placed on French declarations and assurances.” These assurances, Edwards believed, had only obscured the dismal strategic situation in Saint Domingue. In reality, he concluded, “all hopes and expectations of ultimate success are vanished forever!” British leaders had both overestimated their allies and underestimated republican resistance, which Edwards argued had been effectively impossible to eradicate ever since the commissioners’ abolition of slavery. Saint Domingue was “lost to Europe,” and had been for some time, even if the colonists and the British forces had not realized it.

Alongside Edwards’ dire view of the occupation’s prospects, he also offered more wide-ranging criticisms of French colonial society. Edwards argued that the “machinations of the executive power” had played an important role in destabilizing the colony in the early days of the revolution, and in general portrayed the Old Regime colonial government as despotic. Such compliments as he paid to pre-revolutionary Dominguan society were phrased in Whiggish terms: “All respectability and happiness were not allowed to centre in high birth and connexions. The fruits of commerce and industry had so far blessed the plebeian part of the community, that they enjoyed their wealth without being despised for the want of titles.”

Many French colonists, of course, also resented the former colonial administration and envied the representative institutions enjoyed by their British counterparts. Edwards perceived a clear line of transmission

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78 Ibid., 174-175.
79 Ibid., 178.
80 Ibid., 199.
81 Ibid., 172.
82 Ibid., 326.
of the “principles of liberty” from the American Revolution to France, and afterwards to the French colonies. However, Edwards also argued that aristocratic pretensions among the colons had weakened their common resistance to the revolution’s radicalization:

Many of them, under their ancient government, had belonged to the lower order of noblesse, and being tenacious of titles and honours, in proportion as their pretensions to real distinction were disputable; they dreaded the introduction of a system of laws and government, which would reduce them to the general level of the community. Thus, as their motives were selfish, and their attachment feeble, their exertions in the common cause were not likely to be very strenuous or efficacious.

In effect, Edwards was displacing the suspicion of British planters toward imperial centralization and the political dominance of metropolitan aristocrats to the French Old Regime. Edwards pressed this critique to the point that it undercut the basis of a sustainable partnership between the British and the French planters (a partnership of which he was, at any rate, dubious). He further assailed the treatment of the free colored population, whom he acknowledged “were subjected to the most flagrant injustice and contempt.” Edwards noted with disapproval episodes such as the lynching of a white colonist who had spoken on behalf of free colored rights. He also sympathetically described Vincent Ogé’s rebellion and subsequent execution by breaking on the wheel, commenting “such was his punishment; and his crime was asserting the rights of his people!” Given the lesser social and political weight of free people of color in Jamaica than in Saint Domingue, this was not so radical a claim for Edwards to make as it might seem. It was, however, of a piece with the thoughts of many other British contemporaries that

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86 Ibid., 332.
87 Ibid., 344.
saw the oppression of the *gens de couleur* as a risk to colonial stability (see Chapter 3), a perspective that clashed with the prevailing hostility to that caste on the part of the French planters. Edwards felt that securing the rights of the *gens de couleur* under restored French rule in Saint Domingue would provide the best security for Jamaica and the other British colonies.\(^8^8\)

Given that Edwards’ deemed the British campaign in Saint Domingue a lost cause, what course was left to defenders of plantation society elsewhere if it remained “lost”? Here Edwards made a major concession to the abolitionist lobby. He denied that slave resistance was the product of the “strong and arrestable impulse of human nature, groaning under oppression.“ He attributed it instead to “vile machinations” of the abolitionists. However, he was nonetheless willing to grant that the slave trade had created the conditions for revolution by producing a large imbalance between blacks and whites in Saint Domingue.\(^8^9\) He therefore called on his fellow planters “of themselves to restrain, limit, and finally abolish the further introduction of enslaved men from Africa.”\(^9^0\) For Edwards, gradual abolition of the trade was consistent with the indefinite survival with the “benevolent system” of plantation slavery in the West Indies. Nonetheless, the fact that one of the West Indian interest’s intellectual paladins had come to this conclusion is evidence of the impact of events in Saint Domingue over just a few years. In his 1793 history Edwards had to some extent acknowledged the cruelties of the slave trade, but had attributed them to lax enforcement of regulations.\(^9^1\) Now he had proposed a gradual end to the trade as a means of preserving slavery itself—an act of political triage for a system under threat.

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\(^8^9\) Ibid., 16-17.  
\(^9^0\) Ibid., 226. Edwards’ language here is notably similar to that employed by Edmund Burke in his *Sketch of a Negro Code*, written in 1780 and circulated widely in abolition debates in the latter years of the decade. Burke, unlike, Edwards, viewed his proposed reforms as prefatory to the abolition of slavery itself.  
\(^9^1\) Edwards, *History, Civil and Commercial*..., 164.
Despite his sharp criticisms of the colonial emigres and Dominguian society, Edwards was clearly not insensible to the claims of planter solidarity. His praise of the Earl of Effingham, the Jamaican governor who offered assistance to the Dominguian planters in the early days of the crisis, made that much clear:

Superior to national prejudice, he felt as a man and a Christian ought to feel, for the calamities of fellow men; and he saw, in its full extent, the danger to which every island in West Indies would be exposed from such an example, if the triumph of savage anarchy over all order and government should be complete.92

That a figure like Edwards, inclined by interest and sentiment to the Saint Domingue planters’ cause, could nonetheless offer such a thorough brief against their role in the British occupation was evidence of their precarious position in the waning days of the Saint Domingue campaign. Edwards’ arguments in the Historical Survey demonstrated that, while the perils of revolution might spur the tightening of transimperial ties, the disparate elements of the counterrevolutionary enterprise were not seamless. As with the slave trade, so too with the French planters—a pragmatic planter apologist like Edwards was willing to cut losses. Moreover, Edwards’ historical work—and its subsequent reception, as will be seen—show that discourses of progressive reform and humane sentiment helped to define these fault lines within the pro-slavery and counterrevolutionary camp, not merely between counterrevolutionaries and their abolitionist and republican opponents. Such meliorist notions were enlisted by planter historians not merely to justify slavery, but to shape competing arguments about how slave-based society could be maintained in a revolutionary age.

It was inevitable that British-aligned colonial émigrés would take exception to the Historical Survey. One of the most prominent colonial intellectuals in the British Empire had

92Edwards, Historical Survey (1803), 5.
substantially blamed them for the quagmire in Saint Domingue, made biting criticisms of their society, and rejected as fruitless an intervention that many of them still held hope-against-hope would restore their fortunes. Likewise, it was unsurprising that that Charmilly would pen the response. He was the most Anglophilic of all the prominent colonial émigrés, having spent his youth in England before becoming a planter in Saint Domingue.93 “I have cherished all my life the laws, the constitution, and the advantages I came to know in all my travels there,” he wrote in February 1793.94 One of the Léopardin95 deputies aligned with autonomist agenda, he had been among the earliest, and certainly the most enthusiastic, advocates for British intervention in Saint Domingue. He lobbied for it in London as early as 1791, even before his subsequent exile from France, and played an important role in the negotiations surrounding the Treaty of Whitehall in late 1792 and early 1793. He had sailed for Jamaica shortly after the signing of the Treaty to press for an immediate British invasion and rally support from exiles there—though with no real plan or forces at his disposal—and was one of the first émigrés to return to Saint Domingue under the British colors later that year.96 As this history suggests, Charmilly was enterprising, mercurial, and something of a hot-head. He was not always trusted by the British ministers or his fellow émigrés. But few had worked as indefatigably to promote the Anglo-planter alliance in

95 The Léopard was the vessel that carried 85 representatives from the self-proclaimed colonial assembly at Saint-Marc in the North Province of Saint Domingue to the metropole in August 1790.
96 Pierre Victor Malouet, “Observations sur l’état actuel des choses a Saint Domingue,” WO 1/58, 557-563; Charles Frostin, “L'intervention britannique à Saint-Domingue en 1793” 323-325. Charmilly would also be one of the few prominent émigrés (and even fewer among the colonials) to remain in Britain after 1802. He was later involved in a somewhat obscure controversy over his conduct in the Peninsular Campaign against Napoleon.
Saint Domingue. “England alone,” he had written to William Pitt in 1791, “can today prevent the ruin of the most beautiful colony in the world.” Six years later, Charmilly still clung to that belief, and Edwards’ *Historical Survey* was consequently a personal and political affront.

The result was a strange riposte. Contrary to what its title might suggest, the *Lettre à M. Bryan Edwards* was a substantial work running to well over two hundred pages. Though published in London, it was an untranslated French text, perhaps a result of Charmilly’s haste to bring the tract to the public a mere four months after the *Historical Survey* appeared. It was neither thorough-composed nor arranged by chapter: instead, Charmilly organized the text as a series of responses to particular extracts of Edwards’ book, listed under headings by the original page number. These objections were clustered thematically, meaning that they jumped back and forth chronologically and in relation to different parts of the *Historical Survey*. Despite this ungainly presentation, however, Charmilly’s attack on the *Historical Survey* was so extensive and wide-ranging that it created a sort of negative image of Edwards’ work and an alternative work of history in its own right.

Charmilly presented the letter in part as a response to a slight to his honor: Edwards had only mentioned Charmilly twice in passing, and only once in a manner that could be construed as unfavorable, observing (falsely, according to Charmilly) that the Frenchman held property at Jéremie, where he joined the first British landings in Saint Domingue. Charmilly, however, noting that he had been made aware of the mention by unspecified friends he shared with Edwards in London, claimed to be “astonished at the manner in which you introduced my name

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97 Charmilly to Pitt, November 23, 1791, cited in Frostin, “L’Intervention britannique,” 324
in your work.” His wider objection was to the “malice with which you speak of those who recommended to the ministers of Great Britain one of the greatest and most useful operations of the current war.” Charmilly aimed to vindicate the colonial émigrés in the British camp—himself first and foremost—as well as the war effort in Saint Domingue. In the service of that project, however, he subjected Edwards’ interpretation of virtually all matters colonial to withering scrutiny, even on subjects on which the two men largely agreed.

This approach says something of Charmilly’s personality, but also reflects his imperative to dismantle the edifice of scholarly and eyewitness authority that Britain’s foremost colonial historian had constructed for himself. Charmilly began the work with an autobiography in miniature, sketching his long familiarity with the colony along with his involvement in the intervention. With characteristic modesty, he presented himself as a “proprietor much-instructed in everything regarding Saint Domingue.” By contrast, Edwards had only spent a few weeks in the colony, and had not travelled widely there, facts that Charmilly contended Edwards had deliberately downplayed. Aside from derogating Edwards’ direct experience of the colony, Charmilly also sought to undermine the local sources that the Englishman had relied on, which sometimes meant criticizing other prominent counterrevolutionaries. For instance, Charmilly argued that Edwards’ host Paul Cadusch had diminished credibility because of his factionalism in the early days of the Revolution. Just as Edwards, and Long before him, had done to the metropolitan critics of plantation society, Charmilly aimed to do to Edwards, by undermining his claims to intimate familiarity with Saint Domingue and asserting his own. “You made use of false documents…you have no knowledge of St. Domingue,” he complained. Charmilly, with his

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99 Ibid., 1.
100 Ibid., 6-7.
101 Ibid., 10.
superior expertise, would “prove to you that a prediction made in England by your fireside will not come true.”

Charmilly’s attempt to dislodge Edwards as an authority on Saint Domingue went far beyond the question of personal experience: he attacked virtually every part of Edwards’ text, concerning matters as diverse the topography of the island and Spanish colonial historiography. The former was not a merely academic concern, since Saint Domingue’s mountainous interior was portrayed by Edwards (among others) as an impenetrable fortress for the black rebels. Charmilly ridiculed Edwards’ notion that the former slaves had founded a “savage republic,” in these remote fastnesses, since, in his view, they knew “only one kind of government, one founded on complete submission.” This exchange underscores a divide within the proslavery camp on the seriousness with which treat enslaved resistance: though, in reality, the two men’s attitudes toward Africans were not radically different, Charmilly sought to downplay the difficulty of subduing Saint Domingue. This was, in some respects, a paradoxical position for him to take, since he also argued that Edwards’ dovish position on the British intervention threatened the rest of the Caribbean. If Saint Domingue were lost, Charmilly declared, “I predict that all the Colonies of the West Indies will be fully and promptly completely ruined and annihilated.” This blend of optimism and catastrophism was central to Charmilly’s argument for sustaining the British presence in Saint Domingue.

In historical terms, Charmilly’s chief grievance with Edwards was of course his portrayal of the planter émigrés and their role in the Saint Domingue campaign. Edwards, he said, had

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102 Ibid., 191.
103 Ibid., 98; see also 204 for topographical quibbles by Charmilly.
104 Ibid., 218.
“forgotten the sacred duties of a historian” by slandering the colonists. Charmilly passionately denounced Edwards’ claim that the planters had not proven their loyalty to Britain. The émigrés had not exaggerated the pro-British sentiment in the colony; rather, the colonists had all been in favor of British assistance aside from “rascals” and the “associated barbarians of the Amis des Noirs.” Like Edwards, Charmilly blamed the importation of revolutionary ideology for the slave uprising, though he went further to argue that the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man was itself the “true principle of the misfortunes of the colonies.” He contended that the metropolitan Jacobins had sought to destroy the French colonies because of the strong interests of the French aristocracy there. Despite his contempt for the “abstractions” and “pretended natural equality” of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, Charmilly was not a reactionary monarchist in philosophical terms, any more than Edwards was. Indeed, some of Charmilly’s justifications for resistance to metropolitan authority had the ring of American revolutionary language about them. The colonists, he had written to Prime Minister Pitt, had the “right to choose the government that seemed most advantageous to them,” and thus the right to declare independence or accept British protection. What distinguished Edwards and Charmilly was less a matter of first principles than of political positioning. Edwards’ Whiggish defense of British plantation society against metropolitan interference coexisted with an often-unfavorable view of the French aristocracy and colonial Old Regime. Charmilly, despite his own enthusiasm for British constitutionalism and its commercial society, was a Saint Domingue planter directly

105 Ibid., 6.
106 Ibid., 102-105.
107 Ibid., 8.
108 Ibid., 49.
109 Ibid., 50.
implicated in Edwards’ criticisms; moreover, he was attempting to hold together the fissile transimperial coalition in Saint Domingue, which those criticisms could only serve to destabilize.

The Anglophile Charmilly instead found himself in the role of a patriotic hardliner defending French colonists and colonial institutions as a whole against Edwards. He defended the Old Regime colonial administration against Edwards’ charges of tyranny; he likewise favorably compared French planters’ industriousness and treatment of slaves to that of their British counterparts.\textsuperscript{111} Attempting to reverse the charge of “interestedness” that Edwards had levelled at the Dominguan émigrés, he contended that Edwards hoped to see Saint Domingue’s sugar production suppressed in order to benefit Jamaica.\textsuperscript{112} Charmilly also felt the need to respond to Edwards’ repetition of gruesome tales of widespread mortality from disease in Saint Domingue. The fact that the British had lost far more men to fevers than to revolutionary bullets was a recurring point in criticisms of the intervention; Edmund Burke declared in \textit{Letters on a Regicide Peace} that “it was not an enemy we had to vanquish but a cemetery to conquer.”\textsuperscript{113} As Burke’s comment suggests, the very real toll of sickness lent itself to narratives that stressed natural obstacles to counterrevolution in Saint Domingue, rather than human ones, i.e., black political and military agency. Charmilly, however, seeking to dispel the notion of the intervention as a quagmire, alleged that the dreaded yellow fever had been introduced into the colony by the British themselves. He further claimed that French doctors treated the disease with superior and “less violent methods.”\textsuperscript{114} Charmilly’s ripostes to Edwards in these passages sometimes struck an almost chauvinistic tone. This aggrieved edge reflected the internal tensions

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{111} Charmilly, \textit{Lettre à M. Bryan Edwards}, 39-46, 79-82.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 84.
\textsuperscript{114} Charmilly, \textit{Lettre à M. Bryan Edwards}, 157.
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in his political and literary project: Charmilly sought at one and the same time to vindicate his own colonial compatriots and to present the Saint Domingue expedition as a joint project necessary for the survival of the European colonial system.

This dynamic is especially evident in Charmilly’s extensive attempts to rebut Edwards on the subject of the *gens de couleur*. The only real difference in personal rights between the free men of color and white under the Old Regime, he asserted, were the former’s liability for military service. “The men of color are as free there as the whites,” Charmilly claimed, and had been “happy and protected” until stirred by revolutionary agitation.\(^{115}\) His defense of their political and social subordination rested on pragmatic political grounds rather than any racialist assessment of their innate qualities. Such color barriers as existed in Saint Domingue, Charmilly argued, were a product of the essential role of slavery in colonial life. As such, they were part of the “foundation of our social contract.” Addressing metropolitan Frenchmen, he declared, again in somewhat Jeffersonian language, that they had no right to “judge what maintains our property and preserves our existence and that of our families…. if by necessity, therefore, we cease to be the same people, we cease to be your fellow citizens, we cease to be part of your empire, you separate from us, you break all the ties that unite us to you.”\(^{116}\) Charmilly thus appealed to the common language of contractarianism to present Edwards’ criticisms of the Dominguan color line as aligned with the radical metropolitan assault on colonial autonomy. Aside from defending French racial laws, Charmilly also more generally tried to counter what he perceived as Edwards’ bias toward the *gens de couleur*. While Edwards had complimented in passing the talents of several free-colored counterrevolutionaries such as Jean-Baptiste Lapointe and Charles

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\(^{115}\) Ibid. 25-36.

\(^{116}\) Ibid., 33.
Savory. Charmilly preferred to heap praise on Jean Kina: “Show me among the mulattoes a man who can be compared to him, and who is as generous, as honest, as brave a man.” Less than prophetically, Charmilly claimed that “he and his soldiers will always be loyal to the whites.” Kina’s image as a faithful slave was more flattering to Saint Domingue’s white planter establishment than was the prominent position of freeborn colored men like Lapointe, even if they fought on the same side.

Charmilly likewise took a hard line against Edwards’ reformist musings on the slave trade. Most of his defenses of the trade—as preferable to the “absurd despotism” of Africa, as a necessity to planters, as impossible to eradicate—were common enough among his contemporaries. More interesting from a historian’s perspective was his disagreement with Edwards on the impact of the slave trade on slave rebellion, a subject still debated in modern historiography of the Haitian Revolution. In Charmilly’s account, it was in fact the Creole slaves that were the first to revolt, while the more Africanized areas of Saint Domingue’s were slower to join the insurgency. The former had been “seduced by the cruel envoys who wished to see blood flow,” i.e., the French abolitionists. Charmilly sought to present Edwards as insufficiently committed to his own anti-abolitionist program, since Edwards had been willing to concede some role for the slave trade in promoting slave resistance. At the same time, Charmilly himself proposed ameliorative measures for the trade along the same lines as many other colonial writers—here, as in much else, the gulf between the two men was in reality not vast. Edwards’ proposal to gradually halt the trade, however, had been offered as a measure for the security of

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117 Edwards, An Historical Survey (1803), 175fn.
118 Charmilly, Lettre à M. Bryan Edwards, 112; Note that Edwards himself observed that Kina, whom he referred to as a “black general,” had “served well and faithfully.”
119 Ibid. 220-221.
120 Ibid. 14.
the British colonies. In attacking Edwards on this point, Charmilly sought not only to discredit him by linking him to abolitionists, but to reinforce the contention that only a united front against revolution in Saint Domingue could guarantee the survival of the colonial system.

The more distant colonial history of Hispaniola was another area where Charmilly shared many of Edwards’ premises as a historian even as he sought to refute him. Both men held the conventional view of Enlightenment writers of the Spanish Empire as bastion of tyranny and obscurantism, both past and present. Edwards in *The Historical Survey* condemned the “restless and remorseless bigotry of the Spanish nation” in their treatment of the island’s indigenous peoples. 121 Charmilly would hardly be expected to reject this characterization; in 1791 he had even proposed that the “enlightened and philosophical nation” of Britain and the French colonists could together conquer the Latin American territories “groaning for three centuries under the cruel yoke of Spain.” 122 Charmilly’s response in the letter to Edwards was “far from approving the barbarities of the Spaniards” and he described their conquest as a “crime.” At the same time, however, on multiple fronts he took issue with the extent of Edwards’ traffic in the *Leyenda Negra*. One was the question of the scale of the depopulation caused by the Spanish conquest—another historiographical debate still active today. Charmilly argued that Edwards’ proffered figure of a million deaths caused by the Spanish in Hispaniola was an absurdly inflated figure. To prove it, he provided a detailed account of Caribbean agriculture, fishing, disease, population density, and what modern ecologists would describe as carrying capacity, concluding that there were no more than 300,000 inhabitants when the Spaniards arrived. 123

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anticlerical clichés against Edwards, Charmilly declared that the Englishman had fallen into the “monkish superstition and ignorance of the first writers on the colonies of the Antilles.” Edwards, he said, had followed unreliable sources such as the 16th century historian Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés. Part of Charmilly’s object in this disquisition was simply to undermine Edwards’ appearance of reliability as a historian and burnish his own credentials. Yet the dispute was not entirely antiquarian in nature; Charmilly also suggested that Edwards’ bias against the Spaniards had present implications. Commenting on Edwards’ narrative of the 17th-century conflict between the Spanish and the filibustiers, he wrote:

I approve and admire the courage of the Filibustiers who attacked them; but I do not grant them, like you, sir, that it was a right of justice. It is not appropriate for a philanthropic historian to put law into force. The Spaniards were masters of the Antilles by a crime: I grant it; but the Filibustiers, who attacked them there with so much bravery, were not avengers born of the Caribbean or the Indians of those countries, and the defense of the Spaniards against those who attacked them was legitimate. A historian must not, by his reflections, establish false principles in a century and in a time when it was their falsehood that brought Europe to the moment of its general upheaval and loss.

Charmilly here heavily implied that Edwards’ imposition of contemporary moral judgements on the Spanish colonialism of yesteryear was an analogue of the radical “philanthropic” attack on slavery. Much as Charmilly claimed that a lower death toll did not diminish the crimes committed by Spain, he was still eager to make some relativist concessions to their historical memory, since he perceived that opponents of the contemporary colonial system might conflate it with the “barbarities of the Spaniards” and cast revolutionary slaves as the “avengers of the

124 Charmilly, Lettre à M. Bryan Edwards, 199-203.
125 Ibid., 71.
New World,” as Dessalines would famously do after the 1804 massacres. Edwards’ sympathy for the *filibustiers*—Frenchmen though they were—as a sort of providential comeuppance for Spanish atrocities struck too close to home for Charmilly. The conquistadors were men of their time and place; so too, the planters.

Despite the lack of an English translation, Charmilly’s *Letter* was widely-read enough for reviews to appear in a number of prominent periodicals in the Britain, but the overall reception was tepid at best. The sheer pique of Charmilly’s attack on Edwards, in a literary culture that valued a gentlemanly winsomeness of style, was a major drawback to its persuasive power. The *Monthly Review* complained of “such an excess of rancour and scurrility as, happily for us, has rarely disgraced English literature in modern times.” The tract did have its admirers, particularly among other émigrés that were fighting for a continued British presence in Saint Domingue. Jean-Gabriel Peltier’s *Paris pendant l’année* (which, confusingly, was printed in Piccadilly Square) published an enthusiastic three-part review, which dwelt approvingly on Charmilly’s defense of the slave trade and on his depiction of the racial character of Africans.

The *Lettre à M. Bryan Edwards* was part of a desperate burst of pro-occupation émigré writings aimed not only against British critics like Edwards, but also other pro-slavery émigrés like Malouet who were willing to consider a negotiated handover of the colony to France. Despite the dire warnings of Charmilly and his confreres, however, British troops withdrew from Saint

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126 Dessalines’ remark, which Laurent Dubois more recently adopted into the title of his seminal *Avengers of the New World*, was “I have avenged America.”
128 *Paris pendant l’année* 129 (25 August 1797) 543-8; 137 (5 Oct. 1797), 341-8; 138 (10 Oct. 1797), 397-402.
129 Burrows 168-176. Peltier, oddly enough, would go on to act as an agent for the Haitian king Henri Christophe, and became an abolitionist under the Restoration.
Domingue in 1798, less than a year after it was published. The subsequent failure of the rest of the colonial Caribbean to fall to revolution, as Charmilly’s “domino theory” had supposed, naturally colored the Letter’s further reception. As an 1800 review in Tobias Smollett’s *Critical Review* wryly observed, “We know that St. Domingo has been abandoned, and that Jamaica is not in danger. Events therefore favour the opinion of Mr. Edwards; and it is probably for this reason that he has not thought it necessary to answer the present prolix epistle.”

Despite the wreckage of Charmilly’s immediate political goals and his failure to knock Edwards off his perch as the premier British colonial historian, the impact of the *Lettre à M. Bryan Edwards* was not as ephemeral as this might suggest. Charmilly’s dark predictions of what would follow a British withdrawal still had some currency with hawkish commentators dissatisfied with the Peace of Amiens and later with the British war effort against Napoleon. Moreau Saint-Méry’s old translator William Cobbett, for example, endorsed Charmilly’s warnings of the dangers to Jamaica and the other colonies in an 1802 article in his *Weekly Political Register*, noting that “subsequent events” had proved Charmilly “to possess an accurate knowledge of everything relating to the West Indies.” Charles Chalmers 1803 *Remarks on the Late War in St. Domingo* approvingly cited Charmilly while relitigating the British withdrawal, which Chalmers argued had been a mistake. Chalmers rejected Edwards’ belief that the intervention had doomed by the “the magnitude of the object, the considerable Republican force, and the lukewarm attachment of the inhabitants who invoked the British protection,” attributing the failure to more contingent military and political mistakes. Despite the end of the Anglo-

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131 *Cobbett’s Weekly Political Register* Vol 2. No. 1, July 10, 1802, 786.
133 Ibid., 99.
émigré alliance in Saint Domingue, the influence of émigrés was still felt, and discontents of British imperial policy found Charmilly useful as an authoritative source for their arguments.

The central divide that had existed between Edwards and Charmilly remained: whether to respond to the grave challenges facing colonial slave society with a full-spectrum counterattack or with a policy of retrenchment. In broad strokes, the two men agreed on the origins and character of the Haitian Revolution, but Saint Domingue’s history—and the struggle over the right to relate it—became a means for litigating unresolved strategic and moral questions at the heart of the transimperial counterrevolutionary enterprise.

Jean-Félix Carteau and the Reintegration of the Planters in the Napoleonic Era

By the dawn of the new century, colonial politics and, consequently, colonial historical writing had entered a new phase. The Constitution of Year VIII, in the aftermath of the coup of 18th Brumaire, declared that the colonies would be governed by “special laws,” a clear sign that the political winds were shifting—though it did not specify what those laws would be. The First Consul’s wife, Josephine de Beauharnais, was a Martinican creole from a planter family, a fact many colonial émigrés sought to exploit for patronage, relief, or political leverage. The gradual relaxation of emigration laws in the latter years of the Directory, culminating in the general amnesty offered for most remaining émigrés by the Consulate in April 1802, induced many exiles to return to French territory, either in the colonies or the metropole. The British withdrawal from Saint Domingue in 1798, the Peace of Amiens in 1802, and the subsequent attempt to reassert metropolitan control in the Antilles all meant that it was now France rather

than Britain that offered planters the best hope of restoration of their property and position. As noted, many colonial émigrés and their allies obtained prominent roles under the Consulate and Empire. However, these developments did not mean that the place of the planters in French politics and society was secure or uncontested. The conservative turn in French politics resulted in the reintegration of many colonists’ voices into mainstream French political discourse. Nonetheless, many of them still found their position precarious, and saw the need both to rehabilitate themselves as a class and to exert what influence they could on the direction of French colonial policy. French overseas empire stood at a crossroads, both in the period immediately surrounding the Leclerc expedition to Saint Domingue and, in a different way, in the decade after its failure, during which colonial debates were more subdued. Even after the Napoleonic rollback of slave emancipation, planter authors still found themselves engaged in debates with radicals and with one another over slavery, race, and the relationship between metropole and colony. They attempted, in many cases, to define the French colonial project in relation to Britain, France’s once-and-future enemy with which many colonists had an inconvenient history of collaboration. Increasingly, colonial writers also reflected on the fundamental underpinnings and justifications of colonization as such.

While most colonial authors were invested in the restoration of French control over Saint Domingue and in the reconstitution of its plantation economy, there was no univocal discourse of reaction: they were divided among themselves about the form that the project of restoration would take. Particularly in the early years of this period, many writers hewed to a moderate line. M. J. La Neuville’s *Dernier cri de Saint-Domingue*, published in Philadelphia in 1800, narrated the revolution in the colony as a horrific catastrophe. At the same time, Neuville deemed slavery “an excellent system in its time, but counterproductive, dangerous, and inapplicable in another
era unless it is modified.” François Page, the former Dominguan planter and longtime enemy of Sonthonax, argued against reversing emancipation on strategic grounds in his 1801 *Traité d’économie politique*, believing that Toussaint’s armies of freedmen would resist it and that they would be better used instead for offensive campaigns elsewhere in the Americas. However, the dominant view within French colonial debates coalesced by 1802 into support for re-enslavement, white supremacy, and the old trade policy of the *exclusif*, in what Baptiste Biancardini calls a “theoretical restoration” that marked the end of the first period of French abolitionist advances.

The degree to which this climate of opinion was a cause, rather than a consequence, of Napoleon’s decision to invade Saint Domingue and restore slavery in the Antilles is disputed. Phillipe Girard argues that the First Consul took relatively little notice of planter polemics, many of which were published after the decision to launch the Leclerc expedition had already been made. In any case, comparative hardliners on colonial issues clearly enjoyed an ascendancy. Malouet’s essays on colonial administration were published by Raynal in 1802. Baudry des Lozières, who was Moreau Saint-Méry’s brother-in-law and had run a grocery while exiled in Philadelphia, railed against the abolitionists in his *Histoire de la Louisiane* and *Les égarements du nigrophilisme*, both released the same year. In the former book, a product of the author’s

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North American travels, Lozières sought to acquaint his readers with the history of the territory recently annexed from Spain, in order to promote investment in further colonial development, particularly sugar cultivation. Like The Coffee Planter of Saint Domingo, the Histoire de la Louisiane was a both a result of the exile experience and a literary marker of the regional economic changes accompanying the colonial revolutions. Meanwhile, Jean Barré de Saint-Venant—a friend of both Moreau and Lozières and a fellow member of the Cercle des Philadelphes, a colonial intellectual society in Saint Domingue—expounded the climatological case for slavery at length in his Des colonies modernes sous la zone torride. The crux of Saint-Venant’s case was that inhabitants of cold climates were “slaves of [their] needs,” while civilization in the tropics required forced labor. This was a familiar argument by the turn of the 19th century, but one Saint-Venant made systematically and in the context of a progressive developmental vision. “I am not an apologist for slavery, but for work,” he proclaimed, “without which there is neither production, nor population, nor strength, nor riches…nor any means to bring to perfection the intelligence of men.”

Pro-slavery apologetics remained, as ever, tightly bound to the language of utility and improvement, which was itself closely linked with racialized concerns about labor, efficiency, and productivity.

In terms of historical writing on Saint Domingue, perhaps no author’s career better captures these trends of Napoleonic colonial discourse than that of Jean-Félix Carteau—this, despite the fact that Carteau was in some respects atypical as a historian. Less widely read than Moreau, and less politically prominent than Charmilly, Carteau nonetheless delivered as vivid a portrayal of individual experience of revolution and exile as any French colonial writer. Critical

of both Jacobinsm and counterrevolution, blending fictional elements with memoir, scholarship, and poetry, Carteau’s work reflected many of the characteristic planter perspectives on the colonial crisis while departing from it in key respects. In Carteau one finds an exemplar of the transimperial considerations that continued to shape colonial debates even after the political salience of the Anglo-émigré alliance had abated, as well as the coexistence of an anti-emancipation agenda with deep reservations about the European colonial project as a whole.

Not much is known of Carteau’s life aside from the scant details he provided his readers. Nonetheless, in a genre where eyewitness accounts were at a premium, Carteau had considerable material to work with: he witnessed the unfolding of the revolution in Saint Domingue from its early stages until he fled the colony in the autumn of 1793. His journey from the colony to the metropole is of interest both in terms of its impact on his work and as a broader illustration of the colonial exile experience.

By his own account, Carteau’s family left Saint Domingue in the summer of 1792, when he was in his late twenties, but he stayed behind to defend his plantation, remain among the “Negros who had remained faithful to me,” and to “collect the profit of their labor” in order to ensure his family’s needs later. He saw the gradual deterioration of the slave regime amid guerilla fighting, disease outbreaks, and famine; as a militiaman he was present in July 1793 at the capture of Saint Domingue’s capital of Cap Français by black revolutionaries aligned with the republican commissioners. After the commissioner’s decree of general emancipation some weeks later, he decided to leave. In October he boarded a neutral Ragusan ship in Le Cap’s

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142 Carteau, Soirées Bermudienes, ou Entretiens sur ses événemens qui ont opéré la ruine de la partie Française de l’île Saint-Domingue (Bordeaux: Pellier Lawalle, 1802), 2; Carteau mentions in the preface that he was 36 in 1802 (or perhaps 1800; it is unclear when the preface was originally composed).

143 From Ragusa, i.e., modern Dubrovnik, then an independent merchant republic.
devastated harbor. The vessel was promptly seized by a British naval vessel or privateer—possibly with the connivance of the Ragusans, Carteau suggested—and taken to Bermuda, where the cargo was confiscated. Carteau spent four months stranded in Bermuda, where he claimed he first began to write an account of events in Saint Domingue. In March of 1794 he was at last able to leave for France, arriving two months later in the midst of the Terror. He and his fellow refugees spent five days at anchor at the port of Hyères, under the watchful eye of National Guards, before they were given permission to disembark.¹⁴⁴

Once on land, he claimed to have found a hostile reception from metropolitan French of all backgrounds. The “caluminators” of the planters, he reported, “had infected with their venom all classes of society: domestics, peasants, workers, all the way to day-laborers in the fields… We were, in their minds, worse than cannibals; imagining that we mutilated, skinned, and massacred our slaves, for pleasure.” He met with people abstaining from coffee, “touched by the unhappy lot of the slaves, imagining that they swallowed their blood and sweat in this sugary beverage.” Others accused the planters of having fomented the slave uprising themselves in order to hand over the colony to Britain. “You yourselves are the cause of your misfortunes,” he was told.¹⁴⁵ Despite his alarm at the prevalence of this “very pronounced hatred” of the colons, Carteau perceived it “was not the moment to reply. The guillotines were placed in the public squares.”¹⁴⁶ His manuscript remained an unfinished sketch.

¹⁴⁴Jean-Félix Carteau, Soirees Bermudiennes, xxi-xxvi.
¹⁴⁵Ibid., xxvi-xxvii.
¹⁴⁶Ibid., xxi-xxii.
By 1802, however, the climate had shifted: “the political horizon of France is becoming clear,” Carteau wrote, and he hoped that the First Consul would “present a helping hand to the weak remnants of the unfortunate colonists.” Despite the waning of abolitionist and anti-planter sentiment, however, Carteau believed that they were still influential and had to be confronted in debates surrounding colonial management and a possible restoration in Saint Domingue. Carteau’s avowed project as a historian was quite conventional in conception: to narrate the slave uprising, explain its causes, and to defend the Dominguan colonists and their now-lost society from their metropolitan “calumnators.” Now that the political fortunes of the planters were ascendant, his ambition was “to leave to succeeding generations a justifying memoir.”

If Carteau’s polemical aims were unoriginal, however, the structure and setting of his first work, Soirées Bermudiennes, were more striking. Rather than composing a straightforward narrative, he presented his account of the colonial revolution as a dialogue and transplanted it from metropolitan France to the scene of his exile in Bermuda. The five British interlocutors in the Soirées were based, he said, on actual acquaintances: a doctor, a vicar, a lieutenant, a merchant (“M. Goodrich”), and a lawyer, the last of whom favored “the system of the Pearces, the Priestleys, and the Wilberforces,” and acts as the radical devil’s advocate throughout the dialogue. Carteau presented the Soirées as a record of their evening conversations in the peristyle of Goodrich’s estate. The dialogic structure allowed Carteau a certain freedom of

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147 A footnote on xxxiv of the 1802 edition of Soirées Bermudiennes appears to suggest that Carteau first published the book in July 1800, but no such earlier version appears to be extant if so.
148 Ibid., 14.
149 Ibid., xvii-xviii.
150 Ibid., xli-xlii.
151 Ibid., 14-16.
digression as well as a means of presenting multiple perspectives. By displacing the discussion to a fictionalized gathering in Bermuda, Carteau underscored his own experiential credentials as an exile and perhaps avoided the more contentious approach of directly addressing French critics. Lastly, it also served as means to address the specifically transimperial dimensions of the conflict in Saint Domingue and the broader struggle over slavery, abolition, and empire.

*Soirées Bermudienes* interwove Carteau’s firsthand account of events in Saint Domingue with a broader historical narrative and exchanges among the characters. His recollections of the siege and sack of Le Cap were sufficiently vivid that Victor Hugo would later make use of them (down to the rhythm of the language in some cases) in his historical novel *Bug Jargal*. As with many writers on Saint Domingue, Carteau accentuated the terror of the occasion—the smoke, flames, and crowds of fleeing and dispossessed colonists. For Carteau as for many other planters, the fate of the city marked a definitive point of (figurative and literal) departure that signaled the end of Saint Domingue’s Old Regime. “The flames that devoured Cap-Francais,” he wrote, “were the completion of the triumph of the yellow caste [i.e, the *gens de couleur*] over the white species; and the forerunner step of the future primacy of the black race.” Among Carteau’s observations that have proven of particular interest to modern historians is his account of the spread of abolitionist ideas through the enslaved population. He claimed to have seen Raynal’s *Histoire des Deux Indes* and other books “in the hands of some Negroes,” along with abolitionist engravings, all of which gave “proof of how much they were pitied in France, and how much people wanted them to free themselves of the rough yoke of their

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pitable masters.” While these passages were intended to cast blame on the abolitionists for provoking the 1791 uprising, they nonetheless provide a plausible account of how enslaved people were exposed to and circulated French political ideas as they organized against their masters. Carteau’s eye was often sharper than his polemical purposes might suggest.

As these passages illustrate, Carteau held the characteristic hostility of most planter authors to the Amis des Noirs, the commissioners, and the gens de couleur. His account of the causes of the collapse of the colonial regime, however, was couched in a wider critique of the excesses of the French Revolution. It was inevitable, Carteau’s dialogic counterpart told his hosts, that the “extreme imprudence” of the revolutionaries would lead to the “philosophical system” of the metropole being communicated to the colonies, even if the colonists themselves had not embraced revolutionary ideas. “Sooner or later we would have succumbed to the spirit of the century.” At the same time, Carteau was critical of the royalist party in Saint Domingue as well as of pro-independence tendencies among the colonists. He likewise rejected the notion of a Bourbon restoration—naturally enough for a book calibrated to the political consensus of the Consulate.

By the same token it is unsurprising that Carteau, writing for a metropolitan audience, would reject alignment with the British Empire—treason against France, as noted, was one of the common accusations hurled at the planters by their opponents. Britain’s role in Saint Domingue was nonetheless a complex problem for Carteau to wrestle with, given its struggle against a republican regime that he blamed for the ruin of his class. The setting of the dialogue itself conveys some of this ambivalence: Carteau’s narrative counterpart was conversing with largely

154 Ibid., 75-76.
155 Dubois, A Colony of Citizens, 105.
156 Carteau, Soirées Bermudennes, xxx, 19.
sympathetic and hospitable British characters, yet his presence in Bermuda in the first place was the result of being seized on the high seas. Carteau depicted his interlocutors urging him at several points to return to Saint Domingue with the British expedition; the merchant even offers to personally arrange to reunite Carteau with his family if he does so. The fictionalized Carteau, however, rejects the British blandishments on both pragmatic and principled grounds. Britain had sent too few troops to conquer the island, and the former slaves would fight hard now that they had tasted freedom; it would be better, Carteau suggested, to wait for the colony to disintegrate and then attempt a reconciliation between the rebels and their former masters. Beyond his doubts of the efficacy of the intervention (a settled question by the time of the book’s publication), Carteau rejected the notion that Britain’s interests were truly aligned with the French colons. Against the legitimist argument that only a Bourbon restoration would secure the nations of Europe against revolutionary chaos, Carteau argued that Britain would have no interest in restoring the Bourbons except to enjoy the “fruits of their weakness” at France’s expense. British intervention, including arming émigrés, had only exacerbated France’s internal divisions. Carteau’s patriotic attachment to France, he said, existed independently of any particular government in Paris. More broadly, Carteau depicted British imperial power in starkly hostile terms:

I have no aversion for any Englishman in particular… I recognize in the English nation a superiority of talents in many things; the love of culture and sciences…the basis of its political constitution seem to me excellent and worthy of everything she has done to conserve it. After such a confession, permit me to be frank, and to tell you that it is her government that I abhor; there does not exist on earth anything more Machiavellian… Tyrant on all the seas, her ambition has no limits; her usurpations are continual, and her rapine unheard of.

157 Ibid., 255.
158 Ibid., 251.
159 Ibid., 247.
Against the objection of one of the Britons that his country could not be expected to forgo opportunities to expand its commercial interests, Carteau’s narrator recalled “the fate of the frog who burst from having distended his skin too much; there is a limit to everything.”

Carteau’s indictment of Perfidious Albion was, of course, a suitably Bonapartist point to make. As such, it is impossible to say exactly how much such passages reflected his views in 1793 and 1794 as opposed to those of nearly a decade later. Nonetheless, Carteau’s rejection of the Anglo-émigré alliance underscores the fact that the planter class was always divided on the question: only some were willing to look beyond France’s borders in the cause of preserving the colonial Old Regime. At the same time, the history of colonial collaboration with the British was a problem that planters had to address in seeking to carve out a renewed place for themselves in French national life, regardless of their past political associations. Carteau’s fictionalized debates with the Bermudan lawyer further demonstrate the importance of the international dimensions of abolitionism in the French colonial intellectual and political landscape. Lastly, in Carteau’s criticisms of British imperial hubris, one also detects the germ of his changing assessments of colonialism that would emerge in the following years.

Carteau did not attempt to narrate events that occurred in Saint Domingue much after his departure, despite the benefit of events of several years of hindsight by the time Soirées Bermudienes was published. As with many, though not all colonial writers, it seems that the events he felt most required explanation had already transpired by the end of 1793: the fragmentation of white colonial politics into factionalism, uprisings by free colored and enslaved people, the embrace of emancipation by the republican administration, and the British intervention. Carteau’s objective of vindicating the colonists did induce him to delve in the

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160 Ibid., 250.
colony’s Old Regime history to provide a heroic narrative of planter achievement. The early French settlers, in this account, had crossed vast seas to land on an unknown shore where they contended with burning sun, volcanos, hurricanes, and harsh terrain. Likewise, in one of his more astute passages on the nature of the slave regime, Carteau observed, “always surrounded by slaves, they had to fear covert vengeance from them, or their actual uprising: this perpetual state of war obliged them all to be soldiers.” With help from the mother country always far away and insufficient, it was natural that the planters should be governed by “gentle and encouraging laws.” Under this regime, along with the “indefatigable work of its cultivators,” Saint Domingue flourished; but its riches, Carteau argued, had attracted a “barbarous and insensible national jealousy” from other Frenchmen that underpinned revolutionary hostility to the colonists.

Carteau was keen here to rebut accusations that the colonists had been a drain on the metropole or had enjoyed unfair advantages. As with Moreau and many other colonial writers before him, he portrayed the old Saint Domingue as the pinnacle of European colonialism and a boon to French national greatness.

Defending the planter class naturally meant the affirmation of slavery and of the color line. Here Carteau’s method was eclectic, enlisting the usual economic arguments, biological and climatic racism, and defenses of the humanity of slaveowners: Blacks could bear heavier whipping than whites because of the thickness of their skin, he assured his readers. Like other colonial authors, he favorably compared the condition of enslaved people to that the working classes of Europe: “It is the lot of the poor to work for the rich; considered thus, the Negroes can

161 Ibid., 21.
162 Ibid., 21-23.
163 Ibid., 288.
be made to work.”

Though Carteau believed that only slavery, or something very much like it, would allow the colony to be restored to its former prosperity, he was willing to entertain “modifications” and better enforcement of regulations to tame arbitrary authority and the “excess of certain violent and angry spirits”—so long as French planters were not put at a competitive disadvantage.

Carteau’s defense of the subjugation of free people of color included a striking passage that was later cited and mocked by the Abbé Grégoire, and, following him, the Baron de Vastey. Discussing the Old Regime prohibition against a man of color striking a white man under any circumstances—one of the laws that had disturbed General Trigge in Martinique—Carteau argued that it was the “natural consequence of our preeminence, was the Palladium of our species: in it resided the safety of our persons.” The submission of the enslaved population required this “useful prejudice,” Carteau argued, since it established a “moral servitude” to complement the physical force that kept slave society running. Though Carteau contended that the “unalterable superiority of the white species” was not “purely ideal,” he nonetheless dubbed it a “fictive force” and compared it to belief in immortality of the soul, Heaven, and Hell: “true or false, it is necessary to believe it; there are necessary illusions indispensable for general happiness.”

In this claim Carteau channeled much of the distinctive spirit of planter apologetics of his generation: steeped in the skepticism of the philosophes, conscious of the historical contingency of his society’s ideological and social underpinnings, and with a pragmatic openness to any argument or strategy that would secure the privileges of his class.

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164 Ibid., 259
165 Ibid., 303
166 Grégoire, De la Littérature des negres (Paris: Chez Maradan, 1809) 57-58; Vastey, The Colonial System Unveiled, 141.
167 Carteau, Soirées Bermudienes, 60-61.
Carteau’s memoir-cum-dialogue reflects the changing political exigencies for planters that continued to shape the production of colonial history during the early Napoleonic era. At the same time, it shows the persistence of late Enlightenment historicism as an interpretive lens for the upheaval in Saint Domingue—and how the interaction of both factors served to “silence” the assertion of black political power in the emerging historical record. Carteau’s subsequent, far lesser-known writings reveal the ways in which these factors could operate in tandem with historically-based critiques of the foundations of the colonial project.

The middle and later Napoleonic years produced a much sparser selection of colonial literature, historical or otherwise: with the independence of Haiti, the Louisiana Purchase, and the resumption of war with Britain and the other European great powers, France’s imperial ambitions were increasingly continental in nature. Still, while debates over the future status of the former Saint Domingue receded, they did not disappear. One of the Abbé Grégoire’s most important antislavery works, De la Littérature des Nègres, which appeared in 1808, highlighted the influence of the phalanx of anti-“philanthropic” colonial writers who had emerged over the previous two decades. “These pamphleteers,” he said of them, “speak unceasingly of the unhappy colonists, and never of the unhappy Blacks. The planters repeat that the soil of colonies has been watered with their sweat, without a word about the sweat of slaves. The colonists paint the Negroes of Saint Domingue, with reason, as monsters…who have slit the throats of the whites, and never say that the whites provoked these reprisals, by drowning the Negroes or having them devoured by dogs…The erudition of the colonists is rich with citations in favor of servitude; no one knows better than they the tactics of despotism.” Carteau’s Soirées came in for this condemnation alongside the work of Hilliard d’Auberteuil, fellow émigrés Louis-

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Narcisse Baudry des Lozières and Jean-Barré de Saint-Venant, and the British Jamaican essayist William Beckford. The Abbé’s attack on these writers suggested their continued imposing presence on the field of colonial and racial discourse even in a comparative lull in debates about French overseas possessions.

In the meantime, however, Carteau had made a significant departure in that regard. In the closing pages of *Soirées Bermudiennes*, he posed a dilemma for his interlocutors: “One of two things are necessary: either to renounce the possession of the colonies, or to consent to govern them with a constraining discipline of work.”¹⁶⁹ The British attorney admits defeat on this point, and the dialogue ends. Strangely enough, however, Carteau himself would revise his choice among these alternatives. In 1805, he addressed the question of Saint Domingue for a second time in his *Examen politique des colonies modernes*.¹⁷⁰ In the three years since the publication of *Soirées Bermudiennes*, he had turned decisively—even bitterly—against the colonial project. He argued that the greatest colonial powers of the past—the Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch—had successively ruined themselves through overextension. Moreover, France, in Carteau’s view, was fundamentally a land power, and expending resources on colonial competition would leave it vulnerable to continental competitors like Austria or Russia. As for Saint Domingue in particular, Carteau believed that a new invasion would prove too costly to justify, and might only lead to another power—the British, or perhaps the Americans—swooping in after a pyrrhic French reconquest to seize the colony for themselves. The *Examen politique* did not exactly contradict the arguments Carteau had made on behalf of the planters and slavery in *Soirées Bermudiennes*; indeed, Carteau continued to snipe at the “charitable Negrophiles,” and declared

¹⁷⁰ Carteau, *Examen politique des colonies modernes, dans le but le plus particulier de savoir, si celles de la France lui ont été advantageuses ou non?* (Bordeaux: 1805)
once more that, left “free to work or not,” the former slaves of Haiti could not possibly maintain the colony’s former productivity. But these considerations were now beside the point. The luxury products of the tropics were “superfluous objects” that France could no longer afford, Carteau argued. With France’s destiny being decided in Europe, he asked, “must we leave our wheat fields without subjects, in order to go plant sugar cane and coffee?”

Carteau’s intellectual turn against overseas empire was, like *Soirées Bermudaines*, very much tailored to the political realities of the moment. It also drew on older physiocratic discourses in French politics skeptical of the corrupting influence of maritime commerce and luxury, as well as patriotic narratives that cast France as a virtuous terrestrial Rome pitted against the avarice and vice of a latter-day Carthage, namely Britain. The book was not, in that sense, unprecedented; nonetheless, the *volte-face* from a prominent colonial author provoked a sharply negative reaction. Charles Etienne Pierre Wante, a financier and former administrator in Saint Domingue, published a lengthy pamphlet to refute Carteau, *Importance de nos colonies occidentales, particulièrement de celle de Saint-Domingue*, complete with production and export tables to prove its titular thesis. Wante’s tract combined a quantitative approach with a derisive attitude toward Carteau, slighting Carteau’s Old Regime career as the owner of a “piece of property on a mediocre indigo plantation.” He contended that Carteau’s desire to abandon the colonies was the product of crypto-radicalism and even “Anglomania,” accusing him of having

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171 Ibid., 133.
172 Ibid., 135-136.
174 Charles Etienne Pierre Wante, *Importance de nos colonies occidentales, particulièrement de celle de Saint-Domingue*, démontré par la réfutation d’un écrit ayant pour titre : "Examen politique des colonies modernes, dans le but plus particulier de savoir si celles de la France lui ont été advantageuses ou non" (Paris: 1805), 7.
accomplished “a rebirth of all the falsely philanthropic ideas, differently colored…that so powerfully worked the burning and annihilation of our colonies.”  

By Carteau’s own account, the *Examen Politique* was excoriated in the press, and one of his detractors even denounced him to the Ministry of Police, though without result. The hostile response to the *Examen politique* illustrates the continued strength of restorationist designs on Haiti among the colonial émigré community through the years of the Empire, even during a low ebb in wider interest in Saint Domingue.

The rough reception evidently did not dissuade Carteau from his anticolonial turn. Instead he decided to recapitulate and expand his arguments in a new literary effort that looked to the distant colonial past for inspiration: *Le songe de Colomb*. The 1809 work was a thirty-page poem with accompanying historical, philosophical and political commentary in footnotes that ran three times the length of the verse. Carteau opens with Christopher Columbus anchored off the unknown shore of Haiti. This was a significant choice of setting, given that it was not the site where the Spanish first landed. Columbus receives a nocturnal visitation by the “genius” of the New World. The future unfolding of Spanish colonization is revealed to him, with all of its atrocities against native peoples driven by greed and religious fanaticism. Columbus sees the successive rise and decline of the other European colonial empires, and the grim results of their struggle for dominance through successive global wars. The “mercantile spirit,” it is revealed, is the cause of “eternal struggles.”  

Britain—"Sumptuous Albion, colossus with feet of clay”—is portrayed as the pinnacle of this commercial decadence, but all of Europe awaits the “avenging

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175 Ibid. 112-113.
177 Ibid., 31.
blade” of divine judgement for its crimes. Carteau allows him to offer a defense of the global spread of commerce and Christianity, but he remains a tragic figure: violence and corruption will be the ultimate outcome of his achievement.

In his notes, Carteau digressed on everything from the age of the earth to the relative achievements of the Incas and Aztecs, but the central intention of his poem and commentary, as he explained it, was “to expose the excesses committed in the Two Indies by the European nations, first against the naturals of the country, and then among themselves.” Notably, the Songe de Colomb’s indictment of colonialism had nothing whatsoever to say, directly at least, about slavery or Africans. The essence of Carteau’s historical argument remained the same as that of the Examen politique: he claimed that the revolutionary upheaval, great power conflict and the devastation of Europe of his day was the inevitable outgrowth of colonial and commercial rivalry since the fifteenth century. He extended his critique of luxury and commercial society further, however, observing that the “cosmopolitanism” of capitalists was inherently dangerous to the state, even if the capitalists themselves might be useful: “l’amour de la patrie est en lui comme nul.” It would have been better, he argued, to leave the colonies to the colonists, as independent states trading freely with all flags, “as one goes to the Levant to buy whatever one wishes, in exchange for what the West produces or manufactures.” The latter point seemingly harkened back to the aspirations of many Dominguan planters during the revolutionary period, but it was expressed in terms of metropolitan interests, and departed sharply from the views of planters like Wante who still hoped for a restoration of the old order.

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178 Ibid., 16.
179 Ibid., 95.
180 Ibid., 125.
181 Ibid., 117, 12; Carteau alternatively suggested that the colonies could be “submitted to the great powers of the countries where they are located” presumably the United States.
The book ended with the famous Virgilian epigraph, “to show mercy to the conquered and to subdue the proud.” This, Carteau contended, was the proper mission of Napoleonic France: to emulate the Romans as terrestrial empire and to triumph over the British, and by extension the maritime-colonial system of power that Carteau rejected for France.

Carteau, in decrying the violence of imperial conquest and rivalry, conspicuously declined to consider the violence of chattel slavery in the same light. Yet one of the era’s prominent defenders of slavery had nonetheless reached what critics like Wante believed to be an objectively pro-Haitian stance, albeit one that dismissed or erased the Haitians themselves. In the end Carteau was more favorable to the abolition of colonialism—at least, colonialism as it had existed hitherto—than the end of slavery. That perspective placed him outside the mainstream of planter literature, but it reveals that colonial discourse during the Empire encompassed a number of moral and strategic concerns that were not simply a matter of abolitionists and colonial émigrés reenacting their old polemics. The pan-European dimensions of empire retained a central place in these debates, even for a writer like Carteau committed to metropolitan French patriotism. Christopher Columbus and the Spanish conquest consequently served, for Carteau as for other writers, as a historical point of entry into the fundamental questions they saw facing French colonial policy—fundamental questions which, however, still largely excluded the political agency of the formerly enslaved. In the decade and a half from 1793 until 1809, Carteau took on the role of the exile historian—albeit one with more literary aspirations than most—to first defend, then reject, the colonial Old Regime. His career serves as a microcosm of the diversity of the period’s colonial thought, the challenges the colonial elite faced as it sought to re-establish its place in French national life, and the persistence of the

182 Ibid., 143.
framing assumptions of colonial discourse across divides of ideology and changing political circumstances.

*An Abortive Restoration, 1814-1825*

Twenty-three years after enslaved people on Saint Domingue’s northern plain launched their armed campaign for freedom, and ten years after the Haitian Declaration of Independence crowned its success, the former colony was again at the forefront of French politics. The restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in the spring of 1814 provided an opening, for the first time since the defeat of the Leclerc expedition, for another attempt at the reassertion of French sovereignty over Haiti. The new regime signaled its inclination toward the interests of colonial émigrés when it quickly appointed Pierre Victor Malouet to the Ministry of the Marine and Colonies. One result of these developments was a flood of renewed interest in the Saint Domingue question—dozens of published books and hundreds of newspaper articles, pamphlets, and private memoranda sent to government ministers by former colonists and their allies all attest to it. Nearly all of this literature advocated for reconquest, but commentators differed on the difficult of the task and the methods to employ. The Dominguan Creole Jean-Jacques de la Martellière argued in a note to Malouet that “the means of restoring the colony of Saint Domingue and the Colonial system” would be simple, adding that, if necessary, “all the other colonial powers ought to join forces with France to launch a crusade against an anti-colonial society whose very existence, let us be frank, is a disgrace to all colonial governments.”

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contrast, another émigré named Morin held that only a diplomatic solution was viable, one that would involve co-opting the Haitian gens de couleur with “concessions…that will attach them to the colonial system." As the dueling proposals suggest, Malouet’s language of the “colonial system” had by this point passed into general usage; commentators were increasingly seeking to theorize a pan-European pattern of colonial rule as a premise for their political arguments.

While many of these colonial texts were ephemeral in nature, the sudden upsurge of interest in Saint Domingue also meant a reexamination of the history of its loss to France. Charles Malenfant and Antoine Dalmas, both former colonists, offered perhaps the most substantial entries in the expanding historiography of Saint Domingue, albeit from very different political perspectives. Together the two émigrés’ work shows the unfinished debates over the causes and significance of the Haitian Revolution, a full generation after it begun. The role of metropolitan ideas in sparking the uprising, the place of free people of color within the colonial system, and the role of Great Britain in the revolutionary crisis all continued to animate historical inquiry as well as present polemics. One thing that had changed was the presence of Haitian writers with an international audience, and it is during this same period that some of their most striking efforts to develop a historical counter-discourse in opposition to the émigrés emerged. All of these analyses were increasingly conscious and explicit regarding colonialism-as-system, causing them to look both internationally and into the distant past in order to situate the confrontation between France and its former colonial subjects.

Antoine Dalmas’ Histoire de la Revolution de Saint-Domingue was, like many other histories of the period, an artifact of exile. According to Dalmas, he had written it while in the

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United States between 1793 and 1794, and left the text unchanged prior to 1814, when he published it together with a shorter *Mémoire sur le rétablissement de Saint Domingue*. His friends, he said, had urged him to publish it in 1801, during the last great period of opportunity for a reconquest of Saint Domingue, but he had demurred. It had not been, he explained, “the moment in which France could draw from the past some advantage for the future, and where considerations that are hardly applicable except to legitimate governments, bring her back towards the colonial system, source of her former splendor.”\(^{186}\) Now, however, after years of a “continental and martial system,” under Napoleon, the moment had arrived to reconsider France’s colonial prospects. The particular “past” Dalmas sought to narrate was circumscribed however: his narrative proceeded from the foundations of the colony but ended with the British invasion at the end of 1793, a similar chronological scope to what Carteau, among others, had offered his readers. While this periodization may in fact reflect Dalmas’ particular history of writing the text while in exile—a condition that evidently spurred many colonists to reach for their quills—it also suggests that the breakdown of the old order remained of greater interest to Dalmas, and perhaps to his audience, than the protracted multi-sided struggle that had followed it. For many émigrés, it seems, the history of Saint Domingue was arrested not long after the fires of Le Cap and the proclamation of emancipation.

Dalmas was a physician rather than a planter, but he was as stalwart a defender of the colonial Old Regime as any of the plantation magnates. He followed many other colonial writers in portraying the old Saint Domingue’s opulence as the achievement of the indefatigable planters who had wrested it from the jungle—a rebuke, as he saw it, to the physiocratic *économistes* who

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\(^{186}\) Antoine Dalmas, *Histoire de la Revolution de Saint Domingue, depuis le commencement des troubles, jusqu’a la prise de Jérémie et du Môle S. Nicolas par les anglais, suivie d’un mémoire sur le rétablissement de cette colonie* (Paris: Chez Mame Frères, 1814), i-ii.
rejected colonial-maritime commerce. He theorized the colonial system as resting on a three-legged stool of tropical cash crops (“whose production is foreign to the metropole and useful to its industry”), slavery, and exclusive commerce with the metropole. He was willing to grant that the need for slavery was among the “imperfections and faults” of the system, not least because of the vulnerability created by the overwhelming disparity between the white and black populations. As a result of this imbalance, Dalmas argued, colonial society was “uniquely based on opinion, and could not exist without it.” The revolutionaries had disrupted this delicate arrangement by offering both the slaves and the gens de couleur a model of liberation and rebellion to emulate, in contrast to their alleged contentment under a monarchical constitution. Dalmas particularly emphasized the role of the Amis des Noirs and British abolitionists in inspiring Vincent Ogé’s 1791 rebellion. His condemnation of Ogé, in turn, rested not so much on any assessment of the racial qualities of the gens de couleur, nor on a defense of their treatment, but principally on the basis of the needs of the colonial order:

What was Ogé? In the eyes of nature, he was a man like the whites; but in the eyes of politics, the color that distinguished him from them deprived him of the prerogatives reserved to the white class…But if it is true that resistance to oppression is a natural right, reason teaches civilized peoples how important it is to their happiness to restrain its exercise, and how much this right is dangerous for they who claim it, sword in hand, when they have not the means to succeed. What could all the mulattos have achieved against the whites? Nothing, absolutely nothing, and the results proved it!

Dalmas’ was neither the first nor the last colonial writer to make an admission of natural right in principle while denying it in practice in the same breath. His focus on the disruptive effect of the

187 Ibid., 271.
188 Ibid., 8-9.
189 Ibid., 11.
190 Ibid., 76.
metropolitan revolution, while also hardly unique in the wider field of planter historians, was articulated in legitimist-friendly language calibrated to the arrival of the Bourbons on the scene. Saint Domingue could only flourish again under the same regime, both internal and external, that had built it. Under their former political and economic structures, the Antilles could “become for the French what India is for the English.”

Dalmas’ account of the origins and progress of the slave uprising was rich in both anecdote and invective. As Matt Clavin observes, the struggle for colonial historical writers to lay claim to authenticity and reliability coexisted with sentimental, provocative, or even pornographic narratives, often drawing on the stylistic elements of Gothic fiction. Dalmas himself is best known to latter-day historians of the Haitian Revolution for publishing the first written account of the ceremony in Bois Caïman, which was alleged to have preceded the initial uprising led by Dutty Boukman on the Gallifet plantation in August 1791. His sensationalized narration aimed to “characterize the African” with the “ignorance” and “superstition” that he depicted in the sacrificial ritual, immediately before proceeding into a number of horrific tales of violence committed by the insurgents. Dalmas transposed something of the eighteenth-century philosophes’ rationalist assaults on revealed religion—“écrasez l’infâme”—into his depiction of Haitian voudou.

Less well-known, but no less significant, is Dalmas’ account of the colonial emigration, particularly the flood of refugees that left for the United States after the fall of Cap Français in 1793. Dalmas highlighted the exiles’ exposure to piracy, shipwreck, and poverty, as well as what

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191 Ibid., 260.
he argued was their shabby treatment by the French consular authorities. Dalmas claimed that the Norfolk, Virginia consul Martin Oster favored free colored people over whites and once refused to give an exiled white mother a paltry sum to bury her dead child.\textsuperscript{194} The invocation of émigré pathos did not only aim to garner sympathy for the plight, however. Dalmas was also keen to argue that the colonists had suffered in part as a result of their own rebellion and factionalism at the outset of the revolution: “Patriots, aristocrats, partisans of England and independence, they had lost everything, fortune, country, rest, happiness; what a severe, what a frightful lesson!”\textsuperscript{195} As this passage suggests, the Restoration-era ideological pivot to legitimacy and personal loyalty to the monarchy sometimes sat uneasily with the complicated history of planter political involvement. Dalmas did present the British invasion as a necessity, albeit not a desirable one. The planters had been justified in inviting them because only Britain could establish the “empire of laws” in the face of anarchy, he argued.\textsuperscript{196} Nonetheless, Dalmas’ brief and largely matter-of-fact account of the British intervention suggests that the planters’ recourse to a foreign power remained an at-least-potential embarrassment. The transimperial dimension of the counterrevolution had emerged alongside an ascendant French nationalism that outlasted the revolutionary republic, and even advocates for the colonial Old Regime had to acknowledge this reality.

If Dalmas was one of the most articulate exponents of colonial reaction, the military officer, diplomat, and Saint Domingue proprietor Charles Malenfant represented the leftward edge of French planter commentary on the possible restoration in Saint Domingue/Haiti. Like Dalmas’ history, Malenfant’s \textit{Des colonies, et particulièrement de celle de Saint-Domingue,}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., 216.  
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 225.  
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., 231.  
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mémoire historique et politique purported to be an older work: in Malenfant’s case, he updated a
text he previously written in 1801. Though Malenfant had opposed the abolition of slavery in
1793, by the turn of the century he rejected the idea of re-imposing it as unworkable, and
unsuccessfully lobbied General Leclerc to maintain Toussaint Louverture’s cultivator system.\textsuperscript{197}
The publication of texts written years previously—as always, at the urging of others, Malenfant
said—reinforced claims to expertise as a historical participant, but it also suggests that for
French colonists across the political spectrum, the fundamental nature of the colonial question
had not changed in the wake of Haitian independence; it had merely been frozen to await a later
reckoning.

The proper approach to Saint Domingue, in Malenfant’s view, remained a question of
establishing a mixed regime that would reconcile “the rights of the proprietors with the liberty of
the cultivators.”\textsuperscript{198} This end would have to be accomplished diplomatically, though that would be
no small task, in part thanks to the past depredations of Leclerc, whom Malenfant denounced as a
“new Pizarro,” in an appeal to the trope of Spanish imperial barbarism. In place of the old
colonial order, Malenfant envisioned the extension of political rights to the gens de couleur
together with a semi-feudal code de culture that would guarantee a portion of agriculture
production to black laborers.\textsuperscript{199} At the same time, Malenfant believed, with most other planter
authors, that the resumption of the transatlantic slave trade was essential to Saint Domingue’s
future viability as a colony. His code proposed that, in lieu of chattel slavery, the newly-bought
cultivateurs would be bound to a particular plantation for nine years, after which they would be

\textsuperscript{197} Girard, “Napoléon Bonaparte and the Emancipation Issue,” 594.
\textsuperscript{198} Charles Malenfant, Des Colonies, Et Particulièrement de celle de Saint-Domingue, Mémoire
\textsuperscript{199} Ibid. vii-viii
allowed to work at others if they desired. Malenfant’s reformist proposals for restoration shared an appetite for finely-detailed ameliorative regulations—and the fundamental assumption of the need for a coercive plantation labor regime—with colonial writers across the political spectrum.

Malenfant’s denial of the viability of slavery as such remained a provocative claim within the mainstream of Restoration colonial discourse. He supported it with a historical perspective that placed him at odds with the vast majority of colonial accounts of the revolution in Saint Domingue: to wit, he defended the republican commissioners Sonthonax and Polverel and their decision to embrace emancipation. In contrast to Dalmas, who claimed to have proof from private conversations that the commissioners intended from the start to destroy the colony at the behest of the Jacobins, Malenfant argued that emancipation had been the only means to save the lives of the remaining whites in Saint Domingue. This was hardly a “philanthropic” defense of emancipation; nonetheless, as Malenfant acknowledged, he had been virtually alone among the colonial émigrés in not viewing the commissioners as “brigands.”

Malenfant’s qualified defense of the commissioners, much against the grain of most émigré histories of Saint Domingue, left the need to identify alternative villains in the story of the colony’s collapse. The real “brigands,” Malenfant declared, had been on the counterrevolutionary side. Enslaved rebel leaders such as Jean-François and Biassou had been “chosen by the enemies of the revolution to begin the insurrection,” he claimed. More than two decades after the 1791 uprising, black actors continued to appear as the dupes of malevolent

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200 Ibid. 305-310
202 Malenfant, Des Colonies, 60-61.
203 Ibid., 7.
white factions. Though, like many republican authors, Malenfant blamed reactionary elements of the Old Regime administration and planters for instigating the uprising, he was naturally careful to avoid casting aspersions on the Bourbons themselves. Indeed, Malenfant strategically played to royalism in order to discredit the counterrevolutionary colonists, observing that the planter elites had “believed themselves the equals of the Bourbons and the Condés.”\textsuperscript{204} These “greedy and credulous” planters had invited the British, whom Malenfant blamed as the real agents of the colony’s loss to France, since their eventual support for the Haitians helped to doom the Leclerc expedition.\textsuperscript{205} Though the British had invaded in the name of Louis XVIII, he argued, their policy in Saint Domingue had always been self-interested and treacherous; even their 1807 abolition of the slave trade, Malenfant argued at length, had been for economic reasons.\textsuperscript{206}

The restoration of the Bourbons at the point of allied bayonets had not erased the legacy of decades of conflict with Britain. Leclerc’s condemnation of British conduct in Saint Domingue consequently allowed him to paint himself and his distinctive agenda of a reformist restoration in patriotic colors, and to strike colonial hardliners at one of their weakest points. Unlike the planters who had welcomed foreign occupiers into the colony, Malenfant was proud to note that he had been arrested by the British and incarcerated for a time in Jamaica.\textsuperscript{207} He meanwhile issued personal indictments against British-aligned \textit{colons} like Jean-Baptiste Lapointe, whom he accused of spying for the British before their intervention, of playing both sides of the revolution for his own advantage, and of committing numerous atrocities. According to Malenfant, Lapointe had personally cut the heads off of twelve French prisoners while

\textsuperscript{204} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{205} Ibid., 80.
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid., 223-224.
\textsuperscript{207} Ibid., 61.
shouting “Vive George III!” Malenfant attacked the work of “Edouard Bryand”—the not-quite-pseudonym under which an apparently unauthorized French translation of Bryan Edwards’ *Historical Survey* was published in 1812. Edwards, as noted, had commended Lapointe and other free-colored counterrevolutionaries as brave and capable allies to the British; since he failed to mention Lapointe’s crimes, however, Malenfant argued that the Englishman only proved that his “impartiality” as a historian was compromised. Malenfant’s choice of “M. Bryand” as his foil underscores the continued importance of transimperial exchanges in colonial historical writing—although his apparent unawareness of the identity of Edwards, who had died more than a decade earlier, suggests that the give-and-take of these exchanges was sometimes uneven.

One source of interaction with French colonial historians in the Restoration period was relatively new: Haitian authors were responding with their own historical narratives and arguments. Their engagement was in one sense one-sided: while the Haitians were closely attentive to transimperial print culture, one looks in vain for an acknowledgement of Haitian texts by French colonial writers. Presumably most would not have wanted to grant their black and colored interlocutors any legitimacy, even if they were aware of them. These texts did have an international audience, but it chiefly consisted of the abolitionist fraternity as well as broader European metropolitan publics that the various Haitian regimes were appealing to for support. The mixed-race Baron Pompée Valentin de Vastey, a court writer for King Henri Christophe and

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208 Ibid., xi; This incident forms a key part of the climax of Marie Vieux Chauvet’s novel *Dance on the Volcano*.
209 “Edouard Bryand,” *Histoire de St-Domingue depuis 1789 jusqu’en 1794* (Paris: 1812). This version is notable, among other reasons, because it incorrectly purports in the introduction to be the first French translation of Edwards’ book and is full of anti-British commentary in editorial footnotes.
210 Malenfant, *Des Colonies*, xi.
a frequent correspondent of Thomas Clarkson as well as Prussian literary circles, was sent to France in March 1814 on a mission to seek diplomatic recognition for Christophe’s government. However, Vastey only got as far as London when he learned that the Bourbon Restoration had unexpectedly made Haiti a target for reconquest.\footnote{Bongie, Introduction, \textit{The Colonial System Unveiled}, 20.} As a result, Vastey found himself leading the charge against the French planter interest and its intellectual justifications for re-enslavement.

Vastey’s \textit{Le Système colonial dévoilé}, published in London in October, assailed the work of numerous planter authors, above all Malouet: the epigraph on the book’s title page was a parody of a line from Malouet’s introduction to his work on colonial administration: “Here it is, revealed, this secret full of horror. The Colonial System: White Domination, Blacks Massacred or Enslaved.”\footnote{Ibid., 8. Malouet’s 1802 text was “Here it is, revealed, this secret of horror. Liberty for the blacks: Domination for them! Whites massacred or enslaved. Fields and cities burned to the ground…”. Malouet, \textit{Essai sur l’administration de Saint-Domingue}, in \textit{Collection de mémoires et correspondances officielles sur l’administration des colonies: et notamment sur la Guiane française et hollandaise} (Paris: Baudoin, 1802), Vol 4., 46.} As the book’s translator Chris Bongie observes, Vastey’s critique of slave society offered an “astonishingly prescient invocation of a decolonizing world” that anticipated many of the insights of 20\textsuperscript{th} century anticolonial thinkers.\footnote{Bongie, Introduction, \textit{The Colonial System Unveiled}, 5.} Its contents, however, were primarily historical. \textit{Le Système colonial dévoilé} had a tripartite structure, focusing first on the expropriation of the Americas, with an account of the indigenous kingdoms of Hispaniola and their wholesale destruction by the Spanish. For Vastey, French colonization, plantation slavery, and white supremacy were the historical and spiritual heir to this genocidal legacy. “Things are no different in our own day,” Vastey wrote. “For the sake of producing sugar and coffee our oppressors defiled themselves with similar atrocities.”\footnote{Vastey, \textit{The Colonial System Unveiled}, 92.} The book’s middle section accordingly
consists of, on the one hand, a refutation of the racial theories of colonial authors, and on the other, an extensive catalogue of accusations of cruelty leveled against more than one hundred individual slave-owners, many of them part of émigré political and literary circles. Charmilly, for one, had allegedly burned slaves alive and mutilated them with tongs—aside from, as Vastey noted in almost the same breath, writing a history much inferior to that of Bryan Edwards. Vastey’s litany of crimes committed against enslaved people is frequently graphic, but its cumulative effect is not primarily sentimental or sensational; rather, it assumes the character of a legal indictment issued against the planters—the same planters now pressing for the extinction of Haitian independence. Vastey presented the proposal that “new fetters be forged for Africans” as the culmination of centuries of exploitation and violence, against which Henri Christophe’s government stood as the vindicator of black rights before the civilized world. Speaking to “Englishman, Frenchman, German, Russian, white man, from all the regions of the earth,” Vastey pledged resistance to the project of reconquest. “The only ones who will not applaud this magnanimous resolution are the shameful colonists, the abominable traffickers in human flesh and their partisans.”

As Nick Nesbitt observes, Vastey never explicitly defined the colonial system at greater length than the book’s epigraph. Nonetheless, *Le Système colonial dévoilé* presented a historically-rooted “counter-discourse” to Malouet’s model of the system, which relied on the overseas negation and quarantine of metropolitan doctrines of liberty and equality. Vastey repurposed longstanding features of transatlantic colonial discourse—the preoccupation with the

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215 Ibid., 119-120.
216 Ibid., 140-141.
217 Ibid. 145
atrocities of the Spanish conquest, for instance—to serve Haitian nationalism and anti-slavery internationalism. He sought to discredit hostile émigré authors not only by engaging with their texts but by situating them as historical actors within the “barbaric colonial system that has weighed us down for centuries.”219 A consummate Anglophile, he also sought to portray alternatives to the French colonial reaction in the Antilles, claiming that the British might “bring about the regeneration of half the inhabitants of the globe” by bringing a civilizing mission to Africa.220 Vastey’s work demonstrates the bi-directional movement of transimperial modes of thinking between radical and conservative participants in debates over the future of the colonial world, debates that now encompassed the historical consciousness of former colonial subjects.

Plans for a French invasion were disrupted by Malouet’s death in September 1814, the Hundred Days the following year, and the depleted shape of the kingdom’s finances and naval and military forces.221 A delegation sent by Malouet to explore a negotiated restoration ended in disaster in the autumn of 1814 when it was seized by Henri Christophe’s forces and Malouet’s secret instructions were revealed, which outraged Haitian opinion and compelled the rival government of Alexandre Pétion to disavow any agreement with the French.222 These events much diminished, but did not eliminate, speculation about a restoration of metropolitan authority, which only abated definitively with the 1825 French recognition of Haiti—now unified under President Jean-Pierre Boyer—in exchange for an indemnity of 150 million gold francs. Juste Chanlatte’s *Histoire de la catastrophe de Saint Domingue*, published in 1824, thus represented the official Haitian effort at historical self-representation as a final settlement

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220 Ibid.
between former colony and metropole loomed. Born, like Vastey, among the *gens de couleur* under the Old Regime, as a younger man Chanlatte had briefly supported the British invasion in its early stages. He later became a key court intellectual for multiple Haitian heads of state, and helped to write the 1804 proclamation in which Dessalines declared he had “avenged America” by winning Haitian independence. Two decades later, Chanlatte was still in the business of representing Haiti’s cause to the world, which required him to engage with, and attempt to subvert, a generation’s worth of colonial narratives.

The *Histoire de la catastrophe de Saint Domingue* defended the Haitian revolutionary achievement in large part by reversing the valence of the language of “disaster” that had shaped so much of international discourse surrounding Saint Domingue. The post-independence massacres presided over by his former employer Dessalines had only redoubled this association for colonial writers across the political spectrum in France and elsewhere. As the book’s title suggests, Chanlatte did not reject this catastrophist framing outright; instead, he sought to shift its focus to the crimes of the French, above all the brutal campaign of re-conquest of Leclerc and Rochambeau in 1802-1803. Echoing Vastey, Chanlatte aspired, he said, to tear away the “magic gauze” concealing the “horrors of the colonial system.” He deliberately played up the horrific qualities of his own form of witness literature, even declaring in a dramatic flourish that ladies should not read the *Histoire de la catastrophe*, “as their souls would be too pitifully affected.”

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224 Kieran Murphy, “Haiti and the Black Box of Romanticism” *Studies in Romanticism* 56, No. 1 (Spring 2017), 18.
225 Ibid., 20.
Chanlatte appropriated many of the Gothic tropes that had long marked European reactions to Saint Domingue’s revolution, in both his imagery and language. The book was littered with grotesque images of funeral pyres, bodies floating along shorelines, and black masses called to vengeance by the “sepulchers” of their ancestors. Where the French colonial administrator Pamphile de Lacroix had in 1819 described Dutty Boukman and his fellow rebels as “tigers seeking to appease their rage,” who covered “the most beautiful country in the world with fire and ruins,” Chanlatte wrote of “white tigers with human faces, who devoured much of our population.” Not all of the *Histoire de la catastrophe* fit this pattern; indeed, the book began with a rather arid refutation of racial polygenism. But the violence of the black revolutionaries, culminating in the 1804 killings of most remaining Dominguan whites, had become key to the European historical imagination of Saint Domingue, and Chanlatte aimed to replace one master narrative of horror with another.

The Black Legend of Spanish history played a key role in Chanlatte’s indictment of French colonialism—a reflection of the longstanding concern with Spain’s imperial enormities in Enlightenment colonial thought as well as the stereotypes of medieval superstition common in the Gothic mode. Chanlatte thus referred to the mass killings perpetrated by Leclerc’s forces as “auto-da-fes” conducted by “inquisitors.” The emotional climax of the *Histoire de la catastrophe* was the French use of attack dogs against the Haitians, in particular a prolonged description of the death by mauling of a black prisoner that Chanlatte said he had witnessed.

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227 Ibid., 69.
229 Chanlatte, *Histoire de la Catastrophe*, 63.
230 Ibid., 2.
231 Ibid., 62.
232 Ibid., 63-71,
The dogs, importantly, had been imported by Leclerc from Spanish Cuba, and their use against the Haitians echoed the similar methods of the conquistadors in Hispaniola three centuries previously. It was in the face of such cruelty, Chanlatte argued, that the “general will” of the Haitian people had consented to the 1804 massacres. Matt Clavin argues that the Gothicization of the Haitian Revolution in colonial literature reinforced its Trouillotean “unthinkability” by “making this real event a source of imaginative fancy.” Chanlatte’s embrace of the conventions of colonial “disaster” literature, however, suggests that the Gothic mode was susceptible to contrary ideological uses. In a broader sense, Chanlatte’s book represents both a refutation of decades of pro-planter colonial histories and a continuation of many of their characteristic concerns and methodologies.

The 1825 treaty of recognition represented the final sunset of the political aspirations of those colonists and their allies who hoped for a reversal of the Haitian Revolution. However, the heavy indemnity imposed on Haiti, and the accompanying program of compensation payments to former planters and their children—though not, notably, to other colonists—also represented the affirmation by the French state of the claims of these exiles to their property and to victimization. This affirmation was quite explicit: the 500-gun French flotilla that presented its demands to Port-au-Prince carried with it a proclamation from Charles X that expressed his solicitude for “the misfortunes of the former colonists of Saint-Domingue” and the intent to compensate them with the indemnity. This success for the exiled planters was the result of long years of lobbying, which was effective in portraying the Dominguian proprietors as the tropical equivalent

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233 Ibid., 75.
235 Proclamation of April 17, 1825. Quoted in J.N. Leger, Haiti: Her History and Her Detractors (New York: Neale, 1907), 182.
of the metropolitan royalist émigrés—an ironic result, given how many colonial exiles had insisted they were not émigrés in earlier decades. But it must also be accounted a victory for the many of the historical narratives that colonial writers had produced over the preceding three decades. Diverse and conflicting as their views often were, they had largely concurred in presenting the story of Saint Domingue’s revolutions as one of the wholesale destruction and dispossession of a previously-flourishing white society. This assumption underpinned the vindication that the former masters of Saint Domingue’s slave society received as its living memory began to fade.

In subsequent decades the Haitian Revolution was subjected to something closer to a simple “silence,” though its relevance in historical and political discourse did not immediately disappear on either side of the Atlantic. As David Geggus notes, Britain’s legislative termination of first the slave trade and then slavery made the Haitian experience appear of questionable relevance for many in Britain, and its discursive salience gradually declined there, while rising to a mid-century peak in a United States torn by sectional conflict over slavery. In France, the liberal historian and politician Adolphe Thiers, who believed British emancipation to be a premature failure, devoted just enough attention to the Haitian Revolution to savage it in his 1845 Histoire du Consulat et de l’Empire, although he, like many American apologists for slavery, gave grudging approval to Toussaint’s continued use of forced plantation labor. As it had been for earlier planter historians, the Revolution’s effect on the economic base of colonial

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society remained a central concern: anti-abolitionism had not lost its close connection with utilité, in historiography or otherwise.

Conclusion

In 1914 the historian T. Lothrop Stoddard—soon to become one of the foremost white supremacist and eugenicist intellectuals in American life—published *The French Revolution in San Domingo*, one of the small handful of Anglophone scholarly monographs on the subject prior to the late 20th century. Stoddard believed that the fate of Saint Domingue spoke to the “fundamental problem of the twentieth century,” to wit, “the world-wide struggle between the primary races of mankind.” He recognized the paucity of scholarship on the subject over most of the previous century, claiming that the “real story” of Saint Domingue had never been told. At the same time, in narrating the “great tragedy” of the destruction of white colonial rule, Stoddard relied heavily upon the first generation of historians of the Haitian Revolution, above all Bryan Edwards and Moreau de Saint-Méry, whom he considered “invaluable.” His narrative approach to the Haitian Revolution mirrored much older historiographical trends. Most strikingly, Stoddard ended his history abruptly with the 1804 post-independence mass killings of whites. Punctuating the narrative of the revolution in this manner left little doubt that, for Stoddard, its legacy was fundamentally destructive, just as it had been for the many planter historians that preceded him. If he was critical of many aspects of planter society, so too had they often been. Perhaps surprisingly, Stoddard held a certain fascination for the figure of Toussaint Louverture. However, he ultimately claimed defeat in interpreting his personality and

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240 Ibid., 400-402.
motivations, declaring that, with few reliable sources, Toussaint was “destined to remain forever shrouded in the haze of legend and tradition.” As often before in colonial historiography, the brute fact of violence was at the forefront of this narrative, while the black agency behind it—personified by Toussaint—remained “enveloped” in myth.

What remained was the story of the Haitian Revolution as, in essence, a cautionary tale. Though Stoddard’s fears of threats to global white dominance were the product of the racial preoccupations of his own, post-slavery age, he shared that political attitude toward his subject matter with the first generation of French and British historians of the field. That continuity reflected not only the longue durée effects of racial ideologies, but also the fact that history itself as a literary form developed, in a 18th century transimperial context, as an expression of the instability of the position of white colonial elites. Their collective claims to property in land and lives, subjected to critique and contestation—all the more acutely after 1789 and 1791—required a historical narrative to establish their legitimacy, as property claims often do. In their historiographical interventions into both shifting political controversies and the more fundamental questions about nature of the colonial system, planter historians sought to establish a clear title.

As this chapter has argued, these historians made that case within an inherited late-Enlightenment framework that linked progress, reform, and material improvement to the growth and preservation of the colonial system. To justify that system and the rewards they reaped from it, they often looked backward to relate their predecessors’ foundation of Saint Domingue in a Lockean-like state of nature, and to depict the flourishing “Pearl of the Antilles” as the product of that legacy. The recurrent fascination with the darker side of their Spanish colonial

241 Ibid., viii.
predecessors reflected a desire to distinguish the planters’ own humane, progressive, and industrious self-concept from a stereotyped decadence and barbarism, while also betraying disquiet over whether that legacy could be so easily escaped, or whether they too were “masters of the Antilles by a crime.” In the wake of the revolutionary deluge, they looked to the recent past and present to paint vivid portraits of the overthrow of a rich, globally connected, and forward-looking colonial society, and to lay the blame at the “philanthropists’” door. As noted, this was a framework that counterrevolutionaries substantially shared with their radical and abolitionist opponents: the latter typically only sought to identify different culprits.

The fundamental interpretive problem of the Haitian Revolution was thus not only that it was unthinkable because of racist assumptions in the strictly anthropological sense. To affirm—or even to take seriously—the collective political agency of the enslaved in challenging the colonial system from the ground up was to call into question the integrity of a shared developmental understanding of human progress. It was to suggest that the material and social bedrock of colonial society as they had known it might be so fatally flawed as to render Enlightened meliorism irrelevant—something few Western thinkers countenanced. The smoke of burning cities, or indeed burning plantations, was not something they were willing or able to see past. This catastrophist understanding of the revolution in turn led the historiographical custodians of the Haitian cause like Vastey and Chanlatte to countercharges of the same barbarism that mainstream colonial discourse attributed to rebellious slaves or to long-dead Spaniards. To be sure, the latter writers also understood the Haitian Revolution in terms of its
positive achievements—but they were swimming within and against a tide of historical discourse whose keynote was apocalyptic. 242

The dyad of “interest” and “humanity” provided the watchwords for many late-Enlightenment thinkers struggling with the contradictions of slave-based societies. 243 As Trouillot argued, the limitations on what and whom were encompassed by “humanity” played an integral role in the Haitian Revolution’s silencing from its inception through the twentieth century. At the same time, one of the Revolution’s tragedies was that even observers—and participants—with comparatively expansive views of humanity were enmeshed in deep-rooted systems of interest that seemed to them to offer no easy exits. The writing of history helped colonial actors to negotiate their place in this changing world, often from a position of dispossession and displacement, and the resulting transimperial burst of intellectual activity can be considered one of the chief legacies of the Haitian Revolution. It was, however, a legacy that helped to negate the political possibilities that gave rise to it.

242 In that light, is perhaps unsurprising that one of the first seminal modern attempts to recover the Revolution’s legacy came from the Marxist C.L.R. James, who saw the struggle of enslaved people as a prefiguration of contemporary mobilizations against colonialism and global capitalism.

243 Malenfant for instance, mentions the Haitian Revolution as having decided “the question so long debated between interest and humanity,” though the use of the two terms in concert is a common one. Malenfant, Des Colonies, vi.
In 1840 an ambitious young Scotsman named Robert Boyd Tytler made a 10,000-mile journey from Britain to the lush central highlands of island of Ceylon. The verdant landscape might well have reminded Tytler of another island, Jamaica, where he had until recently lived. He had now come to the old heartland of the Kingdom of Kandy. For centuries the Kandyans had held out against one colonial power after another through a combination of deft diplomacy and guerilla fighting from their mountain fastnesses. Two decades before, the British had made Kandy a protectorate, then crushed an island-wide uprising in a bloody two-year war. After the war, the last vestiges of the kingdom’s independence were snuffed out, and the once-remote hinterland of Ceylon came under direct European sway for the first time. The question that next arose, the one that had brought Tytler to the other side of the world, was how to make the land pay.

The conquerors of Kandy had quickly seized upon one prospect in particular, a plant that the Sinhalese peasants had been cultivating in their gardens for centuries: coffee. The cool climate, numerous water sources, and sloping hillsides of the highlands seemed the perfect

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1 Aliquis (alias Stewart Jolly), *Coffee Planting in Ceylon* (London, 1861), 1.
2 Peebles says Tytler arrived in Ceylon in 1840 after three years in the West Indies, while Barron says 1837; without this author having examined all of the relevant primary literature, the former seems more likely as Tytler was born in 1819 and would still have been a teenager in 1837. Patrick Peebles, *The Plantation Tamils of Ceylon*, (London: Leicester University Press, 2001), 55; T.J. Barron, “Science and the Nineteenth-Century Ceylon Coffee Planters,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 16, No. 1 (1987), 12.
environment for the crop. The governor, Sir Edward Barnes, grasped the opportunity, and oversaw the establishment of the first European coffee plantations in the interior. He became a pioneering planter himself, liberally mixing administration with his own business interests. Barnes waived land taxes and export duties on coffee, had roads and other infrastructure built to facilitate cultivation, and moved the government’s botanical research station from the capital of Columbo to a spot next to his plantation.\(^3\) By the late 1830’s coffee production in the West Indies was dropping as emancipation gradually took effect, and changes in tariff policy made the Ceylonese variety more competitive.\(^4\) With a gap in the British imperial market to fill, the island was poised to become a global powerhouse in the coffee trade.

A hurdle remained for the budding plantation enterprise: most of the planters did not quite know what they were doing. William Boyd, one of Tytler’s relatives and employers in the firm of Acland and Boyd, noted in 1842 that his landholding neighbors consisted not of experienced agriculturalists, but of retired army and navy officers, lawyers, newspapermen, bank clerks, clergymen, menial laborers, and a lecturer in anatomy from the University of Edinburgh. Unsurprisingly, mistakes were made: in some cases the amateurish planters sowed their coffee in the wrong season, in others they quickly exhausted the soil; more than one ill-sited plantation washed away in the heavy tropical rains. Though coffee exports rose throughout the 1830s, this was mostly due to the efforts of Sinhalese smallholders, not the whites.\(^5\) As a result, there was ample demand for a man like Tytler, who had spent three years in Jamaica learning the “West

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India System” of plantation agriculture. Tytler brought firsthand expertise to bear in an industry where it was in short supply.

He brought another asset with him as well, something he had picked up second-hand in a London bookshop: *The Coffee Planter of Saint Domingo.* Pierre Joseph Laborie’s 1798 manual, written in English as a “proof of [his] gratitude” to the British who had received him and other French exiles, had already become the bible of coffee planters in Jamaica. Laborie’s book—along with exiled proprietors and the enslaved people they brought with them—helped to spread the techniques of coffee cultivation pioneered in Saint Domingue to Jamaica, making new fortunes in the process. Now, a full four decades later and in another hemisphere, it would serve as a definitive guide yet again. In 1842 excerpts from Laborie were published in the *Ceylon Miscellany,* with his numerous references to “Negros” left intact. A full reprint was published in Columbo in 1845, and another in 1863. The preface to the latter edition declared that “Laborie, although an old writer, is still the authority on all that relates to Coffee planting. The principles laid down by him so many years ago in the West Indies, are those which still guide the managers of Ceylon properties.” Even when the book was eventually superseded by more modern texts, the newer writers acknowledged their debt to the émigré. William Sabonadière’s 1866 *The Coffee-Planter of Ceylon* both mimicked Laborie’s title and included long extracts from his book, while another planter-author, Alex Brown, referred to Laborie in 1872 “that chief of the writers of Coffee Planting.”

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6 Peebles, *The Plantation Tamils of Ceylon,* 55; for Laborie, see Chapter Four.
7 Laborie, *Coffee Planter of Saint Domingo,* iii.
The more than two decades during which Laborie reigned supreme coincided with the flourishing of the Ceylonese coffee business. Tytler helped to develop a system of technical apprenticeship for planters and their managers, many of them, like Tytler, Scots from east Aberdeenshire. Driven by these skilled practitioners of the West India system, and facilitated by the legalized expropriation of tens of thousands of acres from Sinhalese farmers, coffee came to dominate the island’s economy and politics. One observer described the colonial government as little more than an “appendage of the estates.” Coffee created a unified Ceylonese economy and integrated it into a capitalist export-oriented market, with banks, roads, railroads, and telegraph lines all introduced to undergird the planters’ success.

All the while, they read Laborie—a strange point of reference, in some ways. Laborie had written for the world of Atlantic chattel slavery, and his work was concerned with both the effective management and the defense of that bygone system. The British planters in Ceylon held no slaves: unable to tempt the local peasantry into low-wage fieldwork, they instead recruited thousands of seasonal contract workers from across the straits in Tamil Nadu. The Tamils were neither enslaved nor indentured; the planters nonetheless did as much as possible, legal and extralegal, to dominate their nominally free labor force. The workers were restricted in their movements and ability to change employers, and sometimes subjected to withheld wages or physical abuse. Their only legal recourse was often to the planters themselves, who served as local police magistrates and justices of the peace until the later 1860s. In that sense, the Ceylon

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planters could still style themselves as the patriarchal potentates their West Indian forbears had been, despite the increasing pressure of centralized administration and corporate capitalism over the course of the century. Not coincidentally, they understood their relationship to their workforce in ways strongly colored by the legacy of slavery. Sabonadière complained in 1870 that “Tamuls have not earned for themselves the character for gratitude and affection which has hitherto been freely yielded to the African negro,” while a plantation manager who had once worked in Trinidad declared that “on average it requires six Malabars to perform the work of one Negro, even subsequent to the abolition of Slavery in the Colonies.” Such disappointments aside, the planters essentially retained the view of their workers that Laborie had held of Africans: that their “natural state of thralldom” required coercion as the price of production.

The fact that the planters’ most trusted guide to the rudiments of their vocation was a Dominguan slaveholder was not, one suspects, entirely incidental to this worldview. Generations after the revolutionary crisis of the French colonial system, and even decades after the end of chattel slavery in the British empire, a long-dead exile from a fallen slave society continued to shape imperial imaginations.

Such a circuitous exchange is characteristic of the intellectual history of empire. But the second, subcontinental career of Laborie’s work underscores key lessons that can be drawn from

16 The Ceylonese coffee boom proved transitory: the leaf blight *Hemileia vastatrix* struck in 1869 and all-but annihilated the industry over the next fifteen years, leading those planters who could to rapidly switch to tea. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle subsequently proclaimed that the tea fields of Ceylon were “as true a monument to courage as is the lion at Waterloo,” and “one of the greatest commercial victories which pluck and ingenuity have ever won.” Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, “De Profundis,” in *The Last Galley: Tales and Impressions* (London, 1911).
the legacy of colonial emigration and counterrevolution. In a narrow sense, it is exemplary of the impact of French exiles in particular on the transimperial production of colonial ideas and practices. Through geographic movement and through new political, economic, and intellectual realignments, exiles helped to diffuse the legacy of the French colonial system. In a broader sense, it suggests the ways in which the early-to-mid-19th century British imperial pivot toward Asia, free labor, and “liberal empire” that sought to discipline subaltern societies for the needs of the marketplace all had strong continuities with the old slave-based Atlantic colonial order.\(^\text{17}\)

Despite the victories of British abolitionism, the “Second Empire” was in no way a repudiation of the First, least of all in its blend of a romantic progressive technicism—the sort that infused the cloying poetry in the epigraph as well as Laborie’s book—with a bedrock assumption of white supremacy. The joint Anglo-French ideological and material reinvestment in slavery that *The Coffee Planter of Saint Domingo* represented in the 1790’s was still paying dividends well into the Victorian era.

Emigration profoundly shaped the course of the revolutions in the colonial Atlantic at the close of the eighteenth century. It also cast a longer shadow. Even in their absence or relative disempowerment, exiles shaped the politics of emancipation on the ground in the French colonies and in the metropole. The landmark moments of the first French abolition of slavery simply cannot be fully understood absent the context of the shifting and overlapping formations of opposition to abolition, counterrevolution, and displacement from French territory. Likewise, the eventual restoration of slavery, Haitian independence, and the Restoration-era politics of recognition and indemnity were all entangled with the politics of exile. Exiles helped to draw

\(^{17}\) Christopher Bayly has long since shown that the old dichotomy between a “predatory” American empire and a later “developmental” Asian and African one fails to capture the nature of developments between 1780 and 1830. See Bayly, *Imperial Meridian.*
Britain and France into imperial conflict, and both assisted and complicated Britain’s protracted and costly struggle against revolution in the New World. These colonial revolutionary conflicts, especially in the pivotal period between 1791 and 1804, thus appear as, on one hand, the culmination of more than a century of imperial power struggles between Britain and France, and on the other, as a uniquely transimperial moment driven by racial and ideological divisions that crossed national boundaries. The peak of early modern colonial rivalry, in other words, coincided with and was intensified by the newfound challenges to the fundamentals of the colonial system.

Those challenges—particularly as experienced in the transimperial socio-political space of emigration—in turn forced a growing understanding, in the French and British Empires and elsewhere, of colonialism-as-system, a specific historically-constituted arrangement of racialized power and property that was shared by the European powers. Sometimes this systemic analysis took a self-consciously cosmopolitan turn, as with Malouet’s calls for a “New Westphalia” to maintain the Caribbean plantation complex, which he called “the common property of the European Republic.”18 In other cases it was grounded in more traditional assessment of the importance of the colonial system to French national power and prosperity, and in still others—Jean-Félix Carteau’s later work, for instance—the “system”, or aspects of it, were rejected outright. But the systemic frame prevailed. In a post-revolutionary era shaped by the Concert of Europe, this turn toward a systemic view of colonialism is suggestive of the ideological roots of

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a parallel, more diffuse, imperial concert that prevailed throughout much of the nineteenth century.

To be sure, the reconstruction of the French colonial empire in the post-Napoleonic period was not always characterized by amity between Britain and France. The illegal, but widely-tolerated slave trade carried out throughout the 1820’s to “restock” the plantations of the Windward Islands, for instance, was often viewed as a form of resistance to the hegemony of Britain, which had pressured the Bourbons into banning it.\textsuperscript{19} The reimposition of the \textit{exclusif} that formed a cornerstone of Restoration colonial policy was a throwback to the former days of mercantilist competition. Under such polices the French Windwards, together with France’s Indian Ocean possessions, produced as much sugar by 1826 as Saint Domingue had yielded in 1789, a revival long underappreciated by historians of the colonial empire.\textsuperscript{20} From a broader perspective, however, as David Todd has argued, France gradually adopted an imperial “policy of collaboration with Britain, to preserve and enhance France’s stake in the exploitation of the extra-European world.”\textsuperscript{21} This collaborative policy was determined, above all, by the constraints of British maritime dominance and France’s diminished position on the post-Napoleonic world stage; yet it also reflected a shared imperial sensibility in which even continued competition constituted a form of “co-operative emulation.”\textsuperscript{22}

The legacy of the revolutions in the colonial Caribbean continued to shape that sensibility. In the short term, plantation society and chattel slavery were fortified and

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\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 156.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 162.
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expanded—often with the involvement of French émigrés—in places such as Trinidad, Cuba, and the Ile-de-France (Mauritius). Yet even where Atlantic slavery did not extend, and well after the abolitions of 1838 and 1848, the old French colonial order and its diaspora exerted an important influence. Thus, even as British planters were establishing coffee plantations in the Ceylonese highlands with a French exile’s guidebook in hand, French settlers were colonizing Algeria, which was widely perceived as a replacement for the lost Saint Domingue. The first governor of Algeria under the July Monarchy, General Bertrand Clauzel, had served as the governor of Le Cap during the Leclerc expedition in Saint Domingue in 1802 and married into a planter family. Like the British in Ceylon, the French in the early stages of Algerian colonization sought to replicate the West Indian model of tropical plantation production with crops like sugar and cotton, and similarly relied on a combination of primarily-free labor and mass expropriation of indigenous land.  

Todd notes that the “increasing capacity of Europeans to collaborate between themselves,” which drove renewed imperial expansion by Britain, France, and other powers after 1815, was strengthened by ideological commonalities, including the rise of political and economic liberalism and the concept of “the West.” Placed in the context of the deeper history of colonial emigration and counterrevolution, however, this shared “developmental” logic appears part of a longer trend with at least partial roots in the transimperial reactions to the crisis of the “predatory” model of Atlantic racial capitalism. The international reception of exiled planter perspectives—and accordingly of their dominant strain of imperial nostalgia—was hardly

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23 Ibid., 171. Clauzel also had his own exilic career after the fall of Napoleon, living as a farmer near Mobile, Alabama between 1815 and 1820.
24 Ibid., 185.
limited to technical manuals: to offer a suggestive snapshot, the Romantic poet Robert Southey
took a copy of *Soirées Bermudiennes* with him on a leisurely tour of the Lake District in 1817.\(^{25}\)

The ideological consequences of the counterrevolution were closely tied to the sway
exiles held over the memory and meaning of that crisis. The dominant role of émigré and planter
writers within the historical literature of the Haitian Revolution has been noted at length. While
exile narratives of the revolutionary era were never univocal, their cumulative effect was to
stress the colonial revolutions as an experience of loss, displacement, and wholesale destruction,
one which cried out for restitution if not restoration. Haiti’s heavy indemnity to France—the
final interest payments on which were still being made to the National City Bank of New York
(now Citibank) as late as 1947—was the material confirmation of the narrative victory that the
planters had won within French politics.\(^{26}\) There is bitter world-historical importance that the
first great instance of reparations connected with slavery were issued to slaveholders. Nor, of
course, would this be the last such case. Slavery ended in Saint Domingue, as it would end
decades later throughout the entire British, then French, colonial empires. But the moral and
historical logic of reparations points to the deeper commitments that would persist into the era of
free labor, above all the marriage of claims to property and claims to white superiority.

In this sense, the history of the colonial emigration and counterrevolution stands as one of
the most consequential episodes in the coevolution of the nation state with empire. It also casts
new light on the longstanding fascination of historians, political theorists and belle-lettists with

\(^{25}\) More precisely, Southey attempted to, but the luggage containing his books went missing, and
it is uncertain whether he recovered it. Robert Southey to Thomas Southey, 24 August 1817.
British Library, Add MS 30927, ALS.

\(^{26}\) Anthony D. Phillips, “Haiti’s Independence Debt and Prospects for Restitution,” Institute for
the figure of the exile as a paradigmatic problem in the modern polity. Hannah Arendt famously presented statelessness and the de facto “abolition of the right of asylum” as a challenge to liberal universalism’s doctrine of human rights. For Arendt, in a world dominated by nation-states “there is no guarantee for human rights outside the political community,” no instantiation of the abstract rights of the individual outside of a concrete and particular locus of collective sovereignty. She argued that the absolute “rightlessness” of contemporary refugees was comparable to, but in fact even more totalizing than, the condition of slavery, since “even slaves still belonged to some sort of human community.”27 Raymond Williams echoed Arendt when he identified the exile as in a “curiously ambiguous position, for while the rights in question may be called individual, the condition of their guarantee is inevitably social.” The exile—and here Williams was thinking of exile as a broader intellectual posture as much as a concrete social condition—cannot finally believe in any social guarantee; to him, because this is the pattern of his own living, almost all association is suspect.”28

The intellectual and cultural fecundity of the exiles who, like Arendt herself, faced this predicament at the hands of 20th century dictatorships, has, on the other hand, contributed to a valorization of the condition of exile—especially, though not exclusively, on the left—as site of resilience, creativity, principled dissidence, and an honest reckoning with the alienating conditions of modernity as a whole. “Modern Western culture is in large part the work of exiles, émigrés, refugees,” Edward Saïd declared. Unlike its historically-twinned force of nationalism, he argued, “exile is never the state of being satisfied, placid, or secure.”29 Paul Gilroy’s cultural

28 Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (New York: Anchor Books, 1960), 310; this discussion of exile was part of Williams’ critique of Orwell’s relationship to socialism.
history of the titular *Black Atlantic* likewise posits the creative energies of the transnational African diaspora as the “counterculture of modernity,” a foil to “national and nationalistic perspectives” and the supposed “integrity and purity of cultures.” Gilroy presents his subjects with Biblical overtones as a “people in but not necessarily of the modern, western world,” and their movements as an oppositional force to the tidy strictures of the nation state and what he sees as the post-Enlightenment schism of politics and ethics. For such thinkers, exile or diaspora represents a kind of prophetic witness to the poverty of essentialist categories of belonging.

The history of colonial exile at the turn of the nineteenth century both enriches these insights and sits uneasily with them. The émigré as a phenomenon and as a category demonstrates as well as anything the paradox of universalism and particularism Arendt identified at the heart of political modernity: the disjunction between the rights of man and those of the citizen. Constituted by, and in many ways constitutive of, the French Revolution, the revolutionary emigration occupies a critical juncture in the history of modern exile. French republicanism established itself on doctrines of rights pertaining to the abstract individual, but the guarantor of those rights, the republic itself, remained a geographically and socially bounded collective. Emigration therefore assumed a new political significance not just as the abandonment of the soil of the *patrie* but of the betrayal of the shared revolutionary project of citizenship, a project defined by its exclusions as well as its inclusions. This significance

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31 Ibid., 29-39.
32 Émigrés were not precisely stateless people in the Arendtian sense however; as Miranda Spieler has shown in her study of deportation in Guiana, France still claimed them, if only to exclude and punish them, in a liminal space at the republic’s literal and conceptual margins. Spieler, *Empire and Underworld*, passim.
became all the more urgent and fraught in the colonies, where the boundaries of citizenship were in violent flux and where and where what the “inviolable and sacred right of property,” as the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen put it, already deprived hundreds of thousands of people of the “right to have rights.”

As scholars such as Uday Mehta and Andrew Sartori have explored, the British liberal tradition held its own quandaries of universality and particularity, particularly with respect to the empire. French colonial exiles occupy an awkward and revealing place within the sweep of British imperial history in the long transition to the “liberal empire” of the mid-nineteenth century. Many were Anglophiles who sought to align themselves with Britain because of its attractions as a constitutional and commercial state. At the same time, they helped to facilitate Britain’s defense of and further investment in plantation slavery at a time when it was coming under sustained attack in the metropole. Moreover, as British rule extended temporarily or permanently over Francophone and other colonial societies, the question of where British laws and liberties did or did not extend became increasingly complicated by competing demands of distinct elements of the counterrevolutionary coalition. The interests of British and French slaveholders had never been more aligned—and yet even some British planters deprecated French colonial society as a foil for their own political aspirations. In all these respects the colonial emigration moved both with and against the grain of wider developments in British imperial history. Exiles were figures of both the past and the future.

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The contemporary wave of colonial exiles—whether they were officially labelled émigrés or not—also anticipated many of the characteristic sociopolitical patterns of exile in later decades and centuries. Across multiple nations, the colonial exiles were met with the now-familiar contrast of an outpouring of humanitarian concern with suspicion, securitization and “extreme vetting.” Exile created diasporic routes and communities—black and colored as well as white—that generated new forms of cultural, economic, and intellectual exchange. Their displacement meanwhile became one of the primary ways that the great matters at stake in the Caribbean revolutions—slavery, white supremacy, plantation capitalism, metropole-colony relations, and imperial rivalry—were mediated into public consciousness and political debate across Europe and the Americas. The mass experience of dislocation, dispossession and suffering, and especially the firsthand narration of this experience in some of the modern era’s first flowering of “witness literature,” played a central role in the struggle to define what those revolutions meant, not merely for France but for the Western world. In all these respects the colonial emigration prefigures the phenomenon of exile as it has come to be understood in a world whose political bestiary the French Revolution did so much to populate.

In one sense, therefore, one sees in the colonial exilic experience the historical importance of what Gilroy identifies as “the flows, exchanges, and in-between elements that call the very desire to be centered into question.”35 Yet the splintering and geographic dispersal of French colonial society ultimately helped to reconstitute forms of imperial rule grounded in the essentialism of race. Exiles were never univocal. Nonetheless, the central fact of the politics of the colonial emigration, whether counterrevolutionary, republican, or somewhere in between, was the attempt to rehabilitate and reconstruct, and indeed expand, a system predicated on white

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35 Gilroy, The Black Atlantic, 190.
supremacy. The displacement and foreign co-option of a large segment of French colonial society was a challenge for the ascendant French nationalism of the revolutionary enterprise. So too, was the struggle of Africans for liberation, a struggle that likewise reached across islands and borders. Yet these two forces pressing against the republican project from its margins were fundamentally antagonistic, even if, as with Jean Kina’s career in Martinique, the counterrevolution produced its own forms of unexpected political possibility. The unsettling of national boundaries made possible new attempts to rearticulate and reestablish lines between races, and to empower old hierarchies across a widening transimperial sphere of action and ideas. Facing unprecedented challenges from above and below, white supremacy itself reached outward, and became more self-consciously cosmopolitan. As this history suggests, there is no inherent contradiction, and may often be a causal relationship, between an outward-looking fluidity along one axis of social organization and a hardening of boundaries along another.

If revolutionaries had no monopoly on transnational exchanges and perspectives, neither did they compose the only motive and transformative force in the colonial Atlantic. The political opening created by the crisis of the colonial Old Regime allowed sudden free play to competing and overlapping visions of freedom: freedom of trade, freedom of property, freedom from debt, elite freedom from metropolitan interference, alongside freedom of popular political participation, freedom from kings or freedom from the lash. The exilic perspective reveals the Atlantic colonial conflicts at the turn of the 19th century less as simple tug of war between progress and reaction than as a chaotic collision of shifting alliances of local, national, and transnational actors, most desiring a break from the old order in one way or another. And when change did come, it would be the child of both revolution and the transimperial counterrevolution writ large—not just the military alliance against republicanism and
emancipation, but the entire constellation of adaptive reactions to revolutionary radicalism in imperial praxis and ideology. A colonial system chastened by reformers but in full possession of white supremacist assumptions would expand to new corners of the globe. In assessing the consequences of the Caribbean revolutions, as well as the wider contributions of the African diaspora to Atlantic history, it is thus important to account for the ways in which these legacies were mediated and transformed by their own opposites.

Scholars and intellectuals, by historical fashion and perhaps by nature, tend to aspire to their own form of cosmopolitanism as denizens of the Republic of Letters, a standpoint that informs their perception of all things mobile. If the story of these imperial exiles—not least their victories in the internecine struggles of that republic—can suggest a broader lesson, perhaps it lies in the ambivalence of movement, hybridity, boundary-crossing, and the like, which have never held a single moral valence or been the sole property of a single political tendency. The notion of the prophetic witness of exile, with its Jewish and Christian antecedents, is a deep-rooted and powerful idea. Yet the view from outside or in-between may prove as doubtful as the view from nowhere.
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