



Encyclopédie noire

THE MAKING OF
MOREAU DE SAINT-MÉRY'S
INTELLECTUAL
WORLD

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Introduction

Notes toward a Communal Biography of Moreau de Saint-Méry

Lundi 30 du présent mois de juin, à neuf heures précises du matin, on fera la vente de divers meubles, effets & Livres (dont 200 volumes Anglois & une Encyclopédie, édition de Paris, en 35 volumes *in-folio*) appartenans à M^e Moreau de Saint-Méry, dans sa maison rue du Conseil. Il a aussi à vendre un Mulâtre perruquier pour homme & pour femme, & un excellent Cuisinier.

FIGURE 1. “Biens et effets à vendre: Lundi 30 du présent mois de juin,” *Affiches américaines* (Cap Français, Saint-Domingue), June 18, 1783, [4]. The advertisement reads, “To be sold, Monday, the 30th of the present month of June, at exactly nine o’clock in the morning, various furniture, effects and books (including 200 volumes in English and an *Encyclopédie*, Parisian edition, in 35 volumes *in folio*) belonging to M. Moreau de Saint-Méry, at his house on Conseil Street. He is also selling a mulâtre wigmaker for men and women, and an excellent cook.”

In 1783, Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry (1750–1819) was headed to France from Cap Français. Born in Martinique, he had been living in Saint-Domingue since 1775, where he dedicated much of his time to documenting Caribbean social customs. The notice above is one of several advertisements that appeared in the local newspaper announcing his imminent departure for Europe. In some of these announcements, he advertised two thousand books for sale. Part of a large library by standards throughout the colonial Americas, this collection and its sale presaged his life as a bibliophile who would own thousands of books and manuscripts, many rare, by the time of his death. In other ads, he announced the publication of the first volume of his *Loix et constitutions*, the printing of which was the motivation behind this particular trip to France. The

June 1783 advertisement announced the sale of his furniture, various effects, and more books, two hundred of them in English (Figure 1). In addition, he mentioned the sale of his large-format, thirty-five-volume set of a Parisian edition of the *Encyclopédie*, the eighteenth-century Enlightenment text par excellence. Following these objects, he casually listed the sale of two men. One was a skilled wigmaker. The other was an excellent cook. The books and the people Moreau owned were moving in related transactional circuits: people, books, books, people. His ability to fund his trip to Paris and the printing of a volume that has sealed his legacy as a canonical source in Caribbean studies required the sale of enslaved members of his household.¹

This advertisement captures the central concerns of this book. Moreau was a multilingual philosophe with multigenerational ties to the Caribbean, his self-proclaimed *patrie*. He was a slaveholding intellectual of the Jeffersonian model, a man who thought and wrote about the much-discussed ideas of liberty and equality even as he bought and sold human beings alongside furnishings, books, and maps.² This book embraces the challenge of contrasting the capaciousness of Moreau's intellect with the extreme violence that undergirded the colonial system to which he devoted his life. Over the course of his career—as a lawyer and judge, ethnographer, printer and bookseller, editor and translator, official historiographer of the French Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, diplomat, and participant in a host of intellectual academies on both sides of the Atlantic—Moreau's livelihood depended upon the study of and profits generated from slaveholding societies. The book moves beyond the conundrum prevalent when studying men of his ilk: “yes, he was a slaveholder / bigot, *but* he was a genius / founding father / skilled writer / man of his times.” Moreau was these things because of, not despite, his investment in slavery. His work teaches us much about the intellectual projects and biases of slaveholding elites anxious to acquire political autonomy and scholarly status for their American homelands. It likewise provides a wealth of information, much of it fragmentary, about the people he studied and how they negotiated the legal customs and personal relationships designed to commodify them.

While making notes on the practice of slavery in the United States during his 1790s exile in Philadelphia, Moreau remarked that “the American people, so excited about their own liberty, do not consider the liberty of others unless it suits their political convenience” (le peuple américain si enflammé pour sa liberté écoute la politique lorsqu’il s’agit de celle des autres). Moreau could have been holding up a mirror to himself and the French colonial state he represented. For example, as president of the Paris Commune electors in 1789, he worked enthusiastically for government reform even while he represented the planter lobby

and argued vociferously against the abolition of slavery and reforms that would have granted increased rights to free people of color in the colonies. An ideologue of white superiority who left copious descriptions of the alleged seductive voluptuousness (*volupté*) of free women of color, “priestesses of Venus” (*prêtresses de Vénus*) designed for pleasure, he personally raised and educated his beloved mixed-race daughter Aménaïde, his child with his freed Black housekeeper (*menagère*) Marie-Louise Laplaine. Their father-daughter relationship is captured in dozens of letters that provide a fascinating intertext to his published work. These double standards about the meaning of liberty and who was “deserving” of it would have been clear to a man who was deeply familiar with arguments spanning the whole spectrum of anti- to proslavery thought in the revolutionary Atlantic world. It is not anachronistic to evaluate his work according to the ideologies that he himself was instrumental in creating, evaluating, and disseminating. He was indeed a man of his times.³

All roads in French Caribbean historiography intersect with Moreau's work. His infamous explanation of the differences between Black and white racial groups has likewise made him a primary source on theories of racialization in the eighteenth-century Americas. His two seminal texts, the six-volume *Loix et constitutions* (1784–1790) and two-volume *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue* (1797–1798), document the legal, social, cultural, and scientific customs of the French Antilles. The former was a compendium commissioned by the French court, with Moreau benefiting from the patronage networks of the “colonial machine.” The latter, a classic in the genre of natural history, was read widely in the years after its publication and even used by former planters to justify their claims following the Haitian state's 1825 agreement to indemnify former French planters for their losses during the Haitian Revolution. The *Description* is now consulted widely by academics, fiction writers, and genealogists.⁴

Given the vast scope of Moreau's work, many roads through Latin American natural history, translation studies, 1790s Philadelphia print culture, and early American visual culture should lead to Moreau as well. He is a figure best understood beyond storylines that assume only a French colonial/nationalist framework as a point of departure or ending. He surfaced repeatedly at flash point historical moments in the revolutionary Atlantic world and as a doyen of historical memory of the hemispheric Americas: presiding over events in the aftermath of the storming of the Bastille in 1789; claiming to have found Christopher Columbus's remains while doing research in Spanish Santo Domingo; witnessing political and bibliographic practices in the early U.S. Republic; compiling, circulating, and archiving legal codices for the global French empire. This

book positions Moreau at the center of a web whose skeins encompass stories that are geographically diverse (intra-American, transatlantic, and transpacific), linguistically rich, and deeply mired in the racial and class fault lines of the Age of Revolutions.

Moreau's achievements were, at every turn, predicated upon his extraction of labor, physical and intellectual, from enslaved people and free people of color. Enslaved women, men, and children took care of him; their work afforded him the leisure to write and contributed to the wealth he needed to amass his research collection. He litigated and tried cases within a legal system grounded in slave codes. He once even proposed that he be allowed to use money from the *caisse des libertés*—a fund containing the fees slaveholders paid to emancipate enslaved laborers—to cover the travel expenses he would incur collecting more information for the ensemble of work he called his *Ouvrage*.⁵ Much as the wealth generated from slaveholding scaffolded the material possibilities of his life, his intellectual pursuits were similarly grounded in the institution of slavery. He wrote about the customs of people of African descent: their languages, dances, religious practices. He entertained learned audiences at the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia and elsewhere with lectures about the ingenuity of the wooden locks used by the enslaved in Saint-Domingue (lectures accompanied by the objects themselves). Although images of the Enlightenment era showcase white men and women conversing in their salons and laboring in their workshops, whose intellectual activity was on display in Moreau's work? He preyed on Black knowledge, not only Black labor.

Even as he serves as the glue that binds together the stories that follow, Moreau acts as an unreliable center whose interpretations I question throughout. The structure of the book, along with a recasting of the stories of the people who made his life's work possible, turn the biographical approach inside out.⁶ The core challenge and commitment of this book is to keep multiple groups in the same frame: the extended Moreau family; the enslaved, both those the family owned and the thousands who formed the bulwark of their communities; and the free people of color who were also the subject of his work.

The project is thus a communal biography, one that foregrounds Moreau's multiple households and professional relationships. To the extent that the biographical genre works on behalf of an individual subject, communal biography extends a reader's focus to the lives of others. These others, so often lost or known only through fragments, are critical interlocutors. Communal biography concentrates attention on what and whom we know and do not know historically. It is a creative, interdisciplinary enterprise that explores the lives of historical actors through prose narrative and close readings of archival documents. It functions

through the accumulated weight of serialized anecdotes, both textual and graphic. Just as important, it experiments with the *way* the words and images are presented—the way of crafting a page, as it were—so that readers have to ingest and process information differently than they ordinarily might. At times, it provokes readerly discomfort, prioritizing the act of wondering that stretches what can be seen and understood. In some instances, it is a life-making endeavor—a pushback against “slaves” or even “enslaved” as the dominant category for studying people. Instead, people are encountered as language innovators; as members of kinship networks; as world travelers; as figures, often unwilling, in transatlantic scientific and moral debates; as brokers of their own social and political lives.

Communal biography, then, has allowed me to explore Moreau’s legacy by re-archiving it to different ends that rebut the worst of the inheritance he and other planter intellectuals have bequeathed us. It showcases how Moreau’s capacity to create and institutionalize knowledge—including knowledge about himself as a man who believed in his own biographical worthiness—was dependent on stolen labor. Every beautiful book he crafted contains an embedded story of hidden violence. We cannot evaluate Moreau simply as a legal scholar, bookseller, printer, arbiter of culture, and diplomat. His life and his work reveal how structures of violence, even evil, proliferated through the law, bookselling, printing, cultural history, and diplomacy. The narrative trope of dismemberment that haunts his ethnographic and legal descriptions of colonial life, for instance, existed alongside physical dismemberment of human beings. I use his life and work to expose violence in the social practices that were as quotidian as they were powerful. I repudiate the values of the system he defended while arguing that his work remains of vital importance.

And his work is indeed fundamental to understanding how the economic gains from slavery undergirded myriad, sometimes seemingly unrelated, cultural practices. An apologist for slavery, Moreau nonetheless left some of the most detailed accounts of the social customs of enslaved women and men, recounted amid the prosaic details of life in what many, including Moreau, considered a war zone. From these narratives, we also know that men and women set type, dried paper and folded pages, and fashioned elegant books in Moreau’s printshop, providing a French and French Caribbean expertise to the early North American book trade that is often ignored. Meanwhile, Moreau’s diligent translations of Spanish-language manuscripts, essays on Chinese culture, and exhaustive compilation of French jurisprudence evince the vitality of American intellectual debates in an age that prided itself on informed investigations into the forces that made the world go round. His mind contained an evolving index of information. A jurist, he was also a cultural historian with strong literary tendencies,

concerned not only with what the laws were but how they were related to *mentalité* and behavior. An engagement with his work repulses and interests me on many levels: for the depths of its casual sadism; for Moreau's keen eye and almost obsessive fixation with punishment techniques and the particulars of typesetting styles; for his vibrant descriptions of a wide swathe of eighteenth-century life.

I use Moreau's work as a platform to explore how and to what ends he, and in turn we, craft stories and generate knowledge. I am interested in why stories are created, weaponized for profit or professional accolade, rejected, translated, consumed. The disciplinary divisions between fields such as natural history, literary criticism, and linguistics had not hardened in Moreau's time, and I have built my study of this late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century world on the premise that these different categories of knowledge did, and still do, inform one another. Many of Moreau's interdisciplinary research methods are embedded into the content and format of this book. I repurpose the master's tools to dismantle his house and ideology, in part by showing that these tools were never solely his in the first place.⁷

Four methodological convictions explain Moreau's enduring legacy to scholars of slavery, print, and popular culture: a deep reliance on archival evidence; a commitment to multilingual research; mobilization of visual evidence; and work that cuts across the European imperial borders of the slaveholding Americas. Each chapter explicitly engages the value of these techniques to relate different, perhaps unexpected, accounts about the circulation of people and ideas during the upheavals of multiple revolutions. Devotion to amassing and circulating knowledge for practical use was a cornerstone of American and European Enlightenment projects. Moreau was heavily shaped by these ideals, particularly the desire to be useful. His prolific production, like that of many of his contemporaries, was peppered with the word *utilité*, what Shannon Lee Dawdy has called "the third leg of the Enlightenment."⁸ Moreau, however, has himself proved useful to present-day scholars in ways he might not have imagined. This project erects an alternate world of knowledge production around a figure who defined himself as a producer of useful knowledge.⁹

The stakes of this project are inseparable from present-day international conversations about the legacies of slavery that address questions of documentation, memorialization, and the possibility of reparations.¹⁰ My goal is to account for the active suppression and careless disregard of the voices of people who were both direct actors in shaping Moreau's intellectual trajectory and recipients of his "enlightened" ideas. This objective extends long-standing discussions in the historiography of slavery and its afterlives that argue "that incomplete history

remains a worthy pursuit” and that “theorizing what we might call the counter-fact, . . . the fact the archive is seeking to ignore, marginalize and disavow,” becomes a way of producing scholarship that is “accountable to the enslaved.”¹¹ Scholarship, particularly within a Black feminist intellectual tradition, exploring methods such as “critical fabulation,” “poetics of fragmentation,” and “wake work,” offers interpretive frameworks and formal experimentation with hybrid narrative genres that push the bounds of storytelling scholarship about unfree, unacknowledged labor and its material and psychological conditions. There is a groundswell of research in this field, much of it inspired by Saidiya Hartman, whose influential research probes the “protocols and limits” at work when trying to write narratives based on “listening for the unsaid, translating misconstrued words, and refashioning disfigured lives—and intent on achieving an impossible goal: redressing the violence that produced numbers, ciphers, and fragments of discourse, which is as close as we come to a biography of the captive and the enslaved.” Her most enduring contribution is addressing what she calls the “fictions of history”—its foundational “truths” and the discipline itself—in a context where “history pledges to be faithful to the limits of fact, evidence, and archive, even as those dead certainties are produced by terror.”¹²

Creative writers have also done much of this work in the genres of poetry, speculative fiction, historical fiction, and the critical paratextual apparatus of scholarly essays and interviews about their writing. In her prose poems and essays, the Trinidadian-Canadian writer M. NourbeSe Philip wonders how one can produce different kinds of knowledge against the odds outlined above: “It’s as if we’re moving towards an understanding that there’s a built-in limit to how much those tools, including the archive, have helped us to this point. And this limit requires new approaches to engage the task at hand, to tell the stories of our time. . . . I feel that we are coming back to the same story—that is trying to tell itself—by ‘untelling’; the same questions, but with different resources, different understandings.” As both a project and a method, “untelling” involves an openness to unraveling/ fracturing what we (think we) know and the accumulated layers of discourse that have allowed us to understand how and why we know it.¹³

This book takes seriously the call to explore “untelling” as a means of retelling to uncover stories about the past that historicism *per se* cannot. The study of slavery demands creativity and risk taking. It also requires attention to the idea that the worldviews of the dominated and the dominant (living in interconnected, but not synonymous, worlds) require distinct and sometimes divergent sensitivities to evaluate. I believe in an ethical code to our scholarship that calls things out for what they were (“enslaved laborers,” not “domestics”;

“brutality,” not “management principles”; “kidnapping,” not “trade”; “children,” not generic “slaves”); it rejects the euphemisms that make palatable the horrors through which our present world was built.

Communal biography assumes the value of informed speculation as one way to theorize the scarcity of written testimony left by what were millions of historical actors.¹⁴ As such, this book attempts to think creatively about truth claims, what we consider evidence, and the value of wondering about what remains unknowable. This approach is particularly helpful when considering questions of subjectivity and interior life worlds, the “no man’s land” of historical scholarship that sometimes evaluates such speculation as problematic when not tied to precise written documentation.¹⁵ I consider subjectivity and interiority along a spectrum of thought—from calculated analysis, intention, and motivation to the more affective and emotional realm. They are states of mind that are communicative and self-reflexive, collective and individualized. Foregrounding what “could” have been for largely anonymous or little-known people centers human beings as a bundle of lived experience rather than ciphers. To capture what people living in disparate gendered, raced, and class-stratified environments might have thought and felt is one of the fundamental contributions of Black feminist scholarship to the study of slavery.

The four above-mentioned methods intersect with informed speculation to build this communal biographical study. First, the archival. The archives of slavery are textual. They are visual. They reside in many languages and the study thereof. They have metaphorical significance as guardians of epistemes and power. They are also repositories of millions of pieces of paper. A project with Moreau at its center recognizes that he was an archivist himself, over and above his work as author, printer, translator. His labor self-consciously generated a vast trove of information about slaveholding societies, and much of our understanding of what it means to be an Enlightenment-era bibliophile and record keeper is evident in Moreau’s pursuits. He trafficked in manuscripts; a paper hoarder, he began his interactions with documents at the age of ten, when he worked in the record office in Martinique. Copying texts and purloining many original documents, he was extremely proud of his “immense collection that required twenty-four years of research, of work, of travel, enormous expense, etc., and that the destruction of several public record depositories in the colonies during the revolutionary storms renders original in several parts” (*collection immense qui a exigé vingt-quatre années de recherches, de travaux, de voyages, une dépense énorme, etc., et que la destruction de plusieurs dépôts publics des colonies, pendant les orages révolutionnaires, rend désormais originale dans plusieurs*

parties). This “immense collection” was used to substantiate the regime of white supremacy.¹⁶

Moreau’s archival imprint is scattered across Europe, the Caribbean, and North America. For example, in 1817, Louis XVIII purchased Moreau’s corpus of print material, and it is now institutionalized as one of the cornerstones of the French colonial archives.¹⁷ The F3 series that bears his name in Aix is almost inexhaustible in the scope of its diversity: handwritten snippets of transcribed Kreyòl satirical poetry by free women of color, newspaper clippings, voluminous correspondence, legal codices, manuscript witness accounts of heinous torture interrogations upon the enslaved. Alongside his personal library of books, maps, and periodicals sit planter pamphlet and essay screeds about why Saint-Domingue had been lost and how it might recover its former wealth. Moreau not only collected but organized his research: grouping colonies and topics together, often duplicating documents that were relevant to both for cross-referencing. Then there are his own voluminous works now housed in private and state archives and museums in Parma, Italy, as well as repositories including the French Bibliothèque nationale, the Library Company of Philadelphia, and the John Carter Brown Library. An extant copy of his bookstore’s catalog is housed at the American Philosophical Society.

I followed the path of these materials. Like other scholars, I use them for purposes that exceed nationalist French historiography, challenge slaveholders’ interpretations of events, pay attention to their materiality, and prioritize the ideas of diverse historical actors. There is no question that archives are repositories of power, filled in equal measure with the silences and the assumptions of the powerful. Despite this, they hold information that cannot be dismissed any more than it can be read uncritically. This project uses archival information in myriad ways: it reassembles it; it plays with and amends it in discomfiting or unfamiliar fashion; it forces us to see gaps and fill them (or not) in ways that produce other ways of knowing.

With regard to languages, this book operates under the premise that a focus on linguistic specificity reveals ideological and interpersonal power dynamics critical to understanding the colonial world. Hierarchies within and between languages and those who speak, write, and transcribe them; glimpses of worldviews that manifest clearly through the particular word of choice (for example, *vika* versus *esclave* versus *slave*)—these are some of the stakes revealed when language is prioritized as a framework of analysis. My sources, especially in non-European languages such as Kikongo and Guaraní, challenge the continued Eurocentric balkanization of the study of the Americas into the dominant

triumvirate of English-, French-, and Spanish-speaking communities. They dispute the dominance of these three languages and the related tendency to falsely equate one empire / nation to one language.¹⁸ I approach language for what it teaches us about how words shape the horizons of our understanding, concurring with Christopher Ehret's contention that "every language is an archive. Its documents are the thousands of words that make up its lexicon."¹⁹

Moreau's commitment to achieving a working knowledge, if not fluency, in various languages provides an important intellectual model in the present. He worked in at least seven—French, English, Spanish, Dutch, Italian, Kreyòl, and Latin—and published scholarship concerning Chinese and Guaraní.²⁰ His engagement with these languages happened on multiple levels: performing diligent translations, negotiating oral and written business opportunities, reading and writing about materials produced in these languages, selling multilingual publications in his Philadelphia bookstore, amassing an extensive personal collection about the Americas in more than nine idioms, and publishing full-length monographs in French and English with type specially imported from London.²¹

In his capacity as author, editor, and printer, Moreau's attention to typography—the art of putting words and visual elements on a page, including letters and decorative reading stimulants—is a narrative strategy with continued resonance. The way in which stories were displayed and interpreted, through engravings, fancy fonts, and often literally on Black bodies, is a prime focus and theoretical tool of this book. The poet and typographer Robert Bringhurst notes that typography is "an essential act of interpretation," and I rely on it to make meaning. As was the case with Moreau's publications, this book uses visual imagery as illustration, as evidence, as mnemonic cue, as organizational guide. Each chapter is embellished with ornamental pieces that Moreau used in his own printshop, a reminder of his deep investment in the mechanical and artistic elements of the printing trade. My use of these graphics is meant to be discordant, evocative of the affective dissonance of his publications that were designed to please the eye, even as the words they inscribed were discursively violent.²²

My communal biography entailed a communal, collaborative process that demanded artistic expertise. I have worked with a graphic artist, Luz Sandoval, to create and modify eighteenth-century and contemporary visual stimulants as a means of engaging with their storytelling possibilities. I collaborated with the University of North Carolina Press design team to nail down the correct typefaces and formatting. These sources picture a method of untelling and retelling, in dialogue with the rich scholarship demonstrating that "the visual *matters* to the rewiring of slavery's imaginary." For example, we adapted paintings to see below the surface level of Moreau's self-fashioning as a benevolent statesman; we

made drawings to suggest collective biographies that explore household dynamics as much as they exist as representations of what people might have looked like. I experiment with the visual as a way of capturing sound and Black interiority. Taken together, these examples may force a reader to pause, find their expectation of certainty and clarity stymied, or feel entangled in a re-archiving process that does not always allow for an easy extraction of information.²³

Finally, this project continues my own commitment to work that foregrounds the connection of people, ideas, and goods across imperial American frontiers. The following pages sketch the movement of enslaved people in the Moreau orbit between New Orleans, Martinique, Saint-Domingue, and the United States. They trace how a book Moreau published about China required laborers from all over the globe, Saint-Domingue and Batavia included, to gather in Philadelphia. Moreau was an important practitioner of hemispheric American historiography and letters. I take this to mean an orientation that prioritizes seeing “from” the Americas (Moreau resolutely identified as a man from the Caribbean despite living in Europe for much of his life); this perspective assumes the relevance of connections pursued across porous imperial and early national borders. His command of a dense body of work about the circum-Caribbean, including parts of North and South America, informed his belief that the Caribbean belonged to a circuit of ideas, commodities, and societies that were mutually interdependent. Moreau’s work decisively illustrates that the “turn” toward extranational and comparative approaches to the study of the early Americas is in fact a return to the way many scholars of the period assessed their own worlds. His conviction that what was happening in Saint-Domingue could be useful to understanding events and ideas in Santo Domingo, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, or Philadelphia (and vice versa) was formed by his interest in the French state and its current and potential overseas territories.²⁴

This communal biography is thus geographically expansive and grounded in numerous archives as well as several languages. It mines the possibilities of visual storytelling. I evaluate a multiplicity of sources that range from notarial records to newspaper advertisements to portraiture. Four print genres dominate the discussion: encyclopedias, natural histories, autobiographies in the form of legalistic memoirs and journals, and vocabularies / phrase books. I evaluate the content, format, and materiality of these texts, highlighting the “unnaturalness” of order presented in the genres that characterize eighteenth-century knowledge production. My work challenges us to see what happens when we view Moreau as a scholar who made ample use of speculation and was involved in “fiction writing” in his own right. His—and by extension other white metropolitan and creole—fantasies of dominance and submission are disputed.²⁵



Moreau is the unreliable center from which these stories begin, and it is important to establish from the outset a sense of his life trajectory, particularly his material interests and intellectual beliefs. He was born in 1750 to a French family that had been living in Martinique for “more than 150 years” (plus de 150 ans) and boasted many high-ranking colonial administrators, particularly in the judiciary.²⁶ After spending five years studying law (as well as astronomy, math, and Latin) in Paris, he was admitted to the bar, and in 1775 he returned to settle in France’s most prosperous American colonial city, Cap Français. He had an active law practice and served on the Superior Council (Conseil Supérieur). It was during these years that he cofounded the Cercle des Philadelphes, a group of planters and professionals interested in the natural sciences, art, and literature. He also continued his research on legal, cultural, and social issues. During one of his return research trips to France in 1788, he became very involved with metropolitan politics. He was a prominent city elector, represented Martinique in the National Assembly, and served as a public voice for the interests of the Club Massiac, a planter lobby in Paris known for its virulent proslavery views.²⁷ In 1790, he claimed he also received notice that he might be given the job of intendant of Saint-Domingue, the highest civil governing post in a French colony.²⁸

After five years amid the tumult of revolutionary France, Moreau fled the country in 1793. He penned a swashbuckling story of his last-minute escape from Robespierre’s agents onto the brig *Sophie*, a ship that carried him and his family to the United States. Upon arrival, he visited many Eastern Seaboard cities before settling in Philadelphia. Any intention of returning to Saint-Domingue was foiled by the events we now know as the Haitian Revolution, which changed the course of his life; he would never reside in the Caribbean again. The comte de Moré, in his memoir of this period, recalls Moreau lamenting, “You do not suspect who I am and what I was in days gone by? . . . I, who speak to you now, such as I am, was once king of Paris for three days and today I am forced to earn my bread by selling ink and pens and paper at Philadelphia.” Far from limiting his exertions to peddling writing supplies, contraceptives, and hosiery, Moreau opened a multilingual bookshop that became a gathering center for fellow refugees from Caribbean and French revolutions. The shop housed a printing press, on which he published an assortment of pamphlets, periodicals, and work of his own that he had been researching, editing, and translating for years. His printing

business, manned by itinerant fellow exiles in addition to his immediate family, published some of the most artistically sophisticated volumes emerging in the early U.S. Republic.²⁹

Following passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts in 1798, Moreau returned to France.³⁰ He served briefly as historiographer of the French Ministry of the Navy and Colonies (*Ministre de la Marine et des Colonies*), then joined the French diplomatic corps at the invitation of his close friend Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord.³¹ He became the chief administrator of the strategically vital northern Italian duchies of Parma, Piacenza, and Guastalla. In 1805, he was recalled to Paris in disgrace for failing to put down a rebellion with what Napoleon Bonaparte deemed sufficient force and lived for the next fourteen years in “noble pauvreté,” what one eulogist called “a state bordering on indigence” (*un état voisin de l’indigence*). Although “reduced to selling his silverware to survive” (*réduit à vendre son argenterie pour subsister*), he did, however, still employ servants; manage to direct and attend regular meetings at a variety of literary, economic, and agricultural societies; continue his editing and translation work; and acquire a large collection of expensive books. He also maintained his lifelong, multi-continental engagement with Masonic fraternities, serving as an officer in the Parisian Loge des Neuf Soeurs, a group whose membership rolls provide a who’s who of elite political and philosophical circles. He died suddenly of a urinary tract infection in 1819.³²

When cataloguing his virtues, Moreau wrote that he was a “good son, good husband, good father, good friend, good relative, good colleague, good master, good citizen” (*bon fils, bon mari, bon père, bon ami, bon parent, bon confrère, bon maître, bon citoyen*). “Good master” was one of the many societal roles that he aspired to, and his self-image was tied to seeing himself as not only charitable but beloved. This conviction in his goodness and, by extension, the benevolence that his fellow slaveowners were capable of, exemplifies the professed attitude that many colonial philosophes held in their ability to allegedly save Africans through their exposure to French civilization and proper management. He modeled a paternalistic worldview and belief in “enlightened” slaveholding.³³

The sense of stature and authority that slaveholding gave Moreau is evident in a remark he made upon first arriving in the United States in 1794, after a difficult, 189-day Atlantic crossing:

[In Norfolk] I saw several colonists from Cap Français of my acquaintance. None of them seemed to me to be as courageous as I in enduring our common fall, and I could not help smiling scornfully when I heard a European settler lamenting the fate that had reduced him to being served by only two

Black servants (although his father had never had servants, either white or Black), while thinking that I had seventeen when I left Cap Français, and now had none left at all.

Je vis des Colons du Cap de ma connaissance. Nul d'entre eux ne me parut aussi courageux que moi dans notre chute commune, et je ne pus m'empêcher de sourire de dédain en entendant un Européen Colon déplorer le sort qui l'avait réduit à n'être plus servi que par 2 Nègres à lui (quoique M. Son Père n'eût jamais eu de domestique ni blanc ni noir), en pensant que j'en avais 17 en quittant le Cap et que je n'en avais plus du tout.

At the time he wrote this recollection, Moreau had most recently left Cap Français in June 1788, at which point he owned enslaved people in both Saint-Domingue and Martinique. It is not clear what happened to them between 1788 and 1794; based on his testimony elsewhere, he still owned people in 1790. Subsequent chapters follow their traces, and it is worth remembering that the seventeen individuals he mentioned here did not include people he enslaved during earlier periods of his life: the wigmaker, cook, and laundress he advertised for sale in 1783, for example. In addition to the material assets (including people) that he owned in Martinique and in the north of Saint-Domingue, Moreau also inherited a portion of a coffee plantation from his father's sister in the southern parish of Torbeck, an area known for its wealthy free planter families of color. Although revolutionary events in France and its Caribbean colonies resulted in his losing some of the capital he had invested in human beings, their labor was still reflected in the monetized value of the print material he anxiously shipped from port to port and in his very existence as a learned man whose education and lifestyle had long depended on their labor and sale.³⁴

Such an appraisal of himself as a "good master," like his conviction that slaveholding could be beneficent, is an obvious strain on modern-day credulity. The philosopher Charles W. Mills provides a helpful way of understanding Moreau's worldview when he suggests that the Enlightenment "social contract" was guaranteed—or rather secured—by a "racial contract." What Mills terms the racial contract in turn demanded that "one has an agreement to *misinterpret* the world. One has to learn to see the world wrongly, but with the assurance that this set of mistaken perceptions will be validated by white epistemic authority, whether religious or secular." Mills's formulation illuminates how the extraordinary violence of slavery could come to seem "ordinary," even mundane. Yet it is clear that Moreau himself had doubts about the veracity of the lessons designed to allow him to "see the world wrongly." In a 1785 speech to a Parisian learned society that he once presided over, Moreau unequivocally stated that colonial life

necessitated inhabiting a war zone: “Servitude being nothing less than a veritable state of war, the enslaved are and must be the enemies of their masters and the noise of their chains constantly warns the latter that vengeance watches and stirs around them” (La servitude n’étant qu’un véritable état de guerre, les esclaves sont et doivent être les ennemis de leurs maîtres et le bruit de leurs chaînes avertit sans cesse cet dernier que la vengeance veille et s’agite autour d’eux). This book uses his and his contemporaries’ own work to surface the hard realities of these conflicts at the level of language use among the islands’ inhabitants, in chronicles of torture and resistance, via stories of forced migration, and through the study of print culture itself as documented in pamphlet wars, ethnographic scholarship, and the amassing of legal codes that were put to use for surveillance and management.³⁵

My narration reprioritizes different actors, often at the micro-level of diction and sentence organization. A straightforward close-reading example demonstrates how one may undercut Moreau’s interpretative observations to glimpse other worldviews. Consider Castor, a young man from the West African region commonly labeled as “Mandingue” in colonial sources. He died in 1782 while working for Moreau. We do not know the cause of his death nor how long and in what capacity he lived in Saint-Domingue. Moreau mentioned him in passing:

I had the misfortune of losing a young Black Mandingo man named Castor, the 29th of November 1782, and the Blacks held his service on December 25th. I even contributed to the meal, which many masters do. . . . The mourning of the Blacks consists of dressing in white for several days and of folding the head scarf in half, put on carelessly, with the two ends hanging behind.

J’eus le malheur de perdre un jeune nègre Mondongue, nommé Castor, le 29 Novembre 1782, et les nègres firent son service le 25 Décembre. Je contribuai même pour le repas, ce que font beaucoup de maîtres. . . . Le deuil des nègres consiste à se vêtir de blanc durant plusieurs jours, et à avoir le mouchoir de tête plié en demi-mouchoir, mis sans aucun soin, et avec les deux bouts pendans par derrière.

Moreau’s construction of the first sentence is revealing—“I” had the misfortune to lose a young Mandingo man named Castor. Moreau is the subject herein: it was his loss and “misfortune.” Although he did not specify how Castor’s death affected him adversely, one can fathom that Moreau was most bothered by Castor’s lost labor and market value. Likewise, it is Moreau’s largesse that is highlighted in this anecdote; he was the generous benefactor who contributed to the cost of providing a meal at Castor’s funeral.³⁶

By reconfiguring whom Moreau designated as the subject and direct object of his sentence (a person, not a chattel), we experience a reorientation of focus. *Castor, a young man from West Africa, died in 1782 while he was owned by a man named Moreau.* It was Castor who suffered the calamity in this anecdote, having passed away as a young, enslaved man far from the place of his birth. We do not know anything about his life. Perhaps Castor was admired and loved; the community around him took the time to memorialize his death despite laboring for a relentless machine of colonial crop production. Moreau's self-referential and self-congratulatory tone notwithstanding, the entry provides grounds for speculation about the material and spiritual beliefs of the enslaved. We get a contemporaneous account of mourning rituals. People dressed in white and tied their headscarves in particular styles, sartorial choices that had their own meanings. There was a waiting period between Castor's death and the funeral. Food consumption was an element of the funerary service, and the enslaved managed to negotiate their owners' material support for these practices. Details such as these draw scholars to Moreau's work as they afford a glimpse, however brief and limited in its own understanding, of other priorities and cultural spaces.³⁷

Moreau's life and scholarly trajectory were thus inseparable from his reliance on slavery. As such, a study of his work is one way of reading the Enlightenment with slavery at its center, neither as an unfortunate exception nor an unintended consequence. The labor and kinship relationships of Moreau's extended households form the conceptual and contextual backbone of this book. These networks foreground the many women in his circle, and each chapter reorients Moreau's family circles within a wider consideration of the nonwhite and international worlds in which they lived and worked. Many of the people enslaved by the Moreau family were owned across different households. For example, Marie-Louise Laplaine, a formerly enslaved woman, lived with Moreau as his housekeeper for five years. She had disposition over several enslaved people Moreau bequeathed to their daughter Jeanne-Louise "Aménaïde" Moreau de Saint-Méry, who eventually became the Contessa Dall'Asta; they collaborated about Aménaïde's inheritance for many years after their separation.³⁸

Moreau also moved throughout the Atlantic world alongside Louise-Catherine Milhet, his legal wife and partner of thirty-eight years. She was the youngest daughter of a prominent slaveholding Louisiana merchant family. Her father, Jean Milhet, was imprisoned in the El Morro fortress in Havana, Cuba, after participating in the ill-fated French rebellion against the Spanish takeover of the Louisiana colony in 1768. He died shortly after the family relocated to Saint-Domingue. Louise-Catherine's mother, Louise Cheval Milhet, had been taken prisoner by the Choctaws as a child in the late 1740s, living among them

until British traders returned her to Louisiana. The most canonical of settler colonial tropes (fighting for one's crown in the face of great danger from competing European empires) and of colonial genres (the early captivity narrative among Native Americans) were rolled into the lived experiences of Moreau's closest relations. They informed his expansive perspective about the colonial American world—across the Windward and Leeward Islands, mainland North America, and Black and Indigenous communities. Louise-Catherine had two sisters, each married to prominent men who collaborated on business and intellectual projects with Moreau: the physician Charles Arthaud and the lawyer and planter Louis Narcisse Baudry des Lozières.³⁹

The latter deserves special mention. Baudry des Lozières was Moreau's constant companion over the course of several decades—they worked together as lawyers, and their two families often lived together in exile. Moreau named his son after Baudry; the moniker Narcisse is an excellent summation of Baudry's personality. Baudry succeeded Moreau as historiographer of the French Ministry of the Navy and Colonies when Moreau assumed his administrative post in Italy. Most important, Moreau trusted Baudry to act as the Moreaus' power of attorney and distributor of his publications from the 1780s to the years just before his death. Baudry literally stood in for Moreau when necessary. I have grown to see them as conjoined twins, lifetime interlocutors: wherever one finds Moreau, Baudry is not far behind. Though less well known outside French Atlantic historiography than his brother-in-law, Baudry has the deserved reputation as a strident ideologue of white racial superiority. His work shared none of Moreau's nuance, although the truth behind the adage about knowing someone by the company they keep does cast them as more intellectually sympathetic doppelgängers than one might suppose.⁴⁰

Moreau and Baudry produced and advocated an Americas-centered articulation of knowledge. Moreau penned ecstatic paeans to his fellow intellectuals, his "brotherhood" (*peuple de frères*) of savants, and relished his role as part of a transatlantic and inter-American republic of letters. "Brotherhood" is an important indication of his main interlocutors. This book pays careful attention to what both men were reading, and I have seen little to suggest that either Moreau or Baudry actively engaged with women and their scholarship.⁴¹ Regarding how best to promote an Americas-centered knowledge base—what Jorge Cañizares Esguerra has memorably termed a "patriotic epistemology"—Moreau wrote, "But where are those who know the Colonies? By that I mean not those who have seen them, or have even lived in them, but those who have studied them in some way and who are in a position to shed light on that which concerns them" (*Mais où sont ceux qui connaissent les Colonies? J'entends par là non pas ceux*

qui les ont vues, qui même les ont habitées, mais ceux qui les ont étudiées sous un rapport quelconque et qui sont en état d'éclairer sur ce qui les concerne). He, like other philosophes of his time, was a person who cared about the movement of stars and the best plant remedies for fever. He was an informed humanist acutely attuned to the world around him and curious about what made it work. After years of working on this book, I still marvel at Moreau's capacity to tune out close-quarter human suffering and be inured to the abuses he witnessed, caused, and depended upon. His work exemplifies the "dark side" of Enlightenment-era ideologies so ably critiqued by a range of postcolonial and revolutionary-era scholars.⁴² Under what standards do these lived experiences and their discursive quantification qualify as enlightenment?⁴³



Just as this book departs from traditional biography, what follows eschews the normative narrative structure of academic writing. Indeed, this introduction and the endnotes are the most conventional pieces of the project. Chapters 1, 4, and 8 form a three-part alphabetical *Encyclopédie noire*. As is the case with the spine of a book, the place where the pages are gathered and bound, these chapters set the foundational tone and politics of the work at the points of opening, regrouping, and closing. The *Encyclopédie noire* is modeled on Moreau's unfinished colonial American encyclopedia manuscript, his "Répertoire des notions coloniales," which was "a long work undertaken to show, under each word of a colonial dictionary, all the knowledge that this word is useful to know, and to make it possible to compare the various colonies with each other" (un long travail entrepris pour montrer, sous chaque mot d'un dictionnaire colonial, toutes les connaissances que ce mot rend utiles à savoir, et pour mettre à portée de comparer les diverses colonies entre elles). His project was itself loosely modeled on the French *Encyclopédie*. The *Encyclopédie noire* serves as a counter-text to Moreau's archive, even as it draws on that archive to achieve its aims. The format functions as a productive method for working with fragments of archival information. Long a source of inspiration and frustration to historians and literary scholars alike, fragments accrue in these chapters to open up vistas into occluded lives. Although the entries are discrete, they have an internal logic when read together, and the people and ideas contained throughout are often cross-referenced in other chapters.⁴⁴

The entries fall into two broad categories. First, they document the people whom Moreau bought, sold, and manumitted. Scholarship on Moreau has made

scant mention of his personal relationships with those he enslaved, although he claimed that he had “possessed slaves since [his] birth” (possède des Esclaves depuis [ma] naissance). As evident in the opening advertisement he placed in the *Affiches américaines*, he owned people who combed his hair, made his wigs, and cooked and served his food. They also managed his household, nursed his children, and washed the family’s laundry. Women, those he nonchalantly referred to as “his” *mulâtresses* and *négresses*, make repeated appearances in the *Encyclopédie noire* as they traveled in intercolonial and transatlantic spaces with their owners. Though the information about them is insufficient to produce life stories, their inclusion provides a way of exploring how gendered and racialized forced labor sits at the heart of how women experienced the upheavals caused by the Haitian and French Revolutions, an approach that differs from the male-dominated and nationalistic stories of the era. Second, much as people from Africa and of African descent served him, they were also sources of information and objects of study. Moreau’s reputation as a lawyer and a scholar was predicated on his professed expertise about them, and the entries demonstrate how he mobilized this knowledge. A creole, he saw himself as an interpretive voice and mediator between Europe and Africans in the Americas. Readers should approach this *Encyclopédie* prepared to use their imagination: to visualize people as interlocutors with their own thoughts and perspectives.⁴⁵

Chapter 2 interprets a series of interimages, pictures about pictures, which I juxtapose with the popular and widely disseminated scenes of Caribbean life in the volume of engravings that accompanied Moreau’s *Loix et constitutions. Recueil de vues des lieux principaux de la colonie française de Saint-Domingue*, based on the work of the painters and engravers Agostino Brunias and Nicolas Ponce, is well known for its depictions of luxuriously dressed (and partially nude) enslaved female and male figures and *gens de couleur*. I read portraiture of and produced in the Moreau-Brunias-Ponce collaboration against two pieces by the contemporary Caribbean artists Edouard Duval-Carrié and Marielle Plaisir. In addition, I have cocreated my own iconography—two portrait collages of Moreau and a re-creation of his household—as a way of juxtaposing self-representations of slaveholders as respectable paragons of virtue and intellect with the sadistic underbelly of the economic and social systems that invested Moreau with his authority. When read alongside the textual *Encyclopédie noire*, the images continue to strip Moreau down so that he and other colonists are linked to the violence underpinning their wealth and social status. Some of the images also foreground alternative community ties that existed within these structures of power.⁴⁶

Chapter 3 also combines visual and textual analysis, setting Moreau’s printing expertise squarely alongside polemical debates about the future of slavery,

possibilities of French imperial expansion, and questions of aesthetics. I argue that Moreau narrated his work as much through its presentation—the mechanics of type, collaborations with engravers, extensive paratexts—as through its form and content. He used print to secure a place in a particular knowledge market that was also a human labor market. A book history approach juxtaposes the mutually informing aspects of material culture, artisanship, and the migrations (often forced) of the people who made Moreau's print work possible. Close readings of two texts ground the discussion: Moreau's melodramatic and autobiographical *Mémoire justificatif* (1790) and *Voyage de l'ambassade de la Compagnie des Indes orientales hollandaises, vers l'empereur de la Chine* (1797–1798), an account of the Dutch trade mission to the Qing court that Moreau printed, edited, and translated.

After a return to the *Encyclopédie noire* in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 examines Moreau's lesser-known natural history projects. I position translation, zoology, and sexual coercion alongside one another—the need to understand and categorize, to dissect, to use words as a way to exert control over discourse and people. Eighteenth-century natural history's toxic taxonomic conflations between non-European human beings and animals reveal the need to consider Moreau's zoological scholarship alongside his better-known studies of the sexual mores of Saint-Domingue. His Spanish-French translations of Félix de Azara's *Essais sur l'histoire naturelle des quadrupèdes de la province du Paraguay* (1801) and Fray Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra's *Historia geográfica, civil y natural de la Isla de San Juan Bautista de Puerto-Rico* (1788) demonstrate how Moreau brought discussions of Latin America and the hispanophone Caribbean into French natural history circles. My attention to his translation of Spanish-language manuscripts also brings Moreau's scholarship on Indigenous communities into focus, particularly his curious work sounding out Guaraní, an Indigenous language of current-day Paraguay, Argentina, and Bolivia.

Chapter 6 continues the discussion of the relationship between language and power. It focuses on the gendered dimensions of sexual assault and the role that print culture played in regimes of physical and psychic terror. I examine Baudry des Lozières's Kikongo-French “Dictionnaire ou Vocabulaire Congo,” where commands such as “kneel down,” “get undressed,” and “sweep” were coupled with phrases such as “your mother gave birth to a pig,” “your milk is good,” and “do you love me?” Teaching allegedly useful phrases to colonists for extracting the maximum labor out of men and women arriving directly from West Central Africa, this rare phrase book from 1803 demonstrates how language was a weapon of war. Its utilité for combatants of African descent conflicted with planter attempts to contain it. The chapter demonstrates that we must commit

to the study of African languages as American ones, especially given that the vast majority of Saint-Domingue's population on the eve of the revolution was African-born and non-French speaking.⁴⁷

Chapter 7 experiments with form and narrative voice. It serves as a meditation on the role that illustrative storytelling can play in exploring the interior lives of people who are marginal in the archives. I use graphics to imagine a listening and reading puzzle that considers Kikongo from the perspective of its native speakers; to examine scribal and literacy practices of branding as performed on Black bodies and interpreted by people who were marked; and to create a short, natural history-style "description" from multiple points of view. Making use of runaway advertisements placed by Baudry des Lozières and others, the chapter advances its argument through reference to historical antagonists. Chapter 8 concludes the *Encyclopédie noire* with a discussion of Moreau's *Ouvrage* and its poisonous legacy.

The narrative arc of the book is such that chapters can be read consecutively or through pairings of source chapters and an intertext. The three installments of the *Encyclopédie noire* may be read alongside Chapter 2, an explicitly visualized presentation of some of the same historical figures and ideas. Those interested in the Kikongo "Vocabulaire" may wish to ruminate more about how it might have been heard when its phrases were brought to life through speech (Chapter 6 alongside 7). Experiments with typography and the visual occur throughout, especially in Chapters 2, 3, 7, and 8. The politics of language use are foregrounded in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. Key arguments are thus further developed and reinterpreted in these combinations through additional sources or alternate methodologies.



CHAPTER ONE

Encyclopédie noire

— Part I —

INDEX OF ENTRIES

- Aménaïde (Jeanne-Louise Moreau de Saint-Méry, Contessa Dall'Asta):** painter, daughter of Moreau and Marie-Louise Laplaine, Moreau's freed mixed-race housekeeper
- Angélique:** mother of two children, woman who nursed Aménaïde
- Aradas:** a West African ethnic group known for their Kreyòl-speaking skills in Saint-Domingue
- Auba, Etienne (1683–1781):** Black army veteran
- Blanchisseuse:** the Moreau family's anonymous laundress
- Boudacan:** a Warri Kingdom prince, hosted by Moreau during a visit to Paris
- Caraïbes and *crâne*:** Indigenous inhabitants of the Caribbean who became the subject of colonial study
- Créole:** a language born in the Caribbean
- Domestique:** anonymous man enslaved and manumitted by Moreau
- Encyclopédie:** a collection of fragments
- Esclavage:** a “moral sore”
- Ibo:** a West African ethnic group noted for being “prone to suicide” when enslaved
- Jean-Baptiste:** intrepid enslaved man who cut off his hand



I begin with an image: a crowd peopled with thousands of Black faces and intermittent white ones. The setting is late-eighteenth-century Saint-Domingue. Moreau de Saint-Méry conjured this scene, claiming that “to see so many Black

faces [*and the small proportion of white ones*]" (d'y voir autant de figures noires [*et à proportion aussi peu de visages blancs*]) had a startling effect on Europeans newly arrived in the Caribbean. In his words, so much blackness seemed to "melt away" (se fondre) white faces. He remarked that it took whites a long time before they could distinguish one Black person from another, going on to confess "that every time I returned from France to the colonies, I somewhat experienced this embarrassment" (toutes les fois que je suis revenu de France aux Colonies, j'ai éprouvé un peu cet embarras). Moreau was quick to note that he soon acclimated to his surroundings, however, recovering his ability to differentiate Black people from one another, with all of their nuances of expression. The *ombres* that surrounded him—shadows, darkness, obscurity—became gradually legible. The passage is an important reminder of the demographics in Saint-Domingue, where the enslaved and free Black population exceeded that of the white more than tenfold. The imagery of Black faces surrounding white ones is literal. It is also an appropriate metaphor for one of the methodological and narrative through lines of this book.¹

This chapter is the first part of an *Encyclopédie noire*. It is modeled on Moreau's unpublished hemispheric American *encyclopédie*, his "Répertoire des notions coloniales," which was in turn modeled on the French *Encyclopédie* and other colonial dictionaries. An experiment with form allows me to work with fragments of information concerning the people of African descent who undergirded Moreau's work on both personal and professional levels. When the fragments are serialized, they emerge as a collection of anecdotal narratives with their own logic as an ensemble. Historian Sarah Knott persuasively argues that "anecdote is a way of recasting . . . shards and nuggets of evidence, of turning absence into presence, what's mentioned *en passant* into the main drama," concluding that "historical interpretation can reside in the slow accumulation of a trellis of detail." There is an urgency to keeping Moreau and his Black interlocutors in the same frame and to seeing the people whose lives he passed through, disrupted, controlled, and narrativized. By doing so, the undifferentiated faces from Moreau's opening quote, his unknown laborers, and the "types" so prevalent in his work—the Congolese slave, the seductive *mulâtresse*—become discernable individuals.²

The encyclopedia format places slavery at the heart of the French Enlightenment's literary genre par excellence. The sheer quantity of information juxtaposed demands a format that balances contextualization, ease of retrieval, and focused analysis. Yet this *Encyclopédie noire* is inherently incomplete. I end the third installment with the letter *P* by design; Moreau himself stopped with *E*. The goal is not to walk a reader from *A* to *Z* but to disrupt the expectations

of coherence, rational “objectivity,” and comprehensiveness associated with this genre. Each entry opens in Bodoni type, a typographical tribute to Moreau’s collaborations with the celebrated eighteenth-century Italian printer Giambattista Bodoni. The entries consist of Moreau’s own words or are drawn from historical documents such as notary records directly tied to his activities. My interpretation follows these remarks, putting them into dialogue with a broader body of his work, historical events, and primary and secondary sources.

A



Aménaïde (Jeanne-Louise Moreau de Saint-Méry, Contessa Dall’Asta)

Aménaïde (“Jeanne-Louise, called Aménaïde, born May 21, 1778,” “quadroon,” “natural daughter [a child born outside of marriage] of an unknown father” and Marie-Louise Laplaine, a “free mulâtresse”).

Aménaïde (“Jeanne-Louise, dite Aménaïde, née le 21 mai 1778,” “quar-teronne,” “fille naturelle. . . de père inconnu” et Marie-Louise Laplaine, “mulâtresse libre”).³

See also Laplaine, Marie-Louise (Part II).

Aménaïde, Moreau’s beloved daughter, embodies the long-term intimate connections Moreau had with people of African descent. The words above provide a glimpse into Moreau’s most important affective and financial ties. He compensated the child’s mother, a freed mulâtresse named Marie-Louise Laplaine, for her work as his housekeeper (*ménagère*) over the period of five years. This compensation awarded Jeanne-Louise / Aménaïde two enslaved women and two thousand livres to purchase an additional woman.⁴ Why would Moreau bequeath such a large sum in human beings to his housekeeper’s daughter? Aménaïde’s baptismal record, dating from 1778, noted that the father was “unknown”

(inconnu). In 1997, Michel Camus published a short research note suggesting that Moreau's generosity and the timing of Aménaïde's birth made it likely that she was Moreau's daughter. Corroborating evidence confirms this conclusion.⁵

A multi-year correspondence between Moreau and Aménaïde documents the close relationship between the two and provides many clues about their family lives. It is unclear where she passed the majority of her childhood, although in one letter Moreau lamented leaving her in Belleville, Paris, upon a return trip to the Caribbean; a 1788 notarial transaction between Marie-Louise Laplaine and Moreau demonstrates that Aménaïde was living in France by the age of ten. By the time she was fifteen, she had fled with the Moreau family from France to the United States.⁶ When the family returned to Europe in 1798, Aménaïde accompanied them and subsequently moved with them to Parma, Italy, in 1801, where her father was appointed as an adviser to Ferdinand I, the duke of Parma, and eventually served as the administrator general of the duchies of Parma, Piacenza, and Guastalla. She married an Italian nobleman, Pompeo Dall'Asta, a marriage that would have increased the family's social capital in the city they had come to rule.

Aménaïde received a certificate of merit from the Parma Academy of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture in 1802 and became a well-known painter (Figure 2), publicly exhibiting "Five Miniatures" (*Cinque miniature*) (portraits) in an 1818 show. This certificate lists her surname as "Moreau de Saint-Méry," demonstrating that Moreau's "illegitimate" quadroon daughter did in fact carry Moreau's family name by the time she was in her twenties. As president of the Academy, Moreau affixed his name as well. Notice of her 1818 exhibit in a Parma newspaper appeared alongside news of conflict between the president of the Haitian Republic in the south, Jean-Pierre Boyer, and King Henry I (Henry Christophe) of the Kingdom of Hayti in the northern part of the island. The pages of Aménaïde's local newspaper thus kept political news from her island home in circulation. Over the course of her life, she served on the board of distinguished fine arts societies, earning an entry in a dictionary of notable residents of that city. A small formal portrait she painted of her father is now owned by Parma's National Gallery.⁷

"Chère, chère Aménaïde" was Moreau's constant correspondent; indeed, he felt her absence when more than a few days went by between missives. "You have promised us news by each post and we receive it with a lively impatience" (*tu nous promets des Nouvelles par chaque courrier et nous les recevons avec une vive impatience*).⁸ When these letters are read alongside a personal journal Moreau kept while in Italy, a representative account of their interactions emerges and a sketch of the young woman Aménaïde takes shape. She was literate and a talented artist.

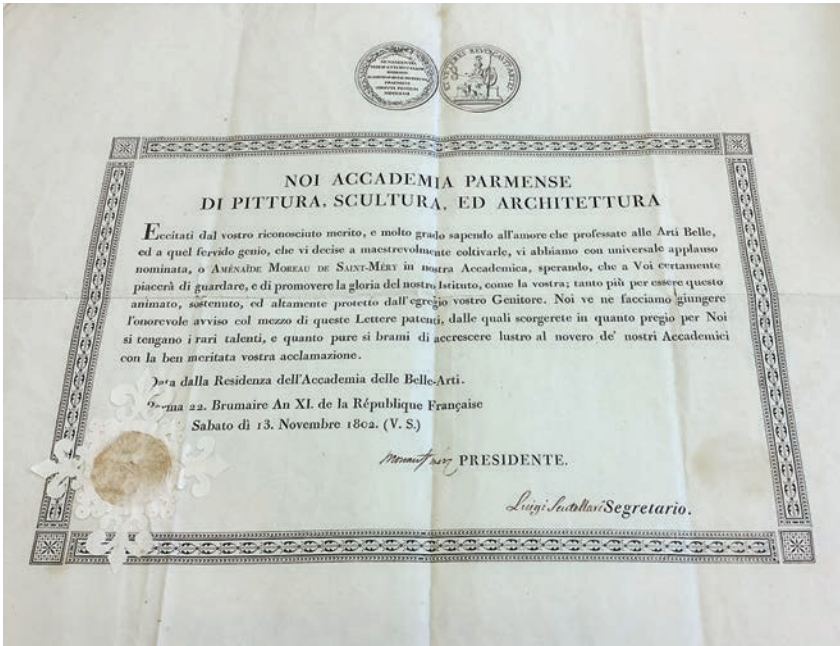


FIGURE 2. Aménaïde Moreau de Saint-Méry's certificate of merit from the Accademia Parmense di Pittura, Scultura, ed Architettura, Nov. 13, 1802. Fondo Carte Moreau de Saint-Méry, Dono Monza, box 6, Materiali per la biografia di M. Moreau de Saint-Méry, "Diplomi accademi," Archivio di Stato di Parma.

He noted that she sang beautifully at local entertainments among their friends, sometimes accompanied by her brother, Médéric Moreau de Saint-Méry *frs*. Entries recorded that Moreau bought her paint and took her on outings to see local artwork. In 1809, he sent the portraits she did of her son to well-known artists affiliated with the Parisian Société académique des Enfants d'Apollon and took the time to report their assessments to her. One such mentor suggested she make her "half [paint strokes] less red" (*demi peintes moins rouges*).⁹

A list of these intimacies continues. When Aménaïde married, Moreau took her bedroom as his home office.¹⁰ The dynamics of a shared household in which she physically occupied a central space thus come to life. We see chronicled his anxiety about Aménaïde's ill health (her "nervous attack[s]" [*attaque(s) de nerfs*] and ailing eyesight) and what medicines he eagerly counseled her to take.¹¹ When she delivered a baby girl that he himself named Célestine (Titine / Titinette),

he carefully recorded the onset and length of Aménaïde's labor. The day that Moreau noted Napoleon's coronation as emperor of France, he also recorded that this same granddaughter had a mouth sickness that had become worrisome.¹² His parental concern is nowhere more evident than when his letters sadly told her of his regrets that her husband was a philanderer and too fond of gaming. "I see unhappiness and sorrow fall upon me, my daughter and my little ones [his grandchildren] due to the foolish conduct of my son-in-law. . . . His horrible remarks and disgusting behavior are the horrible consequences of his principles" (*Je vois fondre le Malheur et les chagrins sur moi et sur ma fille et sur mes petits par la conduite insensée de mon gendre. . . . Ses propos horribles, sa conduite dégoûtante sont les conséquences horribles de ses principes*).¹³ Moreau even remarked that one day he found a lock of Aménaïde's hair, cut twenty years earlier, that he had incredibly managed to save despite his many physical displacements throughout Europe and the Americas. What emerges is a deeply personal portrait of family relations, one in which adieus were made in French and Kreyòl: "Adieu chers amis, des baisers, en pile, en pile, joui" (Goodbye dear friends [his children], lots of kisses, joy). These *tendresses* contextualize continued relationships with their former homes in the Caribbean, ties captured in their excitement to be eating a special treat one evening thousands of miles away in Paris: callaloo, a typical creole stew.¹⁴

Prosaic details of Aménaïde's routines and her more intimate thoughts are revealed through this correspondence. Frustratingly, her letters have not come to light. Moreau's internal thought processes and affections provide a glimpse of hers: her distress about a difficult marriage, her pride in her children and her artistic accomplishments. Without letters in her own hand describing her state of mind, we are forced to wonder. As a child, when was she separated from her birth mother, Marie-Louise Laplaine? Did they stay in touch? Did she know that her mother was a mixed-race Black woman, once enslaved, or anything else about Laplaine's personal family history or of her mother's entrepreneurship? Was Laplaine's biological parentage a source of anxiety, a secret? According to letters, Aménaïde called Moreau's legal wife, Louise-Catherine Milhet, "*mère*." It is intriguing to consider at what point she might have started to refer and think of her as such.¹⁵

In the tripartite racial hierarchies that predominated in Saint-Domingue, such questions would have been important. Moreau left traces suggesting that Aménaïde was openly known as his daughter. In a 1790 publication, he mentioned "a young female child who owes her life to me, for whom my deep tenderness is known" (*une jeune enfant qui me doit le jour, et pour laquelle ma*

vive tendresse est connue).¹⁶ Were details of her mixed-race background passed through networks of rumor in the various places she resettled, or did Aménaïde pass as white when living in Paris, the United States, and Parma? During the family's time in Philadelphia, a city full of exiled planters from the colonies, many people knew the Moreau family well, and *on dits* about interracial couplings were certainly bandied about. For example, rumors circulated that Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, the "spider" of European politics for decades and Moreau's close confidant during their years of exile in the United States, had an elegant woman of color as a mistress. In Italy, the family entertained regular visitors whom they had known in the Caribbean. It is unlikely that Aménaïde would have been able to keep her parentage a secret. "Passing" in the conventional sense of the word would have been difficult and potentially risky. Was Aménaïde shunned or treated as second class? Nothing suggests that this was the case within the household. On the contrary, she was well loved. The phenotypical whiteness that "melted" into blackness in the opening image occurs here in reverse: her blackness could have been subsumed in a performance of white-ish identity and its privileges. Or, if she was openly known to have been of mixed racial ancestry, perhaps she adopted this identity freely in Europe. In France and Italy, for example, there were contemporaneous figures of African descent with public profiles. As someone who spent most of her life living away from the immediacy of large-scale slaveholding societies, the question of her blackness might have been less important to her social acceptance than her middle-class upbringing, social standing as the daughter of an influential citizen / intellectual, and eventual noble title.

For a man obsessively concerned with racial mixture and curtailing the rights of free people of color, Moreau's devoted relationship to this woman reveals the gap between public writings and private life. The person who had one of his closest long-term relationships with a mixed-race daughter is best remembered as the author of elaborate tables and commentary concerning the alleged differences between white and Black people that claimed the latter were inferior. In his description of the "20 manners of producing a quadroon" (*Les Quarterons sont produits de vingt manières*), he singled out this supposed type as follows: "white skin, but tarnished with a nuance of a very weak yellow" (*la peau blanche, mais ternie par une nuance d'un jaune très-affaibli*). Hair long and curly. "There are some quadroon women whose whiteness is such that it requires very well-trained eyes to distinguish them from white women" (*Il est des Quarteronnes dont la blancheur est telle, qu'il faut des yeux bien exercés pour les distinguer des Blanches*). The "well-trained" ability of his own eyes to ferret out racial

admixture was implicitly suggested. He wrote and self-published these words about the importance of distinguishing people of even remote African ancestry from whites as an explicit caution against allowing them full economic and social privileges while his daughter played the piano, one he had shipped for her from France, in the rooms above their bookstore and while she worked side by side with her family doing manual labor in their printshop.¹⁷

When considered in a transatlantic sphere of prominent intellectuals with familial ties to slavery and the slave trade, Aménaïde Moreau de Saint-Méry's history is compelling for the extent of its textual and visual evidentiary traces and the ways it undercuts the legitimacy of what Marlene L. Daut identifies as Moreau's "pseudoscientific claims about 'interracial' degeneracy." Thomas Jefferson's relationship with Sally Hemings and that of William Murray, first earl of Mansfield with his beloved relative Dido Elizabeth Belle are two well-known, if different, points of comparison that test the limits of eighteenth-century taxonomies of racial difference as they intersected with intimate family life. Daut, in the only work devoted to an extended discussion of the relationship between Moreau and his daughter, wrote of how she found herself "endlessly wondering how Aménaïde might have read and responded to the passages in which her father paints such an unflattering portrait of women of color." "Would she have agreed that she was the exception rather than the rule or might she have loudly objected to her father's portrayals of women like her, offering herself . . . as the incontrovertible proof that women of color were capable of virtue by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century standards?" I, too, wonder, much as I wonder if she would have self-identified and been accepted as a woman of color either in the United States or Europe. Aménaïde's life provides an account of diaspora from Saint-Domingue different from the more commonly documented one of former male planters who spent years discursively fighting to recuperate their land, enslaved laborers, and wealth.¹⁸

Yet she was part of their inner circle. The printers' type ornament that introduces this entry and others where Aménaïde appears symbolizes Moreau's idea of his own beneficence in my mind: the smiling central face, the rich plumage, the sun-like rays that evoke Louis XIV's nobility and rank. It is an ornament that Moreau used widely in his publications, including on the title page of his *Description de la partie espagnole de l'isle Saint-Domingue*. The figure spreads its wing-like plumes in protection, in embrace. Moreau, the self-professed "good father" (bon père), safeguarded his daughter and raised her with material security and love; this was possible in large part because of their ownership of other people.¹⁹

Angélique

In 1783, [I freed] a Black woman and her two children, because she had nursed, in 1778, a young female child who owes me her life, and for whom my deep tenderness is known.

En 1783, [j'ai affranchi] une Nègresse, et ses deux enfans, parce qu'elle avait allaitée, en 1778, une jeune enfant qui me doit le jour, et pour laquelle ma vive tendresse est connue.²⁰

See also Nourrices (Part II).

When Aménaïde was an infant, she suckled at the breasts of a woman named Angélique. Marie-Louise Laplaine, while working as Moreau's ménagère, thus would have had the services of a wet nurse (*nourrice*) for her daughter. An act of *liberté* five years later, in March 1783 (Figure 3), identifies Angélique as a "Black creole woman, around thirty years old" (*une négresse créole âgée d'environ trente ans*). She was born in the Americas, perhaps Saint-Domingue, and was about the same age as Moreau. Angélique was the mother of two children, an eight-year-old daughter named Sophie and an anonymous four-month-old boy. These two children were manumitted alongside their mother. As is the case with many of the entries herein, I have extracted information embedded in various narratives (visual, notarial, periodical, natural historical) and given them a new context, a methodology that Caribbean literature scholar Nicole N. Aljoe dubs remixing. Such an approach highlights the life stories of other subjects, often knowable only through fragments, "refocusing on what had only seemed to recede into silence in comparison to what was going on in the foreground."²¹

Several investigative paths yield details of this woman's life. The first involves milk. Angélique worked as a wet nurse, and it is through this labor that traces of her life story can be discerned. In order for her to have been able to nurse Aménaïde, she must have been lactating, possibly after giving birth to her own child months or even a few years before Aménaïde's birth. The manumission record makes no mention of a child close in age to five (Aménaïde's age at the time). Had this child died? Had she or he been sold before 1783, or simply not included in Moreau's decision to free Angélique and her other two children? The very presence of Angélique's milk and the subsequent textual absence of a five- or six-year-old child in 1783 hint of an undocumented story of loss. Or perhaps there was no missing child but rather Sophie (eight at the time of manumission) had been nursed by her mother for at least three years; perhaps Angélique had been continuously performing the labor of nursing for any number of children in the interim.

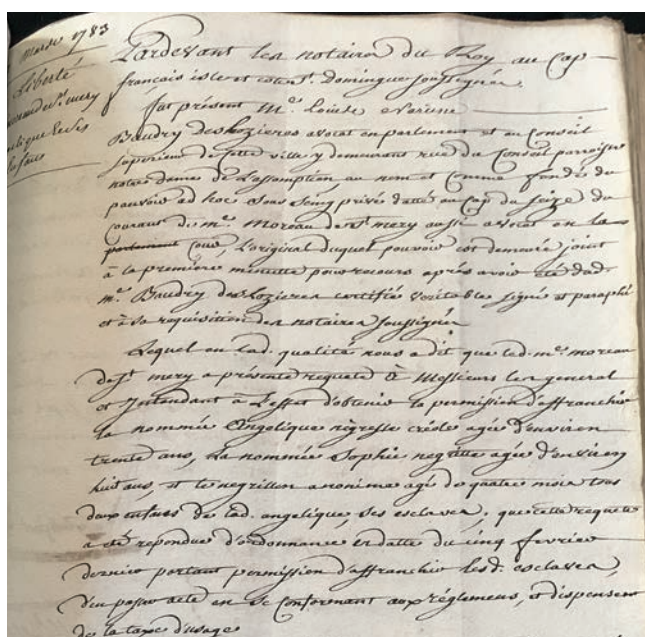


FIGURE 3. Manumission papers for Angélique, her daughter Sophie, and her four-month-old son. Moreau's brother-in-law, Louis Narcisse Baudry des Lozières, acted on his behalf. "Acte de liberté, Mar. 17, 1783, Archives nationales d'outre mer, Aix-en-Provence, Notariat Saint-Domingue, 542, Grimperel, acting notary.

There is evidence that Angélique nursed others after Aménaïde. Moreau wrote that she "rendered the same service to the son of Don Bernardo de Gálvez, who died as the Vice-Roy of Mexico" (rendait le même service au fils de Don Bernard de Galvez, mort Vie-roi du Mexique). Gálvez, for whom Galveston, Texas, is named, supported the patriot cause during the American Revolution and lived in Cap Français in the early 1780s to take general command "of the combined armies of France and Spain" (des armées combinées de France et d'Espagne).²² Moreau noted that Gálvez was popular with local residents, perhaps because, as Matthew Pratt Guterl suggests in another context, they spoke the mutually intelligible "language of slaveholding." While in Cap Français, Gálvez was involved in transactions with multiple people to buy enslaved men, women, and children. For instance, records from Moreau's own notary, Eloi-Michel Grimperel, document that Gálvez purchased a twenty-eight-year-old woman from Curaçao named Catherine, an eighteen-year-old African man named Koyo, a ten-year-old

girl named Hariette, a twelve-year-old girl named Oursène, and a twenty-year-old man named Pierre Louis Bonhomme. In addition to profiting from their stolen labor, Gálvez benefited from the work of a lactating woman Moreau enslaved. One of the many enslaved people whose labor cut across competing colonial regimes, Angélique was thus a Black woman who fed Moreau's daughter and Gálvez's son. These two influential men, a French creole functionary and a Spanish military officer, cemented their friendship through her milk. This deeply personal interaction is an example of what Lisa Lowe describes as the forced "intimacies" of many empires.²³

While following the trace of Angélique's work as a nourrice, I also searched for a name that would allow Moreau's "négresse" to shed her anonymity. It is satisfying to imagine her moving about the Moreau household inhabiting a moniker: *Angélique*, *Angélique*, *Angélique*. It is evocative to imagine not just any child, but a girl named Sophie and her infant brother interacting with their mother or possibly Aménaïde, their *soeur de lait*. Because the law required people of color to be given new surnames in some approximation of an "African idiom" (L'idiôme Africain) upon their manumission, however, this knowledge is transient. At the moment when archival evidence changed them from anonymous people to Angélique and Sophie, they acquired the new names Mirza and Zilia; the little boy became Azor. The unstableness of naming as practice and search technique is a literal reminder that "in the archive of slavery, to be found is to remain undiscovered." Naming people, buying people, freeing people; being named and renamed, maimed, bought, and freed; advocating for one's freedom and that of one's children; having the children of others, some strangers, be entitled to one's breasts. Angélique negotiated a world where these behaviors were quotidian.²⁴

Aradas

Arada women, eternal conversationalists, are rarely employed as domestic servants, given that of all the Africans, the Arada are those who are the least able to speak French; and it is by hearing it in their mouths that one has the greatest test for those who flatter themselves that they possess the Creole language. These women are grumbling and quarrelsome; one can recognize Arada women from the outside by their hips and butts, the amplitude of which has become the measure of all such comparisons of this type.

Les femmes Aradas, causeuses éternelles, sont rarement employées comme domestiques, attendu que de tous les Africains les Aradas sont ceux qui parviennent le moins à parler le français et que c'est à l'entendre dans leur

bouche qu'on peut faire consister la plus grande épreuve de ceux qui se flattent de posséder le langage Créol. Ces femmes sont aussi accariâtres et querelleuses; on les reconnaît [les femmes Aradas] extérieurement à des hanches et à des fesses dont l'amplitude est devenue le dernier terme de toute comparaison de ce genre.²⁵

Moreau's *Description* of the French part of Hispaniola detailed the social customs of the colony's population, including comments on at least fifteen groups that he designated as distinct African ethnicities. As in many Enlightenment-era texts, he attempted to classify knowledge by establishing categories. In this case, he attributed physical and cultural characteristics to different African-born enslaved communities. His goal: to make "all of these blacks better understood by the colonists" (tous ces nègres . . . mieux entendus des Colons). As Gérard Barthelemy has noted, Moreau's desire to classify different African-born communities on the island was in large part motivated by an interest in supplying colonists with the "knowledge indispensable for running a work group composed of numerous nations" (connaissances indispensables à la gestion de l'atelier en fonction des nombreuses nations qui le composent). Ethnographic knowledge was useful for maximized extraction of women's labor for agricultural profit.²⁶

Moreau's remarks demonstrate how the study of eighteenth-century labor management intersected with the study of science and sexuality. The bold assertion that classificatory information could be derived from generalizations about butt and hip size says nothing about these women—and much about their observer. In this moment we catch Moreau looking: a voyeuristic, sexualized evaluation of body parts associated with reproductive capacity and sexual pleasure seamlessly accompanied comments on women's supposed personalities. One can imagine him making a series of mental diagrams or physical sketches of hips and butts, an anticipation of how measurements of head size were similarly mobilized as alleged evidence of personality traits such as intelligence in the following century. This entry is typical of the kinds of "facts" that Moreau deemed empirical observations of value. His misogynist anecdote—women as talkative, quarrelsome, cantankerous—also carried a subtext of deliberate recalcitrance.

Moreau's portrait of Arada women was accompanied by an evaluation of their perceived inability to speak French. "Of all the Africans," he claimed, they were the least likely to learn it, making them less desirable for domestic work in proximity to their owners. Language was thus an important marker for Moreau. In this example, it helped to explain who was supposedly suitable for what kinds of labor. Moreau's negative assessment of their French was combined

FIVE GUINEAS Reward.
RUN AWAY from the subscriber on John's Island, about six weeks ago, a Negro Fellow named SAMBO, and a Wench FATIMA: Sambo is about 5 feet 9 inches high, a very surly countenance, speaks bad English, and is of the Guinea country, but has been many years in this state: Fatima is about the same height, country born, a likely wench, but very artful. It is suspected she is harboured on James-Island. Any person who will deliver the above negroes to the Warden of the Work-House in Charleston, shall receive FIVE GUINEAS for both, or Two and a Half for each.
 Edward Penwick.
 Charleston, July 27, 1786. 98 2

14. Lf. St. Ann's, July 20, 1779.

RUN AWAY
 from the Subscriber,
 About five weeks ago,
 A NEGRO BOY, named
JACK,
 Of the Congo Country,
 About 15 or 16 years of age, and has no Brand Mark.
 —He speaks tolerable good English, and it is supposed that he has taken the Clarendon road, being well acquainted in that parish.
TWO POUNDS FIFTEEN SHILLINGS Reward will be given for taking him up, and lodging him in any of the Goals of this Island, giving information thereof.
 ANDREW BYRNE.

ESCLAVES EN MARONNAGE.
 Léveillé, nation Cambray, élampé
 LORTET, taille de 5 pieds 3 pouces,
 parlant bon Français, Anglais & Espagnol, est parti maron depuis six mois.

FIGURE 4. Newspaper advertisements highlighting the linguistic skills of enslaved people in South Carolina, Jamaica, and Saint-Domingue. "Five Guineas Reward," *Columbian Herald, or the Independent Courier of North-America* (Charleston, S.C.), July 31, 1786, [3]; "Run Away," *Supplement to the Jamaica Mercury* (Kingston), July 24–July 31, 1779, 173; "Esclaves en Maronage," *Affiches américaines* (Cap Français, Saint-Domingue), Sept. 9, 1777, [1].

with admiration for their Kreyòl dexterity. He believed that Arada women set a standard that made other speakers realize their own linguistic inadequacy. Reading between the lines, Moreau's commentary thus provides a glimpse of women behaving on their own terms. They evinced a remarkable level of second- (or third- or fourth-) language acquisition, adapting to their circumstances by learning to dominate Kreyòl, one of Saint-Domingue's lingua francas. Refusal to learn (or display any mastery) of French while speaking fine Kreyòl suggests the community connections these women preferred to enable.

A broad swathe of late-eighteenth-century newspapers from the circum-Caribbean contextualizes Moreau's comments, demonstrating that language skills were noted by buyers, sellers, and owners searching for their escaped laborers (Figure 4). Advertisements reveal the cacophonous, yet intellectually and socially generative assortment of languages surrounding inhabitants of the early Americas. Daily life entailed negotiating complicated linguistic terrain. For example, on John's Island outside Charleston, South Carolina, in 1786, a man called Sambo, with a "surly" countenance, spoke "bad English." Jack, in 1779 Saint Ann's Bay, Jamaica, spoke "tolerable good English." What languages would

these men have spoken well? Hailing from the wide expanse of West African lands commonly referred to in the Americas as Guinea and Kongo, Sambo and Jack would have been able to communicate in a variety of languages: perhaps Fula, Malinke, or Kikongo. Of course, plenty of notices document that enslaved people, both African and American-born, spoke, not one, but several European languages, in addition to their native African ones. For instance, a 1777 advertisement in Saint-Domingue for a runaway named Léveill  , from the Cambray nation, noted that he spoke “good French, English and Spanish.” Moreau’s multiple households provide ample evidence of the veracity of historian Philip D. Morgan’s claim that “without a doubt blacks were the most linguistically polyglot and proficient ethnic group in the Americas.” When trying to recover the experiences of enslaved people of African descent who did not leave copious written records, we must move beyond both monolingual and solely European frames of linguistic reference as we speculate about the languages in which they would have been thinking, speaking, bragging, joking, and dreaming.²⁷

As a scholar, Moreau wrote about communities in which he was embedded. He circulated in at least two overlapping households, and the languages spoken within and between them evoke sound, scales of intelligibility, power. The Mandingo man Castor who worked for Moreau, the Senegalese adolescent Rosine who worked for Marie-Louise Laplaine and Am  na  de, several men from the Gold Coast—they could have known Wolof, maybe Bambara or Ewe. As a native Krey  l speaker, Moreau would have engaged with people—Europeans, Africans, and creoles of all colors—who had different degrees of Krey  l fluency. And of course, there was French, a language that the enslaved who worked for him might have had occasion to speak while living in the Caribbean and France. Each of these languages and the choice of when to use which one and with whom is a reminder that linguistic competence or the lack thereof could facilitate and impede everyday life opportunities.



Auba, Etienne (1683–1781)

It is in Trou where one witnessed the death, in 1781, of Etienne Aub  , born in the Morin Quartier in 1683. A slave of M. Le Long, he went with him to the siege of Cartagena and was manumitted upon returning from that campaign, like all of the Black men who served there. . . .

He always appeared in public in a coat and with a sword. He spoke with good sense about the interesting things that he had seen. I had a long conversation with him in June 1779, and I found him to still be full of energy.

C'est encore au Trou qu'on a vu mourir, en 1781, Étienne Auba, né au Quartier-Morin en 1683. Esclave de M. Le Long qui le mena au siège de Carthagène, il fut affranchi au retour de cette campagne, comme tous les nègres qui y avaient marché. . . .

Il paraissait toujours en public en habit et en épée. Il parlait avec bon sens et avec intérêt de ce qu'il avait vu. J'eus avec lui une longue conversation au mois de Juin 1779, et je le trouvai encore plein d'énergie.²⁸

Etienne Auba was just shy of one hundred years old when Moreau interviewed him, living on a small state pension granted in recognition of his military service. The participation of people of African descent in transnational armed struggles was embedded in the histories Moreau chose to include about notables of Saint-Domingue: both those who fought for European armies and those who fought against them, such as the Maroon fighters living in the mountainous regions of Spanish Hispaniola. Auba's interactions with Moreau reveal how Auba mobilized his dress and sword as a way of claiming his dignity and a small measure of respect in a society that did everything to preclude the healthy aging of people of African descent.²⁹

When culling information from Moreau's work, one must acknowledge his sources and information-gathering processes. He was an avid reader of archival material and the scholarship of his contemporaries. He augmented these sources by soliciting his own information in written and oral form. An announcement in the *Affiches américaines*, for instance, thanked his fellow colonists for sending him "memoirs, maps and observations" (mémoires, des plans et des observations) about the different *quartiers* in the colony that would be of interest to local readers. Similarly, in his study of musical performances in Saint-Domingue, Bernard Camier found that Moreau used a written questionnaire to ask a local theater director about "material aspects" (aspects matériels) of how the business was run in order to complete his *Description de la partie française de l'isle de Saint-Domingue*. The anecdote about Etienne Auba also highlights Moreau's use of oral interviews.³⁰

His "long conversation" with Auba is in keeping with other such in-person interactions he had with free people of color and the enslaved. Moreau used the stories gleaned from these conversations as generalizable evidence to make authoritative pronouncements. In another example, he claimed that African-born

women preferred Black men as sexual partners. As he put it, “I have heard several black women avow it” (j’ai entendu plusieurs négresses l’avouer). Under what circumstances did he hear women avow it? Did he ask them directly or overhear snippets of conversation? He suggested that this preference was in part because of “the advantage which nature or the use of palm wine has given to Black men in what constitutes the physical agent of love . . . to which a white man is but a puny competitor” (l’avantage que la nature, ou l’usage du vin de palme a donné aux nègres sur les autres hommes dans ce qui constitue l’agent physique de l’amour . . . pour lequel le Blanc n’est qu’un chétif concurrent). This passage’s deliberately titillating qualities are similar to Moreau’s descriptions of the Vodou religion and the power of its “mysterious cult” (culte mystérieux). Despite being a white man (*blan*) with a profane eye, he performed his supposed expertise for readers who did not have access to this genre of information.³¹

Importantly, Moreau also recognized that there was a world of meaning that he could not penetrate despite his professed interpretive authority. Moreau’s imagery of a crowd of Black faces becoming gradually distinguishable suggested that along with their faces he was also able to understand *them*: their customs and thoughts had a degree of legibility that a seasoned, native-born observer could ascertain. Although some people Moreau interviewed might have divulged information willingly, he noted that African-born enslaved people refused “quite obstinately, to give details of the customs of their countries. . . . It is only those who arrived when already old who entertain themselves speaking about it or who speak of it to white children” (qu’il refusent assez obstinément de donner des détails sur les moeurs de leur pays. . . . Il n’y a guères que ceux venus déjà vieux qui s’en entretiennent quelquefois ou qui en parlent aux enfans blancs). *Quite obstinately refused*. Moreau proposed that this refusal stemmed from a fear of ridicule, by both whites and American-born creole enslaved people. But from the perspective of the enslaved, all forms of knowledge were potentially repositories of power and weapons of the oppressed. Moreau’s observation suggests that the enslaved received outsiders’ inquiries about African customs skeptically, even with hostility. In these circumstances, silence was thus a meaningful choice. The challenge of conveying the viewpoints of those who refused to engage is one pitfall of relying on planter sources.³²

In another instance, Moreau noted that when enslaved people identified as Mina would recognize one of the “princes of their country” (des princes de leur pays), they would prostrate themselves at the princes’ feet and make “bizarre signs” (signes bizarres) that were unintelligible to Moreau. When his comments are paired with recurring phrases from runaway slave advertisements that obliquely recorded the voices of the enslaved, ample evidence corroborates that the enslaved would dissemble, invent stories, outright lie, or choose silence. Local

papers in Saint-Domingue contained news of Michau, a Congo, “not able to say the name of his master” (ne pouvant dire le nom de son maître). Or “an old Black man of the Coromantee nation” (un vieux Nègre, nation Cramanty), “not able to say *his* name *or* that of his master” (ne pouvant dire son nom, ni celui de son maître). In September 1790, two newly arrived young women from Africa were jailed in Port-au-Prince who were “branded BARRAS, below SARD, having their country marks on their faces, not able to say their names, or that of their master” (deux négresses nouvelles, étampées BARRAS, au-dessous SARD, ayant des marques de leur pays sur la figure, ne pouvant dire leurs noms, ni celui de leur maître). Of course these women knew their African names; they did not reveal if they recognized the names that were imposed upon them once they were forced into slavery in Saint-Domingue. Many other announcements recorded a person as saying that “[she/he] belonged” (se disant appartenir): Were these truthful attestations on their part? The master class and their employees acknowledged that an enslaved person’s not being able to do, nor to say, nor to tell could be an exercise in subterfuge. Unintelligibility and illegibility were intentional.³³

B

Blanchisseuse

M^e Moreau de Saint-Méry, Avocat au Conseil supérieur du Cap, présumant, par la lenteur qu’on met à retirer les affaires dont il étoit chargé, que l’avis de son départ pour France a pu laisser penser qu’il continueroit ses fonctions jusqu’à son embarquement, croit à propos d’annoncer qu’il a déjà quitté le Barreau. Il vendra dès-à-présent, à l’amiable, différents meubles, effets, bijoux, 600 volumes restans de sa bibliothèque, un Nègre cuisinier & une Nègresse blanchisseuse. Il cédera aussi son logement pour le 1^{er} juillet prochain.

FIGURE 5. Advertisement for the sale of a woman working as Moreau’s laundress. “Avis Divers: M. Moreau de Saint-Méry, Avocat au Conseil supérieur,” *Affiches américaines*, May 14, 1783, [3].

Monsieur *Moreau de Saint-Méry*, lawyer at the Superior Council of Cap Français, presumes, due to the slowness of people removing the affairs with which he was charged, that the announcement of his departure for France has left people to think that he would continue his work after his departure; he believes it necessary to announce that he has already left the Bar. He is selling, from the present moment, different furniture, effects, jewels, the 600 volumes remaining in his library, a Black cook and a Black laundress. He will also be ceding his lodgings as of the first of next July.³⁴

In May 1783, Moreau advertised the sale of his Black laundress (*une négresse blanchisseuse*) (Figure 5). The same advertisement also offered his Black cook for public sale, perhaps the same man that he tried to sell the month previously along with an enslaved wigmaker. It appears that this woman was purchased, as subsequent advertisements for the sale of Moreau's belongings did not mention her. The inventory itself highlights how Moreau's personal inanimate effects were placed on par with the human beings he owned. The books and the enslaved were linked, a confirmation that the power to travel, work, and purchase the reading material he needed for his livelihood as a lawyer and public intellectual was inseparably connected to his buying and selling of people. This anonymous woman also demonstrates that Moreau's achievements were predicated upon his masterly extraction of surplus value, intellectual as well as physical, from people of African descent. Indeed, Moreau made a point of turning her job into fodder for publication, composing an essay about "the washing of laundry in the Antilles" (*le lessivage du linge dans les Antilles*). Given that he was unlikely to have been washing his own laundry regularly, he probably consulted with her and others who worked for him, hovering in their work spaces, perhaps getting in their way, in a bid to discover the secrets of the trade so that he could write about them convincingly for Parisian agricultural journals.³⁵

I have found no record of the laundress's purchase, either in 1783 or when Moreau's family might have originally added her to their household. In fact, for all of his diligent documentation of his own work and life accomplishments—archival manuscripts, rare printed material, and personal effects such as diplomas that he carefully preserved for a future biographer—I have seen no inventories listing the people he enslaved, no bills of sale or purchase, no invoices that might hint at expenses dedicated to food rations or the cost of clothing them in his voluminous piles of paper. That genre of documentation, itself limited, is mainly kept in archival sources such as notarial logbooks or newspaper columns. As people they shared the same living spaces. However, sources about the enslaved are housed in separate physical spaces from Moreau's own personal papers, with the exception of passing textual references that formed part of his self-narratives.

Although this woman remains anonymous in the present, she and her enslaved peers were indispensable domestic laborers in the Moreau home. At the time, Moreau had an infant son. Some group of women would have had to change and wash soiled diapers, nurse young Médéric, clean the dresses worn by Madame and the heavy court robes worn by Moreau. Laundresses, like wet nurses and more generalized child care workers, were usually women, and their labor was essential to social reproduction. Advertisements for their sale and recapture when they escaped peppered the colony's newspapers, and the figure herself is a

common one in Caribbean literature.³⁶ Was the woman who belonged to the Moreaus tall, young, shy, bold, relieved to be changing households? Did she have a lover? Were her hands calloused? Could she swim, or did she stick close to the river's edge as she washed?

Boudacan

The Prince of Ouaire spent some time in Saint-Domingue, where the government accorded him the respect that the motive of his trip was sufficient to earn him. Arriving in France, he was received by Their Majesties with an infinitely flattering welcome; and chance has allowed, in this Assembly in Europe's most famous capital, for an American mouth to express to an African Prince the desire that we all have to be worthy of the high opinion that he has conceived for the French nation.

Le Prince de Ouaire a séjourné pendant quelque-tems à Saint-Domingue, où le Gouvernement lui a accordé des égards que le motif même de son voyage aurait suffi pour lui attirer. Arrivé en France, il a reçu de leurs Majestés un accueil infiniment flatteur, enfin il vient ajouter en ce moment à l'intérêt de cette Assemblée, où le hasard veut que dans la Capitale la plus célèbre de l'Europe, ce fait une bouche Américaine qui exprime à un Prince Africain le voeu que nous formons tous de justifier la haute opinion qu'il a conçue de la Nation Française.³⁷

In 1784, Boudacan-Marc, a twenty-year-old prince of the Kingdom of Warri/Iwere, came to Paris. According to Moreau, he also visited Saint-Domingue, where he was welcomed by the government in light of the future slave-trading alliances his kingdom and France might develop. Details about Boudacan's sojourn in the Parisian capital and the story of how he came to be there were detailed in a lecture that Moreau read to the Musée de Paris called "Observations sur le Royaume de Ouaire, à la Côte-d'Or en Afrique." The talk, published as a pamphlet, was full of information about Boudacan's home and noted that the French ship captain Jean-François Landolphe planned to open a slave-trading post there. Landolphe did in fact work with the *Olu/Oba* of Warri to establish a short-lived settlement in what is now modern-day Nigeria, close to the former kingdom of Benin. Boudacan, an Itsekiri man, met with the French monarchs and had his portrait painted at the request of the French court (Figure 6). Why he was dressed in feathers and leopard skin is unclear. These accoutrements might have resulted from a European artist's expectations rather than any



FIGURE 6. *Portrait of Prince Boudakan*. By Joseph Piazza. Oil on canvas. Musée Bonaparte, Ville d'Auxonne, in. 2010.0.61, Photo Bruno François.

representation of his own clothing choices. Moreau lamented that during this visit Boudakan often appeared in European dress rather than “an outfit that was his own” (*un costume qui lui fût propre*). As one of his hosts, Moreau was proud that “an American mouth” (*une bouche Américain*) was there to introduce this African prince to French society. As a Caribbean intellectual, he believed in the appropriateness of his role as a mediator between Europe and Africa.³⁸

The text provided a detailed discussion of the Kingdom of Warri, including specifics that could only have come from eyewitness accounts Moreau garnered from Landolphe. Landolphe, who spent four months living at the Olu / Oba’s court, described greeting customs, architecture, the coral beads and clothing worn by dignitaries, the legal system, the role of women, the use of cowries

for currency, facial scarification, a few words in “la langue Ouairienne,” and a history of the ruling king’s descent from a long-running Benin dynasty. This 1784 speech made it clear that Boudacan came from a community full of metal workers, artists, magistrates, and those who practiced a variety of religions, from Islam to traditional African religions. Moreau even went so far as to critique the kingdom’s reliance on the slave trade as a source of public wealth, stating, “It is thus that Europe augments the crimes of Africa in order to procure for itself, in some way at the cost of human blood, the riches of the New World” (*C’est ainsi que l’Europe augmente les crimes de l’Afrique pour se procurer, en quelque sorte au prix du sang humain, les richesses du Nouveau-Monde*). Moreau’s comments to his Parisian audience, though full of prejudices about the superiority of European customs, differed from his later invective that decried the alleged barbarism and violence of a generic African continent in order to justify the slavery of its inhabitants. In other words, his actual knowledge of and familiarity with a West African society contemporaneous to his own fell to the wayside when it was politically convenient to instead propagate stereotypes that denied African accomplishments in the arts, jurisprudence, and other social forms.³⁹

C

Caraïbes and *crâne*

Among them [the enslaved people of Saint-Domingue] are found mixed in the descendants of some Caribs, of some Indians from Guyana, the Fox Indians of Canada, and some Natchez of Louisiana that the government, or men, violators of the Rights of Man, judged necessary or lucrative to reduce to slavery.

Parmi ceux-ci [les esclaves de Saint-Domingue], se trouve mêlée la descendance de quelques Caraïbes, de quelques Indiens de la Guyane, de Sauvages Renards du Canada, de Natchez de la Louisiane, que le gouvernement ou des hommes violateurs du Droit des Gens, jugeaient nécessaire ou lucratif de réduire à la servitude.⁴⁰

A skull. A skull sitting in a curiosity cabinet, occasionally taken out for study or to be passed around from hand to hand. A head disinterred and blanched from exposure. A community’s ancestral remains. Alongside his two brothers-in-law and other prominent men in Cap Français, Moreau cofounded the *Cercle des*

Philadelphes, one of the most active literary and scientific societies in the late-eighteenth-century Americas. In a discussion of the library and material artifacts collected by this learned society, he mentioned “the head of a former inhabitant of the island” (la tête d’un ancien habitant de l’Isle). Many colonists enjoyed archeological speculation, collecting clues about the island as they cleared the land for cultivation and published natural history accounts of their findings. This skull moved Moreau to pity. He noted that “these unfortunate ones would still exist had the first conquerors had the peaceful taste for study and the soul of the Philadelphes” (ces malheureux, dont la race existerait encore, si les premiers conquerans avaient eu le goût paisible de l’étude et l’âme des Philadelphes). A group including the most prominent slaveholders and functionaries in Saint-Domingue sat in a library, holding an Indigenous person’s remains as they decried the Spanish colonizers for not being as inclined to “peaceful” study as they were. Such a posture infuriates; the irony is plain.⁴¹

Even as Moreau declared these “former” inhabitants of Hispaniola extinct, his opening commentary cited above acknowledged that Native communities of the larger hemispheric Americas were still being enslaved on the island, particularly those from other parts of the French empire in North and South America. The Fox, the Natchez, the Caribs, each engaged in their own histories of warfare, were interspersed among the larger enslaved population in Saint-Domingue. Moreau’s elaborate tables of racial intermixture made specific mention of the “combinational mixtures of Black people with the Caribs or Indians or Western Indians” (combinaisons du mélange des . . . Nègres avec les Caraïbes ou Sauvages ou Indiens Occidentaux). He was interested in how the children resulting from relationships between Black and Indigenous people resulted in particular skin tones and hair that was more or less long, straight, or frizzy (*crépus*). Native genocide and enslavement were thus not events of the past; they were ongoing processes by his own admission.⁴²

Créole

I must now speak of the language that is used by all of the Blacks who live in the French colony of Saint-Domingue. It is a corrupted French, to which has been mixed many Frenchified Spanish words and where many maritime terms have also found a place. One can easily conceive that this language, which is nothing more than a true jargon, is often unintelligible in the mouth of an old African, and that one speaks it better the younger one learns it. . . . And one sure fact is that a European, however much he

uses it, however long his residence has been in the islands, can never possess its subtleties. . . .

. . . I call upon the seductive creole women, who have adopted this expressive patois to paint their tenderness! . . .

There are a thousand nothings that one would not dare to say in French, a thousand voluptuous images that one could not succeed in painting in French and that Creole expresses or renders with infinite grace. It never says more than when it uses inarticulate sounds, of which entire sentences are made.

J'ai à parler maintenant du langage qui sert à tous les nègres qui habitent la colonie française de Saint-Domingue. C'est un français corrompu, auquel on a mêlé plusieurs mots espagnols francisés, et où les termes marins ont aussi trouvé leur place. On concevra aisément que ce langage, qui n'est qu'un vrai jargon, est souvent inintelligible dans la bouche d'un vieil Africain, et qu'on le parle d'autant mieux, qu'on l'a appris plus jeune. . . . et un fait très-sur, c'est qu'un Européen, quelque habitude qu'il en ait, quelque longue qu'ait été sa résidence aux Isles, n'en possède jamais les finesses. . . .

. . . J'en appelle aux séduisantes Créoles, qui ont adopté ce patois expressif pour peindre leur tendresse! . . .

Il est mille riens que l'on n'oserait dire en français, mille images voluptueuses, que l'on ne réussirait pas à peindre avec le français, et que le créol exprime ou rend avec une grace infinie. Il ne dit jamais plus que quand il emploie les sons inarticulés, dont il a fait des phrases entières.⁴³

The above quotations, coupled with Moreau's discussion of the text of a Kreyòl-language song about estranged Black lovers ("Lissette quitté la plaine"), are the most well-cited and studied excerpts concerning Kreyòl in Moreau's work, indeed in much of the work on Kreyòl in the eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Caribbean.⁴⁴ The sexual dimension to his description of Kreyòl's beauty and functionality is evident. Literary scholar Deborah Jenson has made excellent use of other Kreyòl-language fragments, mostly of the vibrant tradition of popular songs she labels "courtesan poetry," found in Moreau's manuscript collection "Notes historiques." She has found ample evidence in these song fragments of the rarely recorded voices of nonwhite women who provide a "literary inscription of the process of unbecoming slaves, of discovering a public space of choice and power negotiations around the politics not of colony or nation, but shared bodies

and affect.” She transcribes and translates multiple versions of one song Moreau collected, “Na rien qui dous,” an example of what she terms “indigo blues” because of how it portrays a discussion between two female indigo workers about the possibilities of sexualized labor. It contains the lyrics:

Comment toi vlé gagner cote?	How do you expect to gain status?
Si tos pas gagner largent	If you don't earn money
Yo vas dit, femme la li sotte	They will say that woman there is an idiot
Li pas connait fair paiyer blanc	She doesn't know how to make whites pay
Femme qui sote cé comme sa yo fair	Women who are idiots, that's what they do
Yo rauséyo, sa fait nou piquié	They [men] beat them, which makes us pity them
Comment toi vlé gagner côte	How do you expect to gain status
Si tos pas gagne[r] largent?	If you don't earn money?
Yo vas dis femme la li sôte	They will say that woman there is an idiot
Li pas connait fai paiye[r] blanc	She doesn't know how to make whites pay.

Jenson notes Moreau's comments about the “celebrity status” of well-known courtesans in Saint-Domingue, and her work illustrates how Moreau—eager to listen to, collect, and archive popular cultural forms—facilitated the ability of many generations of scholars to read with and against his analyses.⁴⁵

Other Kreyòl transcriptions allow the aural worlds of the enslaved to be heard, even as Moreau perhaps missed the point of the utterances he collected. For instance, he documented that Black people used to ring the bells of the church in Cap Français with “deafening peals” (*carillons assourdissants [sic]*). The “sepulchral sound” (*son sèpulcral*) of the bells announcing a funeral occasioned the bell ringers and other enslaved people to say: a “*Bon blanc mourì: mauvé rété*.” Moreau translated this saying as: “Un bon blanc est mort: les méchants restent” (A good white is dead. The mean ones remain). The double entendre here suggests that in sum the best white was a dead white. This short expression provides a view into the enslaved's world of satire and humor.⁴⁶ Moreau's use of it is in keeping with other instances when he discussed Kreyòl as a way to explain that “Blacks love proverbs and sentences. They even have some that are very moral” (*les nègres aiment les proverbes et les sentences. Ils en ont même de très-moraux*). When Moreau wished to add another layer of authority to his statements, he included

Kreyòl to show that local inhabitants, often the enslaved, would have agreed with his assessment. In the aforementioned entry on the Aradas, for example, he further noted that they were reputed to be “greedy” (avare) and “dog eaters” (mangeur de chiens). He remarked that other enslaved people developed the proverbial expressions “Rada mangé chien” and “Varichié tan com’ Rada.” The insertion of Kreyòl in his written work thus sometimes allowed Moreau to mobilize the opinions of the enslaved as back-up evidence supposedly demonstrating the accuracy of his own opinions, a technique of co-option.⁴⁷

The opening remarks of this entry exemplify Moreau’s incorporation of historically inaccurate and biased information. Eighteenth-century Kreyòl was not a “jargon,” and it consisted of more than Frenchified Spanish words and mariner terms combined with “corrupted” French. In this case, the complete absence of any allusions to the African languages that formed both the substrate and lexical sources of Kreyòl is curious. Furthermore, while stating that it was a language that “creoles of all colors loved to entertain themselves in” (*Créols [de toutes les couleurs] aiment à s’entretenir*), Moreau suggested that it was the *only* language Blacks shared among themselves (*les nègres n’en ont pas d’autre entr’eux*). This statement is patently inaccurate given how many African-born slaves lived in Saint-Domingue and spoke mutually intelligible languages. The very existence of the Kikongo “Dictionnaire ou Vocabulaire Congo” (discussed in Chapter 6), a text published by his own brother-in-law, Louis Narcisse Baudry des Lozières, negates Moreau’s claim.⁴⁸

Moreau himself documented the presence of African languages in Saint-Domingue in a story about the Jesuit priest Pierre-Louis Boutin. During Boutin’s long residence on the island from 1705 until his death in 1742, he made “the study of the numerous African languages and the morals / customs of those who lived in that part of the world his principle study” (*l’étude des nombreux idiomes de l’Afrique, celle des moeurs des hommes qui habitent cette partie du monde, était la principale application du père Boutin*). In the first decades of the eighteenth century, there was thus a precedent for studying African languages, made possible by what Moreau characterized as Boutin’s close attention to the physical and spiritual health of the Black population of Cap Français. He noted that although some thought that the priest’s “zeal . . . sometimes went too far” (*zèle . . . avait été quelquefois trop loin*), the local community mourned his death. Implying in one part of his work that people of African descent spoke only Kreyòl among themselves and using other commentary to present anecdotal evidence about the presence of African languages on the island exemplifies the contradictory information and misinterpretations in Moreau’s work about the customs surrounding him.⁴⁹

D

Domestique

I have freed five [of my slaves]. . . . In 1788, my Domestic, who, for 16 years, preferred to be mine as opposed to owning himself, who would have followed me to France, who would attach himself to me again if I returned to Saint-Domingue.

J'en ai affranchi cinq [de mes esclaves]. . . . En 1788, mon Domestique, qui avait préféré, pendant 16 ans, d'être à moi plutôt qu'à lui-même, qui aurait voulu me suivre en France, et qui s'attacherait encore à moi, si je retournais à Saint-Domingue.⁵⁰

Moreau enslaved a man who worked as his domestic servant for sixteen years. According to Moreau's dates, this man would have entered his service in 1772, when Moreau was twenty-two. At the time, Moreau was completing a law degree in France, and he returned briefly to Martinique in 1774, where he visited his family before moving to Saint-Domingue in May 1775. While in Fort Royal, he took possession of some belongings, including "un domestique," some furnishings, a personal library he valued at four thousand French francs, and enough cash that he was able to temporarily loan his new legal mentor in Cap Français, Monsieur d'Augy, fifty Portuguese gold coins to purchase a man named Pierre, a *mulâtre* cook who arrived on the same boat from Martinique that carried some of Moreau's other possessions. This was no insignificant sum of money and assets. Again, Moreau's books and the people he owned circulated together. This male domestique from Martinique could very well have been the same man he freed in 1788. As recorded in both the *Mémoire justificatif* and his marriage contract, Moreau owned "several slaves" (plusieurs esclaves) in Martinique, many left there for "the usage of the lady, his mother" (l'usage à la dame, sa mère).⁵¹

This man is just the type of interlocutor a reader should keep in mind. He is now a silent figure in the shadows, one who lived and labored alongside Moreau for virtually Moreau's entire adult life in the colonies. What gossip might he have heard about notable locals as he attended to his master? What details could he share about the life of a man whom he served at such close quarters? Perhaps he cared for his clothing and helped him dress; during bouts of Moreau's gout, maybe he brought him diluted beer (acquired from Bristol in England), as Moreau himself suggested was a helpful remedy when feverish. At the time he

appeared briefly in the printed record, Moreau and his family could no doubt have related countless details about what this anonymous man looked like, the timbre of his voice, and how he interacted with other members of the household and the neighbors living nearby on Rue de Conseil. They might have known where he decided to live and how he was able to earn a living after being freed.⁵²

As was the case when Moreau discussed his “young Mandingo man named Castor” (*jeune nègre Mondongue, nommé Castor*), Moreau’s choice of words when describing his relationship with his enslaved domestic is instructive: “preferred to be mine,” “followed me,” “attach himself.” The verbs imply desire and free will on the part of this man, although he did not have the legal right to make decisions about his own welfare. The content of Moreau’s comments is entirely self-referential. Can a modern-day audience believe that this man cared for him so much that he would rather belong to Moreau than “owning himself” and that he would willingly have returned to his service again after being manumitted? There is a delusional quality to such claims. It is possible that the two men developed a closeness despite the forced nature of their relationship. It is possible that this man might have wanted to continue in Moreau’s employ as a paid servant following manumission given the difficulties he could have faced finding paid employment as a free man of color. It is also probable that Moreau saw what he wanted to see and heard professions of devotion that he wanted to hear.⁵³

Moreau’s interpretations, here and in other examples, claimed access to the interior lives of the enslaved. He presumed no conflict of opinion or interest when assessing their motivations, feelings, or beliefs. For instance, while positing that the tears of the enslaved were mostly insincere, he claimed: “I am not so unjust as to pretend that the tears of the Blacks are always feigned. There are some Blacks who cry because their hearts are broken, whose eyes tear up for a long time afterward when they speak of objects that were dear to them, such as their masters whom they have loved and served with estimable fidelity” (*Je ne suis pas assez injuste pour prétendre que les larmes des nègres sont toujours étudiées; il est des nègres qui pleurent parce que leur coeur est déchiré, dont les yeux se mouillent lorsque long-tems encore après, ils parlent de quelques objets qui leur étaient chers, et parmi lesquels ils comptent des maîtres qu’ils ont aimés et servis avec une estimable fidélité*). In a context that would have given enslaved people many reasons for despair, the example Moreau provided of their sincere grief was occasioned by sadness to be separated from the very people who held them in bondage. Moreau’s account of mutual respect and care between his class and the people of African descent around him offers textbook examples of how what Toni Morrison calls an “Africanist presence” enabled white conceptions of selfhood.⁵⁴

At one point in his life, Moreau mentioned having seventeen “domestics.” We know of others: Castor, the laundress, the cook, the wigmaker, Angélique, Sophie, Myrtille, and Rosine. Would this anonymous man have known these other people well? Enslaved women named Martonne, Agathe, and Sylvie also lived with Moreau. “Seventeen and counting” has served as a mantra as I have endeavored to track them down, knowing full well that the number is an inaccurate guide to how many women, children, and men Moreau and his immediate family might have owned over the course of his life. These pages serve to gather the people living in his multiple households. Their names and their anonymity claim space.

E

Encyclopédie

Among his manuscripts, is a long work undertaken to show, under each word of a colonial dictionary, all of the knowledge that this word makes it useful to know, and to make it possible to compare diverse colonies. This work has gotten to the letter *E*.

Parmi ses manuscrits, est un long travail entrepris pour montrer, sous chaque mot d'un dictionnaire colonial, toutes les connaissances que ce mot rend utiles à savoir, et pour mettre à portée de comparer les diverses colonies entre elles. Ce travail est parvenu à la letter *E*.⁵⁵

In a 1799 publication outlining all of his scholarship and publications, Moreau (referring to himself in the third person) mentioned his comparative colonial encyclopedia, the “*Répertoire des notions coloniales*.” It remained unpublished at the time of his death. Referring to it as a “dictionary” in this announcement, much as the French *Encyclopédie* was a *Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, its entries documented concepts related to everyday life: suggestions about a public works project for human waste in Cap Français, documentation about burial customs, notes on festival traditions. Many entries defined legal concepts and institutions. Moreau also included numerous entries for material objects and living creatures that described their uses: chestnuts, cider, holy water, bees. Nouns appeared more often than people as organizational categories. Of Saint-Domingue, he wrote that “the Encyclopedia, that work admired even by those who accuse it of insufficiency, only accorded [the colony] three or four

lines" (l'Encyclopédie, cet Ouvrage admiré par ceux-mêmes qui accusent son insuffisance, n'a accordé que trois ou quatre lignes). He aimed to remedy this lack, not only for Saint-Domingue but for French and foreign colonies throughout the globe: Île Bourbon (present-day Réunion), Saint Lucia, Tobago, Guyana, Trinidad, Tobago, Cuba, all appear in his files. Despite a working draft covering only the first five letters of the alphabet, the scaffolding supporting it was voluminous. Thousands of documents, contained in almost three hundred folios, contextualized his entries and provide a sense of the subjects he would likely have included in the future had he finished this project.⁵⁶

Dance/Danse. Abortion/Avortement. Abolition/Abolition. Cruelty/Cruauté. This last entry was left blank in the manuscript, but one can wonder what anecdotes Moreau might have thought fit to discuss. His descriptions of the first three terms and others relied on frequent reference to the enslaved and free people of color. His repertory of colonial notions made people of African descent and their customs central to a discussion of colonial life. In this sense, it shares common content with the *Encyclopédie noire*, even if Moreau's priorities were vastly different from my own. While encyclopedias synthesize knowledge, providing extractable information that can be recycled, mine does not contain entries that synthesize or provide closure. My entries documenting people expose Moreau's reliance on slavery. More important, however, these entries—glimpses into people's lives—ultimately aim to move beyond a central narrative that centers Moreau or that assimilates these people's stories to his. Rather than allowing his life and work to serve as the main points of connection, I ask a reader to embrace disconnection and to wonder about people as individuals and members of communities apart from the lives of their owners.

Esclavage

A large part of Africa is, so to speak, dependent on America, to which she gives her cultivators. Saint-Domingue alone possesses at least three-fifths of the slaves in the French islands of America. ~~It is not relevant to this description that concerns me to examine in and of itself the question of slavery and to verify whether a state of affairs to which it is difficult for humanity and philosophy not to sigh is a subject of accusation against the colonies; if the abolition of slavery in the colonies is necessary, useful or even possible, if slavery produces the evils that some attribute to it. . . . Never perhaps has a thing been stirred up with more important consequences. . . . it is not by a wish that moral sores can be closed; the deeper they are, the more their cure requires talent, precaution, slowness. . . . it would have been desirable~~

~~that the conviction of the impossibility of putting an end to slavery would have demanded that one think only of softening it, of putting an end to its rigor by means that even the interest of the masters would support. But I realize that I have gone on, almost despite myself, about that which I want to avoid; I return, thus, to the customs of the slaves in the French colony.~~

Une grande partie de l'Afrique est, pour ainsi dire, tributaire de l'Amérique à qui elle donne des cultivateurs. Saint-Domingue possède, à lui seul, au moins les trois cinquièmes des esclaves des îles françaises de l'Amérique. ~~Il n'est pas relatif à la description qui m'occupe d'examiner en soi la question de l'esclavage et de vérifier si un état de choses auquel il est difficile que l'humanité et la philosophie ne donnent pas un soupir est un sujet d'accusation contre les colonies; si l'abolition de l'esclavage dans les colonies est nécessaire, utile ou même possible, si l'esclavage produit tous les maux que les uns lui attribuent. . . . Jamais peut-être il n'a été rien agité de plus important dans ses conséquences. . . . ce n'est point par un vœu que les plaies morales peuvent être fermées, plus elles sont profondes, plus leur guérison exige de talents, de précautions, de lenteur. . . . qu'il eut été à désirer que la conviction de l'impossibilité de faire cesser l'esclavage eut exigé qu'on ne songeât qu'à l'adoucir, qu'à faire cesser sa rigueur par des moyens qui eussent trouvé l'intérêt même des maîtres pour appui. Mais je m'aperçois que je me livre presque malgré moi à ce que je veux éviter, je reviens donc aux mœurs des esclaves de la colonie française.~~⁵⁷

This is one of the most insightful and maddening passages that Moreau penned about slavery. He crossed out the manuscript text above and excised it from his 1797 published version of the *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*. It provides a stream of consciousness commentary, an unfiltered look at his thoughts. "Despite" himself (malgré moi), Moreau was compelled to comment upon the very issue that he most desired to "avoid" (éviter), one he believed had enormous consequences for the future of the colonial world. Slavery. Could and should it be ended, and if so, how? His equation of slavery to a deep "moral sore" (plaie morale) requiring profound thought to "cure" guardedly critiques the institution. He claimed that slavery festered beneath the surface, indeed at the core, of his society. He averred it to be justifiably indicted by moral philosophy and humanity writ large. Moreau's way of healing such a wound demanded slowness, deliberation, perhaps an amelioration of the living and working conditions of the enslaved rather than an end to the practice itself. Here is a glimpse

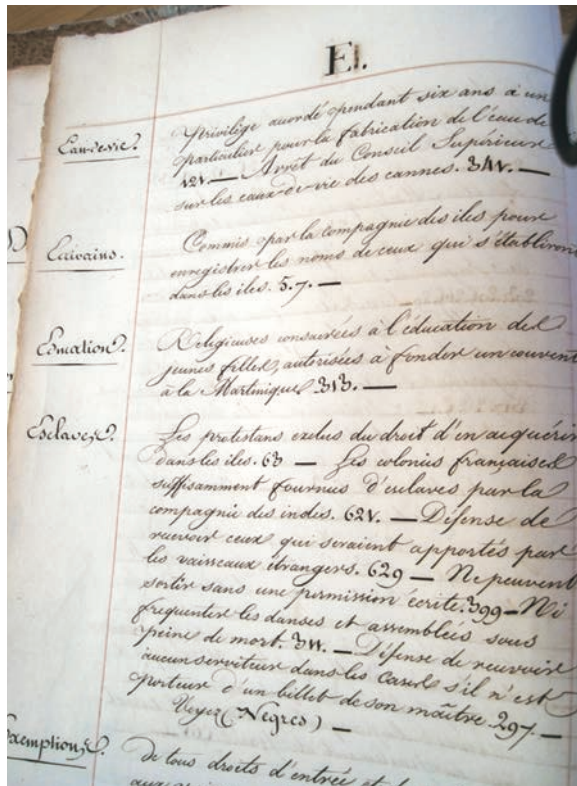


FIGURE 7. Manuscript copy of one of Moreau de Saint-Méry's indexes, letter E, including the entry for "esclavage" (slavery). Archives nationales d'outre-mer, Aix-en-Provence, France, Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry (Ser. F3).

of Moreau trying to straddle an impossible divide in a moment of intense social upheavals in France and in the colonies. The words were published during what was year six of the uprising among the enslaved and free people of color in Saint-Domingue that had begun in 1791. The time lapse between when he felt compelled to comment on slavery despite himself and when he revised and published his book saw the French temporarily abolish the institution with the Law of 4 February 1794 (16 pluviôse, An II).

Of course, it is easy to see how he could be carried away despite himself. While Figure 7 shows a neatly scripted entry for "esclavage" that appeared in a manuscript of his notes on the colonies, its short references to the topic could not hold. How could slavery and its future *not* be relevant to his *Description*? Africa was

the birth continent for the vast majority of the inhabitants of the Caribbean. Some aspect of living in a slaveholding region informed almost every page of Moreau's work, even as subtext. It defined his tomes of legal codes and descriptions of dance. "Esclavage" in this example was cross-referenced as "voyez nègres." Slavery here corresponded to "Blacks," hence the institution itself was racialized. Even whiteness was understood in relation to what it supposedly was not. When Moreau wrote about the personalities of white men born in the colonies, for instance, he detailed their domineering personalities that resulted from having always attempted to bend the will of the enslaved to their own. White women imitated the fashion styles of people of color. Fully avoiding a discussion of slavery, either in the abstract or in the nitty-gritty details of daily life, would have fundamentally changed the nature of his professional career.⁵⁸

In a neighboring context, Thomas Jefferson's determination to document the excisions that contained a condemnation of slavery in his earlier drafts of the Declaration of Independence by drawing a black line beneath them in his autobiography is a reminder that what Moreau deliberately deleted from his most famous work is instructive. Jefferson wrote: "The sentiments of men are known not only by what they receive but what they reject also. . . . The clause . . . reprobating the enslaving inhabitants of Africa, was struck out in complaisance to South Carolina and Georgia, who had never attempted to restrain the importation of slaves, and who on the contrary still wished to continue it. Our Northern brethren also I believe felt a little tender under those censures; for tho' their people have very few slaves themselves yet they have been pretty considerable carriers of them to others." Moreau's waffling about his alleged benevolent proslavery mindset is a bankrupt position. He abandoned his professed desire for reform and amelioration of the institution when revolutionary events in France and the Caribbean placed it into acute jeopardy.⁵⁹

What this entry does not say is what the enslaved felt about esclavage. Yet there is an internal tension in the stories Moreau told. For example, he once wrote that Black people required less sustenance and fewer material things than most people. He then stated that when enslaved men and women ate, especially in situations where food was plentiful, they ate to the point of gorging themselves.⁶⁰ The reality of an enslaved person suffering from chronic hunger suffuses the image painted of her/him in the act of eating. It directly contradicts the very point Moreau has just tried to prove about their need for less food despite their grueling work conditions. He was not stupid, and he was not divorced from reality. Rather, he actively worked toward building and perpetuating the lies designed to maintain the status quo, all while being at the center of metropolitan

and colonial debates about what the future might hold for the right to liberty, fraternity, and equality for men of all colors.

Esclavage is thus an umbrella term and concept.

Herein it signifies all of the people without whom Moreau _____.

would not have worn clean clothes.

would not have been able to subsidize his book collecting.

would have had less leisure time to think and study.

would have compiled a completely different legal code.

would not have eaten the same appetizing meals.

would not have been able to produce his scholarship.

These are the people whose stories require assembling.

I

Ibo

One places a high value on Blacks from the Gold Coast for agriculture, but in general their haughty character makes it difficult to lead them and demands that masters know how to study them. It is principally with regard to the Ibos that great surveillance is necessary, because chagrin or the slightest discontent causes them to commit suicide, the idea of which, far from terrifying them, seems to have some appeal to them because they adopt the dogma of the transmigration of souls. When no longer able to absolutely prevent this Pythagorean voyage, one has the head of the first one who kills himself cut off, or only his nose and ears, and kept at the top of a perch; then the others, convinced that this one will never dare to reappear in his native land thus dishonored in the opinion of his compatriots, and fearing the same treatment, renounce this dreadful emigration plan.

This disposition of the soul resulted in the Ibos being designated by these creole words: Ibos pend'cor à yo, (Ibos hang themselves).

On estime les nègres de la Côte d'Or pour la culture, mais en général leur caractère altier en rend le conduit difficile et elle exige des maîtres qui sachent les étudier. C'est principalement à l'égard des Ibos qu'une grande surveillance est nécessaire, puisque le chagrin ou le mécontentement le plus léger les porte au suicide dont l'idée loin de les épouvanter semble avoir

quelque chose de séduisant pour eux, parce qu'ils adoptent le dogme de la transmigration des âmes. . . . lorsqu'on n'a pu prévenir absolument ce voyage pythagoricien, on fait couper la tête du premier qui se tue, ou seulement son nez et les oreilles que l'on conserve au haut d'une perche; alors les autres convaincus que celui-là n'osera jamais reparaître dans sa terre natale ainsi déshonoré dans l'opinion de ses compatriotes et redoutant le même traitement, renoncent à cet affreux plan d'émigration.

Cette disposition de l'âme qui fait désigner les Ibos par ces mots Créols: Ibos pend'cor à yo, (les Ibos se pendent).⁶¹

The suicide patterns of enslaved Africans in the Americas have received a fair amount of scholarly attention. Moreau's comments about the Igbo and their religious convictions echo beliefs documented in extant slave and planter narratives from Cuba, the French Caribbean, and the United States. In particular, the 1803 mass suicide of the Igbo enslaved near Savannah, Georgia, has entered the public imagination as an iteration of the Flying African tale.⁶²

Moreau had a response to this problem as seen from the perspective of slaveholders; they needed to "know how to study" their laborers. Academic investigation was directly linked to surveillance and control. His offhand dismissal of some Igbo's decision to resist enslavement by taking their lives, claiming their motivations grew from the "slightest discontent," is in keeping with the affective flatness of recounting their beheading and public facial disfigurement. Importantly, although he believed that the spectacle of this torture had the desired effect of diminishing acts of suicide, a glimpse of Igbo reasoning also emerges in his comments. Despite their biases, Moreau's observations provide an informative glimpse of West African philosophical and practical responses to slavery. In some context, Moreau learned that the Igbo themselves might not want to return to their native country dishonored by missing body parts. The fear of the kind of reception they might receive at home, not solely the fear of retribution in their American circumstances, was a determining factor in their behavioral choices.



J

Jean-Baptiste

A Black man named *Jean-Baptiste*, hating agricultural work and wanting to get out of it, conceives of cutting, using the dimensions of his right arm, an arm of fairly hard wood, and for several months, he used his left hand to cut the wrist of his wooden arm with his sickle. When he finally had confidence in his cut, he put his true right hand in place but could not amputate it before the fourth blow.

Un nègre nommé *Jean-Baptiste*, détestant le travail de la culture, imagine pour s'en débarrasser, de tailler sur les dimensions de son bras droit, un bras de bois assez dur, et pendant plusieurs mois, il exerce sa main gauche à couper le poignet du bras de bois avec sa serpe. Lorsqu'enfin il se croit assez sûr de son coup, il place la vraie main droite qu'il ne pût cependant amputer qu'au quatrième coup.⁶³

Jean-Baptiste entered the historical record when Moreau used him as an example of how the enslaved allegedly felt about their circumstances. His story appears as a brief anecdote mobilized to explain how the enslaved supposedly experienced chagrin, were able to endure physical pain, were bothered by the monotony and “constraint” (contrainte) of their existences, and, finally, had been known to hurt themselves for “frivolous motives” (la frivolité des motifs). Moreau felt qualified to assess Jean-Baptiste’s thoughts, relating this tale for its evidentiary value about the interior life of the enslaved.⁶⁴

The tale is striking. Jean-Baptiste’s resourcefulness and sheer desperation are both palpable. In an age of enlightenment that prized empiricism and ingenuity, all of Jean-Baptiste’s inventiveness and experimentation were put to destructive rather than creative use. He employed this ingenuity to create a wooden arm extension, a prosthetic, so that through a process of trial and error he could determine how to effectively maim himself. Prosthetic use among the enslaved was not unheard of. One contemporary observer even noted that a colonist in Gonaïves was nicknamed Master Wooden Legs (Maitre à jambes de bois) by the people forced to work on his behalf because of his habit of cutting off their legs below the knees. As a price for their perceived disobedience, he replaced their limbs with wooden peg legs.⁶⁵

Although Moreau was interested enough to note that it took four hacks for Jean-Baptiste to sever his hand, there is no indication that he recognized or empathized with the terror that must have accompanied that bloody scene. There is no indication that he shared the repulsion with which we might respond to his words. A reader is not told if Jean-Baptiste survived. If he did, we could not trust Moreau's gloss on what Jean-Baptiste might have thought about having taken such a life-changing course of action.

Jean-Baptiste's story is immediately followed by information on another man, this time anonymous. He worked on the Duboisson estate, a sugar plantation that Moreau cited as a model of good management (*sage administration*) throughout Saint-Domingue. After stating that this man was known to have run away in the past and that he suffered from venereal disease, Moreau included his story as a continuation of his evidence for the enslaved's supposed ability to endure extreme physical pain. The man was in such great distress that he sharpened a knife and "with one cut he rendered himself a eunuch" (*d'un seul coup il se rend eunuque*). When his fellow enslaved women allegedly reproached him for his "barbarity" (*barbarité*), he reportedly replied, "*Look see . . . , my flesh, is it not mine!*" (*Hé bien . . . , ma chair, n'est-elle pas à moi!*)⁶⁶

This example is chilling. First, the event: an enslaved man made the decision to cut off his own penis to escape the pain of venereal disease. Poor medical care resulted in a situation so egregious that he risked bleeding to death, or, if he survived, being left without a penis. These deterrents were not strong enough for him to abstain from such an act. His alleged response, "*my flesh, is it not mine!*" is also a present-day reader's chance to hear his voice, however mediated. By law, his flesh was not his. Yet he flouted the law via self-mutilation. He declared that his flesh *was* his. Moreau did not condemn the barbarity of slavery here; he condemned this man's response to it. The two examples are their own counter-testimonies to the very lesson that Moreau was trying to make about the alleged "frivolité" motivating the behavior of the enslaved.

Moreau's interpretive response to the incidents above, including his comments on managing the Igbo inclination for suicide, confirm his work's reputation as the "epicenter of studies of colonial racism." It is not anachronistic to judge him thusly. Michel-René Hilliard d'Auberteuil, another eighteenth-century natural historian, wrote that "in Saint-Domingue, whoever is white mistreats blacks with impunity." "The habit of being obeyed," he noted, "renders the master proud, tough, unfair, cruel, and makes him lose all moral virtues."⁶⁷ To evaluate Moreau's assessments as understandable from a man of his times is logically faulty. His times ran the spectrum from reactionary to revolutionary with regard to slave trading and slaveholding, and he was more well versed than most

in anti- and proslavery arguments. Moreau did not experience the functioning of the institutions that enabled slavery in the abstract. He knew all about these tortures and abuses, including those that the enslaved inflicted upon themselves. He saw severed heads placed on pikes as warnings; he smelled burning flesh; he heard screams. Yet his scholarly voice is notably casual about violence and the desperation of his fellow human beings. He had a propensity to discuss extreme abuse in a lively and anecdotal yet detached and inhumane way. Although his sadism and lack of empathy were conditioned by his upbringing around such cruelties, it was not the only intellectual or moral path available to him. His affective dissonance is particularly remarkable when his discussion of frivolousness is based in examples of dismemberment and a system in which self-mutilation became a viable life (and death) choice for people.

“Autonomy, authority, newness and difference, absolute power”—Toni Morrison suggests that meditations on these matters were indelibly linked to the development of U.S. literature. They are equally resonant in the elaboration of Caribbean cultural production, particularly the body of planter literature (memoirs, how-to manuals, political tracts, natural histories) produced by Moreau and his contemporaries. This urge toward domination is embedded adjectivally in Moreau’s prose: headless, suicidal, one-armed, castrated. The resulting contestation over absolute power and authority are likewise evident adjectivally: one-armed, suicidal, *altier*, castrated, cantankerous, *querelleuses*.⁶⁸

END OF PART I



FIGURE 8. (Facing page) *Portrait Collage of Moreau de Saint-Méry, Part I*. By Luz Sandoval and Sara E. Johnson. The portraits, from top left to right: Detail from Wilbrode Magloire Nicolas Courbe and Charles Toussaint Labadye, *Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de St. Mery: Présid[en]t des elect[eur]s de Paris au mois de j[uil]let 1789 né à la Martinique le 13 j[anvi]er 1750, député de cette colonie au Etats génér[au]x de 1789*, 1789, Bibliothèque nationale de France; James Sharples, *Médéric-Louis-Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry*, 1798, pastel and black chalk on toned wove paper, Bequest of Charles Allen Munn, 1924, Metropolitan Museum of Art; Ostervald L'Ainé, *Ritratto de Moreau de Saint-Méry*, undated watercolor in private collection, Archivio di Stato di Parma; Anonymous [attributed to Jean Baptiste Isabey], *Ritratto dell'amministratore general degli Stati di Parma, Piacenza e Guastalla Médéric Louis-Elie Moreau de Saint-Méry*, n.d., Glauco Lombardi Museum—Parma; Aménaïde Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Conte Moreau de Saint Méry*, circa 1800–1805, licensed by Ministero della Cultura—Complesso Monumentale della Pilotta-Galleria Nazionale di Parma; Marielle Plaisir, detail from *Variation on Lámina 23*, from *The Book of Life*, 2017, inks, gold pigment, and pencils on paper, presented at the exhibition *Visionary Aponte: Art and Black Freedom*, Little Haiti Cultural Center, New York University, and Duke University, 2017–2018.

CHAPTER TWO

Unflattering Portraits

A Visual Critique



Paris Elector



Printer and Bookseller



Ambassador



Ambassador



Father



Cipher

Moreau de Saint-Méry sat for multiple portraits across two decades. In scholarly work, these images appear principally as illustrations that provide background biographical context, free of analysis or comment. Yet, as visual records, there is much they can reveal. In the collage, I have placed them in a novel representational field to move past the idea of them as illustrations of what Moreau looked like (Figure 8). This chapter recasts the representation of Moreau's figure, literal and ideological, and renews focus on the lives of the enslaved to reveal the fictions, visual and textual, erected by colonial slaveholders.¹

Five of these portraits formally depict Moreau when he was living in France, the United States, and Italy; the sixth is a faceless cipher. The cipher appears as a figure onto which we can further project our own knowledge, a placeholder for other historically grounded visions of Moreau and his class. The upper left portrait is in profile, an image made into a commissioned seal to commemorate Moreau's role as president of the city electors of Paris during July 1789. Witnesses lauded Moreau's leadership of the *de facto* governing body in Paris during the first moments of revolutionary upheaval and his *sangfroid* as he issued more than three thousand orders over the course of days with no sleep. An ebullient song was even dedicated to his zeal and service to what would become the new French Republic: "His saintly foresight, unfurls today; the salvation of France, is due to none other than him" (*sa sainte prévoyance, se dévoile aujourd'hui; Le salut de la France, ne sera dû qu'à lui*). In the other portraits, Moreau faces forward, eyes looking out at the viewer. He is depicted with a double chin and a paunchy stomach; these features denote affluence and good living, although the diet that contributed to his girth also caused him painful gout. His dress indicates social status: lace cuffs and cravats, ornate embroidery, the trappings of authority such as sashes, braided epaulettes, lapel pins, and a sword at his side. This authority is likewise captured in the object he holds opposite the sword in the portrait by Jean Baptiste Isabey: a paper that reads "Conseil d' . . . Section d' . . . Legislation . . . Rapport. . . ." It represents his work as a prolific functionary who wielded power with his pen.²

Here, then, was a man engaged in a particular mode of self-fashioning and concerned about how he might be remembered by posterity; a man who was intent upon projecting an image of philanthropic reputation, accomplishment, refinement, and power. His hagiographic biographers painted rosy pictures of a young man who was the apple of his widowed mother's eye, a child who "found many occasions to rescue the miserable Black slaves in the islands; he eloquently pled their cause with their masters" (*il trouva maintes occasions de secourir les misérables esclaves noirs de l'île; il plaidait éloquentement leur cause auprès de leurs maîtres*). Of course, he was himself a master and promoted the

idea of himself as a “good” one. In a February 1809 letter he wrote to his daughter Aménaïde, he admonished her for getting his titles wrong in his granddaughter’s baptism records, telling her that the document would need to be redone: “I have been noted as a simple counselor as opposed to a counselor of state” (on m’a indiqué comme un simple conseiller au lieu de conseiller d’État). All of his publications took care to list his accomplishments on the front cover, varying over the years to include those he felt were most important: administrator general of the duchies of Parma, Piacenza, and Guastalla, vice president of the Musée de Paris, lawyer in parliament, member of many scientific and literary societies in France, the United States, Italy, etc. He was a man who professed to live simply and put his studies and “usefulness” to the colonies ahead of his material interests, yet he was not immune to the lure of pomp and circumstance. As a member of the prestigious Superior Council (Conseil Supérieur) court in Cap Français, he would have worn “black robes trimmed with ermine” and sat on “gold-studded black leather chairs.” Later, when in exile in Philadelphia and denied an invitation to a dance held by George Washington, he related that his social stature had fallen so much that he “begged Mr. Vaughan, my near neighbor, and my colleague in the Philosophical Society, to buy me one of the tickets of admission. But he replied that since I was a *shopkeeper* I could not aspire to this honor. . . . And what did I say to him? ‘Don’t you know that I have never been more your equal than now, when I am nothing?’”³

Médéric Louis Elie Moreau de Saint-Méry: self-important, vain, a believer in the status of public intellectual figures. There is a static quality to the portraits when viewed relationally: the sedentary, half-length poses, the consistently coiffed gray hair/wig, the tight-lipped facial expressions, the unremarkable background settings. Although they cover an epoch of his life that included tremendous ups and downs of wealth and position, the images hide these changes. This chapter considers Moreau and his relationships, professional and personal, through a variety of visual material that obfuscates and reveals. I take Moreau’s interest in cultivating a public-facing persona as a challenge to engage the act of visual perception itself.

This opening portrait collage is one in a series of images that destabilize the edifice upon which Moreau’s self-preferred legacy was built, subverting his cover story of respectability. Iconography in this chapter—of eighteenth-century Caribbean life that Moreau helped to popularize, of the contemporary Caribbean artists Edouard Duval-Carrié and Marielle Plaisir, and of my own cocreation concerning Moreau and his household—probes a straightforward concern. Unfreedom correlates to the planter class’s experience of freedom. This cannot be said, or *seen*, enough. The visuals act as interconnected vignettes—short-form

narratives that frame how Moreau and his work become the object through which we see the subject of slavery and its deep penetration into the lives of both individual people and larger institutions. The *Encyclopédie noire* creates a textual bridge between Moreau and the ways in which he was propped up, in a quotidian and philosophical sense, by the subjecthood of people of African descent. I have collaborated with artist Luz Sandoval to substantiate this line of argumentation graphically—through manipulation of eighteenth-century images; original figurative drawing based on the historical record; and attention to color, placement, and shape.⁴

Just as we may apply theory to a body of work or discuss how written works serve as intertexts, I use images as theory. This is in line with a branch of art history scholarship that W. J. T. Mitchell describes as “picture theory,” as opposed to a “theory of pictures.” Of particular interest is how image juxtaposition—the ways in which images are read alongside and against each other—produces meaning. Mitchell’s concept of a metapicture, loosely defined as a picture about a picture, is helpful because it acknowledges the self-referential nature of works in dialogue. Although the interplay between eighteenth-century and contemporary images may at first seem an odd pairing for an early Americanist project, the interpretive power of images is as important as other contemporary frameworks for historical work. When placed into dialogue, these visuals redirect our focus to other ideas and perspectives, picturing an argument that Moreau’s self-fashioned idea of the benign slaveholding statesman and intellectual is a myth.⁵



Let us return to Moreau. As Agnes Lugo-Ortiz and Angela Rosenthal remark in their excellent commentary on portraiture of the enslaved, it is important to remember that “the period marked by an expanding trade in human bodies coincided with the emergence of portraiture as a major field of representation in Western art.”⁶ In addition to portraits of himself, Moreau generated a record that has been undeniably important in constituting the iconography of the slaveholding Americas. He accrued intellectual capital through his mobilization of the visual in his historiographies: from geographic maps of various islands to detailed city plans, to illustrations of people and customs in places including China and the Caribbean. His work’s status as an invaluable primary source in Caribbean studies is built on its textual as well as visual value. Moreau is most

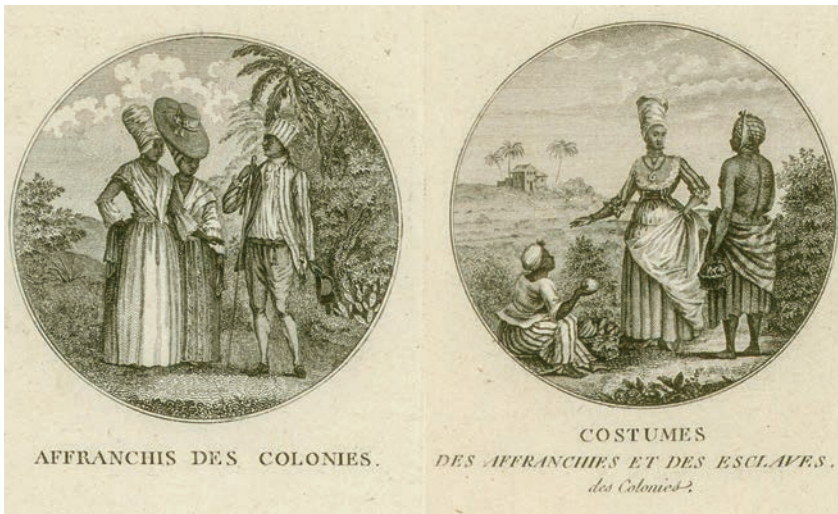


FIGURE 9. *Affranchis des colonies* and *Costumes des affranchies et des esclaves des colonies*. Engraved by Nicolas Ponce, after Agostino Brunias. From Nicolas Ponce, *Recueil de vues des lieux principaux de la colonie française de Saint-Domingue* (Paris, 1791), nos. 25, 26. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library.

associated with the set of engravings commissioned to appear alongside his law and history compilation of the French Caribbean colonies. Engraved by the celebrated French artist Nicolas Ponce, they were published in Paris as *Recueil de vues des lieux principaux de la colonie française de Saint-Domingue* (1791). The compendium of eighty-two images is famous for its stylized depictions of Black subjects that were in turn based on engravings by Agostino Brunias.⁷

Although Brunias painted and engraved most of these images to depict the inhabitants of the Leeward Islands, especially Dominica and Saint Vincent, they have become synonymous with Old Regime society in the French Caribbean. They are what art historian Mia L. Bagneris has termed “pan-Caribbean” iconography. In her excellent work on the Italian painter (who lived for many years in the Caribbean), Bagneris contends that “in spite of the association of the artist’s work with traditions of natural history or ethnography, suggesting the images as visual transcriptions of reality ‘drawn from life,’ Brunias’s adaptation of so-called ‘Old Master’ precedents to fit the colonial context indicates that his paintings must be understood as fabricated representations of colonial fantasy filtered through a particularly selective vision and meant to appeal to planters and potential settlers.”⁸



FIGURE 10. Original ensemble view of engravings, *Blanchisseuses*, *Affranchis des colonies*, *Danse de nègres*, and *Nègres jouant au bâton*. Engraved by Nicolas Ponce, after Agostino Brunias. From Nicolas Ponce, *Recueil de vues des lieux principaux de la colonie française de Saint-Domingue* (Paris, 1791), no. 26. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library.

The details in Brunias's *Affranchis des colonies* and *Costumes des affranchies et des esclaves des colonies* (Figure 9) highlight the figures' finery and depict free people of color and the enslaved in relaxed poses as they gossip and buy and sell wares. The idleness or recreational release portrayed in the dancing and stick-fighting scenes that accompanied these two engravings (Figure 10) suggests that free, unsupervised, and pleasurable time was constitutive, even representative, of a typical day in the life of the enslaved and free people of color in the colonies.

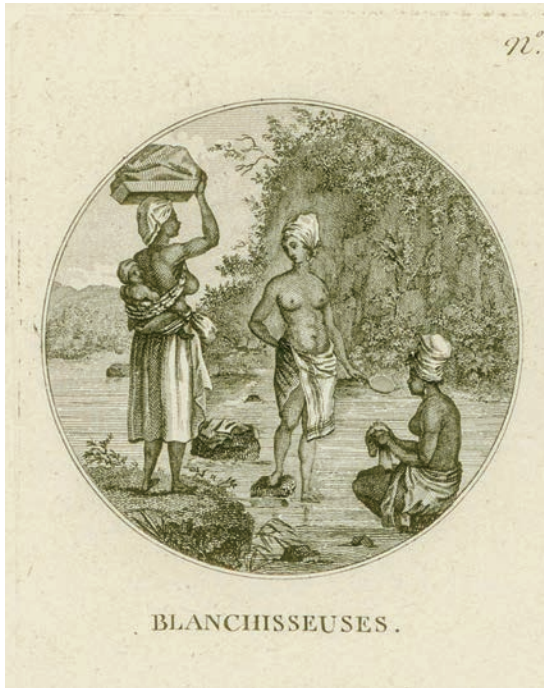


FIGURE 11. *Blanchisseuses*. Engraved by Nicolas Ponce, after Agostino Brunias. From Nicolas Ponce, *Recueil de vues des lieux principaux de la colonie française de Saint-Domingue* (Paris, 1791), no. 26. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library.

No one is dressed plainly; even the figure of the topless woman presumably representing *l'esclave* wears two layers of striped clothing.

In the *Blanchisseuses* portrait in Ponce's compilation, the Black and mixed-race laundresses are depicted enjoying conversations with other women in provocative, seminaked poses along a scenic riverbed (Figure 11). The physically demanding, labor-intensive work of bending, scrubbing, pounding, and bleaching hand-washed items is idealized to such a degree that it is unrecognizable. Instead, a sexualized portrait of pornographic titillation takes precedence over a documentation of manual labor.⁹

Importantly, Moreau's use of these images as a companion piece to his work was part of illustrating certain "types." A dominant characteristic of his oeuvre is its organization around presenting different subgroups of the population—"the Africans," "free women of color," "creole white women," and so forth. He

believed that these sketches of local life informed his work “as an observer, as a historian” (comme Observateur, comme Historien). He placed value in his own eyewitness ability. For example, his oft-cited portrait of mixed-race *mulâtresse* women noted:

The entire being of a *mulâtresse* is given up to love, and the fire of this goddess burns in her heart, to be extinguished only with her life. This cult is her whole code, all of her votive offerings, her entire happiness. There is nothing that the most inflamed imagination can conceive of that she has not offered, guessed, or accomplished. Captivating all the senses, surrendering them to the most delicious ecstasies, holding them in suspense by the most seductive raptures: those are her whole study. Nature, in some way the accessory to pleasure, has given her charms, appeal, and sensibility.

L'être entier d'une *Mulâtresse* est livré à la volupté, et le feu de cette Déesse brûle dans son cœur pour ne s'y éteindre qu'avec la vie. Ce culte, voilà tout son code, tous ses vœux, tout son bonheur. Il n'est rien que l'imaginaison la plus enflammée puisse concevoir, qu'elle n'ait pressenti, deviné, accompli. Charmer tous les sens, les livrer aux plus délicieuses extases, les suspendre par les plus séduisants ravissements: voilà son unique étude; et la nature, en quelque sorte, complice du plaisir, lui a donné charmes, appas, sensibilité.

As is the case with Moreau's textual description, the accompanying iconography of these women functioned less as individualized portraiture than as a way of representing people grouped together as classes and his ideas about them—concerning hierarchy, sexual and manual labor availability, cultural attributes. Types, in stereo, amplified and circulated to project a worldview of domination in which the dominated were content with their condition.¹⁰

The portraits in the opening collage creation (Figure 8) are intended to be read alongside one another as well as the *Recueil de vues*. I arranged them in order to make meaning in part through other pictures. Haitian-born artist Edouard Duval-Carrié's *Colons et châtiments* (2004) is a series of interimages that likewise offer pictorial commentary on Brunias / Ponce / Moreau's collaboration and Figure 8. The work provides a productive theorization of power, capital, and violence.¹¹ In the eight-paneled piece (Figure 12), the planters / colonists depicted are linked with an unambiguous scene of punishment. The richly dressed colonists below and the Black woman and man being punished above exist together unequivocally. The latter are represented with arms splayed, bare feet, simple body coverings. They engage in no carefree recreational time. They wear no expensive linen or towering headwraps, no jewels, no shoes. The symbolic cues used in idealized portrayals of the enslaved are absent. The man is being crucified, intensely

vulnerable and exposed; he is staked to the ground in such a way that the very center of the image, the part most illumined, falls at his groin, his manhood and personhood imperiled. The woman literally and metaphorically bears the weight of the colonial system; her movement is stilled, even as her muscled arms hint of a clenched struggle against such imprisonment.

Duval-Carrié created golden frame vignettes that are decorated with delicate flowers, beads, and ridges. A large shell ornament, echoes of the French framing tradition of *rocaille*, connects the two frames vertically. The linkage makes clear that, without the squared-off scene above, the scene in the round would be different, even impossible. Indeed, the framing here is crucial: the rounded shapes of the lower images are reminiscent of Ponce's *Recueil de vues*. Ponce's circular designs, set off against the larger white backdrop of the page, help direct and focus a viewer's gaze on the figures. The effect in both works is similar to peering through a lens to bridge a distance, to hone the eye. Duval-Carrié is adept at integrating colonial-era iconography into his work, demonstrating how "the 'politeness' of artifice not only veils but also engenders and enables the horrific production and consumption of refinement." The individualized faces of the *colons* (colonists) in their westernized portrait poses contrast with the depictions of the enslaved in poses more "typical" and constitutive of their environments than anything found in the Ponce / Brunias / Moreau referent that Duval-Carrié seems to deliberately reenvision and redraw. *Colons et châtiments* pictures Lugo-Ortiz and Rosenthal's reminder to link the development of an art form—portraiture—with the escalation of the transatlantic slave trade.¹²

Duval-Carrié collaborated with Haitian artist Sylva Joseph to have his original four painted portraits reinterpreted as sequined art. The color variance between the oil and sequined paintings is powerful. In the first, there is a range of bright green vegetation and a brocaded chair, yellow fancy dress, brown earth, and blue sky and sea. The colors evoke the vibrancy of a Caribbean landscape. In the sequined version, the tone and value of the color are somber. A lighted daytime scene is transformed to night: the dark side of enlightenment, a subtext of an underworld that haunts. If one were to see inside of a scene, to get to its heart, this might be the result. The colors of mourning predominate—purple, black, crimson, the hue of spilled blood. Combined with the deadened eye sockets of the masters' portraits, a ghostly, eerie effect emerges. The artists' color palettes across the painted and sequined versions suggest a causal correlation between societal respectability, wealth, and corporeal torture.¹³

Duval-Carrié's colons are both man and woman, and his oil portraits racialize them. The man could be white or mixed race, and the female colonist appears to be a mixed-race woman. Their phenotypes are inconclusive in the sequined version. *Colons et châtiments* is an indictment of a system, one in which a small



FIGURE 12. *Colons et châtiments*. By Edouard Duval-Carrié. Sequined versions by Sylva Joseph. 2004.

percentage of people of African descent also profited alongside their white counterparts. The Milhet-Moreau women owned people; Marie-Louise Laplaine and Aménaïde Dall'Asta owned enslaved women, as well.¹⁴

Baron de Vastey's *Le système colonial dévoilé* (*The Colonial System Unveiled*) (1814) is a vivid prose intertext to the picture theory that places this chapter's images into dialogue. As is the case with Moreau's work, the power of Vastey's prose lies partly in the painterly richness of his descriptions: words create stark, damning portraits in the mind. Marlene L. Daut and Chris Bongie have done much to establish Vastey as a key figure in a Black Atlantic humanist tradition that deliberately and meticulously "unveiled" the limits of Enlightenment-era thought and colonial violence.¹⁵ Vastey, also a creole historian of Saint-Domingue, ably dissected Moreau's work for its grotesqueness in defending a legal structure that



equated people with mules and swine. His oeuvre is an invaluable refutation of Moreau's scholarship. In one of the most repugnant and damning sections of *The Colonial System Unveiled*, Vastey narrates a geographic tour of Saint-Domingue's parishes to document local inhabitants' customs, echoing Moreau's method in *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*. The text is a natural history of French-controlled Hispaniola that prioritized a vastly different body of observations and anecdotes, however. Vastey named distinguished families and the tortures they inflicted upon the enslaved—what Daut describes as a campaign of public shaming in print, because, as Vastey put it, “not a single one of the[se] monsters . . . has suffered the penalty that his foul deeds merit; not a single one has experienced even the slightest punishment for his crimes.”¹⁶

Similar to the violence depicted in the coupled images of Duval-Carrié's work, Vastey's writing corrects the fantasy-like aura of the Brunias / Ponce prints. It also challenges the distance Moreau's portraits put between himself and his background as a slaveholder, along with the violence this ownership supposed. Many of Vastey's claims indicted Moreau's colleagues, the men who worked as lawyers and magistrates in the courtrooms of Saint-Domingue. For example, Moreau appeared as a lawyer in a case decided by the below-mentioned Magistrate Pourcheresse, a man who refused to provide clothing to the people he enslaved. Like Vastey and Duval-Carrié, I study the island's so-called distinguished and worthy citizens by placing them into the same stop-motion frames as those who served them in flesh and blood. We must remember that torture in Saint-Domingue "occupied a prominent niche in the set of techniques by which masters sought to discipline and terrorize their slaves." Vastey wrote:

Bichot, master-builder, resident of Port-de-Paix, in an outburst of jealousy tore away the privates of his black mistress with a razor, and then had boiling oil spread over that part of her body. . . . Lombard, one of the magistrates for the Superior Council of the Cape, entertained himself by cutting off the ears of his unfortunate blacks; having reduced them to this cruel state, he would then burst into a fit of unrestrained laughter. . . .

Pourcheresse from Vertières, one of the magistrates for the Superior Council of the Cape, and Charrier [the co-owner of small provision grounds] . . . were so cruel toward their slaves that they forbade them to wear any clothing, even if it was bought at their own expense; they forced those poor blacks to go naked, with nothing more than a little rag about the waist, or what in this country is called a *tanga*. . . .

Bauduy, retired magistrate for the Superior Council of Port-au-Prince, resident of the district of Bellevue, one afternoon had his confectioner flogged to death for having offered him sweetmeats that were, according to him, poorly made. . . .

. . . Another fury of a woman, by the name of Siouaret Ducoudrai, would administer two to three hundred lashes, after which she would take newly melted sealing wax and slowly pour it over the wound, one drop at a time. . . .

Whenever a child died, Latour Duroc, settler, resident of Bas-Limbé, would put the disconsolate mother in an iron collar until such time as she produced a new one. He had a black woman confined in an underground dungeon that was a foot deep in water, despite the fact that he had fathered three children with the woman.

In this mode of reportage, there is no polite distance from the punishments, no respite from the accumulated tension and disgust generated by more than fifteen pages of names, locations, and atrocities. A reader cannot lose sight of the human beings mangled, mutilated, and executed. Claiming that he spoke to survivors, viewed their wounds, even “awaken[ed] the remains of the numerous victims you [the colonists] thrust into the grave,” Vastey offered what Daut has termed a “proto-*testimonio*” of colonial savagery. His pointed condemnation was bold and subversive. One can imagine Moreau jumping out of his portrait frame, gasping in outrage, rushing to the defense of his indicted colleagues.¹⁷

Returning to the collage of Moreau’s portraits, coloring and stacking them is meant to turn the observer into the observed; to turn the racialized white subject into the racialized white object; to objectify Moreau as an ideologue of white supremacy as he objectified free people of color and the enslaved in his fanciful portraits of life in the tropics. He is typecast, standing in for an economic class and a white supremacist ideology. *Moreau dévoilé: A Portrait Collage, Part II* is an interimage to *Portrait Collage of Moreau de Saint-Méry, Part I*, Ponce’s compilation, and Duval-Carrié’s work. It also seeks to visually represent the heart of Vastey’s critique. This negative rendition of the collage (Figure 13) signifies an incisive, X-ray-like underbelly: of violence, of unrighteousness, of opulence made possible by extreme deprivation. In each image, Moreau’s eyes emit a disconcerting glow. In *Colons et châtiments*, the eyes of the colonists are blacked out. The collage denotes predatory monsters—the zombified undead, vampires, ghoulish specters, Marx’s description of capital accumulation made possible through leeching the lifeblood of once-living workers. This collage directs our eyes to see through the staid conventional portraits; instead of from the outside in, we see from the inside out. Color saturations in part 2 tell a different story than in part 1—the lightest areas appear darkest (literally and metaphorically); the darkest take on different shades. *We will completely unveil this colonist. Nous dévoilerons complètement ce colon.* These were the words that Moreau’s antagonists used when they accused him of actively working against the interests of free people of color; of slave trading in the Parisian capital; of being of African descent himself.¹⁸ Unveil, unmask. These were Vastey’s verbs of choice to publicly expose the lie of colonial respectability. The zombified images also unmask. The portraits “Elector,” “Printer and Bookseller,” and “Ambassador,” in particular, have darkened Moreau’s facial contours to the edge so that his luminous eyes peer through a veneer, a façade, a mask (Figure 14). These visual prompts cannot be unseen. Moreau’s projection of himself across time is spoiled, and the rot shines through.

The static quality of Moreau’s portraits across time mirrors the scarcity of empirical data available regarding his own personal and scholarly evolution. As



Elector



Printer and Bookseller



Ambassador



Ambassador



Father



Cipher

FIGURE 13. (Facing page) *Moreau dévoilé: A Portrait Collage, Part II*. By Luz Sandoval and Sara E. Johnson. Adapted from the portraits, from top left to right: Detail from Wilbrode Magloire Nicolas Courbe and Charles Toussaint Labadye, *Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de St. Mery: Présid[en]t des elect[eur]s de Paris au mois de j[ui]l[et] 1789 né à la Martinique le 13 j[anvi]er 1750, député de cette colonie au Etats génér[au]x de 1789*, 1789, Bibliothèque nationale de France; James Sharples, *Médéric-Louis-Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry*, 1798, pastel and black chalk on toned wove paper, Bequest of Charles Allen Munn, 1924, Metropolitan Museum of Art; Ostervald L'Ainé, *Ritratto de Moreau de Saint-Méry*, undated watercolor in private collection, Archivio di Stato di Parma; Anonymous [attributed to Jean Baptiste Isabey], *Ritratto dell'amministratore general degli Stati di Parma, Piacenza e Guastalla Médéric Louis-Elie Moreau de Saint-Méry*, n.d., Glauco Lombardi Museum—Parma; Aménaïde Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Conte Moreau de Saint Méry*, circa 1800–1805, licensed by Ministero della Cultura—Complesso Monumentale della Pilotta-Galleria Nazionale di Parma; Marielle Plaisir, detail from *Variation on Lámina 23*, from *The Book of Life*, 2017, inks, gold pigment, and pencils on paper, presented at the exhibition *Visionary Aponte: Art and Black Freedom*, Little Haiti Cultural Center, New York University, and Duke University, 2017–2018.



FIGURE 14. Detail of *Moreau dévoilé: A Portrait Collage, Part II*. By Luz Sandoval and Sara E. Johnson. Adapted from the portraits, from left to right: James Sharples, *Médéric-Louis-Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry*, 1798, pastel and black chalk on toned wove paper, Bequest of Charles Allen Munn, 1924, Metropolitan Museum of Art; Ostervald L'Ainé, *Ritratto de Moreau de Saint-Méry*, undated watercolor in private collection, Archivio di Stato di Parma; Anonymous [attributed to Jean Baptiste Isabey], *Ritratto dell'amministratore general degli Stati di Parma, Piacenza e Guastalla Médéric Louis-Elie Moreau de Saint-Méry*, n.d., Glauco Lombardi Museum—Parma.

a witness of, a participant in, and an unwilling refugee from two revolutions that upended the politics and social realities of his Saint-Domingan and French homelands, Moreau left a curious lack of documentation concerning how these experiences might have changed him. Although he continued to edit his manuscripts until the time of his death in 1819, he did not publish a major work after 1805. His personal letters contain little detailed discussion of politics, although he kept abreast of events in the Caribbean. I cannot say whether his experiences alienated or entrenched his confidence in chattel slavery as a fundamental principle of economic development and social order. As he lived alongside his daughter and grandchildren, did he come to believe in the potential racial equality of people regardless of their genealogy? Mixed in among his papers is news about postrevolutionary Haiti that shows his knowledge of a king, a president, statesmen, and authors of African descent whose proclamations and writings were circulating in the public sphere. In his letters, he mentions his desire for an audience with Emperor Napoleon to request payment for his services after being summarily dismissed from his post in Italy. Yet his analyses of these postrevolutionary worlds on both sides of the Atlantic are conspicuously absent.



The surfeit of visual documentation of Moreau's appearance contrasts with the lack of visual documentation about his household circles. Let us return to the idea of pairing and juxtaposition as a form of critique, seen through Moreau's household, particularly the women in his life. Moreau's most constant companion was his wife, Louise-Catherine Milhet Moreau de Saint-Méry. In a hundred-plus-page memoir documenting his proslavery credentials, Moreau praised his wife in passing and noted how fortunate he had been in his choice of partner. He wrote that she had been "formed at the school of misfortune" (*formée à l'école du malheur*). This school of "malheur" refers to the Milhet family history of forced exile from Louisiana to Saint-Domingue with the Spanish takeover of the Louisiana colony in 1768. In addition to the enslaved woman Martonne and the two children that Louise-Catherine and Moreau inherited from her mother upon their marriage, his new wife also owned other tangible property: furniture, clothing, and even some diamonds. Thus, although Moreau suggested that his wife's past made thriftiness a key part of her "patrimony," she was not without material assets. Extant copies of letters she penned hint at a woman full of energy. Her French orthography had an orality to it, suggesting that she might have had a limited formal education.¹⁹



FIGURE 15. *Ritratto di Louise-Catherine Milbet, moglie dell'amministratore Moreau de Saint-Méry* (rounded frame mine). Anonymous. N.d. Glauco Lombardi Museum—Parma.

In a watercolor portrait, Madame Louise-Catherine Moreau de Saint-Méry is shown while the family was resident in Italy (Figure 15). Her softly draped clothing, coupled with her turban, were in vogue at the opening of the nineteenth century. Her gaze is candid and direct. In Italy and back in France for the final fourteen years of his life, Moreau regularly noted her companionship in daily social activities, her knee problems, and her great affection for their family. During an 1809 visit to Paris by their son and grandchildren (Aménaïde's son and daughter), Moreau remarked, "Grandmama is like the hen that has re-found her chick" (*est comme la poule qui a retrouvé son poussin*).²⁰ A doting grandmother ruling the household roost: this message of domesticity can be dated backward. In Philadelphia, she entered Moreau's journal as a scold, making her husband desist his late-night conversations with friends since he had to work the next day. Louise-Catherine Moreau might also have needed to rest because she too labored in their bookstore and printing business, handling printed pages and folding them alongside Aménaïde while her son and nephew set type.²¹

Art historian Floriana Cioccolo has suggested that this is not a painting of Moreau's wife, however, but that it could be a self-portrait of his daughter, Aménaïde. The possibility is intriguing. In addition to providing another extant example of Aménaïde's work, it would document what she looked like. Is it possible that the face resembles Moreau's, particularly around the set of the eyes? Can one discern what Moreau himself called a phenotypical "trace" of the quadroon classification with which she was legally designated upon birth? Such an effort reinscribes the absurdist logic of a system that felt the need to classify human beings according to their "nth degree" of whiteness in the first place. There is no doubt that her appearance would have affected how easily she would have been able to integrate into French, North American, and Italian societies. A portrait of her, especially one that she might have created herself, would further whet my curiosity about a woman who could have told her own unique stories: of life in multiple Saint-Domingue exile communities in Europe and the Americas; of trying to work as a female painter in the male-dominated social and artistic circles in which she traveled; of the complex family life she shared with an ideology of Caribbean proslavery and racialist thought.²²

Although the subject and artist of the above portrait are uncertain, Aménaïde did paint a portrait of her father (Figure 16). One can imagine her reflection in Moreau's eyes as he gazed upon her fondly while she worked. Moreau was proud of his daughter's artistic accomplishments and encouraged her mentorship by professional artists. Like the portrait attributed to Jean Baptiste Isabey (middle row, right portrait in Figure 8), her work depicts Moreau in an ornately embroidered dress coat with lace sleeves and cravat. Rather than holding a piece of paper as in the former, he sits beside a single volume on a desk. The book's marbled leather binding and gold leaf-tinged spine suggest that it is a precious book, and the ribbon protruding from its pages suggests that it has been read and remarked upon. This tome resembles Moreau's imprints and the hundreds of pages of manuscripts and notes that he bound in just such a manner. Small details such as the reddish nose and cheeks and the lines under his eyes and around the mouth hint at wrinkles from age and laughter. Aménaïde's depiction of her father, although warmer than the Isabey, Ostervald, and Parisian elector portraits, also has mistakes in proportion—the enormous head and strangely large hand, for example. The huge face draws further attention to the same porcine features depicted in other portraits: upturned nose, sagging jowls, weak chin. For a trained painter, these artistic choices that distort perspective could be intentional, a commentary on Moreau's character.²³

Portraiture depicting the master class thus emerges: Moreau and his wife or, potentially, his daughter. During his years in exile and after moving back to



FIGURE 16. *Conte Moreau de Saint Méry*. By Aménaïde Moreau de Saint-Méry. Circa 1800–1805. Licensed by Ministero della Cultura—Complesso Monumentale della Pilotta-Galleria Nazionale di Parma.

Europe, he regularly lived with his sister (a slaveowner in Martinique), sisters-in-law, and several nieces. A web of household relationships would have also included women such as the enslaved Martonne, who lived with the family in the Caribbean and France; Rosine, a young girl he gifted to his daughter; Angélique, mother to her own children and the wet nurse of Moreau's son; or the family's anonymous laundress. Of these women, there are no extant physical descriptions or visual documentation.

However, I can depict them in a way that visualizes freedom's parasitical reliance on unfreedom and leisure's requirement of someone else's labor. The vignette frame, traditionally designed to be clearer in the center with a faded periphery, can be dispensed with altogether. A step outside the proverbial circle allows an exploration of that same "periphery" as central. The work I have

cocreated does not represent violence as overtly as Duval-Carrié's; yet threat, menace, and appropriation of a group's labor for the benefit of others underpins the pairings we could make to the Moreau portraits above. To think beyond the point of saturation that has familiarized a characterization such as that of the available nubile seductresses depicted in Brunias/Ponce's oeuvre, we can visualize Moreau's actual blanchisseuse differently (paired with Madame Moreau de Saint-Méry, for example). Here she is not selling sex via a riverine laundering scene in nature's boudoir but carrying heavy loads (Figure 17). Moreau's writing about her provided no individualization: she was a Black woman *à vendre*, a washerwoman to be sold. Her life as we know it was tied to the violence contained in the casual wording of her being liquidated alongside his other, nonliving possessions: furniture, jewels, and the six hundred volumes remaining in his library. The iconicity of the sexualized type in the engraving is contrasted with the concreteness of what she might have experienced in May 1783. To perceive her is to know that much of her time that spring would likely have been spent thinking about her new living and labor arrangements; using her own networks of friends and kin to ascertain information; perhaps trying to assert her own will into the selling and buying process.

A different set of narrative possibilities emerges when people are depicted in community. Figure 18 is a figurative re-creation of Moreau's household. Rather than portraits of bourgeois individual slaveholders as (il)liberal subjects (Figures 15 and 16), this is a drawing of the Moreaus among their workers. Each person pictured is documented in archival records. They are in motion, not static. Their vital presence is constituted in the children's chubby toes that beg to be tickled; the concentration with which the wigmaker adjusts a curl; the sturdiness of their bodily contours; the brightness of their white linen headwraps and rough osnaburg shifts; and the blueness of clothing materials meant to signal servitude. After searching for these individuals for so many years, assembling dramatized depictions of them in one frame felt surprisingly compelling. A collective biography emerged from fragments visualized into narrative.²⁴

The household is crowded and alive with competing emotions, desires, intentions. The people whom James H. Sweet describes, in a larger context of the transatlantic and inter-American trade in people, as "refugee strangers" come together with their knowledge of lives lived in Louisiana, experiences of the Parisian capital, native-tongue thoughts in the languages of Senegal or the different Kreyòls they spoke in Martinique and Saint-Domingue. I am as interested in the relationships they had with one another as those they had with their owners—conversations between Martonne (3) (conspicuously not the Martonne stereo-



FIGURE 17. *Blanchisseuse X*. By Luz Sandoval. 2020.

typed and sexualized in Figure 34) and Angélique (6) as they cared for Black and white children together; the jokes shared, or perhaps competition felt, between Moreau's valet (1) and hairdresser (2). In this rendering, do the blanchisseuse and the cook (5 and 4) know that they will shortly be sold off? Historical fragments of information tie these people to their masters (as people for sale or manumitted, as travel companions and unfree laborers). How did they interact when alone with one another, when walking through the streets or visiting friends? Their faces in Figure 18 are deliberately turned aside or rendered without detailed features since we cannot know how they looked. Angélique and the children she cared for are the exception. They present an invitation to consider the fullness of personalities in community, an invitation that suspends the need to claim

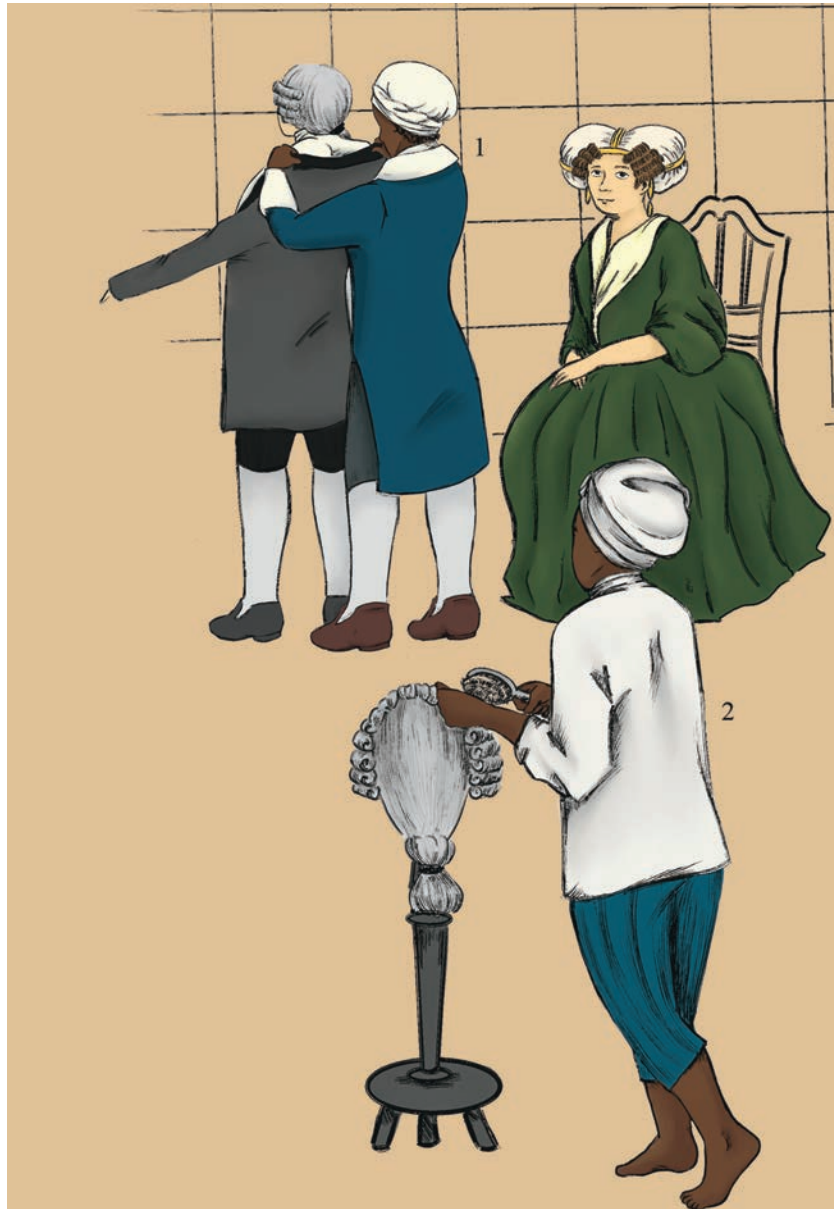
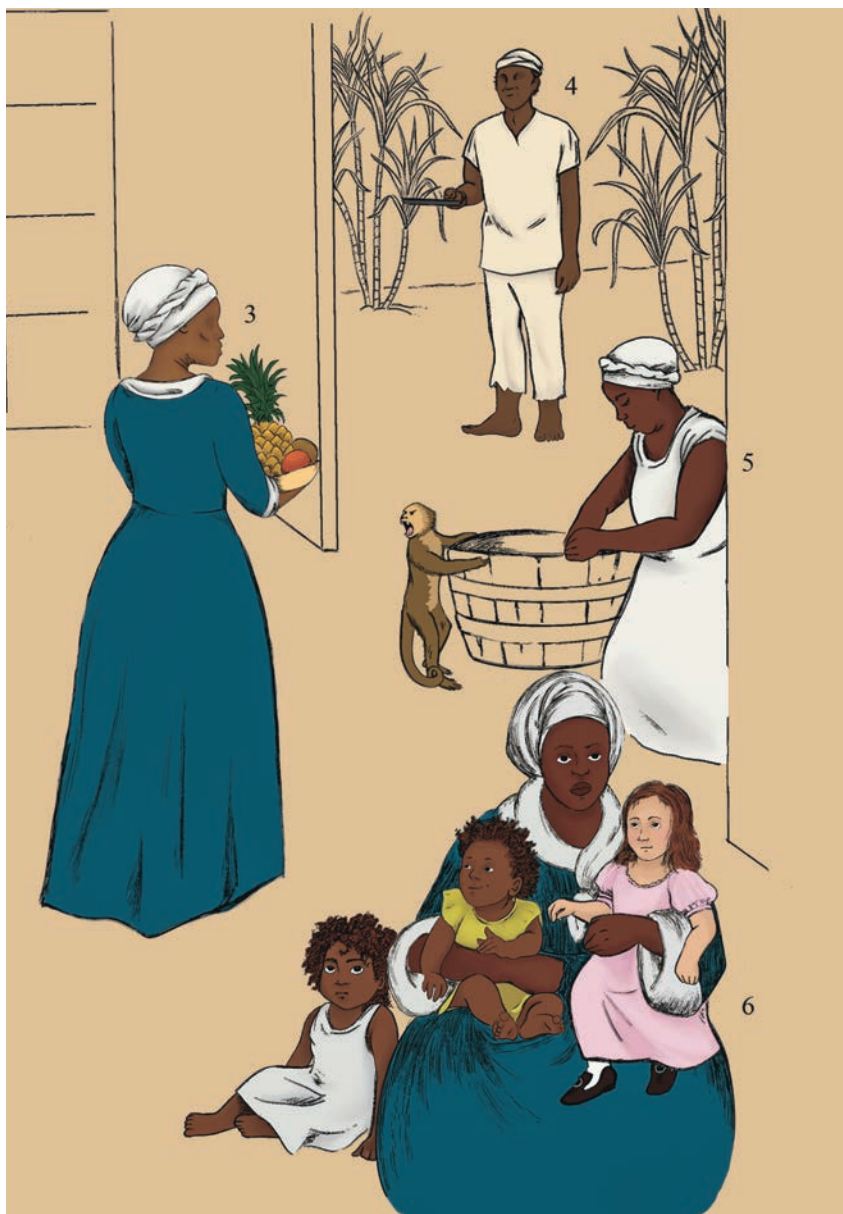


FIGURE 18. *The Household*. By Luz Sandoval and Sara E. Johnson. 2020. (1) An anonymous manservant aids Moreau as Madame Moreau sits nearby; (2) Anonymous wigmaker; (3) Martonne; (4) Anonymous cook; (5) Anonymous washerwoman; (6) Angélique holds anonymous child and Aménaïde with Sophie to the side. The monkey Coco is also on the prowl.



historical accuracy. These figures take up room; they claim space. The ensemble cast is a Caribbean-centric adaptation of the “upstairs / downstairs” motif of British great houses; the portrayal reveals how those in (chattel) service form the backbone of domestic life.²⁵



An evocative drawing from the series *The Book of Life* by the French Caribbean artist Marielle Plaisir provides a fitting conclusion (Figure 19). It is a variation on *Aponte Lámina 23*, one of the drawings included in the *Visionary Aponte: Art and Black Freedom* exhibit that sought to re-create the famed and missing *libro de pinturas* of the Cuban free Black carpenter and revolutionary José Antonio Aponte. He was executed in 1812 as part of what came to be known as the Aponte conspiracy in Cuba, and all that remains of his lost book are records from the three-day interrogation conducted between him and Spanish colonial officials detailing the content and significance of the images therein. Plaisir suggests that her drawings are intended to “evoke the way Aponte escapes from the world by deconstructing his time and place, moving through mythology, religion, death, war, love. . . . Aponte’s ‘Book of Paintings’ represents a kind of beautiful exile, his process of dreaming about a better world.” Plaisir depicts a seated, crowned Black figure, a rendering of the portraits of messianic Black kings that peopled the pages of Aponte’s mixed-media book. Though smaller than the two human figures that surround it, the “king’s” face is flesh, its warm brown hues contrasting to the whiteness of the others.²⁶

The piece is vibrantly colored—from the tendrils of delicately floating sargasso in aqua and red to the center splash of granite-like browns offset by the deep orange and yellows of the skeletal figure’s chest cavity. One is reminded of a Caribbean coral reef in motion; the king sits atop a stack of coral while marine life floats by. The pinpricks of finely drawn white dots evoke both crystal chandeliers and the spot pattern of tropical fish; the droplets of red—bubbles, blood—also foreground connections between man-made luxuries and the natural world. It is a pictograph of the detailed portraits of flora and fauna that form the centerpiece of most natural histories, including some of Moreau’s work.

Like Duval-Carrié and Joseph’s collaboration, the image exquisitely renders both life and death / dying simultaneously. A skull and skeletal torso topped by an elegantly coiffed and towering colonial-era wig are depicted just below the brown figure. The head and its wig are set in relief by their black and white



FIGURE 19. *Variation on Lámina 23*. From *The Book of Life*. By Marielle Plaisir. 2017. Inks, gold pigment, and pencils on paper. Presented at the exhibition *Visionary Aponte: Art and Black Freedom*, Little Haiti Cultural Center, New York University, and Duke University, 2017–2018.

delineation among bursts of primary colors. Elsewhere, I have written of how Plaisir's image evokes Cuban author Alejo Carpentier's classic novel of the Haitian Revolution, *El reino de este mundo* (*The Kingdom of This World*), which opens with white waxen and bewigged heads displayed in a shop window. The heads presage the guillotine, uprisings of the enslaved, and other revolutionary events to be witnessed by the novel's enslaved protagonist, Ti-Noel. Plaisir's figurative rendition of skeletal remains allows for infinite interpretations of the relationship between dreams of Black freedom and the destruction of the tropical colonial regime.²⁷

Although this piece was imagined as commentary on 1810s Cuba, it pictures the same pan-Caribbean interpretative possibilities of Brunias's work. I wish to draw attention to the figure in the top left corner. A man in black fancy dress observes the scene, surrounded by red dots reminiscent of blood splatters. His head is an empty silhouette, less detailed than the folds on his collar. He is faceless, a stand-in for generalized, cloaked (and menacing) authority. He is Moreau's cipher from the opening portrait collage. This faceless Moreau surveils the scene "as a historian" (*comme Historien*) and offers pithy, authoritative anecdotes about a world that he sees and one that contains depths he cannot or does not wish to fathom. Alternately, he perceives these depths of feeling and knowledge but ruthlessly suppresses them.

The well-elaborated details of Moreau's facial features across the opening five portraits of the chapter—close-set eyes, aquiline nose, prominent forehead beneath a receding hairline—are vacated. This erasure places Moreau and the fellow colons he speaks for on par with the anonymous, interchangeable faces of the Black masses conjured in the portrait Moreau drew of them at the opening of my *Encyclopédie noire*. Plaisir's work pictures my method; it anonymizes Moreau as I bring both anonymous and little-known figures to the forefront of my discussion. These figures move in the same world and are indeed interdependent. This chapter reminds us to perceive and evaluate them as such, particularly the structures of physical, psychological, and ideological violence that knitted them together.

The national portrait galleries of imperial centers are filled with smug depictions of important men. They are sedate and poised, in contrast to the anxiety Moreau and other slaveholders described in their speeches about living in a "state of war." They are individuals, separated from those who coiffed and slept with them, provided the teeth for their dentures, soldiered in their wars, and otherwise contributed to their stature. Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Bernardo de Gálvez—whose lives would a visual communal biography of these men reveal?

NOTES

Introduction

1. Classified advertisement placed by Moreau de Saint-Méry, “Biens et effets à vendre: Lundi 30 du présent mois de juin,” *Affiches américaines* (Cap Français, Saint-Domingue), June 18, 1783, [4]. The announcement concerning the two thousand volumes Moreau was selling stated, “Une bibliothèque d’environ deux mille volumes choisis, à vendre par parties. Il faut s’adresser à M. Moreau de Saint-Méry, Avocat en Parlement et au Conseil supérieur au Cap, à qui elle appartient” (ibid., Jan. 15, 1783, [3]). Published over the course of six volumes, *Loix et constitutions des colonies françaises de l’Amérique sous le vent . . .* ([Paris], [1784–1790]) was collaborative and demanded several research trips to France and neighboring colonies. For his book collection at the time of his death, see the posthumous sale of materials advertised in the *Catalogue des livres et manuscrits de la bibliothèque de feu M. Moreau de Saint-Méry . . . dont la vente se fera le mercredi 15 décembre 1819 . . .* (Paris, 1819).

2. Moreau should be included in wider conversations about various American enlightenments happening in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Conversant in European classical, historical, dramatic, and epic traditions, he also read widely in works about and by Latin American, Caribbean, and North American thinkers. David Brion Davis included him alongside a discussion of the prominent planters and intellectuals Thomas Jefferson and Bryan Edwards of Jamaica. See Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (1975; rpt. New York, 1999), 184–195. William Max Nelson discusses Moreau in the context of a detailed analysis of “Atlantic Enlightenment,” suggesting that if we know “more about figures like Moreau, the contours of the Atlantic Enlightenment will become significantly clearer.” See Nelson, “The Atlantic Enlightenment,” in D’Maris Coffman, Adrian Leonard, and William O’Reilly, eds., *The Atlantic World* (London, 2015), 657. Moreau’s work is cited extensively in scholarship on the French colonial world.

3. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Voyage aux États-Unis de l’Amérique, 1793–1798*, ed. Stewart L. Mims (New Haven, Conn., 1913) (hereafter cited as Mims, *Voyage*), 334 (“liberté”); see also the English translation of the diary, Kenneth Roberts and Anna M. Roberts, eds. and trans., *Moreau de Saint-Méry’s American Journey [1793–1798]* (Garden City, N.Y., 1947), 310 (hereafter cited as Roberts and Roberts, *American Journey*); Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry, *La description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l’isle Saint-Domingue . . .*, ed. Blanche Maurel and Étienne Taillemite, new ed., 3 vols. (Saint-Denis, France, 2004), I, 104. This work was originally published as M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l’isle Saint-Domingue . . .*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1797–1798). Unless otherwise noted, all citations to Moreau’s *Description* throughout are to the 2004 edition published by the Société française d’histoire d’outre-mer (hereafter cited as *Description de la partie française de l’isle Saint-Domingue*). A few scholars have documented Moreau’s

relationship with Marie-Louise Laplaine. Aménaïde is discussed throughout this book, particularly in Chapters 1, 2, and 8.

4. See Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, 86–102, for tables describing various racial combinations. For a fascinating interpretation of Moreau's racial descriptions, see Leah Gordon's "Caste Portraits," <http://www.leahgordon.co.uk/index.php/project/caste/>. For the "colonial machine," see James E. McClellan III and François Regourd, *The Colonial Machine: French Science and Overseas Expansion in the Old Regime* (Turnhout, Belgium, 2011). The Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier obliquely references Moreau in *El Reino de este mundo* (1949) as that "ruddy, pleasure-loving lawyer of the Cap" (aquel rubicundo y voluptuoso abogado del Cabo). See Carpentier, *The Kingdom of This World*, trans. Harriet de Onís (New York, 1970), 78; *El reino de est mundo*, 6th ed. (Mexico City, 1991), 61. Carpentier's reference to Moreau in a novel that grounds his philosophy of "lo real maravilloso" in the events of the Haitian Revolution is a tribute from one preeminent archivist of the Americas to his predecessor. Sites such as genealogy.net often cite material contained in Moreau's work. During his lifetime, he was called upon to testify based on his "expert" knowledge. For example, while in exile, he testified in the Circuit Court of Philadelphia "concerning colonial regulations, and particularly concerning the legal rate of interest in San Domingo, where the affair took place." See Roberts and Roberts, *American Journey*, 213.

5. Charles Eugène Gabriel de la Croix, marquis de Castries, the secretary of state of the navy, wrote to Moreau, "Her Majesty has given you an honorable and useful proof of her satisfaction with your services, by granting you a gratuity of 12,000 French livres, to be taken from the Caisse des libertés in the colony [Saint-Domingue], to which you have more particularly devoted your work" (Sa Majesté vous a donné une preuve tout-à-la fois honorable et utile de la satisfaction qu'elle a de vos services, en vous accordant une gratification de 12,000 liv. de France, à prendre sur la Caisse des libertés de la Colonie [Saint-Domingue] à laquelle vous avez plus particulièrement consacré vos travaux). See "No. 78," in Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Mémoire justificatif* ([Paris, 1790]), 132.

6. There is an extensive bibliography on biography as historical form and life writing. Some texts that have been helpful include Annette Gordon-Reed, "Writing Early American Lives as Biography," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., LXXI (2014), 491–516; Jill Lepore, "Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography," *Journal of American History*, LXXXVIII (2001), 129–144; Sue Peabody, "Microhistory, Biography, Fiction: The Politics of Narrating the Lives of People under Slavery," *Transatlantica*, II (2012), <http://transatlantica.revues.org/6184>; and the work on Black Atlantic biographical subjects in Lisa A. Lindsay and John Wood Sweet, eds., *Biography and the Black Atlantic* (Philadelphia, 2014).

7. See Audre Lorde's rightfully influential articulation in "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," included in the collection *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, Calif., 1984), 110–114.

8. Shannon Lee Dawdy, "Proper Caresses and Prudent Distance: A How-To Manual from Colonial Louisiana," in Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham, N.C., 2006), 141. Moreau claims that the primary lesson he learned from his mother was "The length of man's life is measured by its

utility” (la durée de la vie de l’homme se mesure sur son utilité) (*Mémoire justificatif*, 2). In her work on multiple American enlightenments, Caroline Winterer writes that, during the latter half of the eighteenth century, Americans “began to think of themselves as *enlightened* and of their era as an *enlightened age*. To these people, becoming enlightened meant using reason and empirical data as their guides rather than inherited tradition or biblical revelation. . . . Today . . . we wonder how they dared call themselves enlightened when they left so much misery and injustice in the world, and when some of the projects they put into motion appear to us to have yielded such ambiguous or even tragic results” (Winterer, *American Enlightenments: Pursuing Happiness in the Age of Reason* [New Haven, Conn., 2016], 1).

9. My last book explored the transcolonial intellectual histories of the enslaved and free people of color (*The Fear of French Negroes: Transcolonial Collaboration in the Revolutionary Americas* [Berkeley, Calif., 2012]). Here, my dominant concern to critically center blackness in its myriad, nonessentialist, and experientially diverse meanings during the late eighteenth century is still in place. My method approaches a biographical subject in creative, collective, and critical ways to tie a revolutionary-era historian to his slaveholding colonial investments.

10. There is an extensive literature on the legacy of slavery and reparations, including public history projects such as the 1619 Project in the *New York Times Magazine* (Aug. 14, 2019); city, state, and federal commissions and legislation tasked with investigating the possibility of reparations; and university-led commissions to investigate the legacy of slavery at institutions such as George Washington University, Cambridge University, Rutgers University, and the University of Virginia. For examples of well-discussed and important work in a U.S. and French context, see Daina Ramey Berry, *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to Grave, in the Building of a Nation* (Boston, 2017); Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *Atlantic*, June 2014, 54–71; Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York, 2014); and Crystal Marie Fleming, *Resurrecting Slavery: Racial Legacies and White Supremacy in France* (Philadelphia, 2017).

11. Work on archives and the production of power is particularly indebted to Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s seminal *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, 1995). See also Laura Helton et al., “The Question of Recovery: Slavery, Freedom, and the Archive,” special issue of *Social Text*, XXXIII, no. 4 (125) (December 2015), esp. 7. Stephanie E. Smallwood’s “Politics of the Archive and History’s Accountability to the Enslaved” gives a succinct overview of these issues, rightly showing that “for as long as it has been a subject of professional scholarship, American slavery has exposed the methodological limits of the discipline of history. And for just as long, a prolific list of radical intellectuals has made a tradition of trying to write the enslaved into history by challenging received understandings of the archive” (*History of the Present*, VI, no. 2 [Fall 2016], esp. 120–121, 125). Marisa J. Fuentes’s *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia, 2016) has done much to draw critical attention to these issues. In dealing with the idea of how to tell stories about the revolutionary age more broadly, see David Scott’s work, particularly “Antinomies of Slavery, Enlightenment, and Universal History,” *Small Axe*, XIV, no. 3 (November 2010), 152–162 and *Omens of Adversity: Tragedy*,

Time, Memory, Justice (Durham, N.C., 2014). In the context of the Haitian Revolution specifically and the role that fiction plays in representing voices of the enslaved, see Régine Michelle Jean-Charles, “*Memwa se paswa*: Sifting the Slave Past in Haiti,” in Soyica Diggs Colbert, Robert J. Patterson, and Aida Levy-Hussen, eds., *The Psychic Hold of Slavery: Legacies in American Expressive Culture* (New Brunswick, N.J., 2016), 86–106. Marlene L. Daut, Grégory Pierrot, and Marion C. Rohrleitner’s edited volume *Haitian Revolutionary Fictions: An Anthology* (Charlottesville, Va., 2022) gathers fictions from across three continents.

12. The proliferation of names that define alternate methodologies indicates the ongoing need for and consequent richness of such work. On “critical fabulation,” see Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Small Axe*, XII, no. 2 (June 2008), 1–14; on “protocols and limits,” see *ibid.*, 2–4, 9; on “poetics of fragmentation,” see Nicole N. Aljoe, *Creole Testimonies: Slave Narratives from the British West Indies, 1709–1838* (New York, 2012), esp. chap. 1; on “wake work,” see Christina E. Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, N.C., 2016). Jocelyn Fenton Stitt provides another excellent framing of what she terms “absence aesthetics” and the possibilities of life writing to “create a different feminist epistemological space from fiction, concerned with marking the limits of the archive and creating new forms of Caribbean historiography and aesthetics based on women’s experiences.” See Stitt, *Dreams of Archives Unfolded: Absence and Caribbean Life Writing* (New Brunswick, N.J., 2021), 8, 11.

13. Patricia Saunders, “Defending the Dead, Confronting the Archive: A Conversation with M. NourbeSe Philip,” *Small Axe*, XII, no. 2 (June 2008), 71.

14. Sophie White has shown how mining French court records allows the voices of the enslaved to “spring to life,” challenging notions of what written sources can count as autobiographical documentation of individual lives and communities in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. See White, *Voices of the Enslaved: Love, Labor, and Longing in French Louisiana* (Williamsburg, Va., and Chapel Hill, N.C., 2019), 5.

15. Many scholars have explained the benefits of a robust interaction between the disciplines of literature and history. In the words of Doris Garraway, literary criticism has a unique role to play in considering “what cannot be verified; to posit what could never have been documented in any historical archive; to recover the fantasies, beliefs, mentalities, and silences in which the desires and anxieties of historical subjects may be lodged.” See Garraway, *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean* (Durham, N.C., 2005), xii. Her work on Moreau has been very influential on my own. I concur with Eric Slauter’s belief that “attempting to reconstruct the perspectives of people described within texts, people who have left few other traces of their intellectual history, is an enterprise too important to be left to a single discipline.” History and literature, both the study and writing thereof, are two disciplines with countless narrative modes that do the work I attempt here. See Slauter, “History, Literature, and the Atlantic World,” *WMQ*, 3d Ser., LVI (2008), 158.

16. *Note des travaux du citoyen Moreau-St.-Méry* (Paris, 1799), 5. Anyone who has worked in his archives cannot fail to notice that he owned copies of what seem to be original government documents among his private papers. He was so attached to his research materials that he once wrote, “I fulfilled the formalities which were necessary in order to

have my boxes; and on July 23 I had the happiness of again setting eyes on these materials, which had cost me so much expense, worry, weariness and trouble. Of all the pleasant experiences of my life, this was the one that I enjoyed the most. I call to witness all authors, of whatever kind they may be.” See Roberts and Roberts, *American Journey*, 194. Moreau combed various French and Spanish colonial archives, in addition to exploring a variety of institutions in the Americas such as local Catholic churches and the personal papers of friends and acquaintances. For example, people sent him information from London, Madrid, and Cayenne. He collected materials relevant to the new United States while he was living there. As further proof of how valuable his work was to him, he wrote about the fires that broke out in Philadelphia during his residency. He asked a reader to “judge, then, of my anxiety in these moments with a business that equally dreads water and fire, and me having my colonial collection with me” (qu’on juge de mon anxiété dans ces Momens avec un commerce qui redouté également l’eau et le feu et moi ayant avec moi ma collection colonial). See *ibid.*, 332; Mims, *Voyage*, 358.

17. See Archives nationales d’outre-mer, Aix-en-Provence, France (ANOM), Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry (Ser. F3). There are 297 registers (*registres*) containing hundreds of folders of his papers. These are filled with manuscripts of his own work, correspondence with and belonging to others, maps, and many other original and copied sources. ANOM also holds the remnants of his personal library of more than 3,000 items in the Bibliothèque de Moreau de Saint-Méry. Moreau himself remarked that he might have had one of the only full runs of *Affiches américaines*, a periodical source that is critical to anyone working on Saint-Domingue. With regard to maps, he collected, sold, and published them over the course of his career, and this interest resulted in the large map collection that is also part of the Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry. Dating from 1490 to the early 1800s, they range from hand-drawn maps to printed ones, some monochrome, others finely done in watercolors, many of large spatial conception and design and an equal number of depictions of local sites. In his Philadelphia bookstore catalog, he advertised more than 120 *cartes géographiques* of Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas, the latter comprising more than half of them. That Moreau carried the work of famed French cartographers Jacques-Nicolas Bellin, Louis Brion de la Tour, Guillaume de L’Isle, Jean-Nicolas Buache, and Jean-Claude Dezauche demonstrates his interest in and familiarity with some of the finest work in the eighteenth-century cartographic tradition. This knowledge facilitated his authorial and editing work, as he was producing his own maps for several of his imprints while living in Philadelphia. He also carried maps of U.S. states including Maine, Maryland, and Massachusetts, done by Samuel Lewis, the famed American cartographer, as well as important maps of the West Indies that were circulated by the British publisher Thomas Jefferys. He placed special emphasis on the Antilles, given the number of different maps he advertised for islands such as Antigua, Cuba, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Jamaica, Dominica, Grenada, and coastal Guyana.

18. In the Kikongo vocabulary discussed in Chapter 6, there is an entry for *vika*, translated by its compiler as “slave.” In his work on Baudry des Lozières’s same “Dictionnaire ou Vocabulaire Congo,” James Sweet suggests that *vika* meant a person who was a kinless dependent with the right to potentially search for a better master. This person could even have periodic, expected times of *marronage*; critically, this was *not* a person who became

chattel with the expectation of enslaved posterity in perpetuity. Sweet's critique makes an excellent case for the importance of historical linguistic methodologies for the study of slavery. I comment on this term in both Chapters 6 and 7. See Sweet, "Research Note: New Perspectives on Kongo in Revolutionary Haiti," *Americas*, LXXIV (2017), 83–97. Susan Gillman's articulation of the limits of formulations that equate an empire with just one language is helpful for thinking of language spectrums in any given colonial situation (personal conversation, 2019). For example, French colonial rule obviously entailed fraught relationships between French, Kreyòl, Vietnamese, Kikongo, Bambara, etc. Even Moreau's work on Spanish and Italian sources has remained largely outside the purview of Caribbean-focused scholarship.

19. For a sustained analysis of the intersections between historiography and the study of language, see Christopher Ehret, *History and the Testimony of Language* (Berkeley, Calif., 2011), 3 (quotation). Many Italian publications (original works and translations) were about the early Americas. Francesco Saverio Clavigero's important book about early Mexico was first published as *Storia antica del Messico . . .*, 4 vols. (Cesena, Italy, 1780–1781) and published in Spanish later. Once the Jesuit order was disbanded in the Americas, many relocated to Rome. See chap. 5 in Miguel de Asúa, *Science in the Vanished Arcadia: Knowledge of Nature in the Jesuit Missions of Paraguay and Río de la Plata* (Leiden, 2014). Some of the earliest Kikongo language manuals were also done by Italian scholars; see Jean de Dieu Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Kongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles: À travers les documents linguistiques* (Paris, 1995).

20. I discuss Moreau's work in Spanish and Dutch in later chapters. Regarding English, an extant letter he wrote to Alexander Hamilton provides a sense of his linguistic abilities at the beginning of his stay in the United States. After meeting Hamilton in 1794, Moreau sent him a letter promoting his bookstore. In this unedited transcription of the letter, he wrote, "The Kind Reception I have been honoured with by your Excellency, Seems authorize me to hope that my Enterprize will not be intirely indifferent for your Goodness. Nobody feels more deeply than me the grief of Seing your Excellency Leaving a Department where his ability and his fondness of his country was so eminently perceived. But for the true Citizen the means of Serving his native land, may be meet with at every Step or at every Instant. I am with Respect, Sir, of your Excellency the most obedient and very humble servant. Moreau de st Méry." The letter contained a French postscriptum excusing his English: "I dare to expect that Your Excellency's complaisance will make up for what my incorrect English will not express to you well in relation to my respectful devotion" (J'ose attendre La complaisance de Votre Excellence qu'elle Suppléera à ce que mon Anglais incorrect ne lui exprimera pas bien par rapport à mon respectueux dévouement). See "To Alexander Hamilton from Médéric Louis Elie Moreau de St. Méry, 15 December 1794," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-17-02-0433>, orig. publ. in Harold C. Syrett, ed., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, XVII, *August 1794–December 1794* (New York, 1972), 444–445. Moreau also wrote to George Washington and John Adams on the same day, advertising his new bookstore; Adams was a patron of his bookshop. For the letter to Adams, see <https://founders.archives.gov/?q=Moreau%20de%20saint%20mery&s=111131111&sa=&r=7&sr=>. For the letter to Washington, see <https://founders.archives.gov/?q=Moreau%20de%20saint%20mery>

&s=IIIIIIIIII&sa=&r=8&sr=, orig. publ. as David R. Hoth and Carol S. Ebel, eds., *The Papers of George Washington*, Presidential Series, XVII, 1 October 1794–31 March 1795 (Charlottesville, Va., 2013), 274–275.

21. See [Moreau de Saint-Méry], *Catalogue of Books, Stationary* [sic], *Engravings, Mathematical Instruments, Maps, Charts, and Other Goods of Moreau de St. Mery, and Co's. Store, No. 84, South Front-Street, Corner of Walnut* (Philadelphia, 1795). Upon leaving Philadelphia, he advertised the sale of many of his personal belongings, including “a complete Printing office wherewith the publication of several works, whether in French, or in English may be undertaken at the same time.” This advertisement is available as an un-sourced newspaper clipping in “Historique de Saint-Domingue . . .,” 1797–1798, ANOM, F3, 201. It also appeared in the *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia), July 20, 1798, [4].

22. Robert Bringhurst, *The Elements of Typographic Style*, 3d ed. (Point Roberts, Wash., 2004), 19. All printers’ type ornaments that appear in this book are ones that Moreau used in his own Philadelphia printshop, both in the work that he wrote, translated, and edited himself and in the jobs he printed on behalf of others. He imported his printing press and his type from London. Edmund Fry and Isaac Steele, “letter-founders to the Prince of Wales” in London, seem to have supplied some of the ornaments. The 1793 edition of their specimen book contains designs Moreau used regularly. See, for example, numbers 13 (rose), 21 (musical instruments), 32 (horizontal musical instruments), 74 (state home), 86 (the “Finis” plate found at the close of the *Encyclopédie noire*), in Fry and Steele, *Specimen of Metal Cast Ornaments, Curiously Adjusted to Paper . . .* (London, 1793). Publications in which Moreau used the printers’ type ornaments found throughout this book include, for example, Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l’isle Saint-Domingue* (1797–1798), I, 100 (single floral border), 745 (three stacked lines of floral and X-shapes border headpiece), II, 816 (arrow design dash); M[édéric] L[ouis] É[lie] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description topographique et politique de la partie espagnole de l’isle Saint-Domingue . . .*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1796), title page (crowned face with plumes); M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, ed. and trans., *Voyage de l’ambassade de la Compagnie des Indes orientales hollandaises, vers l’empereur de la Chine, dans les années 1794 et 1795 . . . Le tout tiré du journal d’André Everard van Braam Houckgeest . . .*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1797–1798), I, xxix (asterisk border), xlv (five stacked lines headpiece), II, 379 (rose head- or tailpiece), 439 (musical instruments central page ornament); C[laude] C[orentin] Tanguy de La Boissière, *Observations sur la dépêche écrite le 16 janvier 1797 par M. Pickering, secrétaire d’État des États-Unis de l’Amérique, à M. Pinkney, ministre plénipotentiaire des États-Unis près la République française* (Philadelphia, 1797), 3 (seven stacked borders headpiece), 50 (“Finis” tailpiece).

23. There is a large bibliography on the intersection between the visual and slavery; see, for example, Huey Copeland, Krista Thompson, and Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, eds., “New World Slavery and the Matter of the Visual,” special issue of *Representations*, CXIII, no. 1 (Winter 2011). The volume’s excellent introduction by Copeland and Thompson reminds us, “Given that both word and image have long been experienced as sites of constraint for black populations, it makes a kind of sense that African diasporic practitioners have time and again worked to deform extant representational conventions in order to carve out spaces of subjective autonomy. . . . The visual *matters* to the rewiring of slavery’s imaginary,

in examining the ways in which black subjects have appropriated widely available representational means only to undo their formal contours, to break apart their signficatory logic, or to reduce them to their very substance” (“Perpetual Returns: New World Slavery and the Matter of the Visual,” *ibid.*, 10). See also the essays in Celeste-Marie Bernier and Hannah Durkin, eds., *Visualising Slavery: Art across the African Diaspora* (Liverpool, U.K., 2016), and chaps. 1 and 4 of Johnson, *Fear of French Negroes*.

24. In *Fear of French Negroes*, I examined transcolonial collaborations in great detail, arguing for the existence of competing inter-Americanist intellectual and material traditions, many of which existed along a pro- and antislavery continuum. For an overview of the phrase “transnational turn” as it is used much as “global turn” has been, see Donald E. Pease, “Introduction: Re-mapping the Transnational Turn,” in Winfried Fluck, Pease, and John Carlos Rowe, eds., *Re-framing the Transnational Turn in American Studies* (Hanover, N.H., 2011), 1–46. A volume with many important essays that mapped out these connections is Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine, eds., *Hemispheric American Studies* (New Brunswick, N.J., 2008).

25. Again, this observation about the fictional nature of much planter propaganda is a long-standing result of the excellent work of previous scholars. See, for example, Barbara Bush, “‘Sable Venus,’ ‘She Devil,’ or ‘Drudge’? British Slavery and the ‘Fabulous Fiction’ of Black Women’s Identities, c. 1650–1838,” *Women’s History Review*, IX (2000), 761–789. Joan [Colin] Dayan also expresses the fungibility of disciplines / writing practices widely taken to be completely distinct when she remarks, “To read the Black Code with *The Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom* is to understand that the strategies for degrading a body into mere matter—whether called ‘a novel’ or ‘the law’—are both fictions that must be read as histories” (Dayan, “Codes of Law and Bodies of Color,” *New Literary History*, XXVI [1995], 293).

26. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Mémoire justificatif*, 2 (quotation). Given his stature as a public intellectual figure, there is plenty of biographical information available about Moreau, much of it derived from the various journals and memoirs he wrote about his own life. See Anthony Louis Elicona, *Un colonial sous la Révolution en France et en Amérique: Moreau de Saint-Méry* (Paris, 1934). The introductory essay “Moreau de Saint-Méry,” by Étienne Taillemite, to the 2004 edition of *Description de la partie française de l’île Saint-Domingue*, vii–xxxvi, also contains a wealth of information, as does Monique Pouliquen’s introduction to Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Voyage aux États-Unis de l’Amérique, 1793–1798*, new ed., ed. Pouliquen (Saint-Denis, France, 2007), 7–29. See also the extensive introductory materials in Carla Corradi Martini, ed., *Historique etats de Parme, 1749–1808* (Parma, Italy, 2003). There is also an excellent collection of essays in Dominique Taffin, ed., *Moreau de Saint-Méry; ou, Les ambiguïtés d’un créole des Lumières ...* ([Fort-de-France], Martinique, 2006). Finally, see Marcel Dorigny, Dominique Rogers, and Taillemite’s catalog to the 2004 exhibition *Des constitutions à la description de Saint-Domingue: La colonie française en Haïti vue par Moreau de St-Méry* ([Fort-de-France?] Martinique, 2004). This collection centers Moreau as a means of discussing pressing colonial concerns.

27. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Mémoire justificatif*, 2–4. The first French settlers arrived in Martinique in 1635, and Moreau placed his ancestors in this “founding” group of settler

colonialists. For an excellent study on French legal regimes, see Laurie M. Wood, *Archipelago of Justice: Law in France's Early Modern Empire* (New Haven, Conn., 2020). For his collaborations with the Cercle des Philadelphes, see James E. McClellan III, *Colonialism and Science: Saint Domingue in the Old Regime* (Baltimore, 1992). I thank him for his advice about consulting Moreau's manuscript translation of Fray Íñigo Abbad y Lasierra's work on Puerto Rico. Such was Moreau's fame that his friend Beaumetz, another French man living in exile in the United States, informed him that a play or pantomime called *The Bastille; or, Liberty Triumphant* was performed in New York on June 25, 1795, in which Moreau was the leading character. John Hodgkinson, the renowned British American actor, played Moreau. See Beaumetz to Moreau, June 26, 1795, cited in Roberts and Roberts, *American Journey*, 186–189. On the Club Massiac, see Gabriel Debien, *Les colons de Saint-Domingue et la Révolution: Essai sur le Club Massiac (août 1789–août 1792)* (Paris, 1953).

28. Moreau wrote, “October 23 a letter announced that I was named to the intendance of Saint-Domingue” (Le 23 octobre une lettre annonce que je suis nommé à l’Intendance de Saint-Domingue) (*Mémoire justificatif*, 32); I have not seen this confirmed anywhere but in Moreau's own words. His conflict with Louis Charton in 1790 seems to have led to the death of some of his political ambitions in the French American colonies; see Chapter 3. In a 1789 conversation with the marquis de Lafayette, when asked what position he aspired to, Moreau replied, “My ambition was to become Administrator of a colony; that having been born in America (which he did not yet know), that having given my life to the study of the legislation and the history of the colonies, I believed, even out of honesty, to belong to them more than anywhere else, and that after having served Paris with some success, I would die happy if I were useful to my true country [Martinique] or to the colony to which had received my care for fifteen years, at a time when I foresaw that they would not be free from trouble” (Mon ambition était de devenir Administrateur d’une Colonie; qu’étant né en Amérique, [ce qu’il ne savait pas encore], qu’ayant donné ma vie à l’étude de la Législation et de l’Histoire des Colonies, je croyais, même par probité, leur être plus propre qu’à toute autre chose, et qu’après avoir servi Paris avec quelque succès, je mourrais content si j’étais utile à ma véritable patrie ou à la Colonie, qui avait mes soins depuis près de quinze ans, à une époque où j’entrevois qu’elles ne seraient point exemptes de troubles) (*ibid.*, 22).

29. *Mémoires du comte de Moré (1758–1837)* (Paris, 1898), quoted in Roberts and Roberts, *American Journey*, xix. Moreau took credit for introducing inhabitants of the newly independent United States to contraceptives, “certain small contrivances—ingenious things said to have been suggested by the stork. . . . I carried a complete assortment of them for four years; and while they were primarily intended for the use of French colonials, they were in great demand among Americans, in spite of the false shame so prevalent among the latter.” He sold these in his Philadelphia bookstore alongside pornographic books. See Roberts and Roberts, *American Journey*, 177–178 (quotation), and Mims, *Voyage*, 193, for his descriptions of what he was selling at his store. For Moreau's swashbuckling story, see *Description de la partie espagnole de l’isle Saint-Domingue*, I, 1–3.

30. The Alien and Sedition Acts expelled many foreign residents from the United States, and the legislation set a precedent for anti-immigrant U.S. policy. The French were

one targeted group; when Moreau was given notice that he might be deported, his inquiries about the charges against him returned notification that John Adams, the Federalist president who had lobbied in favor of the legislation, said, “Nothing in particular, but he’s too French” (Roberts and Roberts, *American Journey*, 253).

31. Talleyrand, one of the most important figures in European diplomatic history, was a close friend of Moreau’s and intervened at many stages of his life to further Moreau’s career. He subsidized *Description de la partie française de l’isle Saint-Domingue*, introduced him to powerful friends and future collaborators, and tried to “obtain for [Moreau] a position which will call you here [a return to France in 1797], and which gives you independence without too much work. I well know that you were never afraid of too much work; but I am lazy, take great pleasure in being so, and want my friends to have the same opportunity.” See Talleyrand to Moreau, Feb. 17, 1797, in Roberts and Roberts, *American Journey*, 238–239. During their exiles in Philadelphia, Moreau said, “On every night we were together, without a single exception, Talleyrand and I discussed the condition of France in the past, her present lot, and finally what would happen to her in the future. The last part of the picture always made us think of Louisiana, and we found many reasons to make us wish to have a home there for ourselves. Then we would determine to devote all our thoughts and energies in this direction, and Talleyrand would decide that we would wind up by becoming its governors” (ibid., 215–216). By 1797, Talleyrand wrote, “I have made so little progress in getting support for our excellent ideas relative to the colonies that I have given up everything we planned together about that. Present-day diplomats are not at all impressed with the possibilities of Louisiana” (ibid., 239). He was instrumental in getting Moreau his subsequent post in Italy.

32. [Augustin-François de] Silvestre, *Discours prononcé le 30 janvier 1819, lors de l’inhumation de M. Moreau de Saint-Méry, membre de la Société* ([Paris], 1819), 4; [François] Fournier-Pescay, *Discours prononcé aux obsèques de M. Moreau de Saint-Méry, le 30 janvier 1819* ([Paris], 1819), 10. See also Louis Gabriel Michaud, *Biographie des hommes vivants; ou, Histoire par ordre alphabétique de la vie publique de tous les hommes qui se sont fait remarquer par leurs actions ou leurs écrits* (Paris, 1818), 502–503. For his time in Parma, see Emilia Carra’s *Gli inediti di Moreau de Saint-Méry a Parma* (Parma, Italy, [1954]), 63–150; Carla Corradi Martini, “Aspetti inediti di vita parmigiana negli scritti di Moreau de Saint-Méry,” *Aurea Parma*, LXIV, fasc. 2 (August 1980), 137–142; [Marzio Dall’Acqua], *L’ossessione della memoria: Parma settecentesca nei disegni del Conte Alessandro Sanseverini* (Parma, 1997); and Christine Peyrard, Francis Pomponi, and Michel Vovelle, eds., *L’administration napoléonienne en Europe: Adhésions et résistances* (Aix-en-Provence, France, 2008). For more on Moreau’s Masonic ties, see Taillemite, “Moreau de Saint-Méry,” in *Description de la partie française de l’isle Saint-Domingue*, xiv–xv, xxxii–xxxiv; and, more generally, Bernard Faÿ, *La Franc-maçonnerie et la révolution intellectuelle du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1942).

33. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Mémoire justificatif*, 34.

34. Mims, *Voyage*, 46–47 (English translation mine); Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Mémoire justificatif*, 34, 109. Although the passage does not specify how many of these seventeen “domestiques” were enslaved, it does establish that he had a household of servants. Since he and others routinely referred to their enslaved as “domestiques” after abolition in 1794, it is reasonable to surmise that the people he mentions here were mostly, if not all, enslaved

Black women and men. See John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (New York, 2006) for more on these wealthy families of color in the area. Moreau's father's sister Madame Hagar, wife of a former captain of the dragoons and chevalier de Saint-Louis, left him and his sister part of this estate. See Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Mémoire justificatif*, 104.

35. Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1997), 18, quoted in John Ernest, *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794–1861* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2004), 3; Moreau de Saint-Méry, “Discours de Moreau de Saint-Méry, sur les affranchis des colonies, prononcé par lui dans l’assemblée publique du Musée de Paris,” Apr. 7, 1785, ANOM, F3, 156.

36. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l’isle Saint-Domingue*, 80.

37. In African diasporic religions from Regla de Ocha to Vodun, practitioners still dress in white to mark a variety of ritual occasions. Details about the way that religion was practiced in the past, particularly among the enslaved, are gleaned through passages in archival sources such as these. Moreau provided many such descriptions of rituals, most famously of a Vodun ceremony. Whether he knew what he was seeing and understood its meaning has been the subject of much debate, including Stephan Palmié’s discussion of the “Eh, Bomba” song in “Conventionalization, Distortion, and Plagiarism in the Historiography of Afro-Caribbean Religion in New Orleans,” in Wolfgang Binder, ed., *Creoles and Cajuns: French Louisiana—La Louisiane française* (Frankfurt, Germany, 1998), 315–344. Remarketing elsewhere that the choice of how to tie a scarf indicated a host of meanings, from a woman’s being single to her being unavailable, Moreau showed he was clued into some knowledge about the epistemological codes inherent in sartorial choices.

38. See Julie Hardwick, Sarah M. S. Pearsall, and Karin Wulf, introduction to “Centering Families in Atlantic Histories,” special issue of *WMQ*, 3d Ser., LXX (2013), 205–224. For more on Marie-Louise Laplaine, see Michel Camus, “Une fille naturelle de Moreau de Saint-Méry à Saint-Domingue,” *Revue de la Société haïtienne d’histoire et de géographie*, XLVI, no. 162 (March 1989), 51–52, and Chapters 1 and 4, below. Camus notes her date of manumission as June 20, 1766.

39. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Mémoire justificatif*, 6–7.

40. L[ou]is-N[arci]sse B[audr]y Deslozières, *Les égarements du nigrophilisme* (Paris, 1802). A number of advertisements in the *Affiches américaines* announced that Baudry would be acting as Moreau’s representative in Saint-Domingue while the latter was abroad. For one such announcement, including the information that Moreau was going to France and that “the printing [of his work] is the object of his trip” (l’impression [de son ouvrage] est l’objet de son voyage), see *Supplément aux Affiches américaines*, July 9, 1783, [1–10], esp. [1]; and see “Acte de liberté,” Mar. 17, 1783, ANOM, Notariat Saint-Domingue, 542, Grimperel, acting notary, for an example of Baudry’s legal power of attorney on Moreau’s behalf.

41. Moreau wrote: “There is nevertheless in the human species a class that is friendly to all others, and which only truly rejoices when it shares the fruit of its labors; similar to the industrious bee, it prepares goods whose enjoyment is often unknown to it; its emulation is the wish to be useful; its sweetest reward is to know that it truly is. United by a common bond, all those who form this precious class love each other without knowing

one another and seek each other out with no other goal but the general advantage. . . . Yes, scholars form among themselves a brotherhood” (Il est néanmoins dans l’espèce humaine une classe amie de toutes les autres, et qui ne jouit vraiment que quand on partage le fruit de ses travaux; semblable à l’abeille industrielle, elle prépare des biens dont la jouissance lui est souvent inconnue; son émulation, c’est le vœu d’être utile; sa plus douce récompense, de savoir qu’elle l’est véritablement. Unis d’un lien commun, tous ceux qui forment cette classe précieuse s’aiment sans se connaître et se recherchent mutuellement sans autre but que l’avantage général. . . . Oui, les savans forment entr’eux un peuple de frères). See Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Discours sur l’utilité du musée établi à Paris: Prononcé dans sa séance publique du 1er décembre 1784* (Parma, Italy, 1805), 4–6. I have not come across any extended intellectual conversations he had with women or references he made to their work. He argued for the inclusion of women in salons, such as events at the Musée de Paris, and he represented female clients in divorce proceedings in Saint-Domingue. The manuscripts and printed material documenting some of these cases and many more is mentioned in Victor Advielle, *L’odyssée d’un normand à St. Domingue au dix-huitième siècle* (Paris, 1901), 267–283. Six volumes of Moreau’s work were purchased in 1875 and given to the Fonds Advielle in Arras. My attempt to retrieve records of these cases was unsuccessful owing to the destruction of many of these records during the German bombing of the city in 1915. For more on women in Enlightenment-era intellectual circles, see Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor, eds., *Women, Gender, and Enlightenment* (Basingstoke, U.K., 2005); and Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1994).

42. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l’isle Saint-Domingue*, 8 (“Colonies”). See also Jorge Cañizares Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Stanford, Calif., 2001), esp. chap. 4. Critiques that document the imbricated nature of eighteenth-century European scientific, political, and social thought with the infamous set of laws governing the enslaved and free people of color in the French colonies Enlightenment theory have done much to ask, “How should we read the Enlightenment?” and answer, “With the Code Noir in hand!” See Louis Sala-Molins’s *Le code noir; ou, Le calvaire de Canaan* (Paris, 1987); and Michèle Duchet, *Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des Lumières: Buffon, Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvétius, Diderot* (Paris, 1971). Laurent Dubois’s “Enslaved Enlightenment: Rethinking the Intellectual History of the French Atlantic” provides a succinct overview of the history and stakes inherent to Eurocentric and Americas-centered approaches to the study of the Haitian Revolution, with particular attention to incorporating the role of the enslaved into these discussions. See Dubois, *Social History*, XXXI (2006), 1–14. Toni Morrison writes, “As the sociologist Orlando Patterson has noted, we should not be surprised that the Enlightenment could accommodate slavery; we should be surprised if it had not. The concept of freedom did not emerge in a vacuum. Nothing highlighted freedom—if it did not in fact create it—like slavery.” See Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), 38. There is a huge literature on the often-contentious readings of the Enlightenment via postcolonial critiques and an equally large body of research on the “global”

dimensions of eighteenth-century intellectual traditions done by scholars such as Felicity Nussbaum and Anthony Pagden.

43. In Toni Morrison's masterful reading of Bernard Bailyn's work on the planter William Dunbar, she probes how Dunbar, an educated man, lover of books and science, became immune to the suffering of those around him. "Once he is moved into that position, he is resurrected as a new man, a distinctive man—a different man. And whatever his social status in London, in the New World he is a gentleman. More gentle, more man. The site of his transformation is within rawness: he is backgrounded by savagery" (Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution* [New York, 1986], 488–492, quoted in Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 44). Morrison notes that Bailyn used William Faulkner's fictive Colonel Sutpen from *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) for his comparison to Dunbar's experience in Mississippi, another example of the fruitful pairing of history and literature to explore slaveholding mentalities.

44. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Note des travaux du c[ito]yen Moreau-St.-Méry* (Paris, 1799), 5 ("un long travail"). The explanation of the spine as the gathering space of a book comes from a printshop webpage. See <https://www.formaxprinting.com/blog/2013/01/book-printing-lingo-what-is-the-spine-of-a-book>. In one of the only articles that he published from "Répertoire," he wrote, "The adoption of the title *Répertoire de notions coloniales* was born from the conviction that a single man could not dare to promise an encyclopedic work and from the desire of the author to excite more scholarly pens to perfect and even to rectify that which would have come from his own" (L'adoption du titre de *Répertoire de notions coloniales* était né de la persuasion qu'un seul homme ne peut oser promettre un ouvrage encyclopédique et du désir qu'avait l'Auteur d'exciter des plumes plus savants à perfectionner et même à rectifier ce qui serait sorti de la sienne) (Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Danse: Article extrait d'un ouvrage . . .* [Philadelphia, 1796], 8). He took great pleasure in reading aloud parts of his encyclopedia to fellow colonists, both when he was still living in the Caribbean and while in exile in the United States. It was a collective project of sorts. Moreau also had American sources as a model. See, for example, his mention of Fournier de Varenne's work on a "Supplément à L'Encyclopédie pour la partie des colonies," in Moreau de Saint-Méry, "Discours préliminaire," in *Loix et constitutions*, I, xxiii. Varenne apparently shared many of his entries with Moreau, who was very concerned that people living in the Caribbean should write and disseminate their own histories.

45. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Mémoire justificatif*, 34. Most scholarship on Moreau does not study his daily contact with his and others' enslaved people nor his interactions with people of color. Several exceptions are studies of his vitriolic pamphlet debate with Julien Raimond and other *gens de couleur*, chronicled in Florence Gauthier, "Au coeur du préjugé de couleur: Médéric Moreau de Saint Méry contre Julien Raimond, 1789–91," *Cahiers des anneaux de la mémoire*, VI (2004), 43–68; and Gauthier, *L'aristocratie de l'épiderme: Le combat de la Société des citoyens de couleur 1789–1791* (Paris, 2007). See also Dominique Rogers's excellent "Entre 'Lumières' et préjugés: Moreau de Saint-Méry et les livres de couleur de la partie française de Saint-Domingue," in Taffin, ed., *Moreau de Saint-Méry*, 77–93.

46. Nicolas Ponce, *Recueil de vues des lieux principaux de la colonie française de Saint-Domingue* (Paris, 1791). These were based on Agostino Brunias's work on Dominica and

Saint Vincent, although they have been widely associated with Moreau for more than two centuries. See Chapter 2 for a discussion of this work.

47. [Louis Narcisse] Baudry des Lozières, *Second voyage à la Louisiane, faisant suite au premier de l'auteur de 1794 à 1798* . . . , 2 vols. (Paris, 1803), II, 108 (“kneel” / *agenouiller*), 111 (“do you love me?” / *m’aimes-tu?*), 112 (“sweep” / *balayer*), 122 (“get undressed” / *va te déshabiller*), 130 (“your mother gave birth to a pig” / *ta mère a mis au monde un cochon*), 131 (“your milk is good” / *votre lait est bon*).

Chapter One

1. Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry, *La description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l’isle Saint-Domingue* . . . , ed. Blanche Maurel and Étienne Taillemite, new ed., 3 vols. (Saint-Denis, France, 2004), I, 73 (hereafter cited as *Description de la partie française de l’isle Saint-Domingue*). After noting that he suffered from an initial inability to distinguish one Black person from another when he returned to the Caribbean from France, Moreau remarked that he eventually could and that “all of the affections, all of the passions are depicted there [on the face] with the character that is proper to each of them, and nothing is lost, even the blush that betrays innocence in favor of pleasure, although this expression may seem strange” (toutes les affections, toutes les passions s’y peignent avec un caractère que est propre à chacune d’elles, et rien n’y est perdu, pas même la rougeur qui trahit l’innocence en faveur du plaisir, quoique cette expression puisse paraître étrange). When speaking about the natural facial variation and expressive traits of the Black people around him, Moreau’s prime example purports to document how a blush appears on the face of someone experiencing “pleasure” for the first time. The undercurrent of prurience and innuendo in so much of his prose is striking and disturbing. Population statistics on colonial Saint-Domingue vary, particularly concerning the number of enslaved people. One of the often-cited sources for the demographics of the island is Moreau de Saint-Méry himself. For example, see Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), 30.

2. Sarah Knott, *Mother Is a Verb: An Unconventional History* (New York, 2019), 264–265. The manuscript of Moreau’s “Répertoire des notions coloniales; par ordre alphabétique” is held at Archives nationales d’outre-mer, Aix-en-Provence, France (ANOM), Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry (Ser. F3), 73–77.

3. Baptismal record of Jeanne-Louise, dite Aménaïde, Dec. 10, 1778, Archives nationales, État civil du Cap-Français, cited in Michel Camus, “Une fille naturelle de Moreau de Saint-Méry?” *Généalogie et histoire de la Caribbe*, no. 93 (May 1997), 1960 n. 2.

4. “Donation,” Apr. 8, June 13, 1781, ANOM, Notariat Saint-Domingue, 861, Grimperel, acting notary.

5. See Camus, “Une fille naturelle de Moreau de Saint-Méry?” *Généalogie et histoire de la Caribbe*, no. 93 (May 1997), 1960. Monique Pouliquen confirms that Moreau had a mixed-race family in the comprehensive biographical overview of him in Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Voyage aux États-Unis de l’Amérique, 1793–1798*, new ed., ed. Pouliquen (Saint-Denis, France, 2007), 27–28. Marlene L. Daut discusses this relationship in *Tropics of Haiti: Race and the Literary History of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic*

World, 1789–1865 (Liverpool, U.K., 2015), chap. 4 (220–252). Dominique Rogers, “Entre Lumières’ et préjugés: Moreau de Saint-Méry et les livres de couleur de la partie française de Saint-Dominique,” in Dominique Taffin, ed., *Moreau de Saint-Méry; ou, Les ambiguïtés d’un créole des Lumières...* ([Fort-de-France], Martinique, 2006), 87, also provides helpful archival information about Aménaïde Dall’Asta and Angélique.

6. Moreau de Saint-Méry to Aménaïde Dall’Asta, May 29, 1809, in “Moreau de Saint-Méry: Correspondance à sa famille, 1808–1809,” transcribed by Cecilia Paini, under the supervision of Carminella Biondi (thesis, Università degli studi di Parma, 1986–1987), from the manuscript letters in Fondo Carte Moreau de Saint-Méry, Dono Monza, Archivio di Stato di Parma, Italy (hereafter cited as “Correspondance, 1808–1809”). The manuscript letters (1806–1813) are in four bound volumes and three additional folders and were given to the Archivio di Stato di Parma by the Countesses Aménaïde and Clelia Monza, Moreau’s granddaughters, known as the Monza sisters (sorelle Monza). See also “Donation,” May 30, 1788, ANOM, Notariat Saint-Domingue, 869, Grimperel, acting notary. Moreau discusses his daughter frequently during the trip from France to the United States in his diary. See Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Voyage aux États-Unis de l’Amérique, 1793–1798*, ed. Stewart L. Mims (New Haven, Conn., 1913); and the English translation of the diary, Kenneth Roberts and Anna M. Roberts, eds. and trans., *Moreau de Saint Méry’s American Journey [1793–1798]* (Garden City, N.Y., 1947).

7. Roberto Lasagni, *Dizionario biografico dei parmigiani*, III (Parma, Italy, 1999), 595. Various issues of the *Gazzetta di Parma* from 1800 through 1890 have turned up traces of Aménaïde’s continued involvement in the Parma art scene and her descendants’ efforts to keep her legacy alive. For “Five Miniatures” (Cinque miniature), see *Gazzetta di Parma*, Oct. 13, 1818, 330. For her formal portrait of Moreau (Aménaïde Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Conte Moreau de Saint Méry*, circa 1800–1805, Galleria Nazionale di Parma), see the discussion in Chapter 2. The Italian sojourns of Saint-Domingue and Haitian exiles is worthy of further attention. See, for example, LeGrace Benson, “A Queen in Diaspora: The Sorrowful Exile of Queen Marie-Louise Christophe (1778, Ouanaminth, Haiti–March 11, 1851, Pisa, Italy),” *Journal of Haitian Studies*, XX, no. 2 (Fall 2014), 90–101.

8. Moreau to Aménaïde Dall’Asta, Mar. 10, 1809, “Correspondance, 1808–1809” (“des Nouvelles”). Moreau addressed many of his letters to his daughter Aménaïde Dall’Asta with terms of affection. For example, on May 20, 1809, he wrote, “Yesterday was your birthday, my dear Aména [her nickname]. I made a thousand wishes for everything that could be useful for your happiness. There is not a single one that is new, but the feeling that repeats them at every annual return, despite the different nuances due to my age, yours, and the circumstances in which we find ourselves. It is always fatherly love that inspires me and if the expression varies the motive is always the same” (C’était hier, ma chère Aména, ton anniversaire. J’ai fait mille vœux pour tout ce qui peut être utile à ton bonheur. Il n’est pas un seul qui soit nouveau, mais le sentiment qui les repete a chaque retour annuel, a cependant des nuances différentes relatives à mon age, au tien, et aux circonstances où nous nous trouvons alors. C’est toujours l’amour paternal qui m’inspire et si l’expression varie le motif est constamment le même). Another, dated May 31, 1809, speaks of their shared adoration for Aménaïde’s son, who was visiting Moreau in Paris. He wrote, “What a shame, my dear, that we could not enjoy him together!” (Quel dommage, chère

amie, que nous ne puissions pas en jouir ensemble!). In another example of the strong family bonds between Aménaïde and her family, her brother, Moreau de Saint-Méry, fils, wrote to her on June 21, 1809, “You make fun of me, my dear Aménaïde, with your thanks for the care I took of our dear Edouard” (*Tu te moques de moi, ma chère Aménaïde, avec tes remerciemens [sic] des soins que j’ai pris de notre cher Edouard*). See *ibid.* I have reproduced the French here as it appears in Moreau’s letters, sometimes without accent marks.

9. Moreau to Aménaïde Dall’Asta, Sept. 6, 1809, *ibid.* (“demi peintes”). Moreau kept a detailed journal from 1801 to 1807 that includes their daily family rituals. See, for example, June 23, 1802: “Went to the concert with Count Bianchi where my daughter sang two pieces” (*Été au concert du comte Bianchi où ma fille a chanté 2 morceaux*); Apr. 12, 1802: “Aménaïde begins with oil on the sketch of Aeneas” (*Aménaïde commence à l’huile sur l’ébauche d’Enée*); Nov. 20, 1802: “My daughter receives her certificate as Academician from the Academy of Fine Arts of Parma” (*Ma fille reçoit le brevet d’académicienne des Beaux Arts de Parme*). See “Journal de Moreau de Saint-Méry,” 5 vols., transcribed by A. Saccò, I (1801–1802), G. Quaquarelli, II (1803–1804), G. Tambini, III (1805), D. Faidherbe, IV (1806), and S. Zanardi, V (1807), under the supervision of Carminella Biondi (theses, Università degli studi di Parma, 1980–1986), from the manuscript “Journal de ma vie,” in Fondo Carte Moreau de Saint-Méry, Dono Monza, Archivio di Stato di Parma, Italy. The five volumes of this manuscript journal were gifted to the Archivio di Stato di Parma by Moreau’s granddaughters.

10. See “Journal de Moreau de Saint-Méry,” Dec. 2, 1802: “Marriage of my daughter with the Count Pompeo Dall’Asta at eight o’clock in the morning. Lunch at 12. Had Charles Dall’Asta and his wife and Count Bianchi to dine. Took my daughter’s room for an office” (*Mariage de ma fille avec le comte Pompée Dall’Asta à 8 heures du matin. Dejeuner à 12. Eu Charles Dall’Asta, sa femme et le comte Bianchi à dîner. Pris la chambre de ma fille pour cabinet*).

11. See *ibid.*, July 23, 1802: “Nervous attack; Aménaïde indisposed” (*Attaque de nerfs; Aménaïde incommodée*). See also Moreau to Aménaïde Dall’Asta, Oct. 17, 1809, “Correspondance, 1808–1809”: “Your three letters speak of the poor state of your eyes, especially in the letter from the 5th. This causes me a lot of pain. Do not hesitate for a moment to stop your painting, it is an essential necessity. Do not play with this organ. An absolute cessation will work wonders, especially with rice water. I demand it of your friendship, your reason” (*Tes 3 lettres parlent du mauvais état de tes yeux surtout celle du 5. Cela me cause beaucoup de peine. N’hésite pas un instant à suspendre ta peinture, c’est une nécessité indispensable. Il ne faut pas jouer avec cet organe. Une cessation absolue fera merveille surtout avec l’eau de rice [sic]. Je l’exige de ton amitié, de ta raison*).

12. After being awoken at 5:30 in the morning by his son-in-law, Moreau noted: “At 6:30 the pain became stronger and more frequent. . . . I believe that my daughter is about to give birth. She gets into the labor bed at 7:30. Ten minutes later and with three abdominal pushes she very happily gives birth at 7:45, to a very healthy girl whose name I chose: Célestine. . . . I received many visits and congratulations for the birth of my Célestine” (*À 6 heures et demie les douleurs deviennent plus forts et plus fréquentes. . . . Je juge ma fille va accoucher. Elle passe au lit de douleurs à plus de 7 heures et demie. 10 minutes après et avec trois coliques elle accouche très heureusement à 7 heures trois quarts, d’une fille*

très bien portante dont j'ai [faite] choisi le nom: Célestine. . . . Reçu plusieurs visites et des félicitations sur la naissance de ma Célestine). See "Journal de Moreau de Saint-Méry," Nov. 24, 1804. See also *ibid.*, Dec. 2, 1804: "Célestine's sore mouth becomes worrisome. . . . Coronation of Napoleon I in Paris" (Le mal de bouche de Célestine devient inquiétant. . . . Couronnement de Napoléon Premier à Paris).

13. Moreau to Aménaïde Dall'Asta, Oct. 4, 1809, "Correspondance, 1808–1809." See also, for example, Moreau to Aménaïde Dall'Asta, Oct. 29, 1810: "What a picture for a father to see his daughter constantly treated with contempt by her husband who denies her everything!" (Quel tableau pour un père que de voir sa fille constamment traitée avec mépris par son mari que lui refuse tout!) (Paini, "Introduzione," *ibid.*, xlvii).

14. Moreau to Aménaïde Dall'Asta, Feb. 6, 1809 ("Adieu"), July 3, 1809, both in "Correspondance, 1808–1809."

15. *Ibid.*, Sept. 22, 1809 ("mère").

16. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Mémoire justificatif* ([Paris, 1790]), 34.

17. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, 86–102 (quotation on 91). Moreau wrote that his "well-trained" eye, "accustomed from childhood," could differentiate between Africans from the Gold Coast and *mulâtres*, despite the similarity in their "yellowish tint" (*teinte jaunâtre*). He wrote, "One could take several of them for *mulâtres*, if marks more or less multiplied, more or less insignificant *for the eye which has not been accustomed to them from childhood*, did not show that they are Africans and Blacks" (On pourrait en prendre plusieurs pour des *mulâtres*, si des marques plus ou moins multipliées, plus ou moins ridicules *pour l'oeil qui n'y a pas été accoutumé dès l'enfance* ne montraient qu'ils sont Africains et nègres). See *ibid.*, 50 (*italics mine*).

18. Daut, *Tropics of Haiti*, 224.

19. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Mémoire justificatif*, 34 ("bon père"); M[édéric] L[ouis] É[lie] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description topographique et politique de la partie espagnole de l'isle Saint-Domingue* . . . 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1796), title page.

20. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Mémoire justificatif*, 34.

21. "Acte de liberté," Mar. 17, 1783, ANOM, Notariat Saint-Domingue, 542, Grimperel, acting notary. On remixing as a method and the importance of embedded testimony by and about the enslaved, see Nicole N. Aljoe, *Creole Testimonies: Slave Narratives from the British West Indies, 1709–1838* (New York, 2011), introduction and chap. 1, esp. 33 ("refocusing").

22. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Mémoire justificatif*, 34 ("rendait"); Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, 363 ("armées combinées"). Gálvez is the subject of a full-length biography by Gonzalo M. Quintero Saravia, *Bernardo de Gálvez: Spanish Hero of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2018).

23. Matthew Pratt Guterl, *American Mediterranean: Southern Slaveholders in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge, Mass., 2008), 17; Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, N.C., 2015); "Vente de mulâtresse" (Catherine), Oct. 3, 1782, "Vente de nègre" (Koyo), May 7, 1783, "Vente de negritte" (Halette), May 7, 1783, "Vente de negritte" (Oursène), May 7, 1783, "Vente de mulâtre" (Pierre Louis Bonhomme), May 7, 1783, in ANOM, Notariat Saint-Domingue, 542, Grimperel, acting notary.

24. See "Reglement des administrateurs concernant les gens de couleur libres," June 24

and July 16, 1773, in Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions des colonies françaises de l'Amérique sous le vent* . . . , 6 vols. (Paris, [1784–1790]), V, 448–449 (quotation on 449); and Stephen Best's provocative essay, "Neither Lost nor Found: Slavery and the Visual Archive," *Representations*, CXIII, no. 1 (Winter 2011), 155 ("archive").

25. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, 51.

26. Ibid., 51. See also Gérard Barthelemy's excellent article "Tentatives de description de l'Afrique et des Africains à partir des Amériques à la fin du XVIIIe siècle," in Taffin, ed., *Moreau de Saint-Méry*, 147–158 (quotation on 147).

27. "Five Guineas Reward," *Columbian Herald, or the Independent Courier of North-America* (Charleston, S.C.), July 31, 1786, [3]; "Run Away," *Supplement to the Jamaica Mercury* (Kingston), July 24–July 31, 1779, 173; "Esclaves en Maronage," *Affiches américaines* (Cap Français, Saint-Domingue), Sept. 9, 1777, [1]; Philip D. Morgan, "Life in the New World," in *Captive Passage: The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Making of the Americas* (Washington, D.C., and Newport News, Va., 2002), 139. For an excellent discussion of African-language use in what would become the United States, see Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1998). See also Chapter 6.

28. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, 186–187.

29. Scholars such as Stewart R. King have shown how military service could sometimes lead to manumission, improve social status, and provide extended networks of personal and professional relationships in Saint-Domingue. See King, *Blue Coat or Powdered Wig: Free People of Color in Pre-revolutionary Saint Domingue* (Athens, Ga., 2001), 248.

30. "M. Moreau de Saint-Méry saisit avec empressement cette occasion," *Affiches américaines*, May 14, 1783, [3] ("mémoires"); Bernard Camier, "Moreau de Saint-Méry et la musique coloniale des Antilles françaises au XVIIIe siècle," in Taffin, ed., *Moreau de Saint-Méry*, 175–176 ("aspects matériels").

31. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, 58, 67–68 ("culte mystérieux," 68). Given what we know of Moreau's interests and research habits, he could very well have done some type of empirical study of Black male anatomy. Black bodies were on constant public display.

32. Ibid., 58. In the context of Cuba and British North America, for example, there is clear evidence that creole Africans also understood that knowledge was being withheld from them by those who were African-born. The Cuban artist and religious leader Felipe García Villamil discusses this withholding of information in the context of religion. In an interview he stated: "Those who came from Africa had another way of thinking, as well as another way of talking. . . . There in Cuba you can see how they tried to lay the foundations for their religion in spite of all the changes: the changes in climate, the change in plants. . . . So when we arrived at the religion, our ancestors took a long time to begin to teach us a little bit. Some of them refused to teach to us *criollos*, because they were afraid we would take over or misuse the knowledge." See María Teresa Vélez, *Drumming for the Gods: The Life and Times of Felipe García Villamil, Santero, Palero, and Abakuá* (Philadelphia, 2000), 24.

33. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*,

51; “Nègres Marrons,” *Supplément aux Affiches américaines*, Jan. 4, 1783, [1] (“ne pouvant dire”); “Nègres Marrons,” *Supplément aux Affiches américaines*, June 29, 1782, [1] (“ne pouvant dire son nom, ni celui de son maître”) (italics mine); “Esclaves marrons entrés a la geôle,” *Affiches américaines*, Oct. 7, 1790, [1] (“deux négresses nouvelles”); “Nègres Marrons,” *Supplément aux Affiches américaines*, Mar. 6, 1784, [1] (“se disant appartenir”).

34. “Avis divers: M. Moreau de Saint-Méry, Avocat au Conseil supérieur,” *Affiches américaines*, May 14, 1783, [3].

35. *Note des travaux du [citoyen] Moreau-St.-Méry* (Paris, 1799), 6.

36. For example, an advertisement from the *Affiches américaines* reads, “a Black woman, wetnurse, a good subject, a good enough laundress and ironer, passable seamstress and cook, and a good laundress of silk stockings, with her little Black child, about seven months old” (une Nègresse nourrice, bon sujet, assez bonne blanchisseuse et repasseuse, couturiere et cuisiniere aussi passablement, et bonne blanchisseuse de bas de soie, avec sa Négritte âgée d’environ sept mois). See “Biens et effets à vendre,” *Supplément aux Affiches américaines*, Feb. 19, 1783, [3]. The list of her skills suggests that she performed many household functions in what could not have been a situation affording much relief from labor. Mayotte Capécia [Lucette Ceranus], *Je suis Martiniquaise* (Paris, 1948), Joseph Zobel, *La Rue Cases-Nègres* (Paris, 1950), and Simon Schwarz-Bart, *Pluie et vent sur Têlummé Miracle; roman* (Paris, 1972) all feature female characters in this role.

37. Moreau de Saint-Méry, “Observations sur le Royaume de Ouairé, à la Côte-d’Or en Afrique,” in *Mémoires du Musée de Paris*, Belles lettres et arts, no. 1 (Paris, 1785), 43–72 (quotation on 68). I have found no contemporary accounts of Boudacan’s visit to Saint-Domingue in the newspapers there. He was escorted by Jean-François Landolphe, a ship captain with extensive ties to Saint-Domingue (see Chapter 6). Notes on Boudacan’s wearing European dress when Moreau and his other hosts hoped to see him in his own country’s clothing are found on 70. Moreau described the crowns worn by Warri monarchs, and they were not feathered as depicted in the portrait. However, the importance of the coral-colored beaded necklace in the portrait to denote high status does appear in his description of the Warri Kingdom (48).

38. *Ibid.*, 68 (“bouche”), 70 (“costume”).

39. *Ibid.*, 52. Moreau’s comments (drawn from Landolphe’s personal experiences) differ remarkably in tone and content from Thomas Jefferson’s almost contemporary contention that Africans had produced no art, learned no trades, and had no genius, with the exception of the relatively good musical ear that he had witnessed among some enslaved Africans in the Americas.

40. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l’île Saint-Domingue*, 83.

41. *Ibid.*, 349. See James E. McClellan III, *Colonialism and Science: Saint Domingue and the Old Regime* (Baltimore, 1992), esp. pt. 3. Charles Arthaud, Moreau’s brother-in-law and president of the Cercle des Philadelphes, wrote a short treatise on the island’s native inhabitants, borrowing heavily from Jesuit Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix’s work and citing Père Nicolson’s as well. See *Recherches sur la constitution des naturels du pays, sur leurs arts, leur industrie, et les moyens de leur subsistance* (Cap Français, Saint-Domingue, 1786). In it, he remarks that Louis Narcisse Baudry des Lozières owned an Indigenous stone axe, found on the banks of the Massacre River and given to him by a businessman

in Cap Français (4). It was exhibited to members of the club and apparently looked much like one of the four printed in Père Nicolson's work, *Essai sur l'histoire naturelle de l'isle de Saint-Domingue, avec des figures en taille-douce* (Paris, 1776), plate 10.

42. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, 86 ("combinaisons"), 89 (crépus). Work by Brett Rushforth (*Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France* [Williamsburg, Va., and Chapel Hill, N.C., 2012]) and Andrés Reséndez (*The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America* [Boston, 2016]) and the work-in-progress by Noel Smyth on post-1730 Natchez communities discusses Native North American enslavement, including the movement of the enslaved between North America and the Caribbean. See also "Native American Slavery in the Seventeenth Century," ed. Arne Bialuschewski and Linford D. Fisher, special issue of *Ethnohistory*, LXIV (2017). A perusal of the *Affiches américaines* highlights that Native peoples were enslaved alongside their African and African-descended counterparts. Among a selection of runaways being held in jail, for example, there was a man "à l'Artibonite: le 28, un Indien, sans étampe, âgé d'environ 26 ans, ayant des marchandises dans un panier, et se disant appartenir à M. Trussel, au Port-de-Paix"; see "Nègres Marons," *Supplément aux Affiches américaines*, June 7, 1777, [1]. Indigenous Studies scholarship documents the long arc of discursive strategies that have declared Native populations in the Caribbean to be extinct, despite their continued fraught existences. See, for example, the edited volume by Maximillian C. Forte, *Indigenous Resurgence in the Contemporary Caribbean: Amerindian Survival and Revival* (New York, 2006).

43. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, 80–81.

44. For example, see the work of Marie-Christine Hazaël-Massieux, including *Textes anciens en créole Français de la Caraïbe: Histoire et analyse* (Paris, 2008).

45. See Deborah Jenson's discussion of Kreyòl language poetry, particularly chapters 7 and 8, in *Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex, and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution* (Liverpool, U.K., 2011), esp. 279 ("courtesan"), 282 ("celebrity"), 289 ("indigo"). She writes that the different textual fragments of songs suggest that it's "as if Moreau had asked for a knowledgeable source to help in reconstituting a known song. These documents collectively point strongly to an oral tradition known by persons capable of helping Moreau to assemble notes on the corpus—and to potential imperfections in the accuracy of the transcriptions" (284). For "Na rien qui dous," see M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, "Chansons créoles," in "Notes historiques," ANOM, F3, 139, 21–22, cited in Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, 286. Jenson notes the issues with transcription that are evident in this and other poems.

46. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, 340. This anecdote is reminiscent of a song recorded in 1927 in the United States, when John Scruggs, a formerly enslaved man in Virginia, sang a version of the song "Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane" about "mistress and master" "sleepin' side by side." The masters were most beloved when they were dead and buried next to each other. See *Times Ain't Like They Used to Be: Early American Rural and Popular American Music, 1928–1935*, produced by Sherwin Dunner and Richard Nevins (Shanachie Entertainment, 2000), videodisc (DVD), circa 70 min. The song was popular in the U.S. minstrel circuit. The first chapter

of Laurent Dubois's *Avengers of the New World* opens with an anecdote about Moreau and the importance of his *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, centering it as a primary source that generations of scholars have relied on to paint a portrait of the incredibly violent and fantastically wealthy colony of Saint-Domingue. He includes the anecdote on the church bells (11).

47. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, 51 (“avare,” “mangeur de chiens,” “Rada mange chien”), 56 (“proverbes”).

48. Ibid., 82 (“Créols”), 83 (“pas d'autre entr'eux”). For more on Kreyòl, see Philip Baker, “Assessing the African Contribution to French-Based Creoles,” in Salikoko S. Mufwene, ed., with the assistance of Nancy Condon, *Africanisms in Afro-American Language Varieties* (Athens, Ga., 1993), 123–155.

49. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, 525.

50. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Mémoire justificatif*, 34.

51. Ibid., 103–104n; “Mariage de Moreau de Saint-Méry et Louise-Catherine Milhet,” Apr. 9, 1781 (quotations), ANOM, Notariat Saint-Domingue, 861, Grimperel, acting notary.

52. See the entry for “bière” in Moreau's colonial dictionary, “Répertoire,” ANOM, F3, 74. I am reminded of figures such as William Lee, George Washington's enslaved manservant, who often accompanied him and was famously captured by his side in the John Trumbull portrait. See Trumbull, *George Washington and William Lee*, 1780, oil on canvas, 36 × 28 in. (91.4 × 71.1 cm), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/12822>.

53. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, 80.

54. Ibid. On an “Africanist presence,” see Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992).

55. *Note des travaux du c[itoyen] Moreau-St.-Méry*, 5.

56. See Moreau's commentary in “Variétés,” *Supplément aux Affiches américaines*, Sept. 15, 1787, [1].

57. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, 46. For the six-volume bound manuscript, see also ANOM, F3, 96–101.

58. See his descriptions of white men and women in *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue* (for example, 34–44). See Joan [Colin] Dayan's discussion of this phenomenon in “Codes of Law and Bodies of Color,” *New Literary History*, XXVI (1995), 283–308, esp. 283–284; see also Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, 280–281.

59. “Declaration of Independence: Thomas Jefferson's Draft with Congress's Changes (July 4, 1776),” in Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ed. David Waldstreicher (Boston, 2002), 47. Moreau echoed Jefferson's invective against the British for establishing slavery in its colonies and then inciting these same enslaved against him when he wrote, “I will add that the colonist never went looking for slaves in Africa; it was the Europeans who brought them to us and this trade was always favored and protected by the administration of the kingdom” (J'ajouterai que les Colons n'ont jamais été chercher des esclaves en Afrique; mais que ce sont les Européens qui nous les ont apportés & que ce commerce a toujours été favorisé & protégé par l'administration du royaume). See M. L. E. Moreau de

Saint-Méry, *Considérations présentées aux vrais amis du repos et du bonheur de la France; à l'occasion des nouveaux mouvemens de quelques soi-disant Amis-des-noirs* (Paris, 1791), 31.

60. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, 61.
61. *Ibid.*, 51.

62. See Jason R. Young, "All God's Children Had Wings: The Flying African in History, Literature, and Lore," *Journal of Africana Religions*, V (2017), 50–70; and Terri L. Snyder, *The Power to Die: Slavery and Suicide in British North America* (Chicago, 2015).

63. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, 78.
64. *Ibid.*

65. [Pompée-Valentin], Baron de Vastey, *The Colonial System Unveiled*, ed. and trans. Chris Bongie (Liverpool, U.K., 2014), 114. He also provided an example of an enslaved woman who had to carry around a wooden baby when one of her children died (118).

66. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, 78.

67. Daut, *Tropics of Haiti*, 222 ("epicenter"), 82; [Michel-René] H[illiard] d'[Auberteuil], *Considérations sur l'état present de la colonie française de Saint-Domingue: Ouvrage politique et législatif; présenté au minister de la marine*, I (Paris, 1776), 136 ("habit"), 145 ("mistreats").

68. Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 44.

Chapter Two

1. This chapter is inspired by the visual material that suffused Moreau's work, in particular his collaborations with Nicolas Ponce, whose *Recueil de vues des lieux principaux de la colonie française de Saint-Domingue* (Paris, 1791) was intended to accompany Moreau's *Loix et constitutions des colonies françaises de l'Amérique sous le vent . . .*, 6 vols. (Paris, [1784–1790]).

2. *Chanson sur la prise des Invalides et de la Bastille, les lundi 13 et mardi 14 juillet 1789 . . .* ([Paris], 1789). The chevalier Pierre Jean Georges de Callières de l'Etang, an early supporter of the reforms promised by the French Revolution, composed this song about Jacques Necker and Moreau and dedicated it to "mon parent, Moreau de Saint Méry, President des 300 Electeurs de Paris." Thomas Carlyle wrote of him: "Moreau de Saint-Méry of tropical birth and heart, of coolest judgement. . . . What a head; comparable to Friar Bacon's Brass Head! Within it lies all Paris. Prompt must the answer be, right or wrong; in Paris is no other Authority extant. Seriously, a most cool clear head;—for which, also thou O brave Saint-Méry, in many capacities, from august Senator to Merchant's clerk, Bookdealer, Vice-King; in many places, from Virginia to Sardinia, shalt, ever as a brave man, find employment" (Carlyle, *The French Revolution: A History*, I [Paris, 1837], 278). On the three thousand orders, see Anthony Louis Elicon, *Un colonial sous la révolution en France et en Amérique: Moreau de Saint-Méry* (Paris, 1934), 42.

3. Elicon, *Un colonial sous la Révolution*, 10. For his comments to his daughter, see Moreau to Aménaïde Dall'Asta, Feb. 20, 1809, in "Moreau de Saint-Méry: Correspondance à sa famille, 1808–1809," transcribed by Cecilia Paini, under the supervision of Carminella Biondi (thesis, Università degli studi di Parma, 1986–1987), from the manuscript letters in Fondo Carte Moreau de Saint-Méry, Dono Monza, Archivio di Stato di Parma,

Italy (hereafter cited as “Correspondance, 1808–1809”). On the dress and physical setting of the Superior Council, see James E. McClellan III, *Colonialism and Science: Saint Domingue and the Old Regime* (Baltimore, 1992), 43. For his comments to Vaughan, see Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Voyage aux États-Unis de l’Amérique, 1793–1798*, ed. Stewart L. Mims (New Haven, Conn., 1913), 358–359; and the English translation of the diary, Kenneth Roberts and Anna M. Roberts, eds. and trans., *Moreau de Saint Méry’s American Journey [1793–1798]* (Garden City, N.Y., 1947), 333 (hereafter cited as Roberts and Roberts, *American Journey*).

4. Inspiration for clothing and other details was drawn from a variety of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources. One example is the portraiture of George Washington and his Black servants, including John Trumbull’s 1780 depiction of Washington and William Lee, his enslaved manservant and a spy for the patriot army, and the supposed portrait of Washington’s chef, Hercules, which may not be a portrait of Hercules or a chef at all. See “George Washington’s Enslaved Chef, Who Cooked in Philadelphia, Disappears from Painting, but May Have Reappeared in New York,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Mar. 1, 2019, <https://www.inquirer.com/food/craig-laban/george-washington-slave-chef-cook-hercules-gilbert-stuart-painting-wrong-20190301.html>; Trumbull, *George Washington and William Lee*, 1780, oil on canvas, 36 × 28 in. (91.4 × 71.1 cm), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/12822>.

5. In his influential *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago, 1994), W. J. T. Mitchell writes: “The metapicture is a piece of moveable cultural apparatus, one which may serve a marginal role as illustrative device or a central role as a kind of summary image, what I have called a ‘hypericon’ that encapsulates an entire episteme, a theory of knowledge. . . . They are not merely epistemological models, but ethical, political, and aesthetic ‘assemblages’ that allow us to observe observers. In their strongest forms, they don’t merely serve as illustrations to theory; they picture theory” (49). For more on portraiture in general, see T. H. Breen, “The Meaning of ‘Likeness’: American Portrait Painting in an Eighteenth-Century Consumer Society,” *Word and Image*, VI (October–December 1990), 325–348. Caribbean art and literature have long provided interpretive commentary on historical subjects, engaging, questioning, and revising accounts of historical actors and events.

6. See Agnes Lugo-Ortiz and Angela Rosenthal’s introduction in Lugo-Ortiz and Rosenthal, eds., *Slave Portraiture in the Atlantic World* (New York, 2013). 7. They continue: “Portraiture . . . insists on the face as a primary site of an imagined subjectivity, often at the expense of the rest of the body. Its metaphysical aura of transcendence has been conventionally understood as a privileged tool for the visualization of ‘being,’ and for the production of the subject as visibility. . . . However, in the logic of chattel slavery, it is the face that seems to be overcoded by the subjected body, and ‘facelessness’ the means by which the slave is theoretically rendered a nonsubject.” For more on eighteenth-century portrait conventions, see the introduction and essays in Ellen G. Miles, ed., *The Portrait in Eighteenth-Century America* (Newark, Del., 1993).

7. Ponce belonged to many fine arts academies in France and produced a similarly elaborate set of engravings about French history at the same time he collaborated with Moreau. See Nicolas Ponce, *Les illustres français; ou, Tableaux historiques des grands hommes de*

la France . . . (Paris, [1790–1816]). *Recueil* contains geographic views of various cities in Saint-Domingue, local monuments, and a detailed map of Cap Français. According to the volume's front cover, Ponce worked with René Phelipeau, who engraved the maps and city plans. Moreau did believe that Brunias's prints were accurate representations of scenes he saw in Saint-Domingue. In his commentary on a martial arts practice among the Black residents of Saint-Domingue that involved the use of stick batons, he wrote, "This joust, that I have had engraved after an English design, has rules similar to those of fencing" (Cette joute, que j'ai fait graver aussi d'après un dessin anglais, a ses règles comme l'escrime). Presumably the "English design" referenced here is to Brunias's work. See Moreau, *La description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue . . .*, ed. Blanche Maurel and Étienne Taillemite, new ed., 3 vols. (Saint-Denis, France, 2004), I, 71 (hereafter cited as *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*).

8. See Mia L. Bagneris, *Colouring the Caribbean: Race and the Art of Agostino Brunias* (Manchester, U.K., 2018), esp. chap. 3, coda (quotations from 143 and 230). In regard to the Ponce volume, she notes, "A suite of beautiful stiple engravings made by Brunias himself in 1779–80, apparently during a brief return to London, served as the source of the images reproduced by Ponce for Moreau de Saint-Méry's project" (221). I concur with her sense that "more than simply uncomplicated examples of plantocratic propaganda, Brunias's paintings function as unique indices of a critically inchoate moment in the forging of modern understandings of race. At times, they offer the possibility of interpretations that seem contrary to the purposes for which they were created" (233). "The artist's pictures reflect a unique vision of the world in which he lived, demonstrating the broad spectrum of human diversity but also suggesting openings for questioning a hierarchy of value along the continuum of human difference" (236).

9. Bagneris continues, "Brunias's depiction of the nymph-like bathers in *Mulâtresses and Negro Woman Bathing* prefigures literary representations of mixed-race beauties as teeming with sexual appeal, often despite their desire to remain virtuous and chaste. Such treatments represent the sensual nature of mixed-race women as innate, the inevitable result of the transgressive circumstances of their birth; their bodies are born to sin because, originating in the illicit merger of black and white flesh that resulted from the colonial encounter, they are born of sin" (ibid., 149). "The image of the mixed-race Venus as depicted in the painting suggests the colonial Caribbean as a liminal world in which the pleasures of the flesh might be indulged without compromising one's Britishness; where in fact one's Britishness specifically *entitled* one to enjoy them" (163).

10. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Mémoire justificatif* ([Paris, 1790]), 48; Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, 104. The English translation is from Moreau de Saint-Méry, *A Civilization That Perished: The Last Years of White Colonial Rule in Haiti . . .*, ed. and trans. Ivor D. Spencer (Lanham, Md., 1985), 81–82.

11. See Edward J. Sullivan, ed., *Continental Shifts: The Art of Edouard Duval Carrié* (Miami, 2007). The power of visual art that uses juxtaposition to suggest the interdependence, rather than the disconnect, of objects rooted in violence and refinement is found across a wide swathe of African diasporic art. Fred Wilson's 1992 installation *Mining the Museum* at the Maryland Historical Society did this masterfully. As Huey

Copeland and Krista Thompson write, “In the section of the installation labeled ‘Metalwork, 1793–1880,’” the artist famously paired a prized repoussé silver tea service with slave shackles lent to the MHS by a private collector; “in ‘Cabinetmaking, 1820–1960,’ he situated four beautifully preserved nineteenth-century chairs around a whipping post that had long been consigned to storage.” See Copeland and Thompson, “Perpetual Returns: New World Slavery and the Matter of the Visual,” special issue of *Representations*, CXIII, no. 1 (Winter 2011), 8–9.

12. For more on French framing traditions, see Bruno Pons, “Les cadres français du XVIII^e siècle et leurs ornements,” *Revue de l’art*, LXXVI (1987), 41–50. A later work, *Sugar Conventions* (2013), integrates Brunias’s prints directly. See Lesley A. Wolff, Michael D. Carrasco, and Paul B. Niell, “Rituals of Refinement: Edouard Duval-Carrié’s Historical Pursuits,” in the catalog for the Florida State University Museum of Fine Arts exhibition *Decolonizing Refinement: Contemporary Pursuits in the Art of Edouard Duval-Carrié* (Tallahassee, Fla., 2018), 7. They write: “In *Sugar Conventions*, [Duval-Carrié] thus glazes Brunias’s ‘saccharine’ images with a coating of refined sugar crystals. Layered one over another, sugar becomes historicized and aestheticized, while Brunias’s idyllic scenes are then inscribed with the urgency of contemporary industry. Duval-Carrié thus employs sweetness to subversive ends, drawing in and then enchanting the viewer, only to reveal upon closer examination how the object of desire, be it art or sugar, actually serves as a tool of destruction and violence.” Duval-Carrié has long worked in portraiture, one of his most well-known pieces being the Jean-Claude Duvalier portrait *J. C. Duvalier en folle de marié* (1979); he also created many works that incorporate Haitian revolutionary-era figures such as Toussaint Louverture.

13. Many thanks to Edouard Duval-Carrié for providing background about the history of this piece. The original work was created for the traveling exhibit *Révolution française sous les tropiques* for the bicentennial of the French Revolution. He and Joseph re-created these images as sequined pieces. For more on the sequin arts tradition in Vodou, see Donald J. Cosentino, ed., *Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou* (Los Angeles, 1995); and Nancy Josephson, “Artists on Artists: Nancy Josephson on Haitian Sequin Artists,” in “The Americas Issue: Tribute to Haiti,” special issue of *Bomb*, no. 90 (Winter 2004 / 2005), 14–17.

14. Scholarship has explored the practice of slavery within communities of African descent. Notarial records document business transactions across the Americas in which free people of color—female and male, black and mixed race—sold and bought children, women, and men. See, for example, Susan M. Socolow, “Economic Roles of the Free Women of Color of Cap Français,” in David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine, eds., *More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Bloomington, Ind., 1996), 279–297. Marisa J. Fuentes’s chapter on Rachael Polgreen in Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia, 2016), 46–69, also argues that it is critical to acknowledge the intraracial and intragendered dimensions of violence against enslaved women. In 1789, gens de couleur “owned one-third of the plantation property, one-quarter of the slaves, and one-quarter of the real estate property in Saint-Domingue, as well as competing in commerce and trade” (quoted in Joan [Colin] Dayan, “Codes of Law and Bodies of Color,” *New Literary History*, XXVI [1995], 297).

15. Marlene L. Daut, *Baron de Vastey and the Origins of Black Atlantic Humanism* (New

York, 2017); [Pompée-Valentin], Baron de Vastey, *The Colonial System Unveiled*, ed. and trans. Chris Bongie (Liverpool, U.K., 2014). Importantly, Vastey claimed that “the wives of these monsters proved equally proficient in the commission of such deeds: when it comes to debauched and indecent conduct, several of those furies—the shame and dishonour of their sex—equalled and even surpassed the men, committing the most abominable excesses, the most unimaginable crimes and unparalleled acts of cruelty” (ibid., 123).

16. Vastey, *Colonial System Unveiled*, ed. and trans. Bongie, 123. See also Daut, *Baron de Vastey*, 119. Vastey was a key critic of Moreau’s, and his commentary appears throughout this book. In *Colonial System Unveiled*, Vastey cites a case showing that “in the public records, entered on the very same line, one finds slaves, horses, cattle, mules, hogs, etc., all one and the same thing: a man was sold with pigs, it made no difference. As proof of these assertions, we provide a word-for-word transcription of a decision of the Council of the Cape, which we have drawn from Moreau de Saint-Méry’s compilation [*Loix et constitutions*]” (Vastey, *Colonial System Unveiled*, ed. and trans. Bongie, 126). The case in question is not only collected in Moreau’s work, but Moreau himself was the lawyer for the defendant, who was ordered to sell off his assets to reimburse the plaintiff for the “two negroes, four mules” that died. The magistrate for the case was Monsieur de Pourcheresse de Vertières, the same man cited earlier in the text for his sadism; see ibid., 111–112.

17. Malick W. Ghachem, “Prosecuting Torture: The Strategic Ethics of Slavery in Pre-revolutionary Saint-Domingue (Haiti),” *Law and History Review*, XXIX (2011), 985–1029, esp. 987 (“prominent”); Vastey, *Colonial System Unveiled*, ed. and trans. Bongie, 106 (“remains”), 111–113, 117, 118; Daut, *Baron de Vastey*, 116.

18. See Chapter 4 for a discussion of Moreau’s public arguments with various mixed-race political antagonists.

19. Moreau wrote: “From the cradle she was surrounded by good examples, and I believed that the habit of thriftiness was her patrimony. I felt that my choice [of a spouse] would bring me honor, and every day, for close to nine years, I have become more and more convinced of it” (Elle avait été, dès le berceau, environnée de bons exemples, je crus que l’habitude de l’économie était un patrimoine; je sentis que mon choix m’honorerait, et chaque jour, depuis près de neuf ans, m’en a de plus en plus convaincu) (Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Mémoire justificatif*, 8). See also the Introduction and Chapter 4, particularly the latter for the “Jeanne and Sylvie” and “Mulâtresses and Martonne” entries. The articles outlining Louise-Catherine’s dowry and the stipulations of their marriage contract are found in “Mariage de Moreau de Saint-Méry et Louise-Catherine Milhet,” Apr. 9, 1781, Archives nationales d’outre-mer, Aix-en-Provence, France (ANOM), Notariat Saint-Domingue, 861, Grimperel, acting notary. Examples of her writing, including its grammar and spelling errors, are found in her letters to Aménaïde in “Correspondance, 1808–1809.” For instance, on May 29, 1809, she wrote, “Ils son arrivez samedi 27 a 4 heur de l’après diné ses chere enfans et tu te doute ma chere Aменаide du Plaisir que j’ai éprouvez en embrassan mille fois ces enfans chéris” (They arrived Saturday the 27th at four in the afternoon these dear children and you cannot doubt, my dear Aménaïde, the pleasure I felt hugging these dear children one thousand times).

20. Moreau to Aménaïde Dall’Asta, May 29, 1809, in “Correspondance, 1808–1809.” Moreau received a letter from his friend Jean Nicolas Demeunier describing Paris in

July 1797: “As for the sensible people, the true friends of liberty, their number has not decreased; but they are not seen at brilliant fêtes, where everyone shines in the splendor of Greek and Roman raiment: they busy themselves with more useful affairs” (Roberts and Roberts, *American Journey*, 234).

21. “My wife would have to urge the boisterous company to go home to bed. . . . ‘Tomorrow you will play the sluggard in your bed until noon; but promptly at seven o’clock in the morning your friend must get up and open his shop’” (Roberts and Roberts, *American Journey*, 215). See the note written by Angelo Pezzana attached to a gifted copy of Moreau’s *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l’isle Saint-Domingue* . . . (Philadelphia, 1797–1798) to the Parma library (la biblioteca de Parme). Pezzana added three notes contextualizing the value of the work, details likely provided by Moreau himself. One of Pezzana’s annotations stated that the library should congratulate itself (*se feliciter*) for owning copies of this rare work “because it was printed by himself in Philadelphia during the time that he [Moreau] was obligated to save himself [escape] there to remove his illustrious head from the axe of Robespierre’s executioners. M[oreau] de Saint-Méry’s son, the heir of his father’s talents, then a child, worked with one of his cousins on the typographical composition, while his amiable mother and his charming sister were in charge of the hanging [to dry] and the folding of the printed pages” (*parce qu’il a été imprimé par lui-même à Philadelphie dans le temps qu’il fut obligé de se sauver là bas pour soustraire son illustre tête à la hache des bourreaux de Robespierre. M de Saint-Méry fils, l’héritier des talents de son père, alors enfant, travaillait avec un de ses cousins à la composition typographique, pendant que son aimable mère et sa charmante soeur étaient chargées de l’étendage et du pliage des feuilles imprimées*). See Biblioteca Palatina, Parma, Italy, Z. IV. 22610/1. The manuscript donation slip is reproduced as figure 112 in [Marzio Dall’Acqua], *L’ossessione della Memoria: Parma settecentesca nei disegni del conte Alessandro Sanseverini* (Parma, Italy, 1997).

22. See Floriana Cioccolo’s discussion of the uncertainties surrounding attribution of this painting in “Artiste a Parma e a Milano: La creatività femminile fra obbligo pedagogico e veto istituzionale,” *Memorie della accademia delle scienze di Torino*, XXIV (2000), 345–347.

23. In his journal entry for Jan. 14, 1802, Moreau noted, “Aménaïde a achevé mon portrait.” See “Journal de Moreau de Saint-Méry,” I (1801–1802), transcribed by A. Saccò, under the supervision of Carminella Biondi (theses, Università degli studi di Parma, 1980–1981), from the manuscript “Journal de ma vie,” in Fondo Carte Moreau de Saint-Méry, Dono Monza, Archivio di Stato di Parma, Italy. Many thanks to Catherine Kelly for our conversation about this image.

24. In working on this group portrait, I found myself thinking of William J. Wilson’s “Afric-American Picture Gallery.” Writing under the pseudonym “Ethiop,” Wilson published a seven-part collection in the *Anglo-African Magazine* (1859) in which he imagined a gallery with paintings and sculptures of notable African-descended people as well as landscapes picturing scenes such as the slave trade. There were no actual images published alongside his descriptions. Rather, his prose imagined what such a gallery might include and how visitors might respond to it, an important way of performing what Ivy G. Wilson calls a “curatorial” practice for an antebellum Black public sphere. My household portrait

came together in color on the page after I pulled its members together in my mind and thought about them collectively. See Wilson, *Specters of Democracy: Blackness and the Aesthetics of Politics in the Antebellum U.S.* (New York, 2011).

25. James H. Sweet, “Reimagining the African-Atlantic Archive: Method, Concept, Epistemology, Ontology,” *Journal of African History*, LV (2014), 147–159.

26. See the entry on Marielle Plaisir and her series of drawings, *The Book of Life*, in the catalog for the New York University exhibit *Visionary Aponte: Art and Black Freedom*, Feb. 23–May 4, 2018, 16. For more on José Antonio Aponte, see the work of Ada Ferrer, Matt D. Childs, Linda Rodriguez, Kris Minhae Choe, Eric Anderson, Sibylle M. Fischer, Agnes Lugo-Ortiz, Stephan Palmié, Jorge Pavez Ojeda, and the excellent digital humanities exhibition <https://aponte.hosting.nyu.edu>. The *Visionary Aponte* exhibit conceived jointly by Ferrer and Duval-Carrié proved very inspiring for my own work.

27. Sara E. Johnson, “‘He Was a Lion, and He Would Destroy Much’: A Speculative School of Revolutionary Politics,” discussion of Ada Ferrer’s *Freedom’s Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution*, in *Small Axe*, XXIII, no. 1 (March 2019), 195–207.

Chapter Three

1. See Simon Gikandi’s provocative and beautifully argued *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (Princeton, N.J., 2011), xii.

2. M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Considérations présentées aux vrais amis du repos et du bonheur de la France; à l’occasion des nouveaux mouvemens de quelques soi-disant Amis-des-noirs* (Paris, 1791), 32 (“homme”), 48 (“esclaves”). An example of his self-proclaimed “moderate” stance, one that found fault with some of the practices of slavery, is the comment he made about a project for a law he wished to pass “to protect the enslaved from the misfortune of changing masters at every instant, by correcting, in several ways, the fiction of colonial law that would like them to be treated as if they were furniture” (pour garantir les esclaves du malheur de changer de maîtres à chaque instant, en corrigeant, à plusieurs égards, la fiction du droit colonial qui voulait qu’on les considérât comme des meubles). See Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Note des travaux du c[ito]yen Moreau-St.-Méry* (Paris, 1799), 2.

3. As noted in Chapter 1, the enslaved women who traveled with Madame Milhet, Moreau’s mother-in-law, joined the family household in the United States, and it is unclear what happened to them after her death. At least one woman, Sylvie, seems to have remained with the family when they returned to Europe.

4. Anthony Louis Elicona devotes several chapters to Moreau’s life in the United States in *Un colonial sous la Révolution en France et en Amérique: Moreau de Saint-Méry* (Paris, 1934). For more on Moreau and his time in Philadelphia, see Sara E. Johnson, “Moreau de Saint-Méry: Itinerant Bibliophile,” *Library and Information History*, XXXI (2015), 171–197.

5. The complete title, which notes the presence of engravings and maps along with Van Braam’s qualifications as author, is M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, ed. and trans., *Voyage de l’ambassade de la Compagnie des Indes orientales hollandaises, vers l’empereur de la Chine, dans les années 1794 et 1795: Où se trouve la description de plusieurs parties de la Chine inconnues aux Européens, et que cette ambassade a donné l’occasion de traverser: Le tout tiré*