Black Female Agency and Sexual Exploitation: Quadroon Balls and Plaçage Relationships

A Senior Honors Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for graduation
with research distinction in the undergraduate
colleges of The Ohio State University

by

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May 2008

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Acknowledgements

This thesis could not have been researched and written without the help of many individuals who have given me endless guidance and support. I am incredibly grateful to Dr. Walter Rucker and Dr. Leslie Alexander, my thesis advisors and mentors. Their knowledge, expertise, and dedication have been invaluable. I also want to thank Dr. Hasan Jeffries who first sparked my interest in attaining a Ph.D. and who encouraged me to pursue undergraduate research. He has been a great mentor ever since. Finally, I would like to thank my mother, Dr. Margo Voltz, who has given so much of her time to help me through the research process. She served as mentor, editor, travel companion, sounding board, and in many other roles.

I am also incredibly thankful for the financial support that the Ohio State University has provided me for my research. I was given the opportunity to participate in the Summer Research Opportunities Program which enabled me to conduct full-time research for two summers. I also was awarded a grant through the Colleges of Arts and Sciences which facilitated my archival research trips to Louisiana. Special thanks as well, to the kind, knowledgeable and patient (These were my first archival research experiences.) archivists at: the New Orleans Public Library, the New Orleans Notarial Archives, the Williams Research Center in New Orleans, the Earl K. Long Library Archives at the University of New Orleans, the Carmel Archives for the Sisters of Mount Carmel, and the Archdiocese Archives of New Orleans.

Abstract

In 1805, a New Orleans newspaper advertisement formally defined a new social institution, the infamous Quadroon Ball, in which prostitution and plaçage–a system of concubinage–converged. These elegant balls, limited to upper-class white men and free "quadroon" women, became interracial rendezvous that provided evening entertainment and the possibility of forming sexual liaisons in exchange for financial "sponsorship."[1] It is the contention of this thesis such "sponsored" relationships between white men and free women of color in New Orleans enabled these women to use sex as a means of gaining social standing, protection, and money. In addition, although these arrangements reflected a form of sexual exploitation, quadroon women were able to become active agents in their quest for upward social mobility.

Until recently, historians have overlooked the lives of Louisiana's free women of color during the colonial and antebellum eras. My research, therefore, expands historical knowledge about the unique social institution of Quadroon Balls and plaçage relationships in order to give greater breadth to scholarly understandings of quadroon women's sexual and economic choices. This research formally began in summer 2006, during my participation in the Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP) at the Ohio State University. Through this experience, I was able to begin analyzing the institution of Quadroon Balls and I have discovered the immense possibilities of this topic. While there are many directions that this research can take, I have decided to focus my undergraduate research and honors thesis on the history of the balls and quadroon women's agency in antebellum New Orleans. In order to research these concepts, I have utilized a combination of primary sources and secondary sources written about women of

[1] A "quadroon" is a person, who is one quarter black and three quarters white. The "quadroons," of the "Quadroon Balls" may or may not have been technically "quadroon"; it appears that this term encompassed several different racial gradations, although fair skin and European phenotypes were common among most of them.

color. In winter 2006, I was awarded an Undergraduate Research Scholarship and, with this money, I visited New Orleans and Baton Rouge to conduct archival research. My most recent trip to New Orleans and Baton Rouge has augmented my understanding of the topic by providing a large quantity of primary source materials, including court cases and other legal documents, as well as affording me an opportunity to experience archival research first hand in the actual historical environment in which the balls took place. Ultimately, I plan to continue my current research as my dissertation topic.

The Quadroon Ballroom.

Where 'fore the war, in days of glory old,
When wealth and fashion set the paces high,
When morals and strange customs held their code,
The quadroon girl made white men dance and sigh.
The half-white woman was a creature strange,
A petted, fawning thing ,of love and sin.
Her beauty was a dream surpassing rare,
Whose charms their masters oft' in fight did win.
And proud, these girls were petted darlings fair,
Whose sight the grand dames did then hate and fear;
For in their ballroom vast were revels held,
Which brought the blush of shame and bitter tear.
There Folly led the dance in madness wild,
When rivals,'neath the oaks would often meet,
In duel there, to place their lives at stake,
Because they found a quadroon girl so sweet.
There flash'd the quadroon's eyes so soft and bright,
As on she flew, voluptuous in the dance;
There breathed her lang'rous beauty, wondrous, warm,
With sighs and words, the white man to entrance.
But now, where sin and folly once did reign,
A holy silence rests on cloister wall;
And noble colored Sisters lift their race,
The quadroon girls, who long in sin did fall.
The orphan and the poor of that sad race
Find shelter there with God and holy rest;
The ignorant are taught and led from harm,
Where Christ shall lead them to his kingdom blest.
-Rixford J. Lincoln[2]

[2]Rixford J. Lincoln, "The Quadroon Ballroom," in *Historical New Orleans; In Verse* (New Orleans: s.n., 1911), 10.

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHIC REVIEW

In 1805, a New Orleans newspaper advertisement formally defined a new social institution, the infamous Quadroon Ball, in which prostitution and plaçage–a system of concubinage–converged. These elegant balls, limited to upper-class white men and free "quadroon" women, became an interracial rendezvous that provided evening entertainment and the possibility for the formation of interracial sexual liaisons in exchange for financial "sponsorship."[3] This sponsorship allowed quadroon women to use their bodies and sexuality to obtain desired financial and social status through brief or extended liaisons with white men. According to Joseph Tregle,

> It was the free Negro women, actually, who proved themselves to be most enterprising…a large if undetermined number monopolized the task of accommodating the licentiousness of the male part of New Orleans…Those of the women favored by nature set themselves up in bordellos all over the city, even in the most respectable neighborhoods, or roamed the streets in open pursuit of trade. The most famous of these Negro women, [was] the quadroon.[4]

Although the sexual arrangements between white men and quadroon women reflected a form of exploitation, many of these women were able to become active agents in their quest for upward social mobility because they leveraged their sexuality as a means of gaining social standing, protection, and money.

Until recently, historians have largely overlooked the lives of Louisiana's free women of color during the colonial and antebellum eras. As a result, there are few studies that effectively grapple with the unique intersections of race, gender, class, and location that this study seeks to

[3] A "quadroon" is a person, who is one-quarter black and three-quarters white. The "quadroons", of the "Quadroon Balls" may or may not have been technically "quadroon"; it appears that this encompassed several different racial gradations, although fair skin was common to them all.
[4] Joseph Tregle, "Early New Orleans Society: A Reappraisal" *The Journal of Southern History* 18 (1952), 34-35.

explore. Yet over the past fifty years, a small collection of historical works have emerged that have gradually enhanced our analyses of quadroon women in antebellum Louisiana. The earliest discussions on Quadroon Balls and plaçage relationships tended to be rather limited, since scholars usually mentioned these important events only in passing references. In 1966, for example, Henry Kmen published Music in New Orleans, which focused primarily on various musical performances including balls, concerts, bands, and most extensively the opera. Although he devoted an entire chapter to a discussion of Quadroon Balls, Kmen neglected to provide much analysis of the social significance of the balls or their participants. Even worse, Kmen periodically injected his subjective opinion; in one case, he described the Quadroon Balls as "field operations of prostitutes."[5] As we shall see, however, Kmen's argument is not supported by the archival evidence and has caused some scholarly misinterpretations about the structure and function of Quadroon Balls.

For more than a decade after the publication of Kmen's work, scholars continued to overlook the importance of the Quadroon Balls. In 1972, H. E. Sterkx published The Free Negro in Ante-Bellum Louisiana, which contributed important insights on the origin of New Orleans' free black population and their place in antebellum society. However, the social institution of Quadroon Balls is given only scant attention– literally occupying approximately two pages in the entire book. Likewise, in the following year, John Blassingame wrote Black New Orleans, 1860-1880 which explores the lives of the black population in New Orleans.[6] Sterkx's and Blassingame's treatments helped to expand our general historical knowledge of the lives of both the enslaved and free populations of New Orleans. However, their research does not specifically

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[5] Henry Arnold Kmen. *The Music of New Orleans: The Formative Years 1791-1841* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), vii-viii, 49.
[6] H. E. Sterkx, *The Free Negro in Ante-Bellum Louisiana* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1972).

deal with free women of color in New Orleans and, as a result, barely mentions women or Quadroon Balls at all.[7]

Liliane Crété, a French scholar, offered one of the first studies that provided substantial commentaries about Quadroon Balls in her 1978 social history of Louisiana. Daily Life in Louisiana 1815-1830 focuses on a wide range of social practices in antebellum New Orleans including societal structure, family, education, newspapers, music, religion, medicine, and various forms of entertainment (e.g., gambling, dancing, opera, etc.). Of particular interest to the current study was Crété's handling of Quadroon Balls and plaçage relationships. She provides detail and informed analysis about these topics, particularly from the perspective of the white male and female "Creoles." Unfortunately, however, there remain some significant shortcomings in her analysis. First, Crété fails to fully examine how people of color viewed the Quadroon Balls and plaçage relationships. In addition, given the broad nature of her topic, the discussions of Quadroon balls, interracial relationships, and free women of color are only briefly mentioned and are not specifically analyzed for their deeper societal significance.[8] Also, Crété neglects to include citations throughout her work, which undermines the book's usefulness for historical research.

The historiographic silence on women of color was finally broken in 1981 when Angela Y. Davis published her work Women, Race and Class. Davis devotes the first chapter of her book to analyzing women of color during slavery. While Davis does not specifically discuss free women of color, she does analyze interracial sexual encounters that occurred between primarily enslaved women of color and white men. Davis contends that all sexual relations between white

[7] John W. Blassingame, *Black New Orleans 1860-1880* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).
[8] Liliane Crété, *Daily Life in Louisiana 1815-1830*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 80-84, 98-100, 144, 210-212.

men and women of color were a demonstration of white men's attempts to dominate these women. She states, "It was as oppressors – or, in the case of non-slaveowners, as agents of domination – that white men approached Black women's bodies."[9] Davis makes the assumption that all interracial sexual relationships, whether within the confines of slavery or not, were the manifestations of exploitation of the black female. In all interracial sexual encounters, according to Davis, women of color can only be the victims and, while women of color can resist the sexual advances of white men, the actual act of sex is always an assault. Davis removes the possibility that women of color could and did choose to capitalize upon their own sexuality by voluntarily entering into relationships with white men.[10]

Quickly following up where Davis left off, Deborah Gray White took revolutionary steps in the field, when she wrote her first book, Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South. Published in 1985, White's book was the first to be completely devoted to the complex lives of enslaved women of color and therefore had a significant impact in the field of African American history. Her analysis exposes the sexual exploitation that was intertwined with the antebellum stereotypes of black women as asexual Mammies and oversexed Jezebels. Utilizing the Works Project Administration's interviews of ex-slaves, White unveils the "nature of female slavery" and explores women's roles, as both slaves and human beings, in the slave community. Not only has her work opened the door to future analyses of the history of black women, it serves as a call for continued research on black women's history.[11]

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[9] Davis wrote a journal article entitled "The Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves" which appeared in the *Black Scholar* in 1971 and thus appeared earlier than her work, *Women, Race and Class*. Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1981; reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 26.
[10] Ibid., 3-29.
[11] Deborah Grey White, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 25.

While Ar'n't I a Woman? has had a significant impact in the field of African American history, the book's focus is on the enslaved populations of the plantation South and therefore White's research relates only indirectly to Quadroon Balls, plaçage, and free women of color. It does, however, offer a context for understanding the growth of the multiracial population in New Orleans during the antebellum era. As she explains, rampant sexual exploitation during slavery ultimately created a sizable mixed-race community throughout the South, and particularly in New Orleans. She further argues that multi-racial women, free or not, were not exempt from the stereotypes about black females which were popular in the era. According to White, "One of the most prevalent images of black women in antebellum America was of a person governed almost entirely by her libido, a Jezebel character."[12] The overtly sexualized images of the quadroon woman in travelers' journals written in nineteenth century Louisiana were clear manifestations of this stereotype about black women. As White states,

> Black men and women were thought to have such insatiable sexual appetites that they had to go beyond the boundaries of their race to get satisfaction. It was the black woman, who, many claimed, tempted men of the superior caste…Proponents of this line of reasoning actually celebrated the societal stratification that made black women available but put white women out of reach."[13]

It was the Jezebel stereotype, in tandem with the quadroon's nearly European phenotype that gave the free women of color in Louisiana their "exotic" desirability in the eyes of white men.

Following the publication of White's study, other scholars began to build upon her example and examine both free and enslaved women of color in more depth. In 1991, Lois Virginia Meacham Gould completed her dissertation entitled "In Full Enjoyment of Their Liberty" which discusses the lives of free women of color in the Gulf South regions–including

[12] Ibid., 28-29.
[13] Ibid., 38-39.

New Orleans, Mobile, and Pensacola–during the colonial and antebellum eras. Drawing upon a wealth of primary sources, Gould analyzes identity construction among free women of color and shows that these women were neither enslaved nor were they considered equal with their white counterparts. Through her discussion of identity, Gould does give room for agency on the part of free women of color. Yet despite Gould's important contributions, there are some issues that need to be explored in more detail. For example, although Gould hints that women of color were active agents, she never fully develops this argument. In addition, since her work is broadly focused on free women of color over the *longue durée* and in several geographic spaces, Quadroon Balls and plaçage relationships are not the primary focus of her dissertation and are therefore not given sufficient attention.[14] Sadly, Gould's dissertation was never published as a monograph which limits it contribution to the historiography and historical knowledge of the field. Gould has, since writing this dissertation, published a number of articles; however, current studies of free women of color could have benefited immensely from the wide circulation of her analysis.[15]

The issue of free women of color and sexuality was explored more explicitly in Kimberly S. Hanger's 1997 work. In her essay, "Coping in a Complex World: Free Black Women in Colonial New Orleans," Hanger focuses on interracial sexual relationships which took place in New Orleans during the era of Spanish rule (1769-1803). While not incorporating the term *plaçage* in her research, Hanger clearly centers her research on the plaçage relationship. Her

[14] Lois Virginia Meacham Gould, "In Full Enjoyment of their Liberty: The Free Women of Color of the Gulf Ports of New Orleans, Mobile, and Pensacola, 1769-1860" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1991).
[15] Lois Virginia Meacham Gould, "A Chaos of Iniquity and Discord: Slave and Free Women of Color in the Spanish Ports of New Orleans, Mobile, and Pensacola" in *The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South,* ed. Catherine Clinton and Michele Gillespie (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 232-246. Lois Virginia Meacham Gould, "Henriette Delille, Free Women of Color, and Catholicism in Antebellum New Orleans, 1727-1852" in *Beyond Bondage: Free Women of Color in the Americas,* ed. David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 271-285.

work is particularly significant because she advances two important arguments that are central to the current study. First Hanger maintains that the historical setting of New Orleans provided an ideal venue for free women of color to maneuver their way through the social ranks and to gain financial and social benefits. In addition, she argues that these women may have enjoyed a type of freedom unique to their caste and that exceeded the status of both slaves and white women. However, because her timeframe predates the antebellum era and the official beginning of Quadroon Balls, this study seeks to build upon this seminal research by exploring the complex relationship between plaçage relationships and the subsequent formation of Quadroon Balls in 1805.[16]

Monique Guillory can be credited with being one of the first scholars whose writing has focused almost exclusively on Quadroon Balls and plaçage relationships. In fact, Guillory's dissertation, written in 1999, has become a principal source on the institution of Quadroon Balls for subsequent scholars.[17] Her research on the topic of Quadroon Balls provides an essential starting point for scholarship on this institution, especially in regards to her extensive bibliography which includes a comprehensive listing of travel journal accounts. However, there are some important methodological problems with Guillory's work which this current project seeks to rectify. First, Guillory's academic background in literature becomes apparent in her text because her focus, while nestled in historical context, is more about the literature that has been written about the balls. Therefore, in her historical summary of the balls, she uses material from reliable sources as well as some questionable data in her research. Also, while her dissertation seeks to unravel the sometimes confusing and contradictory accounts of Quadroon Balls and

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[16] Kimberly S. Hanger, "Free Black Women in Colonial New Orleans" in *The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South,* ed. Catherine Clinton and Michele Gillespie (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 218-231.
[17] Monique Guillory, "Some Enchanted Evening on the Auction Block: The Cultural Legacy of the New Orleans Quadroon Balls" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1999), 15-16.

plaçage relationships, Guillory relies on uncited primary and secondary source material to support her thesis.[18] As is evident in the title of her dissertation, Guillory argues that the Quadroon Balls were essentially one small step away from the slave markets which were convened just a short distance from the balls. By framing her work in this way, Guillory removes much of the agency on the part of free women of color. In doing so, she ignores the very real choices that were made by these enterprising women.

One of the most recent articles about plaçage relationships and Quadroon Balls is "Plaçage and the Louisiana *Gens de Couleur Libre*" written in 2000 by Joan M. Martin. Incorporating outside analyses about sexual and racial interactions, Martin draws the conclusion that plaçage relationships were in essence forced upon women because of their need to survive in a racist and sexist society. While Martin has added great insight and breadth to historiographic understandings about the lives of free black women in antebellum Louisiana, she also makes a questionable contention:

> They [free women of color] must adapt their behavior to the situations in which they find themselves…When *plaçage* is viewed within this framework, the actions of the free woman of color can be deemed not only as moral and ethical, but also courageous. They didn't choose to live in concubinage, what they chose was to survive.[19]

To say that free women of color entered into plaçage relationships because of a need for survival, is to discount the numerous free black women who chose to not live the "quadroon lifestyle."

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[18] There are many examples throughout Guillory's work were she does not cite sources for her material. These citations are absent from her footnotes and her bibliography. For example, Guillory discusses in detail an archival case about a free woman of color named Pauline. However, Guillory provides no reference for the case except to say that it is "archival material" from March 28, 1846. Ibid., 15-16.

[19] Joan M. Martin, "*Plaçage* and the Louisiana *Gens de Couleur Libre"* in *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color,* ed. Sybil Kein (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 65.

Until recently, free women of color of Louisiana have been virtually ignored in the historiography of southern life. Works by H.E. Sterkx, John Blassingame, and Liliane Crété helped to open the door into the study of free people of color in New Orleans, yet free women of color were often marginalized in these earlier studies. Responding to this void, scholars like Lois Virginia Meacham Gould, Kimberly Hanger, Monique Guillory and Joan Martin have begun to analyze the lives of free women of color of New Orleans. However, these recent works have either been focused on the colonial era or have denied the free women of color the possibility of personal choice and agency in their lives. As a result, this thesis analyzes antebellum New Orleans' unique social institution of Quadroon Balls and the related concept of plaçage. It is the contention of this thesis that "quadroons," as free women of color, were active agents who made conscious and calculated choices to utilize interracial sexual relationships to their financial and social advantage. While working within the constraints of a racist society, free women of color determined their own identities and destinies for themselves and their families. Analysis of contemporary travelers' journals, newspapers, poems, songs, letters, court cases and other legal documents of the period reveals the agency wielded by free women of color.

The first chapter of this thesis begins with an examination of the history of Louisiana and how Louisiana became the home of a large population of free people of color. Following this analysis is a discussion of what it meant to be a free woman of color in New Orleans and more specifically an explanation of the social positioning of quadroon women. Chapter two analyzes the plaçage relationships that occurred between white men and free women of color. This chapter deals with why the relationships occurred as well as the roles played by the participants involved. Through this discussion, free women of color will emerge as active participants in

these connubial relationships. Chapter three concentrates on Quadroon Balls and their significance as social institutions that were both created and utilized by free women of color in their quest for upward financial and social mobility. The fourth and final chapter of this thesis provides a case study of black female agency as it relates to plaçage relationships through specific analyses of the lives of six New Orleanian women in the same family line, stretching from the 1720s through the 1850s.

CHAPTER 1: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF NEW ORLEANS' FREE WOMEN OF COLOR, 1699-1805

In order to better analyze the choices quadroon women made regarding their sexual relationships during the antebellum era, it is important to understand the historical context out of which they emerged. Louisiana's complex history provided an optimal situation for Quadroon Balls and their resulting interracial relationships. Louisiana was founded in 1699 by the French, who began to build the capital city, New Orleans, in 1718.[20] African slaves were quickly brought to Louisiana to work: "Between 1719 and 1731, twenty-two ships carrying nearly 6,000 slaves arrived in Louisiana's ports."[21] Some of these early slaves were able to earn or otherwise receive their freedom and therefore became part of a free population of color.[22] With this large increase in the number of both free and enslaved blacks in the colony, New Orleans' governor, Sieur de Bienville, quickly put into place a code of laws designed to regulate the expanding populations of color. The laws, laid out in 54 Articles, were formally called *Code Noir* or the Black Codes (1724) and were based upon an earlier set of Black Codes written in 1685 for the French Caribbean islands. These regulations ranged from establishing Catholicism as the only permitted religion in the colony, to discussing the treatment of slaves and the punishments to be inflicted upon those who were disobedient. *Code Noir* declared that masters were to baptize all slaves and teach them the tenets of Catholicism and that slaves were to receive Sundays and other religious feast days off.

While *Code Noir* contained provisions which attempted to manage all people of color in Louisiana, a significant portion of *Code Noir* was dedicated to controlling the interracial

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[20] Spanish explorers were really the first to discover the land that has become known as Louisiana in the 1500s.
[21] Gould, *'A Chaos of Iniquity and Discord,'* 233.
[22] It is important to note that many of the slaves who were freed were women of color who had been the concubines of their masters.

relationships that had been occurring with some frequency between white men and women of color. According to Article 6 of the Code:

> We forbid our white subjects of either sex [nos Sujets blancs, de l'un et de l'autre sexe] from contracting marriage with the Blacks [les Noirs], under penalty of punishment and arbitrary fine; and all curés, priests, or secular or regular missionaries, and even the chaplains of ships, from marrying them. We also forbid our said white subjects, and even the manumitted or free born Blacks [Noirs affrachis ou nez libres], from living in concubinage with slaves.[23]

Code Noir outlawed interracial marriage between whites and all blacks, as well as concubinage between whites and slaves; yet concubinage between free people of color and whites would remain legal until 1777.[24] Given the continued growth of the mixed-race population, we can assume that interracial sexual relationships continued to exist up to and through the time when the Spanish gained control of Louisiana in 1769.

It was during the time of Spanish rule–in the aftermath of the Treaty of Paris–that many slaves from Africa and the West Indies were brought into colonial Louisiana. As the enslaved population expanded, there was also an increase in the number of people of color who attained freedom. According to Kimberly Hanger, "Free blacks made up only 7.1 percent of the city's population in 1769, but rose to a high of 33.5 percent by 1805."[25] This growth can be attributed to migration–especially from San Domingue–manumission, and natural increase. In order to control the growing population of both free and enslaved people of color, the Spanish government created its own set of codes that were used to govern Louisiana. These new Spanish

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[23] Excerpt from Code Noir, 1724, Article 6. Jennifer M. Spear, "Colonial Intimacies: Legislating Sex in French Louisiana." *William and Mary Quarterly 3rd ser.,* 60 (2003): 91-92.

[24] According to Code Noir, if a white master impregnated a slave, both the slave and the resulting child would be removed from the master's possession and turned over to Louisiana's government. Joe Grey Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1963), 19.

[25] Kimberly S. Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans's Free Creoles of Color" in *Creoles of Color of the Gulf South,* ed. James H. Dormon, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 5-6.

codes incorporated the Spanish slave codes, *Las Siete Partidas*, and the *Recopilación de las Leyes de los Reinos de las Indias* with parts of the French *Code Noir*.[26]

While the Spanish codes were meant, like *Code Noir*, to establish control over Louisiana and particularly over Louisiana's people of color, they were more liberal in nature. For example, the Spanish codes allowed for manumissions to occur relatively frequently. The leniency of manumission laws can be attributed to the fact that there was a need for people of color to fill skilled labor positions in colonial Louisiana. According to Hanger, "In desperate need of allies and laborers, Spanish authorities fostered the growth and protection of the free black population."[27] Not only were masters allowed to free their slaves without the need of government permission, but there was an intricate petition system that guaranteed slaves the right to purchase their own freedom at a fair market price. Moreover, because of the strict religious laws that were a part of both the *Code Noir* and *Las Siete Partidas*, slaves in Louisiana were generally given Sundays off. This allowed slaves the option of earning money to purchase their freedom or a *carta de libertad* (certificate of liberty).[28] All of these laws helped to create the possibility for a free black population to emerge in New Orleans at early points in Louisiana's history. [29]

New Orleans provided a unique life style for all people of color, both enslaved and free. The urban setting allowed for a great deal of interaction among all castes of society. Slavery, under the French, Spanish and United States governments, was distinctive in New Orleans

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[26] Ibid., 13-17.
[27] Ibid., 2.
[28] Carolyn Morrow Long, *A New Orleans Voudou Priestess: The Legend and Reality of Marie Laveau* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), 14.
[29] Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 17; See Kimberly S. Hanger's articles "Avenues to Freedom Open to New Orleans' Black Population, 1769-1779" and "Origins of New Orleans's Free Creoles of Color." She provide an in depth analysis of the different types of manumission that were granted to slaves.

because many of the slaves had significant autonomy. Rather than working directly for their masters, these slaves were often hired out and were required to give only a portion of their earnings to their masters. Not only were slaves given one day a week in which they could earn money, but if they were industrious, they could earn extra money throughout the week–above and beyond the master's stipend. Many slaves were able to save money and ultimately join the ever growing free population, the *gens de couleur libre* (the free people of color), in New Orleans. This was just one path of several that allowed for the formation of a distinct third tier in New Orleans society.[30] By 1805 there were 8,222 inhabitants in New Orleans. Of these 3,551 were white, 3,105 were slaves and 1,566 were free people of color.[31]

Along with the process of manumission by petition mentioned earlier, there was another significant way that slaves could attain their freedom: enslaved women and their offspring were often manumitted by their white masters. This specific avenue to freedom had two important consequences. First, it guaranteed a consistent increase of free, light-skinned people of color who were the offspring of the interracial relationships between masters and enslaved women. In many instances, quadroon women were the result of this particular practice. Either their mothers or their grandmothers had been the sexual partners, by force or by choice, of a white master. In addition, this practice clearly favored women who had served as concubines. In fact, on average, women were manumitted twice as often as men before 1805.[32] Kimberly Hanger suggests that this gender imbalance can be attributed partly to the fact that women were considered less valuable as slaves, and that they were also able to make a living by "selling services and goods

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[30] Blassingame, *Black New Orleans,* 1-11.
[31] See Table 1 in the Appendix. According to scholar Carolyn Long, there were 1,556 free people of color in New Orleans in 1805, making the city's total population 8,212. Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans's Free Creole of Color," 2; Long, *A New Orleans Voudou Priestess: The Legend and Reality of Marie Laveau*, 36.
[32] After 1805, this gender imbalance appears to get smaller; however, women are still manumitted more frequently than men. Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans's Free Creoles of Color," 9.

and by begging." But she also concludes that sexual liaisons may have also been a factor: "Slaveholders commonly manumitted these female-headed families for good and loyal service and for the love and care they had shown the master…in some cases…[sexual] relationships can be deduced."[33]

Within New Orleans society, there was an ongoing inequality in the gender ratios in the free black community which made women of color the decided majority. Also, due to manumission practices and other slave laws mentioned previously, there was a significant portion of the free black population that was of mixed heritage. Blassingame, author of Black New Orleans, points out that in 1860 "color was closely correlated with status: 80 percent of all blacks were slaves and 70 percent of all mulattos were freemen."[34] These two factors in Louisiana's demographics allowed for the emergence of a distinct class of mixed race women who became known collectively as quadroons.

These free women of color, also known as the *femmes de couleur libre*, occupied a complicated space in the social hierarchy of New Orleans. As part of the population of free people of color, the quadroons were in a class higher than slaves but lower than poor whites. Within this middle tier of society, there were established racial classifications that caused further division among the free population. This division was based on racial composition and therefore, it further separated these quadroon women into a group of their own:

> Among themselves, however, there were jealous and fiercely guarded distinctions: 'griffes, briqués, mulattoes, quadroons, octoroons, each term meaning one degree's further transfiguration toward the Caucasian standard of physical perfection'.[35]

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[33] Ibid., 10-13.
[34] Blassingame, *Black New Orleans 1860-1880*, 21.
[35] Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson, "People of Color in Louisiana" in *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color,* ed. Sybil Kein (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 3-4.

Many free women of color found themselves internalizing these racial gradations and saw their relative whiteness as a possession which granted them higher standing.[36] John H. B. Latrobe, a visitor to New Orleans in 1834, illustrated well the very significant, and yet very confusing, racial hierarchy that played such an important role in the lives of Louisiana's free women of color:

> 'Hah – what's that. A fine figure, a beautiful foot, an ankle like an angels – an air quite distinqué, and then so strange, and characteristic – so Spanish, with that long black veil over the head' – 'Allons, we will pass her. Why she's a mulatto – Fie – not at all – don't let her hear you – that's a quadroon. A Quadroon! Well, I'll know better next time. Are those quadroons on high there, in the balcony that projects from that Spanish looking house with ornamented cornice and window frames and flat roof. One of them has a veil, and all that I see are darker than she we have just passed. Heavens no, they are creoles – natives, whites – Spaniards and French mixed – born in the country – very good society. No indeed they are not quadroons. You must make the distinction.'[37]

However insignificant the slight changes in skin tones might have been, they clearly had a strong social relevance that made it necessary for Latrobe to make the comment "don't let her hear you." Typically, quadroon women took pride in the white portion of their racial composition and identity, and therefore, it would have been an insult to call them mulattoes "as the quadroons on their part regard the negroes and mulattoes with contempt…[they would]…not mix with them."[38] As important as it was to not call a quadroon a mulatto, it was more important to distinguish between a quadroon and a Creole – a member of "very good society." As Latrobe

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[36] Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness as Property" in *Black on White: Black Writers on What It Means to be White,* ed. David R. Roediger (New York: Schocken Books, 1998), 103-118.
[37] Samuel Wilson, ed. *Southern Travels: Journal of John H. B. Latrobe* (The Historic New Orleans Collection, 1986), 43.
[38] Bernhard, Duke of Saxe-Weimar Eisenach, *Travels through North America during the years 1825 and 1826,* Vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Carey, 1828), 61.

stated, "You must make the distinction." Louisiana's white society was well aware of the possibility for quadroon women to be mistaken for Creoles and Americans.[39]

Most travelers of the time made note of the immaculately fair skin of many of the quadroon women as Latrobe stated "all I see are darker than she we have just passed." In response to the implied threat of the quadroon, white women of New Orleans pushed for legislation that would mark mixed raced women as part of the second tier of society. In 1786, Spanish Governor Esténban Miro passed a law that required free women of color to "no longer…wear too many jewels or to deck their hair with plumes, and that from then on they would be required to tie up their hair in a *tignon*–a kerchief used as a headdress–as a symbol of their lower status."[40] The quadroon women's response to this law, however, clearly indicates that they were unwilling to accept being a part of this imposed lower class. According to scholar Carolyn Long, "Instead of being considered a badge of dishonor, the tignon…became a fashion statement. The bright reds, blues, and yellows of the scarves, and the imaginative wrapping techniques employed by their wearers, are said to have enhanced the beauty of the women of

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[39] In this particular context, Latrobe used the term "Creole" to refer to a white person of Spanish and French descent, born in America. The definition of "Creole" historically is quite complex and has changed through time to encompass different ethnicities and geographical regions. According to scholar Virginia Meacham Gould, "The term *Creole* in the eighteenth century was originally a Portuguese label, soon adopted by the French and the Spanish, that designated anyone born in the Americas. 'Creole' in that sense, was a term that separated persons born in the Colonies from those born in Europe or Africa…The term changed, however, after Americans began pouring into the region after the Louisiana Purchase treaty of 1803." For further analysis of the term "Creole," see Gwendolyn Midlo Hall's work, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. Gould, "Henriette Delille, Free Women of Color, and Catholicism in Antebellum New Orleans," 273; Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 157-159.

[40] James Haskins, *The Creoles of Color of New Orleans* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1975), 24-25; Virginia R. Dominguez, *White by Definition: Social Classification in Creole Louisiana* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 25.

color."[41] While some chose to not wear the scarves at all, others fabricated scarves out of the best material and adorned them with jewels, to further accentuate their beauty.[42]

The beauty of the quadroon was celebrated by many writers. As previously mentioned, Latrobe described the quadroon on the street as possessing a "fine figure, a beautiful foot, an ankle like an angels–an air quite distinqué." Harriet Martineau, another traveler of the time, commented that "the girls are highly educated, externally, and are, probably, as beautiful and accomplished a set of women as can be found."[43] It is important to note that this perception of beauty was based on European tastes which held the white, "pure" woman as the epitome of perfection. As the traveler Featherstonhaugh pointed out:

> I had occasion to see a good many of them [Quadroons] during my stay, at a ball or two I had access to; and certainly it must be allowed that they are "bien mises," and carry their persons very well; but in the lips and mouth, and in an unpleasing coarse texture of the skin, the negro blood shows itself very distinctly.[44]

While Featherstonhaugh commended these women for their beauty, any part of their appearance that reflected their mixed heritage was condemned. Although most other travelers did not point out negative traits in the quadroons' appearance, they all commented on the very European nature of their looks.[45] In doing so, these travelers were implicitly asserting a European standard of beauty. Quadroon women were very aware of their beauty in the eyes of white society. Clearly, white women felt threatened by them, and white men were attracted to them.

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[41] Long, *A New Orleans Voudou Priestess,* 21.
[42] For a picture of a tignon, see Figure 1 in Appendix.
[43] Harriet Martineau, *Society in America,* Vol. II (New York: Saunders and Otley, 1837), 117.
[44] George William Featherstonhaugh, *Excursion Through the Slave States* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1844), 141.
[45] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Journey to America,* ed. J.P. Mayer, trans. By George Lawrence (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1971), 100.

Within the context of colonial and antebellum New Orleans, there emerged a unique population of free women of color. Limited by the encumbrances of race, class and gender, free women of color occupied a precarious position in their society. Yet these women chose to capitalize upon their social status, by transforming their severe limitations into opportunities for financial and social gain. Aware of their stereotypically exotic, these quadroon women presented themselves to white men who could offer them money, protection and social status.

CHAPTER 2: PLAÇAGE RELATIONSHIPS

Many quadroon women throughout the colonial and antebellum eras chose to enter into concubine relationships with white males in New Orleans. These relationships, more recently known as *plaçage*, were often referred to as "left-hand marriages" or *marriages de la main gauche* because of their illegality. *Code Noir*, *Las Siete Partidas*, and the American Slave Codes all outlawed interracial marriage.[46] Although interracial marriages and, at times, concubinage were illegal, this did not curtail the existence of interracial sexual relationships. In fact, the demographics of New Orleans, Louisiana created an atmosphere that in many ways encouraged these sexual relationships. While free women of color outnumbered free men of color, there was also a significant gender imbalance in the white population. There were significantly more white men than white women. According to Kimberly Hanger, during the Spanish period,

> the median age at death for white males was 30.6 years and white females 18.1 years; the figures for free blacks were even more dismal, although reversed by sex, with a median age at death for free black males of 8.1 years and for free black females 30.3 years.[47]

Hanger's statistics show one reason why free women of color might have been drawn into interracial relationships. This demographic disparity caused many white men to turn to black women to conveniently fulfill their sexual and emotional needs. Quadroon women chose to capitalize on these demographic imbalances by providing white men with sexual and emotional support, while at the same time securing financial security for themselves and their progeny. New Orleans provided an environment that was conducive to the flourishing of interracial relationships. The gender/racial imbalance, however, is not the sole explanation for why free women of color entered into plaçage relationships.

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[46] Martin, "*Plaçage* and the Louisiana *Gens de Couleur Libre,"* 68; Jennifer M. Spear, "Colonial Intimacies," 75.
[47] Hanger, "Free Black Women in Colonial New Orleans," 220.

These interracial relationships, while condemned by the government, appear to have been condoned by some white males. Women of color were encouraged at times, by social prescription, to enter into relationships with white men. For example there existed several prescriptive works, in the form of cigar box lithographs, which describe interracial sexual relationships between free women of color and white men as the "means to an end."[48] Cigar boxes with the images of mixed race women were produced in Cuba in the mid-nineteenth century.[49] These cigar box lithographs prescribe lifestyle choices for free women of color and also describe their place in a three-tiered society like New Orleans. While we do not know whether free women of color in New Orleans ever came into contact with these particular cigar boxes, it would not be a stretch to say that it was a possibility.[50] New Orleans, as a port city on the Gulf of Mexico, was a location of import and export. Regardless of whether these cigar box lithographs ever made their way into the hands of New Orleans' women of color, they still reveal some of the social expectations of the time. The images on the boxes revealed a popular sentiment and this ideology was certainly widely circulated in contemporary culture.

Specifically, there are two series of cigar box lithographs which describe the lives of free, bi-racial, women of color. The first is entitled "Vida y Muerte de La Mulatta" (The Life and Death of the Mulatta). In this series, the images follow the expected life of a free woman of color, a mulatta.[51] From the first image, which deals with the creation of a mulatto–a sexual encounter between a white man and a visibly dark skinned woman–this series lays out step-by-step a prescription for how free women of color should expect to survive. According to this

[48] See Figure 12 in Appendix.
[49] See Figures 2-10 in Appendix.
[50] There are comments made about cigars in several letters sent from the Miller's, a family of color residing in New Orleans to their family in Natchez. Virginia Meacham Gould, ed., *Chained to the Rock of Adversity: To Be Free, Black, and Female in the Old South* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1998).
[51] In New Orleans, "as late as 1860…the free colored population was overwhelmingly mulatto (81%)." Daniel E. Walker, *No More, No More: Slavery and Cultural Resistance in Havana and New Orleans* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 68.

method, the mulatto woman enters into a relationship with a white man which "promises the best results" and will make her "happy." However, as time progresses, her lover leaves her and she enters into a relationship with a black man.[52] This new relationship causes her demise in the form of imprisonment, sickness, and death. These particular images served as both a prescription for inter-racial relationships and as a proscription of intra-racial relationships. Clearly men of color did not, in all reality, destroy the lives of free women of color. Yet in making this assertion, these cigar boxes encouraged women of color to select white sexual partners, instead of men of color, and conveyed the idea that white lovers are the only way for women of color to gain social and financial standing.

Similarly, another series entitled "Historia de la Mulatta" (The History of the Mulatta) emphasizes interracial relationships as a "means to an end" for the attainment of money by free women of color.[53] Clearly these lithographs encouraged women of color to enter into relationships with white men by promoting the idea that white men were their primary means of acquiring financial security. In fact, these images go as far as to reduce women of color to mere stereotypes; they become "hawk-like" aggressors against white males who are depicted as innocent "doves."[54] Interracial relationships did provide an important path to social and financial advancement that might otherwise have been nearly impossible; however, it was not the only path available–a fact which at times is ignored by modern scholars.

The argument that all free women of color entered into relationships with white men entirely out of a need for survival is limiting because there were many women of color who maintained jobs and ran successful businesses on their own. Certainly, the lives of free women

[52] See Figure 7 in Appendix.
[53] See Figures 11-13 in Appendix.
[54] See Figure 11 in Appendix.

of color were far from easy, since racial and gender boundaries were ever present and could not be easily overcome. However, there were free women of color who were able to earn their living independent from the sexual commodification of their bodies, through working as “laundresses, seamstresses, domestics, cooks.”[55] In addition, many free women of color worked as peddlers and merchants, selling goods in the port city of New Orleans. These women “owned more property than did either free men of color or white women.”[56] Admittedly, white men, in the roles of either family members or sexual partners, did often financially contribute to free women of color’s ability to start businesses. According to scholar Loren Schweninger, “By 1840, with rare exceptions, affluent free persons of color in the lower south were directly related either to whites or mulattoes who had been assisted by white benefactors.”[57] However, these financial contributions from white men do not detract from the fact that many free women of color were quite resourceful and industrious and were able to maintain their businesses independently and successfully. Eulalie Mandeville is just one example of an industrious free woman of color who ran a dry goods business. Although Mandeville did choose to enter into a relationship with Eugene Macarty, a white man, she continued to run her business which was often described by witnesses as being very successful. Her financial contribution to their relationship was dramatic enough that the Louisiana Supreme Court felt that she was entitled to keep $111, 280.37 of Macarty’s approximately $123,280.37 estate even with Macarty’s legal heir laying claim to the money. Even in this condensed form, this case shows black female ingenuity and just one of the

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[55] Gould, “In Full Enjoyment of their Liberty,” 149.
[56] Gould, “Henriette Delille, Free Women of Color, and Catholicism in Antebellum New Orleans, 1727-1852,” 273.
[57] Loren Schweninger, *Black Property Owners in the South, 1790-1915* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 101.

financial possibilities available to free women of color. Free women of color, like Mandeville, in many instances were capable of running their own businesses.[58]

Free women of color were not forced into sexual liaisons with white men out of a need for survival, but rather chose to consciously enter into such relationships. Their decision to enter into interracial relationships can be viewed as all the more deliberate since free women of color rejected successful free men of color with whom they could have developed relationships. These men were ready, willing, and able to marry their female counterparts yet some of the women would not have them. Floyd D. Cheung's analysis of a collection of poetry entitled "Les Cenelles" gives deep insight into this issue. "Les Cenelles" were written in French, in 1845, by well educated, free men of color in New Orleans. Through their poetry, the men cry out to the female participants in the Quadroon Balls and, in code, they express their own dissenting political sentiments about the institution and their feelings of rejection:

> In the center of the city these marginal men spoke among themselves like exiles at home…Indeed the poets were excluded by cruel quadroons and the system in which the latter thrived; thus, 'l'amour…d'une vierge adorée' ('the love of a treasured virgin') is 'la fraîche oasis…le manne sacrée…la source d'eau pure' ('the fresh oasis, the sacred manna,/ The source of pure water') for socially and sexually exiled men who found themselves 'au milieu des déserts' ('in the middle of deserts') between freedom and slavery, black and white, Canaan and Egypt.[59]

Cheung further makes the point that:

> In no way do free men of color automatically possess exclusive rights over free women of color by virtue of their shared racial identification but…from the

[58] *Macarty et al v. Mandeville*, 3 La. An. 239 (March 1848), Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans, New Orleans.
[59] Floyd D. Cheung, "*Les Cenelles* and Quadroon Balls: 'Hidden Transcripts' of Resistance and Domination in New Orleans, 1803-1845," *Southern Literary Journal* 29 (1997), 10.

> perspective of free men of color, women preferred not one man over another, but one race over another, one culture over another.[60]

The free men of color in Louisiana felt that the males of their caste were being systematically rejected by the system of Quadroon Balls and plaçage. Many quadroon women refused to marry men of similar composition and phenotype, choosing instead to enter into relationships with white men. Some of the women internalized the notion that their futures would be better served if they rejected men of their own caste, however successful, and chose instead to enter into risky relationships with white men.

Another example of an embittered black male can be found in Frederick Law Olmstead's literary traveler's journal. Olmstead dictated a conversation that he had with a black barber while in Louisiana. When Olmstead questioned the man about his marital status, the man replied that he was unmarried because:

> 'I'd never be married to any but a virtuous woman, and there are no virtuous women among the colored people here!...There are some very rich colored people, planters, some of them are worth four or five hundred thousand dollars. Among them I suppose there are virtuous women; but they are very few. You see, sir, it's no disgrace to a colored girl to *placer*.'[61]

It is obvious that these free men of color were interested in marrying free women of color and yet these women chose to make themselves unavailable. Instead the free women of color elected to offer their "virtue" to white men in exchange for more lucrative and status-enhancing possibilities.

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[60] Ibid, 7-8.

[61] The term "placer" was used in literary travelers' journals of the time as a verb to describe the state of being in an interracial sexual relationship. The similar term "placée" is the name for the woman who has been "placed" in such relationships. These terms are the root of the term "plaçage". While "plaçage" has in recent years been used by scholars to describe these relationships, in historical documents, only "placer" and 'placée" appear. Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States* (n.p.: Dix & Edwards, 1856), 635-636.

Quadroon women's choices were all the more unique when contrasted to the choices other free women of color made. There were many free women of color who chose to marry within their own caste and still were able to survive. It appears possible that the "quadroon women" wanted to thrive, not merely to survive. "Thriving" for the quadroon apparently meant more than financial security, since there were numerous successful free black men in New Orleans. Blassingame discusses in depth the financial and career success achieved by many free black men during the antebellum era in New Orleans. Many held skilled labor jobs like carpentry, masonry and blacksmithing while "only 9.9 percent of them were unskilled laborers."[62] There were other free men of color who worked in more elite positions as architects, brokers, engineers, doctors, large land owners and merchants. Many of these men were able to support a family and yet we see these very same educated men being rejected by many quadroon women. It can be deduced that quadroon women chose to enter into risky plaçage relationships, not only for the financial security but also for perceived racial advantages.

Entering into a sexual relationship with a white man enabled some free women of color to have the possibility at "passing" into white society. For example, there was a woman nicknamed "Toucoutou" who attempted to "pass" and was legally married to a white man. Toucoutou even sued her neighbor on the charge of slander after the neighbor accused her of being a person of color. Rather than officially being marked white before the court, it was proven that Toucoutou was actually a woman of color.[63] Her attempt to pass was critiqued by

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[62] Blassingame, *Black New Orleans 1860-1880*, 10.
[63] Information about the "Toucoutou" case can be found in Shirley Thompson's *"Ah, Toucoutou, ye conin vous": History and Memory in Creole New Orleans* and in Rodolphe Lucien Descunes' *Our People and Our History: Fifty Creole Portraits*. It is important to note that the actual court case about Toucoutou has been lost/taken. The information about the case's contents has been passed down from historian to historian. The song was written before the Civil War - around the time the case went to trial.

members of the free population of color. Joseph Beaumont, a free man of color and a barber in New Orleans penned his song "Toucoutou" offering his opinion of the woman's actions:

Toucoutou	**Toucoutou**
Si vous té gagné vous procé Oh, négue cé maléré Mové dolo qui dans focé Cé pas pon méprisé	If you win your lawsuit, Indeed, O Negress, this is bad; Bad for those who force it And the harm can not be disregarded.
Refrain: Ah Toucoutou, ye conin vous Vous cé tin Morico Na pa savon qui tacé blanc Pou blanchi vous lapo	Refrain: Ah Toucoutou, we know you! You are a little Mooress Who does not know you? No soap will make you white
Au Théâtre même quand va prend loge Comme tout blanc comme y fot Ye va fé vous prend Jacdeloge Na pas pacé tantôt	At the theater, if you go there, Like all white people should, They will treat you like a Jacdeloge, Who did not pass so well as White, did he?
Refrain	Refrain
Quand blanc loyés va donin bal Vous pli capab aller Comment va fé, vayante diabol Vous qui laimez danser	When these White lawyers give a dance, Will you be able to go? Will you, O beautiful devil, You who love to dance so!
Refrain	Refrain
Mo pré fini mo ti chanson Pasqui manri dormi; Mé mo pensé que la leson Longtemps li va servi	I have finished my little song Because I want to sleep But I think the lesson will serve, For a long time to keep you meek.
Refrain	Refrain

The song's lyrics demonstrate several things. [64] First, as a free man of color, Beaumont looked down on free women of color who chose to attend dances. Second, this song is enlightening because it suggests a sense of pride and collectivity among New Orleans' free people of color. Not all free people of color wanted to enter into white society. In fact, Shirley Thompson argues that "primary among [free people of color] was their determination to separate themselves from

[64] Shirley Thompson, "'Ah Toucoutou, ye conin vous': History and Memory in Creole New Orleans" *American Quarterly* 53 (June 2001): 232-266; Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes, *Our People and Our History*, trans. and ed. Sister Dorothea Olga McCants (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 61-64.

less fortunate free Negroes, and whenever possible from whites as well."[65] Lavinia Miller, a daughter in a successful family of free people of color residing in New Orleans, makes it very clear that she looks down on free women of color who entered into relationships with white men. In a letter to her aunt, Ann Johnson, dated December 2nd, 1848, Lavinia states,

> Manda is married to a white man last saturday night. Madame Amie was not at the wedding nor her sister Kittey. None but the family – an not all of them. Her mother says that the man has been courting her eight years and she told me that he was going to bay of St. Louis to marry because they could not get lawful married here. That was fool to me. But madame Amie told me that they did not go. That they had the French Priest to make the serremony at the house without licens. Now what you call that. [66]

As this letter shows, it appears that the Millers felt that interracial relationships were beneath them. The Miller family was a part of New Orleans' free black elite. From the collection of family letters, there appears to be no indication that members of the family ever wanted to be part of or felt any need to pass into white society. Also, the women of the Miller and Johnson families chose to marry free men of color.[67]

The Johnson and Miller families were not unique in their negative critique of interracial concubinage. In 1841, a court case over slander appeared before the 2nd Judical District Court for the La Fourche Interior Parish in Louisiana. Delphine Solet, a free woman of color, sued her father, Jean Baptiste Solet, a free man of color, for character damages that resulted from his calling her "a thief" and "the most base and infamous person that ever lived." Although Delphine Solet originally had sued for $2,000, she was awarded only $5 by the Lower Court. Her father appealed to the Louisiana Supreme Court and the ruling of the Lower Court was overturned. As their story unfolds through the court proceedings, it becomes apparent that the

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[65] Schweninger, *Black Property Owners in the South 1790-1915*, 126.
[66] Gould, *Chained to the Rock of Adversity: To Be Free, Black, and Female in the Old South,* 7. "Manda" is a free woman of color.
[67] Ibid.

comments made by Jean Baptiste Solet were in spoken in response to his daughter moving out of his home to go "live in concubinage" with a white man. In the final statement and ruling of the Louisiana Court it was stated that,

> The words charged appear to have been spoken in a moment of irritation, on the departure of the plantiff with the man with whom she went to live. It appears to us, that…in rebuking his daughter for her ill conduct, the father was under the influence of a sense of duty rather than prompted by malice to injure her. If during the excitement under which he was, he used an expression which, if applied to any other person, than a guilty daughter, might be imputed to a malicious intention, his relation to her and her own misconduct repel the imputation.[68]

It is apparent that the father in this case, who would pursue a Lower Court decision to the Supreme Court over a $5 judgment against him, felt strongly that his behavior toward his daughter was justified and deserved legal vindication. As a free man of color, Jean Baptiste Solet, felt that his daughter's choice to enter into this extra-legal connubial relationship was unacceptable.[69] When this case is viewed alongside comments made by other members of the free population of color in New Orleans, it is evident that not all free people of color supported plaçage relationships.

Clearly, there were other options for free women of color beyond those recommended by the prescriptive cigar box lithographs. Social, financial, and racial reasons explain why some free women of color chose to risk their reputations and ultimately their security to be with white men. Plaçage relationships were inherently risky. Due to their illegality, women of color had little recourse if their white lovers left relationships or died. Some women attempted to pursue their illusive fortunes through the court system, but there was no guarantee that they would win.

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[68] Quote taken from the Supreme Court opinion by Judge J. Martin. *Delphine Solet v. Jean Baptise Solet* 1 Rob. 339, (February 1842), Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans, New Orleans.
[69] *Delphine Solet v. Jean Baptise Solet* 1 Rob. 339, (February 1842), Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans, New Orleans; Sterxx, *The Free Negro in Ante-Bellum Louisiana,* 254-255.

The law placed stipulations on the amount of inheritance that a concubine and any illegitimate children of the relationship could receive. Yet, even with the obvious risks of being deserted – often with children – some women of color were still determined to enter into relationships with white men. The most obvious question here could be "why." Clearly there were short-term financial benefits to the plaçage lifestyle. White men were expected to financially provide for their concubines and any resultant offspring.[70]

Another very plausible explanation for why women of color took such risks in entering plaçage relationships, was the possibility of being able to "pass" oneself or one's offspring into white society. Gould states,

> While there is little proof that many people passed, there is circumstantial evidence that it did happen…[W]ills and other documents of certain elite free women of color which were recorded late in the antebellum did not include their racial designation as defined by law. According to oral histories taken by Marcus Christian many of these people successfully passed into the white population of the city. As Rankin notes, some mulattoes continued to disappear, and the slaves kept on singing Beaumont's song.[71]

The song "Toucoutou," penned by the New Orleanian barber, Beaumont, clearly was referencing a practice that, while hard to trace, was probably common. According to Eliza Potter, a free woman of color and hairdresser, "Some of these [mulattoes] pass for white, and some, again, are so independent they will be thought nothing but what they are." Potter was making the distinction between people of color who wanted to pass and those who had no interest in entering white society. It is also possible that some free women of color may have had a larger, "trans-generational passing" agenda in mind as they chose to enter into relationships with white men. Free women of color may not have been thinking only of themselves with regards to "passing." With each successive generation of intermixing, progeny

[70] Olmstead, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States,* 594-595.
[71] Gould, "In Full Enjoyment of their Liberty," 144-145.

had greater potential for having lighter skin. Ultimately, with enough intermixing over several generations, whole families could theoretically “pass” into the white, privileged population. Several primary sources lend credence to this assertion. Charles Gayarre, a historian from the era stated,

> They [free women of color] preferred forming Liaisons, or illicit connection with white men, whom the Law prevented them from marrying, because they gained by it in position and reached a higher sphere of refinement, then if they had married their equals…Another consideration was, that, if they were to have children, it would intensely gratify them that those children should have more of the Caucasian blood than flowed in their own veins.[72]

Additionally, literary traveler Alexis de Tocqueville noted that, “They [free women of color] pass like that from hand to hand until they have made a sufficient fortune, when they marry for good a man in their own station, and send their daughters out into the same way of life.”[73] This observation made by Tocqueville highlights black female agency in two ways. First, and most obviously, free women of color entered into relationships with white men for the purpose of financial gain. They chose to pass from “hand to hand” in order to amass a “sufficient fortune.” The second example of black female agency is less obvious, but no less significant. Tocqueville mentions that after these free women of color “made a sufficient fortune” they married free men of color and established their own daughters in plaçage relationships. Thus, according to Tocqueville, after these free women of color had acquired money and children by white men, they settled into permanent relationships with free men of color. At the same time, they established their daughters in plaçage relationships. This suggests that these free women of color were not only trying to have their own children with white men, but that they encouraged their daughters to follow the same path. While this conjecture still needs further exploration, its

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[72] Charles Gayarre, “The Quadroons of Louisiana: Historical Sketch, [1890]” Gayarre Collection, Hill Memorial Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, 9.
[73] Tocqueville, *Journey to America,* 61.

potential to illuminate the layers of black female agency is great. If true, it indicates that free women of color who chose to enter into plaçage relationships, did so as active agents. They had the strategic intent to "improve" themselves and their offspring, socially, financially, and racially through their sexual relationships with wealthy, white men.

To this point, the focus of this chapter has been on the free women of color who were involved in plaçage relationships. On the other side of the racial divide, white men found themselves using black women to conveniently fulfill their sexual and emotional needs. On the most basic level, it appears that white men were sexually attracted to quadroon women because these women combined the looks of white purity and perfection and also the taint of black, exotic blood. Both single and married white men entered into relationships with free women of color and, often, the quadroon mistress would serve a man's sexual desires before he was married. According to Olmstead, "eventually he [the white man] marries, and has a family establishment elsewhere. Before doing this, he may separate from his *place*."[74]

Many men were married and still chose to have connubial relationships with free women of color. While some of these men may have just wanted additional sexual gratification, others turned to quadroons for the loving partnership that was absent from their marriage with white women. In colonial and antebellum Louisiana, marriages between white families were frequently arranged based on financial considerations. Literary traveler Major Amos Stoddard described these marriages as "often made by the parents, and the affections and inclinations of the children are not always consulted."[75] These marriages, also known as "convenience marriages," were based on family decisions and, often, love and affection were not necessarily

[74] Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave State*, 596.
[75] Major Amos Stoddard, *Sketches, Historical and Descriptive of Louisiana* (Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1812), text-fiche, 323.

considered during the matrimonial arrangement. Therefore white men may or may not have felt lovingly connected to their white wives and turned to quadroon women for these emotional needs. Even if white men did have a "good" relationship with their white wives, some "wearied by the monotony of the company of their wives, [sought] solace in the company of the Negresses and especially of the mulatto women."[76]

There were other white men who chose to forgo marriage completely in favor of their relationship with their quadroon concubine. In fact, some of these men went as far as to marry quadroons in the Catholic Church. These marriages, although they had no legal sanction, were the closest union these couples could enjoy. One example of such a marriage existed between Josephine Macarty, a free woman of color, and her lover Francisco Tio.[77] Their relationship, which is described during a court case over the estate of her white father, Augustin Macarty, was ongoing and had lasted nearly forty years. Macarty and Tio had a long-term and loving relationship, in which both partners appear equally committed to each other and their children. In their situation, the illegitimacy of their relationship was only in the eyes of the law.

There were many reasons why white men might have entered into relationships with free women of color. Beyond the sexual and emotional benefits, there were also financial benefits to plaçage relationships:

> One reason which leads this way of life to be frequently adopted by unmarried men, who come to New Orleans to carry on business, is, that it is much cheaper than living at hotels and boarding houses…it was cheaper for him to placer than to live in any other way that he could be expected to in New Orleans.[78]

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[76] C. C. Robin, *Voyages to Louisiana, 1803-1805,* trans by Stuart O. Landry Jr. (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Company, 1966), 56.
[77] *Marie P. Badillo et al v. Francisco Tio,* 6 La. An. 129 (February 1851), Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans, New Orleans.
[78] Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States,* 598.

Clearly the range of reason for entering to plaçage relationships could vary significantly. While some men may have chosen to have a free woman of color concubine for meaningful love, others chose to enter into these sexual arrangements for sexual gratification and even more mundanely, for practical financial advantages.

Obviously, the plaçage relationship was very symbiotic in nature; both free women of color and white men could benefit from these relationships. As a result, free women of color and white men helped to establish social arenas where sexual relationships could form. One such construction was the infamous “Quadroon Ball.”

CHAPTER 3: QUADROON BALLS

The Quadroon Ball, a social gala that was unique to New Orleans, Louisiana during the antebellum era, became one distinct arena where plaçage relationships were formed.[79] Since attendance at these balls was limited to elite white men and quadroon women, these gatherings provided a venue where plaçage relationships converged with prostitution to create a unique situation in which money was being exchanged for the connubial placement of women. When Quadroon Balls are properly understood as vehicles that assisted in the establishment of these modified plaçage relationships, their historical significance is made clear.

While most scholars argue that Quadroon Balls formed in 1805, legal documents show that interracial balls, while not officially named "Quadroon Balls," had been held throughout the period of Spanish control in Louisiana.[80] These "other" balls could probably fall into category of "colored balls" which admitted a wider array of racial gradations described by one literary traveler as "varying in complexion from the slightest tinge of olive to the darkest shade of ebony."[81] It was common for white men to frequent these balls in the evening and plaçage relationships likely formed in such social gatherings. While there were many dances for people of color throughout the city, Bernardo Coquet was known for hosting a number of these balls in his ballroom. In February 1800, the Spanish attorney general, Pedro Barran, petitioned for the city to prevent Coquet from allowing slaves to attend his balls. Simultaneously, New Orleans's first theatre was struggling financially. Coquet offered to help the city, by supporting the theatre in exchange for exclusive rights to hold dances at his ballroom for the free people of color in

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[79] In 1805, when Quadroon Balls began, plaçage relationships were actually past their peak in popularity. However, the notoriety of Quadroon Balls brought these relationships into the public eye. Guillory, "Some Enchanted Evening on the Auction Block," 63-64.

[80] Ronald R. Morazan, ed., trans., "'Quadroon' Balls in the Spanish Period," *Louisiana History* 16 (1973): 310-315.

[81] Louis Fitzgerald Tasistro, *Random Shots and Southern Breezes* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1842), 20.

New Orleans. The government, not wanting to shut down the theatre, accepted Coquet's offer with the condition that slaves be kept out of the dances. In 1805, Coquet rented out his ballroom, located on St. Philip Street, to Auguste Tessier, who transformed it into the first official location to host Quadroon Balls. On November 23, 1805, the first Quadroon Ball advertisement appeared in a New Orleans newspaper.[82] The balls became popular and soon the institution was imitated throughout the city.

As the excitement of Quadroon Balls grew, many other ballrooms began to host their own Quadroon Balls. Dance halls like the Washington Ballroom,[83] the Orleans Ballroom,[84] and the Chartres Street Ballroom became the host of these interracial gatherings.[85] A handful of scholars have engaged in extensive conjecture about which ballrooms specifically held Quadroon Balls. Adding to the complication of specifying the locations which held Quadroon Balls is the fact that many offered a variety of dances, depending on the night. Therefore, a dance hall such as the Washington Ballroom reserved Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday nights for Quadroon Balls while the other nights of the week were devoted to white-only balls.[86] Although many different ballrooms are mentioned in both primary and secondary sources, specific dance schedules were not always included. Most likely, the above ballrooms were not the only facilities to offer these interracial dances. They were, however, some of the most influential hosts. Another point of

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[82] See Figure 14 in Appendix.
[83] Many ballrooms changed names and owners fairly often throughout the antebellum era. The Washington Ballroom changed names three times before it became was named the Washington. It started as the Salle Chinoise, it then became the Winter Tivoli and then the St. Philip Street Ballroom, and finally it was entitled the Washington Ballroom. This ballroom became the site of the first officially advertised Quadroon Ball and under all of its different title transformations, this ballroom continued to host quadroon balls. Kmen, *Music in New Orleans*, 48.
[84] Historians have questioned the accuracy of this ballroom being used for quadroon balls. It appears that there is little written documentation that the Orleans Ballroom in fact held these balls, however, there has been an oral history that has placed the balls in this venue.
[85] Other mentioned ballrooms were: the Union Ballroom, the Conde Street Ballroom and the Globe Ballroom. Kmen, *Music in New Orleans,* 48; Violet Harrington Bryan, "Marcus Christian's Treatment of *Les Gens de Couleur Libre"* in *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color,* ed. Sybil Kein, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2000), 51-52.
[86] Kmen, *Music in New Orleans,* 48.

complication in deciphering which balls were specifically meant for quadroon women is the style of ball being offered. Based on a close inspection of available records, there were more than four types of Quadroon Balls. According to R. Randall Couch's article, "The Public Masked Balls of Antebellum New Orleans: A Custom of Masque Outside the Mardi Gras Tradition," there were both public and subscription Quadroon Balls and both of these balls could be either masked or unmasked. While the goal of all of four types was the establishment of sexual liaisons between white men and free black women, the balls varied in terms of both class and costuming.[87]

The New Orleans government had ongoing issues with masked balls because they felt that under the cover of masks, slaves and free blacks could and did intermingle with whites during different social activities. They also felt that masks would increase the likelihood that slaves would engage in illegal activities, such as theft. Therefore, in 1781, the city's council made it illegal for either slaves or free people of color to wear masks to balls. This law was strengthened in the mid 1790s, when its provisions were broadened to prohibit whites from wearing masks as well. It would not be until January 1828 that masked balls would again be legally held in the city. However, despite the government's attempted restrictions, the balls continued to thrive. The 1820s, in particular, saw a major increase in the number of masked balls cited in the newspapers. Latrobe commented on the quadroon women attending these masked balls, stating that "Nearly all had masks – white masks." Later in the same entry, Latrobe also mentioned that, for men in particular, masks were accompanied by costumes.[88]

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[87] Randall R. Couch. "The Public Masked Balls of Antebellum New Orleans: A Custom of Masque Outside the Mardi Gras Tradition," *Louisiana History* 35 (1994), 403-431.
[88] Wilson, ed., *Southern Travels: Journal of John H. B. Latrobe*, 77-78.

While costumes were apparently popular among men, contemporary accounts indicate that women usually wore ball gowns or dominos instead of costumes.[89]

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, both public and subscription Quadroon Balls were routinely held in New Orleans. At the public Quadroon Balls, tickets were sold the night of the dance and anyone who could afford a ticket, and was of the "correct" racial background, was admitted. Tickets for these public balls ranged in price from fifty cents to two dollars, depending on the quality of the balls and the women present. The most expensive ticket for the Quadroons Balls cost twice the amount of a ticket to a white-only ball.[90] The higher ticket prices were put in place "so that only persons of the better class can appear there."[91] Subscription Quadroon Balls were even more elegant than the best public ball. Subscription balls provided high priced seasonal tickets to several different private Quadroon Balls, and were limited to the elite white males in Louisiana. Not surprisingly, then, the best quadroons made appearances at subscription balls.[92]

Quadroon Balls, many of which were competitive with the best balls held for elite white women, provided nightly entertainment. They became an active part of the institutionalized recreation in the city and were frequented by both locals and visitors alike. Many literary travelers wrote about their experiences at the Quadroon Balls. One of the most detailed accounts was written by John H. B. Latrobe who attended a ball held at the "Salle Washington Rue St. Phillippe" on November 29, 1834.[93] This particular Quadroon Ball was a masked public ball

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[89] Ibid.; Tasistro, *Random Shots and Southern Breezes,* 20. Wilson describes a domino in a footnote as being a "long hooded cape worn as a costume."
[90] Bernhard, *Travels through North America during the Years 1825 and 1826,* 61-62.
[91] John Davis, "Observations on the Negroes of Louisiana" *The Journal of Negro History* 2 (1917), 180.
[92] Wilson, ed., *Southern Travels of John H. B. Latrobe*, 77.
[93] Ibid., 76-79.

with the ticket price set at one dollar. Upon entering the ball, Latrobe stated that he was struck by the "beauty and brilliancy" of the ballroom.[94] According to Latrobe,

> It is a very large one, of an oblong shape. The sides are fitted with alcoves alternating with mirrors, and are richly painted and gilded…The ornaments are of blue and gold – and from the ceiling which is well decorated there hang five immense chandeliers blazing with cut glass and gas light – and making the brilliancy of noon day in the ball room. An orchestra of excellent music occupied an elevated gallery in the middle of one of the sides…Windows down to the floor led out upon an iron balcony and looked out over the Southern part of the City. There many a tete á tete went forward, and doubtless many an intrigue was carried on.[95]

Latrobe stated that "there were about forty women present of all shades from the very dark mulatto to the light quadroon whose person bore no mark of her descent."[96] Many of the women wore white masks and "those who had not were young girls as yet destitute of a keeper, and who it seemed…shewed their faces as a merchant shews samples of his wares to entice purchasers."[97] During the course of the evening, these women danced waltzes and cotillions and conversed with white men whom Latrobe described as being very respectable in appearance, and ranging in age from young men to fathers and grandfathers.[98] According to Latrobe, "it was really a pretty sight to see some twenty or thirty couples whirling one after another round the apartment."[99]

Quadroon Balls functioned as a form of entertainment but also served a meeting space for its participants to enter into plaçage/sexual relationships. It was at these dances that free young women of color, guided by their mothers, charmed their way into the hearts and pockets of Louisiana's white males. At the balls, quadroon women "show their accomplishments in

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[94] On his visits to New Orleans in 1834, John H. B. Latrobe attended a Quadroon Ball and drew a sketch of his observations, see Figure 15 in Appendix. Wilson, ed., *Southern Travels: Journal of John H. B. Latrobe*, 76-77.
[95] Ibid., 77.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.
[98] It was not unusual to see up to three generations of men being entertained by quadroon women. Multiple generations of men from particular families would frequent the balls together.
[99] Wilson, ed., *Southern Travels: Journal of John H. B. Latrobe*, 78.

dancing and conversation to the white men."[100] Upon finding a quadroon to his liking, a man would negotiate with the quadroon woman's mother. If both mother and daughter were satisfied with his financial and social ranking, she would be "placed" as his placée. According to literary traveler George William Featherstonhaugh,

> When one of them [a quadroon] attracts the attention of an admirer, and he is desirous of forming a liaison with her, he makes a bargain with the mother, agrees to pay her a sum of money, perhaps 2000 dollars, or some sum in proportion to her merits, as a fund upon which she may retire when the liaison terminates. She is now called "une placée;" those of her caste who are her intimate friends give her fetes, and the lover prepares "un joli appartement meuble."[101]

Each quadroon had a "value" which "depended on the attractiveness of the subject, the fairness of her complexion, and her mother's ability to show her off against the competition."[102] This "value" was derived through negotiations between the quadroon's mother and the white suitor. If an agreement was reached, the quadroon would become a concubine or placée for the white man in exchange for financial support for the woman. These exchanges frequently meant that the quadroon woman would receive housing, a sum of money, and promised financial support for any children that would come from these relationships. The "price" for a quadroon varied, but could be as much as $2,000. Often times, the quadroon woman would be set up in an apartment ("un joli appartement meuble") located on Ramparts Street in New Orleans that was rented by the white gentleman for their use.[103] These plaçage relationships could last for weeks, months, years, and, much less frequently, a life-time. In these exchanges, sexual exploitation by both parties is particularly noticeable; the quadroon exploited the pocketbook and the man exploited her body.

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[100] Featherstonhaugh, *Excursion through the Slave States,* 141.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Crété, *Daily Life in Louisiana 1815-1830*, 211.
[103] Ibid.,82; Martineau, *Society in America,* 117.

Quadroon women who participated in the balls had been groomed from early childhood by their mothers to take advantage of this unique opportunity to become the exploiters, using their bodies, beauty and assumed exotic sexuality to enter into contracts with wealthy white men. Monique Guillory discusses this exchange that gives women some power when she states, "Through this strategic commodification of the quadroon body, which I have called the commercial, women of color seized an opportunity beyond the confines of slavery to set the price for their own bodies."[104] These quadroon women chose to use their bodies as leverage to raise their own social status above the "negro" slave and the dark-skinned free people of color. This population of women became agents who exploited themselves and white men in an effort to transcend the racist system of antebellum Louisiana.

The women used their charm, beauty and sexuality from which they derived much notoriety, and in exchange received financial security and status. Being both non-white and female, these women experienced conflicting standards by which they were to live. On the one hand, being nearly white women, they were expected to act virtuously. On the other hand, they were black, and, therefore, in the white supremacist society of antebellum Louisiana, second class citizens. Regardless of the fact that most of these women were more white than black, their black heritage became a permanent, almost inescapable condition. The racist stereotypes that had been developed about black slaves on the plantation, carried over to apply to these women as well. In particular, the suggested hyper-sexualized nature of black women became a central stereotype as these women sought aggressively to be part of the white affluent society. Quadroon women used their sexuality to enhance their status, yet by conceding to the dominate

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[104] Monique Guillory, "Under One Roof: The Sins and Sanctity of the New Orleans Quadroon Balls" in *Race Consciousness,* ed. Judith Jackson Fossett and Jeffrey A. Tucker, (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 83.

stereotype, these women reinforced the very stereotypes that continued to haunt their existence. This ironic circumstance merits further exploration and discussion in future writings.

Quadroon Balls provided a unique space that could be utilized by quadroon women to maneuver their way into the social ranks of Louisiana society. These infamous balls, limited to upper-class white men and free "quadroon" women, became interracial rendezvous that provided evening entertainment and the possibility of forming sexual liaisons in exchange for financial "sponsorship." Quadroon Balls are historically significant because they were an established social institution formed for the specific purpose of facilitating the connubial placement of free women of color with white men.

CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDY
FIVE GENERATIONS OF WOMEN[105]

In the course of New Orleans history, there were many situations in which women of color chose not to engage in interracial sexual liaisons and lived happy, successful lives; even those women whose families pressured them to follow in the line of plaçage. This chapter will serve as a case study of black female agency in regards to plaçage relationships through a specific examination of the lives of six free women of color in the same family line, stretching from the 1720s through the 1850s. The personal histories of half-sisters Henriette Delille and Cecille Bonilla, and the story of the four generations of women who preceded them, illustrate the range of agency that free women of color exerted over their own lives. Through their life stories we see the history of New Orleans unfold and how free women of color fit into that history. While their family was, by no means, representative of the experiences of all women of color, they do provide examples of some of the choices made by both women of color and their white male counterparts. This extended evaluation will provide additional discussion of black female agency and will create a better understanding of the lives of the free women of color of New Orleans, and the choices available to them. One cannot deny the existence of black female agency when the story of Henriette Delille and her family is told.

Nanette [Dubreuil]

Between 1719 and 1731, some 6,000 to 7,000 African men, women and children were forcibly brought to the developing French colony of Louisiana.[106] Of these thousands of Africans who came to Louisiana during this early period in the colony's history, there was one

[105] The family tree of Henriette Delille and Cecille Bonilla can be found in Appendix. See Figure 16 in Appendix.
[106] Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 6; Emily Clark and Virginia Meacham Gould, "The Feminine Face of Afro-Catholicism in New Orleans, 1727-1852," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59 (2002): 415.

enslaved woman named Nanette who would eventually become the great-great-grandmother of Cecille Bonilla and Henriette Delille.[107] Nanette would become the first of five generations of women who exerted varying degrees of agency within the confines of the colonial and antebellum contexts of New Orleans.

Nanette, also known as Marie Ann, was likely born in West Africa and was brought as a slave to New Orleans in 1720 where she was purchased by Claude Joseph Villars Dubreuil–a recent arrival with his wife and childen from France. In Louisiana, Dubreuil quickly became a wealthy planter and landowner and, as the Royal Engineer of the French crown, he directed the construction of some of the earliest levees in the state, as well as of the Ursaline's convent.[108]

As a domestic slave in the Dubreuil household, Nanette came into regular contact with Claude Dubreuil and a sexual relationship between the two developed. Out of that relationship came five children, the first born when Nanette was approximately twenty-five years old: Marianna Dubreuil, Fanchonette Dubreuil, Tonica Dubreuil, Cécile Dubreuil and Etienne Dubreuil. Their relationship was illegal under the *Code Noir* which prohibited concubinage between white men and enslaved women.[109] Although *Code Noir* condemned interracial concubinage and threatened severe financial punishments for entering into such relationships, this did not deter white men from engaging in sex–both forced and consentual–with enslaved women.[110] The relationship between Dubreuil and Nanette is just one example of the on-going and extra-legal liaisons which proliferated during this time period. Dubreuil was never punished

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[107] Clark and Gould, "The Feminine Face of Afro-Catholicism in New Orleans, 418-448.
[108] Ibid.; Virginia Meacham Gould and Charles E. Nolan, *Henriette Delille: "Servant of Slaves"* (New Orleans: Sisters of the Holy Family, 1998), 3.; Gould, "Henriette Delille, Free Women of Color and Catholicism in Antebellum New Orleans, 274.; Cyprian Davis O.S.B., *Henriette Delille: Servant of Slaves, Witness to the Poor* (New Orleans: Archdiocese of New Orleans in Cooperation with the Sisters of the Holy Family, 2004), 2.
[109] Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*, 19.
[110] The punishment for interracial sexual relationships between white men and enslved women was the removal of the enslaved woman and resulting offspring from the white owner. Spear, "Colonial Intimacies," 91-92.

for his sexual interactions with his slaves. Clearly, while *Code Noir* may have technically rendered illegal these relationships, in practice the laws were not upheld.

The relationship between Claude Dubreuil and Nanette was likely exploitative. The very nature of slavery meant that Nanette's body, assumed to be the "property" of Dubreuil, could become the object of physical and sexual domination. White masters often had unbridled access to enslaved black women's bodies and thus the black female slave could become victim to ongoing sexual abuse. While the exact nature of the relationship between Nanette and Dubreuil is unknown, rape was certainly an all too common and horrific reality for many enslaved women. However, even within the confines of this horrific system, some enslaved women were able to use their ingenuity to resist being completely victimized. Historian Deborah White states, "The choice put before many slave women was between miscegenation and the worst experiences that slavery had to offer."[111] Making the "choice" to enter into a sexual relationship with the master is "widely recognized as one of the few means that some slave women might use to better their status and achieve manumission, or at least favored treatment."[112]

Whether women like Nanette resisted the sexual advances or "chose" to become the concubines of white men, these women were still able, in some small way, to assert a measure of agency which is too often overlooked. In no way does acknowledgement of the agency of women of color lessen the fact that many of these enslaved women were sexually exploited. It does, however, allow their actions to not have gone in vain and validates their unquestionable humanity. Many interracial sexual relationships began as rape and continued as such. Some, however, evolved into "consentual" liaisons as enslaved women used sex to their advantage.

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[111] White, *Ar'n't I A Woman?*, 34.

[112] Claire Robertson, "Africa Into The Americas? Slavery and Women, the Family, and the Gender Division of Labor" in *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas,* ed. David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 24.

The fact that Nanette was twenty-five years old when she bore her first child to Dubreuil, suggests that she would have been mature enough to understand the opportunities that could come along with their sexual relationship.

Nanette's life beyond her sexual relationship with Dubreuil is particularly worthy of investigation because it demonstrates both her religious beliefs and her struggle to obtain freedom. Nanette was eventually baptized, and became a devout Catholic with the assistance of, Claude Dubreuil's wife. Nanette's dedication to Catholicism was a critical dimension in her own life, and ultimately the lives of her offspring. Their devotion to the Catholic Church is evident through many generations of baptismal records which show the women baptizing their own children and also acting as godmothers to many of the children of color–both slave and free–in the community.[113] Nanette was never granted her freedom during Claude Dubreuil's lifetime.[114] However, in 1763, Nanette appeared before the notary with her *carta de libertad,* which stated that Claude Dubreuil's son and namesake, Claude Joseph Villars Dubreuil, had granted Nanette her freedom. Nanette, as a free woman, displayed one way in which the free population of color emerged in colonial New Orleans–the manumission of slave concubines.

The fact that Nanette had to wait six years after Claude Dubreuil's death, to be freed by his son, merits further discussion. There are several possible explanations. First, Nanette was freed the same year that the Spanish gained control of Louisiana. With the change in regime came a change in slave laws which governed the colony. The more lenient legal approach of the Spanish to slave manumissions, may have allowed for the greater possibility that Nanette could be "easily" manumitted. It is possible that Dubreuil waited to manumit Nanette until that more

[113] For further analysis on the role that Catholicism played in the life of Nanette and her descendents, see the article, "The Feminine Face of Afro-Catholicism in New Orleans, 1727-1852" by Emily Clark and Virginia Meacham Gould. Clark and Gould, "The Feminine Face of Afro-Catholicism in New Orleans, 1727-1852, 409-448.
[114] Claude Dubreuil dies in 1757. Davis O.S.B., *Henriette Delille,* 2.

favorable legal environment existed.   Second, it was common for white slaveowners to free elderly slaves as a way of getting out of the financial responsibility of taking care of unproductive slaves.[115] At the time that Nanette was manumitted, she was fifty-three years old. At first glance it might seem that this could have been a plausible reason for her freedom, especially given the fact that none of her children were freed with her. However, at closer examination, the likelihood of this seems slim. After Nanette was manumitted, she disappeared from legal records until 1770 when she reappeared to purchase and subsequently free her daughter Cécile, the youngest of her four daughters, and Cécile's two children. She paid a total of 2,800 livres for them.[116] The fact that she was able, in the seven years between 1763 and 1770, to amass enough money to free her daughter and grandchildren, as well as to survive herself, indicates that she was still a very productive worker. Clearly, Nanette continued to be financially productive however, her "productivity" and "appeal" as a fifty-three year old concubine, had likely expired. It is possible that she was freed due to fact that she was no longer needed or wanted as a concubine. Another significantly viable and final explanation was that Nanette was freed by Claude Dubreuil, the younger, because of her long term relationship with the elder Dubreuil. If this last contention is accurate, then the agency that Nanette exerted in having a sexual relationship with Dubreuil, resulted in her freedom. Regardless of the reasons behind Nanette's manumission, the resourcefulness she displayed, both as an enslaved woman and as a free woman of color, demonstrates the role that agency played in the lives of women of color in colonial Louisiana.

Cécile Dubreuil and Henriette Laveau

[115] In 1762, the Dubreuil family experienced financial crisis as Louisiana became a Spanish colony. Ibid., 2.
[116] Ibid.; Gould, "Henriette Delille, Free Women of Color, and Catholicism in Antebellum New Orleans," 274.

Less information is known about the lives of Cécile Dubreuil and her daughter Henriette Laveau, the great-grandmother and grandmother of Cecille Bonilla and Henriette Delille. Born into slavery in 1744, Cécile was the daughter of Nanette and Claude Joseph Villars Dubreuil. While still in slavery she had two children, Henriette and Etienne Narcisse. Cécile and her children were freed by their mother in 1770.[117] Nanette, Cécile and Henriette became part of the ever growing population of free people of color in New Orleans. In 1777 there were 161 free women of color living in New Orleans out of a total free population of color of 315.[118] Once freed, Cécile's children likely attended an Ursaline school where they were taught to read and write in French. The Ursalines were a Catholic, female, religious order originally formed in sixteenth-century Italy. This group came to New Orleans in 1727 and established schools to educate and catechize the population of New Orleans and particularly women of all social ranks.[119]

Cécile began to invest in property and soon she "could be counted among the most well-to-do property-holders in New Orleans."[120] Clearly, Nanette and her daughters were quite hard working and resourceful and had a lot of ingenuity. As unmarried women of color, once granted their freedom, they were able to exert more control over their economic situation and were clearly successful. Historian Kimberly S. Hanger writes, "they [free women of color] could maintain formal and informal relations with white, libre, or slave men, and if they chose to

[117] It is unclear what happens to Etienne Narcisse, current research to date has primarily focused on the women of color in the family.
[118] Clark and Gould, "The Feminine Face of Afro-Catholicism in New Orleans," 434-435; Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans's Free Creoles of Color," 2.
[119] Ibid, 417.; Sister Mary Bernard Deggs, *No Cross, No Crown: Black Nuns in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans*, ed. Virginia Meacham Gould and Charles E. Nolan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), xxv.
[120] Gould, "Henriette Delille, Free Women of Color, and Catholicism in Antebellum New Orleans," 274.

remain single or widowed, they could exercise greater independence in the economic sphere than slave women or married women"[121]

Neither Cécile nor Henriette ever married, choosing rather to enter into sexual liasons with white men. Cécile had already been in a relationship with Charles Laveau while she was still enslaved. After she was freed, Cécile allied herself with a white man named Migual Roig (or Roche) and had two children. Like her mother, Henriette also entered into interracial sexual relationships. It appears that Henriette entered into plaçage relationships with four different white men: Chevalier (Charles) Morant, Pedro Foucher, Enrique Roche and Antonio Diaz.[122]

MARIE JOSEPH DIAZ AND HER DAUGHTERS: CECILLE BONILLA AND HENRIETTE DELILLE

Even though little is known about Marie Joseph Diaz, the daughter of Henriette Laveau and the mother of Cecille Bonilla and Henriette Delille, her contribution to an analysis of black female agency is still significant. She, like many women of her caste and in fact in her own family, chose to enter into plaçage relationships with a series of white men. When her choices are viewed as an integral part of a trans-generational practice, the role of agency becomes increasing visible. It is significant that there were four unbroken generations of women of color who entered into sexual relationships with multiple white instead of black men. Diaz, herself, was in plaçage relationships with at least two white men. During these relationships she gave birth to three surviving children: Jean Delille, Cecille Bonilla, and Henriette Delille. Diaz not only made the choice to enter into plaçage relationships herself, but she also raised her daughters "in the traditions of her class and for the same destiny of her female ancestors–to be a mistress of

[121] Hanger, "Coping in a Complex World," 219.
[122] Davis, O.S.B., *Henriette Delille,* 98.

some aristocratic member of the white gentry."[123] Cecille Bonilla and Henriette Delille were prepared by their mother to become the concubines of white men. While Bonilla would choose to be the concubine of an Austrian business man, Delille would make the conscious choice "to pursue a course that was the antithesis of everything she had been trained for."[124]

Cecille Bonilla

Cecille Bonilla entered into a plaçage relationship following in the footsteps of the preceding four generations of women of color in her family. Historian Sister Audrey Marie Detiege has conjectured that Bonilla's plaçage relationship was formed through a Quadroon Ball. According to her secondary source account, "In 1824…Cecille had the thrill of attending the *ball* where she met and gave her love to Samuel [Hart], a wealthy commissioned merchant of New Orleans, originally from Austria."[125] While it seems highly probable that Bonilla did attend Quadroon Balls, at this time there is no documented evidence to support the claim. However, given the facts that Quadroon Balls were still very popular in the 1820s and that Bonilla appears to have lived in close proximity to several ballrooms, the idea that she could have attended the balls seems likely. Whether or not her relationship had its beginnings rooted in a Quadroon Ball, Bonilla's plaçage relationship with Samuel Hart began in 1824, when she was seventeen or eighteen. At that time Hart was about fifty-three years old. He was born in 1772 in Austria and was a wealthy merchant who came to New Orleans sometime before 1805. Soon after their relationship began, in 1825, Bonilla gave birth to her first daughter Antoinette Hart. Together Bonilla and Hart had four children during the seven year span of their relationship. The relationship between Bonilla and Hart appears to have been a committed one. In the 1830

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[123] Sister Audrey Marie Detiege, *Henriette Delille, Free Woman of Color: Foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Family* (New Orleans: Sisters of the Holy Family, 1976), 15.
[124] Ibid., 17.
[125] Ibid., 17.

census, Hart is listed as having lived next door to Bonilla, her children, her sister Henriette Delille and her mother, Marie Joseph Diaz. Hart's and Bonilla's relationship continued up until the time of his death in 1832.[126] Their relationship is an example of a committed long-term, and presumably loving, plaçage relationship. It does not appear that Hart ever married. In his will he acknowledged both Bonilla and their children.

At the time of his death, Hart had given Bonilla promissory notes totaling $123,451.50. These notes became the center of what would be an extensive court battle which eventually appeared before Louisiana's Supreme Court.[127] Hart's executors claimed that the promissory notes were a donation to Bonilla, Hart's concubine, and thus illegally given. The use of promissory notes was one way that white men would try to manipulate an unsympathetic legal system in order to leave money to their concubines.[128] Samuel Hart's actual intent of leaving a large portion his fortune to Bonilla and their children, was ultimately honored, although not as a direct result of the Supreme Court case. The court ruled based on the technicality of the law and Bonilla lost. Nonetheless, "in all, mother and children received the sum of $123,450.50."[129]

Bonilla's relationship with Hart left her and her children quite wealthy. In her situation, the plaçage relationship could be considered a financial success. In entering the relationship with Hart, Bonilla had undoubtedly taken risks given the tenuous nature of plaçage relationships. While Bonilla and her children were well taken care of during Hart's life, once her financial protector was gone, she became susceptible to the whims of the society to which she belonged. But clearly there was the potential, both in the short-term and in the long term, for substantial

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[126] Davis O.S.B., *Henriette Delille*, 9.
[127] *The Executors of Hart v. Boni, f.w.c.* 6 La. 97, (December 1833). Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans, New Orleans.
[128] For an example see *Barriere f.w.c. v. Gladding's Curator* 17 La. 144 (February 1841). Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans, New Orleans.
[129] Davis O.S.B., *Henriette Delille,* 10.

financial stability that came from entering into such a relationship. It appears that the risks were worth taking and that "every Quadroon woman [believed] that her partner [would] prove an exception to the rule of desertion."[130] Bonilla made the *choice* to enter into a plaçage relationship with a very wealthy, older, white man. Her choice aligned well with her family's long example of black female agency. While Bonilla's familial environment undoubtedly influenced her decision making, it did not predetermine her choice. That she could have made a different decision is seen clearly when she is contrasted with her younger sister, Henriette Delille.

Henriette Delille[131]

"Je crois en Dieu. J'espére en Dieu. J'aime. Je v[eux] vivre et mourir pour Dieu."

"I believe in God. I hope in God. I love. I wish to live and die for God."[132]

Henriette Delille was the youngest daughter born to Marie Joseph Diaz in 1812. Her father was likely Jean Delille who was also the father of her older brother, Jean Delille. It does not appear that Jean Delille Sr. played any significant role in the life of Henriette. However, Jean Delille Sr. did have a half-brother, Felix Delille, who was a free man of color and Henriette's paternal uncle and regularly appeared in legal documents relating to Henriette Delille and her family.[133] The paternity of Henriette Delille shows two interesting aspects of plaçage relationships. First, that they did not always last for extended periods of time and, that they were fairly commonplace. This can be deduced, not only from the number of women in Delille's family that entered into interracial relationships with white men, but also from the fact that Delille's paternal grandfather must have been in an interracial relationship in order to have

[130] Martineau, *Society in America in Two Volumes,*117.
[131] See Figure 17 in Appendix.
[132] Henriette Delille penned these words on May 2, 1836 at the age of 23 or 24. Davis, O.S.B., *Henriette Delille,* 35.
[133] Ibid., 12-14.

produced Felix. Clearly, the precedent had been set for both Henriette Delille and Cecille Bonilla. While Bonilla may have chosen to pursue an interracial relationship like so many of the women that came before her, Henriette made a different choice. Delille's female ancestors inspire in her "self-dependence, hard work, and dedication," but she chose to utilize those skills in a different way.[134] According to Gould,

> It is obvious that Delille drew upon the example of her female ancestors, but it is also evident that she rejected some of their choices. Each of the women who preceded Delille cohabited with white men. Delille chose otherwise. She did not live in concubinage, nor did she marry…Instead, Delille created a new opportunity for free women of color in New Orleans by building upon the Catholic tradition of her ancestors.[135]

In 1842 Henriette Delille co-founded the Sisters of the Holy Family, a religious order of free women of color devoted to serving their people in Louisiana. Together with Juliet Gaudin and Josephine Charles, Delille embarked upon a career dedicated to God.[136] As a young woman, Delille rejected the path of concubinage so clearly laid out for her, choosing instead to help those in need, and particularly women of color. Her two colleagues, Gaudin and Charles, joined Delille in her choice and also rejected the plaçage lifestyle. Historian Sister Mary Bernard Deggs recorded the story of Josephine Charles' rejection of a dancing master who was brought to the house to teach her how to dance properly because

> …dear Josephine preferred to go to David's dancing master, that is to dance before the altar of Christ. I say, to dance with Christ, for one hour in the chapel in the presence of the dear Lord in the blessed sacrament is far sweeter than a whole life of vanity in a ballroom, dancing with a sinful creature who is blinded by his many sins that are most hideous in the sight of Almighty God, our good father.[137]

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[134] Gould, "Henriette Delille, Free Women of Color, and Catholicism in Antebellum New Orleans," 274.
[135] Ibid, 274
[136] Gould and Nolan, *Henriette Delille,* 7, 11-14.
[137] Deggs, *No Cross, No Crown,* 42.

Delille and her Sisters in Christ repudiated the lifestyle of the quadroon despite its charms and the possibility of financial advantage. In Delille's decision to reject this lifestyle, she not only found an option for herself, but also created a new choice available to other women of color. According to one source, Delille's actions actually inspired other women in her own family to reject the quadroon lifestyle.[138] As empowered women, Delille and the Sisters of the Holy Family made active choices to go against the status quo for free women of color. They chose to act, not as agents of short term material gain for themselves and their progeny, but as agents of change for the entire community of color.

A substantial portion of Henriette Delille's life work was devoted to improving the situation of the women of color in New Orleans. She, together with a growing band of other like-minded women, took on the roles of educator, social worker, health care-giver and evangelist. As an agent of change for herself and for other women of color, Delille injected herself wholeheartedly into the community of need until her premature death in 1862.[139]

Henriette Delille left a legacy of choice and agency which the Sisters of the Holy Family continued to uphold. This legacy inspired the Sisters of the Holy Family to actively re-appropriate physical spaces for the purpose of recreating the historical narrative of their people. On two separate occasions the Sisters of the Holy Family chose to purchase and "sanctify" edifices which had previously been home to two social institutions, a slave trading yard and a Quadroon Ballroom, which represented aspects of the history of the carnal relationships between women of color and white society. First, in 1770 the Sisters opened the St. Mary's School on

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[138] Detiege, *Henriette Delille,* 23.
[139] "During Delille's lifetime, the order opened a school, an orphanage, and a home for the aged. They catechized slaves and taught free children of color, and, in 1853, nursed black and white New Orleaneans through the worst of the cholera epidemics the city had until endured." Tracy Fessenden, "The Sisters of the Holy Family and the Veil of Race," *Religion and American Culture* 10.2 (2000), 191.

Chartres Street. The building which became the school, had at one time been used as a slave trading yard. According to Sister Mary Bernard Deggs, who officially joined the Sisters of the Holy family in 1773 and had previously been a pupil in the early school run by Delille,

…Many in this city looked on the old house as a disgraceful place and it was abandoned. No one would think of buying it for the very reason that it had previously been a trader's yard and many sins had been committed at that place, not only sins, but the most horrible crimes. It must have been the will of God that our sisters should buy the place to expiate the crimes that had been committed there.[140] Deggs' clearly displayed the empowerment of the women of color who represented the Order. They chose to transform the space into a school to educate children of color and, more specifically, young women.

The Sisters of the Holy Family did not stop with just purchasing a slave trading yard. In 1881, they again purchased a space with the intention of putting "an end to so much sin and displeasure toward our dear Lord" and turning it into a convent and school for young women of color.[141] This second space was the Orleans Ballroom, located on Orleans Street, a noted host of Quadroon Balls. Deggs makes reference to the building's history, stating,

> Our house on Orleans Street had been a den of sin. That was why they wanted to get us out, so that they might still have a place of sinful pleasure and would be more free to go and come if this place was a coffee house with a ballroom in the upper story where they could hold their balls during Lent and Advent. Many would miss their church duties so as to attend those balls.[142]

It is clear that the founders of the Sisters of the Holy Family were strongly opposed to Quadroon Balls and their social ramifications for free women of color. Their opposition manifested itself through the re-appropriation of the Orleans Ballroom. The Sisters of the Holy Family actively

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[140] Deggs, *No Cross, No Crown,* 46.
[141] Ibid., 63.
[142] Ibid., 73.

reconceptualized the ballroom space by converting it into a school for free women of color. Inspired by Henriette Delille and her co-founders, the Sisters of the Holy Family transformed specific spaces into a legacy of opportunity for free women of color and a memorial to the women who stepped out of the tradition of the quadroon to permanently impact their community. The very fact that against obstacles as formidable as white supremacy and sexism, Delille was able to carve out a choice for herself and other free women of color that went well beyond merely surviving, reinforces the perception that quadroon women were less the victims than the agents of their own destiny.

…But now, where sin and folly once did reign,
A holy silence rests on cloister wall;
And noble colored Sisters lift their race,
The quadroon girls, who long in sin did fall.
The orphan and the poor of that sad race
Find shelter there with God and holy rest;
The ignorant are taught and led from harm,
Where Christ shall lead them to his kingdom blest.
-Rixford J. Lincoln

CONCLUSION

New Orleans provided a historically unique setting that allowed for the emergence of a distinct caste of free women of color. These free women of color, working within the constraints of a racist society, determined their own destinies and that of their progeny. Some of these women, the "Quadroons," chose to enter into sexual relationships with white men for the purpose of financial and social gain. Acting as agents in their own lives, the Quadroons made the deliberate choice to enter into symbiotic plaçage relationships despite the invariable risks. Quadroon Balls, unique to New Orleans, were created expressly to facilitate the connubial placement of free women of color into plaçage relationships.

Too often scholars, in their analysis of the antebellum Louisiana, have categorized all women of color as victims. While there were many situations in which women of color were victimized, there were, in the case of the Quadroons, women of color who made conscious and calculated choices to utilize interracial sexual liaisons to their financial and social advantage. Although these arrangements reflected a form of sexual exploitation, quadroon women were able to become active agents utilizing their bodies and sexuality as leverage for gaining social standing, protection, and money.

Appendix

Table 1
Colonial New Orleans Population, Year by Racial/Status Group

Year	Whites	Blacks: Slaves	Blacks: Free Blacks	Indian Slaves	Total
1721	278	173*		21	472
1726	793	78		30	901
1732	626	258		9	893
1771	1,803	1,227	97		3,127
1777	1,736	1,151	315		3,203
1788	2,370	2,131	820		5,321
1791	2,386	1,789			5,037
1805	3,551	3,105	1,566		8,222

*First three sources do not distinguish between slaves and free blacks.
Source: Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans's Free Creoles of Color," 2.

Figure 1. Alleged portrait of Marie Laveau wearing a *tignon*.
Reprinted from Long, *A New Orleans Voudou Priestess,* 58.

Figure 2. “Life and Death of the Mulatta” Series – “He who sows reaps.”
Reprinted from Vera M. Kutzinski, *Sugar's Secrets* (Charlottesville:University Press of Virginia, 1993), 70.

Figure 3. “Life and Death of the Mulatta” Series – “It promises the best results.”
Reprinted from Walker, *No More, No More,* 69.

Figure 4. “Life and Death of the Mulatta” Series – “If you love me you’ll be happy.”
Reprinted from Walker, *No More, No More*, 69.

Figure 5. “Life and Death of the Mulatta” Series – “My lover says there is hope.”
Reprinted from Walker, *No More, No More*, 70.

Figure 6. “Life and Death of the Mulatta” Series – “We’re pretty, that’s why he’s following us.”
Reprinted from Walker, *No More, No More*, 70.

Figure 7. “Life and Death of the Mulatta” Series – “You want excitement.”
Reprinted from Walker, *No More, No More,* 71.

Figure 8. "Life and Death of the Mulatta" Series – "The punishment."
Reprinted from Walker, *No More, No More*, 71.

Figure 9. "Life and Death of the Mulatta" Series – "The consequence."
Reprinted from Walker, *No More, No More*, 72.

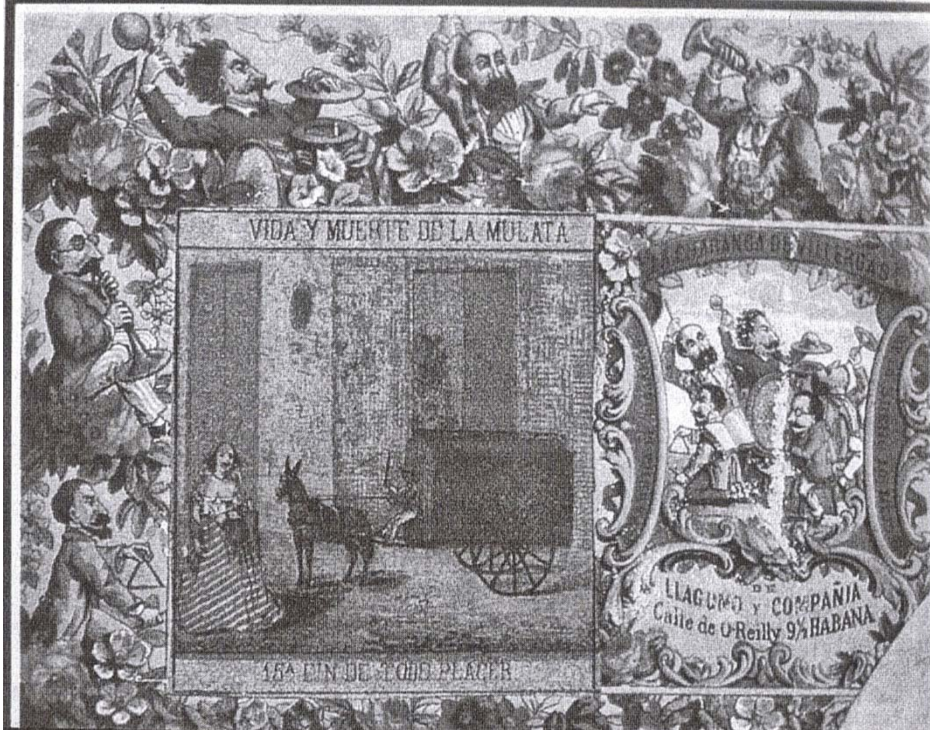
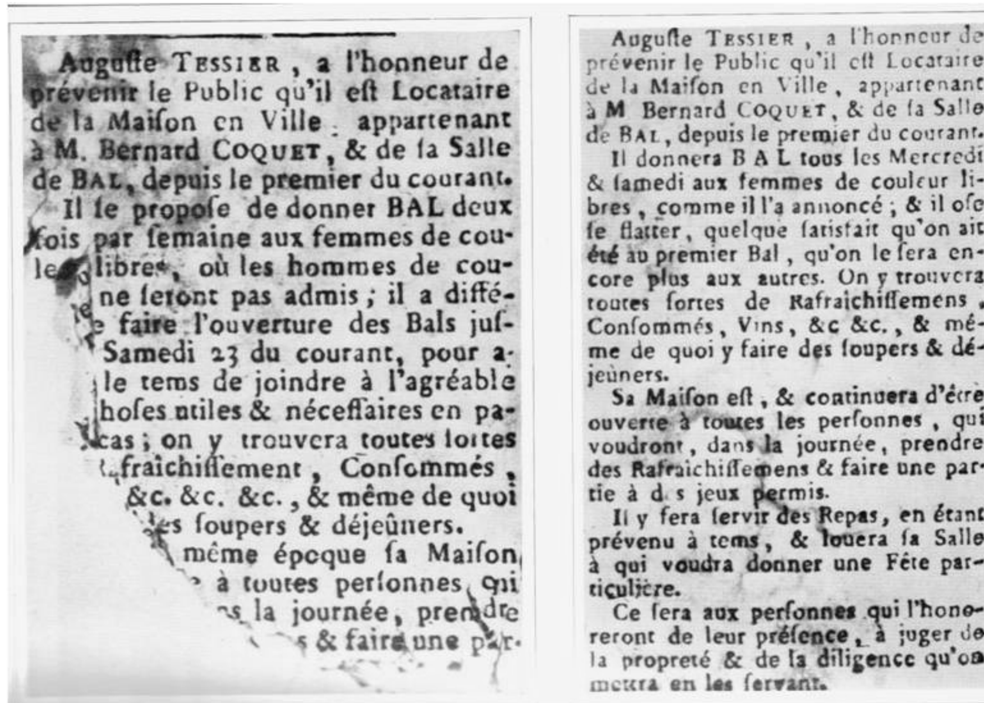


Figure 10. "Life and Death of the Mulatta" Series – "The end of all pleasure."
Reprinted from Walker, *No More, No More*, 72.

Figure 11. "History of the Mulatta" Series – "Male dove and female hawk."
Reprinted from Kutzinski, *Sugar's Secrets*, 76.

Figure 12. “History of the Mulatta” Series – “To provide a means to an end.”
Reprinted from Walker, *No More, No More*, 81.

Figure 13. “History of the Mulatta” Series – “A direct attack on the pocket.”
Reprinted from Walker, *No More, No More*, 81.



Auguſte TESSIER, a l'honneur de prévenir le Public qu'il eſt Locataire de la Maiſon en Ville appartenant à M. Bernard COQUET, & de ſa Salle de BAL, depuis le premier du courant.

Il ſe propoſe de donner BAL deux fois par ſemaine aux femmes de cou- le[illegible] libres, où les hommes de cou- [illegible] ne ſeront pas admis; il a diffé- [illegible] faire l'ouverture des Bals juſ- [illegible] Samedi 23 du courant, pour a- [illegible] le tems de joindre à l'agréable [illegible]hoſes utiles & néceſſaires en pa- [illegible]cas; on y trouvera toutes ſortes [illegible]fraichiſſement, Conſommés, &c. &c. &c., & même de quoi [illegible]s ſoupers & déjeûners.

[illegible] même époque ſa Maiſon, [illegible] à toutes perſonnes, qui [illegible]s la journée, prendre [illegible]s & faire une par-

Auguſte TESSIER, a l'honneur de prévenir le Public qu'il eſt Locataire de la Maiſon en Ville, appartenant à M Bernard COQUET, & de ſa Salle de BAL, depuis le premier du courant.

Il donnera B A L tous les Mercredi & ſamedi aux femmes de couleur libres, comme il l'a annoncé; & il oſe ſe flatter, quelque ſatisfait qu'on ait été au premier Bal, qu'on le ſera encore plus aux autres. On y trouvera toutes ſortes de Rafraichiſſemens, Conſommés, Vins, &c &c., & même de quoi y faire des ſoupers & déjeûners.

Sa Maiſon eſt, & continuera d'être ouverte à toutes les perſonnes, qui voudront, dans la journée, prendre des Rafraichiſſemens & faire une partie à d s jeux permis.

Il y fera ſervir des Repas, en étant prévenu à tems, & louera ſa Salle à qui voudra donner une Fête particulière.

Ce ſera aux perſonnes qui l'honoreront de leur préſence, à juger de la propreté & de la diligence qu'on mettra en les ſervant.

Figure 14. Two Quadroon Ball advertisements including the first known advertisement (located on the left side) which appeared in the "Moniteur de la Louisiane" on November 23, 1805.
Reprinted from Kmen, *Music of New Orleans*, between 154-155.

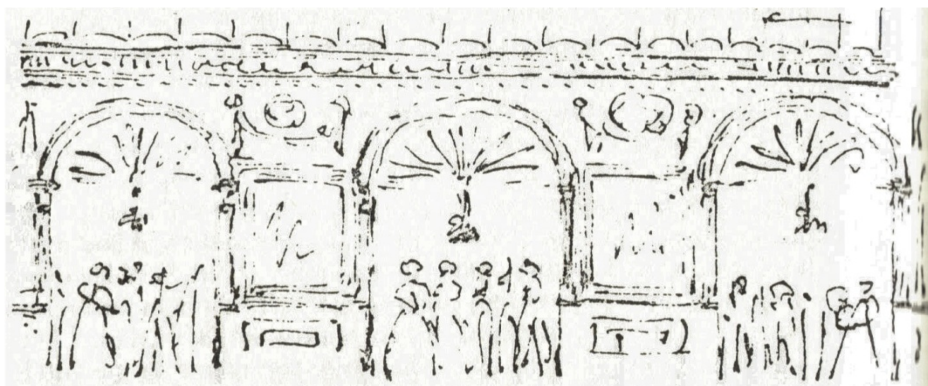


Figure 15. Sketch of a Quadroon Ball by John H. B. Latrobe, 1834
Reprinted from Wilson, ed., *Southern Travels: Journal of John H. B. Latrobe,* 76-77.

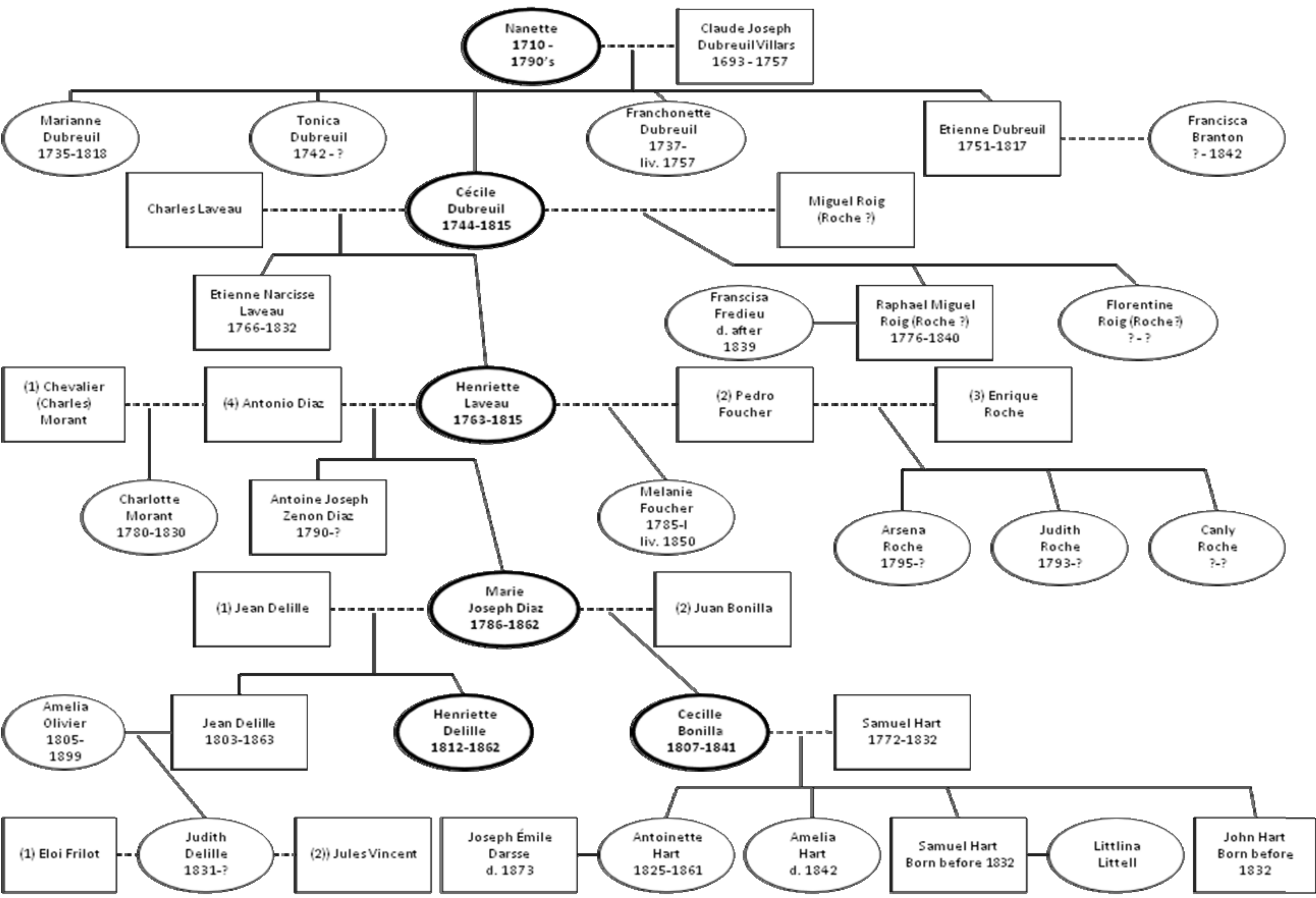


Figure 16. The Genology of Henriette Delille. Data from: (1) Cyprian Davis, O.S.B, *Henriette Delille: Servant of Slaves, Witness to the Poor* (New Orleans: Sisters of the Holy Family, 2004), 98; (2) Emily Clark and Virginia Meacham Gould, "The Feminine Face of Afro-Catholicism in New Orleans, 1727-1852" *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59.2 (2002): 414.

Figure 17. Henriette Delille (1812-1862)
Founder of the Sisters of the Holy Family
Reprinted from Detiege, *Henriette Delille,* 5.

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