

TROUBLING ISLAND: THE IMAGINING AND IMAGING OF HAITI BY
AFRICAN-AMERICAN ARTISTS, 1915-1940

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ABSTRACT

LINDSAY JEAN TWA: *Troubling Island: The Imagining and Imaging of Haiti by African-American Artists, 1915-1940*
(Under the direction of Michael D. Harris)

Images of Haiti have circulated in the social imagination of the United States through painting, sculpture, illustration, performance and film since the late eighteenth century. Although much scholarship addresses the intertwined and often problematic relationship between the United States and Haiti, sparse art historical research addresses the complexities of U.S. visualizations of Haiti. The period of the U.S. occupation of Haiti (1915-1934) and its immediate aftermath resulted in the opening up of Haiti to unprecedented numbers of writers, ethnographers, and artists who focused both on Haiti as a contemporary nation, and retold and reinterpreted its revolutionary history to express new social and political needs. This dissertation contributes to a greater understanding of how representations of Haiti overwhelmingly articulate issues of race, while also touching on cultural anxieties of class, religion, patriotism and national identity. This dissertation specifically examines how African-American artists have worked against mainstream representations of Haiti to create alternate visions, combating and complicating many stereotypes, while also furthering an understanding of the transnational influences and outlook of several prominent twentieth-century African-American artists. Aaron Douglas, Jacob Lawrence, and William E. Scott are just a few of the African-American artists who drew on Haiti as a source of racial pride and heritage, personal transformation, or as a signifier for revolutionary change.

While rooted in art historical analysis, privileging the visual over the text, this is an interdisciplinary dissertation that focuses on the broader context of cultural studies. I draw on both popular media and the performing and fine arts, and match art historical traditions with histories of anthropology and its evolving ethnographic practices, and the politics of U.S. international relations in the Caribbean. Through this lens, I expose how creative representations by African-American artists attempted to open new spaces in interpretations of Haiti, escaping the litany of tired and derogatory tropes so frequently applied to the “Black Republic.”

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Mark Larson, who has accompanied, sustained and joyfully encouraged me in all of my endeavors. His outlook challenges me to be a better person and an active citizen beyond the narrow confines of my discipline, even as his humor reminds me never to take myself too seriously.

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Chapter 1

Thoughts of Haiti: Introduction

...to speak the truth to power with love so that the equality of everyday life for ordinary people is enhanced and white supremacy is stripped of its authority and legitimacy.—Cornel West¹

A man quietly reads a newspaper, stretching out his legs and leaning back into a simple chair made more comfortable by a red cushion (fig. 1.1). The man is bundled against the cold in a long black overcoat and red scarf, and his top hat sits on end at the foot of the chair. With his sober attire, legs crossed at the ankles, and plain but clean brown leather shoes, the slouching sitter possesses an air of eloquence and quiet dignity. His chair is drawn up to the fireplace, in which crackling flames warm a suspended kettle. Düsseldorf-trained artist Edwin White (1817-1877) created this small painting, *Thoughts of Liberia: Emancipation*, in 1861. The painting's setting echoes the man's neat and temperate demeanor; the room is a study of restrained sparseness captured in muted colors. The humble interior's near-empty expanse almost dwarfs the lone occupant, who is placed in the lower part of the canvas, just left of center. The viewer can trace the planes of the worn out room, from the even floorboards that run to the fireplace, to the cracks in the plaster that reveal the wall underneath, just behind the sitter. The reader's chair is the only visible piece of furniture and, save for the top hat and a small broom propped against the chimney, it is the

¹ Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xxiv.

only standing object in the room. Clothes hang in the upper right corner, accompanied by what looks to be another small broom and metal pails, attesting to the care and cleaning to which even this worn space is subjected.

Although this painting focuses on the quiet reader and the careful detailing of his worn space, this is not a painting of interiority. Within this meagerly furnished room every item seems to have a designated place; within this studied canvas every detail seems to have a careful purpose. Yet most discussions of this painting overlook one object: located to the left of the sitter and looming over his head, a poster hangs on a door. This poster, carefully squared to the doorframe, seems to be a sentinel to the picture's only depicted exit, and the only escape from the isolated poverty and emptiness of the room. The painting's composition enforces the symbolism of the threshold; both poster and door break the edge of the picture plane, symbolically and literally leading to an outside beyond the canvas.

Although White has carefully detailed the clothing and household implements placed in the right background of *Thoughts of Liberia*, the artist leaves the image on the poster unarticulated, though its border clearly displays the caption, "Hayti." The poster's vaguely rendered forms suggest a map, or even a landscape, with the rectangular form in the upper left of the poster perhaps imaging Haiti's architectural wonder, King Henri Christophe's citadel: a mountain-top fortress that was a testament to the monumental labor of which the newly-freed citizens of Haiti were capable, and a direct challenge to the white world to dare to return them to slavery. The painting's title and its shadowy poster allude both to emancipation and emigration, heatedly debated and intertwined topics at the time of this

image's rendering that centered on both Liberia and Haiti.² Through twinned evocations—emigration and emancipation, Liberia and Haiti—and this man's newspaper (and not a bible),³ the viewer is assured that White's figure is connected to an outside world. But which outside world will he choose? In direct competition with the painting's title, the poster

² During the period of this painting's rendering, discussions abounded on what to do with newly emancipated slaves. Many people believed that they could not be allowed to remain within the United States. Solutions of emigrationist plans centered on Liberia and Haiti, which also sparked heated debates in the U.S. Congress on whether or not to recognize the two black-led nations. Many people are familiar with emigrationist movements connected to Liberia, the west African colony founded by the American Colonization Society in 1822 for freed slaves, which became an independent republic in 1847; fewer realize that Haiti, as early as 1802, was often considered a more preferable location, with several Haitian administrations actually actively recruiting and facilitating the emigration U.S. blacks. Many African-Americans were skeptical of Liberia, the location particularly advocated by whites; like most people living in the United States at this time, African Americans "knew" that Africa was primitive, backwards, violent, and dangerous. The Haitian government encouraged such beliefs, telling potential emigrationists that Africa was a veritable death warrant, and emphasized that in Haiti, they would become citizens of an already established heroic, self-emancipated New World black nation. Moreover, many blacks preferred to look to the Haiti emigrationist movements, which tended to be black-organized and run, compared to the white-founded American Colonization Society, while also viewing Haiti as a place to build black solidarity. My understanding of Haitian emigration and debates surrounding U.S. recognition of Haiti is drawn from the personal papers of the James Redpath Correspondence, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library and the numerous pamphlets and speeches in the holdings of the New York Historical Society, such as: Loring Daniel Dewey, *Correspondence Relative to the Emigration to Hayti, of the Free People of Colour, in the United States. Together with the Instructions to the Agent sent out by President Boyer* (self-published, 1824); *Address of the Board of Mangers of the Haytian Emigration Society of Coloured People, to the Emigrants Intending to Sail to the Island of Hayti, in the Brig De Witt Clinton* (New York: Mahlon Day, 1824); *Information for the Free People of Colour, Who are Inclined to Emigrate to Hayti* (New York: Mahlon Day, 1824); Benjamin C. Clark; *A Plea for Hayti, with a Glance at Her Relations with France, England and the United States, for the Last Sixty Years* (Boston: Eastburn's Press, 1853); Daniel Wheelwright Gooch, *Recognition of Hayti and Liberia: Speech of Hon. D.W. Gooch, of Mass., Delivered in the House of Representatives, June 2, 1862* (Washington, D.C.: McGill, Witherow & Co., Steam Book and Job Printers, 1862); William Darrah Kelley, *The Recognition of Hayti and Liberia: Speech of Hon. William D. Kelly, of Pennsylvania, Delivered in the House of Representatives, June 3, 1862* (Washington, D.C.: Scammell & Co., printers, 1862). See also: Segun Shabaka, "An Afrocentric Analysis of the 19th Century African-American Migration to Haiti: A Quest for the Self-determining Community" (Ph.D. diss, Temple University, 2001); Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 563-5; Alfred Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); 122-3, 163-174; Leon Pamphile, *Haitians and African Americans* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 35-59.

³ The presence of the newspaper actively works against the stereotype of the passive, contented and dutiful black who reads the bible, as described by Sterling Brown in "The Negro Character as Seen by White Authors," *The Journal of Negro Education* 11.2 (April 1933): 184. Barbara Groseclose includes an analysis of this painting in her section on reading communities depicted in American genre painting, and the notable difference between the public community of whites depicted reading compared to the typical depictions of blacks as solitary readers. Groseclose, however, leans heavily on the mention of Liberia in the painting's title for her interpretation and does not comment on the Hayti poster. Barbara Groseclose, *Nineteenth-Century American Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 79.

directs the reading man's (and the viewer's) departure from the confined canvas to a specific site of black heroic self-agency, race pride, and the chance for social and political uplift on a revolutionary scale that dwarfed the American Colonization Society-founded Liberia as a physical and symbolic option. For this contemplative reader, "Hayti" meant having the courage to exchange his current condition for an unknown contemporary nation, but one with a monumental past that was celebrated by African Americans.

Edwin White's 1861 *Thoughts of Liberia: Emancipation* may seem an odd choice to begin a project focused on twentieth-century representations of Haiti, and especially works by African-American artists who approached the subject of Haiti to seek their racial roots, celebrate a heroic black past, and create transnational ties in the fight against racism and imperialism. Yet surprisingly, this painting grounds the numerous issues out of which twentieth-century representations of Haiti will grow. *Thoughts of Liberia* captures both a shadowy, moldable, and just-emerging picture of Haiti, a country whose name has always vividly called forth both a glittering and near-mythical revolutionary past and a struggling contemporary nation that always seems to remain a looming unknown. White's black reader is a man whose idea of Haiti will have been formed by narratives that have either held up the country as the highest model of heroism and race pride, or used it as the lowest model of debased primitive beliefs, crushing poverty, and political instability. In the nineteenth-century, descriptions of Haiti rarely found a moderate and non-sensational middle ground. As a potential emigrationist, White's reader, however, also has the opportunity to travel to Haiti and discover the nation for himself; his experiences there may shatter all that he has been told and all that he has imagined.

The Haitian Revolution

On New Year's Day, 1804, the former Saint Domingue slaves proclaimed the independence of the Republic of Haiti, which became the second independent nation in the Western hemisphere. The Haitian Revolution has not always received its historical due and the extent of its legacy and influence continues to be debated. Recent scholars, however, have begun to rightly and repeatedly assert the monumental importance of the upheavals on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola from 1791 to 1804; during the "Age of Revolution," the Haitian Revolution involved "the greatest degree of mass mobilization and resulted in the greatest degree of social and economic change."⁴ The complicated road to independence was overwhelmingly violent and resulted in shattering losses for Europe's three most powerful Atlantic empires: France, England and Spain.⁵

⁴ David P. Geggus, ed., "Preface," *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), ix.

⁵ Important texts that ground my understanding of Haiti's history and its impact on the world include: Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (1988; reprint, London: Verso, 1996); Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: the Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004); Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990); Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); David P. Geggus, ed., *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001); C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2^d ed. (1938. New York: Vintage Books, 1989); Franklin W. Knight, "AHR Forum: The Haitian Revolution," *American Historical Review* (February 2000): 103-115. Important works that put Haiti's revolution into greater historical context include: Eric Foner, *Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and its Legacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983); Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Towards the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 375-403; Eugene Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), esp. 82-99; George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 43-70; Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution & Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill: University North Carolina Press, c2004). Finally, for more on Haiti's post-revolution history, see also: Alex Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy: Class, Race, and Underdevelopment since 1700* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988); Robert Heintz and Nancy Gordon Heintz, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People, 1492-1971* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978); Michel S. Laguerre, *The Military and Society in Haiti* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1993); David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996); Lyonel Paquin, *The Haitians: Class and Color Politics* (New York: Multi-Type, 1983); Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Haiti and the*

In general, the course of the Haitian Revolution can be divided into two parts; the first part involved a struggle against slavery, while the second part included not only the defense of recently gained emancipation, but also a fight for national independence. Known as the “Pearl of the Antilles” and occupying the western third of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, Saint Domingue had been the richest and most important French colony in the West Indies and the busiest colony in the Western Hemisphere.⁶ As a modern sugar society, Saint Domingue sustained its huge production through a brutal regime of exploitation, reinforced by a rigid social system of strictly-defined and pronouncedly antagonistic stratifications of caste and color.⁷ On August 22, 1791 the slaves in the north plains set fire to the plantations in a coordinated uprising. The revolution’s first decade was a period of bloody chaos with at

Great Powers, 1902-1915 (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Haiti and the United States: The Psychological Moment* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1992); Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Nation, State, and Society in Haiti, 1804-1984* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1985); Amy Wilentz, *The Rainy Season: Haiti Since Duvalier* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989).

⁶ At its height, the colony produced two-fifths of the world’s sugar and over half the world’s coffee, accounting for forty percent of France’s foreign trade and absorbed ten to fifteen percent of United States exports. See Franklin W. Knight, “AHR Forum: The Haitian Revolution.” *American Historical Review* February 2000: 107-8.

⁷ Estimates suggest that 30,000 whites lived in the colony, equaled or slightly surpassed in number by the free but subordinated stratum of mostly mixed-race persons called *gens de couleur*, many of which were emancipated slaves, or *affranchis*. Although lacking political and many civil rights, portions of the *gens de couleur* trained and served in the militias, possessed great wealth (owning by 1789 one-third of plantation property and over 100,000 slaves), and were well educated and culturally elite, often finishing their training and education in Paris. Despite pronounced racial tensions, free people of color were integral in sustaining the economic regime and power structures of slave subjugation in a world where whites were vastly outnumbered. Numbering close to a half million in 1791, the slaves formed the largest social stratum in the colony, though within this stratum an infinite number of groups could be identified based not only on birthplace, heredity, language, and religion, but also type of work. Their high mortality rate meant that their numbers constantly needed to be sustained by the international slave trade; an estimated 864,000 Africans survived the horrors of the Middle Passage, only to arrive in Saint Domingue’s brutal work system during the eighteenth century. Of the around twenty thousand slaves imported annually, one ninth died within one year of arrival. See: Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 278 f.n. 14, 19; Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (London: Verso, 1996), 168-169; Franklin W. Knight, "AHR Forum: The Haitian Revolution," *American Historical Review* (February 2000).

one point as many as six factions warring at once, with alliances formed and dissolved in rapid succession between the various groups: slaves, free persons of color, *petits blancs*, *grands blancs*, French troops trying to restore order in the colony, and the opportunistic armies of England and Spain. France's tenuous hold on the colony was rescued when the black general François Dominique Toussaint à Breda, known as Toussaint L'Ouverture, abandoned his allegiance to Spain in spring 1794, and rejoined the French amidst promises that slavery in the colonies had been abolished. Toussaint commanded a loyal and well-trained fighting force of former slaves.

The revolution's thirteen violent years included a short break of peace in 1801 when Toussaint in the role of Governor-General-for-life consolidated his rule over the island, oversaw the writing of a new constitution that abolished slavery, and increased the colony's autonomy (though did not completely declare independence from France). Napoleon Bonaparte, however, soon concluded matters elsewhere in Europe and again looked to punish the impertinent black general and reestablish the lucrative plantation system supported by slavery on the island. In 1802, Napoleon's brother-in-law General Charles V. E. Leclerc attempted to retake the island, aided by the largest expeditionary force ever to sail from France. Although Toussaint was eventually captured, and died in a French dungeon in 1803, the people resumed the fight. Led by the most talented and experienced soldiers of France, Leclerc's forces were shocked by the unanticipated difficulty of fighting former slaves who had become seasoned guerrilla fighters. A yellow fever epidemic also ravaged the French troops. Losing 44,000 troops and sailors to sickness and battle, including 18 generals and his own brother-in-law, Napoleon lost the colony and abandoned his interests in the Western

Hemisphere, selling Louisiana to the United States.⁸ On January 1, 1804, the former slave Jean-Jacques Dessalines became Haiti's first head of state. Dessalines proclaimed national independence, severed colonial ties by replacing the name Saint Domingue with the Amer-Indian word Haiti (*ayti*), and introduced the country's inaugural constitution, which noted that all Haitian citizens would henceforth be designated "black."⁹ More ominously, he chided his new "black" citizens for not avenging their dead by allowing French whites to remain on the island. Before long, Dessalines's rhetoric moved to action. That spring he ordered the massacre of all remaining French men, women and children, sealing both their doom and Haiti's lasting reputation as a nightmare republic. The looming word "Hayti" above Edwin White's reading black man, therefore, conjures the ever "presentness" of Haiti's revolutionary past beyond the dreams of emigration, invoking a powerful possibility not found in the word "Liberia."

From its inception, the Haitian Revolution was almost incomprehensible, the fodder of myth as much as history. The West's disbelief in the results of the Haitian Revolution can be summed up by the famous eighteenth-century symbol of the emancipation movement: Josiah Wedgwood's 1786 medallion prepared for the Slave Emancipation Society (fig. 1.2).

⁸ In turn, the British lost nearly fifty thousand soldiers and sailors and expend over £16 million for their actions in Saint Domingue. When one considers the entire Caribbean campaign during this period, including battles waged to regain Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and Grenada, British losses rise to 90,000 soldiers. Statistics drawn from: Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 231-33, 251; David Brion Davis, "Impact of the French and Haitian Revolutions," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. David P. Geggus (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 6; Knight 112-113.

⁹ Haiti's inaugural constitution pronounced all Haitians "black," even the Polish and German mercenaries who had remained on the island after defecting from the French and British armies. Dessalines and his advisors were well aware that Haiti's precarious independence and the freedom of the self-liberated slaves depended on not allowing the tensions of skin color, with its underlying meaning of caste, to weaken the fledgling nation. David Nicholls has suggested that this may be one of the earliest, if not the first, time that the term "black" was employed ideologically. David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996 Revised Edition), 36.

The medallion's popular and heavily circulated image depicts a profile slave, bending down on his right knee, holding up enchained clasped hands, and imploring upwards, "Am I not a man and a brother?" The obsequious figure asks for sympathy and in no way offers the possibility that an abject and "inferior" slave might stand up and take matters into his own hands.¹⁰ In the eighteenth century, no one was surprised that the Haitian slaves would desire freedom, only that they were successful in achieving it. In the nineteenth century, as the myth of the docile slave took hold in the slaveholding U.S. South, Haiti's history became a dangerous anomaly that needed to be contained—politically, and rhetorically.

This containment was achieved not only through political and diplomatic policies, but also through rhetoric and representations that circumscribed, stereotyped and denigrated Haiti. The new country needed to be diplomatically and rhetorically quarantined; a sickness more serious than yellow fever, Haiti was a site that could spread the infection of black rebellion. Worse yet, the example of blacks actually organizing and systematically killing whites proved a perilous lesson to those who would hastily emancipate their chattel. The revolution had destroyed or severely truncated most of the new nation's infrastructure and combined with its economic isolation, the new nation struggled to achieve political stability. For the greater white world, Haiti's struggles "proved" that this new experiment in black self-rule was an utter failure. Moreover, without the "civilizing" interactions with whites, Haitians purportedly regressed to a state of irrational and barbarous primitivism, with rumors of strange religious rites and even cannibalism soon circulating. Through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, this tiny country has become the repository for all that the

¹⁰ Petrine Archer-Straw, *Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 28.

United States believes itself not to be—French, Catholic (or, even worse, derived of African religious spirituality), impoverished, and above all, black.

Haiti has been inextricably woven into discussions of race within the United States. For example, in the nineteenth century, major articulations of pro-slavery and even abolitionist thought moved easily between examples drawn from Haiti and the application of its “lessons” directly to blacks within the United States.¹¹ Representations of Haiti that enforced stereotypes of blacks, such as laziness, childishness, sexual excess and violent irrationality, therefore, created a battlefield that African Americans could not and did not ignore.¹² Indeed, for many African Americans, Haiti’s independence created an awareness of the possibilities of black nationalism and modeled a world where slavery was abolished and citizenship was defined by blackness.¹³ The Euro-centric world told African Americans that they had no history, or at least not one that was worthy of being included in the history textbooks. Haiti, however, provided proof of not only a monumental historical event, but also created a wealth of black heroes that could be studied and celebrated.

Project Overview

Although travel to Haiti had been possible during the nineteenth century and the opening decades of the twentieth, Haiti remained mostly the destination of emigrationists,

¹¹ See for example George Fitzhugh’s *Cannibals All!* (1859) and “Free Negroes in Hayti,” *De Bow’s Review* XXVII (1859): 525-49; even Abraham Lincoln’s 1863 Emancipation Proclamation touched off outcry that Lincoln was trying to incite insurrection, and its believed concomitant of ferocity and rapine on the model of Saint Domingue. Lincoln had attempted to deflect fears by including in the proclamation a statement that the newly freed persons, “abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence.” For a fuller examination of the nineteenth-century U.S. debates on Haiti, see Hunt, esp 131-146.

¹² See Hunt, 147-188; J. Michael Dash, *Haiti and the United States: National Stereotypes and the Literary Imagination* 2d ed. (London: Macmillan, 1997), 11-15, 45-72; Leon Pamphile, *Haitians and African Americans: A Heritage of Tragedy and Hope* (2001).

¹³ Hunt, 3.

diplomats, merchants, missionaries, and the U.S. military. The story of this dissertation crystallizes in the 1920s and 30s, and expands into the 1940s and 50s, when advances in travel combined with Haiti's "taming" during the U.S. occupation (1915-1934) resulted in the opening up of the country to unprecedented numbers of writers, ethnographers, and artists who both focused on Haiti as a contemporary nation, and retold and reinterpreted its revolutionary history to express new political needs. Building upon studies of U.S. literary and non-fiction textual encounters with Haiti, this dissertation examines the ways that the United States imagined and imaged Haiti during the first half of the twentieth century.

The first part of my project establishes and examines how images assisted in developing, reifying, and propagating visions of Haiti in the social imagination of the United States. Brett Berliner defines the social imagination as broadly held mental images that are most often formed in the absence of direct experience and which bind individuals to a larger group identity.¹⁴ During the opening years of the U.S. occupation of Haiti, the U.S. public could view for the first time a large number of images of their southern neighbor through the lavish photographic spreads presented in popular periodicals, foremost among them *National Geographic* magazine. From the comfort of their own homes, U.S. readers could contemplate *who they were not* and how the United States was triumphantly improving these peoples' lives by beneficently bringing them into the U.S. sphere of influence. For most U.S. Americans, the *National Geographic* would be the closest they would come to experiencing Haiti. In chapter two, inspired by the work of Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins in *Reading National Geographic*, I reveal the implicit connotations imbedded within the *National*

¹⁴ Brett A. Berliner, "The "Exotic" Black African in the French Social Imagination in the 1920s" (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1999), 8.

Geographic's presentation of Haiti that reinforced nineteenth-century stereotypes even as it more prominently reinscribed Haiti into the U.S. social imagination. Not all U.S. Americans, however, blithely accepted such representations or, indeed, the presence of the United States in Haiti. In 1920, occupied Haiti became a rallying point for mobilizing a unified African-American front to combat white imperialism and racism. African Americans also viewed the actions of the United States in Haiti as a reflection of their own country's broken domestic policies. Reinterpreted into their own social imagination, Haiti became a symbolic tool for African Americans to make the mainstream United States aware of its own pressing issues of racial, social and economic inequality. African-American coalition and protest, however, also had the effect of effacing divisions within the black community's leadership and tensions between socio-economic and immigrant (especially West Indian) groups. Haiti helped African Americans find solidarity within the United States. Significantly, the symbol of Haiti also bound them to a quickly growing transnational and Pan-Africanist identity.

While popular news media and its photographs brought Haiti to the front pages for a time, creative works that tangentially presented Haiti's revolutionary past and occupied present kept Haiti circulating in the public's eye in an even more widespread and sustained way, albeit more covertly. In chapter three, I examine how the idea of Haiti became a floating signifier in the creative and popular imagination that spoke to issues of race, national identity, and primitivism in the 1920s. *The Emperor Jones* is not a play *about* Haiti, in the same way that this dissertation is also not just about defining the concrete reality of a small Caribbean nation off the coast of Florida; Haiti was and is infinitely more. Rather, both the play and my project engage with how the idea of Haiti inspired creative expressions by artists in the United States that in turn speak to issues of race, class, power, and national identity.

Along with an analysis of this play, I compare noted African-American painter Aaron Douglas's illustrations of *The Emperor Jones* to the officially sanctioned images produced by European-immigrant Alexander King, and examine how *The Emperor Jones*, despite its primitivizing and even racist elements, could be used to champion the burgeoning New Negro Movement and African-American strivings to find an artistic voice that was both modern and American.

While most representations of Haiti blur the boundary between fiction and nonfiction, works produced in the late 1920s, in particular, stand precariously on the edge of observation and imagination. In chapter four, I examine William Seabrook's ethnographic travelogue *The Magic Island*, which was illustrated by King, and travel writer Paul Morand's fictional vignette, "The Black Tsar," which was illustrated by Douglas. These highly sensational works brought Haiti's folk religion, Vodou, to the public's consciousness. Entrenched in the lexicon of the 1920s international vogue of primitivism, these highly detailed yet exotifying ethnographic studies both inspired further adventurers and challenged anthropologists and artists to go to Haiti "to see for themselves."

The second part of my project, therefore, examines how many African Americans vigorously responded to the established and mostly denigrating representations of Haiti by creating alternative visions that countered what the mainstream had long believed itself to know about Haiti. In doing so, they were not just defending a small country located a few hundred miles off the shore of Florida, but they were consciously defending their own place and defining their own representations within U.S. society. During the 1930s and into the 1940s and 50s, a coterie of trained anthropologists began to focus on Haiti and contest the ethnographic-travelogues that dominated accounts of Haiti. In chapter five, I discuss the

unprecedented numbers of African-American artists who joined these anthropologists, becoming creative ethnographers as they sought to carefully document the Haitian people, their culture, and environment in order to go beyond established notions of Haiti and create a more informed dialogue both about and with the Haitian people. This chapter will examine a select number of African-American artists, their works, and their experiences in Haiti, focusing in particular on William E. Scott and Aaron Douglas. First-hand experiences in the country, however, also forced African-American artists to discover a contemporary nation whose harsh daily realities required engagement far beyond celebrating a symbolic history or exploring their own personal racial identities. Their experiences and research allowed them to return home transformed, and to attempt also to transform U.S. culture by providing alternatives to visions of Haiti as a dangerous, dark, sexualized place. While certainly each artist brought a complex individual experience to their engagement with Haiti, their resulting works helped to produce a collective impact.

While the 1930s marks the beginning of a diligent investment in the documenting of Haiti, this decade also saw numerous cultural works that used this new interest in Haitian folklife to stage, both figuratively and literally, Haiti's revolutionary past. I conclude my project in chapter six with an examination of representations of the Haitian Revolution and its heroes, which prominently circulated in the visual arts and theatre during the 1930s. African-American communities in particular have been the keepers and tellers of Haiti's revolutionary history within the United States, where the mainstream academy and Euro-centric history books have long chosen to ignore the most revolutionary event during the Age of Revolution. This chapter focuses on the recounting of Haiti's history by African-American artists who used their voices to tell the legacy of the Haitian revolution to their communities,

making Haiti a “usable past” upon which to draw strength and a greater understanding of what it means to be a black citizen of the Americas and the world.

Literature Review

My approach calls not only on art history, but also on the interdisciplinary eye of cultural studies, with its commitment to examining the fine arts in relation to popular arts, media, mores, beliefs and institutional structures, and modern literary theory, which emphasizes context and convention within a prevailing discourse.

This study stands on the shoulders of many scholars who have made significant strides towards articulating the lives of African-American artists, tracking down and exhibiting their work, and examining critically their images. For several artists who traveled to Haiti, this work is only just beginning. Other artists in this study have received much more sustained examination. For example, scholarship on Jacob Lawrence has expanded greatly since the 1980s, with Ellen Harkins Wheat’s *Jacob Lawrence: American Painter* (1986), the careful and critical essays of Patricia Hills and Richard J. Powell, and most recently, the scholarship put forth through the monumental efforts of the Jacob Lawrence Catalogue Raisonné Project. Also important to my study is Tritobia Hayes Benjamin’s seminal work on Loïs Mailou Jones, Amy Kirschke’s study of Aaron Douglas, and William Taylor’s biographical essays and Della Brown Hardman’s recent dissertation on William Edouard Scott. Although these monographs make important mention of the artists’ Haiti-inspired works within a broader biographical narrative, most neither provide a sustained analysis of the imagery, nor situate the images within the broader historical and social context of Haiti-U.S. interactions.

Artists who chose to represent Haiti worked both within the visual traditions of their training and traditions of Western Haitian historiography. Representations of Haiti often blatantly fell within the racist tradition of picturing the black Other, such as the images of Alexander King. Other representations were aligned with a more subtle but still primitivizing, racially romantic view, from Sir Harry Johnston's early photography to James Weldon Johnson's praises of the picturesque Haitian peasant. Partha Mitter's groundbreaking *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions to Indian Art* provides a useful foundation for examining the possibilities and limitations of U.S. writers, artists and photographers who attempted to document Haiti as part of the occupation's opening up of the country. Mitter traces several centuries of Western reactions to the art of India, examining the power images have to perpetuate pre-existing stereotypes even in the face of attempts to represent a foreign culture objectively. As Mitter's analysis reveals, travelers tend to trust more what they have been taught to expect than what they actually observe, with vivid and expressive exotic illustrations in travelogues lurking behind what would later become "objective" scientific examinations.¹⁵ Following Mitter's model, I focus on how writers and artists in Haiti reacted to their observations and experiences in light of previously constructed understandings of Haiti.

Suzanne Jacqueline Spoor's dissertation, "Searching for a Black Republic: The Textual Invention of Haiti by U.S. Black Artists in the 1930s" (1999), is the most significant study to date that addresses the imaging of Haiti by African-American artists. While her work provides a significant starting point for my project, Spoor's training and emphasis in

¹⁵ Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

comparative literature leaves in-depth analysis and intertextual readings of the images largely undone. Several works in literary studies and social history, however, provide a direct foundation for my dissertation. J. Michael Dash's *Haiti and the United States: National Stereotypes and the Literary Imagination* compiles and examines literature that refers to Haiti-U.S. relations. Dash argues that literary narratives more honestly reveal Haitian and American attitudes and stereotypes toward one another, noting that such exchanges are usually self-censored in more "objective" historical and socio-political texts. Dash's goal is less of a sustained literary analysis than it is an attempt to articulate overarching patterns of representation, "to show how polarizing stereotypes in imaginative literature are developed which make historical and political realities intelligible."¹⁶ Robert Lyall Milde's dissertation, "The Harp and the Sword: Rhetorical Depictions of Haiti in Early Twentieth Century U.S. Literature" (1999), builds on the foundation of Dash, while narrowing his focus to early twentieth-century U.S. works of literature that depict Haitian settings or characters. His project asks why Haiti is such a powerful image for U.S. readers, noting that Haiti "has been one of our literature's most divisive and powerful rhetorical symbols."¹⁷ Further providing groundwork for my study, Milde examines the specific uses to which images of Haiti have been employed, concluding that several African-American writers use the image of Haiti to challenge traditional U.S. conceptions of race, culture, and national identity. Modern literary theory, which demonstrates the importance of context and convention to the existence of a

¹⁶ J. Michael Dash, *Haiti and the United States: National Stereotypes and the Literary Imagination*. 2d ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), x-xi. Dash's work is also unique in that the second half of each chapter examines how Haitian writers have viewed and portrayed the United States in turn. He concludes that both nations tried to defend and define themselves against the dichotomy of the other, while also trying to make the uncomfortable presence of the other more manageable.

¹⁷ Robert Lyall Milde, "The Harp and the Sword: Rhetorical Depictions of Haiti in Early Twentieth Century U.S. Literature" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1999), 2.

text within a prevailing discourse, is the driving force behind both Dash and Milde's works. Edward Said's *Orientalism*, and Christopher Miller's *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French* are highly influential to the above authors and my project, demonstrating the power of representations to acquire an authority even greater than reality. Finally, Toni Morrison's groundbreaking *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* influences my line of questioning. Morrison uses the term "Africanism," to denote the range of readings and misreadings that accompany Eurocentric learning about peoples of African descent. She further describes this unrestrained term as a "disabling virus within literary discourse," and as "both a way of talking about and a way of policing matters of class, sexual license, and repression, formations and exercises of power, and meditations on ethics and accountability."¹⁸ I view the imagining of Haiti in American discourse as a branch of Morrison's Africanism.

Indispensable to my project is Mary Renda's examination of the function of material culture in international relations. *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* has established that not only guns, but also stories were required in the making of a U.S. American empire. Not only does Renda trace the (often unintended) impact of the U.S. military occupation in Haiti, but she also exposes how Haiti has impacted the United States, transforming U.S. citizens' beliefs about themselves as Americans. Following Renda's lead, I argue that images have also played a vital but often ignored role in influencing how U.S. American's interpreted the stories of Haiti they received in histories,

¹⁸ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 7.

travelogues, and mainstream periodicals, such as newspapers and the *National Geographic* magazine.

The isolation of visual material according to subject matter may seem myopic. I do not argue that the artists within this study were always, if ever, focused solely on Haiti, nor are individual artworks examined herein interpretable as being *only* about Haiti. Rather, my intertextual approach to representations of Haiti is a heuristic device for examining the under-acknowledged yet wide-ranging influence and engagement African-American artists have had with major twentieth-century intellectual and cultural movements, not only within the United States, but also in the modern transatlantic world. In this respect, this study attempts to respond to recent calls by contemporary black theorists for the greater study and appreciation of the transnationalism of modern African-American art and culture. For example, Paul Gilroy's broad theory of the Black Atlantic and its drive to situate black culture and history within the international scope of modernity studies, disavowing its confinement to nationalistic boundaries, provides a provocative starting point. Gilroy challenges current understanding of the direction of black culture and art by asking scholars to consider, "the powerful effects of even temporary experiences of exile, relocation, and displacement..."¹⁹

The preliminary markers that Gilroy lays down are a stimulus to examine "the inescapable hybridity and intermixtures of ideas" revealed by the patterns of movement and transformative experiences of African-American artists who dared to look and travel beyond the borders of the United States to discover and articulate their own positions not only within

¹⁹ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London and New York: Verso, 1993), 18.

U.S. society and culture but also in a diverse international black diaspora.²⁰ The protests led by African-Americans to U.S. military aggression in Haiti created alliances with the educated elite of Haiti, in turn, leading to a more global coalition of politics that addressed internationally issues of imperialism and racism. The period of the U.S. occupation and its immediate aftermath also resulted in a cultural turning towards Haiti by large numbers of both black and white artists and writers who produced a web of interconnected influences that cannot be fully understood if one closes the door on perceived racial and disciplinary boundaries. For example, the NAACP and the Republican party assigned African-American poet and diplomat James Weldon Johnson to investigate occupied Haiti. His writings in turn inspired white travel writer William Seabrook to go to Haiti, who in turn provided letters of introduction to signal African-American poet Langston Hughes. Seabrook also sparked white anthropologist Melville Herskovits's desire to create a more scientifically grounded study of Haiti, with Herskovits in turn assisting and influencing famed artist-anthropologists Zora Neale Hurston and Katherine Dunham. That being said, race matters to this study. While race as a scientifically grounded, delimited, and permanent term of inextricable difference has been thoroughly problematized, it remains a social concept with its accompanying labels of black/white that cannot be dismissed.²¹ Race was an inescapable category for the African-American artists and writers during the period of my study, and also

²⁰ Gilroy, xi. My study is also greatly aided and inspired by recent scholarship that examines the transformative travels and international outlook of African-American artists, such as: Theresa Leininger-Miller, *New Negro Artists in Paris* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001); Michel Fabre, *From Harlem to Paris: Black American Writers in France* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Tyler Stovall, *Paris Noir: African-American in the City of Light* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996).

²¹ See for example the poignant discussions of Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Editor's Introduction: Writing 'Race' and the Difference it Makes," in *'Race,' Writing, and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986)

for all accounts and representations of Haiti from the nineteenth century to the present day. Moreover, as Robert Lyall Milde has noted, in many press releases during the U.S. occupation of Haiti, what is discussed is not foreign policy, but race.²² I highlight African-American artists in this study because Haiti mattered to them and through their representations of Haiti, they continued “to speak truth to power” and create alternative visions to mainstream representations that denigrated all persons of African descent.

Troubling Island expands on the important biographical foundation begun by scholars of African-American art history, while building on the substantial analyses of Haiti-U.S. relations begun in literary studies and social history. In response to existing research, this dissertation addresses the lack of in-depth analysis of the images that have accompanied and propelled the histories, travelogues and creative responses to Haiti. Through the above examples, I ask: What are the patterns of thinking—the metanarratives—that lurk behind representations of Haiti and how do they relate to the larger body of discourse on Haiti? How do images of Haiti talk about U.S. race relations, political relations, and social relations? Lastly, how do images of Haiti police those relations and reveal aspects of class, sexuality, power formations, ethics and accountability?

By examining the larger social context of representations of Haiti during the period of the U.S. occupation of Haiti (1915-1934) and the immediate subsequent decades, this dissertation contributes to a greater understanding of how representations of Haiti overwhelmingly articulate issues of race, while also touching on cultural anxieties of class, religion, patriotism and national identity. This study also furthers our understanding of the transnational influences and outlook of several prominent twentieth-century African-

²² Milde, 98.

American artists. While rooted in art historical analysis, privileging the visual over the text, this is an interdisciplinary dissertation that focuses on the broader context of cultural studies; I draw on both popular media and the performing and fine arts, and match art historical traditions with histories of anthropology and its evolving ethnographic practices, and the politics of U.S. international relations in the Caribbean. Through this lens, I expose how creative representations by African-American artists attempted to open up new spaces in interpretations of Haiti, escaping the litany of tired and derogatory tropes so frequently applied to the “Black Republic.”

Chapter 2 Presenting the Taming of Haiti

On July 28, 1915, the U.S.S. *Washington* trained its guns on Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince and prepared a U.S. Marine Corps landing force. A panicked U.S. and French diplomatic corps had cabled their respective governments that Haitians had stormed the French legation, removed their president who had sought refuge there, and hacked his body to pieces.²³ Reports of riots within the capital ensued. While the exact events of President Vilbrun Guillaume Sam's overthrow were not yet clear, Rear Admiral William B. Caperton knew that swift action would prevent the involvement of European powers and the compromising of U.S. strategic considerations elsewhere in Latin America. By evening, the marines had landed. Thus began the nearly two-decade occupation of Haiti by the United States.²⁴

²³President Sam had tried to secure his political power by jailing adversaries and their family members. When an opposition group advanced on the National Palace, Sam's army commander ordered the slaughter of the nearly two hundred political prisoners while Sam hid in the French legation. The discovery of the carnage at the prison led to the infuriated public's swift retribution. For more on the marine landing and its preceding events, see: Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1971), especially 42-81; Robert Debs Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People, 1492-1971* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), 392-405.

²⁴For an overview of the history of the U.S. occupation of Haiti, Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1971), remains the benchmark text. See also: Emily Balch, ed., *Occupied Haiti* (1927; New York: Garland, 1972); Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Haiti and the United States: The Psychological Moment* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 101-120; Mary Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Magdaline W. Shannon, *Jean-Price-Mars, the Haitian Elite and the American Occupation, 1915-1935* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996).

For most of the marine recruits, Haiti was probably a looming unknown. Arriving in August on the U.S.S. *Tennessee*, United States Marine Corps Private Faustin Wirkus confessed that before their deployment he and his fellow marines did not even know where Haiti was, let alone anything factual about the country. Their knowledge extended only so far as it was a country accustomed to turmoil and “a land of black people—‘just like Africa.’”²⁵ Linking Haiti with Africa allowed the young marine’s self-admittedly over-active imagination to lead him to describe his first impression of Haiti as “misted, menacing, and mysterious.”²⁶ His first steps on shore only heightened his initial reaction: “We simply felt we had been delivered into a land of evil enchantment; we nudged one another with our elbows to stand by and be ready for we knew not what.”²⁷ Although Wirkus and his companions professed complete ignorance, their initial impression reveals how their limited knowledge of Haiti, or more generally of a country with a black majority, still conjured specific and strong reactions. These reactions have a history, both immediate and centuries old, rooted in a powerful discourse that has long conflated Haiti/Africa/blackness with both vague feelings and concrete representations of evil, barbarity, mystery, and the supernatural. My introduction outlined Haiti’s revolutionary history and the West’s need to contain the new black nation, politically, rhetorically, and symbolically. I turn now to the more immediate discursive framework of popular media upon which private Wirkus and other U.S. Americans developed and expressed their impressions of Haiti, transforming vague feelings

²⁵ Faustin Wirkus and Taney Dudley, *The White King of La Gonave* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1931), 12.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

into concrete realities as the U.S. involvement in Haiti brought the country to the forefront of public imagination.

The central focus for this chapter will be a series of *National Geographic* magazine articles and their accompanying photographs of Haiti that circulated in the United States during the opening years of the U.S. occupation. I will discuss how these popular media representations were tied to the needs of the U.S. military intervention, yet rooted in highly problematic prior representations of Haiti. During this period, Haiti became literally and figuratively a battleground upon which issues of imperialism, paternalism, primitivism, racism, and national identity were contested.²⁸ It also was a time when the U.S. public was exposed to more information and images of Haiti than ever before in an upsurge of popular interest not seen since the late-eighteenth-century tales of the “horrors of Saint Domingue” or the various nineteenth-century emigrationist movements.

The evaluation of the *National Geographic* as a vehicle for presenting and influencing the U.S. public’s opinion of Haiti is critical. The magazine presented its articles as the latest scientific, and therefore authoritative, information available on the world. Yet the magazine also marketed itself to a popular (albeit white, educated, middleclass) audience and had a circulation that reached far beyond other more academic science and history journals.²⁹ The *National Geographic* had a reported circulation of 400,000 in 1916, growing

²⁸ See: Mary Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (University of North Carolina Press, 2001); J. Michael Dash, *Haiti and the United States: National Stereotypes and the Literary Imagination*, 2d ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), especially 22-72; Robert Lyall Milde, “The Harp and the Sword: Rhetorical Depictions of Haiti in Early Twentieth Century U.S. Literature” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1999).

²⁹ Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins have noted, “From the institution’s second decade [founded in 1888], the funding and conduct of research was always marginal to the institution’s main role of popularizing and glamorizing geographic and anthropological knowledge, yet it was sufficient to establish and retain its

to 743,386 by 1921.³⁰ During these years, the magazine's articles presented U.S. interactions with its newly acquired "dependencies" as benevolent, heroic, and civilizing. In contrast, journals that regularly presented highly critical views of U.S. military and financial imperialism reached a much smaller audience; for example, the *Nation* reached 28,960, while *Current History Monthly* had a circulation of 49,350 in 1921. Part of the marketing strategy and popular appeal of the *National Geographic* magazine after the first decade of the twentieth century centered on large, lavish photographs, "which in number and excellence can be equaled by no other publication."³¹ The 1916 and 1920 *National Geographic* articles on Haiti circulated for the first time numerous, sizeable, high-quality photographs of Haiti to a large audience. Since the late nineteenth century, travelogues and histories on Haiti and the Caribbean had slowly introduced more and more photographic plates alongside, and eventually replacing, engravings. These early photographs, however, tended to be limited in number and quality, and interspersed throughout hundreds of pages of text.³² It was not until the *National Geographic* that images of Haiti moved beyond mere illustrative examples to rival the texts they accompanied.³³ Importantly, the general viewer received these images as

reputation as a *scientific* and educational organization." See, Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins, *Reading National Geographic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 24.

³⁰ All circulation statistics taken from *N. W. Ayer & Son's American Newspaper Annual and Directory* (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Son, 1916 and 1921).

³¹ Gilbert Grosvenor, "Report of the Director and Editor of the National Geographic Society for the Year 1914," *National Geographic* 27.3 (March, 1915): 319.

³² An important exception and transition to the type of image-laden layout adopted by the *National Geographic* is artist-photographer-adventurer Sir Harry Johnston's book *The Negro in the New World* (1910), whose 484 pages included 394 images, though of varying size and quality. Along with several reprinted historical engravings, the book included over forty photographs of Haiti.

³³ The eminent cultural theorist Roland Barthes discusses the implications of this "historical reversal" of text to image in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 25-26.

forms of direct evidence about Haiti. This was in part due to the perceived objective nature of photography, the *National Geographic*'s selection of "straightforward," sharp-focused images with conventional framing, and the claimed scientific authority of the magazine in which they appeared.³⁴ Moreover, the publication consciously strove for "permanent value," lingering in homes, offices and schools long after the daily newspapers had been discarded.³⁵ Therefore, this publication greatly helped to establish and circulate the lexicon of ideas and images of Haiti upon which the later creative artists in my study would build upon and/or resist.

National Geographic Magazine: Regenerating the Degenerate Haiti

One year into the occupation of Haiti, the *National Geographic* published the unattributed feature article, "Wards of the United States: Notes on What Our Country is Doing for Santo Domingo, Nicaragua, and Haiti." The article purported to highlight the numerous successes of the military arm of the Monroe Doctrine,³⁶ giving the U.S. public a glimpse into not-so-distant unknown lands. This article illustrates many of the ways popular media representations treated Haiti as a primitive, exotic and exceptional extreme. Of the "wards" discussed, the author presents Haiti as the most problematic, backwards, unsanitary,

³⁴ Lutz and Collins, 24-30, 269-71. For more on the historical process involved in the acceptance of photographs as evidence, see John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988).

³⁵ *National Geographic* editor Gilbert Grosvenor published his "Guiding Principles" for the magazine in 1915. The third principle emphasized that the magazine's issues should be considered enduring educational resources: "Everything printed in the Magazine must have permanent value, and be so planned that each magazine will be as valuable and pertinent one year or five years after publication as it is on the day of publication. The result of this principle is that tens of thousands of back numbers of the Magazine are continually used in school-rooms." Grosvenor, 319.

³⁶ The "Roosevelt Corollary" amended the Monroe Doctrine to mandate U.S. upholding of law and order in the Caribbean to prevent extra-hemispheric interference. See Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 82-3; Schmidt, 44-45.

and uncivilized. Although Haiti may indeed have ranked below the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua in Western development standards, the discursive strategies used to prove this to the magazine's readership are revealing of the many ways representations of Haiti functioned in U.S. popular culture.

The article's opening line immediately racializes Haiti and Santo Domingo (the Dominican Republic); Haiti is "the Black Republic," while her island neighbor is "the Mulatto Republic." Though the article addresses Nicaragua, and also cites U.S. interventions in Puerto Rico, Cuba, Panama, and the Philippines, it gives no such racial designation to these other countries. Through this invocation of race, the anonymous author proceeds to draw on a storehouse of adjectives reserved for the black Other: childlike, violent, lazy, and (sexually) excessive. For example, the Dominican Republic thinks "they are big enough to take care of themselves" and is where the "orgy of revolution" occurs with "clocklike regularity."³⁷ Likewise, only "under a firm yet gentle, beneficent guidance" will Haiti's "simple population" attain and sustain peace (177). This is because Haiti's past and present is "a nightmare of terror" with "a carnival of crime, and an orgy of revolution such as history perhaps never before was called upon to record" (165). In contrast, the author describes non-racialized Nicaragua's recurring revolutions as a "hydra-headed" monster (155), an analogy that does not connote excessive, and especially sexualized, indulgence. While certainly the anonymous author wants to capture and hold the reader's attention through vivid descriptions, it is telling that the non-racialized countries are not described in the same

³⁷ Anonymous, "Wards of the United States: Notes on What Our Country Is Doing for Santo Domingo, Nicaragua, and Haiti," *National Geographic* 30 (August 1916): 143, 155.

slurring way. This treatment is typical of representations of the racial other and particularly of peoples of African descent.³⁸

Although condescending and paternalistic throughout, the author reserves the article's most vituperative language and supercilious comments for the Dominican Republic's darker-skinned neighbor. This is readily apparent by a glance at the article's subheadings, where discussion of the Dominican Republic falls under titles like "ANY PORT IN A STORM" (143, describing the financial protection given by the United States) and "AN ASTOUNDING PERFORMANCE!" (145). In contrast, the main discussion of Haiti falls under the subsection, "CONDITIONS UNBELIEVABLY BAD."³⁹ Discussion of the two country's capitals offers another point of comparison. In this article, the reader learns that a walk amongst the ruins of Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic, is a "fascinating experience" (150). In contrast, Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince is the "City

³⁸ Such a derisive focus on the African and African-descended other will be a patterned continued by *National Geographic* articles throughout the twentieth century. Lutz and Collins, 132, in their analysis of articles dating from 1950 and later found that sixty percent more articles on Africa had titles that cited problems than in any other region. An important and growing body of scholarship outlines and dissects the nuances and repercussions of the history of such derogatory representations and stereotypes. See for example, P. J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind: Perceptions of New Worlds in the Age of Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), which notes that descriptions of Africans were disproportionately negative compared to other "discovered" peoples; Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), especially 76-149; Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of African and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Daniel M. Mengara, ed., *Images of Africa: Stereotypes and Realities* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2001). For an examination of nineteenth-century textual representations of blacks in U.S. culture and how those representations shaped and were shaped by racist theory and ideologies, see George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

³⁹ A third subsection describing the Dominican Republic announces, "A NEW TARIFF POLICY" (145). The article addresses Nicaragua under the subsection, "HELPING NICARAGUA ESCAPE THE THROES OF CHRONIC REVOLUTION" (151). Along with "UNBELEIVABLY BAD," discussion of Haiti falls under: "A REIGN OF TERROR" (165); "THE DUKE OF LIMONADE" (165), which mockingly describes Haiti's created nobility, before deriding Haiti's filthy capital; and "THE NEW ORDER IN HAITI" (173), which triumphantly announces the benevolent aid rendered to Haiti under the U.S. occupation.

Dreadful” and “holds the palm for being the most filthy, foul smelling, and consequently fever-stricken city in the world.”⁴⁰

The article sets up comparisons between the Dominican Republic and Haiti not only textually but also visually. The magazine’s editors arranged each of the article’s page layouts to display only photographs from a single country. Pages 154 and 155 prove the only exception and seem to offer a deliberate comparison between the capitals Santo Domingo and Port-au-Prince (fig. 2.1). Here, the photograph *Street Scene: Santo Domingo City, The Capital* by Harriet Chalmers Adams appears on the right side above the article’s text. The facing page on the left side displays the full-page anonymous photograph, *The Fish Market: Port au Prince, Haiti* (fig. 2.2). The photograph of Santo Domingo places the viewer in the middle of an avenue. The uncrowded street appears swept clean, with wide sidewalks, gutters and a drainage outlet visible in the lower left corner. Highlighted by the bright sunlight entering the intersection, and framed by a street pole and the shadow of the street’s curb, this drain advertises the advancements in sanitation which accompanied the civilizing of the republic. Though perhaps a minor detail in the photograph, the presence of the drain takes on greater significance when the reader browses several pages further to find a photograph of the Grand Rue in Port-au-Prince, where slapdash wooden ramps span across the street’s purportedly teeming gutters, which the image’s caption points out to prove “how primitive conditions really are” (175). Additionally, the composition of the Santo Domingo

⁴⁰Anonymous, “Wards of the United States,” 149, 165. Although the author attributes this damning description to F.A. Ober, this exact phrase also appears in Colby M. Chester, “Haiti: A Degenerating Island,” *National Geographic* 19.3 (March 1908): 217. Sir Harry Johnston in his tour of Haiti between 1908-9, comments: “. . .nor is the town [Port-au-Prince] nearly so dirty as it was described by various writers down to the year 1900. Either they exaggerated, or their criticisms stirred up the civic authorities of Port-au-Prince to effect considerable improvements in the cleanliness of the streets.” Johnston, *The Negro in the New World* (1910; New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1969), 174.

City street scene creates a sense of well-ordered spaciousness. An open street fills the photograph's center, extending into the distance and ending at a tower, framed by the receding two-story balconied buildings. All of the figures in the composition appear at a distance; a few mules appear as shadows, tethered to the side of the street, while the small figures of individual citizens walk singly along the sidewalks in the distance, going about their business and seemingly unaware of the photographer's presence.

In stark contrast, the facing photograph of the Port-au-Prince fish market is asymmetrical and claustrophobic. The blurred forms of women moving about baskets of fish block the left and center foreground. Well-dressed boys, young men and a few women crowd into the sharply focused middle ground. Some turn to look at the fish or each other, but a greater number gaze directly at the viewer, aware of being observed by the photographer's lens. I find their stares disconcerting, for the close-up framing of the photograph works to place me into this jumbled market scene. Their striking return glances increase my sense of being a voyeur, a stranger in their midst, an unwelcome occupier. The photograph's caption attempts to direct the viewer away from their eye contact to the blurred baskets of fish. The caption describes how Haitians, despite living in a region famous for its fine and plentiful fish, subsist on imported low-quality Massachusetts salt-cod, which had been rejected for the U.S. market due to its poor quality.⁴¹ This caption implies that Haitians are foolish, or at least backwards and with poor taste in their dietary choices. The caption editor neglects to explain how profiting merchants export Haiti's highest quality foodstuffs while the general populace depends upon a cheaper imported food supply. Such examples direct the reader to the conclusion that Haitians are indifferent to squalor and too degraded to

⁴¹ Anonymous, "Wards of the United States," 154.

demand better food and living conditions. The caption works to nullify the demanding return gaze of the well-dressed citizens of Port-au-Prince. Continuing through the article, similar examples work to circumscribe the reader's impressions of Haiti to an amalgam of indifference, ignorance, and primitive backwardness. Moreover, "Wards of the United States" leads the reader to conclude that Haiti is the least understandable of the objects of U.S. "big brother" policy.

Even though this article presents Haiti as an *unknown* land filled with unbelievable practices, Haiti is the only "ward" whose religion and history is outlined in any detail. This elaboration, however, actually works to discount Haiti's folk religion as an inconceivable and barbaric menace, while presenting Haiti's history as theatrical and unbelievably ludicrous. According to the article and its sources, Haitians suffer from 'too deep a belief' in the ubiquitous folk religion Vaudoux (164).⁴² This results not only in idolatry, but also in the secret practices of child sacrifice and cannibalism, purported to occur in the country's mountainous interior 'where they [Haitian adherents] are out of sight and can follow their instincts' (159).⁴³ From the invocation of such horrific acts, the article then moves abruptly to a paragraph outlining the unstable tenures of Haiti's heads of state, by way of noting Haitian revolutionary Dessalines and his 1804 massacre of French women and children after the defeat of the French army (164). By abutting an outline of Haiti's political history with the

⁴² Vaudoux, also spelled as Vaudou, Vodou, or Vodun, is a complex amalgamation of many religious practices, both African-derived, indigenous, and also influenced by Roman Catholicism. In English the religion is commonly referred to as voodoo and is often reduced to a series of sensational superstitions. Throughout this dissertation, I will note the spelling employed by the particular source that I am using. Additionally, I will use the word "Vodou" to refer to Haiti's living and complex folk religion, while employing "voodoo" to textually indicate that these cultural works actually use stereotypes of the religion.

⁴³ Here, the author quotes from James Anthony Froude, *The English in the West Indies* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1888), 183.

previous discussion of child sacrifice and cannibalism through an invocation of a massacre of innocents, yet without any transitional clause, the article implicates all of Haiti, past and present, peasant and politician, in horrific secretive practices.

The lengthy caption to the photograph, *The Entrance to a So-Called Vaudoux Temple: Haiti* (fig. 2.3), makes this connection explicit:

Every authority on Haiti agrees that vaudoux, or voodoo, worship exists there, and that it is probably a survival of African fetichism. It is agreed by all authorities that now and then in the frenzy of the snake dances the worshipers refuse to be content with anything less than a sacrifice of the ‘goat without horns’—a living child. When one of the recent presidents of the Republic was assassinated, he carried the emblems of vaudouxism next to his heart, showing that the cult has existed even in the highest places (153).

After invoking nameless authorities, the caption’s loose string of sentences links criminal sacrifices to leading Haitians. Like the article’s text, this linking implicates Haitians as cannibals without having to provide any concrete evidence or explanation as to why “emblems of vaudouxism” should automatically link a person to such acts. The article’s history lesson continues, regaling the reader with leaders who are “ludicrous” heads of “burlesque reigns” and “superstitious,” with their downfalls in quick succession due to assassination and revolution. All of this flows breathlessly towards 1915 and “the straw that broke the patience of the United States and led it, both for its own safety and the protection of the Haitian people and the foreigners domiciled there, to intervene” (173). The more “information” provided by this article, the more extreme, unknowable and unbelievable Haiti becomes.

For this “in depth” treatment of Haiti, the author draws on a body of highly problematic nineteenth- and early twentieth-century texts, which in turn recycle prior sensationalized accounts of the country. The subsection on Haiti, like the article’s opening, commences with a racialized explanation: “To begin with, it is a place where black rules

white...”⁴⁴ This statement invokes Hesketh Prichard’s *Where Black Rules White: A Journey Across and About Hayti* (1900), an account of the English sportsman-journalist’s extensive travels through Haiti. Claiming to be the first white man in a century to travel through Haiti’s interior, Prichard collected “facts” and observations on the true nature of the country, its people and religion. Prichard also sought to answer the question, “Can the Negro rule himself?” After describing at length Haiti’s populace as fear-driven, child-sacrificing, squalid, and “too lazy and too improvident,” Prichard answers emphatically in the negative.⁴⁵ Given that the anonymous author of the 1916 *National Geographic* article writes to display the great need for the newly begun U.S. occupation with its usurpation of Haitian self-rule, it is important to recognize the article’s tangled roots.

Although only alluding to Prichard’s work, the anonymous author specifically cites several nineteenth-century travelogue-histories by Sir Spenser St. John, Sir Frederick Treves, James Anthony Froude, and Frederick A. Ober, and footnotes the 1908 *National Geographic Magazine* article by Colby Chester.⁴⁶ For this 1916 article, the anonymous author justifies the use of various nineteenth-century texts by citing the above Englishmen as authorities on Haiti based on their various lengths of stay in and affiliations with the Caribbean (159).

⁴⁴ Anonymous, “Wards of the United States,” 159.

⁴⁵ Hesketh Prichard, *Where Black Rules White: A Journey Across and About Hayti* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1900), 115, 284. Like the anonymous *National Geographic* author, Prichard’s book specifically cites Spenser St. John and James Anthony Froude. (See my discussion below.) Prichard, 78, additionally cites the eminent nineteenth-century English adventurer Sir Richard Burton, whom Prichard attests proved the existence of snake worship amongst Haitians.

⁴⁶ Spenser St. John, *Hayti or the Black Republic*, 2d ed. (New York: Scribner & Welford, 1889); James Anthony Froude, *The English in the West Indies* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1888); Frederick A. Ober, *In the Wake of Columbus* (Boston: D. Lothrop Co., 1893); Frederick A. Ober, *A Guide to the West Indies and Bermudas* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1908); Frederick Treves, *The Cradle of the Deep: an Account of a Voyage to the West Indies* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1908); Colby Chester, “Haiti: a Degenerating Island,” *National Geographic Magazine* 19.3 (March, 1908): 200-217.

More importantly, the author notes that his sources have a consensus of conclusions. The author, however, never once considers how each author recycled “facts” and “observations” from his predecessors. For example, the author gives two justifications for accepting the existence of child sacrifice and cannibalism in Haiti. First, Froude’s statements “agree” with others who have also spent time in Haiti, listing Treves, St. John and Ober (159). Second, the occurrence of such horrific acts had already been reported in an earlier article of the *National Geographic Magazine* by Colby Chester in “Haiti, a Degenerating Island” (March 1908). This second justification hinges on the assumed stringent accuracy of the *National Geographic*. Accuracy was of course an important principle to the National Geographic Society and its publications. Editor Gilbert Grosvenor had published his “Guiding Principles” for the magazine just the previous year. Foremost on the list: “Nothing must be printed which is not strictly according to fact.” Moreover, “The Magazine can point to many years in which not a single article has appeared which was not absolutely accurate.”⁴⁷ With the magazine’s purported strong record, the author did not feel the need to question the accuracy of Chester’s article. Yet, with its blend of scholarship and entertainment, the *National Geographic* reinforced already popular notions of the exotic or racial Other.⁴⁸ Chester, for example, also used St. John’s writing as evidence upon which all readers must come to the “reluctant conclusion” that cannibalism exists in Haiti.⁴⁹

Much to Haiti’s detriment, Sir Spenser St. John produced the English-language urtext on the country and it is the textual source for all of the authors cited or invoked in the 1916

⁴⁷ Grosvenor, 319.

⁴⁸ Lutz and Collins, 24-26.

⁴⁹ Colby Chester, "Haiti: A Degenerating Island," *National Geographic* 19.3 (March, 1908): 216.

National Geographic article. St. John published the first substantial and widely-read English-language description of Haiti's folk religion in *Haiti or the Black Republic* (1884), a work *intended* to prove the inferiority of blacks, especially regarding self-government.⁵⁰ St. John regaled his readers with chapters on human sacrifice and cannibalism, and expanded these sections in his book's 1889 second edition.⁵¹ Until the publication of William B. Seabrook's *The Magic Island* (1929), St. John's book was held as the main authoritative tract on voodoo, despite the fact that the author acknowledged never having attended a ceremony.⁵² St. John's claim to authority stemmed from "personally knowing the Haytian Republic above twenty-five years." St. John arrived in Haiti in 1863 and lived there intermittently for twelve years as Great Britain's Minister Resident and Consul-General.⁵³ St. John bases his report on "trustworthy testimony" and official "Haytian sources," mostly constituting sensationalized reports in Haiti's newspapers and the hearsay of foreign colleagues and long-term residents. As further proof to his accuracy, St. John notes that James Anthony Froude arrived in Haiti specifically to prove his text false. In compiling his

⁵⁰ Although he determined that blacks were currently not fit to govern, St. John, xi, graciously allowed that after a few more centuries of civilized education, it may be possible to amend this opinion. Historian Robert Lawless notes that Moreau de Saint-Méry created one of earliest accounts of "Voodoo," but his multi-volume work did not receive much attention outside of French academic circles and was not translated into English until 1985. See Robert Lawless, *Haiti's Bad Press* (Rochester, Vermont: Schenkman Books, 1992), 77.

⁵¹ St. John claimed that due to the great attention his book stirred in Europe (the book was also translated into French) and the United States, and in defense of indignant outcry from Haitian readers, he was inspired to re-investigate the matter of Vaudoux worship and cannibalism. St. John concluded that he had "underrated its fearful manifestations," which required him to expand those sections in the second edition. See Spenser St. John, *Hayti or The Black Republic*, 2d ed. (New York: Scribner & Welford, 1889), xiii.

⁵² Lawless, 77; Rhodes, 72-73; Dash, 23-4; Ludwell Montague, *Haiti and the United States (1714-1938)*, (1940; Durham: Duke University Press, 1966), 26. I will discuss William Seabrook's *The Magic Island* at length in the next chapter.

⁵³ St. John, vii, viii. Ober, 1908, lists St. John's tenure as lasting twelve years. St. John also assured his readers that his observations were free from racism and added, "All who knew me in Hayti know I have no prejudice to colour; and if I place the Haytians in general in an unfavourable light, it is from a strong conviction that it is necessary to describe the people as they are, and not as one would wish them to be" (x).

own book, however, Froude concluded that St. John was indeed correct.⁵⁴ Froude's *The English in the West Indies* (1888) (a work also cited by the *National Geographic* author), however, offered little in the way of new evidence and relied heavily on St. John's circumstantial examples and second-hand reports.

The author of "Wards of the United States," the article's cited authors, and probably most of their subsequent readers did not question the existence of horrific acts in Haiti because such statements had been repeated enough times to take on the weight of fact: "Every authority on Haiti agrees..." As historian Brenda Plummer has pointed out in her discussion of the denigration of Haiti particularly prevalent in travel literature: "Gossip and legends, given weight and force through habit, ascended to tradition and legitimacy. Their endurance, longevity, and omnipresence attest to their ideological utility in a racist and imperialist world system."⁵⁵ Nearly all nineteenth- and early twentieth-century English-language accounts of Haiti's military, political and economic history reference extreme religious practices and superstitions. Moreover, virtually all of these tracts cite St. John, while the remainder cite those who draw from him, following his practice of using secondary accounts and inferences to prove the presence of cannibalism, a common literary technique found within Africanist travel literature. Following Christopher Miller's important study, *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French*, it is the textual accounts of Haiti that are cannibalistic, not the Haitians themselves.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ St. John, xiv. Additionally, St. John claims that even educated and elite Haitians were unable to send him proof of any errors and that for the most part conceded that he had presented the (harsh) truth (xviii).

⁵⁵ Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Haiti and the United States: The Psychological Moment* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 79.

⁵⁶ Christopher Miller notes, "Texts on Africa were severely limited in number until the nineteenth century and tended to repeat each other in a sort of cannibalistic, plagiarizing intertextuality." Christopher

Picturing Haiti

Along with problematically treating Haiti's history and culture at greatest length, the article "Wards of the United States" also makes Haiti hyper-visible. Of the thirty-eight photographs that accompany this heavily illustrated article, none depict Nicaragua, seven show Santo Domingo, while the remaining thirty-one portray Haiti. Harriet Chalmers Adams contributed five photographs of Haiti, while a Mrs. C. R. Miller supplied nine.⁵⁷ The remaining seventeen photographs of Haiti are unattributed, though many of these were actually taken by Sir Harry Johnston, or more likely, his assistant Arthur Greaves, and first published in Johnston's *The Negro in the New World* (1910).⁵⁸ *The National Geographic*

Miller, *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 6. The *National Geographic* thus continues a long tradition of Africanist discourse, or what Toni Morrison has also called "Africanism," a term that encompasses the constant recycling of readings and misreadings of African peoples within Eurocentric learning. See Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 6-7.

⁵⁷ The identity of Mrs. C. R. Miller still evades me, though it is possible that she was the wife of one of the U.S. occupation's military or administration personnel. The U.S. military wives arrived in 1916, which led to the institution of Jim Crow racial segregation. See, Schmidt, 136-7. The life of Adams, however, has been documented. Lifelong explorer and adventurer, Harriet Chalmers Adams (1875-1937) had been taught photography by her husband, Franklin Adams, in preparation for their three-year trip through South America, 1904-1906. In addition to photography, she also took motion pictures and was one of the first Americans to use color slides. Needing to fund her desire to travel, Adams began lecturing and publishing articles on her adventures. In 1910, Adams and her husband set out to trace the movements of Columbus in Hispaniola, while also traversing 510 miles of the interior of Haiti and the Dominican Republic on horseback. Interestingly, although Adams would publish twenty-one articles in the *National Geographic Magazine* between 1907 and 1935, the magazine published only photographs of her Haiti travels, and then, only several years after her trip. Because women could not be full members of the National Geographic Society, Adams founded the Society of Woman Geographers in 1925, serving as its first president. For more on Adams, see Durlynn Anema, *Harriet Chalmers Adams: Explorer and Adventurer* (Greensboro, NC: Morgan Reynolds, 1997).

⁵⁸ Due to his chronic poor health, Johnston employed as his personal assistant the accomplished photographer Arthur Greaves to accompany him on his "New World" travels. Many of the photographs, therefore, could be attributed to Greaves, though under the direction of Johnston. See, Harry Johnston, *The Story of My Life* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1923), 384; Alex Johnston, *The Life and Letters of Sir Harry Johnston* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929), 278. British explorer, illustrator and photographer Sir Harry Johnston, and his colleague Arthur Greaves, created over 250 photographs during a six-month journey through the "New World" at the behest of President Theodore Roosevelt, who facilitated their travels during 1908-9. Johnston's career included marked respect for and relationships with both Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois, facilitating the latter's 1911 visit to England. Du Bois in turn represented the ill Johnston at the 1911 Universal Races Congress in London and included him as an advisor for his planned *Encyclopaedia Africana*. For more on Johnston, along with the above mentioned autobiography and biography, see: George Shepperson,

article employs the photographs in tandem with the text's dissembling elaboration. The captions attached to the photographs, most likely added by an editor, attempt to control the image's meaning and direct the viewer's response.

For example, I have already noted the lengthy caption linking child sacrifice to a Haitian president attached to the photograph, *The Entrance to a So-Called Vaudoux Temple: Haiti* (fig. 2.3). In this photograph, which beautifully displays Haiti's rich tradition of sacred imagery, a well-dressed man sits against the railing of an *houmfort*'s porch. The door to the sacred space remains enticingly open, revealing a drawn back curtain and then darkness. Johnston took this photograph while on his six-month "New World" trip in 1908-09, publishing it in his 1910 book.⁵⁹ The social and cultural influences of both non-Christian religions and Christianity (especially Christian education) in the Caribbean fascinated Johnston, and much of his focus in *The Negro in the New World* centered on his attempts to describe Caribbean religious practices, offering one of the few non-sensationalized descriptions on this subject during this period. The anonymous *National Geographic* author would have done better to have heeded Johnston's text more closely. While introducing "Vudu" practices as found also in Cuba, Johnston cautions, "...those seeking after scientific truth should discount much that may be read on Vuduism." He adds that such texts are frequently out of date, or "manufactured by sensation-mongers for the compilation of

"Introduction," *The Negro in the New World* (1910; New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1969), v-xi; Roland Oliver, *Sir Harry Johnston and the Scramble for Africa* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957). More recently, Dr. Petrine Archer-Straw curated a British Council exhibition of Johnston's photographs: "Photos & Phantasms: Harry Johnston in the Caribbean."

⁵⁹ This photograph was published under the slightly different title, *A "Vudu" House, Haiti*. See, Johnston, *The Negro in the New World*, 194, figure 172.

magazine articles.”⁶⁰ Additionally, the text that actually appears alongside this photograph in Johnston’s book casts doubt upon the presence of snake worship and the prevalence of cannibalism, while also noting that Haitian presidents might consult “Vudu” in the same manner “as an occasional British statesman might half-laughingly submit his hands to a Bond Street palmist.”⁶¹ Johnston’s subject looks into the camera’s lens. His relaxed posture, a far cry from the caption’s attested “frenzy” of worship, suggests his ease with Johnston’s presence. That the man acknowledges the cameraman contradicts the article’s text that Vaudoux and its worship was a secret, blood-thirsty sect hidden away in Haiti’s “impenetrable jungle” interior, far from the gaze of white civilization. Perhaps the gaping darkness through the door to the temple’s interior allows the caption editor and reader to imagine the unspeakable acts that will occur in the rituals enacted after dark, and when the photographer has departed.

Moving beyond the sensationalist potential of voodooism, images of even seemingly mundane subjects also became sites for the textual re-inscription of meaning. The first image of Haiti that appears in the article is an unattributed photograph entitled, *Sorting Coffee by Hand: Haiti* (fig. 2.4). The photograph captures around two dozen women seated on the floor of an enclosure, sorting piles of coffee berries into large woven trays. The women look up from their work and acknowledge the photographer’s presence with direct stares. Many of the women pose themselves by raising a hand with forefinger extended to their faces. Some look weary. A few seem to express a glimmer of a smile. A lone man stands conspicuously amongst the seated women. He wears a suit and bowtie and poses with his

⁶⁰ Ibid., 65, 66.

⁶¹ Ibid., 194.

left arm resting on his hip. His fine dress and commanding position suggests that he is the overseer of this group of workers. His presence suggests that only through masculine enforcement do the women continue to toil. Moreover, the image's extended caption sharply reorients this image of (overseen, female) industry. The caption notes that although Haiti was one of the world's richest coffee-producing regions during the French colonial period, the crop has received a century of neglect. That Haiti still produces large quantities of coffee is due "to the natural exuberance of the soil and not to the care taken of the trees," with most of the crop from "volunteer growth" (148). While the land voluntarily produces, the women must be overseen. The caption denigrates what work they do undertake by implying that the truly hard labor, one of crop cultivation, has been neglected and merely left to nature. It intimates that had Haitians any initiative or sense of industriousness, the bounty of this export crop would elevate the country to the rich prominence of its colonial past. The caption fails to acknowledge that past production was attained only through one of the Caribbean's most brutal slave societies.

What this caption implies, a following caption makes explicit. In the photograph, *A Haitian Country Home of the Better Class*, the women and children of a household sit and stand about the yard and porch of a house almost completely obscured by trees (fig.2.5).⁶² The *National Geographic's* caption offers the explanation: "The Haitians live in a land of almost unexampled fertility. Drought and frost are both unknown. The soil is wonderfully fertile and nothing but sheer lack of initiative and industry keeps them from becoming rich" (162). The caption encodes the lack of apparent activity by the women and children to

⁶² Although unattributed in this article, this is another image taken by Harry Johnston/Arthur Greaves and published in *The Negro in the New World*, 193, as figure 171 and titled *A Haitian Country House of the Middle-Class Type*.

signify their lack of industry, rather than their pause to pose for the camera. The only person who may be doing work is an older woman who sits on the ground in the center foreground, her legs splayed and arms reaching forward. The frame of the photograph, however, crops out her hands and eliminates the focus of her industry. The caption works to control this image of a “better” household by suggesting that its true interpretation is one of non-work and therefore self-earned poverty. This enforces the article’s rehearsed judgments of Haiti as a savage and degenerate space. For, as part of the modern inheritance (and myth) of the “Protestant Work Ethic,” labor is equated to civilization while idleness is another step on the road to degeneration and, ultimately, savageness.⁶³

The ignoring or downright denigration of Haitian labor is rooted in a long history of stereotypes of the racial or socio-economic Other as idle and lazy.⁶⁴ Therefore, images of Haitians working, or the lack thereof, have clear implications for the shaping of perceptions of Haiti. This is particularly apparent in dealing with representations of Haitian men. This 1916 article ridicules and feminizes Haitian men while also discounting what little work the

⁶³ The photograph by Mrs. C. R. Miller on the opposite page continues the blaming of poverty on the Haitian’s backwardness. The photograph captures a wagon being pulled by a team of four oxen picking their way through a rutted and muddy road in order to deliver goods to market. Titled *A Typical Country Road in Haiti*, the caption concludes: “... Compared with the roads of Jamaica, Cuba or Porto Rico [*sic*], they [the roads] furnish eloquent testimony as to the economic backwardness of the land of potential riches” (163). The caption relegates the image of this man’s industry in transporting goods and produce to another example Haiti’s backwardness.

⁶⁴ Representations of the idleness and laziness of peoples of African descent has its own long history particularly in anti-abolitionist circles. The argument followed that only under the beneficent guidance of slavery would a black put in a “good day’s work.” Of course, the other side of the nineteenth-century anti-abolitionist argument was that the “lazy” slave could also become hyper-active, that is, violent if left to his own devices. The “horrors of Saint Domingue” stood prevalently in the minds of the U.S. slave owners and cited as proof that the “docile” and “happy” slave could instantly transform into a white-massacring brute if freed from bondage. See, George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 53-55. Elizabeth Johns addresses the enforcement of social hierarchies through representations of the “lazy black” in U.S. genre painting in her discussion of William Sidney Mount’s *Farmers Noonning* (1836). See Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 34-35.

author claims that they do. For example, the caption to a pre-occupation photograph of Haitian military officers riding in uniform down a street in Port-au-Prince, reduces the men to feminine ostentation: “The army officers of Haiti were as fond of gold lace as a mountain girl of bright colors. Small wonder, then, that the regalia of a field marshal was everywhere in evidence. Times have changed, however, and now the American marine in quiet khaki takes the place of the Haitian fire-eater and his resplendent costumes” (fig. 2.6).⁶⁵ Since its independence, Haiti’s military has problematically encompassed a large percentage of the male population. The author, however, is clearly not interested in explaining the specific historical context which led to the military’s prevalence, while his term “Haitian fire-eater” continues the practice of leveling unfounded and egregious epithets at Haiti.

This article is important, however, in that it does include some images of Haitian men working. *Haitian Soldiers Carrying Coffee to the Wharf in Order to Get Something to Eat* by Mrs. C. R. Miller appears directly below the purported ostentatious army officers. In this photograph, over a dozen Haitian men balance huge sacks of coffee over their shoulders. The caption acknowledges the importance of such work for the men, whose military salaries paid a pittance (152). A caption accompanying the photograph of a lineup of “typical Haitian soldiers,” however, shades the context of the image of the previous soldiers’ labor, noting that “in the days before the American ‘Big Brother’ movement,” the Haitian soldiers also resorted to other methods to secure their livelihoods: begging, borrowing or stealing (157). Importantly, this article also includes images of non-military men engaging in work. *A Country Tailor at Work in Haiti*, another photograph contributed by Mrs. C. R. Miller, shows

⁶⁵ Anonymous, “Wards of the United States,” 152. Heinl, 126, notes an 1819 description of Haitian revolutionary and first head of state Jean-Jacques Dessalines: “Vanity led him to strange caprices. He was fond of gold lace and adornments and dressed magnificently...”

two seated men, one of whom works a sewing machine. Again, however, the caption works to interpret their activity as supercilious and non-essential: "...tailoring is not a very exacting art. The excessively hot climate calls for light-weight clothing, and this is usually imported ready-made from Europe" (171).

The use of captions to circumscribe the meaning of the photographs in order to emphasize the negative aspects of Haiti continues throughout the article. It is not just the derogatory nature of these captions, but also the discrepancy of treatment between captions given for Haiti and those assigned to images of the Dominican Republic. For example, one photograph shows a farmer in the Dominican Republic astride a bull, which is laden also with overflowing baskets of tobacco leaves. Man and bull pose for the camera along a dirt road on their way to market in Santo Domingo. The image's caption announces that the Dominican Republic is "naturally one of the richest countries in the world" and praises the high quality of its sugar cane and tobacco (146). Later in the article, a photograph captures a man driving four oxen in Haiti. The wider angle of this image shows more of the dirt road than the image from the Dominican Republic (fig. 2.7). The team and wagon pick their way through ruts in the road and pools of water from a recent rainfall. The caption, rather than noting the man's produce as in the earlier example, points out the road's condition and cites it as proof of "the economic backwardness of this land of potential riches" (163). This discrepancy in editorial treatment of the two countries is all the more shocking when one considers principle number six as outlined by the magazine's editor just the year before: "Only what is of a kindly nature, is printed about any country or people, everything unpleasant or unduly critical being avoided."⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Grosvenor, 319.

This policy has never been upheld in representations of Haiti, although it is impossible to ascertain clearly the magazine's conscious intentions concerning editorial policy towards Haiti.⁶⁷ One possible explanation for the magazine's breaking from its principle of "kindly" representations is that the material on Haiti perhaps no longer seemed "unduly critical." As I have shown, derogatory and sensational materials on Haiti were quite commonplace, and even habitual. Yet individual staff and editorial decisions, intentional or otherwise, influence heavily the public's (mis)understanding of a greater world they themselves probably will never experience first hand, thus enforcing what was already "known" about Haiti.

Another possibility, however, must also be considered. This 1916 article clearly announces how the Dominican Republic had "invited" the United States to intervene in its finances and political instabilities.⁶⁸ It is silent, however, on the fact that no such invitation was extended by the Haitians. For decades, Haiti had rebuffed numerous overtures by the United States that would have compromised its sovereignty.⁶⁹ Now that the United States had finally forced its agenda through military might, Haitians continued to resist—from cells of armed insurgents operating out of Haiti's mountainous interior, to "passive" acts such as the emptying of chamber pots onto marine patrols passing in the night, or the refusal to

⁶⁷ As Lutz and Collins, 12, have noted: "Producing pictures, captions, and layout is a social and creative act in which negotiation and unacknowledged struggle result in the ultimate artifact, rather than a singular plan deliberately followed through."

⁶⁸ Anonymous, "Wards of the United States," 143. The nature of the "invited" U.S. involvement in the Dominican Republic slowly became more fully known to the U.S. public around the time that public protest about Haiti also increased. See for example, Lewis S. Gannett, "The Conquest of Santo Domingo," *Nation* 111 (17 July 1920).

⁶⁹ Rayford Logan, *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with Haiti, 1776-1891* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941); Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 50-2; Plummer, *Haiti and the Great Powers*, 81, 87, 98, 166, 198; Renda, 30.

work.⁷⁰ This latter act of resistance further enforced the stereotype of the “lazy black” and may have encouraged the article’s denigration of Haitian labor. The article also hints that all is not running as smoothly in the occupation of Haiti as compared to other interventions, noting that the United States military had experienced casualties only in Haiti.⁷¹ The article suggests, however, that the extreme and savage nature of Haiti, rather than the country’s resistance to U.S. military aggression, is the reason for this greater cost. Historian Richard Drinnon has discussed this as a common discursive strategy in imperialist discourse, noting that violent resistance to Western imperialism is treated as a personality fault of the indigenous rather than a concrete response to specific imperialistic actions.⁷² Compared with “invited” interventions in the seemingly docile and improving Dominican Republic, Haiti’s acts of resistance needed to be contained, while justification for the tactics of the U.S. occupation, which led to nearly 3,000 Haitian civilian deaths, needed to be justified. Presenting Haiti as backwards with a brutal political history and even more brutal cultural practices justified the occupation’s aggressive methods, sublimating its more questionable intentions and goals.

Envisioning the Benefits of Occupation

In December 1920, the *National Geographic* again featured Haiti, this time publishing three articles illustrated with numerous photographs. A far cry from the *National Geographic*’s “degenerating island” of pestilence and savagery presented by Chester in 1908 and the unsanitary and unstable “ward” of 1916, these 1920 articles now portray Haiti as a

⁷⁰ Renda, 11, 84.

⁷¹ Anonymous, "Wards of the United States," 147.

⁷² Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian Hating and Empire Building* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980).

site for the tourist seeking picturesque adventure. U.S. Marine Corps Major G. H. Osterhout Jr. contributed the first article, “A Little-Known Marvel of the Western Hemisphere: Christophe’s Citadel, a Monument to the Tyranny and Genius of Haiti’s King of Slaves,” illustrating Haiti’s architectural wonders with his own photographs.⁷³ Along with outlining the dramatic history of Haiti’s King Henri Christophe, Osterhout describes the rewards of a visit to Haiti’s impressive monuments. He even offers advice on making the rigorous trip, turning the mountain climb into a picnic excursion that even ladies could undertake.⁷⁴ Sir Harry Johnston’s “Haiti, the Home of Twin Republics” immediately follows Osterhout’s article.⁷⁵ Johnston’s article highlights Haiti’s “remarkable beauty,” and like Osterhout, emphasizes that the country has much to offer the tourist, including comfortable accommodation and superior cuisine.⁷⁶ It seems that Haiti has been tamed and even transformed. For example, a 1916 caption mocked, “Haiti is not remarkable for its beautiful residential architecture. Foreigners have had few property-owning rights, and the natives have not been given to the erection of costly homes.”⁷⁷ Johnston’s article now praises the

⁷³ Two additional images from Mrs. C. R. Miller and Harriet Chalmers Adams illustrate the article.

⁷⁴ G. H. Osterhout Jr., "A Little-Known Marvel of the Western Hemisphere: Christophe's Citadel, a Monument to the Tyranny and Genius of Haiti's King of Slaves," *National Geographic* 38.6 (December 1920): 479. It should be noted, however, that “ladies” had ventured to the Citadel before marines tamed the trail. The 1916 *National Geographic* article “Wards of the United States” includes photographs of the Citadel and Sans Souci by Harriet Chalmers Adams, made when she traversed the island on horseback in 1910.

⁷⁵ Interestingly, despite the fact that Johnston created numerous photographs of Haiti during his 1908-9 travels, with several included in the 1916 *National Geographic* article, the majority of images included here are courtesy of the U.S. Marine Corps. Two additional photographs are by Mrs. C. R. Miller, while Frederick I. Monsen and J. H. Hare provided one photograph each. Only one photograph, *On Their Way to Market* (492), is unattributed, and hence, possibly by Johnston/Greaves.

⁷⁶ Harry Johnston, "Haiti, the Home of Twin Republics," *National Geographic* 38.6 (December, 1920), 485, 493, 496.

⁷⁷ Anonymous, "Wards of the United States," 168.

sanitary cleanup of Port-au-Prince and remarks upon the comely houses found there.⁷⁸ The *National Geographic* includes Johnston's article to provide further evidence of the important clean-up work of the occupation, yet this is another instance of informative dissemblance. Johnston explored Haiti in 1908-9 and due to failing health and his involvement in the Great War, never returned to Haiti and was certainly not present during the U.S. occupation. In Johnston's earlier publications of his travels, his praise of the aid rendered by U.S. military personnel in the countryside is actually a description of outposts in the Dominican Republic. This detail is omitted in the 1920 *National Geographic* article.⁷⁹

While Johnston's article focuses on the many picturesque aspects of Haiti's land and people, finding even their poverty more picturesque than that of the provincial United States or inner-city England, a second narrative overlies the article through pictures and culminates in Johnston's concluding section, "WOMEN PREDOMINATE IN HAITI." In Johnston's text, the reader learns that women dominate Haiti's internal market economy. The historical explanation given for this societal ordering is that Haitian men had spent their time either participating as marauding *cacos* or hiding from such bandits for fear of being subscribed

⁷⁸ Harry Johnston, "Haiti, the Home of Twin Republics," *National Geographic* 38.6 (December, 1920): 493. Although these articles now promote Haiti, the editorial captions do not completely eschew the derogatory and primitivizing rhetoric found in the magazine's previous descriptions of Haiti. For example, while Osterhout's article focuses on the biography of Christophe and history of his kingdom, the *National Geographic* editor closes the article by inserting Harriet Chalmers Adams's c. 1910 photograph of celebrating Haitians, *Dancing to the Music of the Tom-Tom in Haiti*. As seen in previous articles, the explanatory caption works to circumscribe an image of daytime festive dancing by invoking a more sinister meaning: "The tom-tom is one of the weirdest of musical instruments. It sounds far away when close at hand, and close at hand when far away. The voodoo worshipers make great use of it in their frenzied orgies. The drummer sits beneath the tree" (Osterhout, 482). The highlighting of the tom-tom may be linked to the desire for the article to be "timely," invoking the public's excitement surrounding Eugene O'Neill's new play, *The Emperor Jones* and its famous use of the off-stage beating tom-tom. I will address the importance of this play in the next chapter.

⁷⁹ For Johnston's account of these years, see: Johnston, *The Story of My Life* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1923), 438-459; Alex Johnston, *The Life and Letters of Sir Harry Johnston* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929), 314-336.

into their service.⁸⁰ Other writers on Haiti less graciously attribute the absence of working men to their laziness and it is this explanation that is implied through photographs selected to accompany, “Haiti, the Home of Twin Republics.” Throughout the article, the photographs show women hauling produce to market (488, 492), and selling their wares (491, 493, 495). Although not discussed within the article, the photographs of men show them engaging in favorite pastimes: gambling (484) and enjoying a cock fight (484). Only one photograph clearly depicts men working, *A Railroad Whose Motive Power is Bullock Teams: Haiti* (fig. 2.8). Here, we see a group of men in a wagon pulled by a team of oxen. Another group of men stand in a line along a railroad flat car, perhaps assisting to move it into place so that the oxen team might be hitched to it, or simply watching the other group pass. Their actual activity is unclear and the photograph’s caption discounts any effort they might be making: “Not much of the block of ice on the flat car in the left foreground will remain when it reaches its destination” (485). The article’s selection of images implies, therefore, that Haitian men are indolent and ineffective, resulting in a peasant society dominated by women.

Yet if one follows to the third article in this 1920 series, Haitian women have not been all that successful in their role as economic leaders for although the country possesses “every natural advantage required to make her a treasure-house of riches,” Haiti remained an impoverished country.⁸¹ The anonymous author grants that Haiti’s poverty has no simple solution, for it stems from “the sum of all the accumulated evils and abuses of more than a hundred fevered, retrograde years...” (497). Yet the article’s title triumphantly announces

⁸⁰ Johnston, "Haiti, the Home of Twin Republics," 496.

⁸¹ Anonymous, "Haiti and Its Regeneration by the United States," *National Geographic* 38.6 (December 1920): 497.

that the solution to Haiti's needs has been found: "Haiti and its Regeneration by the United States." The article, while providing an over-sweeping, simplified, and at times egregiously erroneous description of Haiti's history and society, outlines the trajectory established in the prior *National Geographic* articles. Under U.S. benevolence, Haiti has risen from squalid degenerate to the site of one's next vacation.

While the article's text outlines Haiti's chaotic history and barbarous customs, the first three photographs show various lineups or regiments of men, imparting a sense of restored and rigid masculine order. In discussing Haiti, the anonymous author follows Johnston's previous article by suggesting that one of the areas in which Haiti was outside of normal (i.e. Western) civilization, was the predominance of women in the country's labor and economy.⁸² Not surprisingly, the article and its accompanying photographs, provided by the U.S. Marine Corps, impart a sense that order and a "natural" male-dominated balance has been restored (or created) in the struggling and perennially truant country. The opening photograph, *President Dartiguenave of Haiti and his Aides—24 Generals*, shows Haiti's president standing on a second-floor balcony, flanked on either side by a forward-facing row of saluting, uniformed men (fig. 2.9). Their elevated and balanced order, enforced by the rigid repetition of the balcony's whitewashed balustrade, dominates the forms of a woman and two young girls who stand, leaning against a wrought-iron gate, in the courtyard below. They are relegated to the lower right edge of the photograph. They do not participate in Haiti's new martial, U.S.-enforced order.

In a later photograph, *Learning Labor-Saving Methods of Advanced Civilization*, it seems that the labor of women must be reformed and enforced under the new order of the

⁸² Ibid., 500.

occupation (fig. 2.10). Here, a group of standing young women operates two presses. An armed member of the newly-created Haitian Gendarmerie observes, while in the center background, the silhouette of another guard can be seen observing from a watchtower. The title implies that the guard is providing instruction. His stance, however, offers no suggestion that he is engaging with the women outside of passively monitoring their work. The photograph gives the impression that in the new Haiti, Haitian men must oversee women to ensure that they labor properly.

Yet the labor of Haitian men must also be stringently policed and corrected. All of the photographs of Haitian men show them being overseen by members of the U.S. marines, either as uniformed members of the Gendarmerie (501), or as prisoners (500) and in the striped uniforms reserved for convicts as they labor in work gangs (504, 508). The narrative invoked by the assembled photographs suggest that the typical Haitian male is either a convict, or, now “civilized” only under the regimental guidance of U.S. military training. The article contains no images of Haitians working of their own volition, implicitly enforcing many of the assumptions that underlie the justifications invoked and methods employed by the U.S. occupation. For example, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels wrote in a letter to President Wilson warning the President against giving provisions to the Haitians, because many ‘are like the Negroes of the South after the [Civil] war and would quit work entirely.’⁸³ Haiti’s “regeneration,” therefore, is possible only under the high-handed enforcement of the U.S. military. The article goes on to list the accomplishments achieved during the past five years of occupation, from road building to sanitation and disease elimination. However, the

⁸³ Quoted in Mary Jo Wojnar, "American Negro Reaction to the U.S. Occupation of Haiti" (M.A. thesis, Kent State University, 1970), 34.

article cautions that much work still needs to be done if Haiti is to take its place “as one of the civilized nations of the world” (511), suggesting that the high-handed enforcement of the United States must continue.⁸⁴

The clear purpose of this article is to highlight the U.S. triumphant success in dragging Haiti back from the brink of chaos. Yet, one cannot help but feel a note of defensiveness in this article’s tidy conclusion and the sudden new promotion expressed in all three of the December 1920 articles. *National Geographic* editor Gilbert Grosvenor’s final “guiding principle” insisted on the “timely” nature of each magazine issue:

Whenever any part of the world becomes prominent in public interest, by reason of war, earthquake, volcanic eruption, etc., the members of the National Geographic Society have come to know that in the next issue of their Magazine they will obtain the latest geographic, historical, and economic information about that region presented in an interesting and absolutely non-partisan manner, and accompanied by photographs which in number and excellence can be equaled by no other publication.⁸⁵

To warrant three articles, spanning forty-four pages lavishly illustrated with thirty-four photographs, the *National Geographic* must certainly have identified Haiti as having timely importance in the latter months of 1920. This timeliness was not due to war. The United States had ordered a marine invasion, but no war had been declared. Neither was this due to natural disaster. Haiti is prone to earthquakes and has been in the path of many hurricanes, but no natural disaster in Haiti has ever warranted extended coverage by the U.S. media. Rather, a different type of eruption had occurred in the fall of 1920: a media firestorm.

⁸⁴ Anonymous, "Haiti and Its Regeneration by the United States," 511.

⁸⁵ Grosvenor, 319.

African-American Protest

In July 1915, the U.S. government began a nineteen-year occupation (1915-1934) that would prove to be “unprecedented in both its duration and the extreme racism that characterized American behavior.”⁸⁶ The majority of U.S. media coverage on Haiti during the early period of the occupation, however, ardently supported the intervention.⁸⁷ Two days after the initial marine landing, the *New York Times* outlined the “custom” of the “Black Republic” government as a “corrupt and despotic...dictatorship, won by revolution and punctuated copiously with assassinations.” The article notes that this has held true since Haiti’s founding father had ordered the massacre of the remaining whites on the island in 1804. This history, therefore, “may help to an understanding of the characteristically Haitian performances which have called the American cruiser Washington to Port-au-Prince.”⁸⁸ By invoking the terrifying specter of white massacre at the hands of blacks in 1804, the newspaper assured its readers of the vital importance of a strong U.S. military presence in 1915. The *Chicago Tribune* reported a few days later that most U.S. Americans know that Haiti “is a rebellion called a republic.”⁸⁹ Haiti’s constant instability was all the justification

⁸⁶ Brenda Plummer, "The Afro-American Response to the Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934," *Phylon* 43.2 (1982): 125. Though the United States probably did not anticipate the lengthy duration of this occupation initially, the government had long anticipated an opportune moment to intervene in Haiti. To secure both military and financial strategic aims, U.S. gunboats had been present in Haiti’s ports for decades and marines had even landed in Haiti numerous times previously in order to protect U.S. economic interests. See, Renda, 30.

⁸⁷ John Blassingame’s study of the U.S. press reaction to interventions in Haiti and the Dominican Republic found that forty-nine out of sixty-nine journals supported the occupations between 1904 and 1919. John W. Blassingame, “The Press and American Intervention in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, 1904-1920,” *Caribbean Studies* 9.2 (July 1969): 27-43.

⁸⁸ “The Latest Revolution in Haiti,” *New York Times* (30 July 1915): 8.

⁸⁹ *Chicago Tribune* (5 September 1915), quoted in John Blassingame, “The Press and American Intervention in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, 1904-1920,” *Caribbean Studies* 9.2 (July 1969): 30.

needed to condone the U.S. invasion and seizure of Haitian financial and governmental structures.

Though they would soon lead protests against the occupation, leading African Americans were initially slow to oppose the marine landing, revealing the various experiences and political stances of each author. James Weldon Johnson wrote one of the first editorials on the invasion. However, as historian Mary Renda has pointed out, his diplomatic training allowed him to side with perceived U.S. strategic interests. Johnson's August 5, 1915 editorial in the *New York Age* cautioned that the occupation did not necessarily equate to white racism, for Haiti's instability was well known and needed to be solved. Yet although Johnson emphasized that Haiti's political breakdowns were due to its Latin-American heritage and not to race, he also noted that the country's instability tarnished it as a symbol of black self-government and achievement, creating in African Americans "a feeling of almost personal disappointment."⁹⁰ Booker T. Washington took a more critical stance against U.S. actions when he addressed the occupation in a November editorial for *Outlook*. Washington condemned the killing of Haitians and the high handed dealings of the occupation, which forced an overly harsh treaty at gun point rather than through patient explanation and administration provided by carefully selected, sympathetic white men. Washington, however, noted that the occupation itself was necessary due to the "fault of the Haitians," whom were in dire need of educational reform and industrial training.⁹¹ Only Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois argued early and continuously against the "violation" of a "sister state,"

⁹⁰ *New York Age* (5 August 1915); Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 188. Also Plummer, "The Afro-American Response to the Occupation of Haiti," 127.

⁹¹ Booker T. Washington, "Haiti and the United States," *Outlook* 111 (17 November 1915): 681.

questioning harshly the occupation's justifications, intentions, and methods. Writing in the October 1915 issue of the *Crisis* magazine, Du Bois noted that the chaos in Haiti was no worse than that found in the past history of the United States and in the present reality of Europe. Moreover, the U.S. military used the July 28 Port-au-Prince mob lynchings as a smokescreen; a worse lynching had recently occurred in Georgia, and Haiti remained in general "more civilized today than Texas."⁹² Du Bois recognized that the true intent of the occupation was to seize the Mole St. Nicholas, a Haitian bay that the U.S. had long tried to negotiate from Haiti for a naval port, while also securing in Haiti U.S. corporation monopoly claims and charters. "SHAME ON AMERICA!" thundered Du Bois, who concluded the editorial with a call for ten million African Americans to write in protest to President Wilson.⁹³

Despite Du Bois's efforts and a consistent flow of critiques published in select journals like the *Nation*, protest against the occupation grew slowly during the next few years.⁹⁴ Engrossed with the war in Europe, the majority of the U.S. press and public paid little heed to what U.S. corporations and the military were doing in Haiti. This began to

⁹² W. E. B. Du Bois, "Hayti," *Crisis* 10 (October 1915): 291.

⁹³ It is interesting to note that in this concluding call, Du Bois did not ask writers to demand the immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces and the return of Haitian civic and financial structures to the control of Haiti. Rather, he asked his writers to "ask for a distinct, honest statement of our purposes in Hayti and an American Commission of white and colored men to point the way of Honor instead of Graft." *Ibid.*, 291. Importantly, Du Bois also wrote a letter to the President of the United States as early as the 3 August 1915, noting that he was "deeply disturbed" by U.S. military actions, but allowing that if aid is rendered carefully to Haiti with open and clearly articulated non-imperialistic intentions, the uplift of Haiti might provide the United States an opportunity to make "a solemn act of reparation" for "the great wrongs inflicted by this land on the Negro race." Herbert Aptheker, ed., *The Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois, Vol 1, Selections, 1877-1934* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973), 211-212.

⁹⁴ Along with the *Crisis* and the *Nation*, the leftist organ the *Messenger* also published early critiques of the occupation. See for example, Lovett Fort-Whiteman, "Nemesis," *Messenger* 1.11 (November 1917): 23-25. Additionally, the occasional editorial could also be found in the New York *Evening Post*, the Springfield *Republican*, *Literary Digest*, and *Current Opinion*. See, Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 186; Blassingame.

change in 1918, with 1920 becoming a watershed year for reports on the occupation. As historians Brenda Plummer and Mary Renda have pointed out, several events helped to shift the public's focus to U.S. abuses in Haiti: the first-hand reports by missionaries in Haiti of irregularities and brutalities that countered the U.S. government's attestations of rendered "benevolent aid," the increased organization and militancy by African Americans, which created greater awareness of discrimination in the face of bloody race riots and lynchings, and, most importantly, the investigative work of James Weldon Johnson.⁹⁵

In 1918, James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938) reversed his initial accommodating position on the occupation and began to campaign for Haitian self-determination.⁹⁶ The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) directed Johnson, the organization's newly appointed field secretary, to go to Haiti and investigate conditions since the occupation's media censorship effectively blocked all disquieting news reports from reaching the greater public. Johnson approached Theodore Roosevelt and then Hamilton Fish Jr., of the Republican Party, receiving their enthusiastic support for the investigation. Though the trip was delayed, Johnson finally arrived in Haiti in February 1920, and stayed several months, through May.⁹⁷ Fluent in French and Spanish and already possessing diplomatic experience, Johnson was instrumental for this NAACP assignment.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Brenda Plummer, "The Afro-American Response to the Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934," *Phylon* 43.2 (1982): 131-33; Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 186-7. See also Eugene Levy, *James Weldon Johnson* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 199-203.

⁹⁶ Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 190; Levy, 202-4.

⁹⁷ Johnson, *Along This Way* (1933; New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), 345, 353. Johnson traveled to Haiti with Herbert Seligmann, publicity director of the NAACP, who also published his experiences and findings in the *Nation*. Seligmann became seriously ill after several weeks and had to return to the States earlier than Johnson (*ibid.*, 345).

⁹⁸ In fact, Johnson's direct involvement with Haiti could have begun five years earlier in 1915. Several months prior to the U.S. invasion of Haiti, W. E. B. Du Bois wrote to Oswald Garrison Villard, owner of the

Johnson focused his months in Haiti on gathering a full dossier of information by conducting interviews with as many people as possible, or at least, “almost every important Haitian”: Haiti’s past, present and future presidents, numerous other former and current government officials, and members of “radical groups” opposed to the occupation. Johnson also spoke with U.S. occupation officials and even U.S. marines, whom Johnson reported, with the aid of alcohol, candidly spoke of their tortures, killings and rapes.⁹⁹

Johnson published the results of his investigation as “Self-Determining Haiti,” a series of four articles in the *Nation*, between August 28 and September 25, 1920.¹⁰⁰ In her examination of these articles, Mary Renda notes that Johnson not only challenged politically U.S. actions in Haiti, but also succeeded in dismantling and exposing the ideological framework of the imperialist occupation.¹⁰¹ Johnson’s articles revealed that financial interests, especially those of the National City Bank of New York, determined the decision to intervene, not the need to maintain order as generally believed by the public. Yet financial

New York Evening Post and *Nation* and founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, with a list of nominations “of colored persons especially fitted to be U.S. minister to Haiti” and representing “the very best of the Negro race” to be presented to President Wilson. Of the five men Du Bois suggested, James Weldon Johnson led the list and was the only nominee accompanied by a full paragraph endorsement, which described Johnson’s education, excellent civil servant record, and his popularity as a well-known writer and lyricist. Du Bois notes that Johnson’s appointment would perhaps rectify his disgusted resignation from the service, which was the result of his nomination as consul to the Azores being held up by racism in the U.S. Senate. See, W. E. B. Du Bois to Oswald Garrison Villard, 31 March 1915. James Weldon Johnson Papers, Correspondence, Box 6, Folder 136, James Weldon Johnson Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. For more on Johnson’s diplomatic experiences in Venezuela, Nicaragua, see: Johnson, *Along This Way*, 227-36, 242-50, 257-93; Levy, 99-120.

⁹⁹ Johnson, *Along This Way*, 346-349; Johnson, “Self-Determining Haiti: II. What the United States has Accomplished,” *Nation* 111 (4 September 1920).

¹⁰⁰ See: James Weldon Johnson, “Self-Determining Haiti,” *The Nation* 111 (1920): “I. The American Occupation,” 236-38; “II. What the United States Has Accomplished,” 265-7; “III. Government of, by, and for the National City Bank,” 295-97; “IV. The Haitian People,” 345-47.

¹⁰¹ Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 191-193. See also Leon D. Pamphile, *Haitians and African Americans: A Heritage of Tragedy and Hope* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 109-120.

interests required military machinery, resulting in the deaths of over 3,000 Haitians. The need for military enforcement, however, meant that the great percentage of finances extracted from Haiti had to go to maintaining the U.S. military order and not to developing a sustainable Haitian-run government and economy. As James Weldon Johnson's biographer Eugene Levy has pointed out, this combination of financial, military and bureaucratic forces "established its own self-perpetuating sphere of activity."¹⁰² Moreover, Johnson exposed the hypocrisy of U.S. benevolence by noting that the occupation had been undertaken during a period when "our sons were laying down their lives overseas 'for democracy, for the rights of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own government, for the rights and liberties of small nations.'"¹⁰³

Johnson's articles attack not only the justification of the occupation but also its espoused accomplishments. Whereas the *National Geographic* anonymous authors had proclaimed the unsanitary and disease-ridden nature of Haiti's cities, Johnson describes Port-au-Prince as "the finest city of all the Latin-American seaports that I had seen."¹⁰⁴ Moreover, Johnson attests that Haiti had been a "remarkably healthy country," suffering far fewer epidemics than Cuba and the Panama Canal region. He then reports that the trumpeted sanitary regulations purportedly created by the occupation were of "a purely minor character."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Levy, 206.

¹⁰³ Johnson, "Self-Determining Haiti: I. The American Occupation," *Nation* 111 (28 August 1920).

¹⁰⁴ Johnson, *Along This Way*, 346.

¹⁰⁵ Johnson, "Self-Determining Haiti: II. What the United States Has Accomplished," *Nation* 111 (4 September 1920).

More importantly, Johnson argues that the most praised accomplishment of the occupation, the construction of a highway between Port-au-Prince and Cap Haïtien, benefits mainly the U.S. military. Additionally, the U.S. military forced Haitian men to work on the road's construction after seizing them in a manner that "resembled the African slave raids of past centuries." Johnson's powerful analogy ties the U.S. marines to a brutal past while also alluding to Haiti's birth as an independent nation out of its successful slave revolution. Johnson builds his readers' understanding of why Haitians resorted to armed resistance against the marines. It was this use of forced labor that sparked the open rebellion of Haitians and hence the need to "pacify" by shooting on sight any *caco*, a term loosely understood to mean a bandit, but which the U.S. military applied to any Haitian that resisted or protested the occupation. Johnson goes on to describe how the speeding U.S. automobiles traversing this road now terrorize the peasant marketers who have the audacity to use the road built for their benefit. Johnson describes witnessing the peasants' frightened animals bolting and spilling the family's livelihood all over the road, or worse, being run down and thus bankrupting the peasant whose chief capital resides in a donkey or pig. The 1916 *National Geographic* article "Wards of the United States" employs a photograph of a team of oxen pulling a wagon through a rutted and muddy road to prove "the economic backwardness of the land of potential riches." In sharp contrast, Johnson describes the "benefits" of the new highway by invoking slave raids to show the regression of U.S. imperialist policy to a model of slavery, for it was only under slavery that Haiti produced the level of wealth worthy of Western praise, a connection frequently overlooked in discussions of Haiti's past riches. For example, the December 1920 article "Haiti and its Regeneration by the United States," describes how the colony of Saint Domingue rose to its highest level of prosperity and

civilization (specifically citing the colony's network of roads), under French rule and only nominally states that all work at this time was done by negro slaves. The article then blames the ineptitude of the newly freed slaves, rather than the brutal, unsustainable plantation system and the devastation of over a decade of warring as the cause of Haiti's economic downfall.¹⁰⁶

Johnson additionally finds an even greater case of "American brutality" residing in the introduction to Haitians of caste and color prejudice by the U.S. marines, which Johnson believes did not exist in Haiti before the occupation.¹⁰⁷ Through his investigation, Johnson makes the damning conclusion: "If the United States should leave Haiti today, it would leave more than a thousand widows and orphans of its own making, more banditry than has existed for a century, resentment, hatred and despair in the heart of a whole people, to say nothing of the irreparable injury to its own tradition as the defender of the rights of man."¹⁰⁸

The critical work of James Weldon Johnson, along with further publications by W. E. B. Du Bois, Ernest Gruening, Herbert Seligmann, and Oswald Garrison Villard, informed readers of the *Crisis* and *Nation* of the hitherto undisclosed abuses of U.S. "benevolence." With the publication of these articles, suddenly newspapers and journals, which had either supported the occupation, or failed to report on Haiti at all, suddenly looked to Haiti more critically.¹⁰⁹ This was in part due to Warren Harding's use of Johnson's investigation to turn

¹⁰⁶ Anonymous, "Haiti and Its Regeneration by the United States," 499.

¹⁰⁷ Johnson, "Self-Determining Haiti: II. What the United States Has Accomplished," *Nation* 111 (4 September 1920).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ See for example, Adolph Berle, Jr. "Habilitating Haiti," *Survey* 46 (1921): 433; Felix Frankfurter, "Haiti and Intervention," *New Republic* 25 (1920): 71-2; "Probing the Haitian Scandal," *Literary Digest* 67 (Oct 30, 1920): 16-17.

Haiti into a major presidential campaign issue, which he began incorporating into his campaign speeches by the middle of September.¹¹⁰ The *New York Times* had remained quiet on Haiti throughout the summer months of 1920, only publishing the occasional shipping advertisement or noting positively instances of marine heroism in Haiti.¹¹¹ By late September, and continuing into 1921, the newspaper reported almost daily on the charges leveled by James Weldon Johnson and publicized through Warren Harding's mobilized presidential campaign, followed by the Wilson administration's rebuttals and the results of administration's acquiescing naval investigation.

The "timeliness" of the December 1920 *National Geographic* articles on Haiti, therefore, hinges on the public's shock and outrage created by Johnson's investigation and the mainstream media's attempt to respond by suddenly turning towards the previously ignored U.S. interventions. Yet in examining this suite of articles, one must call into question the second part of the *National Geographic*'s edict on "timeliness," which pledged to address current issues in "an interesting and absolutely non-partisan manner." The article "Haiti and its Regeneration by the United States" specifically counters nearly all of

¹¹⁰ In the April 1920 *Crisis*, W. E. B. Du Bois had published an editorial on Haiti predicting, "The greatest single question before the parties at the next election is the Freedom of Haiti." Johnson toiled tirelessly to make this pronouncement a reality, representing the NAACP at the Republican national convention and meeting with Harding in August, 1920 to put forth a multi-point platform for Harding to use to court the black vote, which included protection of voting rights, a federal anti-lynching law, and investigations into racially discriminatory practices. Harding, however, selected only Haiti as an issue that would help attract black and Democratic voters to him without alienating white Republicans. Though disappointed in Harding's lack of interest in domestic black issues, Johnson continued to support Harding and supply him with information on Haiti. See: W. E. B. Du Bois, in "Editorial: Haiti," *Crisis* 19.6 (April 1920): 298; Levy, *James Weldon Johnson*, 208-210. After his election, Harding quickly disillusioned Johnson and other African Americans. Harding's administration did little to address African-American domestic issues, while his international policies only served to entrench the U.S. occupation of Haiti further.

¹¹¹ "Medals to Two Marines for Heroism in Haiti." *New York Times* (2 July 1920): 14.

Johnson's revelations and in the process repeats much of the derogatory and sensationalistic lines of prior publications. For example, according to the article, nearly 87% of the Haitian population was infected with contagious diseases, while stating that it was German propaganda that "stirred up" the cacos into rebelling against the U.S. for the purpose of "promoting disturbances."¹¹² This implies that the "good" and "peaceable" typical Haitian would not have resisted the good-natured assistance of their Big Brothers to the north had they not been provoked by outside agitators.¹¹³ Concerned with trumpeting Haiti's "regeneration," the December *National Geographic* fails to include even a hint of the allegations and ongoing investigations surrounding the U.S. occupation that made Haiti such a timely subject at the close of 1920. Likewise, the article omits any mention that a national debate over the nature and continuation of the occupation had occurred, even as allegations continued to surface and investigations ensued. Indeed, the article concludes by noting that five years has not been enough time to train the Haitians in the "art of self-government," for if the United States were to withdraw today, "a speedy relapse to the conditions which preceded the intervention would follow."¹¹⁴

¹¹² Anonymous, "Haiti and Its Regeneration by the United States," 505, 509.

¹¹³ The need to find an "outside agitator" who provokes resistance, especially in tensions created at the confluence of racial prejudice, economic exploitation and political oppression, can be found in many other situations and particularly within the history of the United States. I am particularly reminded of John Howard Griffin's description of race riots in the 1960s where many white communities sought in vain for traveling agitators or communists who had "stirred up their 'good black people,' rather than facing the oppression endemic in their own communities. See, John Howard Griffin, *Black Like Me* (1960; New York: Signet, 1996), 180-181.

¹¹⁴ Anonymous, "Haiti and Its Regeneration by the United States," 511.

From Protest to Coalition to Cultural Fascination

Not satisfied to let the short attention span of the media and public run its course, Johnson continued to work tirelessly stateside to translate his revelations into action and organized coalition. Johnson wrote to the Haitian Consulate in New York to arrange a conference between prominent U.S. and Haitian citizens to form a more permanent body to aid Haitian interests.¹¹⁵ By the following year, the “Haiti-Santo Domingo Independence Society” had been formed, with Johnson acting as vice-chairman. A major goal of the society was to “locate, verify and secure the testimony” of witnesses to occupation abuses who had been coerced to remain silent through violent retributions.¹¹⁶ Johnson’s efforts sparked not only protest of the occupation at home, but also boosted Haitian resistance. Following the publication of his investigation, Johnson continued to actively correspond with numerous Haitians and his papers at Yale’s Beinecke Library contain hundreds of letters between himself and Haitian patriots. Historian Hans Schmidt, who wrote the benchmark study of the U.S. occupation, notes the particular importance of U.S. anti-imperialists in assisting Haitian protest, especially in presenting their case before the Senate Inquiry.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ James Weldon Johnson to Emile Faubert, 21 September 1920, James Weldon Johnson Papers, correspondence, box 8, series 1, folder 180. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (hereafter Yale). The society’s advisory council included Herbert Seligmann, and Arthur Spingarn, with Moorfield Storey as Chairman.

¹¹⁶The form letter announcing the new organization stated; “[This] Society was organized for the purpose of securing an open thorough and complete investigation of the entire Occupation, the restoration of their full independence to these two nations and to work for the extension to them of future aid based on mutual understandings and international justice.” See: “Haiti-Santo Domingo Independence Society,” 15 September 1921, James Weldon Johnson Papers, *ibid.* Although also concerned with the U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic, the society directed the majority of its efforts towards Haiti and specifically towards assembling evidence to be presented before the 1921-1922 Senate Inquiry.

¹¹⁷ Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1971), 120-122. For his support of Haiti in combating the occupation, the Haitian government honored Johnson in 1935 by decorating him with the national medal of “Honor and Merit.” See, Albert Blanchet to James Weldon Johnson, 23 January 1935, James Weldon Johnson Papers, box 3, folder 47, Yale.

From late 1921 to early 1922 a full-scale Senate Inquiry studied the occupation's methods and investigated abuse allegations in Haiti.

In early November 1921, *Nation* managing editor Ernest Gruening traveled to Haiti ahead of the investigation in order to establish Haitian contacts.¹¹⁸ He carried with him letters of introduction and a proclamation from Johnson. "To the Patriots of Haiti," opened Johnson's address:

This is a critical hour for Haiti. What her future and destiny shall be hangs in the balance. The time demands wisdom, courage, the burying of factional strife, the sacrifice of personal ambitions, and a devotion to the highest ideals of patriotism. Not since the occupation of her soil by American armed forces have you had a greater opportunity to work for the restoration of the sovereignty of Haiti than that which the present time offers.¹¹⁹

Johnson called upon Haitian leaders to abandon their factional ties and unite all Haitians under a clear and carefully prepared plan. Only through a united front, he argued, could Haiti's sovereign future be secured and "a new Haiti, more glorious than the old" emerge. Johnson admitted the overtly bombastic nature of the proclamation, but felt that now was the time for such rhetoric. Staying behind in Washington to testify before the Senate Committee, Johnson continued to correspond and send advice to Gruening in Haiti, giving him lists of various prominent Haitians to contact while also instructing him not to neglect more "radical" groups who would provide additional viewpoints.¹²⁰

African-American leaders had specific and impending reasons to be concerned about the portrayal of Haitians and the fate of Haiti as a sovereign nation. Haiti had long been

¹¹⁸ Schmidt, 121. Gruening worked closely with Haitian luminary Georges Sylvain, who organized fellow Haitians in protest, founding the Union Patriotique.

¹¹⁹ James Weldon Johnson to Ernest Gruening, 4 November 1921, James Weldon Johnson Papers, box 8, folder 176, Yale.

¹²⁰ James Weldon Johnson to Ernest Gruening, 8 December 1921, *ibid.*

considered a “laboratory” for black self-determination.¹²¹ This “experiment,” moreover, was not just about the specific contexts of Haiti’s cultural or political history, but rather, could prove the nature of more general racial characteristics and destinies. The era’s “scientific” literature and popular assumptions continued to place African Americans as one step removed from the racial laboratory of Haiti. Texts generated by the U.S. occupation continued this association. For example, in a January 1921 report to the Secretary of the Navy by an administrative commander observed:

The people of Haiti have had no immediate contact with a superior cultivation and intelligence such as the negroes of the United States have had since their emancipation.... The same traits of negro character that are found in the United States exist in Haiti, both good and bad; but I consider that the bad traits are more in evidence in Haiti than in the United States, where they are under better control.¹²²

Johnson’s call to battle oppression through a clear plan under which all people and parties could stand united applied equally at home. In protesting the occupation, African Americans rallied not only against imperialism and racism abroad but also their own treatment in a country that continued to view them as second-class citizens. Through a Pan-African protest, the NAACP hoped to build a Pan-African-American coalition, one that could be mobilized to combat racism and economic imperialism at home. Domestic battles in a racially bifurcated society required a united front, a front W. E. B. Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson of the NAACP hoped to lead over the accommodationism espoused by the late Booker T. Washington’s industrial education platform or Marcus Garvey’s populist movement. Protest against the occupation of Haiti provided a vehicle through which Du

¹²¹ For example, Hesketh Prichard concluded his *Where Black Rules White* (1900) with an entire chapter devoted to the question, “Can the Negro Rule Himself?” Prichard, 277, cited Haiti not only as an observable experiment, but also a longitudinal study which has been ongoing for a century.

¹²² Quoted in Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti*, 142.

Bois and Johnson could reach out across the political and ideological divide and smooth over the various fissures and frictions within the African-American community. Moreover, by raising awareness of the underlying economic aggression of the U.S. occupation while also working to combat false stereotypes of the black nation, African Americans called attention to economic and racial oppression faced by blacks within the United States.

In placing Haiti at the center of a media firestorm and into the forefront of political protest, James Weldon Johnson also inadvertently succeeded in returning Haiti to a place of prominence in the popular imagination for both white and black U.S. Americans. Along with his political articles and correspondence, Johnson also wrote about and lectured extensively on his cultural experiences in traveling through Haiti. Although U.S. Marine Corps Major G. H. Osterhout, Jr. published his adventures to the architectural New World wonder, Christophe's Citadel, as a part of the *National Geographic's* three-article feature in December 1920, Johnson would later boast in his autobiography that he had "rediscovered" the edifice for the United States, with his writings and lectures sparking a wave of "pilgrimages" to the black republic. More importantly, Johnson also claimed partial responsibility for "a new literary interest in Haiti." Johnson proudly noted, "John W. Vandercook talked with me about Christophe and his citadel before he went down and wrote his book, *Black Majesty*; and William B. Seabrook talked with me about Haiti before he went down and wrote *The Magic Island*."¹²³ I will address Vandercook's work in chapter six on the importance of Haiti to African-American lay historians and Johnson's more problematic claim of inspiring Seabrook's *The Magic Island* in chapter four. I turn now, however, to a seminal creative work that Johnson did not claim to inspire, but which imaginatively

¹²³ Johnson, *Along This Way*, 352.

interwove Johnson's protest and Haiti's revolutionary past into a highly popular and highly influential play: Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*.

Chapter 3

Illustrating *The Emperor Jones*

Considered the defining visual artist of the New Negro Movement (Harlem Renaissance) and “Dean” of African-American artists,¹²⁴ painter Aaron Douglas (1899-1979) is most remembered for his *Aspects of Negro Life* (1934). Douglas created this series of four monumental murals that trace life in tribal Africa through New World slavery and Emancipation to the industrial north, for the Harlem 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library (now the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture). In celebration of the new murals, Robert L. Leslie featured Aaron Douglas in the June 1935 issue of *PM Magazine*. In “Aaron Douglas: An Appreciation,” Leslie states:

Many of us can well remember Charles Gilpin, the great Negro actor, in the role of emperor Jones in Eugene O’Neill’s play of that name. Night after night, in the small playhouse in Macdougall Street, the more adventurous of New York’s playgoers withstood the trip downtown, the hardness of the benches and the lack of ventilation to feel something of the depth and terror of a performance that made dramatic history.

The work of Aaron Douglas brings to mind the surge and rhythm of Gilpin’s magnificent acting. Douglas’ work has the same strength and dramatic intensity. He is always sure of his effects, and precisely for the same reason that Gilpin was—because the expression coincides with the man—it is a part of himself.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ The younger generation of African-American artists gave Douglas this title during the 1930s as Douglas not only inspired and artistically helped younger artists, but also took on leadership positions to fight racism. Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 131.

¹²⁵ Robert L. Leslie, “Aaron Douglas: An Appreciation,” typewritten draft, Aaron Douglas Collection, box 1, folder 1, Fisk Library Special Collections, Fisk University (hereafter, Fisk). Robert L. Leslie (1885-1987), a medical doctor who left medicine to create his own printing company, founded *PM Magazine* (1934-42), a non-profit, cooperative graphic arts magazine, and A-D Gallery (later Gallery 303) in New York City.

Leslie's analogy invokes a powerful image that would have been instantly recognizable to his reading audience, despite the fact that Gilpin had been dethroned by Paul Robeson in the play's 1924 revival and later Hollywood film adaptation. On November 1, 1920, Charles S. Gilpin (1878-1930) and *The Emperor Jones* became overnight successes.¹²⁶ Not only did Gilpin originate O'Neill's demanding lead role, he also broke the color line to deliver his masterful performance. This performance was the first time in the United States that a black actor had ever performed a serious lead role alongside white actors in a white-authored play staged by a white company.¹²⁷

Running less than one hour, *The Emperor Jones* consists of eight intense scenes propelled mainly by monologues delivered by the title character and pantomimed flashbacks that outline the political and psychological rise and fall of the ambitious and intelligent African-American Brutus Jones. Scene One introduces the resplendent emperor in his throne room and through his dialect banter with the corrupt Cockney trader Henry Smithers, the audience learns that the African-American Brutus Jones has worked as a Pullman porter,

The entire run of the magazine can be found in the Cary Library at Rochester Institute of Technology: <http://www.drleslie.com/DocLeslieBio/DocLeslieBio.shtml> (11 March 2005).

¹²⁶ By the next day, long lines formed at the box office as crowds clamored to see the new experimental play with an integrated cast. Greatly extended beyond its original two-week schedule, this new nation-wide sensation ran for 490 performances before going on the road. In 1924, O'Neill replaced Charles Gilpin as the lead in the play's London staging with Paul Robeson. Gilpin had greatly angered O'Neill by altering his lines to avoid using racial epithets, though the actor's alcoholism has also been cited as a factor. *The Emperor Jones* continued to be performed by various companies, and was even translated in the 1930s into a marionette version staged by the Works Progress Administration, an opera debuted by the Metropolitan Opera House, and a Hollywood film starring Robeson.

¹²⁷ Christine Dymkowski, "Introduction," in Eugene O'Neill, *Anna Christie and The Emperor Jones* (London: Royal National Theatre and Nick Hern Books, 1991), xv-xvi. U.S. commercial theatre at this time relied on white actors in blackface in the performance of African and African-American roles. While complaining of many of the small experimental theatre's limitations, one opening-week newspaper review cheered the Provincetown Players's daring and admitted, "[I]f *The Emperor Jones* were taken elsewhere we have little doubt that the manager would engage a white man with a piece of burnt cork to play Brutus Jones." Heywood Broun, Review of "The Emperor Jones," *New York Tribune* (4 November 1920): http://www.eoneill.com/artifacts/reviews/ej1_tribune.htm (2 December 2004).

been convicted of murder, and escaped to a West Indian island where he quickly achieved his position of power that allows him to continue exploiting his subjects. The audience meets Jones on the day that his subjects finally revolt, and the emperor begins his planned escape on foot through the island. Set at two-hour intervals from dusk to dawn, the play's remaining seven scenes capture the emperor's increasing panic as he physically and psychologically disintegrates before visions of his personal and racial past within the darkness of the forest. Throughout his ordeal, the audience is aurally and physically drawn into Jones's increasing panic through the play's darkness, dramatic lighting that silhouetted the actors before a blank cyclorama, and most importantly, the relentless throbbing of an off-stage drum, which slowly increases in tempo throughout the play, matching the hunted-haunted emperor's (and the audience's) accelerating heart rate.

Leslie celebrated Aaron Douglas's *Aspects of Negro Life* as the visual equivalent of Gilpin's powerful and experienced acting, and indeed, both works are often acclaimed as the height of each artist's career. Douglas created the murals as a prominent Harlem artist, experienced and established through his lyrical signature style of concentric circles and silhouettes. Yet Douglas also had a lengthy relationship with *The Emperor Jones*, during a time when he was still unsure of himself and searching to find his mature artistic voice. Douglas's lesser-discussed images of *The Emperor Jones* figure prominently in his early artistic career as he became increasingly involved in the New Negro Renaissance. *The Emperor Jones* would also be Douglas's first step on the artistic path that would lead him to Haiti in the late 1930s.

This chapter offers a parallel to the previous investigation by examining the illustrations that accompanied the 1920's most popular creative invocation of Haiti, Eugene

O'Neill's blockbuster play, *The Emperor Jones*. As the media firestorm surrounding James Weldon Johnson's revelations gathered its full strength, the young and rising dramatist Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953) began writing *The Silver Bullet* in mid-September 1920. He completed the one-act expressionistic psychological drama in October as *The Emperor Jones*. The play debuted with the Greenwich Village Provincetown Players at their Playwrights' Theatre under the direction of George Cram Cook on the eve of the presidential election. While this immensely complex and deceptively dense play can and has been critically interpreted in several important ways,¹²⁸ I will examine *The Emperor Jones* through its thinly-veiled allusions to Haiti and interrogate the cultural contexts of the illustrations it inspired. Through my discussion of the Haitian-roots of *The Emperor Jones*, its little-discussed illustrations, and the uses of the play within the interartistic space of important New Negro Movement publications, I will examine how the idea of Haiti became a floating signifier in the creative and popular imagination that spoke to issues of race, national identity, and primitivism in the 1920s.

Amongst the numerous illustrations and representations inspired by *The Emperor Jones*, I have selected to highlight the work of African-American Aaron Douglas and

¹²⁸ Although I am concerned specifically with the play's links to Haiti, like any great and complex work, *The Emperor Jones* encompasses a range of sources, influences, and interpretations. Dymkowski, xvi, notes O'Neill's experimentation with pantomime and gesture as being inspired by Gordon Craig's *The Theatre Advancing*, while she follows other authors in noting the pulsing drumbeat and impenetrable dark woods in a narrative of "personal disintegration" as coming directly from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Stephen M. Watt discusses O'Neill's "formless fears" as directly drawn from Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, in "The 'Formless Fear' of O'Neill's Emperor and Tennyson's King," *The Eugene O'Neill Newsletter* 6.3 (Winter 1982). The play's origins have also been linked frequently to O'Neill's interest in Jungian psychoanalysis, see for example: Kenneth MacGowan, "The New Season," *Theatre Arts Monthly* 5 (1921): 6; Oscar Cargill, "Fusion-Point of Jung and Nietzsche," in *O'Neill and His Plays*, eds. Oscar Cargill, et. al. (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 408-414. Michael Hinden argues against critic's appraisal of the play's seeming racism, moving beyond theories of racial psychology to contextualize it within early twentieth-century mythmaking of U.S. history in "The Emperor Jones: O'Neill, Nietzsche, and the American Past," *The Eugene O'Neill Newsletter* 3.3 (January 1980): <http://www.eoneill.com/library/newsletter/iii_3/iii-3b.htm> (30 November 2004).

European immigrant Alexander King for several reasons. First, Aaron Douglas's illustrations accompanied prominent publications by Alain Locke and exemplify how the play, despite its primitivizing and even racist elements, was used to champion the burgeoning New Negro Movement and African-American strivings to find an artistic voice that was both modern and American. Alexander King's illustrations accompanied the collector's edition playscript and were published with O'Neill's approval, thus allowing me to compare Douglas's work to a more "official" artistic vision of the play. More importantly, these illustrations reflect both artists' initial relationship with Haiti and opened the way for their involvement with two of the most primitivizing and popular Haiti-inspired texts to be produced during the 1920s.

The Haitian Roots of The Emperor Jones

From the distant hills comes the faint, steady thump of a tom-tom, low and vibrating. It starts at a rate exactly corresponding to normal pulse beat—seventy-two to the minute—and continues at a gradually accelerating rate from this point uninterruptedly to the very end of the play. —Eugene O'Neill, The Emperor Jones¹²⁹

The Emperor Jones is not a play *about* Haiti, in the same way that this dissertation is also not about defining the concrete reality of a small Caribbean nation off the coast of Florida; Haiti was and is infinitely more. Rather, both the play and my project engage with how the idea of Haiti inspired creative expressions by artists in the United States that in turn speak to issues of race, gender, power, and national identity. O'Neill does not explicitly state that the play is set in Haiti, nor does he attempt to write a historical drama. Haiti,

¹²⁹ Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones*, in *The Emperor Jones, The Straw, and Diff'Rent: Three Plays* (1922; London: Jonathan Cape, 1969), 162-3.

nonetheless, lurks closer to the surface of this play than many critics have articulated. Haiti emerges through articulations of its revolutionary history and its culture, as represented through entrenched primitivizing stereotypes, and its more immediate presence in U.S. media reports. Indeed, Eugene O'Neill's Pulitzer-winning play *The Emperor Jones* could be said to provide the imagery, soundtrack, cultural metaphors, and even to justify the military and economic policies that sustained the approach to and uses of Haiti in the 1920s United States. O'Neill's play collapses links to Haiti's revolutionary past with its contemporary status as a "ward" of the United States. The play also collapses an important racial and social breakthrough in U.S. drama: Gilpin broke the colorline in a play that continued to recycle and enforce stereotypes of blacks. Ultimately, *The Emperor Jones* speaks to the ambivalence and tensions of its era.

O'Neill drew on popular understandings of Haiti for several aspects of this one-act play. Foremost, O'Neill formed his narrative around aspects of Haitian history. In scene one, the audience learns that Brutus Jones attained the position of emperor through his quick mastery of the island's language and customs. He has survived an assassination attempt and cleverly used his luck to convince the populace that he is so powerful, only a silver bullet can kill him. As his own talisman, Jones carries a revolver with five lead bullets and a single silver one, bragging that he will choose to end his own life rather than be killed. O'Neill later noted that he came upon the idea for this narrative from a friend who had toured the West Indies and overheard stories of Haitian President Sam's boast that his enemies would never overthrow him and that only a silver bullet was worthy of ending his life.¹³⁰ Sam in

¹³⁰ Arthur Gelb and Barbara Gelb, *O'Neill* (New York: Harper, 1962), 438-9; Mary Renda, *Taking Haiti* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 346 fn 79, notes that it is unclear whether

turn was linking himself to Haitian revolutionary King Henry Christophe (c.1767-1820) who actually did shoot himself in the wake of his subjects' revolt. Legend notes that he carried out his suicide with a silver or gold bullet.

While the Christophe-Sam origin has been well-established in O'Neill scholarship, unacknowledged historical links to Haiti also abound. For example, biographies of Christophe note that he had worked as a waiter, learning vital information by listening to the conversations of the white men he served; O'Neill's Brutus Jones accomplished the same as a Pullman porter. Additionally, Jones exploited the islanders and amassed a vast fortune in a foreign bank account, which will allow him to sail into retirement in Martinique in the face of his subjects' inevitable rebellion. Accounts of Haiti's history noted such a cyclical and "comic opera" pattern prior to the U.S. occupation as the typical course of action for a Haitian head of state.¹³¹ O'Neill also includes highly detailed descriptions of his characters that further allude to Haitian links. O'Neill describes his main white character Smithers, whom some scholars identify as serving to remind the audience of the history of European exploitation in the West Indies,¹³² as an ignominious rainbow combined with a cagey and animalistic personality:

The tropics have tanned his naturally pasty face with its small, sharp features to a sickly yellow, and native rum has painted his pointed nose to a startling red. His

O'Neill's source had been speaking of President Vilbrun Guillaume Sam, whose assassination sparked the U.S. occupation's initial invasion, or President Simon Sam, who led Haiti from 1896 to 1902.

¹³¹ For example, "Haiti and its Regeneration by the United States," *National Geographic* 38.6 (December 1920), 501, notes that thirteen of twenty-five leaders between 1804 and 1903 "retired" to foreign lands. Renda, 203-204, notes further links to Haiti that O'Neill would have been aware of in his reading of Haitian history and the country's color divisions, particularly in linking Emperor Dessalines to Emperor Jones as a "full-blooded negro."

¹³² See for example, Philip Hanson, "The Emperor Jones: Naturalistic Tragedy in Hemispheric Perspective," *American Drama* 5.2 (1996): 27.

little washy-blue eyes are red-rimmed and dart about him like a ferret's. His expression is one of unscrupulous meanness, cowardly and dangerous.¹³³

In the eighteenth century, at the height of French colonial power in Saint Domingue,

In the eighteenth century, at the height of French colonial power in Saint Domingue, it was commonly assumed that prolonged exposure to the tropics produced mental and physical degeneration in whites.¹³⁴ Variations on these assumptions continued into the twentieth century and the U.S. occupation. For example, just as O'Neill completed his play in mid-October 1920, the military parried public outrage over indiscriminate marine killings of Haitians with reports blaming some of the killings as the unfortunate result of marines who had become insane while serving in the tropics.¹³⁵ Alongside white degeneration, O'Neill's description of Smithers's yellow pallor invokes the tropical disease Yellow Fever, which most nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Euro-centric historians credited as the true reason for France's defeat in Saint Domingue, rather than the skill and sacrifice of the rebelling blacks.

Following Smithers's ranging palette of personal color, O'Neill introduces the "full-blooded negro" Brutus Jones by focusing also on inner qualities: "His features are typically

¹³³ O'Neill, 148.

¹³⁴ Alfred Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 12. It was believed that this tropical degeneration could also be passed on to children, with colony-born Frenchmen considered slightly inferior. Theories of the time also suggested that animals and plants degenerated in comparison to their Old World counterparts.

¹³⁵ "Blames Haitian Deaths on an Insane Officer," *New York Times* (15 October 1920): 15. Marine Corps Captain John Houston Craige returned from Haiti and published several sensational accounts of his experiences. In his first book, he describes several incidences of "sun poisoning," including a chapter on the mental deterioration of an ironically named "Lieutenant South" who ala Emperor Jones felt haunted and threatened by the booming drums of the countryside. South eventually abandoned all of his duties, wandering dazed, clutching his pistol and becoming convinced that he was under siege by the natives. See, John Houston Craige, *Black Bagdad: The Arabian Nights Adventures of a Marine Captain in Haiti* (London: Stanley Paul & Co., 1933), 89-101. As Renda, 133, points out, Craige's description suggests that the isolation of marines within a tropical wilderness and specifically without contact with white women, helped contribute to significant mental deterioration. The present absence of gender within the narrative of Brutus Jones takes on powerful implications when assessed within such military narratives of the Haitian occupation.

Negroid, yet there is something decidedly distinctive about his face—an underlying strength of will, a hardy, self-reliant confidence in himself that inspires respect. His eyes are alive with a keen, cunning intelligence. In manner he is shrewd, suspicious, evasive.”¹³⁶ O’Neill assumes that the reader and director will understand what a “typical” *colored* person looks like. O’Neill’s thorough and careful descriptions reflect the primacy of the visual in the theater for conveying a character’s personality and psychology. The “sickly yellow” and “stoop-shouldered” Smithers wears a “dirty white” riding uniform. In sharp contrast, the “tall, powerfully built” Jones is resplendent in his blue military coat and bright red trousers, perhaps alluding to the symbolic colors of Haiti’s flag created from ripping the white band out of the French *tricolour*.

Aaron Douglas’s interpretation of the emperor provides an additional link to images of historic Haitian military leaders and heads of state. Aaron Douglas created at least two different series of images inspired by Eugene O’Neill’s *The Emperor Jones*. Each series of four images, one consisting of drawings, the other of prints, shares similar graphic qualities and both trace Brutus Jones’s emotional descent from proud and defiant emperor to broken and pleading prey.¹³⁷ Both series open with an illustration of Scene One, with the emperor enthroned in his spacious palace (fig. 3.1). Douglas’s print version clarifies several elements found in the earlier drawing, while also adding further details. In both versions, Douglas

¹³⁶ O’Neill, 150.

¹³⁷ The similarities between the two series, and the lack of dating of the prints, have led to confusion and mis-identification of these images. It is the drawings that Locke includes in three separate publications: “The Negro and the American Stage,” *Theatre Arts Monthly* (February, 1926), *Plays of Negro Life* (1927), and *The New Negro: an Interpretation*, 2d ed (1927). The prints, which Douglas did not exhibit until much later in the artist’s career and hence possibly created long after the drawings, have been reproduced in several studies and labeled erroneously as appearing in the Locke publications. For example, Amy Kirschke’s *Aaron Douglas: Art, Race, and the Harlem Renaissance* and Mary Renda’s *Taking Haiti* both reproduce Douglas’s relief print of the enthroned emperor and misidentify it as the drawing from the February 1926 *Theatre Arts Monthly*.

includes a sword in the emperor's right hand, an alteration of O'Neill's careful description of the holstered revolver.¹³⁸ Through this addition, Douglas links his emperor to images of historic Haitian military leaders and heads of state, who are always depicted with elegant swords symbolizing their leadership position. Douglas perhaps recognized the emperor's need for a more symbolic weapon, for Jones wasted his bullets on his "formless fears," losing control of his death even as his subjects granted him his symbolic ending through their own silver bullets.

A second (and the most overt) aspect that links the play to Haiti is O'Neill's provocative description of the play's setting: "The action of the play takes place on an island in the West Indies as yet not self-determined by White Marines. The form of native government is, for the time being, an Empire." The play's program noted O'Neill's specific setting, and nearly all critics who attended the opening performances made sure to quote this description in their reviews.¹³⁹ By linking "White marines," absent in the actual play, with the phrase "not yet self-determined," O'Neill invoked the fall 1920's media firestorm created by James Weldon Johnson's damning articles "Self-Determining Haiti," and the U.S. presidential campaign, which exposed the U.S. occupation's military and financial abuses. If Brutus Jones is in part based on President Vilbrun Guillaume Sam, whose 1915 assassination

¹³⁸ Douglas will give the emperor his revolver back in his print *Defiance*, the second image of his print series. In examining images of *Defiance*, it becomes clear that Douglas continued to rework his vision of *The Emperor Jones* in multiple versions of his prints, for subtle and major differences can be found. For example, reproduced in David C. Driskell, ed., *Amistad II: Afro-American Art* (Nashville: Fisk University, 1975), 47, Douglas's print *Defiance*, in Fisk University's art collection, shows the uniformed emperor standing at the edge of a river and firing his revolver. The exhibition catalogue *Rhapsodies in Black* (1997) reproduces another print version of *Defiance* from a private collection. In this print, the emperor's uniform has changed; the revolver remains but a saber has been added, while the river has been cropped out.

¹³⁹ See: Heywood Broun, Review of "The Emperor Jones," *New York Tribune* (4 November 1920); Alexander Woollcott, "The New O'Neill Play," *New York Times* (7 November 1920); Maida Castellun, "O'Neill's 'The Emperor Jones' Thrills and Fascinates," *New York Call* (10 November 1920). All reviews found on the web: <<http://www.eoneill.com/artifacts/EJ1.htm>> (2 December 2004).

was the announced reason for the U.S. invasion, then Jones's imminent fall mirrors Haiti's recent past, set in a country "as yet not" but soon to be "self-determined by White Marines." While the corruption and fate of Jones can be read as an endorsement of U.S. claims to bring peace and stability, this turn of phrase exposes the hypocritical nature of an occupation by a government that claimed to stand for small countries' rights of self-determination, yet dictated the nature of their self-determination at gunpoint. At the same time, the play could be said to be an allegory of Haiti's present and a vision of Haiti's future. The play presents an American occupier and a foreign trader "bleedin the country dry." The audience may also realize that when the islanders finally capture and shoot their emperor, the foreign-banked fortune will be lost to them. This may be a subtle allusion to the National City Bank of New York's control of Haiti's national finances. James Weldon Johnson's exposing of the financial interests underlying the U.S. military occupation of Haiti was one of the most important revelations that sparked intense interest and critique in the fall of 1920.¹⁴⁰

While links to *The Emperor Jones* and contemporary occupied Haiti through James Weldon Johnson's "Self-Determining Haiti" articles have been explored,¹⁴¹ I want to articulate these links further. The play presents the successful overthrow of a foreign occupier by an oppressed multitude who conquer the occupier's greater military might by drawing on their collective power, and their cultural and racial past. In Scene Four, a black chain gang, mechanically pantomiming the repair of a road, haunts Jones. The group of "automatons" is overseen by a white man, who orders Jones to join them. After at first

¹⁴⁰ James Weldon Johnson, "Self-determining Haiti, III: Government of, by, and for the National City Bank," *Nation* (11 September 1920).

¹⁴¹ See for example, Renda, 205.

subserviently joining, Jones awakens from his stupor and asks the fellow prisoners for a shovel to kill the overseer. When they do not respond, Jones remembers his revolver and fires one more precious bullet to dispel the vision. This is the last of Jones's visions of his personal past; Jones will be haunted by visions of a collective racial past in the play's remaining scenes. While the road-working chain gang is a signal personal moment for Jones, it also invokes the greatest moment of Haitian resistance to the U.S. occupation. In 1917, the U.S. government revived an outdated Haitian law that required citizens to repair roads within their districts. The reinstatement of the *corvée*, however, resulted in gross labor abuses, with Haitian men seized (like "the African slave raids of the past"¹⁴²) and forced to toil for months in remote parts of the country with no contact with their families. Men who protested were severely beaten and/or jailed. The abuses of the *corvée* led to the most organized and wide-spread military resistance by Haitians to the U.S. occupation: the "caco rebellion," under the organization of Charlemagne Peralte, who claimed to be immune to bullets.¹⁴³ The U.S. military response in putting down the rebellion led to reports of "indiscriminate" killings of civilians and through Johnson's investigation became the most sensational and widely reported aspect of the occupation during the fall of 1920.¹⁴⁴

A third important aspect that popularly links *The Emperor Jones* to Haiti is the tightly woven play's famous, repeating elements that enforce the play's expressionistic presentation

¹⁴² Johnson, "Self-determining Haiti, II: What the United States Has Accomplished," *Nation* (4 September 1920).

¹⁴³ H. P. Davis, *Black Democracy* (New York: Lincoln Mac Veagh, the Dial Press, 1929), 222. Assassinated by marines who purportedly snuck into his camp in blackface, Haitians now celebrate Peralte as a national martyr-hero and powerful Vodou spirit.

¹⁴⁴ Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1971), 100-107. For a contemporary overview and defense of the *corvée* and marine suppression, see Davis, 216-239.

of an abrupt turn of fortune and emotional plunge into an atavistic, psychic past. Jones's personal odyssey mirrors typical Euro-centric accounts of Haiti's history, which emphasize that post-independence Haiti regressed in stages to African barbarity, instead of developing into a modern New World nation. Jones punctuates the close of each scene by firing his pistol at his visions, wasting his precious bullets. With each succeeding scene, Jones's "formless fears" become increasingly concrete, while his uniform becomes more and more decrepit. By the play's end, Jones has been reduced to nothing but a loin cloth, making him match both the envisioned African slaves and his indigenous pursuers.

To accentuate the distances that he will fall, O'Neill carefully describes in Scene One the emperor's heavily adorned uniform, with its brass buttons, gold chevrons and braids. After this detailing, O'Neill cautions, "Yet there is something not altogether ridiculous about his grandeur. He has a way of carrying it off."¹⁴⁵ O'Neill anticipates that the reader and audience will interpret the emperor's uniform as sartorial excess. This is perhaps because his description matched popular media representations of Haiti, especially pronounced during the early years of the U.S. occupation, when O'Neill was creating his play. The August 1916 *National Geographic* discussed the theatricality and buffoonery of black self-rule in Haiti, illustrating this point with a photograph of mounted officers of the Haitian army (fig. 2.6). The general leading the line sits erect on his horse, a broad hat shading his face. This general's uniform, with his tailored military jacket, epaulets and buttons that distinguishes him from his following men, does not appear to me to be excessively elaborate or ridiculous. The photograph's caption, however, highlights the "typical" Haitian officer's excessive gold and regalia, and suggests that sartorial excess drove Haiti's hyper-militarization because

¹⁴⁵ O'Neill, 150-1.

Haitian men “were as fond of gold lace as a mountain girl of bright colors.” The feminized sartorial desire of Haitian men sets up the driving point of the caption. The U.S. occupation can be praised not only for its benevolent political and economic aid, but also for its guidance in proper decorum becoming of true men: the U.S. marine in “quiet khaki” has thankfully replaced “the Haitian fire-eater and his resplendent costumes.”¹⁴⁶

Proof of Haiti’s improvement under U.S. guidance frequently took the form of published photographs of the Haitian Gendarmerie, where a disciplined lineup of khaki-uniformed Haitians pass inspection by the white U.S. officer whom they now emulate (fig. 3.2). The lineup of khaki clad Haitians, however, imperfectly mirrors their white U.S. commanding officer, both visually and in actuality. Standing in their new U.S.-issued khakis, this newly created “Haitian” police force embodies Homi Bhabha’s discussion of the importance of mimicry in the colonial machine, with its reforming “civilizing mission” that attempts to recreate the Other in its own image, “*but not quite.*”¹⁴⁷ The colonizer can never accept the colonial subject as its equal and, therefore, any reforms or adoption of the colonizer’s methods and culture must ultimately be shown to be mimicry.¹⁴⁸ Few of the

¹⁴⁶ Anonymous, “Wards of the United States: Notes on What Our Country Is Doing for Santo Domingo, Nicaragua, and Haiti,” *National Geographic* 30 (August 1916), 152. This 1916 *National Geographic* article also includes another detail famously incorporated into the fabric of O’Neill’s narrative. In outlining the architectural splendors, courtly excess and “burlesque reign” of Haiti’s second ruler King Henri Christophe, the article notes that the king committed suicide by shooting himself with a silver bullet, for “lead was too plebeian for his brain” (165).

¹⁴⁷ Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse,” *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 86; italics in the original. Shannon Steen’s article, “Melancholy Bodies: Racial Subjectivity and Whiteness in O’Neill’s *The Emperor Jones*,” *Theater Journal* 52.3 (October 2000): 346-7, directed my attention to how O’Neill’s turn of phrase fits within Bhabha’s important discussion on the construction of colonial discourse.

¹⁴⁸ The slippages in mimicry, Bhabha’s theory of “almost the same, but not quite,” can be located in the ambivalent ‘fixity’ of such stereotypes. Bhabha reveals how racial stereotyping constitutes another important feature of colonial discourse, ensuring the repeatability of power structures even in the face of a

Haitian recruits would be allowed to rise to leadership positions and the occupation would continue to mistrust the Haitians' ability to govern their own affairs, in part due to the occupiers' continued belief that Haitians were childlike, primitive, lazy, corrupt, violent, and/or irrational.¹⁴⁹ Likewise, Jones's downfall has frequently been interpreted as the shortcomings of his imperfect mimicking of white power and exploitative capitalism.

The unrelenting beat of a solitary off-stage drum, however, creates the play's most notorious repetition and popular link to Haiti. The drum commences as Jones begins his overland retreat and continuously throbs until the play's conclusion. O'Neill's stage instructions carefully dictate the tempo, beginning in Scene One at a "normal pulse beat," with an accelerando to the climax, thus linking the audience aurally to Jones's ever-increasing panic. In his tormented state, pursued more by the relentless drumbeat and mythic visions than his uprising subjects, Jones travels in a circle, emerging from the forest at dawn at the same point where he entered. The drumming ceases only when the island's subjects shoot their bullet-less emperor with silver bullets fashioned from melted coins of the empire. In 1930, missionary-turned-travel writer Samuel Guy Inman noted that the continuously beating distant drum "made *The Emperor Jones* Haitian more than all the scenery and the lines."¹⁵⁰ "Bring on the drum and the mystery of tropical forests," he exclaimed, and indeed, nearly every travelogue and novel of Haiti commences by invoking mysterious distant

changing historical context. See, Homi Bhabha, "The Other Question: Stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism," *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 66-84.

¹⁴⁹ For statistics on the number of Haitian officers and the justification of lacking the "right sort of recruit," see Davis, 281-2.

¹⁵⁰ Samuel Guy Inman, *Trailing the Conquistadors* (New York: Friendship Press, 1930), 103.

drums, which greet the first-time traveler (and reader) with promises of mystery and adventure.¹⁵¹

The Emperor's Image

Inspired by the play's innovations, racial subject matter, and dramatic qualities, many artists created their own interpretations of *The Emperor Jones*. Such artists also benefited from the play's popularity; magazines, journals, books and collector's edition play scripts published and circulated widely publicity photographs and illustrations of the play throughout the 1920s and beyond. The earliest publication of Aaron Douglas's *The Emperor Jones* images occurred in February 1926, when the *Theatre Arts Monthly* published two of his drawings to accompany Alain Locke's essay "The Negro and the American Stage." Illustrating Scene One, the first drawing presents a haughty emperor enthroned within his lofty and expansive palace (fig. 3.3). Composed of silhouettes and dynamic patterns that play across the compositional surface, this drawing exemplifies Douglas's early graphic style, which he developed during his first year in Harlem as he searched for his own mature artistic voice.

Douglas creates a sense of space through orthogonal lines, which plunge the eye into the background's right side, and a perceived layering of black and white forms. Yet the artist

¹⁵¹ For example, marine John Houston Craige records his first impressions of Port-au-Prince with the now typical description: "From the hills came the thump of drums, monotonous, mysterious, interminable" (7). As if straight from O'Neill's narrative, Craige later describes the sharp mental decline of Lieutenant South who had become convinced that the booming drums in the countryside were threats from the Devil. South ordered all drums in the district confiscated, but the booming continued incessantly. While Craige himself would not admit to his own mental deterioration, he acknowledged that he had begun to change with lengthy exposure to Haiti. His self diagnosis: "I had got to know the Haitians too well. The drums were always throbbing....It wore on my nerves." Craige, 97-98, 242. In her important study on the cultural ramifications of the U.S. occupation of Haiti, Mary Renda describes the unnerving effect the beating of drums and the blowing of conch horns had on marines in the field and how marines confiscated the drums as both exotic souvenirs and as a currency to exchange "exceptions" to the ban on Vodou for local cooperation. See Renda, 42, 46, 213, 214.

also emphasizes the drawing's two-dimensionality through profile and silhouette that omit internal modeling. The receding tiles end abruptly at an arcuated threshold that separates the palace interior from a blank expanse and the waving lines of landscape or sea. The three crests of the three white waves visually enforce the negative space defined by the three arches and also plays on the repetition of two columns of three stacked bars on the emperor's uniform. Douglas, however, further disrupts the drawing's stabilizing repetitions by stretching and shifting the central arch. While Douglas employs the arch as a traditional compositional framing device to highlight the emperor, he also gives it life by allowing it to lean in concert with the emperor's bending body. Douglas's drawing of the enthroned emperor displays his awareness of traditional design principles, such as linear perspective, overlap, repetition, and framing devices, while simultaneously showing how such rational compositional means can disintegrate into ambiguous pattern.

The *Theatre Arts Monthly* caption that accompanies this drawing betrays unease with Douglas's stark abstracting style, or at least a concern that the reader, accustomed to production stills and portraits of Gilpin or Robeson in costume, might dismiss his lack of academic naturalism and fail to recognize his compositional strategies:

In a striking series of interpretative designs based on Eugene O'Neil's *Emperor Jones*, the young Negro artist, Aaron Douglas, has recaptured the dynamic quality of that tragedy of terror. There is an arbitrary contrast of black masses and white spaces; and the clash of broken line becomes highly expressive in suggesting the proximate collapse of the Emperor's throne and the fear it inspires.¹⁵²

Douglas's image may be deliberately ambiguous but his forms are far from arbitrary.

Douglas strove to create a modernist personal style while also revealing his awareness of art

¹⁵² Alain Locke, "The Negro and the American Stage," *Theatre Arts Monthly* 10.2 (February 1926): 117.

history, traditional perspective and compositional devices.¹⁵³ The black and white floor tiles recall seventeenth-century paintings of Dutch interiors. Additionally, the emperor's awkward splayed-legged position on his throne invokes the solution employed by many Medieval artists in rendering a seated figure frontally, such as the enthroned Christ carved in the c. 1130 central portal's tympanum of the Romanesque church of St. Lazare in Autun.¹⁵⁴

All of Douglas's design elements challenge the viewer to look more closely at this seemingly simple drawing as he offers his own interpretation of the role of Brutus Jones rather than referencing a specific actor within a particular production. When one compares Douglas's illustrations to other *The Emperor Jones* imagery of the period, it becomes clear that the young Harlem artist's interpretation is startlingly and as shockingly modern as O'Neill's play. Illustrations of the play during the 1920s most frequently depicted one of the play's signature actors, Charles Gilpin or Paul Robeson, dressed in character. Production stills and publicity photographs, consisting mostly of portraits or the isolated actor posed and dramatically lit before a blank background, abound. Examples of such photographs can be

¹⁵³ Douglas was an A-level student in not only his drawing and painting classes, but also in art history. He earned a bachelor degree at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1922 and completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at the University of Kansas the following year. Douglas transcript, Julius Rosenwald Fund Microfilm, box B 408, folder 13, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans. Bearden, 128, 133, suggests that Douglas's figural proportions and profiles may have been inspired by Greek black-figure and Egyptian painting.

¹⁵⁴ My emphasis on the art historical roots of Douglas's drawing may seem overly defensive. The lengthy editorial description, rather than merely assigning a title to these drawings, raises warning flags in my mind that are confirmed when I read the caption to the second drawing, which closes: "There is a sharply defined sense of dramatic design—of drama in design. This power is one often missing among men of greater technical skill but less vivid imagination" (118). These drawings were published in a journal that had a predominantly white readership. Through these captions, which emphasize that this young black artist captured with ease the emotional and imaginative aspects of the play without "greater technical skill," allows the white readership to recognize the minority artist through a lens of shallow assumptions. While certainly work that is emotive, unschooled, intuitive holds an important place in the visual arts, these terms are disproportionately placed on minority artists with little examination of the artist's background or intent.

found in Alain Locke and Montgomery Gregory's collection *Plays of Negro Life: A Source-Book of Native American Drama* (1927), which reprints twenty scripts from "the contemporary negro theatre." While not every play is illustrated, *The Emperor Jones* seems to haunt the entire volume, receiving seven full-page illustrations: three production photographs and all four of Douglas's drawings, including the two first published by *Theatre Arts Monthly*.¹⁵⁵ The volume's frontispiece reproduces a full-page publicity photograph by Francis Bruguiere of Charles Gilpin enthroned as the Emperor Jones (fig. 3.4). The photograph captures the role's originator as he slouches in a chair. Gilpin props his right arm on the chair back and lightly touches the revolver at his side. The actor, almost looking uncomfortable in his ill-fitting military coat, glowers to the right, as if staring down the volume's title page and challenging any to depose him. This malcontent emperor, however, has already been deposed, replaced in 1924 by the younger Paul Robeson, who would become synonymous with the role and eventually star in the 1933 film version. This usurper of the crown appears later in the volume, with Maurice Goldberg's full-page photograph of Robeson buried within another play script (fig. 3.5). Robeson makes for a much more resplendent emperor, with his tailored uniform adorned with heavy epaulets, cords and bars. This new emperor in his new clothes, however, appears even more unsure of his rule. Photographed against a blank wall, the standing actor shifts his weight to an almost athletic ready stance and looks furtively to the right. The photographic lighting casts two shadows, giving the impression of the play's "formless fears" sneaking up on him from behind.

¹⁵⁵ *In Abraham's Bosom* is accompanied by three illustrations, while *The Rider of Dreams* has two. No other play receives multiple illustrations.

Paintings, drawings and engravings usually mirrored these photographs, with the artist focused on capturing the likeness of a well-known actor in costume rather than offering an interpretation on the content of the play. The December 1924 issue of *Opportunity* magazine included an essay by Paul Robeson, “Reflections on O’Neill’s Plays,” and was accompanied by production images and two portraits of the actor. The first portrait, a grainy photograph, is a profile of the actor elegantly attired in a suit and bowtie (fig. 3.6). In a nation that still questioned the humanity of African Americans, let alone their accomplishments, depictions of the college and law school graduate Robeson in formal attire became an important visual strategy. It also ensured that the well-educated and sophisticated Robeson was recognized for his *acting* abilities rather than the assumption that, as an African American, he should *naturally* be able to embody Brutus Jones. The international vogue of primitivism, which reached its popular height during the 1920s, accentuated the ease with which a person could conflate an African-American actor with the role of Brutus Jones. Modernist primitivism combined pseudo-scientific notions of race with a new valuing of the “primitive.” It also propelled the popularization and commodification of cultural “blackness,” which, amongst other issues, was believed to offer a greater connection to emotions, spirituality, sexual potency, and the unconscious that modern (white) society had lost touch with due to hyper-industrialization and civilization.¹⁵⁶ That is, African Americans were assumed to be naturally more emotional, spiritual, more in touch with a primitive unconscious due to their ancestral ties to Africa, and thus more at risk of the psychological

¹⁵⁶ James Clifford, “Negrophilia,” in *A New History of French Literature*, ed. Denis Hollier (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994): 901; Sieglinde Lemke’s work particularly focuses on the transatlantic exchanges between the African Americans and Europeans, arguing that primitivism and modernism were accomplices within the Harlem Renaissance. See, Sieglinde Lemke, *Primitivism Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

disintegration experienced by the character Brutus Jones lost in the West Indian primal forest.

Having thus visually established Robeson as a refined and educated gentleman, the *Opportunity* article includes a second portrait, a drawing of Robeson in his emperor costume (fig. 3.7).¹⁵⁷ African-American actor and artist Clement Wilenchick (1900-1957), who appeared in the 1924 Provincetown Players revival as one of the Negro convicts, African slaves, and indigenous soldiers, created the drawing.¹⁵⁸ The title to Wilenchick's drawing assures the viewer that this rendering has been created from life, and certainly as a fellow cast member, Wilenchick would have had ample opportunity to observe Robeson in the role. However, this early drawing by the actor-artist seems rather clumsy, with its awkward and almost too small shoulders set against facial features that almost border on exaggeration. My discomfort with Wilenchick's drawing, however, is less related to this artist's skill than it is with my knowledge of how this standard portrait of an accomplished actor easily became molded into racist caricature in the hands of many white artists, such as Alexander King.

Like Douglas, Alexander King's illustrations for the Emperor Jones do not purport to reference a specific actor. However, like the play they were inspired from, King's drawings embrace some of the most problematic aspects of 1920s primitivism and claims to authentic

¹⁵⁷ The drama section of 1927 second edition of *The New Negro* mirrors the visual and textual strategies found in Robeson's *Opportunity* article. The 1927 second edition added Douglas's enthroned emperor drawing to open the drama section, joining a portrait by mentor Winold Reiss of Robeson wearing a suit. Curiously, the anthology's list of illustrations notes the title of Reiss's elegant portrait of Robeson *not* in costume as: "Study: Paul Robeson as 'Emperor Jones.'" Martha Jane Nadell's dissertation and subsequent book *Enter the New Negroes* provides an excellent study of the visual shifts between the *Survey Graphic* Harlem magazine and the two printings of the *New Negro* anthology.

¹⁵⁸ Born in New York, Wilenchick's artwork appeared in the *Dial* magazine during the second half of the 1920s. He eventually relocated to Hollywood in the 1930s, where he continued to act and exhibit with the San Francisco Art Association.

black representation. King's version of Scene One from *The Emperor Jones* follows closely the visual strategies typically found in images of Gilpin and Robeson as Brutus Jones, like Wilenchick's drawing (fig. 3.8). Both images are composed as tightly framed portraits, with background shadows that could reflect the stage's dramatic lighting, the high back of a throne, or the shadowy "formless fears" that will signal the start of the emperor's psychological terror. King includes the slinking silhouette of the corrupt Cockney trader Henry Smithers. Impossibly thin, Smithers appears to be stooping under the weight of his pith helmet, and haunts the background like one of the later shadowy "formless fears." Unlike Douglas's engraving of Scene One, King's emperor does not confront or engage with the trader. Rather, this smug emperor gazes directly out at the viewer. His stiff-collared military jacket encases his powerful broad chest, while the angle of his shoulders suggest a relaxed pose, perhaps lounging in his throne. Like the Gilpin publicity photograph and Wilenchick's drawing of Robeson, King's emperor exhibits haughty fearlessness. Yet also like the previous two examples, King's emperor also exhibits no neck. With the Gilpin photograph, this seems due to the combination of the camera angle and the actor's slouched pose. In the drawing of Robeson, it is hard to gauge whether the neck is obscured through a combination of the stiff upright military collar, the compressed angle of the drawing, and/or the artist's awkward anatomical rendering of his figure. King takes this neck-less precedent and uses it to accentuate the brute nature of the emperor's head, which appears closer to a column in which a large face with exaggerated features has been rough hewn. King also gives what is supposed to be a rather intelligent, cunning and driven man an impossibly small cranium

Sadly, it is not shocking to find King's 1928 drawing recycling racist caricature from a long history of black representation through damaging stereotypes. That King ended up creating the illustrations for the Liveright special edition of *The Emperor Jones*, however, is a revealing study on what constituted the credentials to produce "authentic" likenesses of the racial Other during a period dominated by the popularity of a shallow primitivism.

Alexander Koenig (or Konig) (1900-1965) immigrated with his parents to New York City from Vienna around 1913.¹⁵⁹ By 1917, he was illustrating for the New York *Sunday World* magazine section, though his major professional breakthrough came in 1928 when along with the Boni & Liveright edition of *The Emperor Jones*, he illustrated three books published by Covici, Friede, and published two folios of artwork. Liveright's *The Emperor Jones* 1928 limited edition of 750 copies signed by O'Neill included eight full-page illustrations by King, one image for each scene.

The edition's book jacket defensively justifies the selection of King as illustrator. It begins by proclaiming King as one of America's rising young artists. It then justifies the selection of King as illustrator by noting his travels and O'Neill's approval:

When he returned from a trip to Africa, with truly extraordinary drawings of negro types we felt that the long looked for illustrator of THE EMPEROR JONES had appeared. Mr. King met the proposal with enthusiasm and Mr. O'Neill, on seeing the first sketches, expressed his admiration and his keen satisfaction with Mr. King's interpretations.

The book jacket assures the public of the authority of a then little-known illustrator to capture O'Neill's play with authenticity. The artist's bold trip to Africa answers the publisher's long

¹⁵⁹ While now little known, this illustrator and painter lived a fast-past social life as a New York City luminary, becoming not only an early associate editor for *Life* magazine but also a major television personality and author, with one of his memoirs becoming a *New York Times* bestseller. See: Biographical Note, Alexander King Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., found also on the web at: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/mss/text/kingalx.html>.

quest to find the best illustrator for such an important play, while O'Neill's "admiration" directs the viewer towards the proper approving response for the two-color full-page drawings.

Certainly mollifying the public with such claims of authenticating details is a common technique, but what does it mean when the authority for depicting a fictional African-American character in the West Indies is authenticated by an artist's purported travels in Africa? King's later account of his travels and the events leading to his *Emperor Jones* commission deconstructs the dust jacket's enthusiastic justifications for his selection as the illustrator of *The Emperor Jones* special edition. Yet at the same time, his autobiography reveals that King still believed himself to be an appropriate illustrator for representations of blacks. Alexander King's best-selling 1958 confessional memoir, *Mine Enemy Grows Older*, focuses on his drug addictions, attendant painful rehabilitations and incarcerations, spiced with flippant comments on his four marriages and affairs. This "tell-all," however, also offers a glimpse into the world of illustration during the 1920s. As a young man, King had aspired to be a painter. By 1924, however, he had grown accustomed to constant rejection from various magazines and turned to book illustrating, which he noted accepted lesser talented artists. A friend suggested that King approach the book publisher Horace Liveright, "a weird character" in his own right, who might appreciate King's images, which the artist readily described as "extreme" and "definitely freakish."¹⁶⁰ King met Liveright through international banker, philanthropist and art patron Otto Kahn, who decided to financially assist in developing King as an artist. Believing that a young artist should experience life

¹⁶⁰ Alexander King, *Mine Enemy Grows Older* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958), 91.

abroad, Kahn provided money to King for a year in France in 1926.¹⁶¹ The American pianist and composer George Antheil, however, encouraged King to leave quickly the tourist trap of Paris and travel to Tunis where life was “still colorful, mysterious and cheap.”¹⁶² Having read Flaubert’s *Salammbô* as a child, King was thrilled to be in Carthage. The nature and extent of the artist’s African experience remains unclear, though one can assume this introduction was rather cursory: it is doubtful that he journeyed any further into the continent as his trip seems to have been rather brief and he fell ill from the local food immediately upon arrival. Nevertheless, upon his return to New York he was determined to illustrate *The Emperor Jones*, arguing that his sketching excursion made him “peculiarly qualified” for the assignment.¹⁶³

King knew that Liveright planned to publish illustrated limited editions of O’Neill’s plays, and that an artist had yet to be selected. Scheming that the author’s approval would guarantee him the job, King developed an elaborate plan to meet O’Neill, eventually cornering him March 14, 1927 at the Liveright offices. King introduced himself as an artist who had recently returned from Africa with “thousands and thousands of drawings of Negroes.”¹⁶⁴ Smiling at King’s audacity, O’Neill agreed to look at the illustrations, but cautioned that although Horace Liveright wanted the editions illustrated, he was not keen on the idea. King escorted O’Neill to a nearby office where three finished *Emperor Jones* oil paintings and around fifty drawings conveniently waited. King’s autobiography proudly

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 14.

¹⁶² Ibid., 223. King’s reason for traveling to Tunis actually mirrors several Euro-American artists’ comments on their reason for going to Haiti in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 329.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 331.

records O'Neill's response: 'I think they're very striking,' he said. 'And I'm glad to see that you understand that Negroes are not just white people with blackened up faces, that their humor, their dignity and their sorrows have all been conditioned by their present tragic status in this world of ours.'¹⁶⁵ With O'Neill's professed approval, Liveright reluctantly acknowledged that King's "pretty extreme" artwork had "the right feeling for the play" and awarded the artist the commission.¹⁶⁶

King's answer to the play's expressionistic qualities and psychological terror was a graphic style that compressed space and dissolved the setting into claustrophobic graphic pattern to express the protagonist's visions and emotions. With my twenty-first century eyes, however, it is impossible to get beyond King's expressionistic exaggeration, which results in images that replicate and reinforce centuries of racist caricatures of blacks. This is seen especially in the figures' distorted facial features, which emphasize enormous lips and diminished cranium. The book jacket's lauding of King's ability to capture a range of African types is more his ability to exaggerate differing features of the head. This is especially evident in his illustration for Scene Four, where the compressed procession of striped convicts shows first a bulbous forehead, then a figure with a tiny cranium balancing a cantilevered jaw, to figures with flattened drooping features, though each displays the exaggerated lips King favors for all of his representations of blacks (fig. 3.9).

As seen in King's "extreme types," his drawings certainly reinforce and recycle a problematic history of stereotyping the peoples of African descent through exaggerated

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 332.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 333. Becoming good friends, O'Neill later defended King and insisted that he illustrate the rest of the Liveright editions of his plays.

features and ape-like qualities. Yet in offering “the right feeling for the play” and not a vision of a famous actor in character, King’s problematic images expose some of the many underlying primitivizing and racist aspects of O’Neill’s color-line-breaking play. For example, instinct and emotion waylay Brutus Jones long before his subjects. Slipping easily into his racial past, Jones confirmed for his 1920s audience the easy atavism of a race that was believed not to have evolved as far as peoples of European descent. Additionally, in his stripped state at the play’s close, Jones matches his indigenous antagonist Lem, who O’Neill describes as an “ape-faced old savage of the extreme African type,” a description King is happy to visualize (fig. 3.10).¹⁶⁷ Jones’s literal shedding of the trappings of civilization through his striptease further allowed the audience to forget Jones’s intelligence and cunning (and the intelligence of an actor like Robeson) displayed in Scene One and focus on his magnificent physique, the fetishized black male body. Jones’s power symbolically wanes with his uniform while, the actor’s sex appeal increases with every skin-exposing tear.

Performance historian Shannon Steen has pointed out that the striptease has always been fundamental to the performance of *The Emperor Jones*. Along with its integrated cast, another innovation of the original performance was its use of a white cyclorama, which was the first time one had been incorporated into a U.S. performance.¹⁶⁸ Steen notes that the cyclorama had the added effect of accentuating the visual pleasure of the actor’s increasingly revealed body; the blank backdrop highlighted and contrasted the surface of the actor’s skin,

¹⁶⁷ O’Neill, 192.

¹⁶⁸ Shannon Steen, “Melancholy Bodies: Racial Subjectivity and Whiteness in O’Neill’s *The Emperor Jones*,” *Theater Journal* 52.3 (October 2000): 347. The white cyclorama had long been employed by European experimental theatre, though the Provincetown Players nearly exhausted all of their financial resources in building one for its U.S. debut in *The Emperor Jones*.

thus emphasizing the body on display.¹⁶⁹ Additionally, many promotional photographs captured the lead actor in a stage of undress, even if the production advertised was for the radio.¹⁷⁰

Surprisingly, King's illustrations do not take advantage of O'Neill's striptease to display the black male body. Jones does not appear in the final two illustrations, scenes where he is the most denuded. Moreover, when he last appears in King's version of Scene Six, Jones can be found crouched in the foreground, with most of his body outside of the picture plane, while the crowding of the African slaves in the middle-ground obscures their bodies (though not their exaggerated faces) (fig. 3.11).

Douglas's early *Emperor Jones* drawings also interact with the play's innovative original staging. Although Douglas is now most known for his painted silhouettes, his use of silhouettes against a blank background in his drawings fittingly mirrors the expansive illuminated white backdrop of the cyclorama (fig. 3.12).¹⁷¹ More importantly, his silhouettes resist the undermining of the character's intelligence through the play's focus on the stripped body. In his first *Theatre Arts* drawing, Douglas captures the emperor in his last moments of self-assurance and bravado (fig. 3.3). While the *Theatre Arts Monthly* editor assures the reader that the "clash of broken line" fits closely to the play's impending narrative of fear and tragedy, the waving lines seen through the palace's threshold invoke the emperor's last hope and confidence; the waves allude to the emperor's planned escape to the coast, where he

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 348.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 347.

¹⁷¹ Douglas designed several Harlem theater stage sets and this type of theatrical backlighting may have influenced his creation of what would become his signature silhouette forms. Caroline Goesser, "'Not White Art Painted Black: African American Artists and the New Primitive Aesthetic, c. 1920-1935'" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2000), 226 f.n. 83.

intends to sail into “retirement.” By omitting the antagonizing Smithers and his announcement of imminent rebellion, while drawing the viewer’s eye to the clear vista beyond the palace with no hint of encroaching forest,¹⁷² Douglas makes the emperor’s visual downfall all the more dramatic when the *Theatre Arts* reader turns the journal page to view the second drawing.

Here, Brutus Jones lunges through the forest, mouth agape, arms flailing in panic (fig. 3.13). Douglas renders the emperor’s sharply bent and upraised arms to form angular points, ending with the barest indication of hand and thumb. The spikes of his hands mirror the spikes of the forest backdrop, which frame the fleeing protagonist while also appearing about to impale him. The forest, not his uprising subjects, hunts the emperor. The rhythmic jabs of the encroaching background are perhaps Douglas’s visual response to the continuous off-stage throbbing of O’Neill’s famous drum. In contrast to these sharp angles, Douglas renders the emperor’s legs with gently rounded curves, mirroring the leaves rising from the forest floor. Jones’s bent forward leg has almost become a leaf itself. The angle of his leg follows the form of the leaf directly below his pelvis, while the negative space that defines and separates calf from thigh mirrors the white midribs of the surrounding leaves. Through Douglas’s design, Jones is at risk of not only disappearing into the foreboding forest but also becoming it, as his subjectivity disintegrates into O’Neill’s “wall of darkness dividing the world.”¹⁷³ Douglas’s subtle elements express the dramatic downfall without emphasizing O’Neill’s striptease. Moreover, while epaulets, ornamental bars, heeled riding boots, and his ornamental sword of office have disappeared in the second image, the solid black silhouette

¹⁷² O’Neill describes that palm trees can be seen, Douglas omits these.

¹⁷³ O’Neill, 167.

of Douglas's figure captures the black body without granting the viewer the pleasure of modeled bare skin.

The Emperor Jones and the New Negro Movement Publications

And stop dat drum soundin' in my ears! —Brutus Jones

... So I lie, who always hear/ Though I cram against my ear/ Both my thumbs, and keep them there,/ Great drums beating through the air. —
Countee Cullen, "Heritage"

While much ink has been rightly spilled in analyzing the damaging primitivizing and stereotyping aspects of O'Neill's play,¹⁷⁴ it is often overlooked that leading African-American critics, such as W. E. B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson and Alain Locke, remained mostly silent about the content of the drama and its implications for African-American representation.¹⁷⁵ It seems that the elder intellectual leaders of the New Negro

¹⁷⁴ Many recent critics have shown how O'Neill's groundbreaking play actually transferred to the stage several problematic stereotypes of blacks, which had a lengthy prior history in literature. The role of Brutus Jones matches several of Sterling Brown's identified African-American character types prevalent in U.S. literature, from the "Wretched Freeman," and "Local Color Negro," to the "Exotic Primitive." See, Sterling A. Brown, "Negro Character as Seen by White Authors," *Journal of Negro Education* 2.2 (April 1933): 179-203. For further discussion of the racial and racist dynamics of *The Emperor Jones*, see: John R. Cooley, "The Emperor Jones and the Harlem Renaissance," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 3.2 (Fall 1974): 73-83; Peter Saiz, "The Colonial Story in The Emperor Jones," *The Eugene O'Neill Review* 17.1 & 2 (Spring/Fall 1993): 31-38; Ed Guerrero, "The Emperor Jones (review)," *Cineaste* 21.1-2 (1995): 100-1; Robert Hamner, "Dramatizing the New World's African King: O'Neill, Walcott and Césaire on Christophe," *Journal of West Indian Literature* 5.1&2: 30-47; Joel Pfister, *Staging Depth: Eugene O'Neill and the Politics of Psychological Discourse* (Chapel Hill: University of Chapel Hill Press, 1995); Philip Hanson, "The Emperor Jones: Naturalistic Tragedy in Hemispheric Perspective," *American Drama* 5.2 (1996): 23-43; Shannon Steen, "Melancholy Bodies: Racial Subjectivity and Whiteness in O'Neill's The Emperor Jones," *Theater Journal* 52.3 (October 2000): 339-359.

¹⁷⁵ See for example, James Weldon Johnson's positive review, "A Great Play and a Great Actor," *New York Age* (13 November 1920): 4, col. 4; W. E. B. Du Bois defends *The Emperor Jones* in "Criteria of Negro Art," *Crisis* 32 (October 1926): 290, but the article does open with his quoting of a harsh attack of the play, thus suggesting the presence of strong public criticism by some African Americans, which would continue to grow. Surprisingly, of early 1920s African-American publications, Paul Robeson's essay, "Reflections on O'Neill's Plays," while defending the play and white author, actually comes the closest to engaging with the play's underlying primitivism. Although he does not mention any issues specifically, Robeson addresses defensively nearly all of the issues that are frequently cited in establishing the racist nature of the play and

Movement held damning criticism of the play's racial and social implications at bay, at least for a time, in lieu of championing the breakthrough of having an African-American actor appear onstage in a serious leading role.¹⁷⁶ Like the familiar publicity stills and illustrations of Robeson and Gilpin, their written comments focused on the leading actor, rather than engaging with the content of the play and the meanings of its representation. The use of *The Emperor Jones* in Locke's various publications walks a precarious line between building racial pride and also enforcing stereotype. While certainly not as egregious as King is, Douglas's drawing of the enthroned emperor also walks a fine line between exploring primitivism through the content of the play and reinforcing racial stereotype. Yet Aaron Douglas's *The Emperor Jones* images powerfully moved beyond his New Negro Movement mentors' silence on the play by complicating the nature of the role of Brutus Jones rather than focusing on the personality of a groundbreaking actor. By illustrating the dramatic content of the role, Douglas's drawings hold important implications within the interartistic

O'Neill's prejudices. See, Paul Robeson, "Reflections on O'Neill's Plays," *Opportunity* 2.24 (December, 1924): 368-370.

¹⁷⁶ Susan Curtis, *The First Black Actors on the Great White Way* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 217-19. This is not to say that African Americans did not recognize early the problems of the play. For example, Errol Hill and James Hatch's *A History of African American Theatre* notes one writer to the *New York Negro World* who argued that the play was just as damaging as Ku Klux Klan propaganda film *Birth of a Nation* (227). I just want to caution that it is impossible to know how early African-American audiences responded and viewed the play based upon the extant written record. Langston Hughes's account of Jules Bledsoe's disastrous performance of *The Emperor Jones* before a mocking Harlem audience remains the most popularly cited negative response. This undated and undocumented performance is given perhaps undue weight by later historians and critics who want to prove the immediate and widespread disapproval of the play by the African-American community. See, Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea* (1940. New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 259. What did provoke early criticism was the initial exclusion of Gilpin, who the Drama League had voted as one of the ten people who had most contributed to the American theater, from the awards dinner because members objected to having a black present. "Drama League Dinner Causes Discussion of the Color Line," *New York Age* (26 February 1921): 1, col. 3; James Weldon Johnson, "The Close of the Gilpin Incident," *New York Age* (12 March 1921): 4, col. 3-4; Theophilus Lewis, "Charles Gilpin and the Drama League," *Messenger* 3 (March 1921): 203-4.

space of New Negro Movement impresario Alain Locke's publications and 1920s African-American critical responses to primitivism.

Returning to the February 1926 *Theatre Arts Monthly* drawings, the earliest publishing of Douglas's *The Emperor Jones* illustrations, I must confess that I am not struck first by Douglas's compositional skill, his experimentation with profile and silhouette that would quickly lead him to his famous signature style, or, what one caption noted, his "psychological verisimilitude." Rather, eight decades removed from the social and creative milieu that made O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* such a major theatrical breakthrough and an important visual vehicle, I notice first the protruding white lips and indecorous positioning of an enthroned emperor who appears to be a jiggling blackface minstrel (fig. 3.3).¹⁷⁷ The emperor's left arm and leg are both sharply angled and raised as he bends from the waist to his left, landing on his booted right heel. It was only with the assistance of Douglas's later print version that it became clear to me that this was an emperor balanced precariously on his throne.¹⁷⁸ While one is not shocked that an artist like King produced stereotyping images in the 1920s, the invocation of minstrel imagery by an African-American artist invested in the social and cultural uplift projects of the New Negro Movement creates a startling disjunction. O'Neill's initial reaction to King's *The Emperor Jones* imagery roar back into my mind: 'And I'm glad to see that you understand that Negroes are not just white people with blackened up faces, that their humor, their dignity and their sorrows have all been

¹⁷⁷ Caroline Goeser's dissertation, 219-20, identified Douglas's drawn emperor as a minstrel figure. Her important work incorporates at length blackface analysis in her argument of Douglas's resistance to the primitivism of his mentors and his Signifyin(g) on primitivism.

¹⁷⁸ Vertical lines found below his extended arms form the back of his chair, while his dancing leg position results from the difficulties of rendering frontally and in silhouette a seated figure.

conditioned by their present tragic status in this world of ours.¹⁷⁹ Douglas seems to have imaged what O'Neill would have decried, producing a burnt-corked comedic actor.

A few scholars have noted how Douglas's enthroned emperor borrows heavily from a drawing by his Harlem teacher, Winold Reiss, which appeared in the March 1925 special Harlem issue of the *Survey Graphic*.¹⁸⁰ A closer look at Douglas's early years in Harlem and his relationship with Reiss helps to begin my interrogation of Douglas's disconcerting minstrel dancing within Locke's publications.

After completing his university training in art in Nebraska and Kansas, Aaron Douglas had returned to his hometown of Topeka, Kansas to teach high school art. By his second year of teaching, however, Douglas realized he was at a decisive crossroad: to remain a high school art teacher and live in relative comfort but limited creativity, or, to risk the unknown yet potentially more rewarding road of creating art fulltime.¹⁸¹ In later interviews and writings, Douglas would note several influences that would spur him from his hometown to the burgeoning cultural center of Harlem. He writes that his journey to New York City was encouraged by his reading of the *Crisis*, *Opportunity*, and the *Messenger* magazines, which, through their publications of poems, short stories and essays, indicated to Douglas "a serious effort on the part of young Negro writers to express in artistic language their

¹⁷⁹ King, 332.

¹⁸⁰ Goeser, 224-5. Jeffrey Stewart, *To Color America: Portraits by Winold Reiss* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Portrait Gallery, 1989), 60.

¹⁸¹ Douglas later described this decision in an undated autobiographical statement: "One way led to an uneventful, pleasant old age, the other appeared to lead over high mountains, through deep valleys and into dark and pathless woods. At this point it seemed to me that a really meaningful life must be one given to struggle against hunger and poverty of the spirit rather than one given simply to the pursuit of security and freedom from bodily pain." See "Aaron Douglas (1899--): An Autobiography" (undated), Aaron Douglas Collection, box 1, folder 1, 10, Fisk Library Special Collections, Fisk University (hereafter Fisk).

reactions to life's hopes and joys, victories and defeats, which had for so long remained unspoken."¹⁸² Additionally, along with encouragement from acquaintances already in New York, Douglas would also later cite the March 1925 Harlem issue of the *Survey Graphic* as "the most cogent single factor that eventually turned my face to New York."¹⁸³ This special issue, guest edited by Alain Locke and devoted to presenting the dynamic community of African Americans in Harlem, both through sociological and creative texts, holds a prominent place in the history of the New Negro Movement and forms the core of what later scholars would call this renaissance movement's "Bible," the anthology *The New Negro: an Interpretation* (1925; 1927).¹⁸⁴

Aaron Douglas's decision to relocate to Harlem ensured his participation in one of the most vibrant cultural movements of the early twentieth century, the New Negro Movement. Also known as the Harlem Renaissance, this literature-dominated movement loosely dates

¹⁸² Ibid. While publishing important social and political tracts, Douglas benefited from the important aesthetic programs of Charles S. Johnson, W. E. B. Du Bois and A. Philip Randolph, the respective editors of the above journals, who believed that creative works had a significant role to play in social uplift and combating racism in the United States.

¹⁸³ Aaron Douglas, "Fisk University Negro Culture Workshop," typewritten speech draft, Aaron Douglas Papers, reel 4520, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution (hereafter AAA). Quoted also in Amy Kirschke, *Aaron Douglas: Art, Race, and the Harlem Renaissance* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995), 13. In *A History of African-American Artists: From 1792 to the Present*, Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson also cite letters from Ethel Ray [Nance] and Eric Waldron [sic], the latter "whose novel *Tropic Death* had just been published," as additional prompts to come to New York (127). While Douglas may have later been impressed by Waldron's novel, the 1926 published book could not have been a specific impetus for Douglas who relocated to Harlem in 1925.

¹⁸⁴ Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes, 1902-1941: I, Too, Sing America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 105. For more on the history of this important publication, see: Anne Elizabeth Carroll, *Word, Image, and the New Negro* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Knopf, 1981), 90; Martha Jane Nadell, *Enter the New Negroes* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Richard Robbins, *Sidelines Activist: Charles S. Johnson and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), 53.

from 1919-1935, reaching its peak in the mid- to late-1920s.¹⁸⁵ Although Harlem struggled under the burden of enormous social and economic problems, it was also a vibrant cultural and political center. 1920s Harlem was a place where a great diversity of people—urban-born northerners, African-American migrants from the rural South,¹⁸⁶ African and West Indian immigrants—rubbed elbows within the close confines of northern Manhattan. During the literary, artistic, musical, and intellectual outpouring of this period, African Americans self-consciously wrestled with how to express the diversity of the black experience, all the while arguing that a “New Negro” had emerged to sweep aside the “Old Negro” of damaging stereotypes.¹⁸⁷

Shortly after arriving in Harlem in 1925, Douglas recognized that his bachelor of fine arts was “woefully inadequate preparation for the task before me,” despite receiving work almost instantly for cover designs and illustrations for magazines like *The Crisis* and

¹⁸⁵ I have chosen to refer to this period as the New Negro Movement to reflect current scholarship acknowledging that the term “Harlem Renaissance” does not reflect the wide influence of this cultural movement and its participants who resided outside of Harlem, in Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Washington D.C., and elsewhere. For more on this important and dynamic period, see: Jervis Anderson, *This Was Harlem* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1982); Arna Bontemps, ed., *The Harlem Renaissance Remembered* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1972); Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); Nathan Huggins, ed., *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); George Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Knopf, 1981); David Levering Lewis, ed., *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader* (New York: Viking Press, 1994); Cary Wintz, ed., *The Critics and the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996); Genevieve Fabre and Michel Feith, eds., *Temples for Tomorrow* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001). For an introduction to the visual works created during this period, see the exhibition catalogues *Harlem Renaissance: Art of Black America* (New York: Studio Museum in Harlem and Harry N. Abrams, 1987) and *Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

¹⁸⁶ These southerners were a part of the Great Migration, a flood of African Americans who from the late nineteenth century had begun to leave the economic and social oppression of the South in the hopes of securing a better life for their families in the industrial north. Between 1920 and 1925, some two million African Americans relocated northward.

¹⁸⁷ For an expansion on the temporal and ahistorical nature of the “New Negro” and the shift in this term as adopted by Locke for the New Negro Renaissance literary movement, see Henry Louis Gates Jr., “The Trope of the New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black,” in *The New American Studies: Essays from Representations*, Philip Fisher, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991): 319-345.

Opportunity.¹⁸⁸ With the aid of the New Negro Renaissance's chief facilitator, Charles S. Johnson, Douglas sought out the German-immigrant painter Winold Reiss and received a scholarship from him to study at his school.¹⁸⁹ Douglas's letters of the time and his later accounts candidly acknowledge the importance he placed on having Reiss as a mentor. The young African-American artist found Reiss to be a good match for two main reasons. First, Reiss was widely known for his careful and dignified studies of "racial types," many of which had appeared in the *Survey Graphic* and had been prominently exhibited in Harlem. Second, as Douglas would later write, "His work, particularly in design, clearly showed his sympathy and appreciation for the contribution of African art to the art of the modern world." Douglas concludes, "This was, of course, precisely the influence I needed at the time."¹⁹⁰

Along with cultural critic Alain Locke, Reiss encouraged Douglas to look to his African heritage for inspiration. Although Douglas chose to study with Reiss because of his

¹⁸⁸ Aaron Douglas, "The Harlem Renaissance, March 18, 1973," incomplete typewritten speech, box 3, folder 2, Fisk.

¹⁸⁹ Martha Jane Nadell, "Nor Can I Reduce This Experience to a Medium": Race, Art and Literature in America, 1920s-1940s" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2001), 126. Charles S. Johnson's role in the New Negro Renaissance has often been ignored or understated, though he encouraged, developed, and connected many of the movement's writers and artists with patrons and publishers. See Robbins, 53-54.

¹⁹⁰ Douglas, "The Harlem Renaissance," Fisk. Winold Reiss (1886-1953) was famous both for his graphic and interior designs and his studied portraits of ethnically diverse people. Reiss's artistic training in Munich introduced him to ethnographic museums and modern decorative art movements, such as Jugendstil, Art Nouveau and the English Arts and Crafts movement. Reiss's training convinced him that a complete artist should work in both the fine and applied arts, all the while seeking ethnically and culturally diverse sources for both his portraits and designs. More importantly, Reiss believed that distinct races possessed special cultural attributes, and that dignified documentation, especially of Native and African Americans, could promote greater understanding and harmony. It is therefore not surprising that leaders of the New Negro Movement (and especially Alain Locke) embraced Reiss, for his artistic ethos aligned with their tenets of race pride, reclaiming a heroic African heritage, and dignified portrayals. For more on Reiss, see Jeffrey Stewart, *To Color America: Portraits by Winold Reiss* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989). For an example of Locke's explicit championing of Reiss, see his essay, "To Certain of Our Philistines," *Opportunity* 3 (May 1925): 155-6.

appreciation of African art and wanted his praises,¹⁹¹ Douglas felt pressured to adopt Reiss's primitivism as an aesthetic approach. He would later recall resisting and being irritated at Reiss's constant insistence that as an African-American artist, he must translate his racial heritage into visual representations. Reflecting on Reiss's enthusiasm for primitivism in a 1973 interview, Douglas noted, "he was interested in... getting me to translate this black thing that nobody had any notion about....and I didn't' either, as an artist. And, not only didn't have a notion, but wasn't really sympathetic toward it." Adding, "...they [most likely referring also to Locke] insisted so vehemently that I finally thought that maybe there is something to this thing. This primitive thing."¹⁹² For their part, Reiss and Locke understood that the European avant-garde at the turn of the century had made themselves into modernists in part through studying African sculpture.¹⁹³ They wanted the young Douglas to reclaim modernism's inspiration and style as his own personal prerogative.¹⁹⁴

Reiss's "primitive thing" can be seen in the decorative drawings included along with his more studied portraits in the Harlem *Survey Graphic* and *The New Negro* anthology. Additionally, Reiss also included examples of his "imaginatives," the artist's name for his

¹⁹¹ Douglas, "The Harlem Renaissance," Fisk.

¹⁹² Ann Allen Shockley interview with Aaron Douglas, November 19, 1973, Black Oral History Collection, Fisk.

¹⁹³ Lemke, 47. For more on this history, see Jack Flam, "Introduction," in *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art*, eds. Jack Flam and Miriam Deutch (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

¹⁹⁴ Locke most famously articulated the need for black American artists to look to Africa in his essay, "Legacy of the Ancestral Arts," in his edited *New Negro* anthology. Although Locke and Reiss's pushing of African-American artists to look to African art for inspiration was seemingly innovative, they were actually rather behind the times and filtering their ideas of primitivism through European sources. By 1920, many of the European avant-garde viewed African art as old hat, "boring," and *too* "rational" and "naturalistic" (Flam, 12-14). Nevertheless, Locke's ideas became (and in some respects, remain) immensely influential. It is important to note, however, that not all African-American artists accepted Locke's ideas. For example, Locke's Howard University colleague James Porter was passionately opposed to Locke's argument for claiming a cultural past in Africa. See for example, Bearden, 376-7.

abstracted compositions created by free association. Two imaginatives appear within J.A. Rogers's "Jazz at Home" in the *Survey Graphic*. This essay outlines the African-American origins of jazz, which Rogers notes has now triumphantly become one of the "foremost exponent[s] of modern Americanism."¹⁹⁵ Rogers's describes the joyful revolt out of the Blues that is jazz while also noting its concomitant "new 'strut'" devolved from the movements of a black comedian, and it is here that Reiss's dancing man appears (fig. 3.14).¹⁹⁶ Nearly disappearing into the drawing's dissonant jumble of patterns, a narrow-waisted, elegantly attired man bends to the left, raising his arm and leg in concert. While eliminating the cacophony of patterns, the man's dance partner, and Reiss's version of Africanized forms,¹⁹⁷ Douglas's enthroned emperor riffs on the akimbo limbs and bending body of Reiss's cabaret dancer. Both drawings are also notable for their figures' highlighted and enlarged lips. While the exaggerated white lips of Reiss's "imaginative" may be due to the desire to articulate features within the solid black face, the dancer's moves, born of a famous comedian, takes the figure back to blackface comedic minstrel performances: with their white lips, they could just as easily be "jumping Jim Crow," as the current day's popular step the Charleston, which was also rooted in that tradition. Caroline Goeser has noted how nineteenth-century illustrations of blackface minstrels made the frozen image of "jumping

¹⁹⁵ J.A. Rogers, "Jazz at Home," *The Survey Graphic: Harlem Number 6.6* (March 1925): 665. For Reiss's "imaginatives," see Stewart, 58. The entire Harlem issue of the *Survey Graphic* can be viewed on the web at: <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/harlem/contents.html>.

¹⁹⁶ Rogers, 666. Rogers here is referring to famous songwriter, comedian, musician and vaudevillian Shelton Brooks (1886-1975). In his early songwriting career, Brooks's works were performed by blackface performers. As a performer, Brooks first became famous for his impersonation of Bert Williams.

¹⁹⁷ The mask-like face in the upper right corner has similar characteristics to the mask from Albert Barnes's collection that appears at the end of Countee Cullen's poem, "Heritage," in *The New Negro* (1925. New York: Touchstone Edition, 1997), 253.

Jim Crow” iconic to minstrelsy, with their depictions of a blackface figure carrying his weight on one knee-bent leg, while the other knee is lifted up, with the foot kicking in towards the body (fig. 3.15).¹⁹⁸ That Reiss’s exercises in “free association” on black subject matter led him to create a modernist update out of this common nineteenth-century imagery reveals the continuing insidious presence of such images lurking within the popular imagination.

Does this mean, however, that Douglas unquestioningly follows his mentor’s lead into a history of blackface imagery? Rogers closes his essay by announcing that jazz is clearly here to stay, and although it is a medium born of vices, it is better to embrace its rejuvenating spirit than protest it, and the wise are those who will “try to lift and divert it into nobler channels.”¹⁹⁹ It seems that Douglas has taken the author’s advice and lifted his mentor’s comedian up onto the throne of serious dramatic theatre.²⁰⁰ The embracing of a

¹⁹⁸ Goeser, 200. Caroline Goeser’s dissertation offers the most thorough discussion of the link between Douglas’s drawing and Reiss’s imaginative, and the links between these images and blackface performance history. Goeser, 224-5, argues that Douglas has “signified on” Reiss’s drawing, finding the teacher’s image more “fixed and static,” while Douglas obscures important boundaries between costume and skin, figure and background.

¹⁹⁹ Rogers, 712.

²⁰⁰ Locke reprinted J. A. Rogers’s “Jazz at Home,” in the *New Negro* anthology. In the transformation from magazine to book, however, Locke replaced Reiss’s drawing with Aaron Douglas’s *Music*. *Music* features a white-lipped man and woman against an abstracted background. Reiss’s dizzying use of pattern that subverts and dissolves foreground and background is considerably simplified in the Douglas drawing, which does not achieve the level of sophisticated design exhibited by his teacher. In Douglas’s new version, the woman continues to kick up her heels in dance, but the man now crouches, beating a drum tucked under his arm. This change may have been done to ensure that readers did not confuse Douglas’s drawing with the Reiss image his work substituted in the *New Negro* printing. Douglas retains the form of Reiss’s dancing man, however, by inserting him into the theatre section in his enthroned emperor. Martha Jane Nadell has carefully examined the visual changes from the *Survey Graphic* magazine to the two printings of the *New Negro*, and argues that the increase in Douglas’s more abstract images and the elimination of Reiss’s imaginatives served to increase the visible presence of African-American artists working in a modernist style and enforce Locke’s cultural call to the “New Negro.” While Douglas also created in a naturalistic style at this time, no drawings in this style are included, while Reiss’s naturalistic portraits are increased in the *New Negro*. See, Martha Jane Nadell, *Enter the New Negroes* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 61-62.

problematic medium due to its importance as an innovation in U.S. American cultural past, as Rogers has argued for jazz, finds parallels within Alain Locke's writings and how Douglas's emperor functions within the interartistic space of the three New Negro Movement publications in which his enthroned minstrel appears.

As the spokesperson for the burgeoning New Negro Movement, Alain Locke wielded the cultural tools that the era handed him; foremost, was the era's fascination with primitivism and a self-conscious search to establish a U.S. culture that could compete with the elite cultural wealth of Europe and its developing modernism. In the first case, as Michel Feith has pointed out, 1920s primitivism built from a line of questioning established at the end of the nineteenth century that had contrasted the notion of civilization, with its perceived constraints and frustrations, against that of "life," which was identified with the spontaneous, instinctual, sexual, and unconscious. Primitivism took characteristics that had long been assigned derogatorily to African and African Americans and re-interpreted them as positives.²⁰¹ Although primitivism reinforced several racial stereotypes, this new positivity allowed leaders like Locke to work to build ethnic pride. At the same time, Locke used the era's popular interest in peoples of African descent to try to awaken the white mainstream to the longstanding and large contributions of African Americans to U.S. culture and society. This in turn leads to the second case, that is, the discovery, development and championing of the "Americanness" of U.S. American culture and African-American contributions to that

²⁰¹ Michel Feith, "The Syncopated African: Constructions of Origins in the Harlem Renaissance (Literature, Music, Visual Arts)," in *Temples for Tomorrow: Looking Back at the Harlem Renaissance*, eds. Geneviève Fabre and Michel Feith (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001): 60.

culture.²⁰² Locke's writings mirror many of the issues central to Euro-American intellectuals of his generation, particularly the "Young Americans" movement as articulated by Van Wyck Brooks. In his 1918 essay for *The Dial*, "On Creating a Usable Past," Brooks argues that past racial history is only important for what the present chooses to find within it. That is, the youthful United States, rather than bemoaning its lack of cultural masterpieces, should take a greater, creative approach to finding or creating a "usable past" by *choosing* which values and cultural tendencies to highlight for inspiration in order to bring about cultural renewal and the sustaining of creative national minds.²⁰³ Locke's writings importantly reinsert non-European racial dimensions into this movement; as Carroll has pointed out, the "Americanness" of African Americans was a heatedly contested discussion during the 1920s.²⁰⁴ Additionally, African Americans were long believed to be a people without access to a cultural past due to the severing of the Middle Passage and the brutality of the slave system under which they labored. Locke's writings, with their internal contradictions, reveal an intellect struggling between advocating the natural and inherent connections between African Americans and Africans, and adopting the seemingly liberating theory put forth by writers like Brooks and expanding it to include Africa as a chosen site for cultural inspiration and renewal.

²⁰² Claire Sprague, "Introduction," in *Van Wyck Brooks: The Early Years, a Selection from his works, 1908-1921* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968), notes that this generation was the last generation to grow up with "an acute sense of American cultural inferiority" (vii).

²⁰³ Van Wyck Brooks, "On Creating a Usable Past" 1918, reprinted in *Van Wyck Brooks: The Early Years, a Selection from his works, 1908-1921*, ed. Claire Sprague (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968): 337-341. Caroline Goesser's discussion, 68-9, pointed me to the writings of Brooks.

²⁰⁴ Carroll, 122.

In “The Negro and the American Stage,” the text Douglas’s dancing emperor first accompanied, Alain Locke focuses on the need to rejuvenate serious American drama. He argues that an expansion of the limited and stereotypical roles will free not only African-American actors, but the entire U.S. national theater. He argues that African-American actors, rather than African-American writers, will provide first the transfusion of folk-arts needed to create a thriving and serious national theater.²⁰⁵ In lieu of racism against black dramatists, and indeed the seeming dearth of them, Locke perhaps has selected to champion what the popular stage has already accepted as popular: blacks in (mostly comedic) performing roles. While accounting for the prevalence of black performers, Locke suggests that the assumption that blacks are ‘natural born actors’ is problematic. Locke, however, chooses to interpret more positively (and thereby reinforce) this assumption rather than challenge it. Locke praises their naturalness over the mannerisms of “polite” (white) theater. Although he champions black actors over writers for this r/evolution, the subtext of Locke’s overview of theater history highlights the problems of the limited and stereotypical roles assigned to blacks (and blackface characters) by (mostly) white writers, propelled by popular taste for black theatrical stereotypes, especially minstrelsy.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ Locke's observations are both prescient and historically rooted. As Eric Lott has shown, blackface minstrelsy had already created a truly American national theatre back in the nineteenth century. See Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), especially 89-107.

²⁰⁶ Locke, "The Negro and the American Stage," 113. For more on the history and critical analysis of blackface performance, see: Krin Gabbard, *Black Magic: White Hollywood and African American Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004); W. T. Lhamon, *Raising Cain: Blackface Performance from Jim Crow to Hip Hop* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); William Mahar, *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

Locke optimistically announces that this expansion and liberation has already begun, as seen in the phenomenal success of recent plays like *The Emperor Jones*, which combines O'Neill's "fine craftsmanship and clairvoyant genius" with Charles Gilpin and Paul Robeson's "unique acting gifts."²⁰⁷ Focusing on the importance of these breakthrough actors, Locke does not reveal any reservations towards O'Neill's use of primitivism, racial epithets, racist descriptions, and the atavistic regression of Brutus Jones. Yet Locke then steers his racial uplift and nationalistic program away from the white-authored play, and perhaps shocked his readers by suggesting that the greater possibilities for a national theatre reside not in the serious dramatic talents of writers like O'Neill, but in the current vogue for musical comedies with African-American performers born out of the minstrel tradition. He enforces such a claim by citing his interview with the celebrated Viennese-Jewish theater director Max Reinhardt. Locke relates how Reinhardt chided him for viewing these plays for what they are, lowbrow popular entertainment, rather than what they will become, inspiration for fresh creative development.²⁰⁸ In the search for this revival, the theater will return to the "primitive," to pantomime, assisted by the genius and technique of African-American actors. But from where, Locke asks, will inspiration for greater experimentation come? It is at this point in the article that Aaron Douglas's dancing enthroned emperor appears, followed immediately by his vision of Jones's panicked retreat through the forest. Douglas's rigid-yet-

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 114.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 115. Locke had already published a description of this interview in, "Max Rheinhardt [sic] Reads the Negro's Dramatic Horoscope," *Opportunity* 2 (May 1924): 145-6; also reprinted in Jeffrey Stewart, *The Critical Temper of Alain Locke* (New York: Garland, 1983), 77-8.

bending, seated-yet-dancing, flat-yet-receding, confident-then-fleeing emperor seems to embody all of Locke's contradictions.²⁰⁹

Following Douglas's drawings, Locke proposes his source for new theatrical inspiration and reveals his narrow aesthetic focus on a limited understanding of Africa that also did not extend to contemporary African society and political engagement. Locke announces that the flowering of serious dramatic American art will find its inspiration through African subject matter, finding in it "elemental beauty," "inherent color and emotionalism," "freedom from body-hampering dress," and "odd and tragic and mysterious overtones."²¹⁰ As proof that the U.S. theatre will move in this direction, with all its dramatic possibilities, Locke offers as evidence: "No recent playgoer with the spell of Brutus Jones in the forest underbrush still upon his imagination will need much persuasion about this."²¹¹ Locke views the African-American Brutus Jones lost in a West Indian forest as proof of the dramatic possibilities of African inspiration for building a mature U.S. American national theatre. Conflating and eliding the subtle play of national identity and cultural difference within *The Emperor Jones*, Locke attempts to negotiate the play's contradictory results to forward his aesthetic program that used the fine arts to call for (and attempt to bring about) a redefinition of national self, one that would recognize the contributing Americanness of African Americans.

²⁰⁹ Goeser, 227-8, argues that the Douglas enthroned emperor's "bent-knee stance" embodies what W. T. Lhamon has called the "vernacular anti-stance," which embodies an "intellectual strategy for always being ready to move—a posture that taught flexibility." Goeser concludes that this state of "perpetual movement and ambiguous identity" offers resistance to white conventions that strive to marginalize through fixed racial identities. See also, W. T. Lhamon, *Raising Cain: Blackface Performance from Jim Crow to Hip Hop* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 217.

²¹⁰ Locke, "The Negro and the American Stage," 119.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 119.

As Renda has argued, *The Emperor Jones* reveals the ambiguities of “empire building and colonial adventuring”:

For if ‘the form of native government’ could be an empire headed by a nonnative, indeed by an American, then where did the ‘native’ end and the ‘nation’ begin? If a West Indian island could be ‘self-determined by White Marines,’ then what did that say about the relationship between ‘White Marines’ and the ‘self’ of the island?²¹²

Renda’s detailed analysis of *The Emperor Jones* reveals the play’s unique blurring of identities between black Haitian and white American that would not be repeated in the late 1920s and 30s fascination with Haiti, which would shift to focus on exotic differences.²¹³

While Locke comes close to enunciating the play’s problematic blurring of national and racial identities, he, in the end, retreats from such overt and charged questions; Locke sublimates the political question long invested in Haiti, “Can the negro rule himself?” to, “Can the negro perform himself?”²¹⁴ The main issue left for Locke is in what form that representation should take and what cultural sources should be used for inspiration.

²¹² Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 206.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 211.

²¹⁴ Hesketh Prichard, *Where Black Rules White* (1900); Renda, 207. In his foreword to the *New Negro*, Locke takes this sublimation of political language one step further. He notes that in this collection, “we have nevertheless concentrated upon self-expression and the forces and motives of self-determination. So far as he is culturally articulate, we shall let the Negro speak for himself” (xxv). Like O’Neill’s West Indian island that will soon be “self-determined by White Marines,” the privileged definition of the determining self carries political implications. One major figure deemed not “culturally articulate” enough for the anthology was Marcus Garvey, who appears only as a brief reference in one essay, W. A. Domingo’s “Gift of the Black Tropics,” which gives no indication to the huge popularity of the Garveyite movement amongst a large swath of the black community. Rather, Domingo, 348, notes this “most-advertised of all West Indians” to suggest that his popular movement was only followed in the United States by fellow West Indians, who were reacting to their experiences of both white racism and anti-immigration sentiment from U.S. born blacks. Domingo suggests that such antagonisms will go away within the close confines of Harlem and especially through intermarriage and the next generation, born in the United States. Domingo thus neutralizes the power of Garvey’s movement even though the ultimate “gift of the Tropics” seems to be Garvey’s type of mass political mobilization: “The outstanding contribution of West Indians to American Negro life is the insistent assertion of their manhood in an environment that demands too much servility and unprotesting acquiescence from men of African blood. This unwillingness to conform and be standardized, to accept tamely an inferior status and abdicate their humanity, finds an open expression in the activities of the foreign-born Negro in America” (349).

In the face of such silences and absences (such as Marcus Garvey) in *The New Negro*, it is Douglas and his enthroned emperor that instead most highlight O’Neill’s textual nuances, dramatizing the myth of racial and national identities. Douglas’s drawing performs what is most U.S. American about the role of Brutus Jones: its roots in blackface minstrelsy, the most U.S. American of performance practices as argued by James Weldon Johnson just a few years later.²¹⁵ Outwardly, Jones is “typically Negroid, yet...” inwardly, he is “decidedly distinctive.” O’Neill’s insertion of the word “yet” creates the black mask behind which the ‘quality white’ exploiter and capitalist resides.²¹⁶ Concentrating on the politically charged details of O’Neill’s descriptions, we find that Jones copies the exploitative practices of white capitalists—“white quality talk” reflected in Douglas’s white lips—to fulfill the American dream of riches and empire. His exploitative trading practices tie him to U.S. financial interests, which James Weldon Johnson revealed to be the truer reason for the lengthy occupation. Yet through his drawing’s silhouetted profile and the emperor’s bald head, Douglas even obscures a clear reading of the race of this figure; the viewer does not know if this figure is white or black beneath the burnt cork minstrel mask. Through his dancing emperor, Douglas shows that race is a performance.

²¹⁵ James Weldon Johnson, *Black Manhattan* (New York: Knopf, 1930), 87.

²¹⁶ Theater historian and critic Edwin Engel identified the “white sources” of Jones’s personal qualities and became the first scholar to invoke minstrelsy in analysis of this play when he called Jones “the American ‘success story’ in black-face.” Engel, *The Haunted Heroes of Eugene O’Neill* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 49. Several scholars have since utilized issues of black-face and minstrelsy in their analysis of *The Emperor Jones*: Peter Saiz, “The Colonial Story in The Emperor Jones,” *The Eugene O’Neill Review* 17.1 & 2 (Spring/Fall 1993), argues that Brutus Jones is a personification of the psychically-split colonial subject, both colonizer and colonized, white and black; Steen, 346-7, discusses Jones’s masquerade of colonial power; Goeser, 212-213, incorporates blackface analysis at greatest length in her argument and notes O’Neill’s assigning of heavy dialect speech and primitivizing characteristics to Jones as directly descended from the minstrel performance tradition.

Douglas's minstrel emperor inspires me to look again at O'Neill's text and reveals the layers of performance within and between his lines. Brutus Jones's lines play both on the stereotype of ostentatious black Haitian leadership and an awareness of the performative aspects of this display as demanded by the audience; both the indigenous subjects within the play and the theatergoers dictate the role of Brutus Jones through their expectations. In the play, Brutus Jones reveals that he has stashed away the money he exploits from the West Indians into a foreign bank account while simultaneously staging a big show. Chiding Smithers, Jones boasts, "You didn't s'pose I was holdin' down dis Emperor job for de glory in it, did you? Sho'! De fuss and glory part of it, dat's only to turn de heads o' de low-flung bush niggers dat's here. Dey wants de big circus show for deir money. I gives it to 'em an' I gits de money."²¹⁷ Brutus Jones implies that his subjects fully expect to be exploited in exchange for rich displays of power; by giving the audience what they want, he reaps their money. Similarly, O'Neill's Provincetown Players (and other companies' subsequent productions) reap in the "long greenbacks" of an expectant audience clamoring to be thrilled by the integrated and innovative play (and the magnificent physique of a black actor reduced to a loincloth).

Eric Lott notes that the enjoyment of nineteenth-century blackface performance allowed an audience to "become black," for the duration of the performance as they identified with the ideologies of black manhood performed by the minstrel: virility, abandon, light heartedness, etc.²¹⁸ O'Neill's audience gets to rest their gaze on the actor's revealed body. Yet, for a brief time, they were also allowed to identify with him and to explore the

²¹⁷ O'Neill, 153.

²¹⁸ Lott, 52.

spiritual primitivism of their psyches through the actor's body, with the rising pulse of the drum assisting their visceral reaction to the staged terror. For the white audience, this was made all the more powerful in that they were able to enter this unconscious through the body of a black man, becoming "black" for sixty minutes, before returning from their reverie through Smithers, who closes the play as the body of the emperor is carried out, emptied now of his racial unconscious and the audience's identification.

Likewise, Douglas also performs, giving his mentors what they expect and desire: a "modern" visual interpretation of O'Neill's play. Yet Douglas also gives more, problematizing not only O'Neill's primitivist modernism, but also Locke's aesthetic program. Great weight has been placed on Douglas's later interviews and speeches where he expresses his resistance to Reiss's insistence that he incorporate an aesthetic primitivism into his artwork.²¹⁹ (Indeed, I incorporated these statements earlier in this chapter.) Often overlooked, however, is how Douglas's statements within these very same texts complicate this emphasized narrative of a black artist's resistance to white influence, and Douglas's own understanding of African art. Douglas's statements, made near the end of his life, accomplish this in much the same way as King's later autobiography: both authenticate and question each artist's position as the illustrator of "black" subject matter. For example, in responding to Reiss, Douglas describes his first solution as an imaginative act: "What I was up against was trying to put myself back in, say, 1840, 50, 60. And try to see the world as a black artist would have seen it during that time."²²⁰ That this was the golden age of minstrel blackface performance is perhaps not coincidental. Douglas describes how African-

²¹⁹ Kirschke; Bearden, 122.

²²⁰ Douglas interview by Shockley, 13, Fisk.

American visual artists lacked a visual history on which to be inspired, unlike musicians and performers who could look to an inherited archive of song and dance from the nineteenth century. What is more importantly overlooked in this statement, however, is that while Reiss and Locke were pushing Douglas to look to Africa, Douglas instead emphasizes that he concentrated his search on antebellum America, choosing the United States as his “usable past.”²²¹ Along with articulating his cultural sources, Douglas also emphasizes that he struggled to learn to create in this new primitivizing style:

...gradually I commenced to do these little funny things. There is one of them up there on the wall. It looked like nothing to me, the people that saw it in those days looked at it and thought it was something terrific, they didn't mind that sort of thing and they...encourage[d] me to do it, wanted me to continue with this sort of thing.²²²

Douglas and his interviewer never say which “little funny thing” appeared on the wall. This present absent drawing, however, functions to prove that primitivism was not more easily achieved by a black artist with his racial inheritance than by a European artist. I noted that a similar strategy was employed visually in the *Opportunity* article “Reflections on O’Neill’s Plays,” through the incorporation of a photograph of Robeson in a suit and the drawing of him as Brutus Jones. In this article, Robeson, who had become a star actor almost overnight, also explicitly states that his performance skills were rather “hopeless at first,” to emphasize

²²¹ Douglas’s minimizing of his understanding of African art and its direct influence on his artwork can be found elsewhere. For example, in 1927-1928, Douglas earned a fellowship from the Barnes Foundation to study the huge collection and library amassed by Alfred Barnes. Scholars have emphasized how Douglas studied the large holdings of African art in this collection. While this certainly may be true, when Douglas later spoke on this period, he does not specifically discuss the African art objects and instead emphasizes the importance of his study of the collection’s modern European art. In his interview of the Fisk Oral History collection, Douglas concludes his discussion of the famously problematic role of white patroness Charlotte Mason who encouraged black artists to “stay primitive,” that he resisted her pressures precisely through continuing his study of the Barnes Foundation’s “modern pictures.” Douglas interview by Shockley, 21, Fisk; for more on Charlotte Mason, see Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes, Volume I: 1902-1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 148-9.

²²² Douglas interview by Shockley, 13, Fisk.

that the role of working-class criminal to racially haunted man did not come naturally.²²³

Both Robeson and Douglas emphasize that they struggled to *learn* to express the type of blackness demanded by primitivism.

Perhaps *The New Negro* anthology's most eloquent examination of the tensions between a consciously learned and inherent racial inheritance can be found in Countee Cullen's poem, "Heritage" and its longing refrains, "What is Africa to me?" The tensions and issues compressed into this beautiful poem actually reflect both the struggles found in the role of Brutus Jones and also surround the complicated legacy of this play: a civilized upbringing in the United States against the lure of the primitive, the tensions between being raised as a Christian against an African religion that does not denigrate blackness, and an almost subconscious memory of Africa that even manifests in a constant drumming that is as much a part of the pulsing bloodstream as it is aural.

Beyond Cullen's allusion, *The Emperor Jones* also appears explicitly throughout the *New Negro* anthology, and of course, especially within the drama section. Douglas's minstrel turns to Montgomery Gregory's essay, which begins by praising O'Neill for dignifying and popularizing black drama more than any other person. It then traces the history of black drama and blacks in drama, including blackface minstrelsy. Arriving at contemporary black musical comedies, Gregory notes that their origins are problematically rooted in minstrelsy, but argues that they are important for actually training and employing talented black actors. This argument parallels the critical silence on the nature of the role of Brutus Jones by leading African-American intellectuals, who instead emphasized the benefits of having a black actor appear on an integrated stage in a serious leading role. Following

²²³ Robeson, 370.

Gregory's essay, Jessie Fauset's, "The Gift of Laughter," while noting the importance of black talent exhibited in tragic characters, as proven by Gilpin and Robeson in *The Emperor Jones*, focuses on comedy. Yet her essay emphasizes the strategies we have seen in Robeson's *Opportunity* article and Douglas's personal statements. Fauset focuses at length on the actor Bert Williams who became one of the most famous minstrel performers. The West Indian-born Williams had to learn how to act the white stereotype of the African American, revealing the slippages and performative aspects of race and nationality in the United States.²²⁴ Fauset's essay is the closest that any textual invocation of *The Emperor Jones* in the *New Negro* anthology comes to matching Douglas's visual interrogation of the nature of the role of Brutus Jones.

Haiti, Black Coalition and U.S. National Identity

The African-American Brutus Jones performs a masquerade of (almost) triumphant U.S. imperialism in Haiti, which was under attack at the time that O'Neill composed the play, but solidly entrenched by the time Douglas created his illustrations. Yet Jones's ultimate failure in his imperial program as he atavistically collapses reveals the racial inequalities hidden behind the myth of what constitutes a U.S. American. Brutus Jones "carries off" his role of emperor rather than embodying and wielding his office's power, just as he claims to have mastered "white quality talk," in order to have become the U.S. American colonizer. His mastery is only mimicry. Indeed, he tells Smithers that he never

²²⁴ Fauset emphasizes that the energy Williams put into learning the comedic black role could have easily been applied to any other (white) theatrical role, concluding: "There is an unwritten law in America that though white may imitate black, black, even when superlatively capable, must never imitate white" (164) Douglas's emperor illustrates a moment when black actually does perform white, but the audience already knows the tragic results of Brutus Jones's usurpation of white imperial power.

intended to hold his position permanently, recognizing it as a fleeting episode of his life, whose benefits he knew he needed to reap as quickly as possible.

Since the 1970s, several critics have argued that Brutus Jones's lack of identification with his subjects—that is, he is a black man exploiting other black men—constitutes the play's greatest tragedy.²²⁵ Identified as an African American, there is an implicit assumption that he should identify with and seek coalition with the black West Indians. This assumption leads to an interpretation of the play that argues that Jones inevitably must be sacrificed, for he has denied his inner racial self, especially in his embracing of Christianity and capitalism. Likewise, Douglas resisted the notion that he *should* identify with African art through rhetorical strategies in how he presented himself in interviews and speeches. Although he did claim great inspiration in African art throughout his career, he articulated his own heritage and identification as also firmly residing within the United States.

O'Neill's text and Douglas's rhetorical strategies and final drawing in his series resist a tidy racial interpretation, emphasizing that the myth of nationalism must also be interrogated, for it held Jones just as strongly as his racial inheritance. Stripped and fallen to his knees, the emperor upraises his arms in an open form in Douglas's illustration, *Surrender* (fig. 3.16). His eyes are no longer fixed on O'Neill's approaching "crocodile god," which resembles a Chinese dragon. With head thrown back, Jones calls out to the god of his Baptist upbringing, which he had conveniently "placed on the shelf." As revealed also in O'Neill's text, this surrender is a return to his Christian roots as the emperor pays obeisance to a god above and not to the African god before him. Moreover, Douglas slightly alters his emperor's form to emphasize his rejection of the encroaching primal forest. In the previous

²²⁵ See, for example, Cooley, 81.

drawing, *Forest Fear*, the emperor's form took on aspects of the surrounding and seemingly attacking forest. In this final image, pleading heavenward in a closed kneeling position, the emperor's leg no longer resembles the silhouetted leaves with their white midribs and pointed ends, while the added hint of fingers removes the hands' previous mirroring of the jagged overgrowth.

Douglas's closing drawings incorporate several aspects of the play's closing scenes. In Scene Five, O'Neill describes the tattered and terrified Jones throwing himself to his knees and raising clasped hands skyward, begging his "Lawd" for forgiveness in turn for his killings and then his exploiting of the "fool bush n-----." That Jones uses the racial epithet "n"-word shows that even in his closing extreme moments, Jones still does not consider identification with the islanders as a possibility. Douglas has chosen to give his emperor not the closed and clasped prayer form described by O'Neill, but rather, the open *ornans* pose common to the southern black evangelical tradition. In Scene Seven, Jones sinks into a "kneeling, devotional posture" before an altar-like collection of boulders, though he quickly comes to his senses and straightens up and calls to God to protect this sinner. With the appearance of the "Congo Witch-Doctor," Jones sinks back to a described half-kneeling, half-squatting rigid posture, before squirming on his stomach before the huge crocodile god to which he will be sacrificed. Drawing on his last reserves of strength, Jones cries out to Jesus and seemingly in answer to this prayer, he remembers his final silver bullet, which he uses to drive away the African visions.²²⁶

²²⁶ Goeser, 220, identifies Douglas's minstrel emperor as just one of the strategies Douglas used to engage with Locke's ideas about the future national importance of black theatrical expression in dialogue with O'Neill's play." She also notes the broken emperor's pose in his fourth drawing, *Surrender* as invoking the black American evangelical worship styles, crying out to receive the holy spirit.

It is Jones's U.S. American identity that does not allow him to see the islanders as a group through which he should seek identity and coalition. His downfall results not from his shallow mimicking of "white" power, but rather, his belief in his own American superiority, which causes him to underestimate the power and resourcefulness of his subjects, and the complexity of the terrain, both physical and psychological. He fails in his attempt to abscond with both the island's wealth and his belief in his own intellectual and cultural superiority intact.

Mary Renda has pointed out that *The Emperor Jones's* complex national, racial, and cultural ambiguities created a modernist text that "helped to launch Haiti on a new phase of its career in U.S. American culture—for better and for worse."²²⁷ Haiti's "new career" in U.S. culture during the late 1920s involved (white) U.S. travelers following Brutus Jones into the forest, testing the limits of their identification with the "primitive" Haitian. This test, however, was not for political coalition, but in order to risk (temporarily) the disintegration of their own cultural superiority in order to experience the throbbing drums and atavistic release of voodoo. Such travelers returned to tell their tales through sensational, illustrated travelogues. And surprisingly, here again, we will find the illustrations of Alexander King and Aaron Douglas, each taking another step closer to Haiti.

²²⁷ Renda, 200.

Chapter 4

Imagining a Black Magic Island

I ain't no fool. I knows dis Emperor's time is sho't. Dat why I make hay when de sun shine. —Brutus Jones

In his autobiography *Along This Way*, James Weldon Johnson notes that many people in the 1920s were ready to capitalize on Haiti while popular interest remained high. For example, when Johnson presented his findings to presidential candidate Warren G. Harding, he notes that the senator “looked upon the Haitian matter as a gift right off the Christmas tree. He could not conceal his delight.”²²⁸ As a result, the Republican Party turned the occupation of Haiti into a major campaign issue, putting the Democrats unexpectedly on the defensive in the fall of 1920. Yet along with his series of articles on self-determining Haiti and subsequent political activism, Johnson also lectured and published on more general topics of Haitian culture and history. He particularly highlighted King Henry Christophe’s mountaintop Citadel, a wonder of human engineering and effort, and mostly unknown to the U.S. general public.²²⁹ “What I said and wrote,” bragged Johnson, “was in some degree responsible for a new literary interest in Haiti.”²³⁰ Johnson claims that he inspired many

²²⁸ Johnson, *Along This Way*, (1933; New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), 359.

²²⁹ Johnson, 352, claims to have “rediscovered it for the United States,” through his lectures and publications, which were illustrated by his own photographs. The December 1920 *National Geographic*, however, published G. H. Osterhout Jr., “A Little-Known Marvel of the Western Hemisphere: Christophe’s Citadel, a Monument to the Tyranny and Genius of Haiti’s King of Slaves.”

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 352.

friends and acquaintances to make “a sort of pilgrimage to the black republic.” Importantly, he specifically records that both John W. Vandercook and William B. Seabrook visited him before making their own investigative trips to Haiti that resulted in best-selling books.²³¹ Vandercook’s popular biography of the life of Haitian revolutionary and king, Henry Christophe, contributed to a growing fascination with Haitian revolutionary history. Long important to the African-American community, Haiti’s history would become increasingly visible during the 1920s and 30s through not only popular nonfiction writings, but also theatre and art. I will address this history in chapter six. That Johnson claimed Seabrook as one of his followers to Haiti with no comment on the nature of *The Magic Island* is, as we shall see in this chapter, much more problematic.

In his overview of nineteenth-century stereotypes of Haiti, J. Michael Dash concludes: “An ineradicable discourse had fixed Haiti in the American imagination. This discourse would guarantee a constant stream of researchers, missionaries, adventurers and tourists with a taste for the outlandish. Haiti’s predetermined strangeness, its strictly defined separateness had become the discourse that allowed it to be seen.”²³² The previous two chapters have shown the influential interplay of this “predetermined strangeness” during the opening decade of the U.S. occupation of Haiti, both through nonfiction media like the *National Geographic* and the more creative flights of fancy as envisioned through Eugene

²³¹ Ibid., 352. Both a part of the glittering and creative social set of the 1920s and early 1930s New York, Johnson and Seabrook may have met on later occasions. For example, Seabrook lived beyond his means as a minor celebrity after the success of *The Magic Island*. He recounts throwing a party for the famous Harlem heiress A’Lelia Walker in the early 1930s and having in attendance such luminaries as Rosamond Johnson, Jules Bledsoe, Carl Van Vechten, Noel Coward, the Haitian Consul-General, and James Weldon Johnson, who recited poems from his *God’s Trombones*. See William Seabrook, *No Hiding Place* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1942), 317.

²³² J. Michael Dash, *Haiti and the United States: National Stereotypes and the Literary Imagination*, 2d. ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 10.

O'Neill's play, *The Emperor Jones*. I turn now to examine one of the major results of the occupation: in "taming" Haiti and bringing the country to the public's consciousness, the U.S. occupation turned what Dash perceived to be a "constant stream" into a veritable flood of visitors, each searching for a vision of Haiti to document. *The Magic Island* is the most famous example of the veritable industry of exotic travel writing on Haiti that peaked during the 1920s and 30s, fueled by the U.S. occupation. This was enforced in part by returning occupation participants—military personnel, diplomats, businessmen—who published their own memoirs or fictional accounts: Beale Davis, H. P. Davis, John Houston Craige, Faustin Wirkus, to name just the most popular. However, the presence of U.S. marines, and the stability they were perceived to have established, also allowed a greater range of travelers to visit Haiti. Some arrived to observe the workings and results of the occupation. Most others sought adventure and the exotic, fueled by the era's *negrophilia*, in a destination where they could now know that Uncle Sam's system (though usually unacknowledged by these authors) could keep things in hand and that the picturesque natives would not become *too* restless. Members of this coterie included writers such as Harry Foster, Blair Niles, Mabel Steedman, Edna Taft, Clement Wood, William B. Seabrook and Paul Morand. The latter two are the most famous and will be the focus of this chapter.

Seabrook and Morand's illustrated "pilgrimages" brought Haiti's folk religion back into the popular imagination with a prominence not seen since St. John's writings of the nineteenth century. Illustrated travelogues, which combine purportedly objective observations with at times wildly novelistic prose, were key in transporting and propagating images of Haiti to a wide audience. Seabrook's *The Magic Island* (1929) led the way, becoming the era's most popular and best selling book on Haitian culture and religion,

reaching at least a half million readers.²³³ Serialized and also translated into numerous languages, this wide-reaching “nonfiction” account on Haiti influenced nearly all subsequent representations of the country.²³⁴ Moreover, through his dramatic descriptions and Alexander King’s fanciful illustrations, Seabrook’s *The Magic Island* created an unprecedented vision of voodoo that helped establish the visual vocabulary of popular representations of the religion. Further solidifying this vision, French diplomat-turned-travel writer Paul Morand arrived in Haiti during same period as Seabrook (winter 1927), publishing *Black Magic* (1929) just months after *The Magic Island*. Aaron Douglas illustrated this English translation of Morand’s *Magie noire* (1928) and provides his own vision of a voodoo ceremony to accompany Morand’s vignette on Haiti. While nearly all descriptions of Haiti blur the boundary between fiction and nonfiction, the late 1920s in particular stands precariously on the boundary between observation and imagination; both *The Magic Island* and *Black Magic* form double-voiced narratives constituting an interartistic collaboration between a writer who had been to Haiti and an artist who had not.²³⁵ Few Haitian scholars have examined Paul Morand’s story “The Black Tsar” in his collection *Black Magic*, while several important scholars have dealt at length with Seabrook’s *The*

²³³ Steven Gregory, “Voodoo, Ethnography, and the American Occupation of Haiti,” in *Dialectical Anthropology*, ed. Christine Gailey, vol. 2 (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992): 169-207.

²³⁴ Seabrook notes the various serializations and translations of his work in his introduction to Faustin Wirkus with Taney Dudley, *The White King of La Gonave* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1931).

²³⁵ I am borrowing the term “interartistic” from the recent dissertation “Nor Can I Reduce This Experience to a Medium’: Race, Art, and Literature in America, 1920s-1940s,” by Martha Jane Nadell. In her work, she examines the much-neglected exchange between African-American authors and artists within works that combine both visual and textual components. Following Nadell, I employ this term to describe two peers who are working within the same artistic space, in this instance an illustrated novel, with both engaging in black representation. Nadell in turn has borrowed the term “interartistic” from Wendy Steiner’s examination of visual and verbal media in *The Color of Rhetoric* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). Martha Jane Nadell, “Nor Can I Reduce This Experience to a Medium’: Race, Art, and Literature in America, 1920s-1940s” (Ph.D. Diss., Harvard University, 2001), xi, 3-5.

Magic Island. Almost no one, however, has addressed the images that accompanied these books.

Ethnographic travelogues on Haiti, like Seabrook's *The Magic Island*, and their fictional versions, like Morand's *Black Magic*, deliberately blur the line between what is known and what is imaginative. Both authors use several strategies within their texts to present an authentic and authoritative account of Haiti, emphasizing their first-hand experiences in the country in order to claim that they have finally and uniquely uncovered the "truth" and "soul" of Haiti. Yet at the same time, both Seabrook and Morand consolidate what readers already "know" about Haiti: they "know" that peoples of African descent are emotional, generally happy, childlike, hyper-sexual, religious, superstitious, simple, picturesque; they "know" that Haiti is primitive, violent, filled with mysterious booming drums, calls to hidden primitive religious ceremonies, and in need of U.S. uplift and paternalistic guidance. By engaging directly with the accompanying illustrations, I will examine how images played a key, but understated role, in constituting the body of ethnographic "knowledge" produced by these texts.

The Magic Island

Though each claimed to be mavericks, both Seabrook and Morand produced quintessential travelogues, where, as Paul Fussell describes, "the modern travelers leaves the familiar and the predictable to wander, episodically, into the unfamiliar or unknown, encountering strange adventures, and finally, after travails and ordeals, returns safely."²³⁶ In their adventurous pursuit of an exotic and even Edenic escape from the straightjacket of

²³⁶ Paul Fussell, *Abroad, British Literary Travelling Between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 208.

civilization, both authors capitalized on popular fascinations with Haiti. Their works also benefited from popular clamoring for what Alain Locke noted in his review of *The Magic Island*, “the fad for things Negro and the cult of the primitive.”²³⁷ Both Seabrook and Morand conversantly participated in the vogue of primitivism and subscribed to the belief that race overwhelmingly determined culture.²³⁸ Moreover, by addressing the topic of voodoo, their tales piqued the interest of a wide audience already whetted with stories of a supposedly sexually-charged and bloody religion operating on the fringes of U.S. American empire.

William Buehler Seabrook (1886-1945) published *The Magic Island* as the answer to his search for the “truth” about Haitian voodoo. Seabrook had several popular contemporary sources upon which to argue for the need for a definitive volume on the religion.

“Everybody has a voodoo story, some interesting, some not—but all fantastic,” is how protagonist Felix Blaine is introduced to the religion of Haiti in the 1925 novel, *The Goat without Horns*.²³⁹ In this novel, businessman Blaine has selected Haiti for his vacation from the stresses of his World War I financial dealings. Disappointed in the seemingly commonness of the island, Blaine perks up when a U.S. naval officer, stationed in Haiti as part of the occupation and longing to be assigned to a “real” war, mentions the hidden but ubiquitous presence of voodoo on the island. The officer explains, “Everybody here talks

²³⁷ Alain Locke, “Review: *The Magic Island*,” *Opportunity* 7 (June 1929): 190.

²³⁸ Lucien Lévy-Bruhl’s *La Mentalité primitive* (1922; English translation, *Primitive Mentality*, 1923), was the most influential tract to put forward the theory of the racially determined aspects. Lévy-Bruhl’s work emphasized the underlying spiritual nature of “primitive” societies, as opposed to the material nature of more “civilized” cultures, that is, industrialized white society. See Dash, 30-36; Jack Flam, ed., “Introduction,” in *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 14. Morand also borrowed directly from Alain Locke’s anthology, *The New Negro: an Interpretation*. See Carole Sweeney, *From Fetish to Subject* (Westport: Praeger, 2004), 121.

²³⁹ Beale Davis, *The Goat Without Horns* (New York: Brentano's Publishers, 1925), 17.

about it continually—all the foreigners, I mean—but nobody really knows anything” (17). The remainder of the novel sets a formulaic romance against a purportedly secret Haitian lore that the voodoo sacrifice of a white male baby would overturn the white world’s supremacy and lead to black being the ascendant race.²⁴⁰ The novel’s author, Robert Beale Davis had turned to writing fiction upon his return from diplomatic duty in Haiti; Davis was the secretary of the American legation in Port-au-Prince who cabled Washington to begin the 1915 marine invasion and who signed the treaties to legalize the occupation.²⁴¹ Yet Davis’s fiction belonged not just to the hobbies of the diplomatic corps. In 1916 and again in 1920, *National Geographic* ran full-article features that attested to child sacrifice and cannibalism in Haiti, thereby proving Haiti’s savageness and justifying the need for the U.S. “civilizing” mission.²⁴² Additionally, John H. Russell, marine brigade commander and soon to become the high commissioner of the occupation, used his belief in Haitian cannibalism and child sacrifice to justify seizing control of the Haitian judicial system.²⁴³ With popular imagination dictating policy, there certainly was a need for Seabrook’s proposed in-depth investigation. Even the briefest skim through *The Magic Island*, however, clearly reveals the audience Seabrook and his publisher ultimately selected to cater to.

²⁴⁰ For a discussion of this novel, see Mary Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 223-225.

²⁴¹ Robert Heintz and Nancy Gordon Heintz, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People, 1492-1971*, 2d ed rev. (1978; Lanham: University Press of America, 1996), 397.

²⁴² Anonymous, "Wards of the United States: Notes on What Our Country Is Doing for Santo Domingo, Nicaragua, and Haiti," *National Geographic* 30 (August 1916); Anonymous, "Haiti and its Regeneration by the United States," *National Geographic* 38.6 (December 1920).

²⁴³ Mary Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 127.

Seabrook divides *The Magic Island* into four parts and adds a lengthy appendix, “From the author’s notebook.” The latter adding an aura of academic grounding to the book. Part one, “The Voodoo Rites,” traces Seabrook’s quest to learn about voodoo, gain the trust of his informants, live amongst the peasants of a small mountain village, and finally, attend their ceremonies and sacrifices. Seabrook’s text attempts to retain a sense of vibrant mystery while also making Haiti’s folk religion more understandable. For example, Seabrook compares aspects of voodoo, such as its animal sacrifices, to Judaism and early Christianity.²⁴⁴ Part two, “Black Sorcery,” brings the adventurer to the outlying practices of a minority group, *le culte des morts*, who are said to use corpses for magical purposes. This section is particularly noteworthy for introducing the zombie, a concept Seabrook is credited with first popularizing for a mass English-language audience and which is now soundly imbedded into popular culture thanks to Hollywood horror films.²⁴⁵ Though Seabrook carefully notes that only a small number of people participate in such practices, which he

²⁴⁴ Following Seabrook’s popular comparative theology, many cultural works during the 1930s relate Christianity and Vodou’s closely melded relationship. The 1933 film adaptation of Eugene O’Neill’s *The Emperor Jones* opens with images of African drummers in the jungle. The polyrhythmic drums fade into the equally complex call-and-response song of a Southern Baptist church service. The Vodou drums, long associated with Haiti’s tropes as mysterious and primitive, are not so distant from the rituals and music of Christianity. The WPA Federal Theatre Project’s 1936 production of *Macbeth* by the Harlem Negro Unit under the direction of Orson Welles is another famous example of the blending of Christian and voodoo, folk religion and magic. Welles took Shakespeare’s vision of Christian folk culture and its interpretation of evil in the Scottish heath and transplanted it to Haiti, substituting an entourage of voodoo priestesses, priest, and drummers for the witches, Hecate, and chorus. Perhaps Langston Hughes articulated Haiti’s melding of Vodou and Christianity best in his play, *Emperor of Haiti*, when two market women banter back and forth during the third act. One woman asks another, why if she is Catholic that she attends Vodou dances and calls on Legba. The Coconut Vendor replies, “Oh, I believes in voodoo, too. Who says I didn’t? Might as well believe in all kinds of gods, then if one fails you, you got another one to kinder help out” (Hughes, *Emperor of Haiti*, 63). For many Haitian citizens, there is no theological rupture between Christianity and Vodou as the oft cited adage goes, Haiti is eighty-five percent Catholic and one hundred percent voodoo.

²⁴⁵ Seabrook neither invented the term “zombie,” nor the concept of a “living dead” controlled by a master and used for slave labor. Seabrook, however, is credited with linking the term to the concept for the first time in a widely-disseminated English-language publication. For the importance of *The Magic Island* on Hollywood horror films and the history of the zombie, see Gary D. Rhodes, *White Zombie: Anatomy of a Horror Film* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2001).

emphasizes as being acts of sorcery and not actually part of the voodoo religion, the author blurs his demarcation between religion and sorcery throughout the book.²⁴⁶ Seabrook concludes part two by recounting fantastic tales linking voodoo practices to previous Haitian Presidents. Part three, “The Tragic Comedy,” actually corroborates much of James Weldon Johnson’s 1920 investigation into the racism practiced under the U.S. occupation, though Seabrook denies any widespread marine brutalities.²⁴⁷ In this part, Seabrook presents himself as equally at home with mountainside peasants and Port-au-Prince’s glittering elite, political leaders, and U.S. Marine Corps officers. While also discussing further implications of U.S. racism and intellectual chauvinism in Haiti, the highlight of part four, “Trails Winding,” involves Seabrook’s experiences on the Isle of La Gonave, including his description of Marine sergeant Faustin Wirkus, crowned king by the island’s populace.

Seabrook’s ethnography is sensational, romantic, paternalistic, and he sexualizes and exoticizes Haitians even as he claims to be revealing a more truthful, contextual portrayal of their inner culture and folk religion. In an examination of the interaction between text and

²⁴⁶ For example, in the concluding chapters of this section, Seabrook moves from *le culte des morts* as an isolated and outlying practice to a discussion of Haitians’ general fears of the “magic of voodoo.” Moreover, Seabrook describes Maman Célie as both a powerful voodoo priestess (*mamaloï*) and sorceress, though he is unclear on how he defines and differentiates his “adoptive” Haitian mother’s two roles. This blurring reveals Seabrook’s overarching desire to retain a sense of excitement and mystery, which he perhaps felt would have been dampened by relegating voodoo to the constraints of theological examinations.

²⁴⁷ Seabrook’s “tragic comedy” is most revealed in the final chapter of this part, where Seabrook contrasts a worker in the outlying community of Hinche who was adamant that the occupation had improved his life through an ending of banditry, conscription into revolutionary armies, building of roads while a second man who lived in a suburb of Port-au-Prince noted that those improvements came at the price of Haitian pride and the poisoning of their souls—for his grandson could no longer play in a park because the white children called him “nXXXXX” (167). Seabrook states that on this matter he cannot make a judgment, purportedly leaving his reader to decide. Much of Seabrook’s argument, descriptions of the benefits and detractions of the occupation (foremost the loss of Haiti’s “soul”), and then retreat from passing judgment seems to draw directly from, or at least enforce, a series of articles written by Harry L. Foster, which were published in August 1928, when Seabrook was writing his book. See: Harry L. Foster, “That Colorful Black Republic,” *The Independent* 121.4079 (4 August 1928): 11-113; Foster, “The American Haters of Haiti,” *The Independent* 121.4080 (11 August 1928): 128-30.

image, however, it is the illustrations which are the most shocking and outrageously titillating aspects of the publication. Critical examinations of *The Magic Island* remain mostly silent about the images, perhaps considering it sufficient to note that the images were excessive, grotesque and racist.²⁴⁸ These images propelled the narrative and guided the reader's imagination to the same exotic and racist destinations as previous popular accounts of Haiti, yet were enforced and even authenticated by being paired to a text that (partly) masked its roots within an Africanist discourse of colonial travelogues behind the pseudo-scientific languages of several emerging disciplines: ethnography, social science, and psychology.

The book's textual organization enforces Seabrook's sensationalism by placing to the fore its most dramatic sections: "The Voodoo Rites" and "Black Sorcery." These first two parts seem guaranteed to pique the reader's interest, especially since the late-1920s reader most likely already possessed fantastic assumptions about Haiti's religious practices, propelled by both popular news media and novels. The distribution of the book's images enforces this revealing organization of Seabrook's text. While *The Magic Island* contains twenty drawings by Alexander King, fourteen occur in the book's first two parts, sections most easily exploited by King's penchant for extreme, primitivizing and titillating images. In comparison, only one illustration appears in part three where Seabrook describes his

²⁴⁸ Steven Gregory's article "Voodoo, Ethnography, and the American Occupation of Haiti" provides the most in-depth analysis and scholarly engagement with Seabrook's work, but he only mentions one illustration, "exhibiting every imaginable feature of racist caricature," and how its caption served to undermine Seabrook's text (187). Renda, 251, describes one "grotesque" drawing to illustrate the split of narrative voices in Seabrook's text and later, 253, notes another egregious caricature by King of the "dark mother of mysteries." In her autobiography *Island Possessed*, famed African-American dancer and anthropologist notes that compared to previous writings on Haiti's religion, Seabrook's work was actually not vilifying. King's illustrations, however, are what made Seabrook *persona non grata* in the country: "... grotesque impressions not only of the peasants, which wouldn't have mattered, but of the elite." Katherine Dunham, *Island Possessed* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1969), 4.

interactions in Port-au-Prince. Evidently it was not necessary to provide very many examples of the urban capital, perhaps because a view of civilization might disrupt the reader's fantasies of a sexually-charged, primitive and mysterious Haiti as put forth by King's images.

The nature of the drawings, however, is even more important than their distribution. Even a cursory glance over King's illustrations of naked, writhing voodoo adherents suggests that they must have played a significant part in propelling Seabrook's prose to its notoriety. In his autobiography, King tellingly introduced his involvement with *The Magic Island* project by noting his aptitude for advertising: "Now, another one of my cherished beliefs is that you can sell the American public anything, if it is properly publicized and sponsored."²⁴⁹ The selection of King to illustrate Seabrook's travelogue certainly was a shrewd advertising move, combining a "truthful" exotic ethnographic account with an artist whose "specialty in Negroes" was sure to titillate. King recalled that "everybody reprinted my illustrations" and proudly proclaimed, "...everyone concerned knew perfectly well that the blatant shock value of my drawings had had a decided influence on the quite phenomenal sales."²⁵⁰ While it may be impossible to quantify the effect the illustrations had on the book's sales, flipping through the volume's pages, King's boast seems rather valid.

Alexander King's deliberately enigmatic frontispiece draws the reader into Seabrook's ethnographic adventure (fig. 4.1). Wearing a wide-brimmed hat and shapeless

²⁴⁹ Alexander King, *Mine Enemy Grows Older* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958), 114. King later noted how his *Magic Island* illustrations actually did bring him offers from a major advertising agency.

²⁵⁰ King, 115, 242. King and Seabrook became friends after the success of the book, but King notes that it always remained uneasy at best due to Seabrook's jealousy of the role King's illustrations played in achieving the book's fame and his fortune. King, 242-44, even recounts an incident where the vindictive Seabrook may have intentionally tried to drown him!

black frock, a hunched and leaning figure clutches a cross with his skeletal hands. The figure's solid-black and amorphous form acts as a backdrop that dramatically highlights the cross, hands and the face's sharply modeled and exaggerated features. Small black eyes peer from just below the hat's brim and are nearly lost in the vertical ridges Alexander King incorporates into most of his Africanized faces to give them the quality of a wood-carved mask. King articulates the grid of the face with horizontals produced by the figure's broad and exaggerated lips and nose. This discomfiting figure is made all the more shocking by being shown riding on the back of a rolling-eyed goat, picking its way through a jumbled pile of bones. The bones are relatively uniform, and with no differentiation or skulls, it is impossible to guess the nature or number of beings from which the bones originated. Goat and rider fill most of the picture plane, with the goat highlighted by King's characteristic eerie glowing outline. Seemingly about to enter the viewer's space, goat and rider descend from a hill where the silhouettes of five people can be seen, framed by a heavy plume of white smoke. One figure crouches, while the other four stand with their arms skyward.²⁵¹ The cross clutched in the rider's hands makes the viewer wonder about the religious nature of the scene and encourages the reading of the swaying poses of the background figures gathered around a fire as gestures of ecstatic prayer in a religious ceremony or celebration. But what type of ceremony? Wrapped in a velvety blackness that imitates the style of a wood-carved relief print, King's drawings invoke a more mysterious, if not sinister, explanation. The piled bones may suggest a religion of ritualistic sacrifice. The presence of

²⁵¹ Rhodes, 31, has pointed out the influence of King's frontispiece for later popular zombie imagery. In particular, he notes how the opening scene of the early Hollywood horror flick, *White Zombie* (1932), copies the swaying forms (in the movie's case, zombies) on the hillside at night, backlit by clouds or smoke as a mysterious funeral takes place. Additionally, Murder Legendre's black plantation outfit and wide-brimmed hat seem borrowed directly from King's goat-rider.

the goat, not an animal normally ridden, points perhaps to the animal to be sacrificed, or even more daringly, invokes a human sacrifice—“the goat without horns.”

This image plays on popular assumptions of the nature of Haiti: a nation of African descendants ruled by religious beliefs that have debased Christianity through an incorporation of and adherence to ancestral superstitions and worship of spirits, which may even require blood sacrifice. The caption, “Here are deep matters, not easily to be dismissed by crying blasphemy,” accompanies this cross-clutching goat rider. The words offer no help in deciphering the meaning of the mysterious goat rider. Rather, the caption directs the reader’s reaction even as it anticipates a response of shock and possible indignation. Accepting that the reader should be provoked by the image, the caption defensively chides the viewer not to discount immediately either the image, or the entire book, until one has looked and read a little deeper. With the image having caught the reader’s attention, the caption then steers the reader beyond his initial shock by suggesting that once he has read the book, the “deep matters” implied by the incongruous image will become more understandable, perhaps even no longer blasphemous. What first appeared to be profane could indeed be sacred, but the reader will not know until he allows Seabrook to lead him into this mysterious world.

Although the caption is a quote from page twenty of Seabrook’s text, its wording and pairing with the frontispiece instigates an overt and direct dialogue with a potential reader (or buyer) of the book. This conscious awareness of an outsider, a non-initiant as it were, gazing upon a scene that itself is an outsider’s far-fetched imagining of voodoo creates a deliberate rupture within the interartistic space of *The Magic Island*, between text and image, and between the purportedly authoritative author and the catechumen reader/illustrator. Like

the frontispiece, many of King's extreme images, rather than visualize Seabrook's descriptive ethnography, create the vision of an outsider, one who is viewing events and cultural interactions that he cannot fully understand.

Images that do purport to illustrate a specific scene or portray a person, however, create a different sort of rupturing and produce a problematic doubling. For example, several of Seabrook's key Haitian informants appear in photographs that have been relegated to the book's appendix,²⁵² including the most important: the powerful and mothering Maman Célié, to whom he dedicated *The Magic Island* (fig. 4.2). Maman Célié poses in two photographs, seated behind a three-piece ensemble of ritual drums. In both photographs she squints in the bright light, but still looks directly at the photographer. In the first photograph, *Maman Célié, Voodoo Priestess, Seated Behind the Ritual Drums*, she appears before a thatched building, with a wall of standing people behind her, most looking out at the viewer, while others, looking bored and distracted, turn away. There is an odd tightness to the cropping of the photograph—several of the standing men have lost the tops of their heads, while the bottoms of the standing drums break the photograph's lower border. In the second photograph, *Maman Célié at the Baptism of the Drums*, she sits behind the largest drum, practically obscured by the instrument's large body. While still squinting directly at the viewer, here, she seems challenging yet vulnerable. Her face remains impassive in this again oddly cropped photograph that cuts off the smaller drums and pushes Célié and the mother drum off-center. She presents the drums, but not herself. Indeed, mostly hidden

²⁵² Problematically, but perhaps not surprisingly, many of Seabrook's non-sensational observations and information has been buried within this sizeable appendix. For example, Seabrook footnotes that there are numerous voodoo ceremonies where no blood sacrifice is made, rather, fruit, food, and/or alcohol are offered on the altar. Seabrook describes attending one such "typical Legba service," but without an animal sacrifice, this type of common ceremony was clearly not sexy enough to be included within the book's main text and instead is found in "From the Author's Notebook" (295).

behind the large drum, the rest of her white-clothed body and head almost dissolve in the bright sunlight into the whitewashed wall behind her, a blank expanse that seems to remove her from her familial community and pin her onto an empty page, like a specimen in a natural history catalogue.

The image of Maman Célie in the body of the book, however, is a far cry from this sun-drenched woman who matches the viewer's gaze with stony patience. Alexander King's drawing, "*Maman Célie, high priestess of the mysteries*," presents her likeness emerging from an inky abyss as a glowing fluted column with a rough-hewn cantilevered face on a block-like body (fig. 4.3). King borrows her visage directly from his *The Emperor Jones* Scene Four chain gang. Seabrook claimed a connection to this woman that was both biological and mystical, stating that his surrogate mother implicitly trusted him to represent her and her religion to the outside world accurately.²⁵³ Seabrook's Haitian contacts may have trusted Seabrook, but they should never have trusted the book he produced through publishers driven to sell more copies through sensationalized illustrations by an artist who did not share Seabrook's purportedly sincere goals of demonstrating the truth about Haiti.

The esteemed folklorist and social anthropologist Harold Courlander had the opportunity to spend time with Maman Célie in 1932, a few years after Seabrook had departed the island to publish his book and never return. Courlander's description cuts through many of Seabrook's dramatic exaggerations. For starters, Seabrook presented his life within Maman Célie's compound as secluded and isolated in the far reaches of the

²⁵³ Seabrook, 31: "Maman was an "active priestess" and "understood quite definitely that I wished to write about it. There was complete candor and confidence between us. She herself could neither read nor write, but she was keenly intelligent and understood clearly what I was and what books were. She understood, further-more, instinctively, that there was no latent intention of betrayal, that whatever I might write would not be with intent to do them harm. Instinctively she knew that whatever might grow tree-like from my interest, its roots were buried in soil common to us both."

mountains. Her home, however, was actually a short twenty-five minute mule ride from Port-au-Prince's outskirts, and many of the capital's landmarks could be seen on a clear day from her courtyard. While Seabrook spoke of the mystic and near-familial connection they shared, Célié mostly remembered him as a handsome man but one who told many *contes* (stories). More importantly, while extremely knowledgeable of Vodou, she was not a *mamaloï* (priestess). And when Courlander broached the subject of Seabrook, Célié became extremely agitated. Courlander recalls her response to have been along the lines of, 'Yes, the man that made us look like monkeys,' Then she challenged Courlander, 'Did you come to look at the monkeys?' Whereas Seabrook presented Célié as an isolated, illiterate though intelligent, and "instinctively" trusting matriarch, Courlander reveals a discerning woman who was clearly aware of her own self-presentation to an outsider, and the true nature of typical representations of Haitians in the outside world. Célié had seen the wages of her trust spent on the grotesque imagery of King's illustrations.²⁵⁴

Beyond his exaggerations or outright inaccuracies, Seabrook's text, like King's illustrations, also contains numerous ruptures and literary splittings. For the most part, Seabrook writes a first-person (auto)ethnography, though in several instances he calls attention to his positioning within the text (and the reader's position outside of it) through the failure of his narrative voice or his deliberate refusal to allow the reader to completely feel like an accompanying participant-observer. For example, Seabrook describes witnessing a man, who had been mounted by a god, speak commands and predictions both personal and

²⁵⁴ Harold Courlander, "Recollections of Haiti in the 1930s and '40s," *African Arts* 23.2 (April 1990). Courlander, however, does note that Seabrook's book was more carefully researched than most hitherto it. He graciously allows that while Seabrook had a penchant for exaggeration, his errors of fact were perhaps due to him being intentionally misled by several "informants," while he was conducting "fieldwork" in the comfort of a hotel bar.

for the community. Seabrook at this point interrupts (what is for him) his more formal ethnographic voice to elusively note, “It [the man’s predictions] related also to other definite matters which I regret have no place in this chronicle.”²⁵⁵ Seabrook, always more participant than observer, wants to explain and contextualize voodoo. But even more importantly, he desperately wants this explanation to retain a sense of the mystical and mysterious. The most prominent and oft-cited instance of Seabrook’s split voicing occurs in his account of the first voodoo ceremony that he was allowed to attend.²⁵⁶ Seabrook veers into the ecstatic and pseudo-mystical language that he often likes to employ. He describes the (sexualized) sense of terror that overcame him at the ceremony where a *white male* goat would be sacrificed. Here, Seabrook breaks his description to deflect coyly his reader’s obvious interpretation of his identification with the white male sacrifices, though creating a far more Freudian interpretation of his fear: “Nor had this any remote connection with the fact that I, a white man, knelt there among these swaying blacks who would presently become blood-frenzied. They were my friends. It was a terror of something blacker and more implacable than they—a terror of the dark, all-engulfing womb.”²⁵⁷ Returning to complete his description, he compares the need for religious sacrifice with Christianity, and then describes how several of the adherents became possessed, and in the presence of the gods, the remaining worshippers abandoned their fear to “joyous, savage exultation” (42). At this point, Seabrook’s narrative

²⁵⁵ Seabrook, 76.

²⁵⁶ Gregory, 186-7; Renda, 251.

²⁵⁷ Seabrook, 37. Despite trying to deflect the reader’s interpretation of his sexual identification with the white he goat, Seabrook’s later descriptions of sacrifices reveal similar personal identification and an emphasis on a sexualized interpretation of the sacrifice. For example, Maman Célie sacrifices a white turkey, which she holds between her knees: “But her fatal hands were still upon its throat, and in that swanlike simulacra of the deed which for the male is always like a little death, it died” (60). For a further analysis of Seabrook’s libidinization of his ceremonial encounters, see Gregory, 182-3.

voice again splits. He plays on how a “literary-traditional white stranger,” observing from a hiding spot, would have “seen all the wildest tales of Voodoo fiction justified” and completely misconstrued the nature of the ceremony. This break again calls the reader’s attention to his own voyeuristic position outside of the ceremony. More importantly, Seabrook uses this voice to indulge in a lengthy description of “Voodoo fiction” through the eyes of this “literary-traditional white stranger,” reinscribing the “ineradicable discourse” of Haiti.²⁵⁸

The narrative rupture of this ceremony and Seabrook’s description allows King’s most lurid illustration to jump into the void. This drawing represents the hidden white stranger’s peripheral observation and misconstrued impression (fig. 4.4). This image depicts what King seems to assume a packed crowd of voodoo adherents attending a ceremonial sacrifice would look like. The background contains a row of figures. With mouths agape, they twist and writhe in a jumble of limbs and torsos. Two figures twist their arms to grab their heads while a third seems to be signaling with bony hands bent into strange gestures. While Seabrook’s description does not include mention of nudity, King depicts the three female worshippers as topless. The woman in the foreground grabs her breasts and presents them invitingly to the viewer.²⁵⁹ In the lower left corner, a wide-eyed man peers from just behind the woman’s shoulder, a face borrowed from King’s previous illustrations of the

²⁵⁸ Seabrook, 42: “...in the red light of torches which made the moon turn pale, leaping, screaming, writhing black bodies, blood-maddened, sex-maddened, god-maddened, drunken, whirled and danced their dark saturnalia, heads thrown weirdly back as if their necks were broken, white teeth and eyeballs gleaming, while couples seizing one another from time to time fled from the circle, as if pursued by furies, into the forest to share and slake their ecstasy.”

²⁵⁹ King may have borrowed and exaggerated this breast-grabbing gesture from examples of African sculpture, such as in Yoruba ceremonial carvings where female figures are depicted holding their bare breasts as a symbol of their nurturing and life-sustaining generosity and power. King co-opts this pose, however, purely for titillating purposes.

frightened Emperor Jones. The eight figures, though placed tightly together within the picture frame, do not engage with each other. Rather, each stares out at the viewer or appears distracted by what Seabrook describes as their own personal ecstasy.

The image's caption has been mined from the voice of the white stranger: "...blood-maddened, sex-maddened, god-maddened...danced their dark saturnalia." This excised caption loses Seabrook's textual nuances and switch in narrative voice. Although problematic in its own recycling of Africanist discourse, Seabrook's text does attempt to call attention to the ease with which an outsider's observations could repeat and enforce "Voodoo fiction." Continuing in the text, Seabrook's explains that while his "unspying eyes" also witnessed such a scene, the adherents' actions were explainable, defensible, and even beautiful. For, such actions could be viewed most evenings in expensive night clubs where such lasciviousness was done without the sanction of gods or authentic divine ecstasy.²⁶⁰ Although lacking training in the emerging and yet to be codified discipline of anthropology, Seabrook shows an awareness of the problems of objectivity in direct observation.²⁶¹ Moreover, in "Voodoo, Ethnography, and the American Occupation of Haiti," Stephen Gregory notes that in speaking from two positions, participant-observer and outside stranger,

²⁶⁰ Seabrook, *The Magic Island*, 43. The most notorious literary example of 1920s primitivism and nightlife is Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* (1926). Additionally, several of Paul Morand's stories in *Black Magic* will give voice to Seabrook's pronouncements on the spiritually-lacking sexual exchanges within Harlem and Parisian nightclubs, while also portraying that the sexual safety valve of primitivism's nightlife, where interracial sex became more accessible, if not quite condoned, but still held dire consequences for both the participants and civilization as a whole. In a further conflation, Morand predicts that Haiti would become the next "hit" for whites addicted to black culture after Harlem had lost its excitement. Yet Harlem still remained "primitive" to the core for Morand, who notes: "Standing erect at the street-crossing, symbolic of white civilization, the policeman keeps his eye on this miniature Africa; if that policeman happened to disappear, Harlem would quickly revert to a Haiti, given over to voodoo..." Morand, *New York* (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1930), 270; Dash, 34.

²⁶¹ Seabrook, 90: "I suppose nine-tenths of what one thinks one sees in any material phenomenon, shocking or the reverse, lies not primarily in the visual impression, but in the contributory psychology."

Seabrook both identifies with the voyeur and also makes the voyeur an object to be scrutinized.²⁶² King's illustration, however, effectively cancels such scrutiny, returning power to the white interloper's gaze, a non-contextualized vision derived without an understanding of the purpose of such a witnessed "orgy." While intentionally shocking, King's illustration does not follow Seabrook in his criticism of conventional morality. Rather, by recycling sexualizing stereotypes, this illustration reinforces a system of power that reduces Haiti to a constrained range of understandings: violent, excessive and sexually available.²⁶³

This tension between an inside outsider, the participant-observer, who returns to transcribe his ethnographic experiences, is at the heart of Seabrook's project and how the illustrations ultimately function within the space of *The Magic Island*. Seabrook's text reveals an awareness of the over-determined characteristics of Haiti and Haitians when he notes, "...they [Haitians] are easily vulnerable to a certain sort of caricature."²⁶⁴ In other sections of his text, however, Seabrook seems perfectly happy to parade a long caricaturizing list; and while he will call attention to his own contradictions, this is a rhetorical strategy employed to further argue for the truthfulness of his message:

²⁶² Gregory, 186. Gregory, 169, also provides a particularly cogent analysis of *The Magic Island's* place within the historical transition between travel narratives and codified ethnography. He argues that the importance of the work lies in its ruptures, revealing "the ethnographic process in its most subversive and critical aspects."

²⁶³ As egregious and excessive as King's illustration is, one can find allusions to Haitian adherents' nudity and frenzied sexual exploits even in publications appearing in the African-American press. Clement Wood, who spent six weeks in Haiti reporting on the occupation noted that at the first sound of the drums, the "lower class natives" instantly ceased work to dance. Adding, "Garments are soon parked nearby and the dance culminates in a selective temporary mating." Clement Wood, "The American Uplift in Haiti," *Crisis* 35 (May 1928): 153, 173.

²⁶⁴ Seabrook, *The Magic Island*, 277.

If, for example, the little scene I have just described seems out of key with things which have preceded it and things which are to follow, I beg readers not to tax me with the inconsistency. The Haitian peasants are thus double-natured in reality—sometimes moved by savage, atavistic forces whose dark depths no white psychology can ever plumb—but often, even in their weirdest customs, naïve, simple, harmless children.²⁶⁵

Yet as Seabrook continues, he reveals that the deep matters which his believed insider status has given him opportunity to observe are another shifting sign, that of black Africa that “surges to the surface” to reveal an essential nature that inspires “terror and sometimes awe” (277). The deep matters that *The Magic Island* ultimately reveal are the autoethnography of a terrifically restless and terribly unhappy man who seeks familial and psycho-sexual connection to his era’s shallow understanding of blackness and the black body.²⁶⁶ King’s illustrations in turn function to capture the “true nature” of *The Magic Island* by happily articulating caricatures that reveal Seabrook’s “deep matters” to be also stereotypes of the already over-determined signifier, Haiti.

Black Magic’s Black Tsar

“Everybody has a voodoo story...,” laments a character in Beale Davis’s novel *The Goat Without Horns*. And like an answering refrain, Paul Morand provided the U.S. audience with another fictive adventure with Haitian voodoo just a few months after *The Magic Island* became a sensation. Like Alexander King’s engagement with *The Magic Island*, Morand’s work provided Aaron Douglas the opportunity to move from his *Emperor Jones* imagery to illustrate a more directly Haiti-inspired narrative. Yet also like King,

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 91.

²⁶⁶ Deborah E. Reed-Danahay defines autoethnography to be both a method and a text, like ethnography, that produces a “self-narrative that places the self within a social context.” Deborah E. Reed-Danahay, ed. *Auto/ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 1997), 9.

Douglas worked with a textual source that continued to represent Haiti through a popular fascination with primitivism.

Paul Morand's *Black Magic*, the 1929 English translation of *Magie noire* (1928) consists of a preface and eight short stories organized by geography into "impressions" of peoples of African descent in the United States, Antilles, and Africa.²⁶⁷ A self-styled *negrophile* on the order of the gregarious Carl Van Vechthen, Paul Morand championed primitivism as an aesthetic solution to the perceived repressed and over-civilized present. Writing at the height of the international vogue of primitivism, Morand employs a common catalogue of identifiable primitivizing stereotypes of blacks: childish, emotional, indolent, hyper-sexual, despotic, atavistic. His narratives, however, also betray a deep-seated ambivalence towards non-Europeans and ultimately question the benefits of primitivism for France and the "civilized" (white) world. A literal around-the-world traveler, Morand visited South American and the Caribbean during the winter of 1927, arriving in Haiti on the second of December. Seabrook himself had arrived in Haiti only in the late autumn or early winter of that year, basing *The Magic Island* on his experiences in the country during 1927 and 1928.²⁶⁸ Unlike Seabrook, the ever fast-paced Morand spent only a few weeks in Haiti.

²⁶⁷ Like most of Morand's original texts in French, *Magie noire* was not illustrated, while most of Morand's English translations were. Slight changes have also been made to the English translation. For example, the book is divided into three parts, with the original French beginning with the section "Antilles" while the English version begins with "U.S.A." "Africa" appears as the third part in both editions, while the order of the stories within each section is unchanged. An examination of both the French original and English translation reveals that no significant changes have been made to Morand's vignettes.

²⁶⁸ I have been unable to determine the exact timeline of Seabrook's Haitian sojourn, though statements that he spent two years "in the field" seem untenable. *The Magic Island* is written as if to reflect a single uninterrupted visit. His autobiography, however, suggests that his "fieldwork" was broken into two separate trips, with his initial arrival in Haiti not until late autumn 1927 at the earliest. Seabrook's first book, *Adventures in Arabia* was published in September 1927. In his autobiography, it is only after a friend congratulates him for finally becoming a published author that Seabrook boasts that his next project would be about voodoo. Challenged by his friend that "no white man can write a book that's any good about voodoo," Seabrook relates how he quickly learned Haitian Creole and then went into Haiti's mountains for a year.

During that time he recorded numerous observations in his travel journal: aspects of the U.S. occupation, the resigned nature of the Haitian leaders, the state of Haitian journalism and literature, information on voodoo, and his speculation on the meaning of race and the African-French dual heritage of Haitians. All of this he published as *Hiver Caraïbe* in 1929.²⁶⁹ The U.S. English-reading audience, however, received a narrowed version of Morand's highly detailed political, social and cultural observations, translated into his much more evocative fictional story, "The Black Tsar," the only vignette in the Antilles section of *Black Magic*.²⁷⁰

Morand commences the "The Black Tsar" with his typical opening style of breathless staccato-like sentences, before settling into long passages of prescient observations and detailed descriptions that belie his fleeting visit to Haiti. The narrative traces the rise and fall of Occide, a mulatto Haitian intellectual and patriot who decries both the U.S. occupation and his apathetic countrymen who are no longer worthy of Haiti's proud revolutionary history: "From being the people of Toussaint-Louverture, from drinking the blood of French planters mixed with rum—now, a hundred years later, to fall to the level of Cuba, of

Realizing that this was "not enough," Seabrook notes that he *returned* for a second year, during which time he resided with Maman Célie. Although excited about his material, Seabrook describes that he had a difficult time writing the manuscript when he returned to the United States. He finally isolated himself in a Connecticut farmhouse for "a long winter" in order to complete it. Dated notations included in *The Magic Island's* foreword and appendix indicate that Seabrook was in New York in September and November 1928, and the book was published at the beginning of January, 1929. All of this suggests that Seabrook's time in Haiti could not have extended the length of two calendar years. See William B. Seabrook, *No Hiding Place* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1942), 272-3.

²⁶⁹ Paul Morand, "Hiver Caraïbe," *Oeuvres* (Paris: Flammarion, 1981).

²⁷⁰ It is curious that while the section title implies a wide geographic location of various nations, this section includes only the tale on Haiti. Morand had also traveled to Guadeloupe, Martinique, Trinidad, Curacao, Jamaica, and Cuba.

California!”²⁷¹ Through Occide’s continuing outburst, Morand alludes to one of Haiti’s most severe problems: its caste system. Since its independence, Haiti has been split between the Mulatto caste, the propertied and educated French-speaking elite who make up ten percent of the population, and the remaining ninety percent, a caste of direct African descent, who are mostly illiterate, Creole-speaking, and impoverished.²⁷² Contrasting his shrewd observations, however, Morand dissipates Occide’s anger into mere envy: “But for these Americans, Occide would be a prefect, a general, a member of the State Council; and on account of them, he is nothing...”²⁷³ Despite the tirade against the educated elite, Morand situates his protagonist as a “fine brute of a mulatto,” thus assuring the reader, as with O’Neill’s description of the emperor Brutus Jones, that he is “no ordinary coloured man” (83). Indeed, Morand’s description of Occide betrays an awareness of not only O’Neill’s play *The Emperor Jones*, but also Alexander King’s illustrations for the published play script: “No nape to his neck, and a face like a staircase—the lower lip protruding beyond the upper; the latter jutting out beyond the nose; the nose, though well pushed back, projecting still further forward than the forehead; and the forehead running straight back towards a

²⁷¹ To Occide/Morand, Haiti had returned to being an agricultural colony, providing the United States and Europe with sugar and canned pineapples. Paul Morand, trans. Hamish Miles, *Black Magic* (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1929), 82-3.

²⁷² Historian David Nicholls provided one of the first, in-depth studies of Haiti’s history that took into account the racial components of this caste system. See, David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti*, 1979 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996 revised edition).

²⁷³ Morand, *Black Magic*, 83. Occide’s envy finds parallel in many essays on Haiti during this period, which frequently notes that Haitian protest against the U.S. occupation was overblown, trumpeted by a loud but minority group of disgruntled elites who lost their graft-taking sinecures to more efficient U.S. employees. See, for example, Harry L. Foster, “The American Haters of Haiti,” *The Independent* 121.4080 (11 August 1928): 128-130.

skull-cap of frizzy hair.”²⁷⁴ Both the second member of the chain gang and Brutus Jones exhibit a “face like a staircase” in King’s illustration for Scene Four (fig. 3.9).

Morand revels in contradictory descriptions throughout. Although Occide is a peevish materialist at heart, within his “sealed universe of ignorance, science and hatred, in an abstract world of excessive reading and of technical words,” his gloomy anger and inferiority complex have led him to embrace socialism (85). Finally spurred to action, Occide single handedly battles the U.S. occupation by bombing the American Club. Fleeing to the mountains, he adopts a Haitian peasant’s life, where he relishes manual labor and finds amongst his adopted fellow peasants “the sum and substance of Africa implanted.”²⁷⁵ Occide admires the beauty of this life and quickly falls into their pattern of manual labor, relishing their hard work propelled by work songs. Considering the ubiquity of descriptions of shiftless and lazy Haitian men, it is important to highlight Morand’s inclusion here of the daily toil of the rural working folk.

Eventually growing restless, Occide follows the sound of drumming to a voodoo ceremony one night, where, as a kneeling worshipper, he envisions his own decapitation. This experience inspires him to become trained in Haiti’s folk religion, which Morand describes as including out-of-body travel and clairvoyancy. Morand’s fast-moving and highly detailed narrative concludes with a vision of a post-occupation Haiti where Occide is the new dictator after the withdrawal of the marines.²⁷⁶ With the arrival of a Soviet steamer,

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 83.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 89.

²⁷⁶ Morand’s biographers frequently note that he had an “uncanny” knack for foretelling the future. When Morand wrote this story in the late 1920s, it would have been easy to foretell that the marines would one day leave Haiti. What is the more stunning twist, however, is that Morand describes the withdrawal as having

Occide becomes infected by communism, which compounds his frivolous despotism. Occide pushes his “communistic” reforms to the extreme, not only expelling foreigners, repressing marriage and the family, but also authorizing the return of voodoo. It is in this transformation that Morand abandons all of his careful observations and lets his imagination run wild: “In the Cathedral, transformed into the Great Temple, monkeys were bred, and phallic emblems in mahogany were set up, before which the young people from the schools came trooping, reciting Creole poetry. Whatever religion lost, magic acquired.”²⁷⁷ Haiti falls into despair. Since they have once again proved their inability to govern themselves, the United States reinvades, but is now welcomed back as a liberator.

Aaron Douglas provided eight gouache and pencil on paperboard drawings for *Black Magic*, one for each vignette. Douglas’s images are an anomaly in Morand’s English translations; never before, and never again would Morand’s work be graced with such compelling and complex images. Aaron Douglas’s painting *The Black Tsar* is hauntingly beautiful, with muted silvery tones and subtle green blues not apparent in the book’s reproduction (fig. 4.5). The luminous delicacy of Douglas’s tonal gradations washes over you, as if carried by the pulse of his radiating concentric circles. The North Carolina Museum of Art displays three of the eight illustrations,²⁷⁸ and in viewing them, one feels in the presence of an artist who has arrived, speaking with a signature, mature artistic voice, and a confidence that was not yet present in his earlier *The Emperor Jones* drawings.

occurred, “during the month that followed the opening of hostilities between the United States and Japan, after the indecisive battle of Pearl Harbour in the Hawaiian Islands” (100).

²⁷⁷ Morand, *Black Magic*, 110.

²⁷⁸ The additional two paintings by Douglas from *Black Magic* are *Charleston* and *Congo*.

In *The Black Tsar*, Douglas has chosen to illustrate the most dramatic and exotic moment of Morand's narrative: Occide's transformative experience at the voodoo ceremony in the moonlit forest of mountainous Haiti. As if appearing on a theater stage with proscenium arch, Douglas centers his dramatically backlit voodoo ceremony within a diamond-framed silhouette of thickets and a canopy of foliage; this closed frame does not create a visual path for the viewer into the image's middle- and background, and thus creates a sense in the viewer of observing the actions from the darkened space of a theatre. Although Morand describes the event taking place within an "amphitheatre of rocks," Douglas's solid-silhouette framing plays upon the trope of Haiti's impenetrable jungle. The lightening tonal gradations of jagged plants and human forms highlight the middle ground and the heart of the action. Here, we see Occide in a kneeling crouch, arms and face upraised before the presiding priest and "executioner," Morand's described "witch-doctors" whose costumes bristle "with tufts of hummingbird feathers."²⁷⁹ Douglas bases Occide's form on what I identify as his "Surrender Figure," which he incorporates frequently into his illustrations, such as in his fourth illustration of Brutus Jones, pleading heavenward before the African "crocodile god," and again in his kneeling figure that illustrated one James Weldon Johnson's collection of poems, *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (1927).²⁸⁰ A concentric circle highlights Occide's head, tonally severing it from his silhouetted body. Douglas transposes the severed head to the immediate left, where it appears at the center of the brightest

²⁷⁹ Morand, *Black Magic*, 94.

²⁸⁰ Douglas's kneeling Surrender figure appears alongside Johnson's poem, "Listen, Lord—a Prayer." James Weldon Johnson, *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (New York: The Viking Press, 1927).

concentric circle held over a ceremonial cauldron or cooking pot, an element not included in Morand's detailed description.

Although Aaron Douglas's illustrations are always improvisations rather than strict interpretations of a specific scene, this alteration of Morand's description is provocative. By centering the head over the pot, Douglas alludes to the belief most U.S. Americans held of the prevalence of ritualistic cannibalism in Africa and Haiti. Interestingly, while Morand includes cannibalism as the climax to another vignette set in the French Sudan, Douglas obscures it in that vignette's illustration and displaces it onto *The Black Tsar*, perhaps playing with the other vignette's title, "The Goat with No Horns," a euphemistic phrase for cannibalism frequently linked to Haiti, and particularly prominent during the U.S. occupation, as I have noted previously. In Douglas's illustration of Morand's voodoo scene, the viewer once again becomes the "literary stranger" observing from a hiding place in the bushes. King's illustration places the viewer in direct confrontation with the imagined adherents, who both invite (particularly the woman in the central foreground) and repel (in their grotesque renderings). Douglas's illustration, instead, holds the viewer at a great distance, accentuating the deep gulf between what Vodou is and what we think we know about voodoo. Yet in shifting slightly the details of Morand's narrative, Douglas still enforces the cultural cues and stereotypes that linked Haitian voodoo adherents to cannibalism.

In examining *The Black Tsar*, Douglas perhaps reveals that he was just as susceptible as any other U.S. American to the ubiquitous fantastic stories and ingrained stereotypes applied to Haiti. The relationship between Claude McKay's characters Jake and Ray in *Home to Harlem* (1928), published just the year before *Black Magic* and Douglas's

illustration, may help to illuminate Douglas's struggles to develop a fuller, transnational awareness of Haiti's representation. Jake and Ray exemplify the gulf between Haiti and many African Americans' perception and (lack of) knowledge of the country. The novel follows Jake, a working-class African American, through his numerous excursions from and returns to his Harlem home. Ray, in turn, is a highly educated elite Haitian, who has been forced to leave his homeland of Haiti because of the U.S. occupation. McKay uses Ray as a mouthpiece for exploring the narrowness of nationalistic and racial identities (as seen in the social tensions between West Indian immigrants and U.S. born blacks), the importance of Haiti as a gatekeeper to a heroic African past, and the failure of African-American political consciousness by the mid-1920s. In the case of the latter, protest to U.S. imperialism in the Caribbean faltered dramatically after 1922, with African-American leaders disillusioned by the new U.S. administration's failure to carry through on its campaign promises and the whitewashing of investigations into military and financial abuses. As John Lowney has argued, the loss of African-American focus on the issue of the U.S. occupation by the mid-1920s is the "unstated political subtext" at the heart of Claude McKay's narrative of Ray in *Home to Harlem*.²⁸¹

For McKay, this failure of transnational political consciousness begins with a failure to understand, or even know about, the Haitian Revolution. Early in their relationship, Ray gives Jake a lesson on the importance and greatness of Haiti's revolutionary history. In reflecting upon his new exciting knowledge, Jake still describes the Haitian fighters as "savage black people," and in gaining their own freedom, Jake still exclaims, "How

²⁸¹ John Lowney, "Haiti and Black Transnationalism: Remapping the Migrant Geography of Home to Harlem," *African American Review* 34.3 (Autumn 2000): 415.

strange!”²⁸² Despite emphasizing Ray’s learning, Jake still returns to the idea that Haitians are a savage people. McKay makes this glaring gulf explicitly clear in his summation of the scene: “Jake was very American in spirit and shared a little of that comfortable Yankee contempt for poor foreigners. And as an American Negro he looked askew at foreign niggers. Africa was jungle, and Africans bush niggers, cannibals. And West Indians were monkey-chasers.”²⁸³ As Claude McKay’s character Jake makes evident, within the narrowed worldview of U.S. culture, a transnational outlook was not always immediately possible for African Americans, leading to their own re-inscription of black stereotypes.

In illustrating the dramatic voodoo scene, Douglas’s *The Black Tsar* also represents the final chance for optimism in the text where an educated elite Haitian can still build coalition with the working class against the U.S. occupation. Morand’s text suggests that this is only possible with the elite Occide’s embracing of Haiti’s folk religion and heritage. For Morand, like the friendship of Ray and Jake in McKay’s novel, ultimately the social and cultural gulf cannot be breached. Occide’s education ultimately separates him from the collective, eliminating his chances for success and happiness. Likewise, in highlighting Occide’s vision of decapitation, Douglas highlights the type of intellectual decapitation thrust onto the Haitian protagonist by Morand’s text. Both narrative and illustration also model, however, the type of intellectual decapitation that popular assumptions of primitivism imposed upon all educated blacks (and even a trained artist like Douglas), dictating that they be savagely primitive, emotive, and uneducated if they are to be authentically black.

²⁸² Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1928), 134. As McKay outlines this history to his reader, 131, he himself even describes Haiti’s history as “strange, almost unimaginable...”

²⁸³ McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 134. McKay, 155, in turn reveals that Ray, like many elite Haitians, had felt himself superior to African Americans.

Morand's text was well received in France, but garnered mixed reviews in the United States. An interesting unanswered question, however, is Douglas's own reaction to Morand. Certainly Morand's take on aspects of black life must have been provoking. Even more so, Douglas, who would later join the American Communist Party, must have noted Morand's rampant anti-Communist stance throughout the book.²⁸⁴ While I have found no statements by Douglas that address this question, I draw some parallels between *Black Magic* and comments Douglas made about the primitivism utilized in Carl Van Vechten's notorious novel, *Nigger Heaven*, a book for which Douglas created advertising images. In a 1975 interview, Douglas reflected on the book's offensiveness,

But I suppose I thought of myself as being sophisticated at that time and therefore I would have gone along with it. But now I—it's a different thing, I would not, I am free from that kind and I see life differently now, and I don't think that was any help to us, that kind of thing. And yet, much of what was written [was] much like that.²⁸⁵

Despite Morand's use of stereotypes and problematic tropes, illustrating for a famous author at the height of the international literary world and who did seem genuinely interested in race relations and the portrayal of peoples of African descent was mostly likely an impossible project for Douglas to turn down. Additionally, Douglas, who was in the vanguard of African-American representation, needed to move in the era's most progressive direction. And in the 1920s, this meant exploring the aesthetics of primitivism.

This interchange between Morand and Douglas is a crossroads where two artists, who ultimately moved in completely different directions, intersected to create a dynamic

²⁸⁴ Morand's deep-seated fear of Communism is most apparent within the vignettes, "The Black Tsar," where Haiti's ultimate downfall is its fictitious entanglement with the corrupting influence of socialism, and "The People of the Shooting Stars," where Morand pairs the epigraph "Dying to rise again...--The Russians" with a story of an African tribe that destroys its village and crops to answer the bidding of a corrupt *Nkisi* tree.

²⁸⁵ Quoted in Kirschke, 48.

interartistic space.²⁸⁶ During this period, Morand's works were widely read, translated, and commented upon; although his critical reception varied, even poor reviews contributed to his notoriety. After the 1930s, however, critical awareness of Morand's writings in the United States dissipated quickly. Critical attention to Douglas's *Black Magic* illustrations has followed a similar trajectory. Although the images are less known today, in the early 1950s, Alta Sawyer Douglas noted that the *Black Magic* images were paintings "people are still talking about."²⁸⁷ Yet by the 1960s, voices had started to fall silent in regards to this group of paintings. Scholars, and indeed Douglas himself,²⁸⁸ have identified the illustrations for James Weldon Johnson's *God's Trombones* (1927) as the moment when Douglas arrived at his mature artistic voice in his now famous and readily identifiable signature style of concentric circles and tonal gradations that luminously shift at the borders of beams of light, activating Douglas's slit-eyed profiles and silhouettes.²⁸⁹ Yet Douglas actually firmly established this style in his paintings for *Black Magic*, which appear more confidently

²⁸⁶ With the Depression, Morand's financial interests in Central Europe suffered greatly and in 1932 he asked to return to active service under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He had discovered that his writing alone could no longer support his lifestyle and penchant for travel. He became the head of the official Tourist Bureau in France. At the outbreak of World War II, he became Chief of the French Mission of Economic Warfare in London. Later during the war, Morand received a position in the Vichy government as head of film censorship, and then as ambassador to Romania and Switzerland. Morand's anti-Semitism, which can be detected in several of his *Black Magic* vignettes, would continue to grow and run rampant during these years. An exile after the war, Morand was eventually rehabilitated and even honored with a controversial appointment in the Académie Française. See: Beck, 22; Berliner 291.

²⁸⁷ Hilda Stewart Proctor, "The Aaron Douglasses Celebrate 25th Year," Aaron Douglas Collection, box, 8, folder 1: Clippings 1930-1949, Fisk Library Special Collections, Fisk University (hereafter, Fisk).

²⁸⁸ In an undated, but post-1966 autobiographical statement, Aaron Douglas notes that he first "devised" this new style for *God's Trombones*. Aaron Douglas Collection, box 1, folder 1: Correspondence General—Form letters, Fisk.

²⁸⁹ Amy Kirschke, 102, who has written the most substantial published examination of Douglas, identifies his mature "hard-edge painting" as directly influenced by orphism, particularly the work of Delauney and Kupka. While Douglas would continue to paint also in a more representational, post-impressionistic French style, as I will discuss below, he would employ this signature style in his many of his paintings, particularly his illustration and mural commissions, for the remainder of his career.

rendered and complex than the earlier images for Johnson's poems. Indeed, alongside the *God's Trombones* paintings, Douglas considered his *Black Magic* illustrations to be his most successful and mature. Moreover, he nearly always referenced both groups of images together, viewing them as the set that critically established his career. Exhibition leaflets, announcements and reviews through the 1950s followed Douglas's lead and nearly always link both groups as Douglas's most well-known and most outstanding works. Yet in the 1960s and later, mention of the *Black Magic* paintings mostly disappear while the images for *God's Trombones* are placed to the fore.²⁹⁰ While this is difficult to prove concretely, I suspect that the slightly less accomplished images for *God's Trombones* have been privileged because they illustrate and accompany James Weldon Johnson's poetry, while Douglas's *Black Magic* illustrations have become ignored because they accompanied such a problematic primitivizing and white-French authored text.²⁹¹

Conclusion

Douglas's use of primitivism was an artistic endeavor full of risks for the young African-American artist. Douglas has created a lyrical, imaginative image, but one that still articulates the artist's distance from the source of this narrative, creating his own voice within Morand's text. It is this dynamic confrontation that makes *Black Magic* an important interartistic space to revisit with a closer scrutiny than it has previously received. The

²⁹⁰ For example, in the 1966 exhibition catalogue *The Negro in American Art*, the biographical note underneath one of Douglas's Haitian landscapes, lists for Douglas's oeuvre of illustrations only "book jackets" and *God's Trombones*.

²⁹¹ Prior to this critical silencing, a few late 1940s Douglas reviews and announcements mistakenly but tellingly note that *Black Magic* was written by Paul Conrad, invoking Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) the twentieth-century ur-text of Western representations of Africa (and Haiti). See, for example, "The Art of Aaron Douglas" at Chabot Art Gallery, Los Angeles December 27, 1948-January 13, 1949, Aaron Douglas Collection, Box 7, Folder 1, Exhibition Leaflets, Fisk Library Special Collections.

importance of Morand's primitivism lies within his complexity and deep-seated ambivalence; it is this ambivalence that is the true marker of the age, where primitivism and negrophilia masked an ever-present negrophobia and narrowly defined cultural nationalism.²⁹² In turn, Seabrook used his negrophilia to try to introduce a controlled (though ecstatic) understanding of Haiti's religious practices. Inserted within a text that works so hard to prove its authority and authenticity, albeit in a highly personal and even auto-ethnographic way, the presence of King's illustrations within this "authoritative" text blurs the line between what is known to be imaginative and how those images constitute their own body of ethnographic knowledge.²⁹³ In the end, King's illustrations swing the interartistic space of *The Magic Island* decidedly back out of control.

Both *The Magic Island* and *Black Magic*'s "The Black Tsar" present complicating visions of the U.S. occupation and Haitian folk religion in order to capture the public's imagination, participating in the cultural commodification of both Haiti and blackness in general.²⁹⁴ The idea of Haiti continued to be recycled, rippling outwards like Douglas's concentric circles, holding the country at a distance, even as it became further incorporated into the U.S. imagination and empire. Seabrook and Morand's ecstatic encounters with Haiti champion a romantic and primitive view of the country, arguing that it should be protected

²⁹² See Berliner; Herman Lebovics, *True France: The Wars over Cultural Identity, 1900-1945* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1992).

²⁹³ Since the late 1980s, visual anthropology has begun to address concretely the issue that no visual representation imparts a "pure image," just as no ethnography constitutes a complete text, and instead has begun to accept and theorize the constructed nature of the visual in ethnographic and anthropological studies.

²⁹⁴ 1920s primitivism emphasized the commodification of cultural "others," especially the popularizing and selling of concepts of cultural "blackness." Mary Renda's *Taking Haiti* examines thoroughly how occupied Haiti became a cultural commodity and an exotic space for the projections of desires: political, financial, spiritual and sexual, see especially chapter five, "Haiti's Appeal."

from the contamination of civilization. This stance completely obscures the political oppressions, great economic need, and the environmental degradation of the country.²⁹⁵ This myopia, in lieu of focusing on the picturesque, exotic, or extreme strangeness of the country, has continued into recent decades. Yet, as I will show in the next chapter, African-American artists would respond by traveling to Haiti to not only see the “truth” for themselves, but also to represent it in a way that took responsibility for black representation beyond the sensational adventures of a Seabrook or Morand, while also seeking cultural exchange and connection.

²⁹⁵ Dash, 31.

Chapter 5

Documenting Haiti: African-American Creative Ethnographers

Robert M. Douglass, Jr. (1809-1887) was one of the first African-American artists to travel to Haiti, perhaps as early as 1837. While little is yet known about his activities there, correspondence suggests that Douglass explicitly traveled to Haiti in order to create paintings that would combat already growing negative stereotypes of Haiti that sprang from U.S. Americans' fears of slave insurrection. Douglass had formed an alliance with Frederick Douglass, William Loyd Garrison and other antislavery leaders and is known to have worked to aid this cause both in literature and in art.²⁹⁶ Following Douglass's precedence, many African-American artists traveled to Haiti with the specific agenda of capturing more truthful and mundane likenesses of the republic and the Haitian people in order to combat previous distortions.

The opening up of Haiti under the U.S. occupation and the popularity of ecstatic ethnographies like William Seabrook's *The Magic Island* and fictional travelogues like Paul Morand's "The Black Tsar" only increased in number by inspiring others to find their own adventures in Haiti and return home to tell the tale. These travelers' visions of Haiti continued to be fixed in J. Michael Dash's "ineradicable discourse" of U.S. representations of

²⁹⁶ Tritobia Hayes Benjamin, "The Life and Art of Loïs Mailou Jones, American Artist" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1991), 139 f.n. 1. Additionally, a free black from Huntingdon and a student of Robert Douglass's, John G. Chaplin, specialized in portraits and is known to have produced a portrait of Toussaint L'Ouverture. See Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 111.

Haiti. Sensational travelogues created both intense interest and a pressing need for African-American artists to travel to Haiti during the 1930s and subsequent decades. Indeed, by 1935, Richard Pattee in reviewing Richard Loederer's *Voodoo Fire in Haiti* (1935), a particularly egregious example of the genre of sensational Haiti travelogues, exasperatedly sent out the call: "A common sense attitude with a sound scientific approach is a crying need."²⁹⁷ During the 1930s, 40s and 50s, a coterie of university anthropologists applied their training to Haiti and contested the ethnographic-travelogues that had dominated U.S. accounts of Haiti.

Importantly, unprecedented numbers of African-American artists also joined these anthropologists in answering this reviewer's call.²⁹⁸ Together, both groups strove to go beyond established notions of Haiti in order to create a more informed dialogue both about and with the Haitian people. The 1930s saw a marked increase in African-American artists in Haiti due not only to an increase in accessible and affordable transportation to Haiti, but also the availability of fellowships and grants. These awards focused not only on artistic achievement, but also projects believed to increase ethnographic knowledge and improve race relations. For example, painter William E. Scott led the way, receiving a Julius Rosenwald Fellowship to document Haiti in 1931-32. Rising dancer and anthropologist Katherine Dunham (b. 1912) received a Rosenwald grant in early 1935, which allowed her to study with prominent anthropologist Melville Herskovits, who had recently returned from fieldwork in Haiti, and prepare for her own nine months in Haiti later that year. Her

²⁹⁷ Richard Pattee, Review of *Voodoo Fire in Haiti*, by Richard Loederer, *Crisis* 42.11 (November 1935): 346.

²⁹⁸ Significantly, Zora Neale Hurston and Katherine Dunham were both anthropologists and artists.

fieldwork was further supported by an award from the Guggenheim Foundation.²⁹⁹ The intrepid writer, folklorist and dramatist Zora Neale Hurston arrived in Haiti the following year to document Haitian folklife and religion. Her initial training also had been partially supported by a Rosenwald fellowship, while two Guggenheim fellowships assisted with her year of fieldwork in 1936-37. Hurston published the results of her fieldwork in *Tell My Horse* (1938), a text that operates in the middle ground between anthropology and fiction and often deliberately rewrites aspects of Seabrook's *The Magic Island*, while also taking a complex and critical stance towards the post-U.S. occupation Haiti.³⁰⁰ In 1938, writer Arna Bontemps and painter Aaron Douglas also arrived in Haiti with grants from the Rosenwald Fund. Focusing in particular on William E. Scott and Aaron Douglas, this chapter will examine African-American artists who traveled to Haiti in the 1930s to document the nation and create a direly needed alternative vision of the country for U.S. viewers.

²⁹⁹ Dunham returned to Haiti in 1939 with her own dance company. She created a revolutionary new dance technique that combined Afro-Caribbean folk and oral traditions and dance ceremonies with modern dance and ballet. Haiti soon became her second home; She purchased the habitation occupied by Pauline Leclerc during the revolutionary period. Her ethnographic work was first published as *Las Danzas d'Haiti*, in Spanish in 1947, translated to French in 1957, and English in 1983 as *Dances of Haiti*. Along with additional articles and lectures on Haiti, Dunham also published an autobiography of her experiences in Haiti, *Island Possessed* (1969). For more on Dunham, see Joyce Aschenbrenner, *Katherine Dunham: Dancing a Life* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

³⁰⁰ For more on Hurston, see: Robert E. Hemenway, *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977); Gwendolyn Mikell, "Zora Neale Hurston," in *Women Anthropologists: A Biographical Dictionary*, eds. Ute Gacs, et al, 160-166 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 160-166; Gwendolyn Mikell, "Feminism and Black Culture in the Ethnography of Zora Neale Hurston," in *African-American Pioneers in Anthropology*, eds. Ira Harrison and Faye Harrison, 51-69 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Wendy Dutton, "The Problem of Invisibility: Voodoo and Zora Neale Hurston," *Frontier* 13.2 (1992): 131+. Dutton provides a solid discussion of Hurston's blend of anthropology and fiction, while also noting her passages that parallel Seabrook. In his later autobiography, Seabrook himself would praise Hurston for corroborating much of what he had written in 1929. See William Seabrook, *No Hiding Place: An Autobiography* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1942), 282-3.

Picturing the Haitian Peasant

Photographs and drawings of Haitian peasants commonly appeared within many late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century histories and travelogues. For example, Hesketh Prichards's *Where Black Rules White* (1900) and Frederick Ober's *In the Wake of Columbus* (1893) made sure to include an illustration or two of a Haitian country peasant, most frequently a pretty market woman or a family standing before their hut. Sir Harry Johnston's *The Negro in the New World* (1910), however, was the first publication to include a large number of illustrations and photographs of Haitians. During his 1908-9 documentary tour of the "New World," Johnston spent a portion of his visit in Port-au-Prince exploring the city's famous markets. "In these open-air markets," noted the artistically trained explorer, "there is endless material for the painter or photographer."³⁰¹ While perhaps longing to have opened his paint-box more frequently, Johnston's fast moving tour through the "New World" allowed him only the time to jot down his numerous observations, but not paint fully the fascinating and colorful world he experienced. Johnston did, however, dictate numerous photographic shots to his assistant, creating the largest early body of images of Haiti. A painterly documentation of Haiti's "endless material," however, waited until the arrival of African-American painter and muralist William Edouard Scott (1884-1964), who spent thirteen months painting furiously in Haiti from 1931-32.³⁰² During this period, the most

³⁰¹ Harry Johnston, *The Negro in the New World* (1910; New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1969), 176.

³⁰² Born in Indianapolis, William Edouard Scott arrived in Chicago in 1904 after graduating from a manual training high school. Scott studied for five years at the Chicago Art Institute, paying for his tuition through odd jobs and various prizes and scholarships, earning the prestigious Frederick Magnus Brand prize in his senior year. By graduation, he had saved enough money to travel to Paris in 1909, where he met and studied with the esteemed African-American expatriate Henry O. Tanner and at the Julian Academy and Colarossi Academy. During this period, Scott focused on genre scenes, particularly images of French peasants, laying the foundation for his work in Haiti. Between 1909 and 1914, Scott traveled several times to Europe to study and

productive of his entire career, Scott completed one hundred forty-four paintings and over five hundred pencil sketches, from which he would continue to work into finished paintings for the remainder of his career.³⁰³

Like a filmstrip, the figures and personalities one might encounter in Haiti parade through Scott's *Haitian Market* (fig. 5.1). Completed in 1950, long after he had left Haiti, Scott's painting retains the sense of a quickly rendered *plein air* image, through his broad brushstrokes, heavy outlines, and the figures' minimally notated faces. The figures and the painting's composition, however, reveal this painting's origin as a studio work where Scott attempted to bring stringent order to a Haitian scene frequently noted by outside observers for its chaotic vibrancy. Fanned out across the horizontal canvas, this market scene reads like a catalogue of body positions and types, with each figure or small figure group inserted

exhibit his work, returning to the United States for short periods to sell his work and raise funds to return abroad to continue his studies. The Salon des Beaux Arts, Le Touquet, France and London's Royal Academy accepted his paintings for exhibition. Upon his return to the United States, Scott completed several mural commissions and also received the 1927 Harmon Award. For more on Scott's life, see: William E. Scott biographical statement, application to Rosenwald Foundation (11 August 1930), Julius Rosenwald Fund Archives, Fisk Library Special Collections, Fisk University; William E. Taylor, "William Edouard Scott: Indianapolis Painter," in *Indiana's African American Heritage*, ed. Wilma L. Gibbs (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1993); Della Brown Hardman, "William Edouard Scott Remembered: Lessons From a Remarkable Life" (Ph.D. diss., Kent State University, 1994); William Taylor and Harriet Warkel, *A Shared Heritage: Art by Four African Americans* (Bloomington: Indianapolis museum of Art and Indiana University Press, 1996).

³⁰³ William E. Scott to William Haygood, February 3, 1943, notes that he created 121 paintings, box 446, folder 3: William Edouard Scott, Julius Rosenwald Fund Archives, Fisk University Special Collections here after Rosenwald Archives, Fisk). Arriving in early Spring 1931, Scott sent several letters detailing his progress to the Julius Rosenwald Fund. One report lists his "Record of Work" completed from March to August, revealing his industrious productivity: seventy water colors and pencil sketches "of market figures, old buildings, pack donkeys and details for mural work"; twenty oil paintings 6 x 10," "of landscape backgrounds with small action figures in foreground"; twenty-two oil paintings 12 by 16," "of types about wharf, market place and fishing boats including study of costumes, implements and home life"; eighteen oil portraits 16 x 22," "of distinct types"; twelve oil paintings, 16 x 22," of "Moonlight [*sic*] peasant dances, roadside scenes of peasants carrying vegetables to market, and general story telling pictures of native peasant life"; two mural sketches, "Christophe builds Citidel [*sic*]" and "Toussaint leads slaves to victory"; five oil paintings 30 x 40," "of home life..."; two oil painting portraits "of more educated Haitian types" and an oil painting 40 x 60," of President Vincent. See "Record of Work by William E. Scott, Haiti, March to August [1931]," Scott, Hotel Excelior, Port-au-Prince, to George Arthur, illegible date, Rosenwald Archives, box 446, folder 3: William Edouard Scott, Fisk.

individually into the canvas from the body of sketches Scott had made in Haiti two decades prior. The heavy brown and glowing gray outlines separate each figure into visual punctuations that, while not completely isolating, makes them also seem not quite integrated into the scene. Accentuating the formal punctuation of each individual figure study, Scott organizes his painting into three stratified fields: shadowed foreground with the greatest number of figures, sun-drenched middle-ground road, and a background white building with colonnaded porch, which both closes off the painting and frames the sunlit middle-ground market women. The framing columns and carefully placed standing figures create a vertical counterpoint to the painting's horizontal differentiation of space. This careful optical grid stands in stark contrast to published photographs of Haitian markets, where a bird's eye view emphasizes the crowded mass of market women and obscures any semblance of ordered stalls or paths through the "good humored, noisy crowd," as seen in a U.S. Marine Corps photograph included in the December 1920 *National Geographic* (fig. 5.2). Compared with this photograph's sea of humanity, Scott's painting organizes his market into orderly streams, where the shadowed and relatively stationary sellers contrast the figures flowing by on the highlighted middle-ground road. Scott's introduction of strict pictorial order reflects his goal to document systematically the various types of people in the Caribbean.

The viewpoint of Scott's *Haitian Market* follows another U.S. Marine Corps photograph, *The Open-Air Market at Port au Prince*, also included in Sir Harry Johnston's December 1920 *National Geographic* article (fig. 5.3). This photograph takes the viewer inside a corner of the market, capturing buyers, sellers and passersby from a perspective similar to the view created by Scott's painting. Similarly, the lower foreground displays the market women's various produce and wares, while a row of buildings closes most of the

photograph's background. The columns from the numerous porches and balconies also create a vertical pattern that highlights the stillness of many of the standing figures. Unlike Scott's painting, however, this photograph makes the viewer aware of her interloper status, for most of the passing figures and market women pause in their activities to turn and stare back at the viewer. Although the *National Geographic's* caption emphasizes the "extremely picturesque" nature of this scene, inviting the reader to partake in a touristic encounter, the intense and stolid return gazes of the Haitians do not allow the viewer to enter the image without questioning the nature and exchange of the camera's eye; provided by the U.S. Marine Corps, this photograph attempts to display the picturesque mundane as a sign of the peace restored to Haiti through the U.S. occupation. (The caption to the "bird's eye view" photograph of the Port-au-Prince market makes this explicit: "... A few policemen stroll about, but their services are seldom required to maintain order. In the old days the place was permeated with soldiers, who exacted [a] heavy toll from the market people."³⁰⁴) Their intent gazes, however, make one aware of the intrusive nature of the camera set up to record their morning routines by a representative of a foreign occupier not necessarily welcomed in their midst.

In sharp contrast, Scott arranges his bustling market figures to create sight lines that look mostly inward or across his composition—almost anywhere but out at the viewer. The passing young market woman who regally sits astride her donkey provides the most notable exception. Scott ensures that the viewer quickly notices this engaging woman through her central position, architectural framing, and highlighting with sunlight, a white dress, bright

³⁰⁴ Harry Johnston, "Haiti, the Home of Twin Republics," *National Geographic* 38.6 (December, 1920): 495.

red head scarf, and a bundle on her head, which creates a halo around her out-turned face. Whereas the photograph's multiple faces stonily make the viewer aware of her outsider status, the less-intimidating solitary direct gaze of Scott's alluring market woman invites the viewer into the painting.

While the U.S. Marine Corps photograph reflects Haitians' awareness of the intrusion of the camera's eye, Scott's painting reflects the discreetness with which he gathered impressions of the community surrounding him. The need for the foreign documentarian's respectful discretion and even permission to record likenesses of Haitians increased with each passing year of the U.S. occupation; Haitians had become increasingly aware of the number of not only sensationalized but also outright racist representations being "directly observed" and swiftly translated back to the United States.³⁰⁵ While William Seabrook's *The Magic Island* (1929) created the most well-known example of "documentation" gone awry, many Haitians had already become hyper-aware of problematic representations years before. For example, white travel writer Blair Niles arrived in Haiti in 1925 and published a description of her experiences and a romantic but remarkably non-sensationalistic analysis of Haitian culture in *Black Haiti: A Biography of Africa's Eldest Daughter* the following year. In the opening of her book, Niles describes viewing a young Haitian boy earnestly practicing a vocabulary list of French words. "I cried out to the photographer that I must have him," announces Niles. But before her husband Robert Niles Jr. could snap the photograph, a

³⁰⁵ The Euro-American chemist, travel lecturer and writer Mable Steedman complained in her own 1939 book on Haiti that Haitians widely distrusted whites suspected to be writers and journalists due to the number of sensational stories published. Mabel Steedman, *Unknown to the World: Haiti* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1939), 249. She diagnoses, however, that such sensational exaggerations are the almost inevitable results of the author's race: "...a white person has to strongly resist the almost overwhelming temptation to exaggerate when describing Haiti." Steedman concludes, "All the local conditions exert a cumulative effect and act very strongly upon the imagination" (246).

“little mourning mulatto” interrupted the scene and vehemently protested: ‘I will not have the child put on a post card and labeled a ‘monkey’! That is why you want the picture. And I will not have it!’³⁰⁶ Although Niles does not get her photograph, her introduction reveals both the possessive act of collecting Haitian types (“I must have him...”) and the awareness of the Haitian elite of the lucrative publishing industry of racist depictions within the United States, and their individual acts of resistance to the collecting of Haitian types. Although clearly a compositional strategy, the ease with which the viewer feels invited into many of Scott’s Haitian paintings perhaps reflects how Scott felt “at home” within Haiti and the community of people with which he interacted. Moreover, as a person of color, Scott may have found that he could engender the trust of his subjects more quickly than a white visitor, like Blair Niles.³⁰⁷

Scott sent numerous letters back to African-American George Robert Arthur (1879-1950), who was at the time the Julius Rosenwald Fund’s Associate for Negro Welfare, that reveal both his experiences in Haiti and his working methods. Walking an average of ten miles a day through the city and neighboring countryside, Scott painted numerous “market-place backgrounds,” which of all of Haiti’s dramatic terrain and scenery, he found the most interesting. This was because only within the market could one view a diverse range of

³⁰⁶ Blair Niles, *Black Haiti: A Biography of Africa's Eldest Daughter* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926), 9-10. For more on Niles and a careful analysis of her work, see, Mary Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 238-46.

³⁰⁷ Anthropologist and famed African-American dancer Katherine Dunham would later describe the importance of her skin color in allowing Haitians to accept her into the social structures of their culture in ways not possible for her white male predecessors. Dunham identified herself as “noir” within Haiti’s social color spectrum, “not exactly the color black, but the quality of belonging with or being at ease with black people when in the hills or plains or anywhere and scrambling through daily life along with them.” Katherine Dunham, *Island Possessed* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1969), 4.

Haitians, which he added to his backgrounds once he had returned to his studio.³⁰⁸ Yet Scott also reveals his need for stealth in collecting images of Haitians: “Almost every type is there [at the market] but they are might hard to get. I *steal* little pencil sketches there and then work them up in the studio.”³⁰⁹ Such furtive and quick recording methods explains in part why the facial features are often absent or indeterminate in many of Scott’s paintings, regardless if he painted them in Haiti or decades later. In general, Scott preferred to capture the body positions and clothing of a representative type of Haitian—market woman, peasant child, manual laborer, fisherman—than individual likenesses, particularly in his paintings that portray figures at a slight distance from the viewer.

Scott’s description also reveals his awareness of how his presence could disrupt the activities of those he observes and he seems careful not to offend the people by overtly taking their likenesses. (One wonders how successful Scott actually was in surreptitiously creating sketches; as a foreigner, but one who did not appear to be attached to the U.S. military occupation or to a business venture, his activities must have sparked curiosity, particularly in the smaller mountainside towns that he visited.) Scott clearly focuses on capturing an accurate, albeit general, depiction of Haitians within their community. His matching of a “type of head” to a background, however, creates a sense of Scott as an artist-naturalist who still approaches Haitians as exotic creatures who must be inserted into their specific habitat and not as contemporary people with individual subjectivities. Scott does note that he did also ask permission to make more detailed studies, inviting people to his studio for portrait

³⁰⁸ William E. Scott to George Arthur, 20 May 1931, Rosenwald Archives, box 446, folder 3, Fisk. Back in his studio on the top floor of the Port-au-Prince Hotel Excelsior, Scott describes how he attempts to match his recorded head type to a previously painted background in which that figure would have appeared.

³⁰⁹ Italics added. William E. Scott to George Arthur, 20 May 1931, *ibid.*

sittings.³¹⁰ Yet even the language of recruiting sitters also takes on that of a naturalist game hunter: "...I have had a wonderful trip hunting through the mountains for types and getting them to pose for me. It has been one tough job but a very interesting one and the experiences I have had, have been almost 'the kind you read about.'"³¹¹ Scott's distancing and objectifying language, however, should be read in light of both his announced personal goals for his project in Haiti, and as articulating the type of projects favored and approved by the Julius Rosenwald Foundation, which provided Scott funding for his thirteen months in Haiti.

In August 1930, one year after *The Magic Island* attained its best-seller notoriety as an authoritative documentation of Haitians and their culture, William E. Scott applied to the newly reorganized and expanded Julius Rosenwald Fund for a fellowship designed to support both projects to improve race relations and promising African-American researchers and artists.³¹² Scott's application proposal outlined an ambitious plan to document the "types of

³¹⁰ William E. Scott closes his letter to George Arthur, *ibid.*, by excitedly noting that an old man, estimated to be eighty-seven years old and who will pose with a voodoo drum, has just arrived for his sitting.

³¹¹ William E. Scott, Hotel Excelsior, Port-au-Prince, to George Arthur, illegible date, *ibid.* Considering my previous overview of the nature of publications on Haiti, one wonders what Scott may have read. But his passage also exposes that even in experiencing Haiti first hand, one still resorts to a preceding body of descriptions in order to articulate individual experiences to a person who has not traveled to Haiti. As Scott's letter reveals, one does not need to name this body of travel discourse—it is enough to invoke it generally, 'the kind you read about.'

³¹² Julius Rosenwald (1862-1932) became the president of Sears, Roebuck and Company in 1909. After meeting Booker T. Washington in 1911, Rosenwald devoted his philanthropic interests to not only economically disadvantaged whites, but also African-American interests and race relations. In 1928, Edwin Rogers Embree (1883-1950) became president, reorganizing the Rosenwald Fund and its initial program of building schools and community centers by expanding it to include not only teacher training and Negro leadership initiatives, but also fellowships for promising researchers and artists. Sculptor Augusta Savage (1892-1962) was one of the earliest African-American artists to benefit from the restructured Rosenwald Fund, and may have even prompted the creation of the Fund's program of African-American fellowships, the details of which were established in April 1929 by James Weldon Johnson and Embree. Julius Rosenwald believed that the generation that had created the Sears, Roebuck and Company's wealth should be the ones to benefit from it. To this end, he stipulated that interest and principle of the Fund be spent within twenty-five years of his death; Edwin Embree closed the Fund in 1948. From its reorganization in 1929 until its closure in 1948, the Fund awarded around one thousand fellowships to African Americans. See, "Scope Note," Julius Rosenwald Fund Archives, Fisk; Theresa Leininger-Miller, *New Negro Artists in Paris: African American Painters and*

Negroes and their characteristics” felt to retain many aspects of their African ancestors in the Caribbean.³¹³ Scott argued that aspects of these people and their communities reflect their living African inheritance and should be “preserved for posterity.” Scott emphasized that such a project had never been attempted in a systematic way. While conceding that the beauty of the tropics would certainly further stimulate inspiration, Scott pitched his project to the Rosenwald Fund committee based on the anthropological significance and pressing need for objective documentation. Moreover, Scott notes that at the end of his proposed two-year project, he would be able to complete public murals of his documented “types and historical settings,” and argued: “These decorations would be a source of inspiration and encouragement to the race, particularly our youth, as well as a means of better understanding, engendering respect of other races, and thereby opening the doors of opportunity.”

The Julius Rosenwald Fund reviewed Scott’s plan favorably.³¹⁴ In examining Scott’s proposed project, several aspects probably caught the Fund’s attention. To begin, Scott’s plan took advantage of the rapidly growing interest in the proving and documenting of African survivals in the New World. By additionally noting the need to “preserve for

Sculptors in the City of Light, 1922-1934 (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 177.

³¹³ William E. Scott to the Rosenwald Fund, August 11, 1930, Rosenwald Archives, box 446, folder 3: William Edouard Scott, Fisk.

³¹⁴ This was not the first grant awarded by the Julius Rosenwald Fund to African-American artists for study in Haiti. In the summer of 1928, writer John Matheus and composer Clarence Cameron White traveled to Haiti with grants from both the Rosenwald Fund and the Harmon Foundation in order to research Haiti’s culture, folklore and history for their opera *Ouanga* on the life of Haitian revolutionary and first head of state, Jean-Jacques Dessalines. The Rosenwald Fund and its representatives had a lengthy and prominent relationship with Haiti. Fund president Edwin Embree became an invited member of the Committee of the Institut Haitiano-Americain in 1943, an organization dedicated to the improvement of Haiti through dialogue and action with strategic U.S. social, cultural and educational agencies and the promotion of Haiti-U.S. interactions. Additionally, Embree and two other members of the Fund traveled to Haiti, acting as advisors to the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. See, Burton Fowler to Edwin Embree, 18 November 1943, and Edwin Embree, 29 December 1944, Rosenwald Archives, box 208, folder 11, Fisk.

posterity” the African-descended peoples and their cultures visually, Scott also introduces an urgency to his project, implying that these people must be documented before they disappear. Indeed, Fund representative George Arthur would later write to Mary Bettie Brady of the Harmon Foundation to solicit an exhibition of Scott’s Haitian paintings upon his return, explaining: “The purpose of the fellowship Mr. Scott received was to give him an opportunity to paint some of the fast disappearing types of Negro life in one of the islands in the Caribbean....I believe that among the one hundred or more canvasses he painted in Haiti, there will be a goodly collection of outstanding Negro types.”³¹⁵ One wonders how exactly these Caribbean peoples, with their increasing populations, were disappearing. A perusal of many travel writers to Haiti under the U.S. occupation, such as William Seabrook and Blair Niles, however, quickly reveals an overarching fear: Haiti, and presumably other African-descended Caribbean cultures, is at great risk of losing its soul as the benevolence of U.S. influence introduced too much “civilization” into the primitive yet picturesque Caribbean. Scott’s proposal also tapped a nineteenth- and early twentieth-century concern that individual ethnic and folk traditions were dying out, particularly the European peasantry and North America’s Native Americans. Of course this fear did not necessarily lead to attempts to preserve these cultures, but did create a boom in paintings and photographs of representative types from these communities.³¹⁶ Additionally, the Fund’s review committee may have felt Scott particularly suited to tackle the subject of documenting Afro-Caribbean cultures in

³¹⁵ George Arthur to Mary Bettie Brady, January 6, 1932, Rosenwald Archives, box 446, folder 3, William Edouard Scott, Fisk.

³¹⁶ This type of “salvage anthropology” was one of the driving beliefs behind many artistic documentations of New World minorities, such as Winold Reiss’s portraits of Native Americans, African Americans and other immigrant racial types. See, for example, Jeffrey C. Stewart, *To Color America: Portraits by Winold Reiss* (Washington City: Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Portrait Gallery, 1989), 18.

general, and Haiti in particular, for not only was Scott a trained and talented artist, but as an African American, Haiti had long been considered the jurisdiction of African Americans and a site in which they should take particular interest. Finally, in outlining his goal of public murals as a specific outcome of his project, Scott incorporated a public outreach component into his plan, which he explicitly believed would bring greater race understanding, not only of U.S. Americans towards Haitians, but also between races within the United States as his murals would also model the artistic capabilities of African Americans.

While quickly accepted by the Rosenwald Fund, Scott's ambitious plan underwent several refinements. Interestingly, Scott listed only Cuba, Jamaica and Martinique as specific locations for study in his initial proposal with the goal of capturing a range of types from former Spanish, English and French colonial possessions. In this initial proposal, Martinique, not Haiti, fulfills the documentation of the Afro-French Caribbean. It is unclear exactly how Haiti became introduced into his project and when it came to the fore as the only country to be studied. The shift to Haiti may have been due to contacts in New York City, for Benjamin Vincent, New York Haitian Counsel and brother of the then Haitian President Sténio Vincent, accompanied Scott to Haiti and assisted in getting the artist settled in Port-au-Prince.³¹⁷ In January 1931, Scott writes that he will shortly sail for Haiti, arriving with a year's supply of paints, paper and canvases. Yet even at this late date, Scott notes his intent to begin painting in Port-au-Prince (to capture studies of "the French-type Negro") but move on to Jamaica "to complete my studies."³¹⁸ His plan's alteration most likely resulted from the

³¹⁷ Della Brown Hardman, "William Edouard Scott Remembered: Lessons from a Remarkable Life" (Ph.D. diss., Kent State University, 1994), 137-8.

³¹⁸ Scott to George Arthur, 20 January 1931, Rosenwald Archives, box 446, folder 3, William Edouard Scott, Fisk.

Fund dictating a more realistic project with money for one year. Scott's original application requested support for two years, and along with his documentation in the Caribbean, Scott planned his resulting mural project to include also scenes from Morocco where slave boats to the Caribbean had been launched. In the fall of 1931, Scott wrote again to the Rosenwald Fund to solicit money for a second year of support. His renewal proposal reveals that he had not given up the prospect of traveling to Africa, and French Morocco in particular, as the concluding segment for his documentation of Haiti. He argues that portrait types of Africans painted from the area that he believed the ancestors of the great General Toussaint L'Ouverture to have originated would complete the set of distinct types that he had already painted, rounding out his mural project, and could be "preserved permanently for historic value."³¹⁹ The Fund did not renew his request and Scott never fulfilled his dream of traveling to Africa, or creating a monumental mural cycle of his gathered range of African-descended types set against prominent Caribbean landmarks, such as Christophe's citadel, and prominent historical events, such as a record of slavery in the Caribbean and Toussaint leading the Haitian Revolution.

Without a second year of funding, Scott also never completed what would have been another landmark project in the history of U.S. representations of Haiti. Scott indeed wanted his experiences to be 'the kind you read about,' except that his book would not have included sensationalized and exotic images of "primitive" Haitians and voodoo worship. Scott wanted

³¹⁹ The Fund probably again rejected Scott's African extension because his plan and location seemed rather ill-defined and ill-prepared. His sources for focusing on French Morocco in regards to the famous Haitian Revolutionary Toussaint are unknown. Histories of Toussaint frequently mention that he was descended from a King of the "Arada" tribe in West Africa. Yet these accounts often mention that his parents had arrived from Africa on a Portuguese slave ship, and not one that had departed from Morocco in north Africa. Practically speaking, however, it is clear that Scott wanted to extend his documentary skills to much maligned Africa and that his knowledge of French through his previous travels would have made traveling to French-occupied Africa more accessible.

to publish not only a description of his year-long experiences, but also lavishly illustrate the book with his own paintings of the Haitian people. Such a book, illustrated with careful renderings of everyday life in Haiti, certainly would have been unique for the time. Scott intended to collaborate on the book project with his wife, Esther Scott, who would have joined him in Haiti that December. Scott states that they already had found a willing publisher and that the proceeds from the book would be used to pay for photo reproductions of his proposed mural project, which he would then distribute to schools, “thereby stimulating pride of achievement in the Negro students.” While he had hoped to engender race pride, and improve U.S. understandings of Haiti through his public murals and a wide-circulating collection of his paintings in book format, Scott contented himself with influencing fellow black artists (both Haitian and African-American) and a more limited number of viewers by continuing to exhibit (and create) paintings of Haiti for the remainder of his career.

Importantly, a children’s book published the year after Scott’s time in Haiti fulfilled many of Scott’s uncompleted goals. Recently returned from Haiti in 1931, Langston Hughes contacted his longtime friend since their days in Harlem, Arna Wendell Bontemps, to collaborate on a children’s book. Hughes contributed his new first-hand knowledge of Haiti while Bontemps provided his expertise in writing for children.³²⁰ In *Popo and Fifina*, Hughes and Bontemps consciously created a book that informed both children and adults about the realities of Haitian life in a beautifully written but non-sensationalistic or sentimental way.

³²⁰ Each writer worked on alternative drafts, with Hughes then visiting the Bontemps family to complete together the final version. Langston Hughes to Margaret Simmons, 9 September 1939, Julius Rosenwald Fund Archives Microfilm, roll 42, box 250, folder 5, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans (hereafter Amistad).

Rather than a linear narrative, the book captures a series of carefully crafted episodes from the daily events in the life of an eight-year-old Haitian boy, Popo, and his ten-year-old sister, Fifina. Bontemps and Hughes's collaboration draws the reader into the intimate details of family life in Haiti: patterns of speech, gender roles, details of a single-room household, the Haitian diet and cooking practices, daily chores. Published at the height of the Depression era, *Popo and Fifina* probably resonated with readers as its episodes demonstrated the scarcity of basic staples and monetary resources typically taken for granted in the United States, though now felt more acutely during the 1930s. Published in 1932 by Macmillan, the era's most prestigious children's book publisher, *Popo and Fifina* garnered accolades and gained widespread popularity, remaining on the publisher's print run for over two decades. The book was even translated into several languages, with a French edition published in Haiti and circulated to Haitian schools.³²¹

Correspondence retained in the personal papers of Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps reveal a tension between the authors' desires to describe carefully and informatively everyday life in Haiti, and the publisher's pushing to make the book more alluring and colorful, and the Haitian characters more fun-loving. While agreeing with some of the publisher's suggestions, Bontemps stringently argued against the rewriting of the characters to be more mirthful, though Hughes would offer a few additionally humorous passages to accommodate the publisher.³²² The Hughes and Bontemps's concern for an

³²¹ Bontemps enthusiastically allowed Macmillan to release the book to the Haitian publisher for a nominal fee, flattered that Haitian interest testified to the authenticity of the book and excited that it would be used in the schools of Haiti. Arna Bontemps to Doris S. Patee, 8 September 1942, Arna Wendell Bontemps Papers, box 19, folder Macmillan Co., Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University (hereafter Syracuse); Arna Bontemps to Rene Piquion, 27 May 1942, Arna Wendell Bontemps Papers, box 23, *ibid.*

³²² During the revision stage, a Macmillan representative wrote to Bontemps, pushing: "I still feel that the first three chapters are the least alluring in spite of thoroughly suitable subject mater. It is here that you

accurate and not exotic presentation extended also to the selection of the book's illustrator and illustrations. With the authors' approval, rising African-American illustrator and cartoonist E. Scott Campbell created the book's illustrations based on photographs taken by Hughes in 1931 while on his trip.³²³ *Popo and Fifina* was later adapted into a play for children's theatre in Chicago, which Bontemps hoped would not only further current interest in Latin America and the Caribbean but also promote "good race relations in schools."³²⁴ In the end, the Bontemps-Hughes collaboration fulfilled the educational and school-outreach component Scott had envisioned for his own Haiti book and mural project.

Like the intimate and mundane details captured within *Popo and Fifina*'s highly descriptive text, Scott was not content to observe Haitians from a distance. Neither did he engage only with Haiti's educated elite. Indeed, although he was befriended by Benjamin

sound most conscious of writing a book which is to describe a foreign place. I feel that this informative attitude can easily be edited out and that even more colorful detail can be put in..." The editor later adds, "May I tell you frankly that the following adverse criticism came up: 'the love of fun is one of the first things that strikes a visitor in Haiti. These children never seem to laugh or to say the amusing, illogical things that the real Haitian children say.'" Louise H. Seaman, Children's Book Department, Macmillan Co., to Arna Bontemps, 2 February 1932, Langston Hughes Papers, box 17, folder 385, James Weldon Johnson Mss 26, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (hereafter Yale). Bontemps responded, "We are not struck with that quality in the folk of the West Indies. They seem rather serious compared with American Negroes. And that goes for the children as well." Arna Bontemps to Louise Seaman, 5 February 1932, *ibid.* Langston Hughes offered a compromise by adding a brief humorous passage about Popo's encounter with a goat in the rain, and some additional "colorful details." Langston Hughes to Arna Bontemps, n.d., Langston Hughes Papers, box 17, folder 35, *ibid.*

³²³ Louise H. Seaman, Children's Book Department, Macmillan Co., to Arna Bontemps, 2 February 1932, Langston Hughes Papers, box 17, folder 385, James Weldon Johnson Mss 26, Yale. While it is unclear if Campbell had yet visited Haiti, he would travel there at some point prior to 1938, as he provides letters of introduction to his acquaintances in Haiti for Aaron Douglas and Arna Bontemps's research trip in the fall of 1938. E. Simms Campbell to Col. André, 30 August 1938, folder: Campbell, Elmer Simms, Arna Wendell Bontemps Papers, Syracuse. For a recent review of the book that includes substantial passages from the text, see, Bob Corbett, review of *Popo and Fifina*: <<http://www.webster.edu/~corbetre/personal/reading/hughes-popo.html>>. A successful commercial illustrator for numerous publications, such as *Esquire*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Opportunity*, Campbell would also later illustrate a collection of Haitian poetry, *We Who Die & Other Poems* by Binga Dismond.

³²⁴ Arna Bontemps to Langston Hughes, n.d. Arna Wendell Bontemps Papers, box 11, folder: Langston Hughes, Syracuse.

Vincent, he seems specifically to have shunned most other social engagements with the upper classes. Additionally, in escaping from Port-au-Prince's sweltering summer heat, Scott spent a period in the mountains around Kenskoff, about twenty-five miles southeast of Port-au-Prince. There, he rented a small "lath and mud shack," located "in the heart of a group of native farmers and laborers." Observing his neighbors at close range, Scott enthusiastically reported to the Rosenwald Fund that they "have changed but very little from the time their forefathers were brought from Africa."³²⁵ Scott's "tough job" of hunting Haitian types became easier as he gained his neighbor's trust. Scott proudly announced to George Arthur, "I get on exceedingly well with the people to such an extent that I was initiated into one of their voodoo dances." Scott's letters do not reveal that he understood anything further about Haiti's folk religion. Although he described his experience as one of "initiation," his lack of contextual understanding reveals that he could not have been elevated to the level of a catechumen of the Vodou religion.³²⁶ Rather, he most likely had been invited to attend and participate in one of the community's gatherings and nighttime dances. Scott views his experience and dresses it in a language, however, that mirrors reports of voodoo ritual so prevalent in U.S. literature. (In contrast, Bontemps and Hughes include a chapter in *Popo and Fifina* where Popo attends a Saturday night "Congo" dance, describing how Haitian drums are constructed and played, and how men and women socially interact at such a function without any exotifying allusion to voodoo ritual or primitive sensuality.) Yet beyond the

³²⁵ Scott, Hotel Excelsior, Port-au-Prince, to George Arthur, illegible date, Rosenwald Archives, box 446, folder 3, Fisk.

³²⁶ In her 1969 autobiography, Katherine Dunham devotes much of her text to lengthy descriptions of her initiation experiences. See Katherine Dunham, *Island Possessed* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1969). Zora Neale Hurston also includes descriptions of initiations in *Tell My Horse* (1938; New York: Harper & Row, 1990), 124-5, 175.

limitation of Scott's ability to situate his experience fully, this passage does reveal that he eagerly engaged with his summer neighbors and that they opened their community to him by inviting him to participate in their social functions. This exchange built trust between the artist and the community, furthering his artistic project; Scott proudly notes that after accepting the invitation to participate in the community dance, "[I] haven't had any more trouble getting models from that neighborhood."³²⁷

These individual sittings resulted in larger paintings where the figures fill the canvas, rendered usually from the waist up. More importantly, these paintings display a range of carefully rendered physiognomies of identifiable, if not named, members of the community. (This type of detailing is absent in most of Scott's Haitian scenes.) Two examples from this period, *Blind Sister Mary* and *Kenskoff, Haiti*, can be found in the collection of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Scott renders both paintings with the same palette of warm gray tones broken by small areas of intense local color. Although its title lists just one name Scott captures two elderly women in *Blind Sister Mary* (fig. 5.4).³²⁸ Compressed together, the two women fill the picture plane, allowing just a glimpse in the background of palm trees and a typical thatched house, a carefully described example of the vernacular architecture that could be found in Haiti's rural communities. The sky's low

³²⁷ Scott, Hotel Excelsior, Port-au-Prince, to George Arthur, Julius Rosenwald Fund, illegible date, *ibid.*

³²⁸ *Blind Sister Mary* holds a particularly prominent place in the collection of artworks within the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The Harmon Foundation presented this painting to the Schomburg Collection in 1933, with the expressed hope that it would form the nucleus of a permanent collection of works by black artists. Evelyn Brown, Assistant Director of the Harmon Foundation, noted that this specific painting was selected not only for its skillful rendering, but also as "one of interest and meaning to the Negro people," noting that it had been created in Haiti on Scott's trip to document Negro types. See, Evelyn Brown, "Speech given at Opening of Negro Art Exhibit in Harlem Monday Evening, March 27, 1933," William E. Scott Artist File, Art and Artifacts Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

clouds frame their heads, while the steep recession to the beach behind highlights the large watery eyes of the blind woman's companion and guide. Scott renders with care and beauty the worn planes of their faces, a care that he also takes in portraying the solitary man in *Kenskoff, Haiti* (fig. 5.5). Looking off to the left, Scott frames his sitter's graying head with a small building that closes off the center background, while hints of foliage add further framing and color. Along with his plain clothes and the foraging goats in the background, the painting's title—a location, not the man's name—focuses the viewer's attention to this figure as an agrarian "type." Yet he was clearly an individual that Scott encountered and arranged to have a personal portrait session with. Like Scott's descriptive reports sent back to the Rosenwald Fund, Scott's portraits of unnamed Haitians can be situated within a lengthy and complex discourse of describing the "Other." Along with Loïs Mailou Jones's *Peasant Girl, Haiti* introduced earlier, Scott's portrait paintings from these individual sittings come out of a long visual tradition of documenting "representative types."

Whether through paintings or photographs, images of people purported to display characteristics that helped to define or epitomize the identity of a collective group, rather than their own individual personalities, have long constituted a form of ethnographic knowledge. Although assumed to be objective, such images comprise a highly stylized mode of representation and a way of viewing people deemed to be outsiders to the creator of the image and his or her intended audience. The rendering of representative types involves not only the constructed and composed nature of the image, but also the means by which it is displayed, classified, and analyzed. One must therefore be cautious in examining such representative types, for they constitute a point on the same charged spectrum that includes the stereotype, and create, as Sander Gilman has described, a closed system of reference that

relies upon a fixity of conventions that inflexibly assign a person or group to an already established ideology of identity.³²⁹ For example, representative types often present a narrow definition of their subject, aided frequently by being displayed with little provided information and/or the elimination of the name of the person from the work's title. Additionally, the ideological fixity of identity becomes particularly acute in representations of "racial" types, which have frequently been conflated with demeaned economic classes and socially undesirable constituencies, such as the criminal or insane.³³⁰

Yet this is not to say that such assembled collections of images are always already entirely disparaging. As Anne Elizabeth Carroll has pointed out in her study of the Harlem Renaissance, carefully rendered representative portraits can also convey dignity, assert the subjects' humanity and connect the viewer to a previously unfamiliar group.³³¹ In the 1920s, a prominent component of the New Negro Movement, as seen in the Harlem issue of the *Survey Graphic* magazine, was the focused and (self-)conscious development of a "New Negro" as the new representative racial type that could be imaged and circulated to a wide audience as proof of African-American accomplishment and modernity. Through a new yet recognizable representation, leaders of the New Negro Movement hoped to build pride in a

³²⁹ See, Sander Gilman, "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine and Literature," in *'Race', Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986): esp. 223-224; Sander Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

³³⁰ See, for example the important analyses found in Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989); A. Sekula, "The Archive and the Body," in *The Contest of Meaning*, ed. R. Bolton (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989). For more on the history of images and ethnographic knowledge, see: Elizabeth Edwards, ed., *Anthropology and Photography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Sarah Pink, *Doing Visual Ethnography: Images, Media and Representation in Research* (London: Sage, 2001); Anna Grimshaw, *The Ethnographer's Eye* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

³³¹ Anne Elizabeth Carroll, *Word, Image, and the New Negro: Representation and Identity in the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 126.

newly codified African-American identity, albeit still expressed within the vocabulary of a tradition of representative types.

Scott's focus on racial uplift through artistic achievement and carefully rendered racial portraits during the 1910s established him as advocating the New Negro Movement's precepts, even before a figure like Alain Locke had articulated them.³³² This was aided by his prior academic training in France (1909-1914), which made him familiar with a tradition of romantic and representative peasant types; many of his paintings created in France captured images of the peasantry and working poor, establishing a visual vocabulary that he would draw upon when he arrived in Haiti.³³³

While a part of the history of representations of racial and social types, Scott's paintings of everyday Haitians also interacted with a much more immediate and pressing history. The documentation and classification of Haitian peasants took on a heightened meaning during the U.S. occupation, when a "docile native" could just as easily be a disguised insurgent "caco" or "voodooisant." One year before the publication of *The Magic Island*, William Seabrook's acquaintance in Haiti, Harold Palmer Davis, had published his own work on Haiti.³³⁴ His *Black Democracy: The Story of Haiti* first appeared in April 1928,

³³² Taylor and Warkel, 39. In her dissertation, Della Brown Hardman, however, points out that Locke had dismissed Scott as a staid 'traditionalist' (23), yet also notes that it was not until Haiti that Scott realized fully the documenting of blacks within their local settings (38).

³³³ Additionally, the desire to document agrarian life and the working poor naturalistically (and even through a brutal realism) had been a growing artistic movement in the United States for some time, as can be seen in the paintings of John Sloan or the writings of Upton Sinclair. This trend only increased after the advent of the Great Depression, with governmental programs, such as the Works Progress Administration and the Farm Securities Administration, specifically employing photographers and artists to document workers, farm life and folk life.

³³⁴ William Seabrook describes his white American friend "Ash Pay Davis," one of *The Magic Island's* "characters," as head of the American Chamber of Commerce in Haiti, and "an authority on Haitian archaeology and history." Seabrook has curiously, though lightly, disguised the identity of his acquaintance

and soon revised and reprinted in January 1929, coinciding with the release of *The Magic Island*. Much of Davis's work provides a fairly standard sketch of Haiti's history up to the present day where he gives a healthy defense of the U.S. occupation. Davis describes how the *corvée* had become a public relations disaster due to a few unscrupulous people. He notes that the Haitian peasants, "accustomed to obey[ing] without protest the orders of any person who appears to be in authority," went to work quietly and without complaint.³³⁵ However, as reports of isolated abuses flourished, Davis argues that old caco leaders, who had been biding their time in the mountains, used these reports to stir up rebellion against the U.S. occupation, spreading propaganda that the whites had returned to restore slavery. During 1918-19, the Caco Rebellion became increasingly acute, necessitating military excursions into the mountains to control the insurgents, who consisted of Haitians who had hid in the hills to avoid being pressed into the *corvée* (thus implying that Haitian men preferred to avoid work), or who themselves had been intimidated into joining the "bandits" and their guerrilla warfare tactics (thus suggesting that the "good natives" would never have resisted the beneficial occupation on their own).

Two drawings appear at this point in Davis's history (fig. 5.6). On the left, a man in profile lifts his chin and directs his eyes upwards. A bandana wraps around his head, just

behind the phonetic spelling of the French pronunciation of his initials. See William B. Seabrook, *The Magic Island* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929; Paragon House, 1989), 124, 228.

³³⁵ H. P. Davis, *Black Democracy: The Story of Haiti* (New York: Lincoln Mac Veagh, the Dial Press, 1929), 216. Davis goes on to argue that things would have gone smoothly except for a few members of the *gendarmérie*, who overstepped the legal limits of the *corvée* law. U.S. marines were also commissioned as officers within the *gendarmérie*. By not noting specifically who had overstepped his bounds, Davis produces an image that it was Haitians exploiting Haitians, and not the U.S. military who pushed for the roads and resurrected the expired labor law. Davis, 217, later makes explicit that he believes much of the problem stemmed from former Haitian military officers, now policemen under the occupation, who had been accustomed to abusing prisoners, which is how they treated the volunteer *corvée* workers.

emerging from a tattered woven hat, while his shirt trails off into bare contour lines. This profile looks across the page to a frontal head that gazes straight out at the viewer. The man's barely sketched collar and shoulders suggest a tattered and worn shirt. The axis of the head leans slightly to the left, creating a subtle unbalance to the drawing that is compounded by eyes that appear slightly crossed while the bridge of the nose and the axis of the lips also appear slightly crooked. Vladimir Perfileff's drawings of these two Haitian men, with their carefully modeled heads that trail off into sparse lines that barely articulate clothing and shoulders against a plain background, are reminiscent of Winold Reiss's portraits of "racial types" such as those that had appeared in the *Survey Graphic*.³³⁶ Yet by pairing one profile and one frontal head, the two drawings invoke a police mug shot or anthropometric study, both powerful means of viewing and classifying the Other entrenched within the history of photography since the nineteenth century.³³⁷ The classificatory nature of these drawings is further enforced by their caption: "Haitian Peasants Typical of the Class from Which the Cacos Were Recruited." The lightly articulated yet clearly tattered clothing expresses the economic "class" of peasant that might be inclined to evade *corvée* work and join the rebellion. The caption does not state that these two men, nor those that appear similar, were *actually* Cacos and thus do not provide the marine on mountain patrol with a clear guide to

³³⁶ See for example, Winold Reiss's *A Woman from the Virgin Islands*, who appears in profile, staring straight ahead but with head demurely tilted downwards. Reiss leaves the background blank and adds just sparse contour lines to indicate the woman's white dress. *Survey Graphic* (March 1925): 658. A U.S. American "artist-explorer," Captain Vladimir Perfileff (1895-n.d.) created animal illustrations for F. R. La Monte and M. H. Welch's *Vanishing Wilderness* (New York: Junior Literary Guild, 1934), after accompanying an expedition to Brazil with professional hunters who were capturing specimens for U.S. zoos. See *Time* (December 1930) and (Aug. 25, 1930).

³³⁷ Elizabeth Edwards, ed., *Anthropology and Photography, 1860-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

the “criminal” he had leave to shoot on sight.³³⁸ Rather, the caption merely implies that there was a particular subgroup of Haitian peasant that is “typically” at risk of becoming recruited. Though in following these drawings, once could assume that they would be male with a darker phenotype, facial hair, and appear a bit worn around the edges. Clearly not a clear guide for a small and nervous detachment of young armed marines wandering the trails of a wild and tropical land populated by a race that their society had long told them were both innocent childlike primitives and cannibalistic savages.

To enforce these drawings and further prove the difficult nature of distinguishing an enemy caco from an innocent peasant, a layout of two photographs appears a few pages later (fig. 5.7). The photograph on the left, captioned “A Peasant,” shows a white-bearded man in uneven and torn trousers standing along a path. He looks off to the left, not acknowledging the camera, though his stiff stance suggests perhaps that he is consciously posing. What appears to be a photograph of the same man appears alongside the “Peasant.” This time, the man wields overhead what appears to be a machete and is given the caption, “A Caco.” To accentuate his confrontational nature, the man now looks directly at the camera. What seems to have been a dramatic twist appears far from threatening and even somewhat comical. Perhaps it is the small frame and aging appearance of the man. Or, the fact that his left arm looks relaxed, even slumped, while his face remains stony with eyes almost hidden in the shadow of his hat’s brim. Davis earnestly announces to those who would criticize the mistaken killings of the response to the Caco Rebellion, “A peasant might well be an active

³³⁸ The young marine corporal Homer Overley recorded that he had been instructed ‘to shoot all Cacos and Voodooes [*sic*].’ Mary Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 41, 137-8, 141.

caco up to the time of the arrival of a marine patrol and, simply by hiding his arms become to all appearances an innocent bystander.”³³⁹

While the U.S. military in Haiti was trying to work out who constituted a “typical” Haitian peasant in the field, back in the United States, images of Haitians also took on political and popular implications. Just a few months following Davis’s published images of peasants/cacos, the June 1928 *Opportunity* magazine published Haitian Jenner Bastien’s “Haiti and Haitian Society,” which briefly outlined the French origins of Haitian culture and customs. An interesting aspect of Bastien’s article is the accusation of false documentary practices carried out at the onset of the U.S. occupation. The author notes that in order to prove the primitiveness of Haiti and thereby the need for the occupation’s civilizing mission of uplift, only pictures from the countryside of “wretched and half naked peasants,” were published to prove Haiti’s “savage state.”³⁴⁰ No images of Haiti’s urban educated elite were proffered to counterbalance this perspective of Haiti’s ignorant barbarity. Bastien does not argue that such images of poverty and nakedness cannot be seen in Haiti, just that they enforce pre-existing assumptions of “savagery.” The images were not false, just incomplete and culled carefully to ensure that the U.S. public received a narrow view of Haiti that promoted a specific agenda. Bastien’s argument highlights how images, even those that try to accurately document Haiti, can be used to enforce assumptions about Haiti just as thoroughly

³³⁹ Davis, *Black Democracy*, 224. Yet even in Haiti, picturesque depictions of Haitian people, especially the peasant and working classes, became bent to political ideology. In 1938, the inaugural editorial of François Duvalier, Lorimer Denis, Clément Magloire *fi*ls and Carl Brouard’s newly founded journal *Les Griots: Revue scientifique et littéraire d’Haïti* called for, ‘an integral reform of Haitian mentality’ involving a racial, religious, and social revival. The editorial announced: ‘We must sing the splendor of our peasants, . . . the beauty of our women, the exploits of our ancestors, passionately study our folklore.’ See, Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 125, f.n. 37.

³⁴⁰ Jenner Bastien, "Haiti and Haitian Society," *Opportunity* 6 (June 1928): 176-7.

as the more fanciful images examined in the previous chapter. At the heart of his argument is the search for an “authentic” or more “truthful” representation of Haiti through images.

Haitian Men and Working Representations

Scott arrived in Haiti during a period when discussions of the U.S. military withdrawal from Haiti were beginning to move forward, though marines would be present throughout the period of Scott’s visit and would not leave until two years later, in 1934. Perhaps not surprising, in his documenting of Haitians in their “unspoiled” environment,³⁴¹ Scott omits any depictions of foreign whites and any references to the U.S. occupation’s shaping or modernizing of the environments captured in his paintings. Certainly in documenting “native types,” Scott did not arrive in Haiti to capture the forms of U.S. visitors or military personnel. And in focusing on the countryside peasants and urban working poor, Scott also did not often portray members of the Haitian elite, who were most engaged with both world affairs and the foreigners in their midst. Scott’s pictorial ignoring of the occupation, however, creates an idealized and isolated world far removed from contemporary history and politics. Such omissions are of course not uncommon in depictions of racial and cultural minorities, whose images present a pure and isolated culture that obscures colonial and imperial presences and/or that group’s ties to modern economies. Yet in stark comparison, Langston Hughes, who also arrived in Haiti in the spring of 1931, described Haiti as, “...a lot of marines, mulatto politicians, and a world of black people without shoes—who catch hell.”³⁴²

³⁴¹ Taylor and Warkel, 27.

³⁴² Langston Hughes, “A Letter from Haiti,” *New Masses* 7 (July 1931): 9, Langston Hughes Papers, box 638, folder 14251 Haiti scrapbook, Yale.

Beyond his paintings, the presence of the U.S. military and other U.S. Americans in Haiti are also mostly absent in Scott's letters. Interestingly, it is only in his letter where he describes his experiences outside of the urban center of Port-au-Prince that Scott actually mentions the presence of U.S. marines. He notes that he purchased a mess kit and army cot and blanket from a marine in preparation for his rougher accommodations on the mountainside. Of course, Scott could not have been unaware of the ramifications of the U.S. occupation. In Scott's late fall 1931 letter to the Rosenwald Fund where he includes an inventory of his paintings and solicits a second year of funding, Scott mentions his friendship and frequent visits with Benjamin Vincent. Scott notes that Benjamin, along with his brother the President, is particularly popular in Haiti at the moment, since a part of the U.S. occupation has "been forced to leave." The Vincents solidified their political future in Haiti through the appearance of their successful efforts in driving out the U.S. military, and Sténio Vincent would sustain his political career and shaky presidency after the 1934 withdrawal by presenting himself as Haiti's "second liberator." With his exhibitions sponsored by President Vincent and his brother, Scott certainly would not have wanted to solidify in paint a foreign presence that was finally starting to withdraw, at least militarily, though not financially, from Haiti. Instead, Scott presents a world where the withdrawal is already a fact rather than an imminent possibility. Yet, as the captions to the *National Geographic* photographs of Haitian market scenes argue, images like Scott's *Haitian Market* of peaceful and organized commerce without a heavy police presence "proves" Haiti's new-found stability purportedly established through the U.S. occupation. While such a pro-intervention caption could be added to William E. Scott's *Haitian Market*, Scott's carefully organized and positioned assortment of Haitian types makes an even more explicit argument.

Returning to this painting, I enter again into Scott's scene through the inviting gaze of the central middle-ground woman who passes along the sunlit road astride her sleepy burro. Her projected leftward movement leads my eye along the middle ground to the market woman confidently striding just ahead. Her regally erect profile belies the enormous load that she balances on a tray atop her head. She displays with ease and grace the skill that has long fascinated visitors to the Caribbean. James Weldon Johnson, while on his 1920 investigative trip to expose the abuses of the occupation, made time to note many of the inspiring and beautiful scenes that he encountered. He was particularly taken by the country women hauling their huge loads untold miles to the city markets, striding "along lithe and straight, almost haughtily, carrying themselves like so many Queens of Sheba."³⁴³ *Black and beautiful*, these women form the backbone of Haiti's domestic economy. Their regal balancing acts are also one of the most popular and memorable subjects depicted in representations of Haitian life. Scott, however, adds further types to his market scene that are unusual not only in a depiction of a Haitian market, but also as subjects in representations of Haiti in general: working men. Scott's striding "Queen of Sheba," with her large but balanced burden, leads the viewer's eye to another impossibly large load: the bundle carried by a shirtless stevedore. The erect ease with which the market woman carries her load sharply contrasts the man's effort. He seems to stagger, neck bent forward under an immense weight, his up-stretched arm trying to steady his awkward load. While the market women impart elegance and beauty, their leading lines bring the viewer to the harsher aspects of the daily toil that is also life in Haiti.

³⁴³ James Weldon Johnson, *Along This Way* (1933; New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), 350.

With my attention called to this man, I soon become aware of the other men included in this picture: the one who stretches to adjust a row of large earthenware jugs in the lower left foreground, the group of three farmers with their huge bunches of recently cut bananas. While Haitian markets have long been described and represented as dominated by women (and indeed, cited as proof of the deterioration and primitiveness of Haitian society), Scott seems at pains to ensure that a relatively equal number of industrious men appear alongside the working market women. While this large assortment of men may in fact inaccurately capture the demographics of a typical Haitian market during this period, Scott's focus on the work of Haitian men in many of his Haitian paintings is actually one of his most important contributions to the representation of Haiti.

A swirl of blues and grays radiate outward from a glowing orb, illuminating in silvery moonlight encircling gulls and radiating ocean waves that gently rock a rowboat (fig. 5.8). The boat rolls and leans under the shifting weight of two Haitian fishermen who haul aboard the hulking form of a glistening sea turtle. Two brave Haitian men break through the surf, having guided their catch home, while a youthful fifth member of the fishing team counterbalances the boat, bracing to receive the turtle. *Night Turtle Fishing in Haiti* (c. 1931) is probably one of William E. Scott's most finished, most dynamic and most haunting visions of Haiti. Cool yet tropical, balanced yet dynamic, routine yet extraordinary, Scott's painting gives monumentality to the humble industriousness of typical fishermen. Scott was particularly fascinated by these men who daily left their families and embarked onto the ocean void. Living amongst the working community, Scott even went to sea with them, making numerous observations and pencil studies, which he then translated into his luminous

paintings.³⁴⁴ The fishermen, like all Haitians, worked hard for their existence, saving for countless years for the family to buy the ultimate capital of a sea-worthy boat, one that they could then pass on to their sons. Scott's painting visualizes what Hughes and Bontemps neatly described in their children's book, *Popo and Fifina*, where the country family dreams someday of having their own fishing boat: 'Yes,' said Papa Jean. 'We'll have to work and work and work.' 'I am willing,' Fifina said, 'I am willing to help all I can.'³⁴⁵ Daughter Fifina is willing, but in this story, it is Papa Jean and son Popo who enter the greater and male-dominated world as laboring apprentices.

In visualizing a male-centered world of dignified labor, Scott and the Bontemps-Hughes collaboration offer to their U.S. audience a new and unusual vision of Haiti. The myth of the lazy and indolent native has long been used to enforce the idea of the West as industrious and therefore deserving of its wealth and power. As the United States became more and more interested in Haiti, especially for its strategic position with the completion of the Panama Canal, this stereotype began to appear with increasing frequency. For example, Eugene Lyle Jr.'s 1906 article, "What Shall Haiti's Future Be?," which advocates for a U.S. commercial involvement that could then lead to military involvement, bears the lengthy subheading: "A land of misery amid opulence, where childish negroes play at dignity, spill blood, and do no work—the entering wedge of American influence in a new railroad."³⁴⁶ With the need to justify the U.S. presence in Haiti after 1915, Haiti's economic and social failures became increasingly described and depicted in terms of gender. As I noted earlier in

³⁴⁴ William E. Scott to George Arthur, 13 October 1931, Rosenwald Archives, box 446, folder 3, Fisk.

³⁴⁵ Arna Bontemps and Langston Hughes, *Popo and Fifina: Children of Haiti* (New York: Macmillan, 1932), 14.

³⁴⁶ Lyle Jr., Eugene P., "What Shall Haiti's Future Be?," *World's Work* 11.4 (February 1906): 7151.

chapter two, popular presentations of Haiti during the early years of the occupation emphasized that women predominate in Haiti—economically, and as can be seen in an overview of the typical illustrative photographs of the period, visually. In photographs of the period, women work (albeit in primitive, labor intensive ways), while men participate in spurious revolutions or leisure pastimes, like cockfighting.

Scott of course created many images of the noble market woman, and he also painted the quintessential Caribbean pastime of fighting cocks. Yet his version of the male-dominated pastime further combats previous descriptions of Haitian men. Most previous representations of this sport focus on the dramatic action in the center ring, framed by a crowd of watching men. (Alexander King used his representation of this activity to again display an array of egregiously exaggerated racial types for William Seabrook's *The Magic Island*.) Centered beneath a thatch-covered enclosure, with radiant beams breaking through into the shaded interior, a smirking young boy looks down at his prize rooster (fig. 5.9). The main action of the scene actually occurs in the background's left corner; through the legs of a row of standing men, whose backs are turned to us, one can just glimpse two fighting birds. Scott's painting of a vibrant and often riotous weekend event devolves into a still yet shimmering portrait. Scott activates his canvas through the white brush strokes of sunrays and flickering shadows and highlights, while the action of the painting's purported subject actually serves to frame the young boy whose job it is to care for and prepare his family's rooster for battle. The young man proudly attends to his task, rather than watching the sporting action.

As a creative ethnographer, Scott's paintings of Haitian men actually broke new representative ground that would not appear visually in academic anthropological accounts of

Haiti until several years later. A student of the groundbreaking and highly influential Franz Boas and his theories of cultural relativism, Melville J. Herskovits (1895-1963) conducted fieldwork in Haiti in 1934, publishing the results in his book-length study, *Life in a Haitian Valley* (1937). Haiti's most dignified intellectual Jean Price-Mars cheered the publication of *Life in a Haitian Valley*, reciting a litany of U.S. writings that he hoped this new work would help to sweep from consciousness: "...I am happy that this book corrects the insanity and colossal stupidity consumed by the average man who feeds on Seabrook, Craige, Wirkus, and Loederer..."³⁴⁷ Herskovits importantly concluded through ethnographic evidence that complex African survivals existed within Haitian culture, syncretically developing with Haiti's French roots. Moreover, Herskovits, like Scott, emphasized foremost the folkways of Haitian daily life and notably included photographic illustrations, several of which capture the collective work groups of Haitian farmers.³⁴⁸

From Representative Types to Unconventional Landscapes

While focusing mostly on portraits and genre scenes of various groups of representative Haitians, Scott also created several landscapes. Painted in silvery blues and grays, *The Citadel, Haiti*, captures a view of Haiti's breathtaking mountainous terrain (fig.

³⁴⁷ *La Relève* 10 (Apr 1937): 19; quoted in J. Michael Dash, *Haiti and the United States: National Stereotypes and the Literary Imagination*, 2d ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 88. Price-Mars's list captures the most prominent examples of authors who attempted to capitalize on the sudden popularity of William Seabrook's *The Magic Island* (1928); John Houston Craige, *Black Bagdad: The Arabian Nights Adventures of a Marine Captain in Haiti* (1933) and *Cannibal Cousins* (1934); Faustin Wirkus and Taney Dudley, *The White King of La Gonave* (1931); and the most egregious of all, Richard Loederer, *Voodoo Fire in Haiti* (1935).

³⁴⁸ In 1938, the Haitian government awarded Herskovits the Order of Honor and Merit for *Life in a Haitian Valley*. See: *New York Times*, September 18, 1938. For a brief but insightful analysis of *Life in a Haitian Valley*, see Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 273-4. For an overview of Herskovits's controversial legacy and work, see: Jerry Gershenson, *Melville J. Herskovits and the Racial Politics of Knowledge* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); George Eaton Simpson, *Melville J. Herskovits* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973).

5.10). Here, a rugged and barren-looking mountain range of purple-blues and cream grays rises dramatically from the pale yet warm blue of a bay. Scott places the most lofty and dramatic peak in the center of his painting, framing it with a glowing white thunderhead, as another cloud releases a torrent of rain onto the slopes. The white square sail of a boat in the far left of the middle ground offers a small human response to the majesty of the enormous cloud. While this landscape captures Haiti's spectacular terrain, Scott continues to allude to the industrious work of Haitians. In the foreground, a tidy row of tethered fishing boats leads across and into the composition. Tiny figures seem to be busily completing their day, ignoring both the passing mountainside squall and the structure highlighted by the painting's title: the ruins of King Henri Christophe's Citadel.

A modern wonder of architectural engineering, the Citadel, or La Ferrière, perches precariously atop the steep summit of Bonnet à l'Evêque in the mountains of Haiti's northern district, and stands ever watchful for the return of France's armies. The human labor necessary to haul the massive stones of its immense walls and multi-ton pieces of artillery is mind boggling. Since the moment of its completion, the Citadel has symbolized two equally valid but polar opposite interpretations: it is both a fortress to ensure Haitians' freedom, yet its construction was demanded by a king who had become their new despotic master. Viewing it as the highlight of his 1920 trip, James Weldon Johnson rightly compared the structure to one of the great pyramids of Egypt in terms of engineering accomplishment and sheer human labor and sacrifice.³⁴⁹ Just over a decade later, Langston Hughes would view its

³⁴⁹ Johnson, *Along This Way*, 351. Initiated by first head of state Jean-Jacques Dessalines in 1804, King Henri Christophe completed the massive building project around 1918.

ruins as testament to a century of revolutions, graft, and the failure of the elite to work to the benefit of their country, all paving the way for the presence of white marines.³⁵⁰

Symbolically and visually, Scott's landscape leaves this ambivalence open. Scott portrays this massive structure like a small boxy snowcap atop the central highest peak. Massive and looming, yet distant and almost ignored, the Citadel, like Haiti's revolutionary past, seems insignificant in the face of the daily activities of common Haitian workers. Like the quickly sketched foreground figures, Scott seems less concerned with individual detail as he is with conveying an overall majestic unity between a heroic past and a mundane yet dignified present. Additionally, Scott does not indicate the Citadel's asymmetrical and multiple projections, including its famous buttressing terrace that projects off the north bastion like a mighty ship's prow. Rather, Scott portrays the Citadel as a box-like fort. While not picturing any of the unique qualities of the structure, Scott has exaggerated the Citadel's size, for it is actually located overlooking the northern plains of Haiti, twenty miles inland from the major coastal town of Cap Haïtien.³⁵¹ Although fascinated by such a major site as the Citadel, with its link to Haiti's early years of independence, Scott's focus remains fixed on Haiti's just as striking present—both its terrain and people.

³⁵⁰ Langston Hughes, "White Shadows in a Black Land," *Crisis* 41.5 (May 1932): 157.

³⁵¹ Indeed, Scott may not have viewed the site before executing this painting. Scott writes to George Arthur in October 1931 that he is greatly looking forward to a trip to Cap Haïtien and hopes to create at least a half dozen paintings at the Citadel and Christophe's palace Sans Souci. He notes, however, that it is now the rainy season and many of the roads are impassable. He had earlier included an inventory of paintings that he had completed through August, and one listed is a mural sketch of Christophe completing the citadel—this inventory was submitted before Scott had traveled north to view the structure. However, by the time Scott had arrived in Haiti, the Citadel was considered a major tourist site, with numerous photographs available through various publications. Indeed, a photograph of the Citadel seemed almost as requisite as an image of a Haitian market woman in publications of Haiti.

William E. Scott led the way for African-American creative ethnographers in Haiti. Others would soon add their painted documents to Scott's body of evidence that countered many prior derisive portrayals of Haiti. Some, like the young artist Zell Ingram, who arrived with Langston Hughes in the spring of 1931 just shortly after Scott, traveled to Haiti by their own means. Others would join Scott by successfully proposing projects and earning funding to document Haiti through prominent organizations like the Julius Rosenwald Fund, the Guggenheim Foundation, or the Whitney Foundation.

Aaron Douglas followed a transnational trajectory similar to Scott, arriving in Europe before going South and to Haiti. Longing to study in Paris, Aaron Douglas followed sculptor Augusta Savage as an early applicant for a grant from the re-organized Julius Rosenwald Fund. As in Douglas's early days in Harlem, Charles S. Johnson worked to gain any assistance that he could for the artist. On May 29, 1929, less than two weeks after the Fund trustees had approved the decision to begin granting African-American fellowships, Johnson wrote to George Arthur in support of Douglas's application, stating:

His concern has been in giving re-interpretation to the African Motifs. These native qualities in Mr. Douglass should be fostered and allowed their fullest flowering. He requires at least a year of study in Europe, where there are fullest opportunities for perfecting his technique and catching step with the best that is being done in this modern field.³⁵²

In the letter, Johnson cites Douglas's illustrations for *God's Trombones*, *Black Magic*, and *Plays of Negro Life* as evidence of his "unusual talent." He also refers to Winold Reiss's statements calling Douglas "easily the most original of all the Negro artists, with a 'rich,

³⁵² Charles S. Johnson to George R. Arthur, May 29, 1929, Rosenwald Archives, box 408, folder 13: Aaron Douglas, Fisk. Unable to secure a fellowship grant for Douglas, Johnson offered him a commission instead. During the summer of 1929, Johnson sent a telegram to Douglas, calling him to Fisk University to create murals for the new library. Douglas came to Fisk during the second semester and by June 1930 the preliminary sketches had been approved. "Aaron Douglas (1899--): An Autobiography," typewritten manuscript, Aaron Douglas Collection, box 1, folder 1, Fisk.

free-flowing imagination.”” Winold Reiss also contributed a letter of support, attesting to Douglas’s great talent, fine character, and leadership.³⁵³ President of the Julius Rosenwald Fund Edwin Embree annotated at the bottom of Douglas’s application, “Undoubtedly one of the best of the candidates.” However, Douglas’s proposal was deemed “vague,” with Embree suspecting that Douglas was merely “seeking sustenance for a year rather than a fellowship in the real sense.” Embree concluded that Douglas should first apply to the Guggenheim committee.

Douglas would have to wait eight years for Rosenwald funding, but only two for study in Paris. Arriving in September 1931 and supported by his own savings, Douglas enrolled at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, one of best-known Parisian schools, but then transferred to the Académie Scandinave, where he paid higher fees in exchange for greater studio space and instructional contact.³⁵⁴ While Douglas would continually strive to hone and improve his craft, this sojourn in Paris marks the end of his formal artistic training. From then on, Douglas readily assumed the mantle of teacher rather than student. Taking on leadership roles in Harlem during the Depression, Douglas received the moniker “Dean” from the younger black artists whom he befriended.³⁵⁵ By the late 1930s, the “Dean” seems

³⁵³ Winold Reiss to Rosenwald Fund committee, July 2, 1929. Rosenwald Archives, box 408, folder 13: Aaron Douglas, Fisk.

³⁵⁴ Despite a vague and probably hurriedly assembled proposal, Douglas was committed to studying art in Paris, a dream he had chased since the days of his departure from Kansas to Harlem. Douglas’s experiences in Harlem clearly profoundly shaped his artistic sensibilities and social goals, and he would later write in a speech that his illustrative work for *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* “convinced me that it was unnecessary to go all the way to Paris to master the fundamentals of the art of painting.” See, Aaron Douglas, “The Harlem Renaissance,” March 18, 1973, incomplete typewritten manuscript, Aaron Douglas Collection, box 3, folder 2, Fisk. Despite such later rhetorical gestures in celebration of Harlem, Douglas’s actions make it clear that he continued to be drawn to the European art world. It is possible that Douglas’s period of study at the Barnes Foundation either rekindled or buoyed his desire to experience the Parisian modern art scene.

³⁵⁵ Bearden, 131.

to have felt less pressure to prove himself as a modernist “New Negro,” freeing him to pursue the other half of his Harlem mentor Winold Reiss’s artistic equation: to portray diverse people and environments in a dignified and realistic manner.

In 1937, Douglas finally gained Julius Rosenwald funding, receiving a fellowship of \$1800 for one year commencing that September. Douglas proposed to create a “contemporary portrait of the American Negro” by depicting three areas of subject matter: racial types and characters of Negro Youth, “Old Slave Types,” and landscapes of “Negro environments,” such as “churches, schools and dwellings.” Arguing that “Such a project carried out in the environment of our best educational centers would help to awaken the creative urge of Negro youth,” Douglas proposed to paint on location in three important African-American “headquarters”: Fisk University, Tuskegee Institute, and Dillard University. Importantly, this was to be “accomplished along the general lines layed [sic] out by Winold Reiss in the Negro number of the *Survey Graphic*.” Douglas argued: “I believe that such a project would be an important contribution to Negro Art in America. I am sure that a sympathetic, *realistic* portrayal would go far to raise the self esteem and self respect of our people.”³⁵⁶ The March 1925 *Survey Graphic* had helped spur Douglas to Harlem and his respect for this single publication had not waned. Acting as a creative ethnographer, Douglas intended to augment and update the “visual facts” Reiss had submitted as a body of evidence of the dignity and complexity of African Americans living in Harlem in the 1920s. In a way, Douglas was proposing the visual equivalent of an ethnographic longitudinal study, a stockpiling of visual facts that would add a new decade’s documentation of peoples of

³⁵⁶ Emphasis mine. Aaron Douglas, “Plan of Work,” March 1, 1937, Rosenwald Archives, box 408, folder 13 Aaron Douglas, Fisk.

African descent, expanding from Reiss's portrait of urban Harlem dwellers to include African Americans in the South and cross national boundaries by adding Haiti a year later.

Other than invoking Reiss's work in the *Survey Graphic*, Douglas gave the committee no further description, background, or explanation of his project. Douglas had not lost his New-Negro-Movement belief in the social efficacy of the visual arts to combat racism as exhibited by Reiss's work and assumed that the committee also shared this outlook. Moreover, he assumed that the committee reading his application would remember and instantly appreciate the importance of a magazine issued twelve years earlier. As on his previous 1929 Rosenwald application, Embree's hand could have easily written, "His proposals are vague..." Indeed, even James Weldon Johnson, who submitted one of the letters of reference, candidly admitted to the Fund, "I do not clearly gather from Mr. Douglas' plan of work, just what it is he proposes to do." Though he added, "However, knowing Mr. Douglas for the past ten years or more and having followed his work as an artist during that time, and furthermore knowing his great talent and ability, I have no hesitancy in endorsing his application for a fellowship from the Julius Rosenwald Fund."³⁵⁷ Luckily for Douglas, the committee agreed.

By the late 1930s, Douglas was well known for his unique modernist style of distinctly designed profiles silhouetted against concentric circles whose borders dictate the design's color and tonal gradations, which he had established firmly through his illustrations for Paul Morand's *Black Magic*. Until his death in 1979, however, Douglas also continued to create landscapes and portraits in a more academic naturalistic style. In fact, while still

³⁵⁷ James Weldon Johnson to Julius Rosenwald Fund committee, n.d., Rosenwald Archives, box 408, folder 13 Aaron Douglas, Fisk.

employing his signature primitivist modernism in commissions, a more conventional naturalism dominates Douglas's 1930s-and-later exhibited works and he seems to have readily assumed the title "landscape and portraiture specialist."³⁵⁸ By invoking Reiss's *Survey Graphic* portraits and emphasizing the need for a "sympathetic" and "realistic" portrayal for the purpose of self-esteem and cultural awakening in his Rosenwald Fund plan, Douglas asserted his New-Negro-Movement belief in the efficacy of the visual arts *and* announced his intent to carry out the project in his less-familiar academic style.

Following his year of painting landscapes and representative types in the South, Douglas applied for an extension to continue the project in Haiti and hold an exhibition there. Douglas proposed to "record on canvas...people of all classes with an eye to revealing racial, social and economic patterns; and pictures of scenes and landmarks, old and new."³⁵⁹ While Douglas may not have known specifically about the details of Scott's prior Rosenwald application, his original and renewal plans closely mirrored Scott's 1930 proposal.³⁶⁰ Regardless, Douglas was clearly aware of the slightly older artist and his work in Haiti; Douglas had exhibited in several shows that included examples of Scott's Haitian paintings

³⁵⁸ See for example "The Art of Aaron Douglas," Chabot Art Gallery, Los Angeles, December 27, 1948-January 13, 1949, Aaron Douglas Collection, box 7: Exhibition Leaflets, Fisk.

³⁵⁹ Aaron Douglas, "Plan of Work," March 1, 1937, Julius Rosenwald Fund Archives, box 408, folder 13 Aaron Douglas, Fisk University Special Collections.

³⁶⁰ For example, Douglas's goal of racial uplift and inspiration through documenting racial types and landscapes closely mirrors Scott's description to document Haiti's "types and historical settings," which Scott had argued, "would be a source of inspiration and encouragement to the race, particularly our youth, as well as a means of better understanding, engendering respect of other races..." Moreover, Scott felt an important achievement of his fellowship was the exhibiting of his work in Port-au-Prince to improve U.S.-Haiti race relations and inspire Haitian artists to view their own people and country as worthy subject matter. Douglas also proposed to exhibit in Haiti contemporary American art to foster cultural dialogue. In the end, Douglas did exhibit some of his previous work upon arrival and also gave an informal exhibition of his Haitian paintings before he left. See: William E. Scott, August 11, 1930 application to the Rosenwald Foundation, Chicago, Rosenwald Archives, box 446, folder 3, William Scott, and Aaron Douglas to Mr. George Reynolds, April 5, 1939, Rosenwald Archives, box 408, folder 13 Aaron Douglas, Fisk.

and a description of his Rosenwald project.³⁶¹ While refusing another year of support, perhaps because Scott had already accomplished much of what Douglas proposed, the Rosenwald Fund did grant an extension, allowing Douglas to spend two months in Haiti completing his study. On September 2, 1938, Aaron Douglas sailed for Haiti on the steamer S. S. Cottica with his close friend and fellow Rosenwald Fund grantee, Arna Bontemps.³⁶²

From an elevated position, the viewer swoops into Douglas's *Haitian Landscape (Haitian Cathedral Scene)* (fig. 5.11). From the positioning of the cathedral, this image seems to have been painted from the point of view of the affluent neighborhood that was located near the presidential palace, home of the Hotel Bellevue where Douglas stayed while in Port-au-Prince. The landscape's foreground tree canopies act as visual stepping stones to the middle ground's three examples of buildings in Port-au-Prince; rather than serving as compositional devices, however, the trees actually obscure the buildings, especially the 1915

³⁶¹ For example, an exhibition in Pittsburgh presented by the YWCA of Pittsburgh and the Group Work Division Federation of Social Agencies May 13-27, 1935, included Scott's oil painting *Confirmation Day, Haiti* and the catalogue duly notes his prestigious year spent painting Negro types in Haiti as a Rosenwald Fellow. Scott's painting was joined by Douglas's landscape *High Bridge* and also watercolors by Lois Mailou Jones. This exhibition was under the auspices of the Harmon Foundation and the College Art Association, NYC. See, "Catalogue of the Exhibition of Negro Art: Presented by YWCA of Pittsburgh and the Group Work Division Federation of Social Agencies, May 13-27, 1935," Lois Mailou Jones scrapbooks, reel 4371, AAA. Douglas has left no written comments on his opinions of Scott's Haitian work, but he did include mention of Scott in general in some of his later writings. In one of his speeches, Douglas praises Scott for his focus on racial subject matter even if his execution was on the staid side, noting: "From the point of view of technique or styles or in matters essentially artistic we might harbor some differences with Mr. Scott. We must give him credit, however, for an outstanding idea, namely that art is finest, most genuine, most enduring when it serves the legitimate living ideas, aspirations, and hopes of a particular group to which the artist belongs and to which he is completely dedicated." Douglas specifically notes being greatly influenced by Scott's painting, *Flight into Egypt*, which depicted the Holy Family with "noticeably Negro rather than Caucasian" features. Douglas adds, "For me Mr. Scott's picture was the answer to the dream of a child who had never seen anything but the likeness of his detractors in children's books, textbooks, Sunday school cards, everywhere." See, Aaron Douglas, "The Development of Negro Art in American Life," n.d., Aaron Douglas Collection, box 3, folder 6, Fisk.

³⁶² Kirkland C. Jones, *Renaissance Man from Louisiana: A Biography of Arna Wendell Bontemps* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992), 90.

Romanesque-Revival new cathedral.³⁶³ Although visually highlighted by a framing mountain range and its central placement within the canvas, the twin cupolas are the only elements of the cathedral that successfully compete with a palm tree that rudely conceals the rest of the church building. While photographs of the period show the cathedral dominating the cityscape, here, encroaching palm trees dominate Haiti's most urbanized city. The blockade of trees emphasizes the inaccessibility of Haiti at a time when Haiti had presumably been tamed enough for the removal of U.S. marines and the influx of tourists.

While certainly Port-au-Prince in 1938 was not the over-crowded city that it is today, Douglas captures a view that is remarkable in its absence of the people he had ostensibly arrived to document. A figure seems to be placed underneath the shadow of a tree in the lower left, while another tiny figure can be seen striding across the nearby green. Wearing a skirt and bearing a load upon her head, this miniscule version of one of James Weldon Johnson's described "Queen of Shebas," seems to be the closest Douglas comes to documenting the popular subject matter of the noble Haitian woman. Likewise, in an untitled Haitian landscape still in the A.C.A. Gallery's collection, Douglas again uses an elevated view to reduce a cityscape to a canopy of trees (fig. 5.12). Competing with the wharf and waterfront park's yellow-roofed pavilion, the numerous uniform trees become the painting's crowd of figures and accentuate the emptied streets, where only a lone blue vehicle belies the presence of a people Douglas was fascinated by but did not choose to portray. Unlike Scott's

³⁶³ Grove Dictionary of Art Online, searched 17 March 2005. James Weldon Johnson notes that this cathedral was constructed between 1903 and 1912, in "Self-Determining Haiti: IV. The Haitian People," *The Nation* 111 (September 25, 1920). Johnson includes mention of the cathedral to prove the cosmopolitan and European-refined nature of Port-au-Prince. During his 1908-09 tour, Sir Harry Johnston photographed the cathedral, with its exterior mostly complete save for a few remaining section of scaffolding and the completion of the southwest cupola, and noted: "Without this cathedral (of French design and Belgian construction), Port-au-Prince, two or three years ago, must have presented a somewhat paltry aspect for a capital city." Harry Johnston, *The Negro in the New World* (1910; New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1969), 174.

lengthy tenure, which had allowed him to become trusted within the communities in which he worked, Douglas's few months in Haiti did not produce many paintings of "people of all classes." Rather, Douglas seems to have jettisoned the main part of his renewal proposal and concentrated on landscapes.

This untitled painting is probably *Waterfront Park*, which Douglas included in his U.S.-debut exhibition of his Haitian Rosenwald work held at the New York City A.C.A. Gallery on April 2-15, 1939. The catalogue to Douglas's "Exhibition of Haitian Paintings" notes twelve paintings, ten categorized as "Scenes of Haiti": 1. Harbor Port au Prince, 2. Champs de Mars, 3. Kenskoff, 4. Going to Market, 5. Mango Tree, 6. Courtyard, 7. Shadowed Courtyard, 8. Haitian Cathedral Scene, 9. Mountains in Haiti, 10. Waterfront Park.³⁶⁴ The *New York Times* gave the exhibition a brief review, calling the scenes, "frankly picturesque work." Along with the Haitian scenes, the reviewer noted the exhibition also included "one or two portraits of Haitian types," though unfortunately did not give titles and so we can only speculate from the exhibition list which works possibly contained Douglas's attempts at portraying various Haitians as opposed to landscapes. The review concluded, "The work, in many ways conventional, is yet sensitive and light effects are well managed."³⁶⁵ Although previously championing Douglas, Alain Locke viewed these

³⁶⁴ The exhibit contained two other Douglas paintings, *The Street Urchin* and *Ex-Slave*. It is likely that both were created during the first year's Rosenwald work in the South. "Exhibition of Haitian Paintings" April 2-15, 1939, ACA Gallery, 52 West Eighth Street, New York City, Julius Rosenwald Fund Archives, box 408, folder 13, Fisk. Based on correspondence in the Rosenwald Fund archives, *Ex-Slave* is probably the painting that Douglas gave to Edwin Embree in 1944, "offered in gratitude for the interest you have shown in my work as well as in the development of Negro art generally." Aaron Douglas to Edwin R. Embree, 26 September 1944, Julius Rosenwald Fund Archives, box 408, folder 13: Aaron Douglas, Fisk.

³⁶⁵ It is quite possible that the works the reviewer took for examples of "Haitian types" were actually *The Street Urchin* and *Ex-Slave*. *New York Times* (April 9, 1939), Aaron Douglas Collection, box 8, folder 1: Clippings, 1930-1949, Fisk.

paintings as an abandonment of the artist's innovative modernism, calling them "a retreat from his bold earlier style to mild local color impressionism, which though technically competent, gives little distinctively new or forceful either in his Negro types studies or his series of Haitian landscapes."³⁶⁶

While perhaps stylistically conventional, Douglas's paintings actually capture unconventional views of Haiti. At a time when artists and ethnographers were focused on and fascinated by the picturesque aspects of Haitian peasants, Douglas paints landscapes. Douglas certainly reveled in painting Haiti's sub-tropical scenery and bright, sun-drenched colors, exploring the combination of deciduous trees and palms. His landscapes, however, are not blank wildernesses onto which notions of a primitive and Edenic space can be inscribed. He explores Haiti's unfamiliar flora within cityscapes and not as components of an "impenetrable jungle." Moreover, the blue truck emphasizes the growing presence of modern technology within Haiti. Additionally, Bontemps and Douglas also traveled to the north of Haiti and viewed the Citadel. Douglas, however, does not seem to have translated this landmark view into paint. Douglas seems to have avoided representing Haitian sights and sites that have been already over-determined, over commodified.

In these paintings, Douglas seems bent on keeping Haiti at a distance. This could hint at a desire to smooth over difficult details of Haiti's reality—poverty, class tensions, racism—a far cry perhaps from imaginings of Haiti's heroic past or a pan-Africanist coalition that could smooth over widely disparate cultural differences. Douglas's personal correspondence with his wife hints that he may have been disillusioned by his initial impressions of Haiti, perhaps aiding his decision to focus on landscapes. Alta Douglas wrote

³⁶⁶ Alain Locke, "Advance on the Art Front," *Opportunity* 17 (May 1939): 135.

to her husband reminding him to send a letter of thanks to M. Vervin and also share his impressions of Haiti. She, however, cautions him to include only his favorable impressions, suggesting that not all of his letters from Haiti to her had been positive.³⁶⁷ Yet Douglas's distancing serves another function as well. Part of the most popularizing aspects of works like Seabrook's *The Magic Island* stemmed from the writer's claim to insert himself inside the culture, as a participant-observer, in order to provide greater detail of wildly titillating material, purporting to make the exotic overly-familiar, while transporting the reader along on a sexualized exotic escapade. In contrast to the intrusive detail of a primitivizing travelogue, Douglas's views maintain a formal and impersonal distance.

Douglas did not capture the range of folk-types that Scott accomplished. He did, however, meet with important members of Haiti's intellectual community. In contrast, Scott's letters emphasize that he quickly made it be known upon his arrival that he was in Haiti to *work* and not to fulfill social engagements, though he did meet with President Vincent and his brother.³⁶⁸ While Scott succeeded in bringing a large body of representations of Haiti back to an audience in the United States, Douglas's work seemed just as involved with bringing discussions of African-American culture to Haiti. This was aided by his travel companion, Arna Bontemps, a fellow Rosenwald recipient who was completing a historical novel on the Haitian Revolution. With Bontemps, Douglas lectured to civic groups on the cultural development of African Americans.³⁶⁹ Bontemps returned to the

³⁶⁷ Alta Douglas to Aaron Douglas, 5 October 1938, Aaron Douglas Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library (hereafter Schomburg).

³⁶⁸ William E. Scott to George Arthur, 28 March 1931, Rosenwald Archives, box 446, folder 3, Fisk.

³⁶⁹ Aaron Douglas to Mr. George Reynolds, April 5, 1939, Douglas also notes traveling to the Citadel in northern Haiti and to Ciudad Trohillo in the Dominican Republic, Rosenwald Archives, box 408, folder 13 Aaron Douglas, Fisk.

United States before Douglas, but continued to write to his friend who remained in Haiti for another month. On October 17, 1938, Bontemps sent a letter to Douglas enthusing:

“Already I’ve started planning my next trip to Haiti. I can’t get it out of my mind, and the shape and color of things take a firmer and firmer hold on you as you look back. The place is without question rich.”³⁷⁰ Importantly, Bontemps states that he has already scheduled a half dozen talks to present his experiences in Haiti to community groups. He hopes that his presentations will specifically help encourage librarians and teachers to plan vacations to the country. Bontemps, a teacher and soon to be librarian himself, personally took it upon himself to promote a greater awareness of Haiti as a destination for not only sightseeing and relaxation, but as a place where educators could also experience Haiti’s culture and history and then bring their new understanding back to their classrooms and communities.³⁷¹ In emphasizing public outreach nearly as much as actual their actual painting and writing, Douglas and Bontemps emphasized the Rosenwald Fund’s call for projects that improved race relations, and furthered the boundaries of that call through their transnational outlooks.

Conclusion

While on his tour of Haiti, Sir Harry Johnston prophesized: “Picture after picture is found, to be realized, perchance, many years hence, when there arises a native school of art and when the educated Haitians of the present day—who can think and talk of nothing but Paris and the beauties of France—will give way to an indigenous race of better-educated

³⁷⁰ Arna Bontemps to Aaron Douglas in Port-au-Prince, 17 October 1938, Aaron Douglas Papers, Correspondence-General 1924-1939 1/11, Schomburg.

³⁷¹ Bontemps took his roll as an educator and archivist for the black community very seriously. In an interview at the end of his life, Bontemps described his greatest accomplishment as the librarian at Fisk University was that he diligently and actively promoted interest in the Black experience and history. See, Arna Bontemps, interview with Ann Allen Shockley, 14 July 1972, Black Oral History Collection, Fisk.

Haitians, of no matter what color, who will concentrate their thoughts and their thankfulness on the beauty of their own country, which in its own way has no rival.”³⁷² Haitians began to redirect their “thoughts and their thankfulness” through a rather unlikely catalyst; one of the “benefits” of the U.S. occupation not announced in its publicity campaigns was the turning of Haitians away from European, particularly French, and U.S. American culture to the study of Haitian folk life and religion. Led by Dr. Jean Price-Mars (1876-1969), this revaluing of Haiti’s African-derived syncretic folkways was a deliberate and conscious form of intellectual and cultural resistance that was designed to ease internal divisions within Haitian society and produce a greater unified front to the U.S. occupation. And while Price-Mars’s studies and nationalistic program, most famously articulated in *Ainsi Parla l’Oncle* (1928), has been criticized for idealizing the harsh realities of Haitian peasant life, he achieved a reorienting of many elite Haitians, particularly the youthful educated vanguard, to their African-derived roots and to the agrarian populace who formed the country’s mass majority.³⁷³

Like the above illustrious Haitian scholar and diplomat, William E. Scott and his painting sojourn in Haiti also contributed to a new and developing vision of Haiti. In a 1938 report to the Julius Rosenwald Fund, Scott praised his fellowship period for enabling him to study “the types, customs and culture of the self-governing Negroes.”³⁷⁴ (Although the U.S. occupation was still underway during his tenure in the country, Scott looked past the

³⁷² Harry Johnston, "Haiti, the Home of Twin Republics," *National Geographic* 38.6 (December, 1920): 489.

³⁷³ See, Jean Price-Mars, *So Spoke the Uncle: Ainsi Parla l'Oncle*, Translated and with an introduction by Magdaline Shannon (Washington, D.C: Three Continents Press, 1983); Magdaline Shannon, *Jean Price-Mars, the Haitian Elite and the American Occupation, 1915-1935* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996).

³⁷⁴ William E. Scott, Fellowship update, 18 March 1938, Rosenwald Archives, box 446, folder 3, Fisk.

contemporary period to Haiti's revolutionary foundation.) For Scott, however, the benefits of his fellowship also included the witnessing of contemporary Haitians who were beginning to strive for a self-expression that reflected not only their French traditions but also turned for the first time to their African customs and beliefs. By observing Scott seriously and repeatedly paint not just portraits of the elite, but also the humble peasants, Haitian artists began to follow his lead and, according to Scott, "realize the abundance of untouched material for painting subject matter at their own doorstep."³⁷⁵

Scott also exhibited the fruits of his months in Haiti in Port-au-Prince before he departed. This may have the first painting exhibition held in Haiti which took Haiti's landscape and the humble Haitian working class and peasant as subject matter.³⁷⁶ Scott's Port-au-Prince exhibitions (his paintings were displayed in an elite club, but then moved to a school where Haitians of all classes could view them) were an overwhelming success, attended not only by the Haitian President and his Ministers, but also by two hundred to four hundred people daily, according to Scott. Far from an inflated belief in his own legacy, many Haitian artists and critics have noted the importance of Scott's influence, even if they did not find his personal painting style compelling. For example, Philippe Thoby-Marcelin provided one of the earliest Haitian-authored histories of the visual arts in Haiti that addressed the new Renaissance of Haitian painting. While he found Scott's "restful impressionism" to flatter the weaknesses of the Port-au-Prince bourgeoisie, Thoby-Marcelin acknowledges that Scott's work in Haiti did have the important benefit of "awakening talent

³⁷⁵Ibid.

³⁷⁶ William E. Scott to George Arthur, 28 November 1931 and William E. Scott to Edwin Embree, 10 February 1932, *ibid.*

among the youth, and we must recognize in all fairness that it is at the root of the present artistic movement.”³⁷⁷ In contrast to Thoby-Marcelin’s reservations, Charles F. Pressoir, who reviewed Scott’s Port-au-Prince exhibition for *Haiti-Journal*, called Scott a powerful painter who understood Haiti with all of his soul.³⁷⁸ Indeed, the Haitian government later awarded Scott the Legion of Honor both for inspiring Haitian painters and also engendering, through his respectful documentation of Haitian life, a better understanding of Haiti within the United States.³⁷⁹

Scott was concerned that his careful, albeit often picturesque, depictions of Haiti help American travelers see Haiti afresh from the dominant stereotypes of violence and hyper-

³⁷⁷ Philippe Thoby-Marcelin, *Haiti* (Washington, D.C: Pan American Union, 1959), 3. In Scott’s defense, he did not choose to paint genre pictures of the Haitian peasantry in order to sell paintings to the Haitian elite. Indeed, Scott describes being rather apprehensive as to how the elite would react when he finally exhibited his work at the end of his stay: “I was very doubtful at first as to how it [his exhibition of peasant paintings] would be accepted, as you know these Negroes are divided into two distinct classes; you also know the attitude of the upper Negroes towards the other Negroes here, so I hardly thought the upper class would agree to have pictures of their lower class in their homes.” William E. Scott to George Arthur, 28 November 1931, Rosenwald Archives, box 446, folder 3, Fisk. To his surprise (and also dismay), the Haitian elite purchased twenty-seven paintings, including twelve by the Haitian President Vincent, reducing the number of exhibition-ready paintings for his return to the United States. Scott inspired Pétion Savain to take up oil painting, soon becoming Haiti’s leading painter in the 1930s. Savain set the stage for a group of Haitian painters to be “discovered” by the American DeWitt Peters, who would help found the famous Centre d’Art in Port-au-Prince in 1944 with a group of Haitian artists. For more on Scott’s influence on Haitian artists that would lead to the opening of the Centre d’Art, see John Hewitt, “The Evolution of Luce Turnier,” *Black Art: an International Quarterly* 3.1: 48. Louis Vergniaud Pierre-Noël, who would become one of Haiti’s most famous designers and illustrators and later marry African-American painter Loïs Mailou Jones, recalls how he had frequently observed Scott painting, and had even asked to be his student. Protective of his limited time in Haiti, Scott refused to teach him, but did offer him encouragement and the two became close friends. See Hardman, 18.

³⁷⁸ Charles F. Pressoir, “L’exposition des oeuvres du peintre noir William Ed Scott,” *Haiti-Journal* (24 November 1931), clipping in Rosenwald Archives, box 446, Fisk. This effusive review, however, must be taken with a grain of salt, for it was published in the journal founded by President Sténio Vincent, who had taken great interest in Scott’s work, purchasing several of his paintings, and requesting that Scott paint his portrait.

³⁷⁹ William E. Scott to William Haygood, Julius Rosenwald Foundation, 3 February 1943, Rosenwald Archives, box 446, folder 3, Fisk. Scott received the award in 1936. Although he believed himself to be the first foreigner to receive this honor, James Weldon Johnson had actually been awarded it one year earlier, for his immense service in exposing the abuses of the U.S. occupation and for tirelessly campaigning for Haitian dignity and self determination. See, Albert Blanchet to James Weldon Johnson, 23 January 1935, James Weldon Johnson Papers, box 3, folder 47, Yale.

sexuality of previous portrayals. Moreover, Scott exhibited his work in Port-au-Prince as he wanted to inspire Haitian artists to document their own country and view their own people as worthy subject matter. And like James Weldon Johnson a decade earlier, Scott noted, “In a humble way, my work and exhibits of Haitian paintings about this country have helped to focus the eyes of American travelers toward that gem of the Caribbean.”³⁸⁰ While Johnson claimed the white writers John Vandercook and William Seabrook as his followers, Scott claims both Haitian and young African-American painters as those most inspired and encouraged by his work. Indeed, Scott considered his thirteen months in Haiti as only the beginning, and would continue to write to the Fund years later, describing how he continued to work to realize his Haitian project; he was still working over two decades later, as can be seen in his 1950 painting, *Haitian Market*.

During the 1930s, creative ethnographers like William E. Scott and Aaron Douglas began to make painted documents of Haiti’s people and landscape. William E. Scott (and Aaron Douglas) went to Haiti with the announced goal to document and present “realistic” and accurate portrayals. Scott focused on the beauty, hard work, sober and spiritual aspects of the Haitian peasant, while Douglas captured a tropical landscape that was removed from the trope of impenetrable jungle. Both artists were not merely exercising arbitrary aesthetic endeavors. Rather, they consciously strove to go beyond the textual and visual constraints that have insisted on representing Haiti as more exotic, more primitive, more exciting and outlandish. While the 1930s marks the beginning of a diligent investment in the documenting of Haiti, especially its people and their daily life, customs and religious practices by U.S. (and particularly African-American) artists, this decade also marks the

³⁸⁰ William E. Scott, Fellowship update, 18 March 1938, Rosenwald Archives, box 446, folder 3, Fisk.

moment when Haiti's revolutionary history became imagined and imaged in an unprecedented number of cultural works, with African-American artists again leading the way.

Chapter 6

Vernacularizing Haiti's Revolutionary History

In the December 1920 *National Geographic*, Harry Johnston describes the expanse of the Champ de Mars, the great public space located in the heart of Port-au-Prince by the National Palace and administrative buildings, and notes: “In the middle of this open space is a preposterously vulgar statue of Dessalines, who is regarded as the national hero of Haiti, the people having, with typical ingratitude, put on one side the real great man of their history, the remarkable and noble-hearted Toussaint L'Ouverture.”³⁸¹ Johnston's photograph (c. 1908-9) shows Dessalines posed high on a pedestal and separated from the viewer by a wrought iron fence, and seemingly isolated by the blank expanse of the sky (fig. 6.1). Stepping stiffly forward, Dessalines holds aloft a saber in his right hand, and a scabbard in his left, which Johnston identified as an excessive second sword. Dessalines braces a painted metal national flag permanently unfurled with the national motto, “Liberty or Death!” and

³⁸¹ Harry Johnston, "Haiti, the Home of Twin Republics," *National Geographic* 38.6 (December, 1920), 496. Originally publishing his findings in 1910, Johnston at that time had noted the ugly nature of the statue of Dessalines and called for its removal. Johnston described the massaging Dessalines to be an “abominable monster of cruelty” and an example of “the Negro at his very worst.” Continuing, he argued, “It is a *disgrace* to Haiti that amidst all her monuments, good, bad, and indifferent, none has been raised to commemorate the character and the achievements of Toussaint Louverture, whose record is one of the greatest hopes for the Negro race. No doubt this is partly due to the long political preponderance of the mulattoes, who hated and despised their mothers' race...” See Harry Johnston, *The Negro in the New World* (1910; New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1969), 158-9, 177. President during Haiti's Centennial, Nord Alexis was responsible for erecting the Dessalines Champ de Mars monument. Criticized for its “cold mask” which did not resemble the likeness more popularly accepted as the emperor's, the Haitian government later removed the 1904 Dessalines to the town hall of Gonaives. See Timoleon Brutus, *L'Homme D'Airain: etude monographique sur Jean-Jacques Dessalines fondateur de la nation haitienne; histoire de la vie d'un esclave devenu empereur jusqu'a sa mort, le 17 Octobre 1806*, 2 Vols (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de l'Etat, 1947), II, 261.

“To die rather than be under the domination of Power.”³⁸² It seems that Johnston was immensely uncomfortable with Dessalines’s visual and textual challenge. The monumental honoring of a monster, rather than the more beneficent and accommodating Toussaint underscored the *National Geographic*’s presentation of Haitians, particularly the peasants who dared to resist the occupiers through guerilla warfare, as petulant children who neither appreciated what was good for them, nor showed proper gratitude or respect for U.S. military’s form of paternalism.

Far from finding a “preposterously vulgar” statue, white travel writer Blair Niles’s imagination found buried within the hollow metal body of Dessalines an emotionally resonant and unspeakable history. In her 1926 travelogue *Black Haiti*, Niles used the 1904 Dessalines monument as a key organizing image for revealing the meaning and pattern of Haitian life in occupied Port-au-Prince. Niles describes joining the sea of Haitian citizens repeatedly circling and flowing past the watching Dessalines on the Champ de Mars. While at first the dominating dark iron figure “begins by being only a statue,” Niles envisions, “In our constant passing and re-passing the lonely threatening figure becomes bit by bit alive.”³⁸³ Niles presents both an ambivalent and romantic view of the statue. While intimating that

³⁸² Dessalines, here, does not present the flag that flew under his reign. While he is credited with creating the blue and red national flag by tearing the white band from the French *tricolour* at a ceremony at Arcahaie on 14 May 1803, Dessalines changed the blue to black soon after independence. These early flags also included Haiti’s national emblem, the palm tree surmounted by a Phrygian cap, with flags and cannons at its base. Alexandre Pétion, Haiti’s first mulatto leader, returned the black band to blue, though he switched the bands to a horizontal orientation, which is what is used for this 1904 statue. Extreme *noiriste* François Duvalier changed the blue back to black in 1966, with the blue returning after the fall of the Duvalier regime in 1986. See Robert Heinl and Nancy Heinl, *Written in Blood*, 2d rev. (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996), 109; fn13, 116; Amy Wilentz, *The Rainy Season: Haiti Since Duvalier* (Simon and Schuster, 1989), 54; David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti* (1979; New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996 rev.), 234-5.

³⁸³ Blair Niles, *Black Haiti: A Biography of Africa's Eldest Daughter* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926), 49.

Dessalines was a “ferocious black leader,” Niles circles around and delays repeating his history. At first she comments on his ornately plumed hat, that it “came to life,” revealing the leader’s “reckless love of the gorgeous.” Niles, however, cannot avoid Dessalines’s sword-wielding gesture for long. Returning, Niles states: “Then upon another day the sword is real; no longer of iron, but steel; steel covered with blood.” Having made this pronouncement, however, Niles again feints: “And with a shudder, I turn away from history, to the life which circles around the statue” (50). A long gap follows between her initial shuddering invocation and her articulation of Dessalines’s brutal history and his ordering of the massacre of the French who had remained in the country after Haiti’s independence. When she finally circles back, however, Niles uses her description of Dessalines to inform the reader of the greater context of Haiti’s revolution and to display her respect of Haitian accounts of their history.³⁸⁴ For Niles, a hollow statue of a Haitian revolutionary bears within its representation the power to come to life in the mind of the viewer, invoking and embodying Haiti’s simultaneously bitter and heroic past, and remaining as a living present.

Perhaps not unlike Blair Niles, I have circled around Haiti’s revolutionary past since my introduction, noting it when necessary, but delaying a direct engagement with its representation until now. In this final chapter, I return to where my project’s introduction began, the story of the Haitian Revolution. My delay has certainly not been due to this history’s lack of import, but rather, because the monumental nature of discussing Haiti’s revolution often threatens to overwhelm all other aspects of approaching Haiti (with the

³⁸⁴ In this section, Niles describes not only acquiring and reading texts on Haiti’s revolutionary history and Dessalines, but more importantly, how she slowly gained the trust and even admiration of the proprietors of the bookshop that she frequented in her quest for “the things that Haitians have written.” Niles explains, “I want to know what they have thought and felt in the years of their dramatic existence as Haitians” (62).

exception of Vodou, of course, which claims a body of discourse, academic and popular, that engulfs even accounts of Haiti's history). Like William Edouard Scott's distant fortress capping his rugged purple-blue mountain in *The Citadel, Haiti*—King Henri Christophe's architectural triumph and iconic challenge to a white world that would dare attempt to retake Haiti—testaments to Haiti's violent birth have quietly loomed in the background. It is now time to bring this history to the fore.

Vernacularizing History

Haiti's signal historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot emphasizes that history is not just produced by academics or within universities. Rather, He asserts that most people receive their earliest history lessons through popular media.³⁸⁵ This is particularly true in the case of Haiti's history; the mainstream academy and Euro-centric history books have long chosen to ignore the most revolutionary event during the Age of Revolution. Yet at the same time, accounts and representations of Haiti's history and famous figures have never belonged strictly to Haitians. Haiti's history has always borne implications for many racial, ethnic and national groups. The collection, preservation, and dissemination of black history had long been wielded as a primary weapon in both combating white prejudice and uplifting the black community through an awareness of black accomplishment. African-American communities in particular have become the keepers and tellers of Haiti's revolutionary history within the United States, In telling and retelling Haiti's history, not only through non-fiction writing, speeches and sermons, but also through fiction, theatre and the visual arts, vernacular historians rebuilt an effaced and glorious past, one that complimented learning about the

³⁸⁵ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 19-21.

glories of Africa within a much more immediate and political New World context. Specifically, Haiti's revolutionary past claimed its position as a monumental overthrow of history—the story of how an oppressed group of African and Creole slaves defeated the greatest powers of Europe—and therefore modeled that even the most downtrodden had the power to change their condition. At once historical and mythical, the Haitian Revolution and its heroes constitute a powerful node to brighten the collective memory of the African diaspora in the New World.

This chapter focuses on the recounting of Haiti's history by African-American artists who used their voices to tell the legacy of the Haitian revolution to their communities, making Haiti a “usable past” upon which to draw strength and a greater understanding of what it means to be a black citizen of the Americas and the world. These artists functioned as vernacular historians, or as what Patricia Hills has identified as pictorial *griots*, operating in the tradition of the professional storytellers of Africa who had long preserved orally the histories of their communities.³⁸⁶ Operating outside the bounds of academia, these vernacular historians take ownership of the pasts that they bring back to life, while also defining the very terms under which such pasts can be represented.

To begin, it must be noted that Haiti's history has never received consistent and continuous scrutiny or celebration. Rather, major cultural works by vernacular historians seem to appear as clusters, like constellations that shine forth and answer the needs of their community at a specific moment; at other times, those who would speak this history seem to

³⁸⁶ See Patricia Hills, "Jacob Lawrence as Pictorial Griot: The Harriet Tubman Series," *American Art* 7 (Winter 1993): 40-59. My understanding and use of the term vernacular historian also draws on the work of Grant Farred who identifies and examines the importance of vernacular intellectuals as under acknowledged but vitally important leaders within marginalized (and especially African-American) communities who operate outside of dominant and organized political structures. Grant Farred, *What's My Name? Black Vernacular Intellectuals* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

have fallen deliberately silent. For example, historian Mary Renda has pointed out that, despite an intent focus on Haiti because of the U.S. occupation, Haiti's revolutionary history received relatively little direct and extended creative attention from African Americans during the height of the U.S. occupation in the 1920s.³⁸⁷ Known works created during this period tend to portray and celebrate only individual Haitian revolutionary heroes as role models for race pride, focusing specifically on the black triumvirate of Toussaint L'Ouverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, and Henri Christophe.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁷ Mary Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 277.

³⁸⁸ While several prominent historians have greatly expanded the knowledge of the subalterns who made the revolution's success possible, especially in the moments when leaders like Toussaint faltered or capitulated, the story of the Haitian revolution has mostly been told through the bodies of its heroes. This is particularly true in the popular accounts of Haiti's history circulated within the United States. Although concerned predominantly with the life of Toussaint L'Ouverture, Trinidadian Cyril Lionel Robert James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938) produced a sea-change in Haitian historiography by examining the Haitian Revolution's complex factors and actors, including that of the subaltern classes. Following James, the most thorough answer to the challenge of studying the subaltern actors of this history can be found in Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990). The dualism between celebrating Haiti's heroes yet cautiously expounding upon the events of the Haitian Revolution can also be found throughout the nineteenth century. Pro-slavery advocates and denigrators of blacks focused on the violent events of the Haitian Revolution and Haiti's subsequent political failings as proof of the dangerous, degraded, and/or inferior nature of blacks. In contrast, those who used Haiti as a positive proof often focused on celebrating individual Haitian figures, without examining in great detail the full context of their actions and the events that thrust them into the world's spotlight. For example, former slave William Wells Brown published *The Black Man: His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* in 1863, a collection of biographical sketches designed to refute misrepresentations that proved the "natural inferiority of blacks" by displaying prominent personal achievements and obstacles overcome. Of the book's fifty-seven entries, all but eleven focus on figures who had been born or lived within the United States. Of the extra-U.S. examples, a full seven are prominent Haitian leaders. (Additionally, the only engraving included in the work is the frontispiece, a portrait of the Haitian President Fabre Geffrard.) And while Brown's biographies do touch on the Haitian Revolution, the entries focus on the individuals as exemplary figures, unburdened from their more problematic or even brutal actions. For example, for Brown, the courageous Dessalines "was a bold and turbulent spirit, whose barbarous eloquence lay in expressive signs rather than in words." Brown, however, does not describe Dessalines's "expressive signs," stating that enough historians have noted them, but without rightly considering the circumstances under which he lived and led. At the time of Brown's writing, however, the tales of Haitian military exploits had begun to re-circulate more widely again, in part to emphasize the accomplishments capable of black soldiers and therefore argue for their right to join the Union army as an armed force in the Civil War. William Wells Brown, *The Black Man: His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (Boston: James Redpath, 1863; New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1969). For a general overview of nineteenth century accounts, see: Bruce Dain, "Haiti and Egypt in Early Black Racial Discourse in the United States," *Slavery and Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 14.3 (December 1993): 140-1; Alfred Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

Not surprisingly, the moments of Haiti's revolution, early years of independence, and the characters one chooses to recount and memorialize constitute a heavily political act. Historically, the vernacular African-American historian often employed Haiti's history with judicious care, for one's tale of uplift could be another's incitation to violence, or an explanation for degradation and justification for control, as can be seen in a battle of editorials that appeared in the opening months of the U.S. occupation of Haiti. Two days after the initial U.S. marine invasion of what would become a nineteen-year occupation (1915-1934), the *New York Times* outlined the Black Republic's "customs" of corruption, despotism, revolution, and assassination, noting that this has held true since Haiti's founding father had ordered the massacre of the country's remaining whites.³⁸⁹ By invoking the terrifying events of 1804, the *New York Times* assured its readers of the vital importance of a strong U.S. military presence in 1915. In turn, prominent African-American leaders James Weldon Johnson, Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois wrote editorials expressing concern over the high-handed tactics of the U.S. government, or condemning outright the military invasion. While each author described why the security and ultimately independence of Haiti mattered to their readership, none specifically invoked Haiti's revolution as the origin of its independence that resulted in Haiti becoming the foremost model of black self-liberation and self-government. Johnson opens his editorial by noting that African-Americans "cannot but feel a keen interest in the fate of Haiti," for Haiti must demonstrate the ability of blacks in self-government. Du Bois centers his outrage on the United States's unjustified violation of an independent sister state. Only Washington's editorial alludes to Haiti's revolutionary past, noting that "every Haitian would rather be

³⁸⁹ "The Latest Revolution in Haiti," *New York Times* (30 July 1915): 8.

swept from the earth than give up the independence won by their fathers. In particular, they do not want the dominance of the white man.”³⁹⁰ Certainly each author may not have wanted to convolute the force of their editorials by adding a description of the history that led to Haiti’s independence and hence its importance. Additionally, each author may have assumed that their readership already knew this history. Their silence, however, is in marked contrast to justifications of the U.S. invasion pronounced in much of the mainstream press.

Black Majesty

This is not to say that Haiti’s history did not matter during this period to African Americans. Rather, the accounts of the Haitian Revolution diminished in lieu of more simplistic and celebratory representations of Haitian heroes as invocations of race pride, with most examples stemming from the second half of the 1920s, after the initial furor of the James Weldon Johnson-led protests against the occupation (and the excitement over the opening of Eugene O’Neill’s *The Emperor Jones*) had died down. 1928 was a watershed year. In this year, the young Richmond Barthé (1901-1989) created a bust of Toussaint L’Ouverture. One of his earliest sculptures, this Toussaint opened the way for Barthé’s rise as one of the most prominent and successful twentieth-century African-American sculptors.³⁹¹ This same year saw Leslie Pinckney Hill’s play, *Toussaint L’Ouverture: A*

³⁹⁰ James Weldon Johnson, “Views and Reviews: Haiti,” *New York Age* (5 August 1915); Du Bois, W. E. B. “Editorial: Hayti.” *Crisis* 10 (October 1915): 291. Booker T. Washington, “Haiti and the United States,” *Outlook* 111 (November 17, 1915): 681.

³⁹¹ Barthé studied at the Art Institute in Chicago from 1924 to 1928, and it was only in his fourth year that he turned to making sculpture, initially only as a clay-modeling exercise to assist him in understanding how to sense volume in his paintings. He produced two practice heads that were impressive enough to be cast and included in the important 1928 “The Negro in Art Week” exhibition, where a patron viewed his work and then commissioned a head of Toussaint for the Lake County Children’s Home. The same patron also requested a bust of famous African-American painter Henry O. Tanner. Richmond Barthé Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans; Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists: from 1792 to the Present* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 139. On the strength of his

Dramatic History, a ponderous script unabashedly concerned with a careful detailing of Toussaint's records of battles and achievements through dignified blank verse. Less concerned with the practicalities of its staging, Hill reveals in his foreword that he has a more important goal: to offer his own contribution to the New Negro Movement and build race pride in youth through creative literature mined from a heroic black history.³⁹² Unfortunately, Hill's enshrining of Toussaint appealed to a very limited audience, counteracting his ultimate goal of inspiring the youth of the race. Hill's publication was completely overshadowed by white amateur anthropologist and adventure writer John W. Vandercook's history, *Black Majesty: The Life of Christophe, King of Haiti* (1928), which was illustrated with the iconic drawings of white illustrator Mahlon Blaine. *Black Majesty* became a runaway best seller, going through fourteen printings by 1930, and spurring a cultural market for all things related to Christophe or black kingship.³⁹³ Although told in a lively manner, Vandercook assured his

early sculptures, Barthé received two consecutive Julius Rosenwald Fund awards in 1931 and 1932, while he would receive two Guggenheim fellowships a decade later.

³⁹² Hill states: "This story is to help fill a long-continuing void. The Negro youth of the world has been taught that the black race has no great traditions, no characters of world importance, no record of substantial contribution to civilization. The withering moral and social effects of this teaching can hardly be computed. The creative literature now building up with such bright promise in Negro America must correct and counter-balance this falsehood of centuries. A worthy literature reared upon authentic records of achievement is the present spiritual need of the race." Conscientious of his play as its own history text, Hill carefully includes in his foreword an explanation of sections in the play where he altered historic facts. Leslie Pinckney Hill, *Toussaint L'Ouverture: A Dramatic History* (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1928), 7-8.

³⁹³ Renda, 216-223, notes that *Black Majesty* easily capitalized on the public's fascination with Christophe and black kingship in general, which had been sparked by O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*. Businesses also quickly took advantage of the popular interest in Haiti's first king, using Mahlon Blaine's iconic book-cover portrait of Christophe to advertise cruises to the West Indies. Renda also notes that the U.S. Marine Corps began using Christophe's citadel for its public relations brochures, while, amazingly, one could decorate the home with a set of limited edition "A Visit to King Christophe" scenic wallpaper panels for \$600.

readers that his text remained firmly rooted in historic facts gained through research and interviews in Haiti.³⁹⁴

Black Majesty dominates the May 1928 issue of *Opportunity*. The magazine includes a lengthy review of Vandercook's biography by John Matheus (1887-1983), a prize-winning African-American author and professor of romance languages who had an abiding interest in Haitian culture. Soon after the May *Opportunity* hit the stands, Matheus himself would depart for a summer of research in Haiti to gather folk material and historical information for the libretto of an opera on the rule of Haiti's first head of state, Dessalines. Clearly already well-versed in Haiti's history, Matheus used his *Opportunity* review to write his own condensed account of Haiti's history rather than discuss the intricacies of Vandercook's book, though he did open and close his review by noting that this important and admirably rendered history was actually produced by a white man. Before arriving at Matheus's history-review, however, the reader must first pass through the hulking back of Christophe, who dominates the magazine's cover (fig. 6.2). Mahlon Blaine's three-toned and heavily textured illustration captures Christophe on the edge of an outlook, gazing down at his recent handiwork—his ordering of the burning of the colony's capital, rather than allow the re-invading Napoleonic troops to claim its benefits. Torch still in hand, Christophe not only gave the orders, but also acted with swift thoroughness, beginning with his own home. Christophe models the sacrifices required to succeed at all costs in a war where no clemency would be given, as he turns to face fully the inferno of his own making.

³⁹⁴ John W. Vandercook, "Foreword," in *Black Majesty: The Life of Christophe, King of Haiti* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1928; Blue Ribbon Books, 1930).

While this image hints at a leader bordering almost on the fanatical, the illustration included within the magazine confirms this diagnosis (fig. 6.3). Vandercook's text celebrates the forceful and domineering masculinity of Henri Christophe. Blaine's illustration, in turn, pushes this interpretation to the limit. Textured like a rough-hewn carving, this Christophe stands forward, huge epaulets accentuating his akimbo arms that brace his form as he unsheathes a dagger-sharp phallic sword that is held across his groin. Blaine's Christophe seems born out of a horror film rather than a history text, and certainly would have been cast as the supernatural villain rather than the hero.³⁹⁵ Hierarchically scaled to fill the picture plane, this brooding giant presides over struggling Lilliputian figures who whip, stab, and strangle each other in a bramble of interconnected lines, rising up like tendrils of flame. This monstrous master even seems to pass judgment on Countee Cullen's poem, also titled "Black Majesty," which the magazine printed directly below. Cullen's poem situates Haiti as a glorious producer of past monumental black heroes, but not as the location of a complex and far-reaching revolutionary history. The construction of Cullen's poem, a sonnet, formally expresses his subject of a recovery of history in which the downtrodden of today learn of black kings who had conquered, and thereby point the way to future action: "A thing men did a man may do again."³⁹⁶ Far from the clean orderliness of Cullen's poem, Blaine's illustration displays the brutal nature of what that action might require.

Lesley Pinckney Hill, however, probably would have been disappointed in both examples' lack of historical accuracy. It seems that Cullen and the *Opportunity* caption

³⁹⁵ Renda, 216-17. Indeed, Mahlon Blaine made his most successful images in illustrating books written on the darker and even erotic edge of literature, specializing in images of the sensuous and demonic: <<http://www.askart.com/biography.asp?ID=4724>> (10 December 2004).

³⁹⁶ Countee Cullen, "Black Majesty," *Opportunity* (May 1928): 148.

editor should have read Vandercook's text, or at least Matheus's condensed version of Haiti's history, for both insert errors in naming the famous black triumvirate of the Haitian Revolution. Cullen's opening line states: "These men were kings albeit they were black: Toussaint and Dessalines and L'Ouverture." It seems that the larger-than-life figure of Toussaint L'Ouverture entitles him to a repeat naming. Historically, he claimed only the two titles of general, and governor of the island; he never presided over independent Haiti and certainly was never crowned, having been captured and deported to France before the completion of the revolution. In turn, Blaine's illustration has been assigned the caption: "Jean Christophe from Mahlon Blaine's illustration for 'Black Majesty.'" The editor has conflated Haiti's first head of state, Jean-Jacques Dessalines with his successor, Henri Christophe. In the intertextual space of this illustration and poem, historical details are secondary to the true task at hand: presenting dynamic, iconic, heroic black figures.

Inaccuracies (or in the case of Hill's play, ponderous hyper-attention to detail) aside, all of these works of 1928 opened the curtain to the 1930s when the Haitian Revolution would take center stage and demand the public's awareness through an unprecedented number of works performed, produced and/or created by African-American artists.

The Play is the Thing...

For the tension in the theater is a very different, and very particular tension: this tension between the real and the imagined is the theater, and this is why the theater will always remain a necessity. One is not in the presence of shadows, but responding to one's flesh and blood: in the theater, we are re-creating each other.—James Baldwin³⁹⁷

³⁹⁷ James Baldwin, *The Devil Finds Work* (New York: Delta Trade Paperbacks, 1976), 30-1. The question of audience is a central theme in Baldwin's essays, a question that he only becomes conscious of after he attended the theatre for the first time, a show of Orson Welles's "Voodoo Macbeth."

Entertainment, especially in the form of theater, has long been an important source for bringing the Haitian Revolution before the public's eye. The recounting of Haiti's history appears in play scripts and on the stage just as readily as it was produced in hefty volumes of history. Published in Paris, Alphonse de Lamartine's play *Toussaint L'Ouverture* (1833) is one of the earliest examples. Productions strictly devoted to Haiti's history in the United States, however, seem to have had to wait for William Edgar Easton, who published *Dessalines* in 1893. Easton wrote his history play specifically to inspire his audience to use knowledge of the past to combat the ills of the present and continue the work into the future. His preface notes that his play will be provocative, but adds that he hopes that his history of Dessalines will direct the attention of the "literati of the race" to "the rich fields of dramatic and narrative art, which by every right are distinctly the property of the Negro." Easton further states that an awareness of black history can ensure the future greatness of the race and ground a "healthy and substantial race pride." Noting that whites take such knowledge for granted by whites, Easton laments, "The Negro alone fails to immortalize his distinguished dead, and leaves to the prejudiced pen of other races, the office, which, by a proper conception of duty to posterity, very properly becomes his duty..." Moreover, for Easton, black writers have neglected historical drama, and have not taken advantage of its ability to influence and reform public opinion.³⁹⁸

Easton's *Dessalines* is a play about the Haitian Revolution play heavily laced with a melodramatic subplot concerning a female character and a major historical revolutionary figure, a theme that will be repeated often in the twentieth century. In the play, Dessalines

³⁹⁸ William Edgar Easton, *Dessalines: A Dramatic Tale (A Single Chapter from Haiti's History)* (Galveston, Texas: J. W. Burson Co., 1893), vi.

awakens to his excessive brutality when he rescues his mulatto enemy's sister, Clarisse, from a voodoo witch and then falls in love with her. The fair Clarisse converts (the surprisingly fair, according to the published play's engravings)³⁹⁹ Dessalines to Christianity and the play ends without even a hint of massacres or political despotism. In the play's preface, Easton openly admits to taking factual liberties in creating a play that would highlight the rich possibilities of uplifting racial drama. Yet as noted above, his preface also laments the lack of African Americans writing and staging black history, implying the importance of historical fact. Easton believes drama to be the perfect medium for teaching both history and moral virtue. He prefers, therefore, to skew history and reconstitute a sanitized Dessalines in order to fulfill the higher purposes of serious moral drama and race pride. Indeed, the debut staging of Easton's interpretation of Haiti's history was actually about the visibility and control of African-American self-presentation. *Dessalines's* debut has been called the "most note worthy African-American event" during the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition, even though it did not actually occur on the fairgrounds or with Exposition sanctioning. Rather, it was produced privately at the Chicago Freiberg's Opera House as a part of the African-American protest against the Exposition's exclusion of African Americans in its planning and the rejection of many proposals for exhibits to display the accomplishments of African Americans.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁹ The Massachusetts-based landscape artist and lithographer Albert (Bert) Poole (1853-1939) created four images to accompany the 1893 publication of Easton's play, including a frontispiece of the actor Scottron as Dessalines transported to an imaginative and dramatic cliff-edge landscape.

⁴⁰⁰ See, Errol G. Hill and James Hatch, *A History of African American Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 88-9, 138-9. The outstanding nineteenth-century actress Henrietta Vinton Davis selected, produced, directed and acted in this debut performance. She would again stage the production in 1909 in Pittsburgh. The only other known performance occurred in May 1930 in Boston, put on by the Allied Arts Players. Aside from a brief review of the debut performance, which the *Chicago Freeman* (9 September 1893) deemed "fair," I have been unable to locate any other reactions to the play. This work's

Almost two decades following *Dessalines*, Easton published another play on Haiti, *Christophe: A Tragedy in Prose of Imperial Haiti* (1911). In this sequel, Easton conscientiously corrects the overly optimistic ending of a civilized and Christianized Dessalines. There is no romantic love and hopeful ending for Christophe. Here, the female character is the vehicle not of moralistic uplift but of treacherous deceit leading to his downfall. While Easton may have been hopeful of the efficacy of both history and of Haiti in 1893, by 1911 a new pessimism has descended.⁴⁰¹ The appendixes published with this play also show a marked change in tone from the celebrative speeches and essays included in the 1893 *Dessalines*. *Christophe* is followed by an epilogue by James B. Clarke with the ominous title, "A Job for Uncle Sam." In this essay, Clarke notes that there is much truth in the writings on Haiti's failures and that while there is much to be proud of there is almost equal amounts of its history that warrants shame. Not a shining example of Negro self-government, Clarke does not blame Haiti solely, for what country ever attained civilization in isolation? Clarke amazingly concludes, however, that Haiti must now be re-conquered by many visiting foreigners armed with the book and the plow.⁴⁰²

importance, rather, stems from its place as a foundational play in the literature of serious historical drama by African-American authors, and would be cited as such by advocates of black drama, particularly Harlem Renaissance spokesman Alain Locke.

⁴⁰¹ While perhaps too easy to read this pessimism biographically, Easton wrote *Dessalines* when he was an active member in the Texas Republican party, an organization that he had originally believed to be the salvation for blacks. By the time he wrote *Christophe*, Easton had left Texas, disillusioned, disenfranchised by new laws, and driven out by the increasingly dangerous climate that made being a politically active African American a life-threatening liability. For more on Easton, see: Robert J. Fehrenbach, "William Edgar Easton's *Dessalines: A Nineteenth-Century Drama of Black Pride*." *CLA Journal* 19.1 (September 1975): 75-89; Douglas Flamming, *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

⁴⁰² William Edgar Easton, *Christophe: A Tragedy in Prose of Imperial Haiti* (Los Angeles: Press Grafton, ca. 1911).

Theatrical productions inspired by Haiti continued intermittently into the 1920s.⁴⁰³ As my earlier chapter discussed, Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* (1920) was an especially popular play that creatively drew on aspects of Haiti's history. Revivals of this play, along with its 1933 film version, set the stage for a host of Haiti-inspired works. In 1936, two short years following the U.S. military withdrawal from Haiti, the Negro Unit of the Work's Progress Administration's New York Federal Theatre Project (FTP) had Harlem in an uproar with its bold production of *Macbeth*. The young (just twenty years old) and rising director Orson Welles, inspired by the tragedy of the failed reign of Henri Christophe, transplanted Shakespeare's setting in the Scottish heath to the forested mountains of Haiti.⁴⁰⁴ Like O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*, Welles emphasized sound to carry the dramatic movement of the plot. Welles employed an ensemble of African drummers led by Sierra Leonian Asadata Dafora to create the proper background atmosphere through Vodou chants and rhythms, purportedly "real African spells."⁴⁰⁵ According to John Houseman, the show's producer, the star of the troupe was an "authentic witch doctor" named Abdul, who "seemed

⁴⁰³ First appearing in 1913, W. E. B. Du Bois's pageant *Star of Ethiopia* presented a parade from black history, and included Toussaint L'Ouverture and the gift of blacks fighting for their own freedom. As part of a drama class at Howard University, Helen Webb Harris composed, *Genifrede: The Daughter of L'Ouverture, a Play in One Act*, in 1922. Harris centers the play around the iron-will of Toussaint L'Ouverture, while Dessalines appears as a moderator to Toussaint's extreme sense of justice, which includes executing his daughter's fiancé. The Howard University Players gave the first performance of *Genifrede*. Alain Locke and Montgomery Gregory deemed the play significant enough to include it in the important Negro Drama bibliographies in the major anthologies *The New Negro* and *Plays of Negro Life: A Source-Book of Native American Drama*. Along with Harris, May Miller's *Christophe's Daughters*, which appears in Willis Richardson and May Miller's *Negro History in Thirteen Plays* (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1935), uniquely shifts the theatrical limelight from Haiti's military heroes to the leaders' daughters.

⁴⁰⁴ Welles's first wife, Virginia, proposed the idea of setting the production in Haiti. Welles excitedly took her suggestion, finding great parallel between the stormy career and demise of King Henri Christophe and Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. John Houseman, *Run-Through* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 185, 197-8.

⁴⁰⁵ Simon Callow, "Voodoo Macbeth," in *Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 41; Houseman, *Run-Through*, 193.

to know no language at all except magic.”⁴⁰⁶ Through sound, costuming (both in outlandish “tribal”-inspired and skin-baring wear for the “natives” and Napoleonic-era gowns and military regalia adopted by Christophe’s court), and setting (designer Nat Karson turned the stage into an iridescent jungle), the production immediately earned the moniker “Voodoo Macbeth.”

Not surprisingly, Welles’s use of Haiti drew substantially from popular understandings of the nation as a primeval magic island in the tropics filled with mysterious African-derived religious practices and a dramatic and violent past. Indeed, director and producer viewed Haiti as the perfect setting to make Shakespeare’s supernatural visions believable, which Welles happily accentuated. Yet those involved with the play and even the press made sure to highlight the production’s historical grounding, as spurious of an understanding as it might be. Welles eagerly expounded to reporters the parallels between King Henri Christophe and Macbeth, while the national director of the FTP, Hallie Flanagan, praised the production as innovative, with the production’s setting in Haiti, “which had once known a half-crazed, despotic monarch.”⁴⁰⁷ Contemporary reviews followed suit, reproducing myopic accounts of Haiti’s history that downplay the context of its revolutionary period that underpins the ultimate failings of Christophe’s reign. Reviews also focused on the exotic nature of not only the production’s setting, but also the cast themselves, seemingly stunned by the audacity of blacks performing Shakespeare. Ignoring that they were a team of Harlemites who had found relief in occupations created by the WPA, many reviewers

⁴⁰⁶ Houseman, *Run-Through*, 190.

⁴⁰⁷ Hallie Flanagan, “Federal Theatre,” speech given March 24, 1939. Hallie Flanagan Papers, series 4, box 25, folder 1, Billie Rose Theater Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts (here after NYPL-Performing Arts).

described the cast and crew as exotic species removed from their natural “habitat” and transplanted onto the mainstream stage, a safari to be experienced without leaving the country.⁴⁰⁸

Hallie Flanagan hoped to create a permanent and sustainable national theatre that would outlast the Depression. While a hit production like “Voodoo Macbeth” established the Federal Theatre Project as a creative and cultural force even as it provided jobs and relief, Flanagan was also highly concerned that new plays be written.⁴⁰⁹ Deemed particularly good subject matter for black theater groups and their attending communities, Haiti featured in several prominent FTP “Negro Unit” productions, not only through tangential inspiration as

⁴⁰⁸ Robert Garland, “Folk Play Replaces Farce on ‘Macbeth,’” *Herald Tribune* (8 July 1936), described the downtown run as having been “removed from its Harlem habitat,” and concluded, “This may or may not be Shakespeare but it’s exotic, zestful and a good colored show. Some of it is truck; some of it is truckin’. But most of it is effervescent and all of it is different. Try it by all means.” See also: Brooks Atkinson, “The Play: ‘Macbeth,’ or Harlem Boy Goes Wrong Under Auspices of Federal Theatre Project,” *New York Times* (15 April 1936): L25+; Bosley Crowther, “Macbeth’ the Moor,” *New York Times* (5 April 1936); Robert Littell, “Everyone Likes Chocolate,” *Vogue* (1 November 1936): 66+ (Also condensed as “Macbeth in Chocolate,” *Reader’s Digest* (January 1937): 88-90), which describes the set as “from the dreams of Toussaint L’Ouverture” while the costumes were “Emperor Jones gone mad, but rather beautifully mad.” Emphasizing the production as a cultural adventure for white audiences seeking reprieve from the straightjacket of civilization, Littell notes: “The whites went, not to see ‘Macbeth,’ not to hear Shakespeare, who had bored most of them in school, but to get something different—that something at once innocent and richly seasoned, childlike and jungle-spiced, which is the gift of the Negro to a more tired, complicated, and self-conscious race” (127). John Mason Brown, however, criticized the production for not going far enough with its Haitian setting in his review, “A Not so Voodoo ‘Macbeth’ Performed in Harlem,” *New York Post* (15 April 1936). For more on this highly popular play and its impact, see: Simon Callow, *Orson Welles: The Road to Xanadu* (New York: Viking, 1995); Richard France, “The ‘Voodoo’ Macbeth of Orson Welles,” *Yale/Theatre* 5.3 (1974): 66-78; Richard France, ed. *Orson Welles on Shakespeare: The WPA and Mercury Theatre Playscripts* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990); John Houseman, *Run-Through* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972); Wendy Smith, “The Play that Electrified Harlem,” *Civilization: The Magazine of the Library of Congress* (January-February 1996): 38-43

⁴⁰⁹ Hallie Flanagan, “Where are the ‘New’ Plays?” opening address, production conference held at Poughkeepsie, July 22, 1936. Hallie Flanagan Papers T-Mss 1964-002, series 4, box 24, NYPL-Performing Arts. From its inception, the Federal Theatre Program faced much criticism and scrutiny, first as a misguided use of government money and later as a bastion for communism. Having to defend the program almost constantly, Flanagan continuously and consistently championed the FTP’s accomplishments, with the Harlem production of *Macbeth* nearly always cited. In fact, in her constant search for newly written plays, that would be innovative and accomplished, Flanagan would lament in a speech, “...I’m getting pretty tired of talking about the Negro *Macbeth*...” Hallie Flanagan, “The Fault Lies not in our Stars,” speech to the regional staff of the Federal Theatre Project, New York City, August 19, 1937, *ibid.* Congress succeeded in shutting down the program in 1939.

that found in *The Emperor Jones* or in “Voodoo Macbeth,” but also in new plays that attempted to dramatically portray Haiti’s revolutionary heroes and history. Christine Ames and Clarke Painters’s *Black Empire* (1936) was one such newly-written example, and focused on the life of King Henri Christophe, his tyrannical building of the citadel, the use of voodoo charms to harm the king, and the final revolt of the people that led to his suicide with a golden bullet. While incorporating important facts from the final days of Christophe’s reign, *Black Empire* continued to enforce the tradition of exotic and sensationalized stories of voodoo human sacrifice.⁴¹⁰ As theatre historian E. Craig has noted, “...although it attempts to dramatize black history, this play is not black drama: the protagonists are white; the orientation of the play is white; the play is riddled with inconsistencies that distort the black image and the black experience...”⁴¹¹

The 1930s also saw dramatic black-authored works created and performed outside the bounds of the Federal Theatre Project that presented a more authentic understanding of Haitian culture and emphasized the heroic nature of Dessalines, even if, like Easton, they still

⁴¹⁰ The authors of *Black Empire* seem to have drawn equally from three sources: its history of Christophe from Vandercook’s *Black Majesty*, “voodoo” phrases from William Seabrook’s *The Magic Island*, and the outlandish and melodramatic storyline of a white girl forced to be a voodoo priestess who must preside over a white male human sacrifice from Beale Davis’s *The Goat Without Horns*. This third narrative line most likely constitutes the authors’ attempts to court a white audience, with the white leads of the Frenchman Jacques and white girl Cecile actually dominating the play’s dialogue. An adapted radio version of *Black Empire* by John Wile aired in September, 1937. Spuriously ignoring the sensational and stereotypical melodramatic fictive story line of the white-girl-voodoo-priestess, the radio introduction emphasized that the “intensely dramatic history” about to be performed was historically true, which adds “an even greater interest to the thrilling and poignant drama.” WPA Radio Scripts, 1936-1940, T-Mss 2000-005, NYPL-Performing Arts. For an analysis of *Black Empire*, particularly the problematic stereotypes inserted by its white authors, see E. Craig, *Black Drama of the Federal Theatre Era* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980).

⁴¹¹ E. Quita Craig, *Black Drama of the Federal Theatre Era: beyond the Formal Horizons* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), 160-1.

continued to ignore the more contradictory and brutal aspects of his history.⁴¹² Although his fascination with Haiti began with his grandmother's rhetorical weavings, Hughes's own renderings of Haiti's revolutionary past would have to wait until after he had established himself as the signal poet of the New Negro Movement. Hughes's literary oeuvre touches on the subject of Haiti several times and in multiple genres, including scorching journalistic pieces for radical publications and even a children's book. Yet it was in his writing for the stage that Hughes's fascination with Haiti would most manifest itself, as he reworked his thoughts in play scripts and librettos, striving to create a successful stage production based on Haiti's revolutionary history. In February 1928, Hughes began to consider writing an opera on the Haitian Revolution, which he hoped would be set by Clarence Cameron White (1880-1960), then director of music at West Virginia State College. First sketched as a "singing play," *Emperor of Haiti* traces the rise and fall of a fierce Jean-Jacques Dessalines, whom he envisions as a key leader of the initial uprising, and was to include a "ballet of witch dancers."⁴¹³ Hughes, however, set the play aside in order to complete his studies at Lincoln University and a new novel. This delay cost him his composer; in the interim, White had decided to write his own opera on Haiti with John Matheus as librettist.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹² 1936 also saw a play on the Haitian Revolution premiere across the Atlantic. C. L. R. James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938) not only solidly situated the Haitian Revolution as a central event within the Age of Revolution, but also drew parallels between the Haitian Revolution and modern-day political and social movements that spoke to the proletariat, anti-imperialists, and Pan-Africanists. Less well known, however, James's *The Black Jacobins* first appeared as a play, opening with Paul Robeson in London in 1936.

⁴¹³ Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes, 1902-1941: I, Too, Sing America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 165-6.

⁴¹⁴ Rampersad, I: 175. Tammy Kernodle, in her article outlining the troubling legacy of Troubled Island, also notes that Hughes had submitted the play to White, but that the composer had refused it. See: Tammy Kernodle, "Arias, Communists, and Conspiracies: The History of Still's "Troubled Island," *Musical Quarterly* 83.4 (Winter 1999): 504, f.n. 3.

White became head of the music department at West Virginia State College in 1924, and soon John Frederick Matheus (1887-1983), a prize-winning author and professor of romance languages who had an abiding interest in Haitian culture. Matheus's enthusiasm for Haiti interested White and the two began an artistic collaboration with the hopes of producing an opera based on Haiti's history and culture, *Ouanga*. The two pieced together money from several artistic awards, including grants from the Rosenwald and Harmon foundations, to finance a period of study in Haiti during the summer of 1928.⁴¹⁵ Matheus gathered information on Haiti's culture, folklore, and history during this trip, which he incorporated into several short stories and a folk comedy, *Tambour*, for which White composed incidental music. White concentrated on studying Haiti's folk music and rhythms for idioms to be incorporated directly into the opera's score. In a 1949 interview given at the time of the opera's first staging, White notes that he was inspired by the unfamiliar rhythms that are a part of Haitian religious drumming, which he studied and recorded diligently in order to incorporate them into his operatic score.⁴¹⁶ White felt that it was important to incorporate indigenous and authentic musical idioms and dance movements into the opera. First performed in 1932, *Ouanga* relates the life of revolutionary and first emperor Dessalines and his attempts to combat voodoo beliefs. Like Easton, Matheus omits Dessalines's massacres, portraying the emperor's greatest crimes as forsaking his true love Défilée and attempting to outlaw voodoo, with both directly causing his assassination. Matheus preferred to have his romantic protagonist in dramatic confrontation with voodoo,

⁴¹⁵ Wallace M. Cheatham, "Ouanga: South Bend, Indiana, and the Premier of a 20th-Century American Opera," *Indiana Magazine of History* (June 2004): <<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/imh/100.2/cheatham.html>> (23 May 2005).

⁴¹⁶ *South Bend Tribune* (1 June 1949), as quoted in *ibid.*

rather than admit that his hero terrorized his people and subjected them to brutal labor policies.⁴¹⁷

Without White, Hughes continued to search for a composer even as he intermittently worked on his Haitian history play and its “singing” version.⁴¹⁸ Langston Hughes’s play, *Drums of Haiti*, was first performed in 1934, but he would continue to revise (and rename) the work, with the Gilpin Players premiering *Troubled Island* in 1936. Encouraged by its moderately positive reviews, Hughes began reworking the play into a more specific operatic libretto to be delivered to his found composer, William Grant Still in Los Angeles for scoring. Hughes and Still would work on the opera intermittently for the remainder of the 1930s, with the opera finally debuting in 1949 as *Troubled Island*, the same year *Ouanga* was finally produced. Like *Ouanga*, Hughes’s play and opera dramatize the life and downfall of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, and provide another example of a sanitized Dessalines as main character. The narrative begins on the eve of the revolutionary uprising in 1791, but Act II then jumps forward over two decades to the end of Emperor Dessalines’s reign, thus omitting both the bloody fight for independence and Dessalines’s ordered massacres.

⁴¹⁷ Matheus completed the opera’s libretto in 1929. White received a two-year Rosenwald fellowship (1930-32) to finish the opera while studying operatic composition in Paris under Raoul Laparra. *Ouanga* premiered in concert on November 13, 1932, at Chicago’s three Arts Club under the sponsorship of the American Opera Society of Chicago, which awarded *Ouanga* the prestigious Bispham Medal for best American opera. Despite such accolades, the opera, however, would have to wait until June 10, 1949, for its first fully staged production, premiering in a high school auditorium in South Bend, Indiana. The opera was again presented in concert on June 18, 1941 by New York City’s New School of Social Research. See Cheatham, *ibid.* One reviewer of the 1956 New York production, while praising it for being well composed and ably sung in oratorio fashion, did lament the opera’s elimination of violence: “But the tension and violence that the subject needs are not there.” See, Howard Taubman, “Opera: ‘Ouanga,’ Voodoo on Haiti,” *New York Times* (28 May 1956): 22.

⁴¹⁸ Hughes initially looked abroad for a composer for his Haitian singing play, though he surprisingly did not seek out a Haitian composer. Rather, he proposed a trip to Cuba, an idea that his patroness “Godmother” Charlotte Mason instantly backed. It seems that both writer and patron neither noted nor cared that the Caribbean had many distinct musical traditions. Regardless, his Cuban search failed, and his understanding of Caribbean folk music went no further. See: Rampersad, I: 176-9.

Both opera productions present a Haitian revolutionary as a figure of heroic black masculinity, reflecting the late-1920s and -30s focus on recreating figures to instill race pride. Both the Matheus-White and Hughes-Still collaborations also reflect the era's interest in ethnographic knowledge facilitated by visits to Haiti. While not completely successful, both Matheus and Hughes attempted to insert authentic patterns of Haitian folk life and elements of Haiti's religion that reflected the Vodou tradition, rather than repeating "voodoo" stereotypes. Musically speaking, *Ouanga* was more conscious of extending ethnographic elements to include sound. Not only did White emphasize studying Haitian idioms, but he literally gave Haiti a voice in the world premiere of the opera when he selected Fritz Vincent and Carmen Malibranche, two natives of Port-au-Prince, to debut the starring roles of Dessalines and Défilée.⁴¹⁹ In comparison, Still's score for *Troubled Island* remained firmly rooted in the grand operatic traditions of Europe, for that was the style through which Still wanted to establish himself. Moreover, Still elected to have white singers, whom he felt to be better trained, perform the lead roles in blackface.⁴²⁰

While all of the above examples served to recount and rehearse Haiti's history to a wider audience, none had the reach of the Federal Theatre Project's follow-up to "Voodoo Macbeth." The FTP Harlem Unit staged the play *Haiti* to capitalize deliberately on the fame and popularity of "Voodoo Macbeth." Written over two decades earlier in 1917 by white southerner William DuBois, director Maurice Clark had DuBois re-write his historical

⁴¹⁹ Cheatham. Born in Port-au-Prince, Vincent and Malibranche, had also studied in New York City. The 1949 premiere was made possible through the support of several organizations. One patron, however, prominently stands out: Joseph Charles, the Haitian United Nations delegate and ambassador to the United States, who also attended the second evening's performance. It seems that Haiti, or at least its ambassador, took a keen interest in bringing a fully staged version of the opera before the public.

⁴²⁰ Leslie Catherine Sanders, ed., *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes: Volume 6: Gospel Plays, Operas and Later Dramatic Works* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 15

melodrama for a specifically Harlem audience.⁴²¹ *Haiti* proved to be the most successful and popular staging of Haiti's history; this record-setting play opened in Harlem's Lafayette theater on March 2, 1938, playing over 100 performances to close to 100,000 people. More importantly, this melodrama shares important links to probably the most important African-American account of the Haitian Revolution: Jacob Lawrence's series of paintings, *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture*.

Jacob Lawrence, Haiti, and the Community of Harlem

Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000) is well known for his celebrated series that combine numerous images with full captions, highlighting through his careful research specific moments in African-American history.⁴²² Yet Lawrence's major exhibition debut did not begin with a serialized depiction of U.S. history, but rather, commenced with *The Life Of Toussaint L'Ouverture* (1937-38): a painted meditation on the three hundred years that led to the revolution of Saint-Domingue, the rise and fall of its famous leader Toussaint l'Ouverture, and the establishment of Haiti as the first black republic in the Western Hemisphere. Jacob Lawrence worked on *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture* series between October 1937 and May 1938, while living in Harlem and attending his first year of formal art school.⁴²³ Lawrence created his first monumental series when Haiti's history was being

⁴²¹ The original played focused on the "evils of miscegenation" but was rewritten to "bring forth the underlying dramatic story of the struggle for racial identity and self-determination for black Haiti." John O'Connor and Lorraine Brown, eds. *Free, Adult, Uncensored: The Living History of the Federal Theatre Project* (Washington, D.C.: New Republic Books, 1978), 117-119.

⁴²² His most famous early series include *The Life of Frederick Douglass* (1938-39), *The Life of Harriet Tubman* (1939), and *The Migration of the Negro*, (1940-41) and *The Life of John Brown* (1941).

⁴²³ After leaving high school after two years, Lawrence worked on a dam construction project in the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1936 and 1937. Through Harry Gottlieb, then president of the Artists Union, Lawrence secured a scholarship to attend the American Artists School in the fall of 1937. Lawrence would study here for two years under Russian social realist Anton Refregier, Sol Wilson and Eugene Moreley. In 1938, Augusta Savage helped Lawrence gain employment with the WPA Federal Art Project in its easel

circulated extensively throughout New York City's Harlem community and the United States. His series also resonated with the contemporary politics and social issues weighed by many African Americans during the Depression years. By choosing to represent Haiti's history and thereby step into the cultural matrix and community dialogue of this transnational and highly important subject, the twenty-year-old Lawrence boldly asserted himself as a professional artist and voice within his community and country. Through his selection of sources, and careful orchestration of captions and images, Lawrence complicated the life of his main protagonist, conferred agency where other historians and writers saw none, and drew penetrating comparisons with other historical and cultural accounts, all in the service of creating a complex, three-dimensional personality rendered in words and brilliant tempera paint.

Lawrence established quickly his unique artistic voice, which neither strictly followed the styles or influences of the artists around him nor the artworks that captured his interest in the New York museums that he visited. Yet he did not operate in isolation, finding great support and guidance in the Harlem community. As a teenager, Lawrence studied with noted African-American painter Charles Alston (1907-1977) and sculptor Henry Bannarn (1910-1965) at the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Harlem Art Workshop, which moved to Alston's studio at 306 West 141st Street in 1934. Alston encouraged Lawrence to translate community stories and African-American history into a visual narrative. Beyond Alston's encouragements, Lawrence received similar directives from the "professors" he encountered on the street corners, in the pulpits, and in the meeting rooms of his community. Lawrence

division for eighteen months. In 1940, Lawrence began the first of three consecutive Julius Rosenwald Fund fellowships, which allowed him to move from Charles Alston's studio to his own work space. During this period, Lawrence continued to create several researched and captioned, multi-paneled historical.

later noted that his first introduction to black history had been when a Mr. Allen spoke about Toussaint L'Ouverture at Utopia House, where the then thirteen-year-old Lawrence attended an after-school program.⁴²⁴ Perhaps even more influential to Lawrence was West-Indian-born Charles C. Seifert (1871-1949), who was one of the most important lay historians in the community. Along with researching black history and giving numerous lectures to eager community, school and university audiences, Seifert had assembled his own collection of resources, creating the Ethiopian School of Research History (later the Charles C. Seifert Library). Lawrence would later recall the importance of Seifert in pushing him and other young black artists to focus on black history, adding, "Seifert [*sic*] was a most inspiring and exciting man, in that he helped to give us something that we needed at the time."⁴²⁵ His teachers' encouragements grew out of the belief that an understanding of black history, a knowledge of which had been thoroughly effaced in the United States, could combat racism and its psychological and social impact.

Such beliefs adhered to the tenets of the New Negro Movement, where celebrating histories and heroes, telling and retelling narratives, and drawing connections between contemporary culture and a lost African homeland were essential tools in reclaiming racial identity and pride. Although Lawrence came of age in the waning years of the New Negro Renaissance, he was surrounded by its spirit in Alston's studio, a renowned gathering place for people in the arts and frequented by many of Harlem's cultural leaders. Perhaps not insignificantly, the roster of artistic and intellectual luminaries Lawrence recalls observing as

⁴²⁴ Jacob Lawrence, "Harmon Foundation Biographical Sketch," 1940, Downtown Gallery Records, reel 5577, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution (hereafter AAA).

⁴²⁵ Ellen Harkins Wheat, *Jacob Lawrence: American Painter* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), 35. For more on the life and influence of Charles Seifert, see Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 229, 247-250.

he worked in a corner of Alston's studio included many of the major contributors to the cultural interest in Haiti during the 1930s: Langston Hughes, Aaron Douglas, Katherine Dunham.⁴²⁶ Lawrence later recounted that Claude McKay and Alain Locke also critically influenced him during this period.⁴²⁷

In February 1939, Lawrence first exhibited *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture* at the Baltimore Museum, which displayed the series in its own room. Lawrence next exhibited the series at the opening of the DePorres Interracial Center in May, and then the following year at Columbia University and the Chicago Negro Exposition, where it received an award of second place.⁴²⁸ Chairman of the exposition's Art Committee, Alain Locke wrote the exposition's exhibition brochure, which highlighted the importance of the exhibition for displaying not only the work of contemporary African-American artists, but also that of previous generations. Locke also praised the artists for producing a collection of works that grew out of the unique American "social and cultural soil" by being rooted in "what he sees most and knows best, his own folk, and his own feeling." "In so doing," expounded Locke, "he can teach us to see ourselves, not necessarily as others see us, but as we should be seen. Finding beauty in ourselves, we can and must be spiritually stronger, and in consequence, socially and culturally more worth while."⁴²⁹ The brochure contained just three

⁴²⁶ Patricia Hills, "Jacob Lawrence's Expressive Cubism," in *Jacob Lawrence: American Painter*, ed. Ellen Harkins Wheat, 16.

⁴²⁷ Jacob Lawrence interviewed by David Driskell and James Buell (4 February 1982), in *The Toussaint L'Ouverture Series* (New York: United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, 1982), 31.

⁴²⁸ For contemporary reviews of Lawrence's earliest exhibitions of this series, see: Marvel Cooke, "Pictorial History of Haiti Set on Canvas," *New York Amsterdam News* (3 June 1939): 11; Jean McGleughlin, "An Exhibition of Negro Art," *Baltimore Museum Quarterly* 3.4 (1938-9): 10; Alain Locke, "Advance on the Art Front," *Opportunity* 17 (May 1939): "Life of Toussaint," *Art Digest* 15 (15 December 1940): 12+

⁴²⁹ Alain Locke, "The American Negro Exposition's Showing of the Works of Negro Artists," Exhibition pamphlet, July 4 to September 2, 1940. Jacob Lawrence Papers, box 2, folder: printed materials,

reproductions, including two from Lawrence's series.⁴³⁰ Locke also textually highlighted Lawrence's work, praising his "considerable" research and "remarkable" execution. Locke's championing of Lawrence served to expand geographically and temporally Locke's argument for a reflection of the "typically American" and the social and cultural folk soil from which it springs. Yet Lawrence *is* reflecting his own people and what he sees and knows best: a history that circulated within the black community even as it was mostly ignored by the white mainstream; a history that teaches blacks to see themselves as active shapers of their own destiny, and in doing so, destroying stereotypes of black docility and passiveness while also claiming their rightful place as influencers of world history.

On May 23, 1943, Jacob Lawrence gave a radio interview with Randy Goodman. In explaining influences on his choice of subject matter, Lawrence notes that Charles Alston was quite excited by the young artist's work and encouraged him to continue to look at the world around him, to "take the material at hand...and develop it." As young students are want to do, Lawrence admits that he did not take his advice right away. Rather, he noted that it was later, in 1938 when he had seen the WPA production *Haiti*, "that made me aware of the pictorial possibilities in Negro history."⁴³¹ Goodman had attended the play also, remembering that it had colorful sets and costumes "rather on the flamboyant side." Lawrence, however, did not describe anything specific about the production that influenced

exhibition catalogues, 1937-1941, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library (hereafter Syracuse).

⁴³⁰ Locke reproduced painting Number 20, the famous profile portrait of Toussaint, which I will discuss below, and Number 23: "General L'Ouverture collected forces at Marmelade, and on October 9, 1794, left with 500 men to capture San Miguel."

⁴³¹ Goodman interview transcript with Jacob Lawrence, 22 May 1943, Downtown Gallery Records, Artist Files: Jacob Lawrence, reel 5549, AAA.

him. Rather, he acknowledged that the play affirmed for him that Haiti's history "was a good subject to work from." Lawrence repeated this statement in an April 1951 interview for *Ebony* magazine, where he noted that the Federal Theater play *Haiti* stimulated him to tell the Negro's story.⁴³² Not surprisingly, later descriptions of Lawrence's *Toussaint* Series emphasize DuBois's play as one of the artist's main inspirations and even misdating the play to enforce the interpretation of its causal effect on the artist.⁴³³

Even a cursory comparison reveals that Lawrence's portrayal of Haiti's revolution differs markedly from DuBois's play. Quite simply, Lawrence chooses Toussaint's life as the central focus of his work, while DuBois centers his play on Henri Christophe. The capture and imprisonment of Toussaint is one of the few parallel scenes shared between the works, offering wildly dissimilar portrayals. In the play, Toussaint and Christophe are invited to a meeting to "discuss" terms of peace and commissions in the French army if they will end their guerilla warfare. This is a trap, however, to capture both leaders. Christophe informs Toussaint of the impending treachery and asserts that they can defeat the French if allowed to forget diplomacy and fight. DuBois describes Toussaint as too weary to continue fighting and his stage directions for Toussaint's second and final appearance in the play state:

⁴³² "Jacob Lawrence: New Paintings Portraying Life in Insane Asylum Project Him into Top Ranks of U.S. Artists," *Ebony* (April 1951): 78.

⁴³³ The misdating of the play *Haiti* and its influence on Lawrence's decision to create the *Toussaint* series begins quite early in the Lawrence literature. In a November 1945 article on Lawrence, Elizabeth McCausland specifically notes that Lawrence painted his series in 1937 after having seen *Haiti* at the Lafayette theatre. As the literature progresses, it is possible to witness the subtle shift of Lawrence's viewing of the play around the time he was working on the series, to his viewing of the play before he begins the series, hence inspiring him to turn to this topic. Not only does the influence/inspiration of Lawrence shift, but so does the play's performance dates. By the end, the play's performances are dated to 1936, most likely confused with the other Haiti-inspired WPA Lafayette Theatre production, Orson Welles's "Voodoo Macbeth." Not only does the dating of the play become confused, but so does its author. Scholarship has confused frequently the play's author, white southern newspaperman William DuBois, with the much more famous and influential W. E. B. Du Bois.

“He comes into the room like a man whose doom has been sealed long ago.”⁴³⁴ DuBois has Toussaint cede his command to the younger general, allowing Christophe to escape and continue the revolution, while Toussaint gives himself up and is led off to prison quietly. Lawrence’s version, *No. 36: During the truce Toussaint is deceived and arrested by LeClerc*. *LeClerc led Toussaint to believe that he was sincere, believing that when Toussaint was out of the way, the Blacks would surrender*, counters DuBois’s play by returning a measure of heroicism to Toussaint, who is truly deceived by the promised truce, yet still clutches his sword as it takes four French soldiers to subdue him (fig. 6.4).

Lawrence does not abide by DuBois’s shallow and condensed recasting of Haiti’s history. This does not mean, however, that we should completely discount the impact this play may have had on both artist and audience. Rather, I believe that it is the play’s role in the greater community, as seen through the reviews, articles, discussions and events that the play inspired that is significant for building a greater understanding of Lawrence’s monumental debut.

Several newspaper reviews of the play erroneously emphasized that DuBois’s melodrama adhered strictly to historical facts, while other reporters more correctly noted its inaccuracies but asserted that they were of little consequence to the play’s Harlem audience. For example, Sidney Whipple, writing for the *World Telegram*, reported that although the play was “the freest sort of interpretation of events during the exciting life of Henri Christophe,” theatre goers were flocking to the play for its excitement rather than its

⁴³⁴ William DuBois, “Haiti,” *Federal Theater Plays* (New York: Random House, 1938), 52.

message.⁴³⁵ Likewise, the *New York Amsterdam News* concluded, “that the play departs from the bounds of actual history is of little moment. The result is as stupendous as any production ground out by Hollywood cameras...”⁴³⁶ Yet through an examination of event announcements during the period of the play’s run, it is clear that although many theatergoers were drawn to the spectacle and drama of the play, the community itself rallied around the blockbuster as a vehicle not only to explore and express a more accurate and thorough account of the Haitian Revolution, but also to increase the public’s awareness of the import of the Haiti’s history, thereby stimulating race pride.

The play’s greatest contribution may have been the various symposia and community events that sprung out of the excitement and publicity of its run. Even before the acclaimed *Haiti* opened, an educational symposium was planned, suggesting the community’s desire to have a more authentic and educational backing to the theatre’s use of Haiti as spectacular entertainment. The play *Haiti* was originally scheduled to open on Wednesday night, February 23, with a symposium announced for that Friday, to be held also at the theater. In attendance were to be lieutenant Faustin Wirkus, who was to speak of his experiences as part of the Marine occupation of Haiti, Laura Bowman and Leroy Antoine who were to demonstrate Haitian music from their recent ethnomusicological study, which was actually incorporated as background and incidental music in the play’s performances, while Arthur Schomburg was the chairman of the entire meeting.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁵ Sidney B. Whipple, “Season’s Serious Plays Proved Most Successful: Reason Probably was Better Craftsmanship and Production,” *World Telegram* (14 May 14 1938). Hallie Flanagan Papers T-Mss 1964-002, scrapbooks, box 32, NYPL-Performing Arts.

⁴³⁶ *New York Amsterdam News* (12 March 1938): 16.

⁴³⁷“Haiti’ Opens February 23rd,” *New York Amsterdam News* (19 February 1938); “Laura Bowman and Husband Gathered ‘Voodoo’ Chants for Play, ‘Haiti,’” *New York Amsterdam News* (16 April 1938): 21.

Although the play's opening was postponed until March 2, plans for community symposia only increased. Arthur Schomburg was the principal speaker at a concert and symposium on the play the afternoon of May 12th. The play's director Maurice Clark and set designer Perry Watkins spoke, while Leroy Antoine, assisted by cast members, demonstrated authentic Haitian songs.⁴³⁸ At the end of May, to commemorate both the coronation of Henry Christophe and the birth of Toussaint L'Ouverture, Harlem held week-long celebrations which climaxed in a program held at the Lafayette Theatre. Richard Moore, of the International Labor Defense, gave a review of the life of Toussaint, while Thomas Anderson dramatically read abolitionist Wendell Phillips' famous Toussaint oration, which declares that the general was one of the greatest leaders of all time. Laura Cadet, Secretary of the Haitian Consulate, spoke on how Haiti's path to real democracy was smoothed by the sacrifices of Toussaint and his followers. Dr. H. Binga Dismond, president of the American Friends of Haiti, James Allen of the NAACP, and Gladys Stoner, of the National Negro Congress were just some of the other speakers who joined cast members of the play in presentations on Haiti's history.⁴³⁹

These various community events went beyond the celebration of a hit WPA play and worked to enlighten the Harlem public on the history and importance of Haiti, transcending the mere melodrama and spectacle of the stage. Additionally, both newspaper reviews and the various symposia programs reveal a bias towards presenting aspects of the life of Toussaint and Haiti's history in general, rather than the theatre's emphasis on the life of Henri Christophe. Lawrence's series, therefore, is aligned to these various community events

⁴³⁸ "New of Art," *New York Times* (12 May 1938).

⁴³⁹ "L'Ouverture Anniversary Event Today," *Daily Worker* (5 June 1938).

by its bringing before the public eye a collection of images tracing not only the life of Toussaint, but also a detailed history of events leading to the Haitian revolution and the triumph of a people wresting their own freedom from an oppressive system of slavery.

Research in Harlem

Like the various symposia speeches, Jacob Lawrence's *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture* was well orchestrated and well researched. In this respect, symposia participant and chairman Arthur Schomburg provides a key connection between the Harlem community events and Lawrence's series. Schomburg had amassed and cared for the wealth of Haitian materials at the Harlem 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library where Lawrence conducted his meticulous research.⁴⁴⁰ This library was an important resource and one of the best archives in the United States for Lawrence to have worked from in creating his *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture* series. This was due to the fact that Puerto-Rican-born Schomburg collected with a Pan-Africanist eye, gathering texts and images related to blacks in Africa and throughout the New World, and particularly the Caribbean. Schomburg had assembled

⁴⁴⁰ While long considered a weapon to combat racism and promote race pride and uplift, the organization of a more systematic study of black history did not begin in earnest until after the Civil War and particularly in the 1890s, with the rise of black historical societies. Writer, activist, self-taught historian, and foremost bibliophile Arthur Schomburg researched and presented on Caribbean history, and Haiti in particular, throughout his life. For example, his first published article in English was, "Is Hayti Decadent?" *The Unique Advertiser* 4 (August 1904), and was a call for Haitians to cease their internal color and class conflict and follow Booker T. Washington's program for black economic development. Along with John Edward Bruce and others, Schomburg established the Negro Society for Historical Research in New York City in 1911. It was through this organization that Schomburg first began diligently amassing a library of black historical materials, and most importantly, generously sharing those materials with anyone who was interested in black history. In 1926, Schomburg sold his collection to the New York Public Library, where it was made available at its Harlem branch—already the cultural and educational hub and focal point of the Harlem Renaissance, thanks to the foresight, hard work and community outreach of librarian Ernestine Rose and her staff. For more on the life and legacy of Schomburg (1874-1938), the development of his library collection and its role as a vital and prominent community institution, see: Elinor Sinnette, *Arthur Alfonso Schomburg: Black Bibliophile and Collector, A Biography* (Detroit: New York Public Library and Wayne State University Press, 1989); Deborah Willis, "The Schomburg Collection: A Rich Resource for Jacob Lawrence," in *Jacob Lawrence: The Migration Series*, ed. Elizabeth Turner (Washington, D.C. The Phillips Collection and Rappahannock Press, 1993): 33-39. Sinnette, 170, notes that the centrality of the library diminished somewhat in the 1930s as the building deteriorated and some of its services curtailed.

numerous volumes published in Haiti and also, stunningly, letters and other memorabilia of Toussaint L'Ouverture. In 1934, Schomburg curated an exhibition at the library that focused on materials that showed how blacks had actively contributed to gaining their own freedom and abolition of slavery. Schomburg's Haitian materials, especially the works of Toussaint, formed a prominent section of the exhibition.⁴⁴¹ In 1938, during the period that Lawrence researched and painted his series and just a few months before his death, Schomburg also gave several presentations on Haiti to various groups, illustrating his talks with original documents from his collection.⁴⁴²

Like Schomburg, Lawrence was a transnational historian from home, conducting research and assembling his history without leaving Harlem.⁴⁴³ In a 1940 biographical statement to the Harmon Foundation, Lawrence noted:

I did all my reading at [the] Schomburg Library. Most of my information came from Charles Beard's book Toussaint L'Ouverture. I read other books—there [*sic*] were more novels than anything else. One book—I don't even remember its name—told me of conditions on the island, and its resources. It gave a short sketch of the history of the Haitian revolution. From that, I got mostly the appearance of the island.⁴⁴⁴

Lawrence's unnamed source may have been Harriet Gibbs Marshall's *The Story of Haiti* (1930), whose introduction is subtitled, "The Island and its Resources." Marshall's book

⁴⁴¹ Sinnette, 178. Additionally, another section of the exhibition highlighted "The Negro in the Arts."

⁴⁴² In January 1938, Schomburg spoke on the life of Henri Christophe before the Society of the American Friends of Haiti at the New York Urban League headquarters. He followed up this speech with a presentation on Haiti in Cincinnati, Ohio. Sinnette, 191.

⁴⁴³ Sinnette, 89-91, points out that Schomburg did not travel abroad until well after he had assembled and sold his collection to the New York Public Library in 1926. Rather, he cultivated a network of people who could act as his scouts and purchase materials for him. Interestingly, Schomburg even recruited a Haitian school teacher. Additionally, African-American expatriate artist Albert Smith collected items for Schomburg from France, particularly artistic materials and also Haitian materials.

⁴⁴⁴ "Harmon Foundation Biographical Sketch," (12 November 1940), Downtown Gallery Records, Artist Notebooks, Lawrence, n.d. and 1941-1968, reel 5577, AAA.

would have been a highly suitable selection for Lawrence, for Marshall had written the book to be a textbook for young researchers who would, through knowledge of Haiti's history, gain an increased sense of transnational race relations, justice, and coalition.⁴⁴⁵ In *The Story of Haiti*, Toussaint does not appear until chapter eight, forty-five pages into the history. Marshall's format, however, is not unusual, for many written histories on Toussaint L'Ouverture begin with an outline of the island's indigenous people and the arrival of Columbus, with several chapters elapsing before the advent of Toussaint and the revolutionary era.⁴⁴⁶ Likewise, Lawrence neither begins nor ends his series with the figure of Toussaint L'Ouverture; instead, he begins with the dawn of Haiti's relationship with Europe, grounding Toussaint's advent in a three hundred year history and implying that his presence will also be felt in the centuries to come.⁴⁴⁷ Just as a contemporary picture of Haiti cannot ignore the country's revolutionary founding, an examination of the Haitian Revolution and

⁴⁴⁵ Harriet Gibbs Marshall, *The Story of Haiti* (Boston: Christopher Publishing House), 7. Harriet Gibbs Marshall (1869-1941) became the first black woman to graduate from Oberlin Conservatory of Music in 1889. Marshall spent six years in Haiti (1922-1929) at the height of the U.S. occupation, with her husband Napoleon Marshall, who served as part of the American Legation in Port-au-Prince and was assigned specifically to the task of improving relations between Haitians and white U.S. Americans of the occupation. Marshall hoped that her history would be informative not only to U.S. Americans, but also Haitians as well and had even hoped that it would be adopted as an English-language textbook in both the United States and Haiti. Specifically, she argued that pride in Haiti's history and heritage would aid U.S. American blacks and also Haitians to take pride in their shared African roots. Many Haitian reviewers agreed, with the famous Haitian intellectual and diplomat Dantes Bellegarde concluding that Marshall's sympathetic yet remarkably truthful and impartial account would help "to establish more cordial and more just relations between the Americans and the Haitians." Marshall was also an active and leading member of the New York City based "Save Haiti League." See Harriet Gibbs Marshall, The Washington Conservatory of Music Records Collection: folder 75: the Story of Haiti, Notes; folder 76: The Story of Haiti, reviews; Harriet Marshall to Mrs. John Glenn, President of the American Association for Organizing Family Social Work, 4 August 1924, folder 79, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

⁴⁴⁶ For example, the Schomburg collection also includes Percy Waxman's *The Black Napoleon: The Story of Toussaint L'Ouverture* (1931). One has to wait until chapter four, some fifty pages into the history, for the birth of Toussaint.

⁴⁴⁷ Lawrence does not introduce the hero of the series until painting six. Lawrence precedes Toussaint's 1743 birth with images of the landing of Columbus (1492), Spain and France fighting for control of the island (1665-1691), their peace treaty (1691), resulting in the division of the island into two colonies, and the Saint Domingue slave market at its height (1730).

its heroes cannot be told without acknowledging the role of Europe's New World empires founded and sustained through a trans-Atlantic system of slavery. By stretching his visual historical narrative across forty-one panels, Lawrence went beyond the tradition of history painting, creating a visual document that mirrored closely the types of historical texts available to him in the Schomburg collection.

Lawrence's first caption announces the landing of Columbus in the New World: "Columbus discovered Haiti on December 6, 1492. The discovery was on Columbus' first trip to the New World. He is shown planting the official Spanish flag, under which he sailed." Despite its centrality in his caption, Lawrence's opening painting does not focus strictly on the planting of Spain's standard (fig. 6.5). Rather, he divides the field between two figure groups, pushing Columbus and his flag to the right side of the painting. The indigenous queen occupies the painting's center, while her exceptionally long gold necklace is swept upwards into the hand of a newly-arrived missionary. The missionary's reverse "S" form seems simultaneously attracted and repulsed by both her body and the cross he holds. His outstretched hands, one touching the cross, the other grasping the gold necklace, become like a scale balance, weighing his vows against his desire. His backwards-lurching form indicates that greed and desire will overcome the cross he carries.

The jagged coastline of the first painting, extending from the missionary to the upper right corner, leads the viewer upwards and into the second painting (fig. 6.6). Here, the scaffold in the upper left of the image abruptly halts the eye; the viewer can now guess the fate of the queen from painting one and this fate is confirmed by Lawrence's caption:

Mistreatment by the Spanish soldiers caused much trouble on the island and caused the death of Anacanca, a native queen, 1503. Columbus left soldiers in charge. Their greed for gold caused them to begin making slaves

of the people, who were living a happy and peaceful life up to that time. They naturally resisted. The queen was one of the leaders in the insurrection. The island's first rebellion, organized by the indigenous queen, has failed. By introducing the indigenous queen in his first painting, Lawrence leads the viewer to her execution, and introduces a long-standing history of resistance to oppression that foregrounds the start of the 1791 revolution. Moreover, by naming the queen, Anacanca, and depicting her death by hanging, Lawrence reveals his most important source. As he noted in his 1940 statement, Lawrence did indeed draw most of his information from a book by Beard, though he misremembered the actual source's author even as he adopted its title for his own history: *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture: The Negro Patriot of Hayti*, written by Reverend John Beard in 1853. Like the other sources, Beard also begins his biography with the landing of Columbus and does not introduce Toussaint until chapter four. Unlike many other sources, however, Beard describes a native queen, "Anacoana," who led several rebellions before Spain captured and brought her to the scaffold.⁴⁴⁸

More tellingly, Lawrence not only seems to have gathered much of his information from Beard, but he also quotes directly from Beard's text in his captions. For example, Lawrence assigns *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture, No. 7* the caption, "As a child, Toussaint heard the twang of the planter's whip and saw the blood stream from the bodies of slaves." Lawrence draws directly from a passage in Beard that outlines that while Toussaint

⁴⁴⁸ John R. Beard, *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture: The Negro Patriot of Hayti* (London: Ingram, Cooke, and Co., 1853), 13. That Lawrence includes a slightly different spelling of the queen's name does not preclude Beard as his source. Indeed, Lawrence's captions include other notable misspellings, such as "Desalines," and "Rynol," suggesting slight copying errors in his note taking or in his editing of his notes for his captions.

had been born into a relatively privileged station within the Breda plantation,⁴⁴⁹ the privilege of partial freedom is still a demeaning and insecure existence. Through the constant witnessing of the brutal under workings of the plantation, a liberator is about to be born:

In this period, when the youth was passing into the man, and when, as with all thoughtful persons, the mind becomes sensitively alive to things to come as well as to things present, Toussaint may have formed the first dim conception of the misery of servitude, and need of a liberator. At present he lived with his fellow-sufferers in those narrow, low, and foul huts where regard to decency was impossible; *he heard the twang of the driver's whip, and saw the blood streaming from the negro's body*; he witnessed the separation of parents and children, and was made aware, by too many proofs, that in slavery neither home nor religion could accomplish its purposes.⁴⁵⁰

An examination of *Toussaint, No. 7* and its caption reveals that while the young artist often copied or closely paraphrased Beard's text, the overall effect of image and text offers a powerful vision of the story of Toussaint that goes beyond the mere copying of a nineteenth-century source. There is a subtle tension between image and caption in this painting.

Lawrence centers this image on the glowing white body of the plantation manager, whose left arm is upraised and about to lash a group of huddled black slaves (fig. 6.7). The man's right arm swings across his body, veiling his face and allowing only his wide eyes to be seen. Paralleling the slave driver, Lawrence hides the faces of all three cowering slaves, with only a few eyes looking up to see the coming blows. In this painting, Lawrence only depicts the young Toussaint's face as fully visible, emphasizing his presence as a witness that goes beyond a "dim conception of the misery of servitude." Darting to the right with fists

⁴⁴⁹ Historic records suggest that Toussaint was born to a relatively privileged station in life; Comte de Noé purchased Toussaint's African- (and possibly noble-) born father, but upon recognizing his regal bearing, granted him "liberté de savanne," partial freedom within the large sugar plantation. See C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2^d ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 19.

⁴⁵⁰ Emphasis, mine. Beard, 27.

clenched in anger, the boy escapes the lash, but he does not avoid the image of the cowering slaves about to be beaten. Toussaint's witnessing of such violence as a boy places him at a psychological crossroads, which Lawrence reveals through mirroring the boy's form with the white planter: lunging legs, swinging arms, and a glowing white shirt. This visual parallel plays on Beard's description of the "youth...passing into the man." Yet, what type of man will Toussaint become? Toussaint's form associates him more with the slave owner's power, than with his own cowering people. He is at risk of becoming the cruel man that he witnesses. The bowed middle slave with outstretching arms in a prayerful gesture, seems to send his petition towards Toussaint, rather than pleading to the callous planter. In answer, the boy assumes the master's stance, projecting the known outcome of a heroic history where this slave will become at once the master and greater than the master. In Lawrence's painting, the blood has yet to flow, but the caption and history tells the viewer it will and in great abundance.⁴⁵¹

John Beard noted in his preface that he believed that his *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture* would not only function to preserve and make readers aware of the biography of

⁴⁵¹ Another example of Lawrence's direct quoting from Beard's text can be found in the caption *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture, No. 20*, the famous profile portrait of Toussaint: "General Toussaint L'Ouverture, Statesman and Military Genius, esteemed by the Spaniards, feared by the English, dreaded by the French, hated by the planters and revered by the Blacks." This passage comes directly from Beard, 84-5. Additionally, within this same paragraph, Lawrence draws part of his lengthy caption for *Toussaint, No. 19*: "The Mulattoes had no organization; the English held only a point or two on the Island, while the Blacks formed into large bands and slaughtered every mulatto and white they encountered. The Blacks had learned the secret of their power.// The Haitians now controlled half the Island, and took their revenge on their enemies." Lawrence, however, has slightly rearranged Beard's words and draws "formed into large bands..." from an earlier passage in Beard: "The next day, after the celebration of mass, those blacks mingled with Spaniards, having formed themselves into bands, traversed the streets and slaughtered every Frenchman they met..." (81). The captions exhibited with the paintings have slightly varied through the decades, and often have additional contextualizing phrases added at the end of each caption. This is particularly true of the captions listed in the December 1968 Fisk University exhibition brochure written by David Driskell (microfiche copy found at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture) as compared to the captions reported in the Lawrence catalogue raisonné, which are drawn from the 1939 exhibition of the series at the Deporres Interracial Center.

a heroic black figure, but would also play a role in 1850s efforts to abolish slavery.⁴⁵²

Continuing, Beard also asserts his desire to combat both white and mulatto prejudiced accounts of Haiti's revolutionary history, lamenting: "The blacks have no authors; their cause, consequently, has not yet been pleaded." In working directly from Beard's book, Lawrence answers the author's lament by appropriating the white author's text in his own unique visual gloss on Haiti's history in order to assume the community role of black griot.

Although Lawrence draws heavily from Beard's text, he deliberately did not reference the engravings that illustrated Beard's volume and even significantly altered the details that appeared in the images. For example, *Toussaint Reading the Abbé Raynal's Work* is one of the full-page illustrations included in Beard's work (fig. 6.8). Here, the artist captures the tidy and furnished interior of Toussaint's plantation home. The room is remarkable for its mantle where an amazing six books are displayed, attesting not only to Toussaint's educational achievement, but also the family's lofty station that would enable them to have such multiple luxuries. Toussaint appears seated at a table, reading a sizeable tome. Toussaint's wife engages in domestic activities in the background, though she looks over at her husband, perhaps curious at his absorption within the book. Toussaint's children play in the open doorway in the left background, gazing out at the plantation's other black slaves. Toussaint's learning and dreaming of leadership occurs within an interior domestic setting and surrounded by his family.⁴⁵³ While also capturing Toussaint inside his home at a

⁴⁵² Beard, v. James Redpath pirated and re-issued this book under his own name in 1863 with a few additions to emphasize the black freedom fighters as an argument to arm black troops in the U.S. Civil War. See Hunt, 96.

⁴⁵³ Toussaint's reading of the passage that purportedly gave him the inspiration to lead his people to freedom through revolution within a domestic setting in a sense softens the violent revolutionary possibilities of such an epiphany. Indeed, Beard's account textually parallels such an interpretation of the scene's illustration;

table with a solitary chair in *Toussaint, No. 9*, Lawrence depicts his hero as alone in his reading and dreaming (fig. 6.9). The bare walls and empty room offer no indication that Toussaint has a wife and family. For Lawrence, Toussaint is a singular person whose life does not include any aspect of the domestic.

Lawrence's omission of Toussaint's family life actually critiques Beard's accommodationist conclusion. Although having just filled hundreds of pages in outlining the heroic biography of Toussaint as a means to combat slavery and white prejudice, Beard closes his volume by noting that blacks still constituted an inferior race in part because they, "as yet," have no history. Toussaint commands "our respect and admiration," but he is an exception and not a representative of the race. Beard, instead, allows that blacks do possess positive emotional qualities, specifically citing their attachment to "place and kindred."⁴⁵⁴ For Beard, however, such qualities actually make peoples of African descent unfit in general for elevated thought and lofty achievement. In presenting a barren home emptied of all references to kin, Lawrence focuses on his (now, unencumbered) hero and denies the specific details that allowed an author like Beard to present Toussaint's life and accomplishments, while still retreating to a dismissive racial conclusion.

Lawrence did more than just follow the format and textually quote the histories that he studied; he also grounded his images in an already established tradition of Haitian historiography. Clearly not satisfied with the images in Beard's text (and perhaps, the author's own limited vision), Lawrence turned to other sources. Within *The Life of*

although Beard suggests that he has quoted Abbe Raynal directly and at length, a footnote actually states that Beard has actually altered "some parts which breath too much the spirit of revenge." Beard, 36.

⁴⁵⁴ Beard, 316.

Toussaint's L'Ouverture Series, Lawrence visually quotes a range of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century engravings found both within the books from which he assembled his notes, and from the Schomburg's collection of prints.⁴⁵⁵ These visual quotations can be seen especially in the panels depicting Toussaint in various battles. Throughout the series, Lawrence alters frequently the elements of Toussaint's uniform and headgear, matching the varying portrayals of his historical costume. For example, in *No. 25: General Toussaint L'Ouverture defeats the English at Saline*, a dynamic Toussaint unusually grasps his sword in his left hand, which leads across his body as he twists from his hips and turns his head to engage the viewer with a direct gaze (fig. 6.10). Toussaint's red coat, the bright white of his britches, glove and plumed hat, and his bright orange saber contrasts the muted colors and silhouetted rifles of his infantry of freed slaves. Lawrence borrows Toussaint's twisting stance, left-handed gesture, gathered coattail, and unusual wide-brimmed feathered hat from an anonymous and undated engraving in the Schomburg collection, *Toussaint Louverture Neger General auf St. Domingo* (fig. 6.11). Here, the General of St. Domingo stands alone, looking beyond the picture frame to the right even as he gestures backwards with his left, sword-holding hand, which leads the eye across a nearly empty fore- and middle ground to a pile of bodies laying before a town engulfed in flames in the far left background. An untouched and seemingly empty fortress caps a barren hill in the right background contrasts the action to the left. Rather than have his hero preside statuesquely over an already conquered battle field, Lawrence heightens the drama by incorporating figures into the

⁴⁵⁵ Beyond assembling a wide range of textual materials, Schomburg also amassed over five hundred prints, while also befriending and supporting several black artists. Sinnette, 70.

foreground and placing Toussaint on the battlefield and amidst his rushing soldiers, whom he inspires and commands to continue the fight.

Toussaint's costume shifts in the very next image of the series, *No. 26: On March 24th, he captured Mirebalois* (fig. 6.12). In this image, Lawrence switches Toussaint's white brimmed hat to black with a circular pin, while also adding greater detail to his red military jacket. This costume alteration can be explained with a comparison to another anonymous and undated print, a study of Toussaint's powerful frame in an open stance from behind, as he eloquently gestures to the right with his saber (fig. 6.13). Like the previous example, Lawrence alters his visual quotation to lend a greater context to his narrative. In this case, a study from behind becomes Toussaint approaching his horse and readying to mount and triumphantly speed to the next battle. In this example, Lawrence also adjusts the details of his visual quotation, revealing his interest in general forms rather than capturing the specific elements of the military uniform. For example, the left epaulet in the original print becomes enlarged and simplified to create an accenting orange curve on Toussaint's left shoulder that counters the opposing movement of his black belt.

Lawrence's closest visual quotation and perhaps his most important borrowing is the famous profile portrait of Toussaint, *No. 20: General Toussaint L'Ouverture Statesman and military Genius, esteemed by the Spaniards, feared by the English, dreaded by the French, hated by the planters, and revered by the Blacks* (fig. 6.14). This is the first of three portraits Lawrence includes in the series and stands out as shockingly different from every image that has preceded it in both visual and narrative terms. The portrait bust of Toussaint against a solid green backdrop fills the picture plane, contrasting with the previous nineteen images and their scenes of multiple figures interacting within a stage-like setting. While

creating a visual pause halfway through his series, Lawrence is also linking his newly painted historical document with a canon of texts that use variations of this portrait, which was lithographed by Nicolas Eustache Maurin in 1832 and first published in *Iconographie des contemporains* and included Toussaint's signature (fig. 6.15). Of the numerous and widely varying representations of Toussaint, this is the most frequently reproduced. For example, Lothrop Stoddard's 1914 *The French Revolution in San Domingo* uses a right facing version of this portrait as its engraved frontispiece. The African-American author Leslie Pinkney Hill also used this portrait as a frontispiece to his 1928 published play *Toussaint L'Ouverture: A Dramatic History*. Like the other borrowings, Lawrence heightens the context of his image, but this time, rather than including additional details, Lawrence adds context through its positioning within his series. Rather than opening his history with this portrait as a frontispiece, Lawrence imbeds it in the middle of the series, allowing the portrait to look back over nineteen images that narrate a three hundred year history. By having his audience trace a history of violence, cruelty, slavery and ignorance before arriving at this portrait, Lawrence emphasizes the exceptional and heroic qualities that allowed this former slave to rise to the rank of general while fighting to free his people.

By including these various direct textual and visual quotes, Lawrence brings the sources of the Schomburg Collection out of the library, directly sharing these important and rare resources with an ever wider audience. Lawrence's series, a vernacular historical document in its own right, achieved a permanence beyond that of the community symposia around the play *Haiti*. And although *Haiti* had bolstered Lawrence, the young artist moved far beyond its spectacle, achieving the most monumental account of the Haitian Revolution in an era full of Haitian historical vernacularizing.

In the end, perhaps what most links Lawrence's debut to his community and the public events that formed a counterpoint to the use of Haiti as mere theatrical spectacle is that the artist never forgot the public function of his work as a teaching tool for the community. This is evident both through his elaborate captions that carefully guide the viewer through a complex history, and in his public engagements as seen in a photograph where a young Lawrence presents a selection of his series with a gathering of school children (fig. 6.16). We can envision Lawrence regaling the attentive children with stories of Toussaint's military triumphs and the excitement of the various battles, as seen in the painting on the far left, *No. 21* from the series, showing General Toussaint galloping forward to attack the English and capture two towns. Lawrence may also be emphasizing the role of great leaders in history, not just of Emperor Napoleon (*No. 30*) as seen on the right, but also of a man like Dessalines (*No. 41*) who was born a slave and became the first ruler of a newly born nation. Just in the corner of the photograph, however, we see that Lawrence has included another image to ground his history lesson: *No. 10: The cruelty of the planters towards the slaves drove the slaves to revolt, 1776* (fig. 6.17). In this painting, the artist includes the ironic detail of the gold cross hanging from the planter's neck, mirrored in the cross-shaped gashes of the punished prostrate slave. Lawrence does not shy away from the more graphic or provocative elements of Haiti's history and makes sure that they are noted, even by his youngest audience members.

This is not the only image of violence found in Lawrence's series. Though little commented upon, Lawrence's most provoking image is the one placed directly before the portrait of Toussaint, *No. 19: The Mulattoes had no organization; the English held only a point or two on the Island, while the Blacks formed into large bands and slaughtered every*

Mulatto and White they encountered. The Blacks had learned the secret of their power. The Haitians now controlled half the Island (fig. 6.18). The glowing white clothes of the European on the far left of the composition quickly catch the eye. Lawrence renders the figure in his characteristic abstracting style, giving the figure very little individual detail. With long hair, but a hidden body, even the gender of the victim on the left is indeterminate. Regardless of the victim's gender, the form of the Haitian rebel is disturbing. The red dagger that he holds across his groin is clearly phallic. The backwards bend of the yellow-shirted man in the foreground leads the eye directly to this red phallus. Additionally, the struggling pair in the center also implies sexual violence. The attacker directs his spear towards the yellow-shirted victim's genitals. The rebel is not only about to kill, but also emasculate his victim.

Though Lawrence is carefully following his research, which would have revealed the numerous atrocities committed during the revolution on both sides, his image of black revolutionaries killing unarmed whites is highly provocative. Lawrence had a much more defined agenda in tackling this history, rather than mere entertainment. In a statement for the Harmon Foundation, Lawrence explains:

... Having no Negro history makes the Negro people feel inferior to the rest of the world.... I didn't do it just as a historical thing, but because I believe these things tie up with the Negro today. We don't have a physical slavery, but an economic slavery. If these people, who were so much worse off than the people today, could conquer their slavery, we certainly can do the same thing. They had to liberate themselves without any education.

Today we can't go about it in the same way.... How it will come about? I don't know. I'm not a politician. I'm an artist, just trying to do my part to bring this thing about.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁶ Downtown Gallery Records, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution, reel 5577.

While Lawrence offers a cautious corrective to the Haitian Revolution's model of liberation by any means necessary, he clearly views the knowledge of this history as a spark to the racially and economically downtrodden to gain hope and improve their condition through communally organized action. Surprisingly, it in *No. 19*'s scene of racial violence that returns us to our original examination of connections between Lawrence's *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture* and DuBois's play. Cultural historian Mary Renda notes a shift in the representations of Haiti in the late 1930s. While any discussion of Haiti inherently carries the specter of violent revolutionary change, Renda points out that it was not until the late Depression-era 1930s that the idea of revolutionary possibility was also paired with unprecedented visions of violence against whites.⁴⁵⁷ She cites DuBois's rewritten play as participating prominently in this cultural shift. Theatre historian Loftin Mitchell believes that it was in this production that Harlemites saw for the first time a black beat up a white on stage.⁴⁵⁸ Furthermore, as the revolutionary battle erupted on stage, audience members could be heard shouting out encouragements: 'Give him a lick for me!' and 'Hit him again!'⁴⁵⁹ The audience identified with the rebelling Haitians in ways never intended by DuBois's original play of race downfall through miscegenation.

Coda: The Haitian Revolution in Haiti

Lawrence's powerful series spoke to and connected with people far beyond the Depression-era Harlem community. Surprisingly, Haiti's Ambassador Elie Lescot viewed Lawrence's paintings in Baltimore with great interest. On behalf of Lawrence, Alain Locke

⁴⁵⁷ Renda, 282.

⁴⁵⁸ Glenda E. Gill, *White Grease Paint on Black Performers: A Study of the Federal Theatre, 1935-1939* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988), 99.

⁴⁵⁹ Renda, 287.

met with the Haitian Ambassador and discussed the Haitian government's desire to purchase the entire series so that it could be displayed in the Haitian Pavilion at the World's Fair and then at the museum of Port-au-Prince. Locke, however, cautioned the young Lawrence to not get his hopes up, for although the Haitian government's interest was a great honor, the government may not be in the position to extend funds for such a purchase at this point. Additionally, Locke adamantly advised Lawrence not to offer to donate the work to Haiti. Rather, he encouraged him to have faith that another museum or organization would surely purchase it and that instead, Lawrence should some day plan a "vacation sketching trip" to Haiti.⁴⁶⁰

Though clearly impressed with the force and innovation that Lawrence brought to his telling of Haiti's history, it does seem rather curious that the Haitian Government and its representatives enthusiastically desired to have a representation of its history created by a non-Haitian artist. In the end, Haiti did not purchase Lawrence's series because the government could not extend the funds. Lawrence, however, would not be the only artist to receive the honor of such attention. (And he would not be the last to experience the repercussions of Haiti's financial woes.) In 1949, President Dumarsais Estimé's government commissioned famous African-American sculptor Richmond Barthé to create a public monument of Toussaint L'Ouverture, while in 1951, President Paul Magloire commissioned Barthé to create a monument of General Dessalines. Additionally, both presidents commissioned Barthé to create a portrait relief to be used on a Haitian coin.

⁴⁶⁰ Harry J. Hunt Jr. to Lawrence, n.d. and Alain Locke to Lawrence, n.d., Jacob Lawrence and Gwendolyn Knight Papers, reel 4571, AAA; Wheat, 43-44.

Like Lawrence, Barthé visited the Schomburg collection to research and study images of Toussaint in preparation for his first monument. Although known as a sculptor, Barthé created beautiful drawings and presented a pastel study of Toussaint based on historical engravings to the Schomburg Collection in gratitude for his extensive use of its holdings. And like Lawrence, Barthé's image moved beyond the engraving's images in bringing Haiti's hero to life. In this profile portrait of Toussaint, Barthé captures a fully mature and forceful man, not a graying sage. Yet the portrait head reveals the edge of a high collar and lace scarf, while his hair is neatly braided and held with a bow; this is no guerrilla fighter, but a dignified statesman. (In his fifties at the start of the revolution in 1791, Toussaint was considered quite aged when he achieved the governorship of the island in 1801.) Rendered in full color, Barthé carefully builds the planes of his portrait through luminous layers of pastel, giving his portrait head a sculptural presence that radiates out from the supporting plain brown paper.

As with the historic engravings depicting Toussaint, a range of likenesses of Dessalines can be found. While nearly every history outlines Dessalines's fierce and brutal character, there are very few contemporary descriptions of what he physically looked like. 'A short, stout Black,' seems to be the most thorough description left and no likenesses taken from life have been authenticated.⁴⁶¹ In the case of Dessalines, one particular image of Dessalines has become privileged and accepted as a correct representation by state-sponsored commission in the twentieth century: the portrait of Dessalines from the series of paintings displayed in the national palace, *Heros de l'indépendance d'Haiti (1804-1806)* (fig. 6.19). Several Haitian administrations promoted this particular likeness of Dessalines and had it

⁴⁶¹ Heintz, 2nd rev., 126.

copied into medallions, engravings, and even a 1949 commemorative postage stamp by famed Haitian designer Louis Vergniaud Pierre-Noël. For his commission, Barthé worked directly from a reproduction of the national palace painting (fig. 6.20).⁴⁶² Barthé's equestrian monument now dominates the great expanse of the Champ de Mars, having replaced Harry Johnston's described "preposterously vulgar" honoring of a monster, the 1904 saber-wielding standing Dessalines, which had been removed to a new location some time earlier.

Unfortunately, any symbolic associations Barthé may have had of Haiti and its heroic history were irreparably marred by his interactions with the Haitian government. While the commissions for Haiti's currency seemed to have gone relatively smoothly, Barthé experienced grave difficulties with both public monuments. In July 1950, Barthé's over-life-size, bronze-cast standing figure of Toussaint had arrived in Haiti, but President Estimé had been deposed by the army two months prior; the sculpture remained uninstalled and Barthé languished for payment from the new government. After a lengthy battle of letters and legal action, extending into the following year Barthé was finally paid. In the meantime, the new government administration of Paul Magloire surprisingly commissioned Barthé to create the twelve-foot equestrian portrait of General Dessalines and a new plaster portrait for Haiti's currency. The archive at the Amistad Research Center reveals a paper trail of Barthé's contracts with the Haitian government and his subsequent legal battles when Haiti failed to make remunerations in a timely manner or pay the artist altogether. Under great financial and emotional stress, Barthé experienced great health problems that interrupted his ability to

⁴⁶² Barthé's personal papers held at Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, include photographs of the Dessalines portrait painting and Barthé's preliminary clay sketches from this copy. The Haitian government may have provided Barthé with a copy of the painting from which to work. Additionally, during this period, the national Haitian tourist bureau circulated copies of this series of paintings as part of their advertising brochures. The entire series was printed in a special magazine issue on Haitian culture and history, "Tricinquenaire de l'Indépendance d'Haïti," *Formes et Couleurs* 12.1 (1954).

accept commissions from other sources.⁴⁶³ One cannot help but to look in sympathy and irony at the rest of Barthé's papers, which also include a pamphlet published by the Department of Tourist and Promotion of Haiti in New York, with its glossy photographs and promises of comfort, announcing: "In spite of the high cost of living in the whole world, in Haiti, you have the opportunity to live a millionaires life without a million."

Barthé's experience in creating the monuments to Toussaint and Dessalines captures a moment where Haiti's revolutionary past literally confronted Haiti's contemporary problems. In looking up at his finally completed and installed monument to Dessalines after having been greatly affected by Haiti's instability and financial mismanagement, Richmond Barthé may have come to believe the conclusions reported in newspapers and magazines at the onset of the U.S. occupation: Haiti had been doomed to political and financial failure because of the cursed actions of its first head of state, Jean-Jacques Dessalines.

Returning to where I began, I circle back one more time to the image of Dessalines, but not this time to a monument on the Champ de Mars, but to the final painting of Jacob Lawrence's *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture*. Jacob Lawrence concluded his forty-one-image series with a portrait of Dessalines (fig. 6.21). Jean-Jacques Dessalines stands in white garb, a royal red cloak wrapped around his shoulders, extending to the ground. He holds an ornamental gold saber and god-like hands descend from on high to crown him. Is this a regal celebration of Haiti's first head of state of a heroic, and newly self-determined nation? The caption quickly reveals a fuller meaning: *Desalines [sic] was crowned Emperor*

⁴⁶³ Richmond Barthé to D. Lherisson, n.d. Richmond Barthé Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans. For a published account of Barthé's Haitian experiences and an analysis of his monuments, see Margaret Vendryes, "Brothers Under the Skin: Richmond Barthé in Haiti," *Journal of Haitian Studies* 10.2 (Fall 2004): 116-134.

October 4, 1804, thus: Jean Jacques the First of Haiti. Dessalines, standing beside a broken chain, was dictator—as opposed to Toussaint’s more liberal leadership. Without this caption, the viewer could easily assume that the broken chains symbolized Haiti’s independence. However, the irony of Lawrence’s caption makes the viewer realize that history does not end here. The tendril of the broken chainlink is almost like a vine. It can and would grow again to form new links of oppression. The golden saber, hanging from his hands, appears to shackle Dessalines’s wrists, indicating that he will never give up his militaristic might to provide the guidance of a statesman which his young country needs desperately. By ending with an ominous image of Dessalines, Lawrence recognizes the political instability that would encourage the United States to militarily occupy and economically exploit Haiti. Like the multiple staged dramatic tragedies that replay the downfalls of each of Haiti’s revolutionary black heroes, Lawrence’s Dessalines and his looming tendril of chain performs the paradox at the center of Haitian military and political history: time and again, Haitian leaders heralded as heroes have turned upon their own people, becoming dictators while also instigating their own destruction. Dessalines proclaimed himself the avenger of the former slaves and their emperor, yet he considered his people ungrateful and unruly, and used his standing army to enforce draconian labor policies. Yet we know that his assassination is imminent, and in this Lawrence’s Depression-era and later audience can find hope: armed with an awareness that history holds such a tale as the Haitian Revolution, even the most oppressed in society know that their station in life can change through their own agency.

Chapter 7

Conclusion: Looking Forward—the 1940s and Beyond

The 1940s through 1956 has been called Haiti's golden age of tourism, when Haiti promoted itself as the premiere tropical destination.⁴⁶⁴ Penny von Eschen has pointed out that this period saw a marked decline and even disappearance of African-American critiques of U.S. government and corporations' actions in Haiti (and also Liberia). Anti-imperial coalition gave way to visions of Haiti as a vacationers' paradise, an image that both white and black U.S. Americans happily enjoyed without thought to international power relations and the sources of Haiti's increasing economic debts.⁴⁶⁵ Historian Rayford Logan (1897-1982) of Howard University, however, provided a continuous and staunch voice of anti-imperialism in regards to Haiti, picking up the fight where James Weldon Johnson left off in the late 1920s, and continuing his campaign for economic justice into the 1940s and beyond. Logan was joined by artists who carried on the 1930s fight to combat sensationalized stereotypes of Haiti, even as their paintings often aided Haiti's fledgling tourism industry.

As in the 1930s, travel to Haiti for many of these artists was facilitated by fellowships and grants. For example, Eldzier Cortor (b. 1916), who had held two Rosenwald fellowships to document "racial types" of the South Carolina and Georgia South Sea Islands, received a

⁴⁶⁴ The Haitian government even hired Poppy Canon White, wife of NAACP leader Walter White, to create and promote Haitian tourism campaigns in the United States.

⁴⁶⁵ See Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 163-4; Plummer, *Haiti and the United States* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 131-8.

Guggenheim fellowship in 1949 to document peoples of African descent in Haiti. During his stay, he also worked at the Centre d'Art in Port-au-Prince, interacting with Haitian artists and also other U.S. artists and members of the avant-garde who had now begun also to turn their focus to Haiti. Cortor was joined by painter Harlan Jackson (1918-1993), an abstract expressionist who was interested particularly in anthropology, the African heritage still manifest in New World cultures, and the power of Haitian Vodou.⁴⁶⁶ While in Haiti, both Cortor and Jackson also interacted with avant-garde filmmaker Maya Deren (1917-1961), who shot footage in Haiti during 1947, 1949 and 1950 and who also became a practitioner of Haitian Vodou.⁴⁶⁷ One year after Cortor and Jackson's trips, Claude Clark (1915-2001), who developed one of the earliest curricula in African-American art history, received a Carnegie Grant-in-Aid, which he used to paint in Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Haiti during the summer of 1950. Following a path similar to Cortor, Ellis Wilson (1899-1977) earned a Guggenheim fellowship in 1944 and 1945 to paint African-American life and laborers in the South and the South Sea Islands. After one of his South Seas paintings of fishermen earned him a major \$3000 prize in 1952, Wilson devoted the money to a painting trip to Haiti that summer, eventually making four trips to the country.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁶ Jackson was especially interested in the work of Katherine Dunham and her Haitian choreography. For an introduction to Jackson, see Ann Gibson, *Abstract Expressionism: Other Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 114-18.

⁴⁶⁷ The results of her filming may be viewed in the documentary film *Divine Horsemen, the Living Gods of Haiti*, assembled from Deren's footage by Teijii and Cherel Ito. The film's narration is also drawn from Deren's 1953 published monograph of the same title.

⁴⁶⁸ Additional U.S. artists who worked in Haiti during the 1940s and 50s include sculptor and painter William Howard Calfee (1909-1995), painter Mary Drake Coles (1903-1998), painter Paul Grady England (1918-1988), sculptor Jason Seley (1919-1983), and professor of Art at Cornell, Kenneth Washburn.

Several U.S. artists, and African-American artists in particular, also received grants to study Caribbean art and develop connections with contemporary artists.⁴⁶⁹ This also allowed U.S. artists, and especially African-American artists, to continue to further public awareness of Haiti beyond sensationalized stereotypes, while also discovering in Haiti a space for artistic exchange and transformation. For example, artist, educator and pioneering African-American art historian James Porter (1905-1970) received a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to meet and study artists in Cuba and Haiti in 1946. He also used this opportunity to sketch numerous paintings of the people and landscapes he encountered. Porter incorporated his gathered information into his groundbreaking Howard University art history courses, which looked beyond European traditions to include also Latin American and Caribbean art, and Porter's own pioneering studies on the history of African-American artists and African art.⁴⁷⁰

Upon his return from Haiti and Cuba, Porter also shared his paintings and experiences with an audience beyond the Howard University classroom. In the fall of 1946, Porter published an essay devoted to Haiti. In it, he argued against standard descriptions of Haiti as a merely picturesque place, which he condemned as an overly simplistic touristic view of the

⁴⁶⁹ Haiti figured prominently in the international art world's new interest in the Caribbean. Haiti was undergoing its own artistic renaissance when noted surrealist Andre Breton visited the country in 1946, and announced that Haitian art would revolutionize modern art, which he noted was in desperate need of a revolution.

⁴⁷⁰ After becoming head of the art department and director of the gallery of Howard University in 1953, Porter focused exhibitions not only on the work of African-American artists, but also made sure to expose his Howard students to artists from Haiti and Cuba through one-artist shows. James Porter was one of the most outspoken critics of Alain Locke's theories of African-American art, arguing that African-American artists should not merely insert African artistic forms into their artwork without a greater contextual understanding. More importantly, he attacked Locke for conflating artistic influences with a loose theory of a biological inheritance of African values and traditions. See, for example, James Porter, "The Negro Artist and Racial Bias," *Art Front* 3 (July-August 1937); Bearden, 124; for a brief overview of Porter's life and work, see Bearden, 372-380.

country. "From the inside," wrote Porter, "Haitian life is fascinating but not picturesque."⁴⁷¹ Rather, the "inside view" of Haiti revealed not only the hardworking nature of individual Haitians, but also the country's "physical and economic limitations." That is, Haiti's extreme poverty, which Porter noted overwhelmingly explained much of what the visitor viewed as unusual and exotic. The remainder of Porter's essay is also notable for his description of the contemporary Haitian intellectual and artistic vanguard. Rather than following numerous authors in a disparaging blanket condemnation of Haiti's upper classes as an over-educated, French-imitative elite who are inauthentically Haitian, Porter praised their work against both internal and external repression, arguing that they will lead the way in building a more realistic picture of Haiti, one that is not founded on a romantic exoticism or the picturesque. While Porter presented his experiences in Haiti in order to combat narrow and long-held assumptions about Haiti, he also made his readers aware of the large number of Haitian intellectuals and artists who could speak for themselves and present a Haitian point of view. Porter directed his reader to the indigenous voices that had long been mostly ignored in the United States.

Porter illustrated his article with four of his paintings of Haiti: two portraits of Haitian types (*Haitian Girl* and "*The Donkey Woman*," *Haiti*), one landscape (*The Bay of Port-au-Prince*), and an interesting pastel study of a historical scene (*Revolution in Port-au-Prince*).⁴⁷² By pairing these paintings with his argument against the picturesque, the

⁴⁷¹ James A. Porter, "'Picturesque Haiti'," *Opportunity* 24 (Fall 1946): 179.

⁴⁷² This last painting shows a line of struggling and fallen figures in a road, framed by a block of porched and multi-storied wooden buildings typical of Haiti. The abstracted and quickly sketched figures appear to have triangular hats, perhaps invoking the Napoleonic-era uniforms adopted by some of the more elite Haitian revolutionaries. The general nature of the title, the rather indeterminate costuming and the rendering of the figures, however, suggest that Porter may have been envisioning any number of political upheavals that led to changes of regimes throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century in Haiti. In fact, Porter also

intertextual space of this article calls into question a tradition of not only disparaging and exotifying accounts of Haiti, but also the growing collection of artistic representations that work to document Haiti's landscape and people. Porter's paintings, in many ways, do not seem very different from the romantic and picturesque tradition of representative types and tropical landscapes. For example, each of the article's portraits depicts a solitary young woman, who, presented from the waist up, fills the picture plane. *Haitian Girl* captures a young woman in a three-quarters profile (fig. 7.1). She looks off to the right, but her uncovered head reveals her carefully highlighted braided hair and gold earrings, suggesting that she has carefully presented herself for her portrait sitting. While her earrings indicate her station to be above the extreme poverty emphasized in Porter's article, his careful emphasis of her large hands still suggests an industrious person who may not be unfamiliar with dexterous labor. "*The Donkey Woman*," *Haiti*, in turn, presents a characteristic country market woman, with her head wrapped in a typical colorful kerchief beneath a wide-brimmed woven hat (fig. 7.2). This pretty young woman looks directly out at the viewer, a slight smile on her face. Porter isolates her from her titular companion. The stick that she grasps in her hand, however, indicates the absent hardworking donkey that she prods over miles of road to bring her produce to market.

In approaching these two paintings, inserted as illustrations into Porter's anti-picturesque argument, one must ask then, can a beautifully rendered painting not be picturesque? Porter removes these women from any indication of the circumscribing environment in which they live; we do not see a tin shack, or sickly malnourished children,

mentions in his article the repression of the Lescot regime and the recent demonstrations led by Haiti's young intellectual vanguard, who were inspired by a recent visit and lectures by famous French surrealist Andre Breton, which led to the deposing of President Lescot.

or tattered and worn clothing. The intertextual space of Porter's writing and illustrated paintings creates a poignant paradox. He asks his reader to see Haiti "from the inside," but then gives us a vision of Haiti that eliminates the harsh realities of the extreme poverty experienced by the majority of Haitians, and certainly by the "Donkey Woman." The viewer remains outside, cut off from the (described but not shown) harsh realities just as sharply as the ledge that separates the space of *Haitian Girl* from the viewer who gazes upon her.

Porter's illustrations demonstrate how African-American artists led the way in re-visualizing Haiti beyond sensational stereotypes in order to forge connections with a people who, as the descendants of self-liberated slaves, are the living caretakers of a heroic past. Porter's essay, however, also demonstrates how this refocus on the documentation of the beautiful and everyday in Haiti falls short of engaging with a contemporary nation that struggles daily for subsistence and justice. Porter's conclusion suggests a solution that can only be answered by listening to Haiti's own voices, taking charge of their own self-presentation and self-preservation, as found in public intellectuals speaking truth to power, such as a historian like Dantès Bellegarde, a novelist-anthropologist-activist like Jacques Roumain, or any number of gifted Haitian artists who were finally being "discovered" by the outside world during the 1940s.⁴⁷³

In conjunction with Haitian intellectuals and artists, African-American artistic voices would also continue to be important in rebuilding and recreating Haiti's reputation in the outside world, and Haiti's government would encourage and even directly support African-

⁴⁷³ It must be said that the editors of *Opportunity* magazine did not sustain Porter's argument. The winter 1947 issue printed a companion essay to Porter's view, this one submitted by school-teacher Naomi Garrett who had spent six months in Haiti teaching as a part of the U.S. Government's English initiative. Garrett's article returns to a complete emphasis on the picturesqueness of Haiti, down to passages that viewed aspects of Haiti's poverty as quaint and lovely. Naomi Garrett, "Saint Marc, Haiti," *Opportunity* 25 (Winter 1947): 9-11, 35-6.

American artists in their documentary endeavors.⁴⁷⁴ For example, in June 1951, Richard Dempsey (1909-1987) arrived in Haiti as a month-long guest of the Haitian Government to paint “Impressions of Haiti: People and Scenes.” This invitation was extended through Jean Brière, then director of the National Tourist Bureau. More than just an artistic and cultural exchange, Haiti specifically commissioned Dempsey to create images to aid its tourist promotion efforts.⁴⁷⁵ Dempsey held a well-received exhibition of his Haitian works at Port-au-Prince’s Centre d’Art at the end of stay. The *Haiti Sun* praised Dempsey’s abstract and realistic paintings as an “extremely well rounded reaction of the artist in Haiti,” noting that Dempsey had also made over three hundred pages of notes and written material and taken several hundred photographs for use in not only future paintings but also lectures. The newspaper concluded, “His work will lead to better cultural relations between Haiti and the United States.”⁴⁷⁶ As an artistic ambassador, first in Haiti and later in Jamaica, Dempsey remained keenly aware and outspoken on the misrepresentations of both cultures in the U.S

⁴⁷⁴ For example, the Haitian Government invited both African-American painters Richard Dempsey and Lois Mailou Jones to visit the country and paint the people.

⁴⁷⁵ It is unclear if and how his paintings were employed to this end. *GSA News* 10.67 (Summer 1963), clipping included in Dempsey Papers, AAA, reel 4366; see also “GSA Artist Awarded Free Haitian Trip to Paint What He Sees” (31 May 1951), and “GSA Artist Awarded Free Haitian trip to Paint What He Sees,” *The Evening Star*, Washington, D.C. (28 May 1951), Dempsey Papers, reel 4367, AAA. It seems that the subject of Dempsey’s Haiti paintings were entirely up to him, and he wrote to Brière on May 1, 1951 noting that he intended to devote his time to painting ‘Haitian life’: “landscapes, historic places, the people and their activities.” Dempsey, however, viewed his trip as a mutual exchange, offering: “If these paintings can be of service to you for promoting information, cultural relations, advertising, etc., I trust you will feel free and under no obligation whatever to requisition them.” Dempsey had been planning his painting trip to Haiti for well over a year and credited esteemed sociologist E. Franklin Frazier for proposing the project and ultimately providing the contacts that made it possible. In 1950, Dempsey applied to the John Hay Whitney Foundation. Although this application was unsuccessful, many of Dempsey’s contacts wrote letters of recommendation and also offered tips and incites from their own travels to Haiti. Dempsey had previously held a Rosenwald Fellowship in 1946 for his wide-ranging project, “Pictorial History of the Negro—a series of paintings depicting ‘Negro Life.’” While only funded for one year, Dempsey had proposed a two-year project, which would have included painting in South American and the Caribbean, where he had hoped to paint in Haiti and also create a series of paintings on Haitian revolutionary leaders.

⁴⁷⁶ See various newspaper clippings in the Richard Dempsey Papers, reel 4366 and 4367, AAA.

media. Painter Loïs Mailou Jones (1905-1998) remained Haiti's most enduring artistic ambassador. President Paul Magloire invited Jones to paint the people of Haiti during the summer of 1954.⁴⁷⁷ Jones had married the renowned Haitian graphic designer Louis Vergniaud Pierre-Noël (1910-1982) the year before, and after this initial visit, Jones established a home and studio in Haiti and would travel to the country for extended stays on a near annual basis for the remainder of her life, and at least one-third of her oeuvre is based on Haitian culture and its people. Moreover, in Haiti, Jones felt freer to experiment artistically, and her fascination with symbols of Haitian Vodou radically shifted her post-1950s paintings away from her French impressionistic style to a greater abstraction. From the 1950s, Jones also increased awareness and understanding of Haiti through her exhibitions of her Haiti-inspired work and also through numerous lectures: at Howard University, throughout the United States, and even abroad in Africa.⁴⁷⁸

Haiti for Jones was the perfect melding of African heritage and French culture and she frequently attested that "Haiti is Africa to me." Jones's assertion was not unusual. During the nineteenth century, people in Europe and the United States frequently had described Haiti as a New World outpost of barbarous Africa. During the 1920s, however, both African Americans and Haitians reinterpreted this belief as a positive. Following the groundbreaking work of Haitian ethnologist-doctor-diplomat Jean Price-Mars in the 1920s, U.S. anthropologists (and anthropologist-artists like Katherine Dunham and Zora Neale

⁴⁷⁷ In inviting various African-American artists to document Haiti rather than a Haitian artist, the Haitian government reveals both its desire to cultivate U.S. connections in order to strengthen Paul Magloire's administration and also the conservative artistic tastes of the Haitian elite who continued to prefer U.S. and European academically trained artists to the more "primitive" works of the then burgeoning Haitian Renaissance.

⁴⁷⁸ For an overview of Jones, see Tritobia Hayes Benjamin, *The Life and Art of Loïs Mailou Jones* (San Francisco: Pomegranate Artbooks, 1994).

Hurston), viewed Haiti as the best laboratory in which to study and document surviving New World Africanisms. African-American artists in the 1940s and 50s and beyond carried forward such African-Haitian documentary projects. Sometimes such documentation was often the inadvertent result of difficulties in actually traveling to Africa. For example, in 1952, Paul Keene received a John Hay Whitney Fellowship, which he had hoped to apply to travel to Nigeria. Hampered in securing a visa, Keene chose Haiti as the next best site to observe intact African traditions.⁴⁷⁹

“What is Africa to me?” is the refrain through Countee Cullen’s poem, “Heritage.” This insistent question pushes and prods through stanzas that first invoke a picturesque notion of Africa (“Copper sun, a scarlet sea, // Jungle star and jungle track”), to the writings of history (“A book one thumbs // Listlessly, till slumber comes.”), and finally Africa as a subtle but unrelenting presence that offers an alternative to the rigid exclusions of a received white culture.⁴⁸⁰ Perhaps not surprising with the historic conflation of Haiti with Africa, the path that Cullen treads runs parallel to the creative trajectories of representations of Haiti in the United States that this dissertation has followed. For African Americans and other citizens of the United States, Haiti has been an imaginative site of the exotic, picturesque, and even an Edenic folk life. But more exclusively, African-American creative ethnographers have documented Haiti as a contemporary nation of industrious and spiritual folk as an answer to portrayals of the “Black Republic” as an outlying site of barbarous irrationality beyond the pale of contemporary time. Haiti has also been a collection of histories and

⁴⁷⁹ Becoming involved in the activities and teaching at the Centre d’Art, Keene remained on for a second year with a renewed Whitney fellowship, noting that while he offered mere technical assistance to Haitian artists, they in turn greatly impacted his work and outlook. See Paul Keene Papers, reel 4234, AAA.

⁴⁸⁰ Countee Cullen, “Heritage,” in *The New Negro*, ed. Alain Locke (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, Inc., 1925; Simon & Schuster, 1997), 250-3.

repeated myths, of which African Americans in particular have preserved and made visible as a “usable past” upon which to draw strength and show that monumental histories are not just the province of triumphal Euro-centric narratives. The dual knowledge of Haiti’s history, which requires the reader to acknowledge the country’s role in shaping the modern world, and its contemporary struggles for self-determination offer their own alternatives to African Americans to move beyond views of U.S. American exceptionalism and a rigid class- and race-defined idea of U.S. American identity to a greater, transnational awareness.

Many U.S. artists, and African-American artists in particular, turned their attention to Haiti for far different reasons than what has traditionally been the narrative of artistic travel. Haiti was more than a picturesque grand tour to develop their technique and catch step with the latest developments in modern art. In traveling to Haiti, most African-American artists arrived already established in their careers, ready to turn their aesthetic skills, racially conscious eyes and mature voices to the subject of Haiti, its unique culture, and its centuries of problematic representations. Additionally, their time in Haiti allowed them to stand outside of their homeland and personally examine their own national identities in a country where skin color did not instantly circumscribe them to a minority status. For the first time in their lives, they could experience life where W. E. B. Du Bois’s famous “veil” of race did not fall across them; where, as Langston Hughes described, “the white shadows are apparently missing”; and where, as art historian and Richmond Barthé expert Margaret Vendryes has noted, they could feel comfortable within their own brown skins.⁴⁸¹ Moreover, visiting Haiti

⁴⁸¹ Du Bois famously articulated his theory of the “veil” and “double consciousness,” in his classic and highly influential work, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903; New York: Random House Bantam Classic, 1989); Langston Hughes, “White Shadows in a Black Land,” *Crisis* 41.5 (May 1932): 157; Margaret Vendryes, “Brothers Under the Skin: Richmond Barthe in Haiti,” *Journal of Haitian Studies* 10.2 (Fall 2004): 125.

in the 1930s—as it emerged from the U.S. occupation—and ensuing decades allowed them to see and experience the influence the United States had on the rest of the world, contributing to an ever-growing pan-Africanist collective outlook and the nascent international Négritude movement. Or, as W. E. B. Du Bois noted in reflecting on the impact of his wide-ranging travel experiences on his own identity, “I was not less fanatically a Negro, but ‘Negro’ meant a greater, broader sense of humanity and world fellowship. I felt myself standing, not against the world, but simply against American narrowness and color prejudice, with the greater, finer world at my back.”⁴⁸²

Many African Americans also turned to Haiti in order to reclaim an effaced heroic black past. In many ways, they identified with black Haitians, who were striving to find their own self-determined place in the world that was not controlled by the double bind of U.S. race prejudice and economic exploitation. First-hand experiences in the country, however, also forced African-American artists to discover a contemporary nation whose harsh daily realities required engagement far beyond celebrating a symbolic history or exploring their own personal racial identities. Their experiences and research allowed them to return home transformed, and attempt also to transform U.S. culture by providing alternatives to visions of Haiti as a dangerous, dark, sexualized place. Choosing Haiti as their subject matter, therefore, was and is a highly-charged decision for African-American artists to use their artwork to engage racial, social and political issues. While each artist that this study touches

⁴⁸² Here, Du Bois was specifically speaking of his experiences as a student in Europe. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century* (New York: International Publishers, Co., 1968), 157. While expanding his concept of self-identity, Du Bois’s autobiography also situates his transformative experiences of travel as extending before his birth. Douglas’s famous concept of double consciousness, the inner struggle between the seemingly contrasting identities of “African American” and “American,” can be situated within his own lineage, which traces multiple U.S.-Caribbean trajectories.

upon brings a unique creative voice to his or her own personal encounter with Haiti, their resulting works helped to produce a collective impact. Representations of Haiti in the United States constitute their own intertextual history and create a multi-disciplinary, cross cultural and transnational dialogue.

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Figure 1.1



Edwin White, *Thoughts of Liberia: Emancipation*, 1861, oil on canvas, 21 x 17.1 in., The Robert L. Stuart Collection, The New York Historical Society.

Figure 1.2



William Hackwood, *Am I not a Man and a Brother?*, 1786, seal designed for the Slave Emancipation Society and produced by Josiah Wedgwood.



THE FISH MARKET, PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI
 Situated in a plain almost unimproved, the market is a notable and identified "no" from former quantities of shad from Massachusetts waters; and the quality of fish imported ample is such as would not find favor in American markets.

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STREET SCENE: SANTO DOMINGO CITY, THE CAPITAL
 Photograph by Herbert Chubbart, Adams

Still, in spite of it all, Santo Domingo remains one of the most fascinating and interesting cities in the West Indies. It is in the heart of the island, and its streets are perfumed with the odor of the sea. The streets are paved with asphalt, and the sidewalks are paved with granite. The buildings are of the finest architecture, and the streets are lined with trees. The city is a beautiful and interesting place to visit.

from the west to the east coast, the dredging of the river, etc. Santo Domingo is a beautiful city, and its streets are paved with asphalt, and the sidewalks are paved with granite. The buildings are of the finest architecture, and the streets are lined with trees. The city is a beautiful and interesting place to visit.

Here, again, the plan worked beautifully as long as the revolution was confined to the island. Santo Domingo is a beautiful city, and its streets are paved with asphalt, and the sidewalks are paved with granite. The buildings are of the finest architecture, and the streets are lined with trees. The city is a beautiful and interesting place to visit.

The revolution consists in the placing of the country under the protection of the United States. Santo Domingo is a beautiful city, and its streets are paved with asphalt, and the sidewalks are paved with granite. The buildings are of the finest architecture, and the streets are lined with trees. The city is a beautiful and interesting place to visit.

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Figure 2.1

Port-au-Prince and Santo Domingo City photo spread. Published in Anonymous, "Wards of the United States: Notes on What Our Country is Doing for Santo Domingo, Nicaragua, and Haiti," *National Geographic* 30 (August 1916): 154-155.

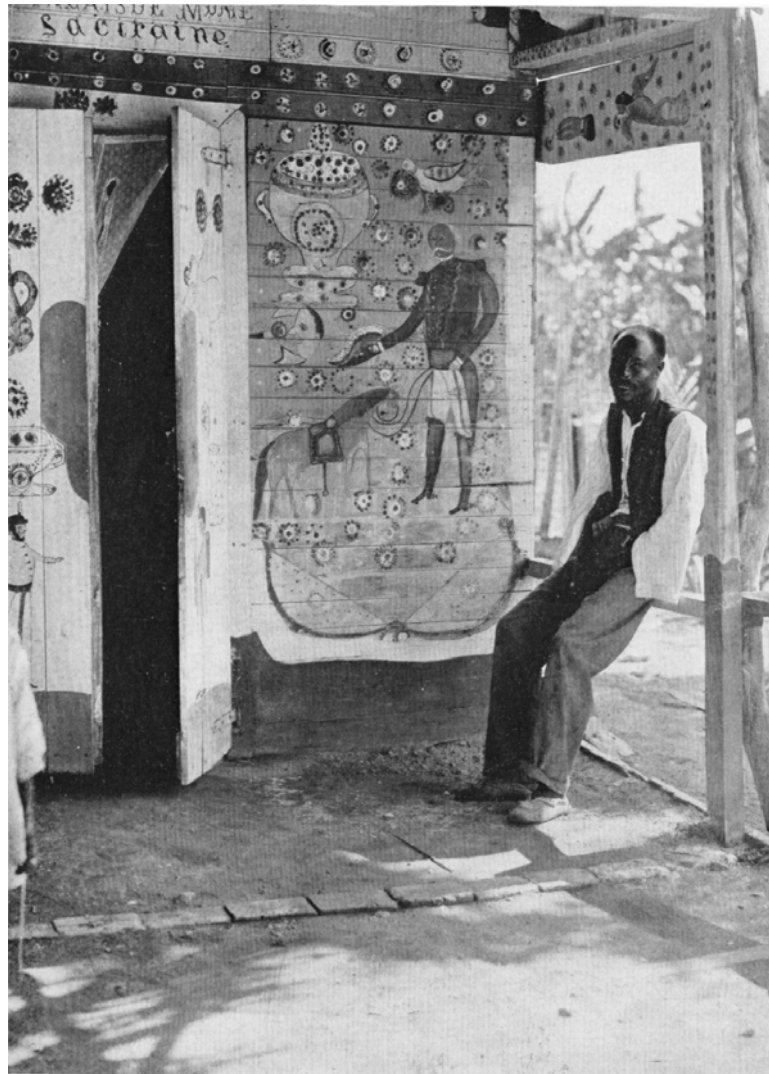
Figure 2.2



Unattributed photograph, *The Fish Market: Port au Prince, Haiti*, n.d.

Published in Anonymous, "Wards of the United States: Notes on What Our Country is Doing for Santo Domingo, Nicaragua, and Haiti," *National Geographic* 30 (August 1916): 154.

Figure 2.3



Unattributed photograph (Harry Johnston/Arthur Greaves), *The Entrance to a So-Called Vaudoux Temple: Haiti*, c. 1908-9.

Published in Anonymous, "Wards of the United States: Notes on What Our Country is Doing for Santo Domingo, Nicaragua, and Haiti," *National Geographic* 30 (August 1916): 153.

Figure 2.4



Unattributed photograph, *Sorting Coffee by Hand: Haiti*, n.d.

Published in Anonymous, "Wards of the United States: Notes on What Our Country is Doing for Santo Domingo, Nicaragua, and Haiti," *National Geographic* 30 (August 1916): 148.

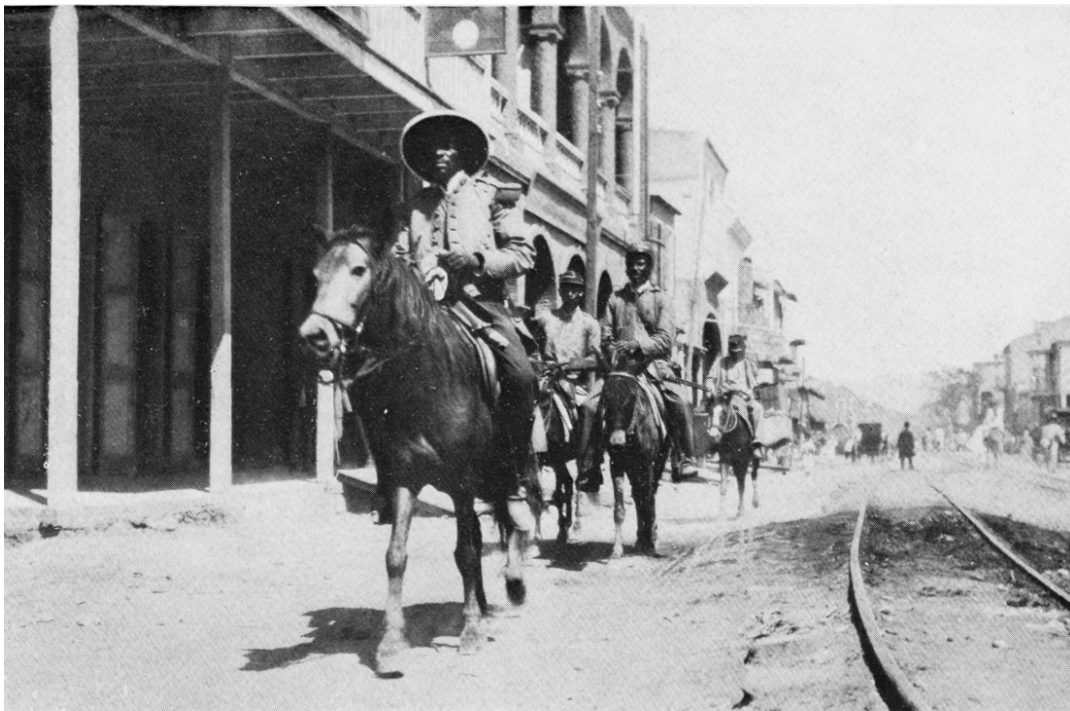
Figure 2.5



Unattributed photograph (Harry Johnston/Arthur Greaves), *A Haitian Country Home of the Better Class*, c. 1908-9.

First published in Harry Johnston, *The Negro in the New World* (1910). Reprinted in Anonymous, "Wards of the United States: Notes on What Our Country is Doing for Santo Domingo, Nicaragua, and Haiti," *National Geographic* 30 (August 1916): 162.

Figure 2.6



Unattributed photograph, *Officers of the Haitian Army on the Streets of Port au Prince, Haiti*, n.d.
Published in Anonymous, "Wards of the United States: Notes on What Our Country is Doing for Santo Domingo, Nicaragua, and Haiti," *National Geographic* 30 (August 1916): 152.

Figure 2.7



Mrs. C. R. Miller, *A Typical Country Road in Haiti*, n.d.

Published in Anonymous, "Wards of the United States: Notes on What Our Country is Doing for Santo Domingo, Nicaragua, and Haiti," *National Geographic* 30 (August 1916): 163.

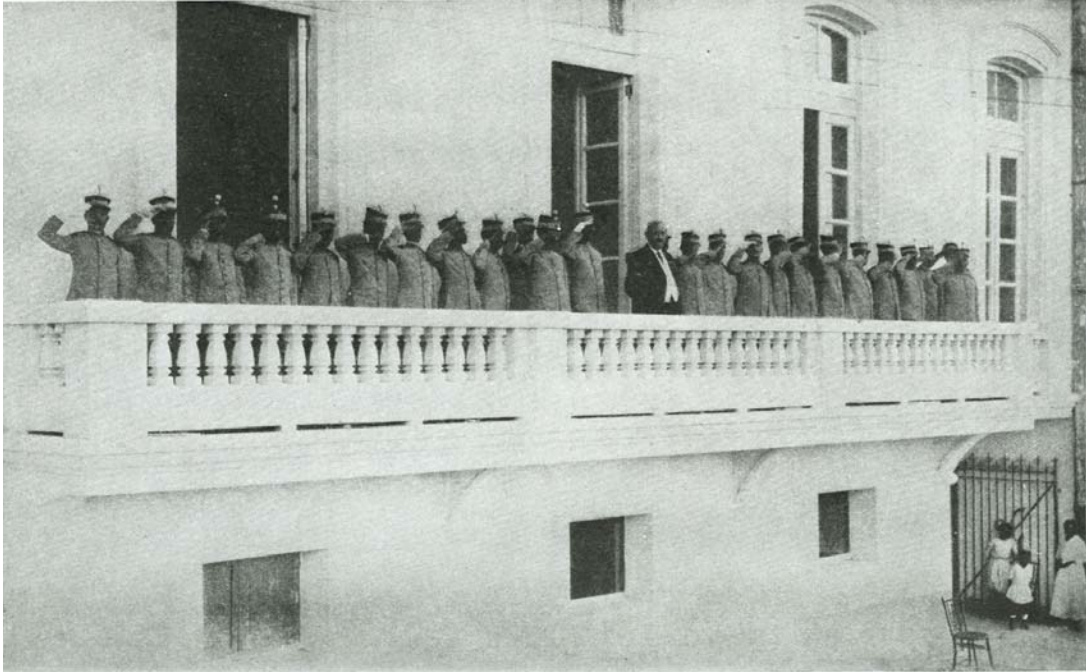
Figure 2.8



U.S. Marine Corps, *A Railroad whose Motive Power is Bullock Teams: Haiti*, n.d.

Published in Harry Johnston, "Haiti, the Home of Twin Republics," *National Geographic* 38.6 (December 1920): 485.

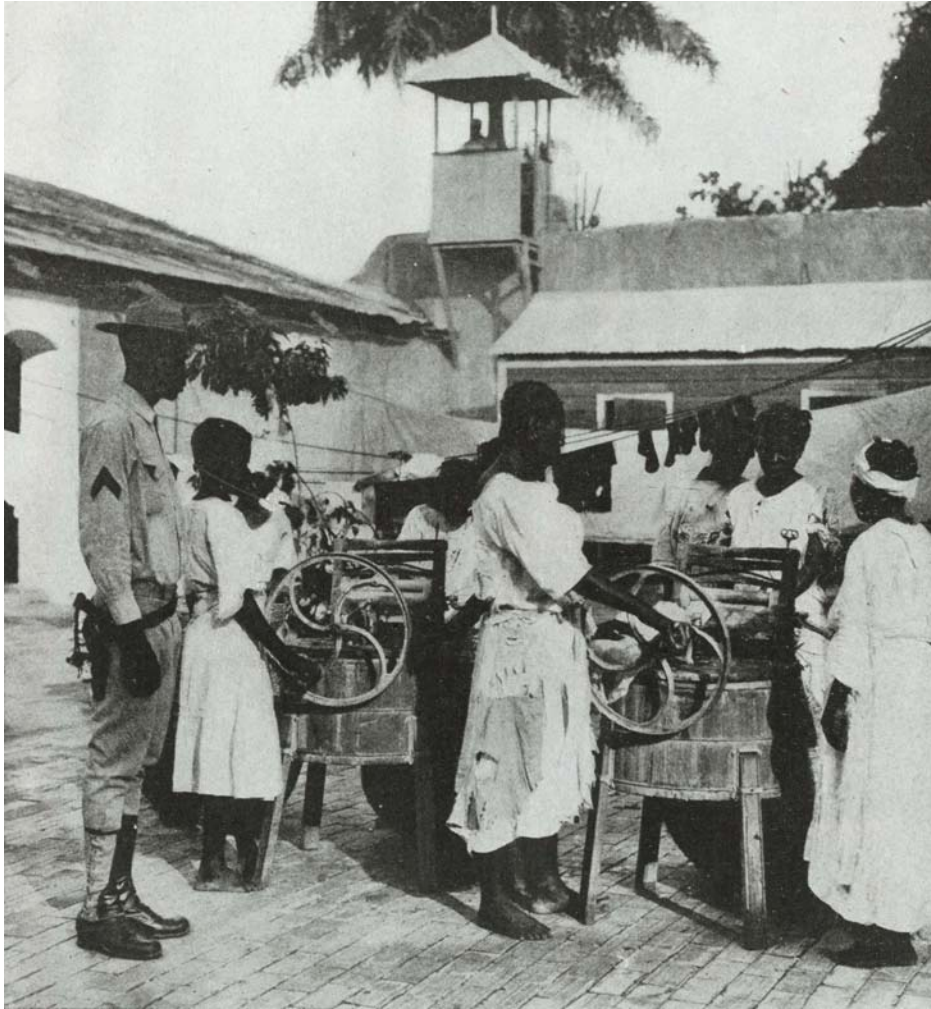
Figure 2.9



U.S. Marine Corps, *President Dartiguenave of Haiti and His Aides—24 Generals*, n.d.

Published in Anonymous, "Haiti and its Regeneration by the United States," *National Geographic* 38.6 (December 1920): 498.

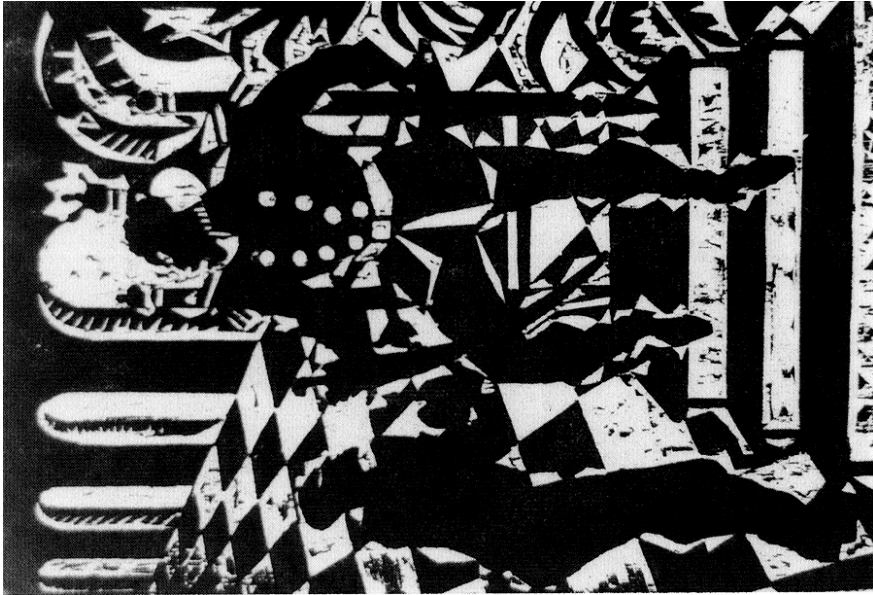
Figure 2.10



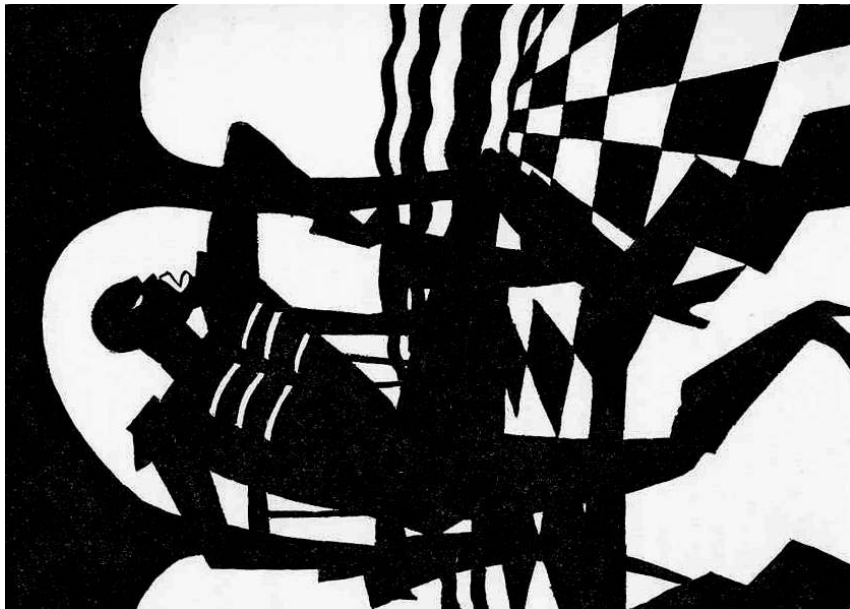
U.S. Marine Corps, *Learning Labor-Saving Methods of Advanced Civilization*, n.d.

Published in Anonymous, "Haiti and its Regeneration by the United States,"
National Geographic 38.6 (December 1920): 507.

Figure 3.1

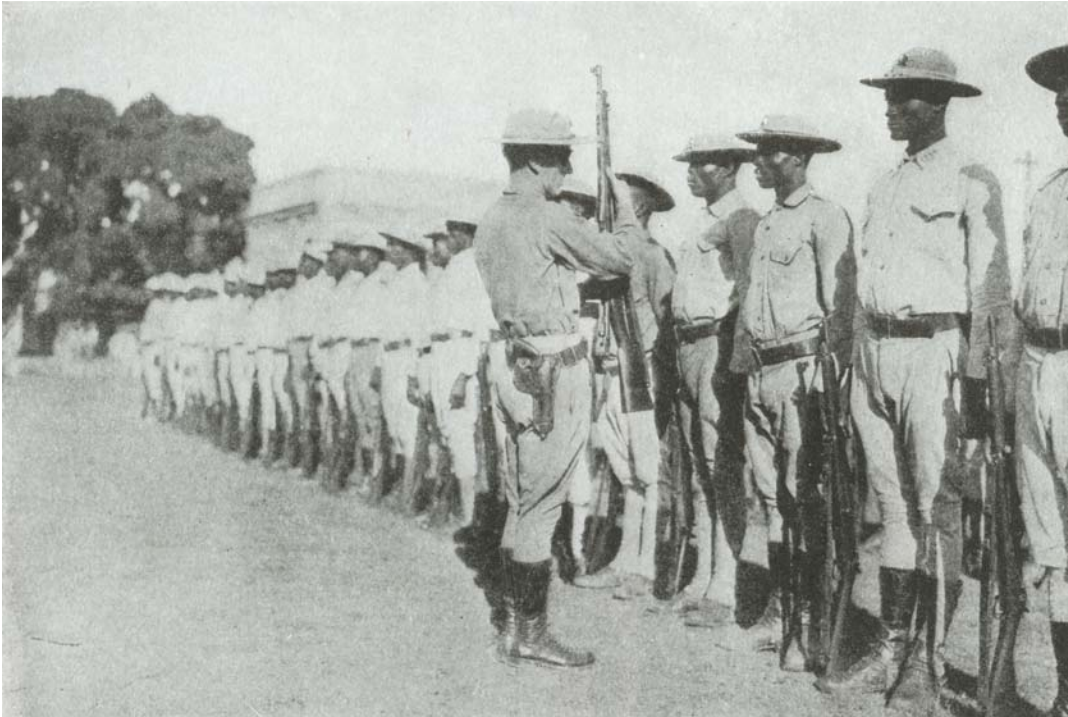


Aaron Douglas, *Bravado*, print 8 x 5 ½ in., Fisk University Art Collection. Reproduced in David C. Driskell, ed., *Amsitad II: Afro-American Art* (Nashville: Fisk University, 1975), 47.



Aaron Douglas, untitled drawing, c. 1926. Published in Alain Locke, "The Negro and the American Stage," *Theatre Arts Monthly* (February 1926): 117.

Figure 3.2



U.S. Marine Corps photograph, *Helping the Haitian to Help Himself: An American Marine Officer Inspecting a Company of the Haitian Gendarmerie*, n.d.

Published in Anonymous, "Haiti and its Regeneration by the United States," *National Geographic* (December 1920): 501.

Figure 3.3



Aaron Douglas, untitled drawing, c. 1926.

Published in Alain Locke, "The Negro and the American Stage," *Theatre Arts Monthly* (February 1926): 117.

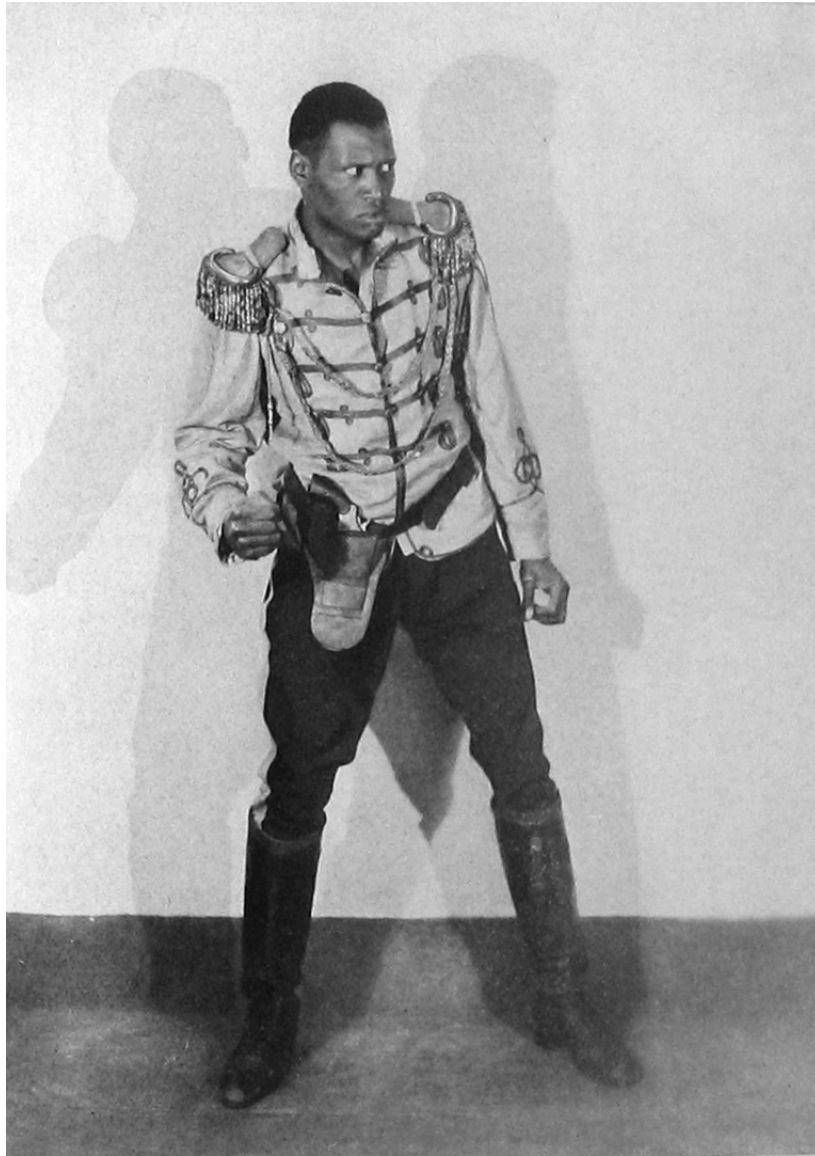
Figure 3.4



Francis Bruguere, *Charles Gilpin as "Emperor Jones,"* c. 1920, photograph.

Published in Alain Locke and Montgomery Gregory, eds., *Plays of Negro Life: A Source Book of Native American Drama* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1927).

Figure 3.5



Maurice Goldberg, *Paul Robeson as "Emperor Jones,"* n.d., photograph.

Published in Alain Locke and Montgomery Gregory, eds., *Plays of Negro Life: A Source Book of Native American Drama* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1927), 220.

Figure 3.6



Unattributed photograph, *Paul Robeson*, n.d.

Published in Paul Robeson, "Reflections on O'Neill's Plays,"
Opportunity 2.24 (December, 1924): 368.

Figure 3.7



Clement Wilenchick, "Paul Robeson as 'The Emperor Jones'
Drawn from life by Clement Wilenchik [sic]," n.d., drawing.

Published in Paul Robeson, "Reflections on O'Neill's
Plays," *Opportunity* 2.24 (December, 1924): 369.

Figure 3.8



Alexander King, *The Emperor Jones, Scene One*, c. 1928,
drawing.

Published in Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones* (New York:
Boni and Liveright, 1928).

Figure 3.9



Alexander King, *The Emperor Jones*, Scene Four, c. 1928, drawing.

Published in Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1928).

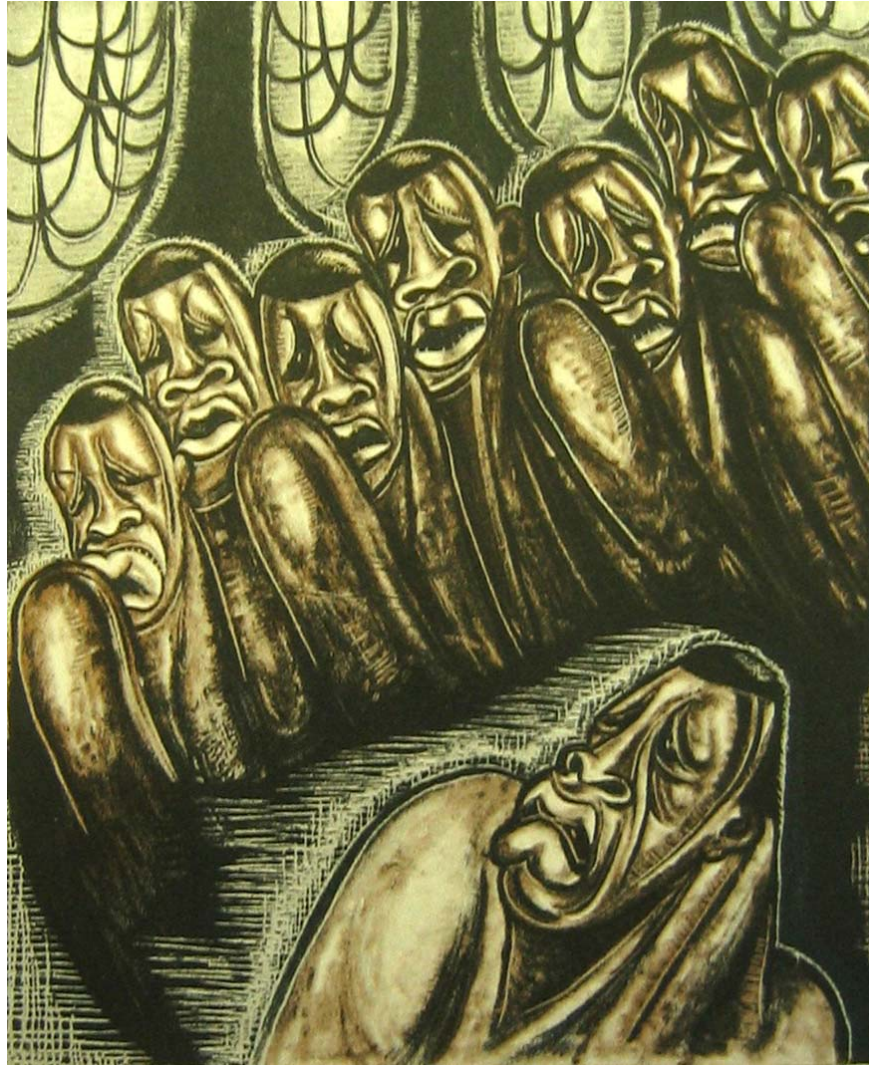
Figure 3.10



Alexander King, *The Emperor Jones, Scene Eight*, c. 1928, drawing.

Published in Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1928).

Figure 3.11



Alexander King, *The Emperor Jones*, Scene Six, c. 1928, drawing.

Published in Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1928).

Figure 3.12



Francis Bruguere, *The Auction Block Scene From The Emperor Jones*, original performance photograph. Reproduced in Alain Locke and Montgomery Gregory, eds., *Plays of Negro Life* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1927).

Figure 3.13



Aaron Douglas, untitled (*Forest Fear*), c. 1926, drawing.

Published in Alain Locke, "The Negro and the American Stage," *Theatre Arts Monthly* (February, 1926), 118.

Figure 3.14



Winold Reiss, *Interpretation of Harlem Jazz*, c. 1924, ink and watercolor on paper.

First published in Harlem issue of *Survey Graphic* (March 1925); Reprinted in Jeffrey Stewart, *To Color America: Portraits by Winold Reiss* (Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery and the Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 60.

Figure 3.15



“Juba.” At the Vauxhall Gardens, Harvard Theatre Collection.

Reproduced in Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 114.

Figure 3.16



Aaron Douglas, *Surrender*, c. 1926, drawing.

Published in Alain Locke and Montgomery Gregory, eds., *Plays of Negro Life*
(New York: Harper & Brothers, 1927).

Figure 4.1



Alexander King, "*Here are deep matters, not easy to be dismissed by crying blasphemy,*" c. 1928, drawing.

Frontispiece to William Seabrook, *The Magic Island* (New York: Literary Guild of America, 1929).

Figure 4.2



Top: Unattributed photograph, "*Maman Célie, Voodoo Priestess, Seated Behind the Ritual Drums,*" n.d.; bottom: Anonymous, (Seabrook?), "*Maman Celie at the Baptism of the Drums,*" n.d.

Both published in William Seabrook, *The Magic Island* (New York: Literary Guild of America, 1929), appendix., n.p.

Figure 4.3



Alexander King, "*Maman Célie, high priestess of the mysteries*," c. 1928, drawing.

Published in William Seabrook, *The Magic Island* (New York: Literary Guild of America, 1929), 27.

Figure 4.4



Alexander King, "*...blood-maddened, sex-maddened, god-maddened...danced their dark saturnalia,*" c. 1928, drawing.

Published in William Seabrook, *The Magic Island* (New York: Literary Guild of America, 1929), 42.

Figure 4.5



Aaron Douglas, *The Black Tsar* (illustration for *Black Magic* by Paul Morand), c.1929, gouache and pencil on paper board, 14 ¼ x 9 ½ in. North Carolina Museum of Art, Gift of Susie R. Powell and Franklin R. Anderson, 2000.11.1.

Figure 5.1



William E. Scott, *Haitian Market*, 1950, oil on canvas, 30 x 48 in., Collection of Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee.

Figure 5.2



U.S. Marine Corps, *Port au Prince Possesses a Magnificent Central Market, Worthy of a Big French or American Town*, n.d.

Captioned: "It is a good humored, noisy crowd that gathers here every day. A few policemen stroll about, but their services are seldom required to maintain order. In the old days the place was permeated with soldiers, who exacted heavy toll from the market people." Published in Sir Harry Johnston, "Haiti, the Home of Twin Republics," *National Geographic* 38.6 (December 1920): 495.

Figure 5.3



U.S. Marine Corps, *The Open-Air Market at Port au Prince*, n.d.

Caption: “The scene every morning, between 6 and 8 o’clock, is extremely picturesque. Fish, turkeys, geese, ducks, sheep, goats, parrots and pigeons are here offered for sale, as well as beans, peppers, avocados, pumpkins, and quantities of firewood and charcoal.” Published in Harry Johnston, “Haiti, the Home of Twin Republics,” *National Geographic* 38.6 (December 1920): 493.

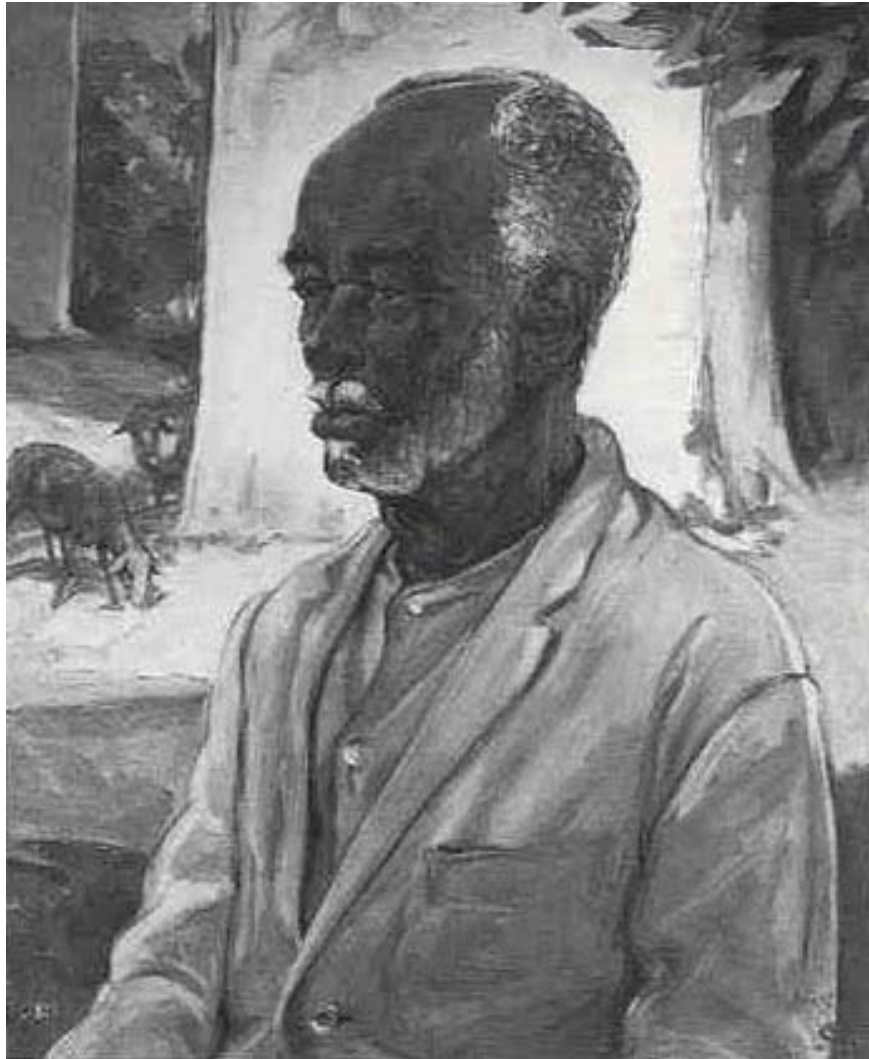
Figure 5.4



William E. Scott, *Blind Sister Mary*, c. 1931, oil on canvas, 29 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 24 in. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Art and Artifacts Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundation.

Reproduced in William E. Taylor and Harriet G. Warkel, *A Shared Heritage: Art by Four African Americans* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Museum of Art and Indiana University Press, 1996).

Figure 5.5



William E. Scott, *Kenshoff, Haiti*, 1931, oil on canvas, 22 x 18 in. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Art and Artifacts Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundation.

Reproduced in William E. Taylor and Harriet G. Warkel, *A Shared Heritage: Art by Four African Americans* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Museum of Art and Indiana University Press, 1996).

Figure 5.6



Vladimir Perfilieff, Haitian Peasants Typical of the Class from Which the Cacos Were Recruited.

Published in H. P. Davis, *Black Democracy: The Story of Haiti* (New York: Lincoln Mac Veagh, the Dial Press, 1929).

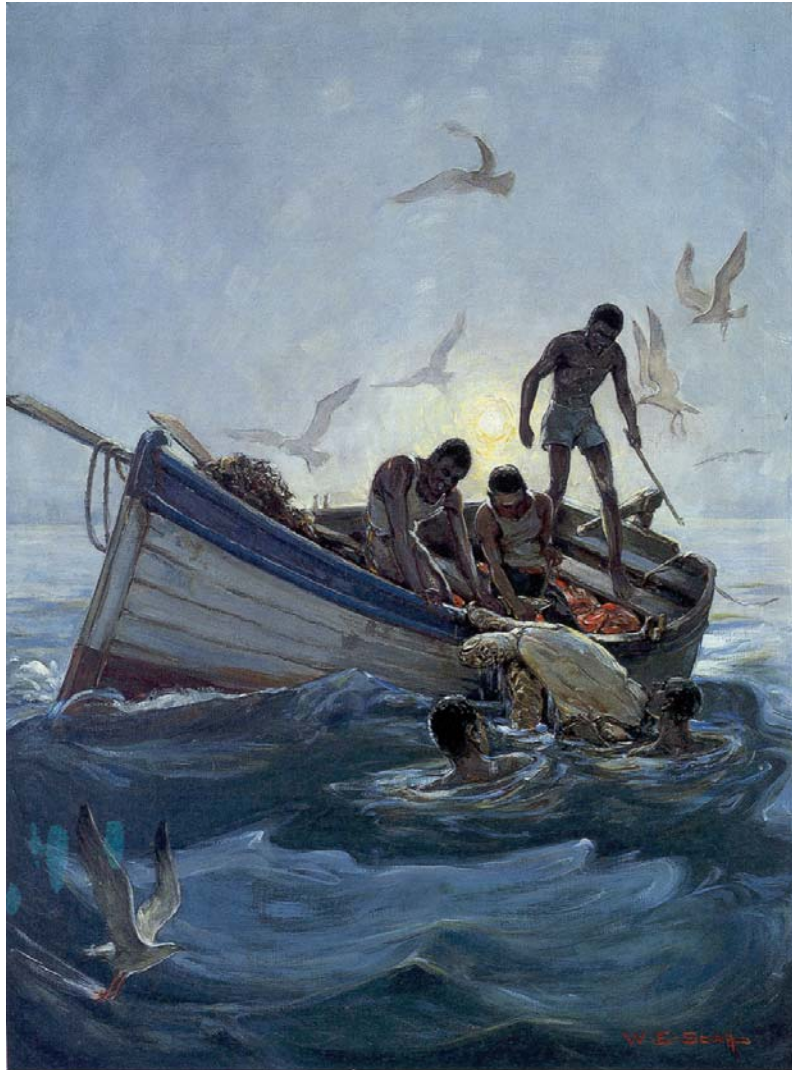
Figure 5.7



Unattributed photographs, *Left: A Peasant. Right: A Caco*, n.d.

Published in H. P. Davis, *Black Democracy: The Story of Haiti* (New York: Lincoln Mac Veagh, the Dial Press, 1929).

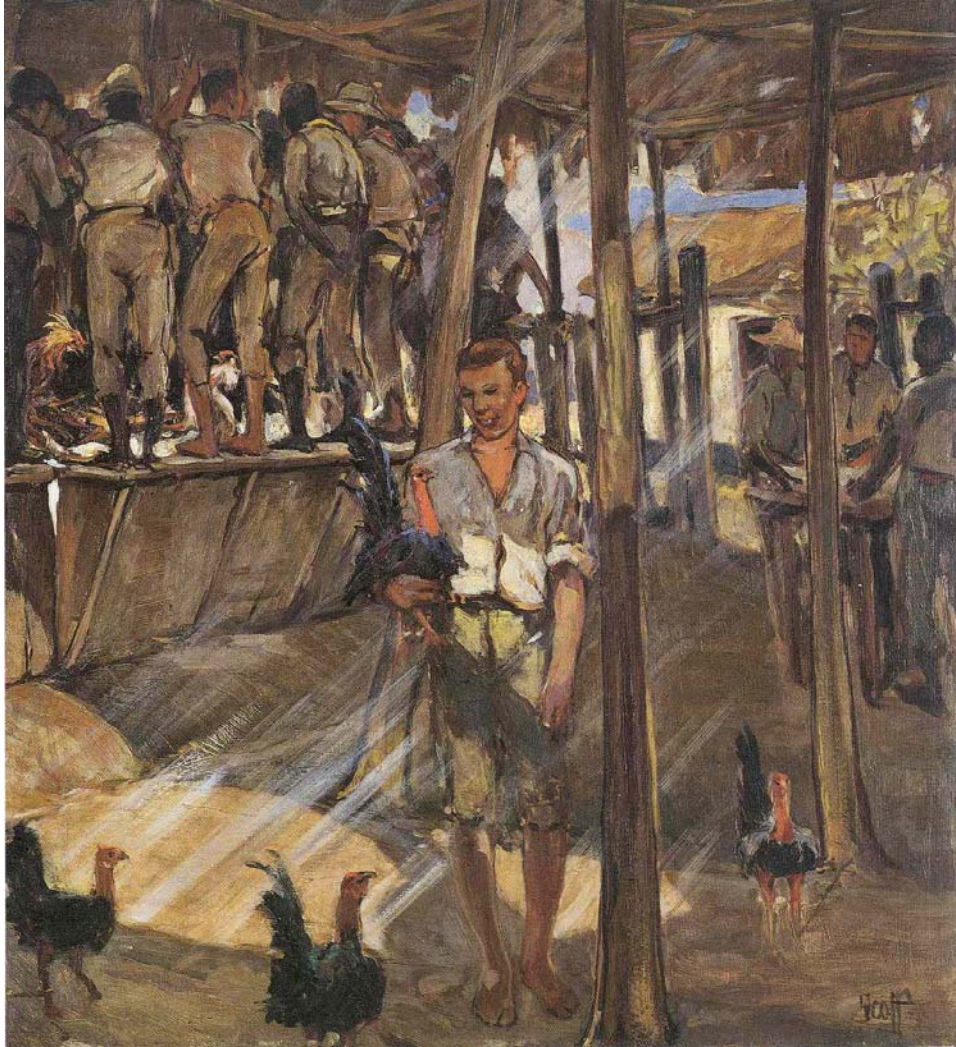
Figure 5.8



William E. Scott, *Night Turtle Fishing in Haiti*, 1931, oil on canvas, 39 ½ x 29 ½ in. Clark Atlanta University Collection of African American Art.

Reproduced in William E. Taylor and Harriet G. Warkel, *A Shared Heritage: Art by Four African Americans* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Museum of Art and Indiana University Press, 1996), 36.

Figure 5.9



William E. Scott, *Cockfight*, c. 1931, oil on wood panel, 22x18 in. Collection of Byron and Frances Minor.

Reproduced in William E. Taylor and Harriet G. Warkel, *A Shared Heritage: Art by Four African Americans* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Museum of Art and Indiana University Press, 1996).

Figure 5.10



William E. Scott, *The Citadel, Haiti*, c. 1931, oil on canvas, 18 ½ x 22 ½ in. Collection of James T. Parker.

Reproduced in William E. Taylor and Harriet G. Warkel, *A Shared Heritage: Art by Four African Americans* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Museum of Art and Indiana University Press, 1996), 31.

Figure 5.11



Aaron Douglas, *Haitian Landscape (Haitian Cathedral Scene)*, 1938, oil on canvas.

Reproduced in Alain Locke, *The Negro in Art*, 1940 (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1968), 52.

Figure 5.12



Aaron Douglas, *Untitled Landscape (Waterfront Park)*, 1938, oil on canvas, 20 x 24 in. A.C.A. Gallery, New York.

Figure 6.1



Normil Charles, *Monument to Dessalines*, 1904, formerly displayed on the Champ de Mars, Port-au-Prince.

Photograph by Harry Johnston, c. 1908-9. First published in Harry Johnston, *The Negro in the New World* (London: 1910); reprinted as unattributed, *Statue of Dessalines, Erected 1904* in Anonymous, "Wards of the United States: Notes on What Our Country is Doing for Santo Domingo, Nicaragua, and Haiti," *National Geographic* 30 (August 1916): 173.

Figure 6.2



Mahlon Blaine, cover to *Opportunity* (May 1928).

Illustration originally published in John Vandercook, *Black Majesty: The Life of Christophe, King of Haiti* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1928). Captioned: “With his own hands he had put the flames to his own house, the richest on the island. With it he destroyed all the wealth he had accumulated during the period of Toussaint’s ascendancy, making himself homeless.”

Figure 6.3



Mahlon Blaine, cover to John Vandercook, *Black Majesty: The Life of Christophe, King of Haiti* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1928).

Reproduced in *Opportunity* (May 1928): 148, with the caption, "Jean Christophe from Mahlon Blaine's illustration for 'Black Majesty.'"

Figure 6.4



Jacob Lawrence, *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture, No. 36: During the truce Toussaint is deceived and arrested by LeClerc. LeClerc led Toussaint to believe that he was sincere, believing that when Toussaint was out of the way, the Blacks would surrender,* 1938, tempera on paper, 11 ½ x 19 in. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans. Aaron Douglas Collection.

Figure 6.5



Jacob Lawrence, *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture, No. 1: Columbus discovered Haiti on December 6, 1492. The discovery was on Columbus' first trip to the New World. He is shown planting the official Spanish flag, under which he sailed, 1938*, tempera on paper, 11 ½ x 19 in. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans. Aaron Douglas Collection.

Figure 6.6



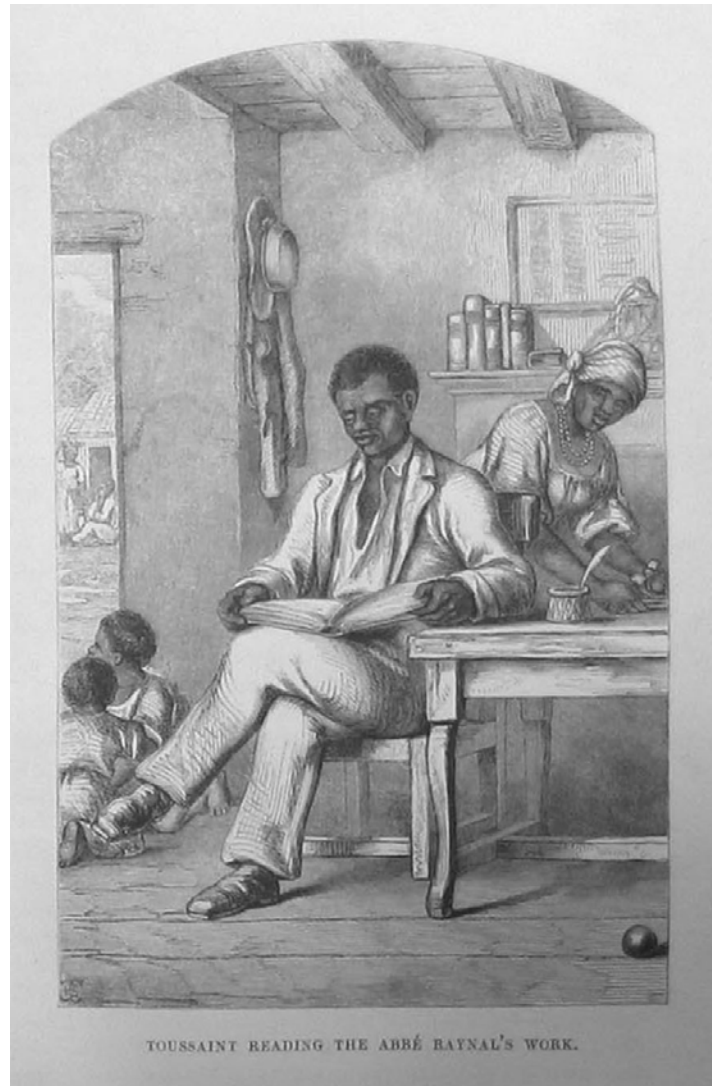
Jacob Lawrence, *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture, No. 2: Mistreatment by the Spanish soldiers caused much trouble on the island and caused the death of Anacanca, a native queen, 1503. Columbus left soldiers in charge. Their greed for gold caused them to begin making slaves of the people, who were living a happy and peaceful life up to that time. They naturally resisted. The queen was one of the leaders in the insurrection*, 1938, tempera on paper, 11 ½ x 19 in. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans. Aaron Douglas Collection.

Figure 6.7



Jacob Lawrence, *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture, No. 7: As a child, Toussaint heard the twang of the planter's whip and saw blood stream from the bodies of slaves*, 1938, tempera on paper, 11 ½ x 19 in. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans. Aaron Douglas Collection.

Figure 6.8



Anonymous, *Toussaint Reading the Abbé Raynal's Work*.
Engraving published in John R. Beard, *The Life of Toussaint
L'Ouverture: The Negro Patriot of Hayti* (London: Ingram,
Cooke, and Co., 1853).

Figure 6.9



Jacob Lawrence, *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture, No. 9: He read Ryno's Anti Slavery Book that predicted a Black Emancipator, which language spirited him, 1763-1776, 1938*, tempera on paper, 19 x 11 ½ in. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans. Aaron Douglas Collection.

Figure 6.10



Jacob Lawrence, *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture*, No. 25: *General Toussaint L'Ouverture defeats the English at Saline*, 1938, tempera on paper, 19 x 11 ½ in. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans. Aaron Douglas Collection.

Figure 6.11



Toussaint Louverture Neger General auf St Domingo.

Anonymous, *Toussaint Louverture Neger General auf St. Domingo*, n.d.
Portrait Collection—Toussaint L'Ouverture: SC-CN-03-126. Schomburg
Center for Research in Black Culture.

Figure 6.12



Jacob Lawrence, *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture*, No. 26: *On March 24 he captured Mirebalois*, 1938, tempera on paper, 19 x 11 ½ in. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans. Aaron Douglas Collection.

Figure 6.13



TOUSSAINT LOUVERTURE.

From a Rare Contemporary Print.

Anonymous, *Toussaint Louverture*. *From a Rare Contemporary Print*, n.d.
National Museum American History/Smithsonian Institution, Washington,
D.C. 1980.0679.05

Figure 6.14



Jacob Lawrence, *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture*, No. 20: *General Toussaint L'Ouverture, Statesman and military Genius, esteemed by the Spaniards, feared by the English, dreaded by the French, hated by the planters, and revered by the Blacks*, 1938, tempera on paper, 19 x 11 ½ in. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans. Aaron Douglas Collection.

Figure 6.15



Anonymous, *Toussaint Louverture*, n.d. National Museum American History/Smithsonian Institution, 1980.0679.03. Based on the lithograph by Nicolas Eustache Maurin, 1832, and first published in *Iconographie des contemporains*.

Figure 6.16



Jacob Lawrence, Lincoln School, New Rochelle, New York, February 1941. Photograph courtesy of Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library, Syracuse, New York.

Figure 6.17



Jacob Lawrence, *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture*, No. 10: *The cruelty of the planters led the slaves to revolt, 1776*. These revolts kept cropping up from time to time—finally came to a head in the rebellion, 1793, tempera on paper, 11 ½ x 19 in. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans. Aaron Douglas Collection.

Figure 6.18



Jacob Lawrence, *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture*, No. 19: *The Mulattoes had no organization; the English held only a point or two on the Island, while the Blacks formed into large bands and slaughtered every Mulatto and White they encountered. The Blacks had learned the secret of their power. The Haitians now controlled half the Island*, 1938, tempera on paper, 11 ½ x 19 in. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans. Aaron Douglas Collection.

Figure 6.19



Anonymous, *General Jean-Jacques Dessalines (1758-1806)*, from the series: *Heros de l'indépendance d'Haïti (1804-1806)*, n.d. National Palace, Port-au-Prince. Published through the Haitian tourist bureau, special issue: "Tricinquantaire de l'Indépendance d'Haïti," *Formes et Couleurs* 12.1 (1954).

Figure 6.20



Left: Richmond Barthé, *Monument to Dessalines*, Port-au-Prince, 1953.
Right: Richmond Barthé, clay model for *Monument to Dessalines*. Richmond Barthé Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans.

Figure 6.21



Jacob Lawrence, *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture*, No. 41: *Desalines was crowned Emperor October 4, 1804, thus: Jean Jacques the First of Haiti. Desalines, standing beside a broken chain, was dictator—as opposed to Toussaint's more liberal leadership*, 1938, tempera on paper, 19 x 11 ½ in. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans. Aaron Douglas Collection.

Figure 7.1



James A. Porter, *Haitian Girl*, 1946, oil.

Published in James A. Porter, 'Picturesque Haiti,' *Opportunity*
24 (Fall 1946): 179.

Figure 7.2



James A. Porter, “*The Donkey Woman*,” *Haiti*, 1946, oil.

Published in James A. Porter, ‘Picturesque Haiti,’ *Opportunity*
24 (Fall 1946).