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## Atlantic Legacies: Free Women of Color And The Changing Notions Of Womanhood In The Long Nineteenth Century

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

ATLANTIC LEGACIES: FREE WOMEN OF COLOR AND THE CHANGING  
NOTIONS OF WOMANHOOD IN THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

HISTORY

by

Marie Stephanie Chancy

2021

To: Dean John F. Stack, Jr.  
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

This dissertation, written by Marie Stephanie Chancy, and entitled *Atlantic Legacies: Free Women of Color and the Changing Notions of Womanhood in the Long Nineteenth Century*, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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Jenna Gibbs

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Hilary Jones

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Daniel Guernsey

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Rebecca Friedman, Major Professor

Date of Defense: September 3, 2021

The dissertation of Marie Stephanie Chancy is approved.

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Dean John F. Stack, Jr.  
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

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Andrés G. Gil  
Vice President for Research and Economic Development  
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2021

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## DEDICATION

To the Atlantic Legacies Who Have Gone Before:

My Grandmother, Simone (1920-1977), if a love of reading and history is genetic, I most assuredly inherited this love from her.

My Father, Robert (1942-1986), who always let me know I could do whatever I set my mind to.

My Uncle, Philippe (1946-2010), who, along with my Mother, pushed hardest for me to begin and complete the Ph.D.

And

To the Atlantic Legacies Who are Just Getting Started:

My nephews Kyle and Colin, and my niece Sydney, they continue the story and have infinite possibilities before them.

And to my mother, Michelle, who wholeheartedly encouraged me to pursue my education, and proofread every one of my papers, including this one.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Completing a Ph.D. is in part a solitary endeavor. The student, after all, is the only one who must read the books, sort out the notes and write the papers. The monumental effort, however, is rarely undertaken in a vacuum and, if one is fortunate, there are many helping hands from start to finish. I am one of the fortunate ones who received help, encouragement and support from quite a number of people on my circuitous path to this degree. As I prepared my application my friends, Dr. Maureen McDermott and Dr. Lina Lopez whom I've known since our days as undergraduates, provided feedback and suggestions on my personal statement. Florida International University Art + Art History Professors Dr. Carol Damian, Bill Maguire and the late Dr. Juan Martinez wrote letters in support of my application without hesitation. When my application hit a snag and I was ready to give up and move on, my friend Klaudio Rodriguez took it upon himself to mention my dilemma to one of his professors, Dr. Sherry Johnson. Both Dr. Johnson and Dr. Damian advocated on my behalf. Were it not for these helping hands early on this project would have ended before it ever began. Once I started the program my professors were supportive and always ready to offer guidance. All the History Department professors with whom I had chance to interact were universally enthusiastic about my research, whether or not I had taken their class.

From the moment I began the program in August 2013 until December 2018, I was teaching and my colleagues in the Art + Art History Department at FIU motivated me with positive words and their willingness to talk about my latest research undertakings. The latter is particularly true of Dr. Jacek Kolasinski with whom I continue to exchange ideas. In Fall 2018 as my teaching responsibilities became overwhelming

and I could not even think about starting to write my dissertation I received an offer that I was wise enough to accept. The Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC) was reviving the Green Family Foundation Fellowship and they wanted me to consider joining the team. It is thanks to the Green Family Foundation and the position they funded at dLOC that this dissertation was written in three years rather than in a decade or more. I want to thank Dr. Kimberly Green, President of the Green Family Foundation and Mireille Louis Charles, Executive Director of the Foundation, for this funding, for their trust in my work and for their belief in the work done at dLOC. A big thank you must also be extended to Miguel Asencio, dLOC Executive Director and to Dr. Hadassah St. Hubert, formerly the Council of Library and Information Resources Postdoctoral Fellow in Data Curation for Latin American and Caribbean Studies at dLOC. It is through Hadassah's and Miguel's efforts that the Fellowship was reinstated and that I was selected as its recipient. Hadassah and Miguel repeatedly expressed their confidence in my abilities and, in the process, introduced me to the Digital Humanities, which for me is a new approach to scholarship. A special thank you is owed to Hadassah who often took on the task of helping me get unstuck as I was working on the dissertation.

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your guidance. My dissertation incorporates quite a few art pieces and, for their help in obtaining the rights and permissions to use them, I would like to thank, Suzanne Inge of the Peabody Essex Museum, Jean-Claude Legagneur of Haiti's MUPANAH, and Robbi Siegel of Art Resource, Inc. An unexpected but pleasant surprise was the community of scholars I encountered on Twitter. These Twiterstorians are extremely generous, often going out of their way to help me track down sources and always open to making introductions and facilitating contacts. For the latter I'd like to particularly thank Dr. Nicole Willson and Dr. Rachel Douglass who put me in touch with Guerdy Lissade to whom I also want to express my gratitude for helping put me in touch with MUPANAH.

Last, but certainly not least I want to thank my family, immediate and extended. My mother, Michelle, read all my papers and her eagle-eye made them better even when we disagreed on a turn of phrase or a word choice. My brothers and their wives, Chris and Anouk and Charles and Julie who were all in with me even when they had no idea what I was talking about. My nephew Kyle, who was six when I started this, Colin, who was not even a year old, and my niece, Sydney, who was born as I was still completing my coursework help me keep it real, especially when I get the perplexed question, "you're going to be a doctor, but you're not going to give shots?" There are also aunts, uncles and cousins too numerous to name but whose support I appreciate. Finally, there are those whose unwavering friendship has kept me sane and now they too have become family, Joe Ciresi, my brother from another mother, Dr. Leonardo Falcón, my companion in too many classes to count, and Klaudio Rodriguez. All of these helping hands make my life richer and infinitely more interesting.



ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

ATLANTIC LEGACIES: FREE WOMEN OF COLOR AND THE CHANGING  
NOTIONS OF WOMANHOOD IN THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY

by

Marie Stephanie Chancy

Florida International University, 2021

Miami, Florida

Professor Rebecca Friedman, Major Professor

This dissertation focuses on three free-born African-descended women who defied expectations and prejudices to live previously unthinkable lives in the nineteenth century. The project uses their biographies to illustrate how, as Black and mixed-ancestry émigrés from the Americas living in Europe, they adopted and adapted the evolving notions of ideal womanhood. As a result they expanded who could be identified as a true, redemptive or new woman. The project shows how they used the tenets of these ideals to live life on their terms. The dissertation is set in an era dominated by white males, and defined by the enslavement and marginalization of African-descended people who were deemed to be intellectually and morally inferior. The project approaches its subjects' adoption of the social mores of the dominant society as a denial of subordination and an autoethnographic expression. By engaging with the norms of the dominant culture they practiced a type of marronage. While typically used in terms of enslavement, when looked at as a form of resistance and as a way of gaining independence and self-determination, marronage is applicable to these subjects who used established structures to break the old order. The project demonstrates how three African-descended Euro-

American women lived life on their terms and left an Atlantic legacy that paved the way for subsequent generations of Atlantic women to do the same.

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# Atlantic Legacies: Free Women of Color and Changing Notions of Womanhood in the Long Nineteenth Century

## Introduction

### Atlantic Women: Mind and Heart Not Just Color<sup>1</sup>

Approximately one third of the way through Alyssa Cole's novel, *An Extraordinary Union*, her two main characters, Ellen "Elle" Burns and Malcolm McCall, have the following exchange:

MALCOLM: How can you stand it Elle? How can you not be bursting with anger?

ELLE: Where would that get me? This righteous anger you speak of?<sup>2</sup>

Cole's novel is a historical romance set in the final weeks of 1861 with most of the action occurring in Richmond, Virginia. Elle and Malcolm are spies embedded in the Confederate capital gathering intelligence for the Union. The story stands apart from the usual historical romance fare in that it depicts a romance between a freed black woman and a white man who, at the end of the novel, call their union a marriage.<sup>3</sup> The character

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<sup>1</sup> This is an adaptation of the Oberlin College doctrine, "Mind and heart not color, make the man and the women too." Quoted in Geoffrey Blodgett, "John Mercer Langston and the Case of Edmonia Lewis: Oberlin, 1862," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (July, 1968), 203, accessed December 4, 2019, [www.jstor.org/stable/2716216](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2716216).

<sup>2</sup> Alyssa Cole, *An Extraordinary Union*, (New York: Kensington Publishing Corp., 2017), 82, Kindle.

<sup>3</sup> It was not until the 1967 Supreme Court decision in *Loving v. Virginia* that marriages between black and white individuals became legal nationwide. Until then at least sixteen states had antimiscegenation statutes. In the *Loving* case the State of Virginia argued that since both parties, black or white, were punished equally their statute was not discriminatory. Moreover, citing the 1955 Virginia State Supreme Court decision of *Maim v. Maim*, antimiscegenation laws were argued to be legitimate in the state's efforts to protect "racial integrity," prevent the erasure of racial pride, "the corruption of blood," and the creation of "a mongrel breed of citizens." *Loving v. Virginia*, 388, US 1 – (Supreme Court 1967), accessed, February 1, 2021, [https://scholar.google.com/scholar\\_case?case=5103666188878568597&q=Loving+v.+Virginia&hl=en&as\\_sdt=40006&as\\_vis=1](https://scholar.google.com/scholar_case?case=5103666188878568597&q=Loving+v.+Virginia&hl=en&as_sdt=40006&as_vis=1). Despite these laws, during the nineteenth century blacks and whites did marry, even if their union was not recognized by United States law. Two examples: Zephaniah Kingsley, Jr., who married the enslaved woman Anna Kingsley in then Spanish Florida (see Daniel L. Schafer, *Anna*

Elle goes against the usual depictions of the formerly enslaved in that she's intelligent, resourceful, and demonstrates her agency by becoming a spy to help preserve the Union and free her brethren from enslavement.

The fictional Elle and the historical women studied in the following pages share many of the same characteristics. Louise Chancy Louverture (1782-1871), Sarah Parker Remond Pintor (1824-1894) and Mary Edmonia Lewis (1844-1907) were all strong women who successfully defied expectations. In many ways they lived lives that were unthinkable for the era. In particular, their push against established boundaries in pursuit of their ambitions were unthinkable since they all “[challenged] the very frameworks” with which womanhood, and more precisely, how black womanhood, was understood in the long nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis, like Elle, also grasped that righteous anger would do little to help them effectively counter pernicious and prevalent notions that black and mixed ancestry individuals, especially women, were intellectually and morally inferior. These resourceful, capable and tenacious women who exercised agency over their destinies “[participated] in history both as actors and as narrators.”<sup>5</sup>

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*Madgigine Jai Kinsley. African Princess, Florida Slave, Plantation Slaveowner*, (Miami: University Press of Florida, 2003); and William G. Allen and Mary E. King, who married in New York and settled in England to avoid persecution and harassment (see Marilyn Richardson, “Edmonia Lewis at McGrawville: the early education of a nineteenth-century black woman artist,” *Nineteenth Century Contexts*, Vol. 22 No.2 (2000), 251-252.

<sup>4</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past, Power and the Production of History*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 82. Trouillot's use of “unthinkable” is used in the context of the Haitian Revolution, which he presents as challenging established frameworks.

<sup>5</sup> Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 2.

From the outset, it must be remembered that Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis lived in a world that was defined by the enslavement and marginalization of people who, largely, looked like them. Their efforts to create a sense of identity and subjectivity in predominantly white Europe where they emigrated and lived out their lives are studied in this larger Atlantic context. All three were fully cognizant that they could easily be, and likely were, perceived as “lesser” in comparison to their white counterparts. They also knew that their accomplishments were often viewed as being outside the norm because of their African ancestry. Their claims to personhood and to social space, which took different forms, are an example of their agency and their rejection of the social structures in a world dominated by “a system that defined [certain] human beings as commodities.”<sup>6</sup>

This dissertation examines how Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis, three free-born African-descended women, asserted their sense of self and defined places for themselves in predominantly white societies. Their negotiations are studied in light of the changing ideas of womanhood and the project considers how each woman approached the undertaking. Chancy Louverture, the oldest of the three, married in her early twenties and devoted herself to the well-being of her family. She followed the traditional philosophies of domesticity and true womanhood. Remond, falls chronologically between Chancy Louverture and Lewis. She maintained the ideas of true womanhood but ventured further into the public sphere as an advocate for abolition and equal rights. She was the redemptive woman. She married late in life, but in pursuing a career as a medical

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<sup>6</sup> Kim D. Butler, “Abolition and the Politics of Identity in the Afro-Atlantic Diaspora: Toward a Comparative Approach,” in *Crossing Boundaries. Comparative History of Black People in Diaspora*, edited by Darlene Clark Hine and Jacqueline McLeod, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 121.



professional, first as a nurse and then as a doctor, Remond foreshadowed the new woman the later iteration of womanhood. Lewis, the youngest of the three, like her predecessors, was versed in the ideologies of true womanhood and domesticity and these notions were often incorporated in her artwork. In her personal life, however, she countered nineteenth-century tradition by focusing on her career as a professional artist and never marrying. Lewis further pushed societal perceptions by endowing her black female subjects with the virtues and characteristics of the true woman. Lewis was the embodiment of the new woman.

Centering three specific biographies illustrates that black women's negotiations for space were not monolithic, yet no matter their approach it was a challenge to and appropriation of the dominant society's social norms.<sup>7</sup> It is also important to note that the ideologies Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis adopted and adapted, true, redemptive and new womanhood, were the prevailing models of the era for all women, regardless of color or ancestry. The expectation, however, was that only white women could fully conform to them.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, while the boundaries of true womanhood and domesticity were expanded over the course of the nineteenth century they never disappeared and are thus present not just in Chancy Louverture's life but also in Remond's and Lewis' lives. At the end of the day to maintain their place in society and,

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<sup>7</sup> Joyce A. Ladner, "Racism and Tradition: Black Womanhood in Historical Perspective," in *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally*, edited by Filomina Chioma Steady, (Cambridge, MA: Schenckman Publishing Company, Inc., 1981), 271, discusses the how black women's approach to life should not be taken as monolithic. Jessica Marie Johnson, *Wicked Flesh. Black Women, Intimacy and Freedom in the Atlantic World*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 1, discusses how women's negotiations for space was an appropriation and challenge to white social norms.

<sup>8</sup> This is an idea Linda M. Perkins discusses in her essay, "The Impact of the "Cult of True Womanhood" on the Education of Black Women," in *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (1983), 17-28. It is also addressed in Ladner, "Racism and Tradition: Black Womanhood in Historical Perspective."

in the case of new women, continue to earn a living through respectable means, women could not, and did not, completely discard the strictures imposed upon them by the ideologies of true womanhood and domesticity.<sup>9</sup>

The dissertation uses Chancy Louverture's, Remond's and Lewis' individual biographies to study larger general concepts, such as womanhood, race and class, to show how these intersected and were experienced by three specific women. The focus on individuals brings interconnections and links across time and space to light. Moreover, the themes of mobility and self-fashioning become more apparent when applied to specific people.<sup>10</sup> Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis thus become case studies illustrating that African-descended individuals occupied different social spaces and social classes. Taken together broadly the analysis of their lives, lived experiences and expressions of identity illustrate how notions of womanhood, conceptions of race, and mobility between social classes changed over time among African-descended individuals. This study thus takes its place among others that counter the idea that Africa-descended

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<sup>9</sup> The story and fate of the white middle-class U.S. American sculptor Louisa Lander illustrates what happened to women who crossed too far over the line and flouted these ideologies. Lander lived in Italy in a community of female artists in the 1850s where she had more freedom than she would have had back home. In 1858, however, rumors circulated within the U.S. American community in Italy that not only was Lander involved in a sexual relationship with a man, to whom she was not married, she had also posed as a model. Lander, from an upper-class Boston family was ostracized and shunned by society and her promising career as a sculptor came to a standstill as patrons would not purchase her work. Lander's experience is discussed in several sources including: Joy S. Kasson, *Marble Queens and Captives. Women in Nineteenth-Century American Sculpture*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 11-12; Charmaine A. Nelson, *The Color of Stone. Sculpting the Black Female Subject in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 34; Melissa Dabakis, *A Sisterhood of Sculptors. American Artists in Nineteenth-Century Rome*, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014), 5; and Sirpa A. Salenius, "US-American New Women in Italy 1853-1870," in *CCLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, Volume 14, No. 1 (March 2012): 5.

<sup>10</sup> Lisa A. Lindsay and John Wood Sweet, Introduction to *Biography and the Black Atlantic*, edited by Lisa A. Lindsay and John Wood Sweet, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 1.

people were mostly downtrodden and lacking agency and that they had no initiative and no ambition.<sup>11</sup> The project also illustrates that by adhering to the tenets of the ideals of womanhood, i.e., using the social systems established by the dominant culture, Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis were able to live lives that by-and-large fulfilled the promises of freedom circulating in the Atlantic world during the long nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

The focus on women and womanhood meant that engaging with the historiography of nineteenth-century womanhood was key.<sup>13</sup> Of particular significance was Barbara Welter's seminal article, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," in which she outlined the ideal characteristics expected of the true woman. Welter further explained that these ideas were so prevalent largely because of their circulation in

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<sup>11</sup> Studies that counter the perspective that individuals, specifically women, of African descent were brought low, lacked initiative and agency include: Bert James Loewenberg and Ruth Bogin, editors, *Black Women in Nineteenth-Century American Life: Their Words Their Thoughts, Their Feelings*, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), Filomina Chioma Steady, editor, *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally*, (Cambridge: Schenckman Publishing Company, Inc., 1981), Dorothy Sterling, editor, *We Are Your Sisters Black Women in the Nineteenth Century*, Forward by Mary Helen Washington, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984, reissued 1997), Beth Maclay Doriani, "Black Womanhood in Nineteenth-Century America: Subversion and Self-Construction in Two Women's Autobiographies," in *American Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (June 1991), 199-222, accessed August 22, 2018, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2712924>, Audrey A. Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England. Abolitionist Politics in Popular Literature and Culture*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Barbara Cutter, *Domestic Devils, Battlefield Angels. The Radicalism of American Womanhood, 1830-1865*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University, 2003), and Jessica Marie Johnson, *Wicked Flesh. Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

<sup>12</sup> Johnson, *Wicked Flesh*, 164. Johnson addresses the idea of free and enslaved women maneuvering freedom by using systems in place in Chapter 5 of her monograph. Johnson provides examples of African-descended women using legal codes and church rituals, such as baptism in the Catholic Church, to negotiate freedom for themselves and for their mixed-ancestry children.

<sup>13</sup> General discussions on nineteenth womanhood include, Rachel G. Fuchs and Victoria E. Thompson, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), Linda L. Clark, *Women and Achievement in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), and Jennifer J. Popiel, *Rousseau's Daughters: Domesticity, Education and Autonomy in Modern France*, (Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2008).

magazines and in religious tracts that “it was assumed that everyone knew and understood what it meant” to be a true woman.<sup>14</sup> As important is the literature on black womanhood that detailed how African-descended women negotiated spaces and their place in society by incorporating notions of womanhood that were not intended for them.<sup>15</sup> The literature on feminism and feminine activism helped in tracing the change over time from the true woman to the new woman.<sup>16</sup> Abolition often garnered the attention of women activists, thus the literature on female abolitionist activities was also important.<sup>17</sup> Black and mixed ancestry women were often at the forefront taking action to help their less fortunate brethren.

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<sup>14</sup> Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” in *American Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 2, Part 1 (Summer 1966): 151.

<sup>15</sup> Sources centered on black womanhood include Filomina Chioma Steady’s edited volume *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally*, (Cambridge, MA: Schenckman Publishing Company, Inc., 1981), Linda M. Perkins, “The Impact of the Cult of True Womanhood on the Education of Black Women,” in *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (1983), Beth Maclay Doriani, “Black Womanhood in Nineteenth-Century America: Subversion and Self-Construction in Two Women’s Autobiographies,” in *American Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (June 1991), Dorothy Sterling’s edited volume *We Are Your Sisters Black Women in the Nineteenth Century*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984, reissued 1997), Jessica Marie Johnson, *Wicked Flesh. Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

<sup>16</sup>Works that discuss the increasing feminine presence in the public sphere include: Jane Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States, 1780-1860*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), Margaret H. McFadden, *Golden Cables of Sympathy. The Transatlantic Sources of Nineteenth-Century Feminism*, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999), Barbara Cutter, *Domestic Devils, Battlefield Angels. The Radicalism of American Womanhood, 1830-1865*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), Alison Piepmeir, *Out in Public. Configurations of Women’s Bodies in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> The literature on abolitionists women includes: Jean Fagan Yellin, *Women & Sisters. The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists A Study in Activism, 1828-1860*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992), and Teresa Zackodnik, *Press, Platform, Pulpit Black Feminist Publics in the Era of Reform*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2011).

The literature highlights how African descended women took steps to shape their identities and exert control over their subjectivity and destinies.<sup>18</sup> The latter allowed them to somewhat enjoy the same rights and opportunities afforded to their white counterparts. Maintaining an impeccable reputation and being perceived as a member of society in good standing was key to this endeavor. Exhibiting these qualities which were those of the true woman also contributed to racial uplift. Racial uplift was a means of helping African-descended individuals rise economically, educationally and socially.<sup>19</sup> To uplift the race, black and mixed-ancestry women strove to dispel the negative stereotypes attached to women like them through self-fashioning and representation and via their redemptive social actions.<sup>20</sup> For Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis that meant living their lives in the same manner as their white sisters and engaging in similar activities. In adopting the social mores of the dominant white culture, Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis should not be seen as trying to pass as white, something which would have been impossible given the color of their skin. Rather, this project approaches their efforts to integrate into white society as an “autoethnographic expression,” whereby they “represent themselves in ways that *engage with*” the norms of the dominant culture.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Beth Maclay Doriani, “Black Womanhood in Nineteenth-Century America: Subversion and Self-Construction in Two Women’s Autobiographies,” in *American Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (June 1991), 202.

<sup>19</sup> Perkins, “The Impact of the Cult of True Womanhood...” 18.

<sup>20</sup> Alisa R. Knight, “All Things Work Together for Good”: Pauline Hopkins’s Race Woman and the Gospel of Success,” in *Loopholes and Retreats: African American Writers and the Nineteenth Century*, FORECAAST (Forum for European Contributions to African American Studies), Vol. 17, edited by John Cullen Gruesser, Hanna Wallinger, (Piscataway: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 127.

<sup>21</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Second Edition, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 9. Pratt presents the term “autoethnography” or “autoethnographic expression” in the

In addressing this aspect of identity formation, the project crosses disciplines and uses art historical scholarship in the analysis of the women's individual portraits. The surviving representations have a significant role in the study as they help convey specific information about each woman. Most obviously, a portrait shows physical characteristics and through the choice of clothing and objects with which the subjects are portrayed help to specify the individual. The portraits, which these women commissioned, demonstrate how they conceived of themselves and perhaps more importantly how they wanted to be remembered. Used as material primary sources the portraits visually substantiate their subjectivity and individuality as they also mitigate some of the generalizations associated with terms like identity. This heeds Frederick Cooper's suggestion that sweeping categorizations such as identity which mean many things and change depending on the circumstances and time need to be clearly defined and contextualized.<sup>22</sup> The portraits are visible representations of how Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis engaged in autoethnographic expression. Their engagement with, and their appropriation and transformation of the dominant culture's societal norms, are herein analyzed as a type of *marronage*.<sup>23</sup>

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context of the colonized subject in relation to how they present themselves on the colonizer's terms. Speaking about autoethnographic texts, Pratt defines the concept as texts constructed "in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations." Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis engage in this autoethnographic expression as shown in their portraits and in the primary documents.

<sup>22</sup> Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question. Theory, Knowledge, History*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 62.

<sup>23</sup> There are several variations on the spelling of *marronage*, which is used herein unless another is quoted. Spelling variations include : maronage, marronnage, and maroonage.

*Marronage* is typically used in reference to enslavement. Therefore its use as one of the frameworks in this project requires a move away from this usual context. Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis were never enslaved. They were freeborn women. In its more traditional usage, there are two types of marronage, *grand marronage* which is defined as “flight away from the plantation with no intention of ever returning.”<sup>24</sup> The second type, known as *petit marronage*, constituted “absences of one or two days, or even a week.”<sup>25</sup> This type of *marronage* was undertaken not for permanent escape since the fugitive did not stray far from the home plantation.<sup>26</sup> *Marronage* was a form of resistance whereby the individual in a bid for “freedom, self-determination, and autonomy” fled the dehumanizing anti-black conditions under which they lived.<sup>27</sup> When *marronage* is thought of in this manner it becomes evident that Remond’s and Lewis’ emigrations from their homeland marked their resistance and refusal to submit to oppression and discrimination.<sup>28</sup> Chancy Louverture did not have to contend with similar circumstances while in Saint-Domingue, but negative perceptions of African and African-descended individuals were prevalent in France where she was sent into exile. In

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<sup>24</sup> Gabriel Debien, “Le Marronage aux Antilles Françaises au XVIIIe siècle,” in *Caribbean Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (October 1966): 3. “Le grand marronage...c’était la fuite hors de l’habitation avec l’intention de n’y pas rentrer.”

<sup>25</sup> Debien, “Le Marronage aux Antilles Françaises,” 7-8. “...Des absences d’un ou deux jours, ou même d’une semaine.”

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 7-8.

<sup>27</sup> Randy R. Goldson, “Liberating the Mind: Rastafari and the Theorization of Maroonage as Epistemological (Dis)engagement,” in *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (2020): 369 and 370.

<sup>28</sup> Khady Fall Diagne, *Le marronage comme essai d’esthétique littéraire négro-africaine contemporaine. Senghor et Césaire ou la langue décolonisée*, (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2018), 11. Diagne describes marronage as the idea of non-submission and flight. “l’idée d’insoumission et de fuite...”

order to participate in the elite/upper bourgeois social circles to which she belonged Chancy Louverture can also be seen as practicing *marronage* to gain acceptance and overcome the limitations imposed on African-descended individuals in France.

Extending the boundaries of *marronage* beyond enslavement is not unique to this project. Khady Fall Diagne used the *marronage* framework in her literary analysis of works by Leopold Senghor and Aimée Césaire.<sup>29</sup> In her work Diagne explored the ideas of “non-submission, subversion, and deviance.”<sup>30</sup> *Marronage*, as practiced by Senghor and Césaire, occurred nearly a century after the end of enslavement and is interpreted as “a response to denial via denial,” which leads to identity formation “outside the colonizer’s ideological borders...”<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Randy R. Goldson argues that in centering Afrocentric ways of knowing Rastafarianism is a form of *marronage* as it rejects epistemologies “that invalidate Africanness or Blackness.”<sup>32</sup> In their adoption of true, redemptive and new womanhood respectively, Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis practiced *marronage* in that they refused to submit to the negative stereotypes attached to African-descended women. Similarly to Senghor, Césaire and the Rastafari they rejected notions that marginalized them because of their Africanness and Blackness. In the process they claimed what Jessica Marie Johnson terms Black Femme Freedom and

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<sup>29</sup> See Diagne, *Le marronnage come essai d'esthétique* ...

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 12. Diagne uses *insoumission*, which translated can mean insubordination, but also conveys a refusal to submit. It is the latter reading of the term that is used here.

<sup>31</sup> Diagne, *Le marronnage come essai d'esthétique*, 12. “La pratique du marronnage symbolise uniformément cette posture de réponse à la négation par la négation, par la reconfiguration d’une identité hors des frontières idéologiques du colonisateur...”

<sup>32</sup> Goldson, “Liberating the Mind...,” 370.



selfhood. As Johnson explains, in the practice of Black Femme Freedom African-descended women “exploited every tool at their disposal” in their refusal to acquiesce to discrimination, exclusion and marginalization enabling them to “claim ownership” over their destinies and lived experiences.<sup>33</sup>

A deeper consideration of *marronage* shows that Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis practiced *sociogenic marronage*, a term coined by Neil Roberts.<sup>34</sup> Roberts discussed *marronage* in the context of the Haitian Revolution which is more traditional. His *sociogenic marronage* idea, however, is valid in studying Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis. *Sociogenic marronage* is a type of flight that does not necessarily entail actual fleeing. Rather, it involves “acts of naming...liberation, [or] reordering of the state or society.”<sup>35</sup> One aspect of *sociogenic marronage* involves engaging with the state of society. Society, as Roberts detailed, is divided into different zones and within each zone is the space the citizen/individual occupies. *Marronage* in this instance occurs when actors overturn internal inequalities within the various societal zones. The act of flight, or *marronage*, happens when these inequalities are pushed against and are overturned.<sup>36</sup>

Roberts used the example of the founding of Haiti as a black republic to more fully explain *sociogenic marronage*. As he indicated, prior to Haitian independence the

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<sup>33</sup> Johnson, *Wicked Flesh*, 173.

<sup>34</sup> See Neil Roberts, *Freedom as Marronage*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015) and his later article, “Theorizing Freedom, Radicalizing the Black Radical Tradition on *Freedom as Marronage* Between Past and Theory,” in *Theory & Event*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (January 2017).

<sup>35</sup> Roberts, *Freedom as Marronage*, 116.

<sup>36</sup> Roberts, *Freedom as Marronage*, 127-128.

ideas of citizenship were tied to whiteness. Similarly, “the idea of black civil society was an oxymoron,” but the establishment of Haiti created “the zone of the Black Republic.”<sup>37</sup> In like fashion, the ideologies of nineteenth-century womanhood were tied to white women but through their lived experiences and their adoptions of these notions, Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis created a new zone, one where who could be identified and accepted as a true, redemptive or new woman changed. Their endeavor can further be classified as *sociogenic marronage* because it entailed using established structures to break the old order. Chancy Louverture’s, Remond’s and Lewis’ embrace of the models of white society distanced them from enslavement, which marked every person of African descent regardless of status, and further showed that African-descended women were just as capable as their white counterparts “of creating stable family and community structures.”<sup>38</sup>

*Marronage* is also applicable to the women studied herein if one thinks of it as a form of mobility. Annette Joseph-Gabriel’s digital humanities project, “Mapping Marronage,” considers *marronage* in just this way, stating that it is “movement in claiming freedom in the Atlantic world.”<sup>39</sup> Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis in their practice of *sociogenic marronage* laid claims to freedom through their migratory choices as they determined the courses of their lives.<sup>40</sup> Thus, another way of studying

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<sup>37</sup> Roberts, *Freedom as Marronage*, 128.

<sup>38</sup> Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists*, 4.

<sup>39</sup> Annette Joseph-Gabriel, “About,” Mapping Marronage, accessed May 20, 2021, <http://mapping-marronage.rll.lsa.umich.edu/about>

<sup>40</sup> Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia’s Black Community, 1720-1840*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 5, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.01388>, EPUB.

Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis is by looking at them in terms of transatlantic migration. Typically, when transatlantic migration and travel are contemplated the focus tends to be on the westward trajectory towards the Americas and the Caribbean. It is a narrative dominated either by European colonial efforts or African enslavement. This project highlights that migration across the Atlantic was not solely tied to colonial efforts or enslavement nor was it unidirectional. Rather, like the ocean currents, migration was circular, bringing individuals from the Americas and the Caribbean to Europe and Africa and sometimes back again. This eastward circulatory migration pattern is one previously explored by scholars including Jon Sensbach in *Rebecca's Revival Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic*, Jane Landers in *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolution*, and Rebecca Scott and Jean Hébrard in *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation*. Chancy Louverture was deported from Saint-Domingue/Haiti and lived out her life in France. Remond and Lewis left the United States and lived in England and Italy.

Displacements, whether on a large scale as illustrated by the subjects of this project, or on a smaller scale, were generally undertaken in pursuit of greater prospects and with the idea that fewer restrictions would be encountered because of non-white ancestry or religious beliefs. In particular, travel and migration provided marginalized groups like women and African-descended individuals a degree of freedom, more opportunities and the chance to reinvent themselves.<sup>41</sup> For example, Sarah Parker

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<sup>41</sup> Beth L. Lueck, Sirpa Salenius and Nancy Lusignan Schultz, "Women Conversing on Culture, Society, and Politics," Introduction to *Transatlantic Conversations, Nineteenth-Century American Women's Encounters with Italy and the Atlantic World*, Beth L. Lueck, Sirpa Salenius and Nancy Lusignan Schultz, editors, (Lebanon: University of New Hampshire Press, 2017), xvi.

Remond and Edmonia Lewis were escaping the racially charged atmosphere in the pre- and post-Civil War United States. Both experienced discrimination because of their African ancestry and for the same reason were victims of violence. Louise Chancy Louverture's case was a bit different from the U.S. American subjects of this project. Her initial migration was not voluntary, nor was it a quest for greater opportunity and freedom. Rather, she was deported from rebelling Saint-Domingue along with her uncle Toussaint Louverture and his family to suit Napoléon Bonaparte's political ends. Forced exile as a result of political circumstances is, however, part of the migration experience. About fourteen years after her exile, Chancy Louverture and her husband made the choice to move from Agen to Bordeaux in part because their new city put them in closer proximity to immigrants and visitors from the Americas.

The project thus also touches on the migratory and diasporic existence that was and remains so prevalent in the Atlantic world. Diaspora, generally speaking, has its basis in Greek and Jewish history. In Greek it is the word for dispersal and it is typically used to talk about the scattering of Jews all over the western world.<sup>42</sup> In African-American contexts diaspora's roots are biblical and tied to Ethiopia which became "a metaphor for a black worldwide movement against injustice, racism and colonialism..."<sup>43</sup> Movement, in this instance, can be read as actual displacement, or as political acts large and small to change the status quo. In their individual way, Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis

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<sup>42</sup> Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin D.G. Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World," in *African Studies Review*, Vol. 43, No. 1, Special issue on the Diaspora (April 2000): 14, accessed December 11, 2017, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/524719>.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

engaged in both these facets of movements. They further fit the idea of diaspora in that they kept connections to their homeland – Chancy Louverture and Lewis traveled to Haiti and the United States respectively, and all three kept abreast of political and social occurrences back home.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to illustrating the idea of diaspora, the project’s Atlantic nature is also highlighted in its attention to mobility, cultural encounters, the exchange of ideas and the interconnections among people.<sup>45</sup> Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis are Atlantic women and their experiences and how they processed those experiences reflect the Atlantic nature of their lives. As a unit of analytical consideration the Atlantic is a way of tracking movement between Europe, Africa and the Americas. In this methodology people form the core as one studies the transmission of culture, politics and commodities.<sup>46</sup> Traditionally when undertaking an Atlantic-centered project the trajectory studied is from a West to East perspective. Herein, however, the Atlantic is approached from an East to West point of view. The definition of the Atlantic is further expanded by applying it to the nineteenth century. Typically, Atlantic history is periodized from 1492 when Columbus embarked on his voyage to the Americas and it concludes with the age

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<sup>44</sup> Kim D. Butler, “Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse,” in *Diaspora*, Vol 10, No. 2 (Fall 2001): 192, accessed May 29, 2021, DOI: 10.1353/dsp.2011.0014. Buter details four criteria for a group to be defined as a diaspora: Connection, real or imagined, to the homeland; awareness of other members of the group; shared identity; the group must be in existence for more than two generations. Chancy Louverture, Remond, and Lewis meet most, and arguably all these criteria.

<sup>45</sup> Bernard Baylin, Preface to *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, second edition, Edited by David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), xiv.

<sup>46</sup> Alison Games, “Atlantic History: Definitions: Challenges, and Opportunities,” AHR Forum in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 111, No. 3 (June 2006): 743, accessed May 30, 2021, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.fiu.edu/10.1086/ahr.111.3.741>.

of revolution in the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This expanded periodization is not new, David Armitage indicates that historians such as Daniel Walker Howe and Daniel Rodgers similarly push the Atlantic date boundaries.<sup>47</sup> The traditional geographic boundaries are also stretched to include Italy as part of the Atlantic conversation. In their edited volume, Beth Lueck, Sirpa Salenius and Nancy Lusignan Schultz explain that, because Italy was an important destination for U.S. Americans and a haven for intellectuals, artists, and writers trying to define U.S. American national culture, it is now included as part of transatlantic studies.<sup>48</sup>

With its focus on black and mixed-ancestry women the project also encompasses notions of the Black Atlantic, first articulated by Paul Gilroy. The Black Atlantic concept emphasizes travel and exchange and indicates that these are the basis for black identity formation. The mobility of African and African-descended people undertaken by ships leads to connection, exchange and in the end transformation.<sup>49</sup> These women's migration across the Atlantic was transformative as it offered them more opportunities. The latter is especially true for Remond and Lewis. The Black Atlantic is thus viewed as a space

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<sup>47</sup> David Armitage, "Three Concepts of Atlantic History," in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, second edition, edited by David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 14.

<sup>48</sup> Beth L. Lueck, Sirpa Salenius, and Nancy Lusignan Schultz, "Women Conversing on Culture, Society, and Politics," Introduction to *Transatlantic Conversations, Nineteenth-Century American Women's Encounters with Italy and the Atlantic World*, edited by Beth L. Lueck, Sirpa Salenius, and Nancy Lusignan Schultz, (Lebanon: University of New Hampshire Press, 2017), xv.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 16-17.

where African-descended individuals were agents of change generally united in the search for “better realities.”<sup>50</sup>

Louise Chancy Louverture’s, Sarah Parker Remond’s and Edmonia Lewis’ stories unfold in the subsequent chapters. In Chapter One the scene and social ideas that form the background against which these women lived and shaped their identities is set. The chapter begins by establishing the project as Atlantic in nature. It provides a broad overview of the influential events that occurred in the Atlantic world, and details the ideas circulating in the region. The chapter then delves more deeply into the changing notions of womanhood and race and how these affected visual culture. The chapter concludes with a look at ideas about class within the specific geographical spaces these women occupied. Chapter Two, “Atlantic True Womanhood in the Long Nineteenth Century” foregrounds Louise Chancy Louverture and looks at the tenets of true womanhood more closely and highlights how Chancy Louverture used her adoption of these ideas to negotiate a space for herself and her family in the upper echelons of French bourgeois society. Chapter Three, “Atlantic Racism and Redemptive Womanhood in the Long Nineteenth Century” focuses on Sarah Parker Remond. Her biography, which includes episodes from her childhood and her abolitionist activities in the United States, demonstrates how she embraced the precepts of redemptive womanhood. The chapter highlights her work on the abolition circuit, which took her to England, Ireland and Scotland where she advocated for the end of enslavement as well as equal rights and

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<sup>50</sup> Kendahl Radcliffe, Jennifer Scott, and Anja Werner, “Introduction: The Black Atlantic Revisited. Methodological Considerations,” Introduction to *Anywhere But Here. Black Intellectuals in the Atlantic World and Beyond*, edited by Kendahl Radcliffe, Jennifer Scott, and Anja Werner, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 6-7.

opportunities for African-descended free and freed people back in the United States. The chapter concludes with her pursuit of higher education and her subsequent career as a medical professional first in Britain and then in Italy. Remond's chapter shows her middle class status, and her focus on doing good works to help the less fortunate further confirms it. Chapter Four, "Atlantic New Womanhood in the Long Nineteenth Century," closes the project with Edmonia Lewis, the embodiment of the new woman. As with Remond, the chapter includes episodes from Lewis' childhood and early adulthood in the United States and details the many obstacles she overcame before and after she established herself in Rome. Lewis prioritized her career and became the first internationally recognized non-white sculptor from the United States. As Lewis' biography illustrates she chose not to marry or have children, opting instead, as did many white middle-class women of the mid- to late-nineteenth century, to give her full attention to her education and later to the development and fostering of her career. Lewis who in her early life was closest to the working classes, illustrates that mobility between social classes through the acquisition of an education and a profession was possible.

While these women are very different, using their biographies as individual case studies illustrates some of the ways African-descended women in the nineteenth-century Atlantic world created subjective identities. The latter is influenced by personal tastes, feelings, opinions, and legacies.<sup>51</sup> This project counters the typical narratives which do not usually have black upper-class or black middle-class women as the focus. Though the field is growing, there is a scarcity of scholarship that foregrounds women of color,

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<sup>51</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, Revised Edition, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 44.



stressing their agency, independence and cosmopolitanism. This project highlights these facets of these women's lives and further illustrates how African-descended individuals, especially women, in the Atlantic "challenged the hegemonic paradigms that threatened the potential of their freedom."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Butler, "Abolition and the Politics of Identity in the Afro-Atlantic Diaspora..." 129.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Atlantic Setting: The Contextual Background**

A project such as this one presents the challenge of incorporating, interpreting and connecting the lives of three women of varying ages who lived across different geographies – albeit Atlantic ones – over the long nineteenth century. As this dissertation demonstrates, each of these three women, collectively outsiders in a hierarchical Atlantic system that elevated rich white European and European-descended men, negotiated normative gender, racial and class systems differently, given their particular vantage points as African-descended persons living among a predominantly white population. To gain a better understanding of their individual lived experiences and to illustrate that African-descended people occupied different social spaces and social classes, it is important to situate the project's subjects in their various geographical, political and social environments. Therefore, before fully delving into the biographical analyses of these women's lives it is necessary to more broadly establish the contextual background.

This chapter provides several layers of context for the complex lives these women lived. By setting the scene within which Louise Chancy Louverture, Sarah Parker Remond and Edmonia Lewis resided, it is possible to begin understanding how their lives embody larger historical and cultural processes reflective of the long nineteenth century. The chapter begins with an explanation of the project's Atlantic nature. It continues with a broad overview of large-scale political events occurring in the Atlantic world and proceeds to discuss how these events influenced the ideas of womanhood and race within the wider Atlantic world. The chapter concludes by narrowing its focus on the specific

geographic spaces the women inhabited and discussing notions of class within those spaces.

### **Why This Is An Atlantic Project**

On the surface, the idea of Atlantic history “is simply the study of the ocean...and of the lands bordering on or connected to it.”<sup>1</sup> More deeply, Atlantic history encompasses the many tales “of a world in motion.”<sup>2</sup> The focus on the movement of people, ideas and commodities leads to one of the Atlantic historian’s goals: to describe lives and provide information about what the “world was like” beyond the borders of one nation state.<sup>3</sup> Since the attention is usually not concentrated on a single governmental entity or empire, the scope of an Atlantic project is international and multi-geographical and the historian studies a world populated by a variety of individuals, including traders and migrants. It is a space where diverse cultures, including those of Africans, Europeans and First People of the Americas come together and transform each other. It is also where the kernel of an idea can blossom, propagate and, at times, bring fundamental change. The Atlantic is

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<sup>1</sup> Philip D. Morgan and Jack P. Greene, “Introduction: The Present State of Atlantic History,” in *Atlantic History a Critical Appraisal*, edited by Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Bailyn, “On the Contours of Atlantic History,” in *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 61.

<sup>3</sup> Bernard Bailyn, “The Idea of Atlantic History,” in *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 5-6. Baylin infers that Atlantic histories are about people’s lives and what the world was like when he explains what imperial histories and histories of exploration and encounters were not. His point was to explain why Atlantic histories are different from these other approaches.

hence a site of interaction, intermixing and reinvention.<sup>4</sup> This project lends itself to the Atlantic approach since it encompasses a multinational and multicontinental scope.<sup>5</sup>

David Armitage proposed three types of Atlantic history in his essay, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History,” Trans-Atlantic, Cis-Atlantic and Circum-Atlantic. As Armitage explains, Trans-Atlantic history applies the Atlantic framework to an international history, while Cis-Atlantic approaches national or regional histories from an Atlantic perspective.<sup>6</sup> A Circum-Atlantic history studies the Atlantic as a wide “zone of exchange and interchange, circulation and transmission.”<sup>7</sup> This project fits the parameters for Circum-Atlantic history. It highlights the biographies of three African-descended women who were born in lands that bordered and were connected to the Atlantic Ocean. Louise Chancy Louverture was born in Saint-Domingue (which in 1804 became Haiti), while Sarah Parker Remond and Edmonia Lewis were born in the United States. Within these Atlantic zones the women were brought into contact with a diverse population and they took part in the robust exchange of ideas that occurred across the Atlantic. Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis were also migrants who traversed the Atlantic as did thousands of others. Some, like Chancy Louverture who was deported

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<sup>4</sup> David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, Introduction to *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, Second Edition. Edited by David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 1; Morgan and Greene, “Introduction: The Present State of Atlantic History,” 5. Armitage and Braddick detail the different groups that come together in the Atlantic world, and further indicate that contact among them leads to reinvention. Morgan and Greene quote D.W. Meinig in calling the Atlantic a site of interaction.

<sup>5</sup> J.H. Elliott, “Atlantic History: A Circumnavigation,” in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, Second Edition, Edited by David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 255.

<sup>6</sup> David Armitage, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History,” in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, Second Edition, Edited by David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 17.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

from Saint-Domingue, made this crossing by force. Others, like Remond and Lewis, undertook the crossing by choice. Each of the three settled in lands that were also connected to the Atlantic geographically, economically and politically. Chancy Louverture lived out her life in the French port city of Bordeaux where she and her husband maintained ties to their homeland Haiti while at the same time participating in Bordeaux society. For their part Remond and Lewis lived in England and Italy. In England Remond publicly advocated for the end of enslavement in the United States and for equal opportunities for people of African ancestry – enslaved, free and freed. In Italy, where she earned her medical degree, Remond was part of the expatriate U.S. American community in both Florence and Rome. Lewis spent most of her years in Rome where, like Remond, she too was part of the U.S. American expatriate community. Lewis' sculptures reflect the Atlantic influence since her subjects were biblical and historical, they were carved in the European neoclassical style and often addressed the emancipation, agency and self-determination of African-descended people.

Mobility, a hallmark of the Atlantic, is evident in the women's lives and helped each stay connected to their homeland. Chancy Louverture and Lewis made the transatlantic voyage more than once, the former to settle family finances in Haiti, the latter traveled even more frequently to promote and sell her sculptural work in the United States. Remond was equally mobile since she crisscrossed the northern United States as well as England, Ireland and Scotland all the while speaking out against the enslavement of African and African-descended individuals. This project takes on an additional Atlantic scope since it also considers Lewis' sculptures which were commodities from which she earned her livelihood. After 1866 her sculptures were carved in Rome and

shipped across the Atlantic where they were sold to her U.S. American patron base. The foregoing illustrates that these women engaged in the connectivity, mobility and circularity that happened in the Atlantic basin, further confirming the Circum-Atlantic nature of this project.<sup>8</sup>

Despite all of the notions of freedom and equality circulating in this wide region during the nineteenth century, the Atlantic world was also a space “deeply shaped by slavery and by the slave trade...” where conceptions of the inferiority of African and African-descended people prevailed.<sup>9</sup> Enslavement was in fact a foundational and characteristic element of the Atlantic world and touched each of the women’s lives in different ways. Chancy Louverture’s mother was a formerly enslaved African-born woman. Moreover, Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis, though not enslaved themselves, grew up in slave societies.<sup>10</sup> Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis resided in this broader cultural and political space governed by “mass displacement, exile, oppression and struggle,” what Paul Gilroy called the Black Atlantic.<sup>11</sup> Their lived experiences were thus not simply Atlantic. They were more specifically Black Atlantic because they provide evidence of transculturation and hybridity. The three maintained ties to their black ethnicities and to their homelands. At the same time, however, they

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<sup>8</sup> Armitage, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History,” 18.

<sup>9</sup> Laurent Dubois and Julius S. Scott, Introduction to *Origins of the Black Atlantic*, edited by Laurent Dubois and Julius S. Scott, (New York: Routledge, 2010), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 8. Berlin makes the distinction between a society with slaves and a slave society. In a society with slaves the enslaved labor was not central to the production process. In a slave society by comparison “slavery stood at the center of economic production...” (8).

<sup>11</sup> Dubois and Scott, Introduction to *Origins of the Black Atlantic*, 2.

adopted the norms of white culture which helped them navigate and live their best life possible within the physical and social spaces they inhabited. These disparate aspects of their lived experiences influence each other and form a significant part of the blended cosmopolitan identities they forged. Following W.E.B. Du Bois, Gilroy calls this hybridity and the occupying of two worlds Double Consciousness.<sup>12</sup> This dissertation demonstrates the idea of Double Consciousness as a facet of the Black Atlantic that Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis engaged in.

### **A Broad Overview of the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World**

To illustrate how Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis asserted a sense of self and defined spaces for themselves as African-descended women in predominantly white societies, this dissertation is periodized into the long nineteenth century. Herein the long nineteenth century is conceived as including the last decades of the eighteenth century when, Chancy Louverture the oldest subject was born (1782) and it concludes at the turn of the twentieth century when Lewis the last subject died (1907). The era was one of turmoil and transformation across the Atlantic world. The period saw political, commercial/economic and social changes that rippled across the ocean. In the concluding decades of the eighteenth century there were three political revolutions: the U.S. American, the French and the Haitian. In the span of a little less than thirty years (1776-1804) the Atlantic political landscape was completely reshaped; two colonial powers

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), see page 1 for Gilroy's discussion of Du Bois' idea of Double Consciousness, see page 2 for his discussion of transculturation and hybridity.

were overthrown in the Americas, one as a result of a successful insurrection of enslaved people and a monarchy came to a bloody end.

These revolutions were buoyed by the ideas of equality, freedom and rights which spread across Western Europe and in the Americas. In this regard the Haitian Revolution was perhaps the more impactful of the three. While the U.S. American Revolution challenged royal and colonial authorities, and the French Revolution challenged royal and class hierarchies, the ideas of equality they promoted excluded the enslaved and women. For its part the Haitian Revolution challenged royal, colonial and class hierarchies as well. Additionally, it also contested racial orders. The Haitian revolutionaries' message of equality and freedom was more universalizing as it applied to all men regardless of color, though here too women were excluded.<sup>13</sup>

The reverberations of the successful Haitian Revolution which resulted in the establishment of the first black republic governed by men who had been enslaved were felt all over the Atlantic world in both positive and negative ways. One positive outcome was the almost complete change in the Atlantic slave trade. Kidnapping and selling Africans from West Africa into servitude in the French Caribbean all but ended after 1804, though France did not legally ban the practice until 1818. The British Parliament formally outlawed the trafficking of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic in 1807 with the United States following suit in 1808. Enslavement, however, lasted and Cuba and Brazil continued the importation of enslaved Africans until the 1850s.<sup>14</sup> The violence of

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<sup>13</sup> Jeremy D. Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution. Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1.

<sup>14</sup> Jessica Marie Johnson, *Wicked Flesh. Black Women, Intimacy and Freedom in the Atlantic World*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 220. The French abolished slavery in 1794, but



the Haitian Revolution, however, also resulted in solidifying prejudices based on skin color in Europe and the United States.<sup>15</sup> The white emigrés from Saint-Domingue arriving in port cities across the United States and other Caribbean colonies with their stories of fire, destruction, bloodshed and death “filled the minds of many whites with visions of black rebellion...”<sup>16</sup> Enslaved individuals aggressively claiming their freedom also engendered fear of free and freed blacks because whites were sure they had been contaminated by the ideas of liberty coming from Saint-Domingue. The apprehension was that blacks – free, freed and enslaved – would resort to violence to right the wrongs committed against them.<sup>17</sup>

The fierce martial nature of these three political revolutions was but one aspect leading to fundamental change in this era. Economies across the Atlantic world were also restructured as a result of booms in industrialization and commerce. Moreover, the world of the European metropolises was further widened with the increase in colonization efforts in Africa and South Asia. The political and economic upheavals accompanied by European imperial efforts resulted in a more diverse population in the Atlantic world. The metropolises and those in authority, usually white males, had to contend with individuals of different genders, ethnicities and social classes looking for citizenship and rights. The

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then reinstated it in 1802 and it was not abolished again until 1848. The British abolished slavery in 1834. The United States abolished slavery in 1865 following the U.S. American Civil War.

<sup>15</sup> Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution*, 1.

<sup>16</sup> Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 174, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.01388>, EPUB.

<sup>17</sup> Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 174.

latter resulted in the creation of categories of difference intended to separate people and create hierarchies. These constructs included gender, race and class.

### **Social Constructs**

It is necessary to assert from the start that gender, race and class are socially constructed concepts and not fixed. It must further be stated that narratives defining normative expectations of gender, race and class hierarchies are always culturally and contextually contingent. The discourses and debates that emerged around these social paradigms in the nineteenth century changed depending on region, politics, social class, and time.<sup>18</sup> These social structures were by and large a means to denote difference.<sup>19</sup> Frederick Cooper ties the need for categories of difference, like gender, race and class, to the fact that more people, e.g. the formerly enslaved, the mixed-ancestry offspring from the colonies, peasant and working class individuals, and women, made claims to “rights and citizenship for themselves.”<sup>20</sup> These claims made it necessary for those in the metropole and those in positions of authority and power to determine who should be entitled to rights and citizenship and who should be excluded, hence the social constructs

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<sup>18</sup> Several authors address the social construction and fluidity of gender including Joan Wallach Scott in *Gender and the Politics of History*, Revised Edition, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Denise Riley in “*Am I That Name?*” *Feminism and the Category of “Women” in History*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988, second printing 1990), and Rachel G. Fuchs and Victoria E. Thompson in *Women in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). Similarly the mutability of race and its socially constructed nature is addressed by: Douglas Lorimer’s “Race, science and culture: historical continuities and discontinuities, 1850-1914, and Tim Barringer’s “Images of otherness and the visual production of difference: race and labour in illustrated texts, 1850-1865, both from *The Victorians and Race*, edited by Shearer West, (Brookfield: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1996), and Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question. Theory, Knowledge, History*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 28. For a discussion of social structures as a way to denote gender difference see Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 2.

<sup>20</sup> Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 28.

emphasizing differences, which were usually created by white male intellectuals.<sup>21</sup> These learned individuals, in their attempts to bring order to their world, classified almost everything including human beings so as to identify and define “the respectable and the civilized in contrast to the unruly and dangerous.”<sup>22</sup> The latter was also a way for them to reassert and maintain their dominance.<sup>23</sup> The classification of people led to the emergence of a hierarchy of Man. Since white European males were typically the ones doing the categorizing, it is unsurprising to find that they placed themselves at the very top of the hierarchy. All others were measured according to the standards established by this select group. Thus, in the hierarchy women and non-whites were generally perceived as inferior.<sup>24</sup> These constructs, which changed over time, were used by the men who created them as justification for the denial or granting of citizenship, opportunities and rights.

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<sup>21</sup> James F. McMillan, *France and Women 1789-1914: Gender, Society and Politics*, (New York: Routledge, 2000), xiv.

<sup>22</sup> Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 15. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 2 also mentions that categorizations like gender are a way of ordering the world.

<sup>23</sup> T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Black Venus: Sexualized Savages, Primal Fears, and Primitive Narratives in French*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 6.

<sup>24</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past, Power and the Production of History*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995). Trouillot outlines the hierarchy of man at the beginning of the nineteenth century. I read his use of the word “Man,” with capital M, as signifying the human race. To have the classification of Man and be placed at the very top of the hierarchy meant one had to be of the male sex, white and European. White European females and “ambiguous whites,” including European Jews were lower on the hierarchy. Regions with strong state structures, e.g., China, Persia and Egypt, were not as elevated within the hierarchy but were seen as advanced though more malevolent than European cultures. At the bottom of the hierarchy were Africans and Native Americans who barely reached the classification of “Man.”

## Social Constructions - Gender

The construct of gender, which denoted the “appropriate roles for women and men,” was one of the more prevalent at the time.<sup>25</sup> As expressed in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century white middle-class ideology of domesticity, men and women were perceived as completely different and, as a result, could not have the same roles or operate in the same realms. The male focused on the public aspects of society – politics, business and making money – while women focused on the home and family.<sup>26</sup> To rationalize the exclusion of women from the public sphere, the female domestic focus was said to be “‘natural’ for their sex,” and further since men and women were biologically different, by necessity they had “different societal roles.”<sup>27</sup>

For women in general, their role in the domestic realm was emphasized in times of conflict. For example, following both the U.S. American and French Revolutions a woman’s primary civic participation and citizenship was expressed through her motherhood.<sup>28</sup> As well, the Napoleonic Code, influential through much of Western Europe and, to a degree, the United States, reasserted the patriarchy. Any measure of societal recognition attained by women was dependent on their adherence to domesticity and exhibition of the characteristics of the true woman.<sup>29</sup> Louise Chancy Louverture who

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<sup>25</sup> Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 32.

<sup>26</sup> Rachel G. Fuchs and Victoria E. Thompson, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 2.

<sup>27</sup> Linda L. Clark, *Women and Achievement in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 22.

<sup>28</sup> Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950, A Political History*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 47.

<sup>29</sup> McMillan, *France and Women*, 37.

resided in France during Napoleon's reign and is chronologically closest to the three Atlantic revolutions, naturally followed the tenets of true womanhood and domesticity. As with others of her generations striving for the ideal, her focus was on hearth and home and she modeled the virtues of the true woman: "piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity."<sup>30</sup> Adherence to these ideals meant that women were seen as morally superior but at the same time they were envisaged as passive citizens with little presence in the public sphere.<sup>31</sup>

The ideology of domesticity prevailed for much of this period and it stressed the female's domestic focus and primary role as child bearer and nurturer.<sup>32</sup> While many women believed in the ideology of domesticity, its tenets are not necessarily an accurate reflection of what women's lives were really like. Though the exemplar was for the woman to remain in the domestic realm where she tended to the needs of her husband and saw to the moral education of her children, in reality for many black and white women the division between the public and domestic spheres was not clear cut. Women regularly crossed out of the private sphere and entered the public one as teachers, nurses and social advocates. These occupations were connected to her feminine qualities and she was said to "serve the general good."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," in *American Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 2 Part 1 (Summer, 1966):152.

<sup>31</sup> McMillan, *France and Women 1789-1914*, 52. See also Rachel G. Fuchs and Victoria E. Thompson, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 22.

<sup>32</sup> Fuchs and Thompson, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, 2.

<sup>33</sup> Clark, *Women and Achievement in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, 2.

In fact, a nineteenth-century white upper or middle-class woman's usefulness and her place in society was determined not by her participation in the workforce but rather by her "moral, spiritual, or redemptive function."<sup>34</sup> The foregoing resulted in the emergence of the ideology of redemptive womanhood. This philosophy was based on the nineteenth-century belief that women were more moral and thus bore a larger responsibility "for the moral and religious health" of the nation.<sup>35</sup> The woman's duty was to "sustain the nation's virtue" and "redeem its sins."<sup>36</sup> Redemptive womanhood was also tied to the early-nineteenth-century evangelical movement, which highlighted the heart and emotion making it more feminine and sentimental.<sup>37</sup> The task for the born again evangelical was to battle sin in every shape and form. Women, because of the ideology of true womanhood, were seen as closer to God and therefore morally superior to men. As a result, women were tasked with waging a moral war for the good of the country.<sup>38</sup> No vice was off limits and the enslavement of human beings was targeted as a danger to the moral well-being of the nation. The focus on redeeming the ills of society pushed women into assuming more public roles. White well-to do women, such as abolitionist Abby Kelley, took the stage to lecture against the immorality of slavery. For her efforts Kelley

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<sup>34</sup> Elaine R. Ognibene, "Moving Beyond "True Woman" Myths: Women and Work," in *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, Volume 10, No. 2 (Spring/Summer 1983): 8.

<sup>35</sup> Barbara Cutter, *Domestic Devils, Battlefield Angels. The Radicalism of American Womanhood, 1830-1865*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University, 2003), 8.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>37</sup> Jane Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States, 1780-1860*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 74.

<sup>38</sup> Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism*, 74.

was labeled a Jezebel and acolyte of Satan by a Connecticut preacher in 1840. His reasoning, she did not follow the Bible and keep silent as a woman.<sup>39</sup> Kelley, her supporters and her successors, like Sarah Parker Remond, held the position that to remain in the home and silent on the issue of enslavement and discrimination was even more of a sin.<sup>40</sup>

Though many women in upper-middle and middle class black communities worked outside the home, some like Sarah Remond's mother and sisters were successful business owners, they too followed the norms established for their white counterparts of similar class. Thus, black women also adhered to the ideology of domesticity and participated in redemptive activities. Among black newspapers, including *The Colored American*, black women were encouraged to become redemptive women and to take direct action as it was "their duty to promote morality and religion" for the future of the black family and community.<sup>41</sup> Sarah Remond exemplifies the upper-middle class redemptive woman as she publicly called for abolition in lectures presented in the United States and Britain. She also took direct action through confrontation to bring attention to discriminatory practices.

A middle-class woman, whether black or white, took on many responsibilities in her redemptive role and in support of her social causes. These obligations included fundraising, organizing, writing and, for a few, public speaking. Women's advocacy for

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<sup>39</sup> Cutter, *Domestic Devils, Battlefield Angels*, 4.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 66.

the less fortunate and their redemptive activities resulted in an increase in literacy among them. This growth in literacy which is also tied to more educational opportunities for girls, occurred in Europe and the United States. In the early nineteenth century there was wider access to education all over the Atlantic world. For boys education was tied to the nation-states' desire for informed leaders and soldiers. Girls were also included since as future mothers they would guide "the early upbringing of future soldiers and voters."<sup>42</sup> The need to better educate people is also attributable to the industrial revolution. Factory owners and managers wanted workers with at least a modicum of education so they could run efficiently. African-descended people, particularly the free and freed in the United States, also stressed the importance of an education for boys and girls equally as they saw it as key in attaining freedom and advancing socially and financially.<sup>43</sup> As literate individuals women further engaged in the public sphere through letter exchanges, writing for and reading newspapers, periodicals and pamphlets. By the mid-nineteenth century, with more education, women became cognizant of their individual potential and began to consider continuing their studies at universities. The more ambitious among them went into professions other than teaching. These were the new women.

Though the term new woman was coined in the 1890s there is literary evidence of female characters who typified the new woman beginning in the 1870s.<sup>44</sup> The new

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<sup>42</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History Global Perspectives*, Second Edition, (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 183.

<sup>43</sup> Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 203.

<sup>44</sup> Greg Buzwell, "Daughters of Decadence: The New Woman in the Victorian Fin de Siècle," *Discovering Literature: Romantics and Victorians*, (May 15, 2014), The British Library, accessed October 14, 2021, <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/daughters-of-decadence-the-new-woman-in-the-victorian-fin-de-siecle#>



woman was independent, self-sufficient and self-supporting. She redefined what it meant to be feminine and because of her increased educational and job prospects she was no longer dependent on marriage and bearing of children for her financial security. The new woman made her own way in the world.<sup>45</sup> Employment opportunities for women because of the industrial and commercial revolutions resulted in more migrations as large numbers of working-class women, often young and single, joined the urban workforce placing them outside their traditional domestic roles.<sup>46</sup> Young women of the lower classes were among some of the first hired in factories and while their pay was low they earned their own wages and moved away from their parents' home and authority.<sup>47</sup>

New women had both female and male supporters and detractors who perceived them in one of two general ways: the less derisive assessments saw the new woman as “free-spirited, independent, bicycling, intelligent, career-minded” individuals.<sup>48</sup> The more critical ones presented them as “sexually degenerated, abnormal, mannish, chain-smoking, child-hating [bores].”<sup>49</sup> Sarah Remond and Edmonia Lewis fit the classification of the new woman since both were well educated and had careers. Remond received a nursing degree in London and later her medical degree in Florence. She was a practicing doctor in Italy. Lewis attended two progressive schools in the United States, including Oberlin College, and established herself as a professional sculptor, first in Boston and

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<sup>45</sup> Buzwell, “Daughters of Decadence...”

<sup>46</sup> Offen, *European Feminisms*, 80.

<sup>47</sup> Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History Global Perspectives*, 45.

<sup>48</sup> Buzwell, “Daughters of Decadence.”

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

later in Rome. Lewis more fully exemplifies the new woman since she, unlike Remond, never married and directed all of her attention to fostering and developing her career.

The preceding demonstrates changes over the course of the nineteenth century in the notions of womanhood. Women across the Atlantic world were influenced by these ideas, including Louise Chancy Louverture, Sarah Parker Remond and Edmonia Lewis. While the tenets of true womanhood evolved and broadened over time, they never entirely disappeared and penalties for openly disregarding this philosophy were severe.<sup>50</sup> African-descended women were aware of these prescriptive notions and were judged by them even though white upper and middle-class society believed black women were incapable of adhering to these ideologies. To counter prejudice and demonstrate that black women were just as capable as their white counterparts, African-descended women adopted and adapted the principles of womanhood into their everyday lives and raised their children to do the same. Thus, black women who had to contend with the knowledge that they were perceived as lesser both because of their gender and their African ancestry, took steps, including following the tenets of womanhood, to ensure they had as many opportunities as possible. The latter despite the fact that the African-descended woman was often identified as negotiating life with a severe double handicap. As Laura Curtis Bullard expressed in an 1871 article, in general, woman's progress was hindered because she could not "enter upon any vocation,..., with the same freedom as a man..."<sup>51</sup> A black woman, as Bullard further stated, also had to contend with "prejudices

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<sup>50</sup> For an example of the repercussions suffered by a woman who contravened the ideology of domesticity and true womanhood, see Footnote 8 in the Introduction above.

<sup>51</sup> Laura Curtis Bullard, "Edmonia Lewis," in *New National Era*, Washington, DC, (May 4, 1871).

felt against color and race” and needed wells of “enthusiasm and courage to venture into the field at all.”<sup>52</sup> When an individual did not meet the established norms of society, such as those for gender, they were deemed dangerously different and seen as inferior.<sup>53</sup>

### **Social Constructions – Race**

For black women any indiscretions that violated gender norms confirmed the negative stereotypes that existed about African-descended people in general and African-descended women specifically. Most prevalent was the hyper-sexualized image of black and mixed-ancestry females.<sup>54</sup> Living during an era when the enslavement of black people was ubiquitous, Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis were cognizant that black female bodies were, more often than not, viewed and presented as chattel.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, the message that black and other non-white female bodies were “of less value than those of middle-class white women” was also common.<sup>56</sup> In fact, Remond and Lewis had first-hand knowledge of how little value was placed on their persons as they were both subjected to physical assaults before their emigrations to Europe. Any degree of African ancestry also meant an individual’s creativity and intelligence was called into question,

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<sup>52</sup> Bullard, “Edmonia Lewis.”

<sup>53</sup> Tim Barringer, “Images of Otherness and the Visual Production of Difference: Race and Labour in Illustrated Texts, 1850-1865,” in *The Victorians and Race*, edited by Shearer West, (Brookfield: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1996), 34.

<sup>54</sup> See T. Denean Sharpley-Whitting, *Black Venus: Sexualized Savages, Primal Fears and Primitive Narratives in France*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Robin Mitchell, *Vénus Noire: Black Women and Colonial Fantasies in Nineteenth-Century France*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2020). Piepmeir, *Out in Public*, 94.

<sup>55</sup> Charmaine A. Nelson, *The Color of Stone. Sculpting the Black Female Subject in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 118.

<sup>56</sup> Kirsten Pai Buick, *Child of the Fire. Mary Edmonia Lewis and the Problem of Art History’s Black and Indian Subject*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 140.

and this was exacerbated when the person also happened to be a woman.<sup>57</sup> At every turn black and mixed-ancestry women were made aware that they had little to no place in civil society, that they were second-class citizens at best, if their citizenship was even recognized, and that whites and white culture dominated.<sup>58</sup>

The discrimination and marginalization encompassed all people of African-ancestry regardless of gender and was prevalent all over the Atlantic world. Africans and African-descended people were thought of as a separate racial group that was inferior to white Europeans and those of European descent.<sup>59</sup> To emphasize the difference and to validate the enslavement of a specific group, blackness was feminized, infantilized and dehumanized. This allowed for the denial of political rights and equality on the basis that a black person was so simple they could focus on little other than adornment and pleasure.<sup>60</sup> Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century intellectuals were certain that race, based on non-white ancestry, shaped thoughts, feelings and character as inextricably as they

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<sup>57</sup> Naurice Frank Woods, Jr., "An African Queen at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition 1876: Edmonia Lewis's The Death of Cleopatra," in *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1999): 62. See also Dorothy Sterling, *We Are Your Sisters Black Women in the Nineteenth Century*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984, reissued 1997), xiii.

<sup>58</sup> Fran Markowitz, "Finding the Past, Making the Future. The African Hebrew Israelite Community's Alternative to the Black Diaspora," in *Diasporic Africa: A Reader*, edited by Michael A. Gomez (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 126, accessed April 27, 2021, EBSCO E-Book.

<sup>59</sup> Allison Blakely, "European Dimensions of the African Diaspora: The Definition of Black Racial Identity," in *Crossing Boundaries. Comparative History of Black People in Diaspora*, edited by Darlene Clark Hine and Jacqueline McLeod, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 87.

<sup>60</sup> Robin Mitchell, "A History of Black Women in Nineteenth-Century France," in *The Routledge Companion to Black Women's Cultural Histories*, edited by Janell Hobson, (New York: Routledge, 2021), 162. Mitchell discusses the feminization/gendering of blackness in the context of Gustave d'Eichthal 1839 book *Lettres sur la Race Noire et la Race Blanche*. In it, d'Eichthal who was secretary of the Société Ethnologique, stated that like a woman "the black is deprived of political and scientific intelligence..." he went on to state that blacks were further akin to women because they passionately liked jewelry, dance, and singing.

saw it shaping physical characteristics.<sup>61</sup> Ever present in the construction of race was the uprising in Saint-Domingue, which appeared to confirm the idea that the black “race” was savage and incapable of civility, thereby marking their difference.<sup>62</sup> The successful slave insurrection, which led to the creation of Haiti, as well as unrest among the emancipated in Britain’s Caribbean holdings, resulted in increased racism and racist thinking which was often couched in scientific terms. These scientific parameters classified blacks as inferior based on the biology of their skin color. These discriminatory attitudes hardened over the course of the nineteenth century as more African-descended people gained rights, and enslavement was abolished in increments across the Atlantic world.

A look at European and U.S. American visual culture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries further illustrates the perceptions African and African-descended individuals had to confront. These were the visual narratives Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis challenged with the composition of their portraits. Almost universally because of their skin color, and regardless of their status at birth, black and mixed-ancestry people were, to varying degrees, perceived as touched by and associated with enslavement and the Atlantic slave trade. These perceptions governed “notions of the cultural, mental, and spiritual inferiority of the African” and those of African ancestry.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr., “Introduction: Writing “Race” and the Difference it Makes,” in *“Race,” Writing and Difference*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 3.

<sup>62</sup> William B. Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans White Response to Blacks, 1530-1880*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 118.

<sup>63</sup> Norma Myers, *Reconstructing the Black Past. Blacks in Britain 1780-1830*, (Portland, OR: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1996), 40.

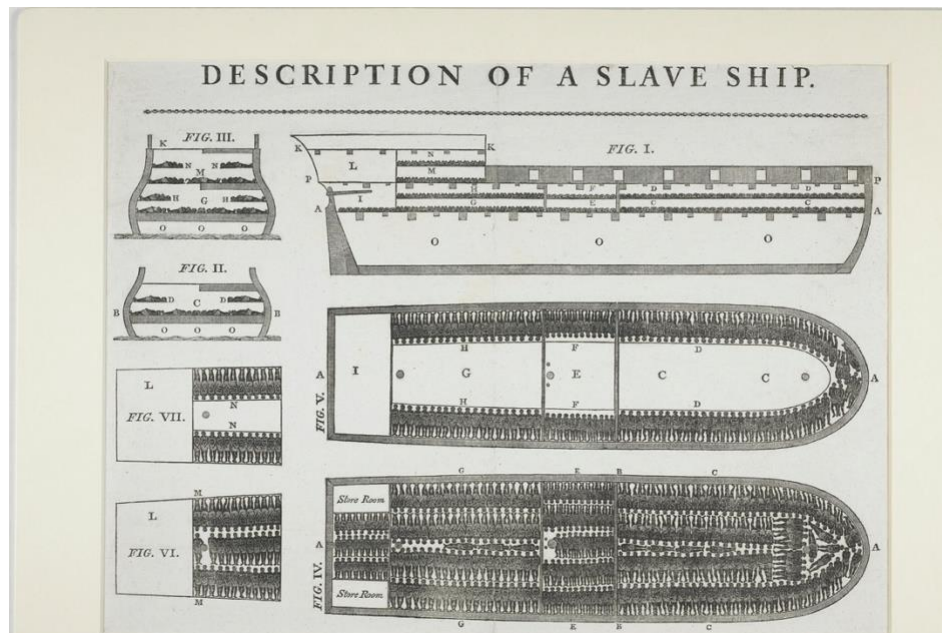
In European and U.S. American visual culture Africans and those of African ancestry were objectified and victimized. They were shown as lacking agency and, in the case of the black female, sexualized. One of the ubiquitous visual representations of Africans and African-descended people dates to 1789 and is deeply tied to the Atlantic slave trade and the Middle Passage. “Plan and Cross Section of the Slave Ship ‘Brookes’ of Liverpool,” also called *Description of a Slave Ship* [See Figure 1] shows a ship with “rows and rows of black bodies laid out like sardines in a can.”<sup>64</sup> The figures are schematic, not individualized and dehumanized stressing their status as commodities. While the image was created as a condemnation of white enslavers, it represents that Africans and those of African descent were seen as lacking agency and were at the mercy of more dominant whites. The latter is a recurring theme in European paintings of the same era, where black figures were often incorporated in the portraits of white male and female aristocrats where they represented conquest and exoticism.<sup>65</sup> These Africans and those of African-ancestry were little more than accessories intended to emphasize the white master’s or mistress’ wealth, as well as to create a contrast between their dark non-ideal

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<sup>64</sup> David Bindman, Introduction to *The Black Figure in the Human Imaginary*, Adrienne L. Childs and Susan H. Libby, (Winter Park, FL: The Trustees of Rollins College, 2017), 11.

<sup>65</sup> Childs, Adrienne L. and Susan H. Libby, “European Art the Possibilities of Blackness,” in *The Black Figure in the Human Imaginary*, 17-43, (Winter Park, FL: The Trustees of Rollins College, 2017), 17.

countenances with that of the ideal white figure.<sup>66</sup> Typically, these black figures gaze upon their masters with adoration.<sup>67</sup>



**Figure 1:** Plan and Cross-Section of the Slave Ship "Brookes" of Liverpool. 1789, Woodcut. (c) The Trustees of the British Museum, Creative Commons Non-Commercial Use License, accessed October 22, 2021, [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_2000-0521-31](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_2000-0521-31).

Even among abolitionists black figures were represented as dependent and childlike as the frontispiece illustration for Benjamin-Sigismond Frossard’s 1789 volume, *La cause des esclaves nègres et des habitants de la Guinée* (“The Cause of the enslaved blacks and the residents of Guinee”) demonstrates. The engraving, *Soyez Libres et Citoyens* (“Be Free and Citizens”) [See Figure 2] shows an enslaved man in a kneeling position begging for salvation. Clasp his hands and the clear grantor of deliverance

<sup>66</sup> Gen Doy, *Women and Visual Culture in 19<sup>th</sup> Century France, 1800-1852*, (New York: Leicester University Press, 1998), 214. See also Olivete Otele, *African Europeans an Untold History*, (New York: Basic Books, 2021), 99. For a more extensive discussion of the representation of African and African-descended people in European art see Catherine Molineux, *Faces of Perfect Ebony. Encountering Atlantic Slavery in Imperial Britain*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

<sup>67</sup> Bindman, Introduction to *The Black Figure in the Human Imaginary*, 12.

and liberty is the personification of France, depicted as a fully-clothed and crowned white woman. The tropical foliage and small slave quarters in the background indicate the setting is a Caribbean plantation. “France” towers over all of the enslaved supplicants and appears as a benevolent savior. As Marcus Wood explains, images such as this one were in keeping with white self-serving rhetoric that presented freedom “as a gift” that stressed the empowerment of the “possessors of freedom” i.e., white abolitionists, while also emphasizing the disempowerment of the enslaved.<sup>68</sup> Note the female figure immediately behind the main male figure. She holds the central male figure’s broken shackle, symbolizing his emancipation but in a contrast to France, her breasts are bared, which underscores her precarious position, while also objectifying and sexualizing her. This objectification, sexualization and diminishment of the black female recurs in the nineteenth-century. For example, in French painting and photography black female figures tended to symbolize “sexual deviancy” and “issues such as prostitution or illegitimacy.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Marcus Wood, *The Horrible Gift of Freedom. Atlantic Slavery and the Representation of Emancipation*, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2010), 2.

<sup>69</sup> Robin Mitchell, “Entering Darkness, Colonial Anxieties and the Cultural Production of Sarah Baartmann,” in *Vénus Noire: Black Women and Colonial Fantasies in Nineteenth-Century France*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2020), Accessed March 27, 2021, ProQuest Ebook Central. Note: Unfortunately, the ebook edition of this volume does not provide page numbers. For a discussion of the representation of black women in mid-nineteenth-century French photography see Gen Doy, “More than Meets the Eye...Representations of Black Women in Mid-19<sup>th</sup>-Century French Photography,” in *Women’s Studies International Forum*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (1998), 305-319.





**Figure 2:** *Soyez Libres et Citoyens*, Charles Boily after Pierre Rouvier, ca. 1789. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Book Division. The New York Public Library. Free of Copyright, accessed October 22, 2021, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-75f1-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

In the context of the United States African-descended Americans of the middle class adopted and followed the ideals and norms of white society, which they believed were one way of “challenging racial discrimination.”<sup>70</sup> For their efforts they were lampooned as the series *Life in Philadelphia* demonstrates. Edward Williams Clay drew and engraved the series between 1828 and 1830. To be fair, Clay also poked fun at Philadelphia’s white middle class society, his harshest depictions, however, were reserved for those in the black middle class. Plate Thirteen of the series [See Figure 3]

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<sup>70</sup> Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists A Study in Activism, 1828-1860*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 3.

exemplifies the way Clay represented members of Philadelphia's small black middle class. The men and women are usually depicted dressed in over the top fashions, they engage in middle-class activities, but commit faux pas, usually through their speech, as they move through society. Plate Thirteen shows a woman and man promenading. She wears a fashionable dress with huge sleeves and is crowned with a giant hat festooned with feathers. She's further adorned with a excess of gold jewelry and even a tasseled belt. The male is dressed at the height of 1820s fashion but puts on airs by commenting that the waltz is only fit for common people. The couple's African physiognomy is pronounced with the intention of making them appear as misfits of their class and society.



**Figure 3:** *Life in Philadelphia*, Plate 13. Edward Williams Clay, ca. 1829, etching, hand-colored. Philadelphia: Published by S. Hart, 65 So. 3d St. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC, accessed October 22, 2021, <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2012647327/>.

## **Social Constructions - Class**

The perceptions of African and African-descended individuals seen in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century visual culture to an extent carry over to the construct of social class. Since the notions of class emerged within the context of specific regions it is best to discuss Chancy Louverture's, Remond's and Lewis' social positions in conjunction with the distinctive geographic spaces they occupied. For all three their understanding of the social class they belonged to prior to their emigrations determined the social spaces they negotiated as Euro-Americans, and how they navigated those spaces as African descended women "in relation" to the predominantly white population amongst whom they lived.<sup>71</sup>

## **Saint-Domingue**

Louise Chancy Louverture was born and spent her childhood in Saint-Domingue, which from the mid-seventeenth through the eighteenth century, was the most lucrative French colony in the Americas. Colonial profits derived from agriculture in cash crops such as sugar, coffee, tobacco, cotton and indigo through the labor of enslaved Africans and those of African-descent. By the end of the eighteenth century Saint-Domingue had the largest population of enslaved people from Africa.<sup>72</sup> The abuse and exploitation were rampant, but amid these depredations the colony's major port cities of Cap Français in the north, Port-au-Prince in the center, and Les Cayes in the south, were cosmopolitan

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<sup>71</sup> Frantz Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness," in *Black Skin White Masks*, translated by Charles Lam Markmann, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1967), 110.

<sup>72</sup> Leslie Desmangles, *Vodou and Roman Catholicism in Haiti*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 21. Desmangles indicates that just before the start of the Haitian Revolution "700 ships carrying some 20,000 slaves" arrived in the colony yearly.

spaces with a mix of people, enjoying sophisticated entertainments. These were also cities where ideas of the Enlightenment circulated, though attempts were made to control their dissemination among the enslaved and freed populations.<sup>73</sup> Contributing to this urbane environment was a large class of *affranchis gens de couleur*, freeborn people of mixed African and European ancestry.

Many among the *affranchis* were wealthy land owners who themselves owned enslaved people.<sup>74</sup> Those whose birth were recognized and made legitimate by their white planter fathers were among the elite in Saint-Domingue society. The males of this class were educated in France and returned to the colony with a further degree of refinement.<sup>75</sup> Their female counterparts were raised in the same fashion and with the same social expectations as their European contemporaries. Marriages among this elite class solidified political and business relationships, while at the same time consolidating wealth within this group. Some *affranchis* young women of mixed ancestry who brought family connections and substantial dowries, married “young white men who came to the colony to make their fortune.”<sup>76</sup> It is into this elite social class that Louise Chancy Louverture was born.

As John Garrigus explains, prior to the 1760s in Saint-Domingue there was little difference made between whites and free individuals of mixed ancestry, especially if that

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<sup>73</sup> Popkin, *Facing Revolution*, 6. See also Johnson, *Wicked Flesh*, 8.

<sup>74</sup> Popkin, *Facing Revolution*, 6. See also Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World, the Story of the Haitian Revolution*, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 61.

<sup>75</sup> Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 63.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, 62-63.

person was educated, wealthy, church-going and a property owner.<sup>77</sup> A more pronounced differentiation between *gens de couleur* and white colonists developed after 1763 when attempts were made to marginalize and distance the mixed ancestry population from the colony's white residents. In part this is attributable to the French loss of Canada following the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) when more white French colonists poured into Saint-Domingue on a quest for financial windfall. These new colonists rarely found the riches they sought and they evolved into a minor class known as the *petits blancs*.<sup>78</sup> To establish and elevate their position in the colony's social hierarchy the *petits blancs* had to marginalize *gens de couleur* many of whom were wealthier, better educated and more socially connected. Though these social shifts occurred about twenty years before her birth, this milieu of marginalization because of African ancestry was also part of Chancy Louverture's reality. With the advent of the Haitian Revolution and her reunion with her uncle, Toussaint Louverture, in 1800, Chancy Louverture's social status increased.<sup>79</sup> By 1800 enslavement had been abolished in Saint-Domingue, and men of African-descent – free and freed – and those of mixed ancestry held high ranking

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<sup>77</sup> John D. Garrigus, "'Sons of the Same Father' Gender, Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue, 1760-1792," in *Visions and Revisions of Eighteenth-Century France*, edited by Christine Adams, Jack R. Censer, and Lisa Jane Graham, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 140. *Gens de Couleur* literally translates to people of color and typically denotes individuals of mixed African and European ancestry.

<sup>78</sup> *Petit blancs* literally translates to little whites. Laurent Dubois explains that the term *petit blanc* was used in Saint-Domingue to denote whites who did not own land. The *grand blancs*, big whites, were the wealthy land owners. Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of New World, the Story of the Haitian Revolution*, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 35.

<sup>79</sup> The details of the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) are discussed by many historians including: Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990), Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), and Jeremy D. Popkin, *A Concise History of the Haitian Revolution*, (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

positions within the military. Toussaint Louverture, himself a formerly enslaved black man, was governor general of Saint-Domingue and leader of the colony's military forces.

## **France**

When she was deported to France Chancy Louverture entered another hierarchically complex society. Just thirteen years prior to her arrival the French Revolution had begun and by the time it ended the king and several members of the noble class had been executed. Traditional social hierarchical systems were threatened and in post-Revolutionary France wealth and land ownership were but two ways of acquiring social and political capital and power, family standing was another.<sup>80</sup> This would have been familiar to Chancy Louverture since family standing, especially among the *gens de couleur*, was a feature of the society she had just left. Her path into the upper echelons of French society, first in Agen and then later in Bordeaux, was well paved because of who her illustrious uncle/father-in-law was.

In Bordeaux, where she settled with her husband Isaac Louverture in 1816, Chancy Louverture once more found herself in a cosmopolitan city with a small but “diverse black population” that cultivated networks across France, Europe and the Atlantic.<sup>81</sup> Their family connections meant that Isaac and Louise Louverture held a place of prominence within the small black community in Bordeaux and among the black and mixed-ancestry visitors who arrived from the Americas. Many of these refugees and

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<sup>80</sup> Peter McPhee, *A Social History of France 1789-1914*, second edition, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 109.

<sup>81</sup> Lorelle Semley, “Beyond the Dark Side of the Port of the Moon: Rethinking the Role of Bordeaux’s Slave Trade Past,” in *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, Vol. 53, No. 107 (May 2020): 48, accessed April 16, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1353/his.2020.0003>.

visitors were, perhaps at least in part, drawn to the city because of the Louvertures' presence.<sup>82</sup> The Louverture home in Bordeaux became a gathering place and, in keeping with her status as an elite woman, Chancy Louverture presided over a type of *salon*. The *salon*, a holdover from the *ancien regime*, in the post-revolution became a place for the exchange of ideas among the upper bourgeois class.<sup>83</sup> The *salon* was a site of discussion which allowed upper-class women like Louise Chancy Louverture to edge along the border of the public and private spheres and also along the ranks of the nobility and the bourgeoisie.<sup>84</sup> Thus, in France, a nation with a complex relationship with non-whites, a woman of mixed African and European ancestry was able to create and maintain a place of prominence for herself in society.<sup>85</sup>

### **The United States**

In the United States the enslavement of Africans had, much like in French Saint-Domingue, started in the seventeenth century. The wave of equality and liberty which spurred the U.S. American Revolution, and caused some slave owners in the northern states to question the morality of the institution of enslavement as well as its economic

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<sup>82</sup> Sally McKee, *The Exile's Song. Edmond Dédé and the Unfinished Revolutions of the Atlantic World*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 9 and 158.

<sup>83</sup> Leora Auslander, *Taste and Power, Furnishing Modern France*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 50.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 66.

<sup>85</sup> The literature on the French interaction with Africans and African-descended individuals is large and includes: William B. Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans: White Response to Blacks, 1530-1880*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003, originally 1980), Sue Peabody, "There Are No Slaves in France" *The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), Françoise Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries Colonial Family Romance and Métissage*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), Sue Peabody and Tyer Stovall, editors, *The Color of Liberty Histories of Race in France*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

viability.<sup>86</sup> Even prior to the U.S. Revolution gradual emancipation had already started and reformers hoped for the spread of abolition across the newly formed republic.<sup>87</sup> The latter did not happen as whites continued to believe in the inferiority of Africans and their descendants and, further, that enslavement had so diminished them “they were unfit for freedom.”<sup>88</sup> Moreover, by the 1810s, with an economic downturn and the working class – black and white – having a harder time finding employment, African-descended Americans faced growing resentment. Exacerbating the situation was the increase in demand for unfree labor in the southern states.<sup>89</sup> The reality for black and mixed-ancestry people in the United States was that they encountered discrimination and marginalization in almost every circumstance, perhaps the most ironic example being the debates at female anti-slavery conventions over whether or not to accept black women.<sup>90</sup>

Despite these social and economic setbacks African-descended Americans – free and freed – managed to create opportunities for themselves that at times resulted in financial success. The lack of employment meant that some turned to self-employment

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<sup>86</sup> Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 71.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 223 and 242.

<sup>90</sup> Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, “Discrimination Against Afro-American Women in the Woman’s Movement, 1830-1920,” in *The Black Woman Cross Culturally*, edited by Filomina Chioma Steady, (Cambridge: Schenckman Publishing Company, Inc, 1981), 301-303. Terborg-Penn stated that between the 1820s and 1920 in many of the reform movements in the United States some, not all, white women “actively discriminated against blacks” (301). She detailed the conflict among white female abolitionists over whether to admit blacks, one anti-slavery organization in Fall River, Massachusetts almost disbanded over the question. Even among the Quakers, black abolitionist, Sarah Douglass, wrote to Sarah Grimké, also a Quaker and abolitionist, about her sense of alienation in a white Quaker church because she and other black members were segregated from the white congregation (303).



with many African-descended people working as hairdressers, barbers, caterers, shopkeepers and traders. Self-employment meant a steady income, protected the individual from “white hostility” and led to positions of status within the black community.<sup>91</sup> Success was of course by no means guaranteed but enough African-descended Americans prospered so that a black middle-class developed.<sup>92</sup> Respectable middle-class black families lived in much the same fashion as their white counterparts of similar class and modeled the virtues of

industry, frugality, circumspection, sobriety, and religious commitment. They owned property, served as trustees and elders at their churches and as officers of black beneficial societies, schooled their children, dressed conservatively, and spoke proper English.<sup>93</sup>

Sarah Remond whose parents were successful business owners, they ran a number of financially lucrative enterprises, was part of this black middle-class. Among African-descended female abolitionists it was largely women from successful black middle-class families who took on public speaking roles.<sup>94</sup> Edmonia Lewis also joined the ranks of the black middle-class when her brother, who financially supported her and paid for her schooling, became a successful barber and gold prospector in San Francisco.

The security provided to black middle-class individuals like Sarah Remond and Edmonia Lewis proved insufficient, however, as tensions mounted in the United States

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<sup>91</sup> Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 148.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 152.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 217-218.

<sup>94</sup> Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists*, 113. Yee states that other than Sojourner Truth and Ellen Craft most of the leading black female abolitionist speakers came from a similar background. Margaretta Forten, Sarah Forten, Maria Miller Stewart, Frances Harper, Mary Ann Shadd Cary and Sarah Parker Remond were all freeborn, from economically comfortable circumstances and were educated.

with regard to the issues of enslavement and abolition. By the 1850s U.S. African-Americans had to contend with The Fugitive Slave Act, which allowed enslaved persons who had escaped to be recaptured and returned to enslavement even if they were found residing in a free state.<sup>95</sup> Freeborn black people were also “recaptured” and “returned” to enslavement since the proof required to show the individual had escaped could be flimsy and the bounties for recapture were large.<sup>96</sup> Later on in the same decade the Supreme Court’s decision in the case of *Dred Scott v. Sandford* removed Constitutional protections from black people by indicating that anyone of African descent, whether free, freed or enslaved, was not considered a citizen of the United States.<sup>97</sup> After these governmental actions, which were added to the color prejudice and discrimination they encountered daily, a large numbers of African-descended men and women from the United States fled to Europe in a bid for more freedom.<sup>98</sup> Édouard Tinchant, one of Rebecca Scott and Jean Hébrard’s subjects, said his parents left New Orleans to settle in France because they wanted to raise their six sons where laws and prejudices would not stop them “from becoming men.”<sup>99</sup> When Sarah Parker Remond left the United States in 1859 she headed

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<sup>95</sup> “Fugitive Slave Act of 1850,” American Battlefield Trust, accessed May 29, 2021, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/fugitive-slave-act>. The Fugitive Slave Act not only allowed for the arrest of those who escaped enslavement, whether they were in putative free states or not, it also provided for the arrest and fining of anyone who aided, abetted and/or impeded the recapture of an enslaved person. This was the second such act, the first being enacted in 1793.

<sup>96</sup> Solomon Northrup’s 1853 memoir, *Twelve Years a Slave*, details his experience as a freeborn man kidnapped and sold into enslavement.

<sup>97</sup> *Dred Scott v. Sanford*, 60 U.S. 393 (Supreme Court 1856), accessed March 31, 2021, <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/60/393/>.

<sup>98</sup> Sirpa A. Salenius, “negra d’America Remond and Her Journeys,” in *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature Culture*, Vol. 14, No. 5 (2012): 3, accessed August 24, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.7771/141.4374.2156>.

<sup>99</sup> Rebecca Scott and Jean Hébrard, *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 83.

to England. Edmonia Lewis who migrated in 1865 made for Italy. Similarly to the Tinchant family, both were on a quest for better opportunities free of the restrictions imposed upon them solely because of their African ancestry.

## **Britain**

Britain, like France, had a long history of interaction with Africans dating to at least the sixteenth century when five Africans arrived not as enslaved people, but as representatives of African entities.<sup>100</sup> As it was with the French, the Spaniards and the Dutch, the British were also deeply involved in the slave trade in the eighteenth century and tended to perceived blacks as tied to enslavement and therefore inferior. Blacks' lower status was confirmed since many of African ancestry residing in Britain were part of the laboring classes and poor with few opportunities to rise economically or socially.<sup>101</sup> In Britain, however, perceived inferiority was not solely tied to skin color since people of the respectable class, i.e., white middle-class, did not necessarily believe that all white men were equal.<sup>102</sup> Until about the mid-1860s white Victorians did believe that through "industry, self-help, and education" a person's social and economic lot could improve and blacks were not excluded from this possibility.<sup>103</sup> Men, black, white and

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<sup>100</sup> Folarin Shyllon, *Black People in Britain 1555-1833*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 3. Several scholars address the black presence in Britain including: Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians. English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, (New York: Homes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1978), Norma Myers, *Reconstructing the Black Past. Blacks in Britain 1780-1830*, (Portland: Frank Cass & Co, Ltd., 1996), Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness, Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), and James Walvin, *Making the Black Atlantic, Britain and the African Diaspora*, (New York: Cassell, 2000).

<sup>101</sup> Norma Myers, *Reconstructing the Black Past. Blacks in Britain 1780-1830*, (Portland: Frank Cass & Co, Ltd., 1996), 74.

<sup>102</sup> Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians*, 15.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

foreign, were by-and-large judged by English standards and if a person met those standards – in terms of education, comportment and refinement they passed the test and could move freely in English society.<sup>104</sup>

By the late 1850s, when Sarah Remond arrived in Liverpool, Britain, especially London, had a diverse population as it welcomed immigrants from all over Europe and the Americas.<sup>105</sup> From the 1830s up to the 1860s U.S. American black activists, many of whom had escaped from enslavement, were also there. For educated blacks, like Sarah Remond, her older brother Charles Lenox Remond and Frederick Douglass, Britain was a haven where they and others like them experienced no outward show of racism or discrimination. They were welcomed among the highest echelons of society. Unlike in the United States, U.S. African-Americans in Britain were not barred from enjoying any of the public entertainments and services available to wealthy whites.<sup>106</sup> What was important to the English, especially when classifying someone as a gentleman or lady, was that they were educated, articulate, refined and polished. An African or African-descended individual who exhibited these qualities was seen as an equal.<sup>107</sup> Sarah Parker Remond because of her upper-middle class upbringing and privilege fit all the markers of

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<sup>104</sup> Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians*, 16.

<sup>105</sup> Willi Coleman, “Like Hot Lead to Pour on the Americans...’: Sarah Parker Remond – From Salem, Mass., to the British Isles,” in *Women’s Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery in the Era of Emancipation*, edited by James Brewer Steward, Kathryn Kish Sklar, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 178, accessed March 27, 2019, EBSCO eBook. See also, R.J.M. Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall. Black Americans in the Atlantic Abolitionist Movement, 1830-1860*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 4.

<sup>106</sup> Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians*, 46-47.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, 45.

gentility for the British and thus experienced no discrimination and was integrated into upper and middle-class British society.

These attitudes prevailed while things remained financially prosperous in Britain. Circumstances changed in the mid 1860s when gentility and the classification of gentleman became tied to white skin while darker complexions came to associate African-descended men and women, no matter their education and refinement, “with a savage heritage and a slave past.”<sup>108</sup> Douglas Lorimer attributes the change in perspective to unrest among the black population in Britain’s Caribbean holdings and to the U.S. American Civil War, both resulted in a decline of economic prosperity, and was blamed on blacks.<sup>109</sup> African-descended individuals were then perceived and treated with hostility and Sarah Remond left Britain for Italy where she arrived at about the same time as Edmonia Lewis, circa 1866.

## **Italy**

Modern-era Italy, like its counterparts France and Britain, had interacted with Africans since at least the late fifteenth century.<sup>110</sup> Italy, however, differed from France and Britain in several key ways: first, Italians arguably reached the height of their influence during the Renaissance period, and that influence was exerted primarily in terms of art and culture. Second, Italians did not engage in the transatlantic slave trade

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<sup>108</sup> Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians*, 113.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>110</sup> Joaneath Spicer, “Introduction” to *Revealing the African Presence in Renaissance Europe*, edited by Joaneath Spicer, (Baltimore: The Walters Art Museum, 2012), 9. The contact and exchange with Africans on the Italian peninsula extends back to Antiquity. The Roman Empire included portions of Africa.

nor did they maintain colonies in the Americas. Finally, from about the fifteenth century until the mid-nineteenth, Italy was not unified. Rather, it was comprised of myriad independent cities. Unification occurred between 1861 and 1871 after generations of foreign invasions and occupations and decades of uprisings and wars against controlling forces.<sup>111</sup>

Perhaps because of its years of oppression Italy was a more welcoming place for unconventional women. Since the late eighteenth century female artists from Europe and the Americas were part of Rome's cultural milieu where they found inspiration and creative encouragement.<sup>112</sup> For visual artists, especially sculptors like Edmonia Lewis, Rome was an unparalleled source for artwork from nearly every period and region of human artistic creation. For the sculptor, who like Lewis worked in the Neoclassical style, of most significance were the abundant examples of works from Classical antiquity.<sup>113</sup> In Rome Lewis lived among a community of independent female artists all of whom came from different social class backgrounds – elite, middle-class and working class.<sup>114</sup> Lewis, an African-descended woman who had risen from a working-class background to the middle class, was integrated into the group indicating that within the expatriate Anglo-American community in Rome little distinction was made in terms of

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<sup>111</sup> Spencer M. Di Scala, *Italy From Revolution to Republic, 1700 to the Present*, third edition, (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), xxi. Luca Codignola, "The Civil War: The View from Italy," in *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 3, No. 4, (December 1975): 457, accessed November 18, 2020, <https://jstor.com/stable/2701501>.

<sup>112</sup> Melissa Dabakis, *A Sisterhood of Sculptors American Artists in Nineteenth-Century Rome*, (University Park: the Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014), 1.

<sup>113</sup> Nelson, *The Color of Stone*, 3.

<sup>114</sup> Dabakis, *A Sisterhood of Sculptors*, 3.

class. Lewis' African ancestry also seemed to have had little significance, other than curiosity, to her contemporaries whose dress and independence she modeled, or to the patrons and Romans who "respected and admired" sculptors.<sup>115</sup> The nineteenth-century U.S. American and British artists living in Rome were largely simply thought of as "*inglesi or anglosassoni*" though there was an awareness of "'Race' in its American context."<sup>116</sup> For the most part Italian sympathies rested with the Union and on the side of abolitionists, though there is some indication that the Confederacy had supporters among the Italian ruling class.<sup>117</sup> Thus, racial ideas and marginalization because of African descent was not as prevalent in Italy as it was elsewhere in Europe and the Americas.

The background context set by this chapter shows that Louise Chancy Louverture, Sarah Parker Remond and Edmonia Lewis lived in a complex and hierarchical world during a time of great change. The constructed social systems present in the nineteenth-century Atlantic world, including gender, race and class, were themselves complicated and continuously evolving. The biographical analyses that follow illustrate in more detail the layered negotiations these women engaged in with these social constructs. They highlight the intersection of their experiences as women, as African-descended people, and as members of the elite and middle classes. The blended cosmopolitan identities they

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<sup>115</sup> Dabakis, *A Sisterhood of Sculptors*, see page 167 for a discussion of Lewis' emulation of her white contemporaries' dress and independence and page 2 for a discussion of the standing of sculptors in Rome.

<sup>116</sup> Kirsten Pai Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 19.

<sup>117</sup> Codignola, "The Civil War: The View from Italy," 457. Codignola's essay is a short historiography of works focused on the diplomatic relations between the United States and Italy during the U.S. American Civil War which coincided with the Italian *Risorgimento*. In the essay Codignola discusses the correspondence of the U.S. American Minister to the Kingdom of Italy, George Perkins Marsh, as published by Howard R. Marraro in his work *L'unificazione italiana vista dai diplomatici statunitensi* published in 1972. Marsh's correspondence reveals where Italian sympathies for the Union and Confederacy rested.

fashioned resulted from their awareness that their lived experiences incorporated simultaneous and varied understandings and perceptions of gender, race and class.



## Chapter 2

### Atlantic True Womanhood in the Long Nineteenth Century

On July 21, 1871 Louise Chancy Louverture died in Bordeaux, France. She was nearly ninety, had lived in the city for fifty-five years and in France for nearly seventy years. The following day her friends placed the announcement of her passing in *La Guienne*, a prominent Bordeaux newspaper:

The friends and acquaintances of Madame Widow Isaac Louverture, niece and daughter-in-law of General Toussaint Louverture, former governor of Saint-Domingue, are summoned to the services for Mme Widow Louverture, which will take place on the 24<sup>th</sup>.<sup>1</sup>

At six p.m. mourners gathered at the Widow Louverture's home and accompanied her funeral cortege to the cemetery where she was buried in a common grave.<sup>2</sup> The funeral notice, Sally McKee notes, was of a type reserved for "notable, wealthy, or well-respected people."<sup>3</sup> While a degree of the respect and regard accorded to the Widow Louverture is attributable to Toussaint Louverture, her illustrious uncle and father-in-law, some of it resulted from the ways in which she lived her life and the spaces she created and inhabited in French society, first in Agen and later in Bordeaux. As a free-born

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Sally McKee, *The Exile's Song. Edmond Dédé and the Unfinished Revolutions of the Atlantic World*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 160.

<sup>2</sup> McKee explains that burial in a pauper's grave was not uncommon in nineteenth-century France. Families often exercised this option to give themselves time to gather the money necessary for a burial in a family plot or other non-communal grave. Isaac Louverture, who died in 1854, was buried in a communal grave until 1866 when he was moved to the Gragnon-Lacoste family plot. Louise Chancy Louverture was moved to the same plot in 1878, seven years after her death. McKee, whose subject is Edmond Dédé, found that he too was initially buried in a communal grave. An administrator at Paris' Bagneux cemetery, where Dédé's body was eventually placed, provided McKee with the following explanation: "Families had the bodies of their deceased relatives placed in mass graves temporarily until they could raise the money for a headstone or until one could be prepared. Sometimes it took months and even years." The burial situations of both Isaac and Louise Louverture are likely the result of just such a circumstance. McKee, *Exile's Song*, 210 and 211.

<sup>3</sup> McKee, *Exile's Song*, 160.

woman of color from the former French colony of Saint-Domingue Louise Chancy Louverture, who was born in 1782, in many ways adhered to the ideology of domesticity and the cult of true womanhood which were increasingly popular over the course of the nineteenth century. Women of that era were bombarded with prescriptive narratives, in texts, magazines and sermons detailing the qualities of ideal womanhood and the importance of their domestic responsibilities. A true woman was expected to abide by “four cardinal virtues – piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity,” which when united created the ideal “mother, daughter, sister, wife – woman.”<sup>4</sup> The expectations and standards of ideal domesticity and true womanhood were typically high and few women could fully keep to the principles outlined by these philosophies in their day-to-day lives.<sup>5</sup> Louise Chancy Louverture exhibited all of these virtues, even as she pushed their boundaries.

It is important to note that the domesticity and true womanhood discourses were not necessarily intended for black women or those, like Chancy Louverture who were of mixed ancestry. Black and mixed ancestry women did try to strive for ideal domesticity and true womanhood, despite the fact that they were by and large barely classified as human and “were not perceived as women in the same sense as women in the larger (i.e., white) society.”<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the stereotypical perception of non-white women was that they were hypersexual and thus incapable of meeting the virtue of purity. As a woman of

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<sup>4</sup> Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” in *American Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 2 Part 1 (Summer, 1966):152.

<sup>5</sup> Linda M. Perkins, “The Impact of the “Cult of True Womanhood” on the Education of Black Women,” in *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (1983): 18.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

mixed ancestry coming from France's former Caribbean colony, Louise Chancy Louverture had to contend with these preconceived ideas. Some particularly harsh stereotypes were attached to females. In Saint-Domingue women of mixed ancestry were often portrayed as skilled in the arts of sensual pleasures giving them the ability to control men, especially white men.<sup>7</sup> Since the Medieval and Renaissance eras, Africans and their descendants have been stereotyped as uncontrolled and hypersexual.<sup>8</sup> The enslaved female, at the mercy of white owners, was often violated or coerced into sexual relationships. She was rarely understood as the victim she was in actuality, but rather as the seductress with an uncontrollable sexual appetite.<sup>9</sup> By the nineteenth century the sexualized narrative was firmly projected and attached to black women and those of mixed ancestry.<sup>10</sup> These were thus the perceptions Louise Chancy Louverture and other women of color like herself were pushing against. Chancy Louverture's approach in combating these stereotypes was to model her life so that it embraced the ideology of

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<sup>7</sup> John D. Garrigus, "Race, Gender and Virtue in Haiti's Failed Foundational Fiction *La Mulâtre comme il y a Peau de Blanchés* (1803)," in *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*, edited by Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 78.

<sup>8</sup> Kate Lowe, "The Stereotyping of Black Africans in Renaissance Europe," in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, edited by R.F. Earle and K.J.P. Lowe, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 31.

<sup>9</sup> Antoine Métral, *Histoire de l'Expédition Militaire des Français à Saint-Domingue, sous Napoléon Bonaparte, Suivi des Mémoires et Notes d'Isaac Louverture, sur la Même expédition, et sur la vie de son père*, (Paris: Edme et Alexandre Picard, Libraires, 1841), accessed November 12, 2019, <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00001041/00001>. Métral provides just one example of how enslaved African women from Saint-Domingue were perceived. He says they used passion and sensuousness to ease their difficult lives, see Book 1, 16. Later he indicates that Saint-Domingue women associated with newly arrived French soldiers, the men embracing "the sensual delights, they found in the women who enchanted their senses with their exotic appearance, their flirtatiousness, and gazes filled with languorous lasciviousness," see Book 3, 122. ("L'armée se plongea d'autant plus avidement dans les délices de la volupté, qu'elle trouva des femmes qui enchantaient les sens par un visage et des formes d'une beauté étrangère, par une coquetterie ingénue, et par des regards chargés d'une lascive langueur").

<sup>10</sup> T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Black Venus: Sexualized Savages, Primal Fears, and Primitive Narratives in French*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 1

domesticity and so that she exhibited the characteristics of the true woman. She was successful since her friends and neighbors in Bordeaux perceived that she had followed and met many of the values set for true womanhood. She was, in fact, dubbed “l’Ange du Malheur,” the Angel of Misfortune, because of the tender care she showed for her family in the face of adversity during their exile.<sup>11</sup>

The imagery of the woman as an angel within the home is in keeping with feminized domestic ideals prevalent in the nineteenth century. Women, especially wives, in their guise as domestic angels were meant to be “selfless minister[s] whose mere presence had an uplifting effect on the moral needs of others.”<sup>12</sup> Chancy Louverture’s husband, Isaac Louverture in anticipation of her circa 1822 trip to Haiti as his representative extolled his wife’s angelic virtues in a letter to Haitian president Jean-Pierre Boyer. Among her feminine and angelic characteristics were her devotion to her uncle and father-in-law, her love for her husband and family, her courage in nursing her young brother-in-law, Saint Jean, and being the one “to receive his last breath.”<sup>13</sup> She

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<sup>11</sup> Alain Turnier, “Séquestre des Biens de Toussaint Louverture,” in *Quand La Nation Demande Des Comptes*, volume 3, (Port-au-Prince: Publisher not indicated, 2017. Original Publication: Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie Le Natal, 1989), 32.

<sup>12</sup> John Tosh, *A Man’s Place. Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 55. The phrase and concept of the Angel in the House, also called the Angel of the Hearth, comes from the nineteenth-century poet Coventry Patmore in his poem “The Angel of the House.” Patmore’s poem was widely circulated and was held up as an example of ideal womanhood. For more on “The Angel of the House” see Grace Bullaro, “Salvatore Morelli, John Stuart Mill and the Victorian ‘Angel of the Hearth’ Feminine Role Paradigm,” *Forum Italicum*, Volume 39, No. 1, (March 2005), 157-166, accessed July 31, 2021, doi:10.1177/001458580503900109

<sup>13</sup> Isaac Louverture letter to Jean-Pierre Boyer, reproduced in Turnier, “Séquestre des Biens de Toussaint Louverture,” in *Quand La Nation Demande Des Comptes*, 29-30. « ...de son dévouement à son oncle et beau-père, de son amour pour son mari, sa famille, sa patrie et le genre humain...et qui pendant la maladie que ma mère et moi nous fîmes au commencement de notre arrivée à Agen, eut le courage de soigner toute seule mon jeune frère et de recevoir son dernier soupir. » Madiou and McKee both mention and quote the same letter. Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d’Haïti*, Tome VI de 1819 à 1826, (Port-au-Prince : Editions Henri Deschamps, 1988), 227; McKee, *Exile’s Song*, 157

also nursed her mother-in-law, Suzanne Simon Baptiste Louverture, after the latter underwent some sort of breast surgery.<sup>14</sup> Chancy Louverture's designation as l'Ange du Malheur, appears further merited since the family's early years in exile were difficult ones filled with sadness and poverty. Not only did Toussaint and Saint-Jean Louverture die within a year of their arrival in France, Placide Louverture, her cousin and brother-in-law, was held in prison for two years. Moreover, the family had to rely on a meager government subsidy for their very survival. The French government provided the five to six-member Louverture household with an annuity of between six hundred and one thousand ninety-four francs a month – roughly between one hundred and one hundred and eighty-two francs per person – with which they were supposed to clothe, house, and feed themselves. For five months in 1807 the government payments stopped completely leaving the family destitute.<sup>15</sup>

Reconstructing Chancy Louverture's life with the objective of placing it within the discursive nineteenth-century gender narratives is not a simple task. For one, no biography dedicated exclusively to her exists. As is somewhat typical of the era women in general and women of color specifically were often no more than an afterthought when

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<sup>14</sup> Isaac Louverture letter to Général Prophète, reproduced in Turnier, "Séquestre des Biens de Toussaint Louverture," in *Quand La Nation Demande Des Comptes*, 30-31. « ...c'est elle qui eut le courage d'exhorter ma mère à supporter les douleurs d'une opération qui lui a été faite au sein et de panser ses plaies. »

<sup>15</sup> The story of the Louvertures' difficult and impoverished life in Agen is told by several who wrote about the family including: Thomas Prosper Gragnon-Lacoste, "La Famille Toussaint-Louverture A Agen (1803-1816)," *Revue de l'Agenais et des Anciennes Provinces du Sud-Ouest*, Tome X, 1883. Bulletin de la Société des Sciences, Lettres & Arts d'Agen, 101-102, accessed February 17, 2019, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k83109q/f97.images>; Général Alfred Nemours, *Histoire de la Famille et de la Descendance de Toussaint-Louverture. Avec des Documents Inédits et les Portraits des Descendants de Toussaint-Louverture Jusqu'à Nos Jours*. (Port-au-Prince: Editions Presses Nationales d'Haïti, Collection Mémoire Vivants, Juin 2008, Originally 1941), 63, 66 and 197 ; Turnier, "Séquestre des Biens...", " 27.

the stories of powerful men were written. This is the case with Louise Chancy Louverture. Her story comes “mostly but not exclusively from historical narratives drafted in retrospect by some of the participants.”<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that the participants writing these historical narratives were men whose approach was decidedly filiopietistic. In other words, they celebrated great men, their great deeds, generally in the context of war. In Chancy Louverture’s case, her story is overshadowed by her uncle and father-in-law, Toussaint Louverture, his military endeavors during the Haitian Revolution and his political policies in the quest for freedom and equality. That Chancy Louverture is mentioned at all speaks to her significance in Louverture family history.

Further complicating matters is the disposition of the Louverture family papers. Thomas Prosper Gragnon-Lacoste, Isaac and Louise Louverture’s close friend in Bordeaux and the executor of Chancy Louverture’s last will and testament, claimed that he inherited all of their papers and subsequently donated them to “the town library where the Louvertures had passed their days in captivity.”<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, Gragnon-Lacoste did not specify if he referred to a library in Agen or to one in Bordeaux. If the Bordeaux library had these documents they cannot find them; the departmental archives of the Lot-et-Garonne have some municipal files on the family.<sup>18</sup> Writing in the late twentieth

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<sup>16</sup> McKee, *Exile’s Song*, 149.

<sup>17</sup> Gragnon-Lacoste indicates that he donated the Louverture papers he had inherited to “la bibliothèque de la ville, où s’écoulèrent les jours de captivité des Louverture.” Thomas Prosper Gragnon-Lacoste, “La Famille Toussaint-Louverture A Agen (1803-1816),” 103.

<sup>18</sup> Jacques de Cauna, *Toussaint Louverture et l’indépendance d’Haïti*, (Paris: Éditions Karthala et Société française, d’histoire d’Outre-mer, 2004), 205. De Cauna states that Gragnon-Lacoste caused quite a bit of confusion first by stating that Toussaint Louverture’s ashes were interred in his family plot, they are not. Similarly, Gragnon-Lacoste said he donated forty-four large volumes of the Louverture family papers to the Bordeaux library where they cannot find them. Unfortunately, no trace of such a donation or acquisition

century the Haitian historian Alain Turnier confirms Chancy Louverture gave the papers to Gragnon-Lacoste. Turnier further asserts that these were acquired by Haitian President Sténio Vincent (ruled 1930-1941) and were given to the Musée du Panthéon National Haïtien (MUPANAH) where Turnier examined them.<sup>19</sup> It appears the papers do still exist at MUPANAH and in the Haitian National Archive, where one is led when doing an internet search for MUPANAH. Their condition is unknown however.<sup>20</sup> The Bordeaux archives do hold some of Chancy Louverture's papers but their website indicates the file has lacunae.

Until more concrete answers can be discovered about the disposition and condition of the Louverture family papers and how much and what is preserved in the archives in Haiti and in Bordeaux, the secondary sources must be relied upon to provide the information about Louise Chancy Louverture and her life in France. Using sources centering on Haitian history and Toussaint Louverture, the accounts written about the Louverture family's life in France, the literature focused on nineteenth-century womanhood, and finally turning to the material evidence in the form of her surviving

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can be found. The departmental archives of the Lot-et-Garonne, however, do have a municipal file on the family a private gift by Gragnon-Lacoste. («...Avoir fait don à la bibliothèque de Bordeaux' où ils sont cependant introuvables aujourd'hui et n'auraient laissé aucune trace dans les inventaires de dons et d'acquisitions, alors que les archives départementales du Lot-et-Garonne conservent le dossier de préfecture relatif à la famille à la suite d'un don privé du même Gragnon-Lacoste »).

<sup>19</sup> Alain Turnier, "Séquestre des Biens de Toussaint Louverture," 26.

<sup>20</sup> I am in contact with the Haitian National Archives to further investigate the availability of these documents. This is a promising avenue of inquiry since I found one digitized letter written by Chancy Louverture in 1803 that the Haitian National Archives uploaded to the Digital Library of the Caribbean website. I am also in contact with someone working at MUPANAH who says he has seen papers belonging to the Louverture family. Unfortunately, political unrest and protests, as well as the Covid-19 pandemic prevent travel to Haiti. There is at least one digitization project focused on MUPANAH's archive planned. Work on this project and in the archive and museum has also slowed because of the aforementioned political unrest, a recent (May 2021) spike in Covid-19 cases in Haiti, and in July 2021 the assassination of Haitian president Jovenel Moïse.

portrait, it is possible to gain a better understanding of her life as a *Saint-Domingoise* living first in Agen and then in Bordeaux for nearly seven decades.<sup>21</sup>

The secondary sources concur on several facts about Louise Chancy Louverture's life. She was the youngest of twelve children, her two oldest siblings having a different father. Her father, Bernard Chancy, was a white colonist born in the southern province of Saint-Domingue where he died mere months before her birth. His mother, Marie-Anne Rousseau, was also born in Saint-Domingue to a French father and an English mother.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The term, "*Saint-Domingoise*," adopted here to refer to Louise Chancy Louverture's Caribbean identity, was used by Léon-François Hoffmann, Frauke Gewecke and Ulrich Fleishmann in the Introduction to the edited volume, *Haïti 1804 – Lumières et ténèbres. Impact et résonances d'une révolution*, (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2008), 11. Secondary sources on Haitian histories, the Revolution and the French expedition to Saint-Domingue include: Claude Bonaparte Auguste and Marcel Bonaparte Auguste, *Les Déportés de Saint-Domingue. Contribution à l'Histoire de l'Expédition française de Saint-Domingue (1802-1803)*, (Sherbrooke, Québec : Édition Naaman, 1979), Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, Tomes V et VI, (Port-au-Prince : Éditions : Henri Deschamps, 1988), Antoine Métral, *Histoire de l'Expédition Militaire des français à Saint-Domingue, sous Napoléon Bonaparte*, Alain Turnier, « Séquestre des Biens de Toussaint Louverture, » in *Quand La Nation Demande des Comptes*, volume 3, (Port-au-Prince : Publisher not indicated, 2017. Original Publication, Port-au-Prince : Imprimerie Le Natal, 1989). Biographies on Toussaint Louverture include : Jacques de Cauna, *Toussaint Louverture et l'Indépendance d'Haïti* (Paris : Éditions Karthala et Société française d'histoire d'Outre-mer, 2004), Thomas Prosper Gragnon-Lacoste, *Toussaint Louverture Général en Chef de l'Armée de Saint-Domingue surnommé le Premier des Noirs*. Ouvrage Écrit d'Après des Document Inédits et les Papiers Historique et Secrets de la Famille Louverture, Orné du Portrait Authentique du Célèbre Général et du Fac-simile de sa Signature, *Surnommé Le Premier Des Noirs*. Ouvrage Écrit d'Après Des Documents Inédits et les Papiers Historique et Secrets de la Famille Louverture Orné du Portrait Authentique du Célèbre General et du Fac-simile de sa Signature. Paris : A Durand Et Pedone-Lauriel, 1877, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://books.google.com/books?id=Ug8FAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Toussaint+Louverture+by+Gragnon-Lacoste&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiarpn339rkAhUGOq0KHXXQCLwQ6AEwAXoECAQQAg#v=onepage&q=Toussaint%20Louverture%20by%20Gragnon-Lacoste&f=false>. For information on the Louverture family's life in exile the oft cited source is Alfred Nemours, *Histoire de la famille et de la descendance de Toussaint-Louverture*, (Port-au-Prince : Éditions Presses nationales d'Haïti, Collection Mémoire Vivante, Juin 2008, originally 1941), Gragnon-Lacoste also wrote an essay on the family's years in Agen, « La Famille Toussaint-Louverture A Agen (1803-1816), » in *Revue de l'Agenais et des Anciennes Provinces du Sud-Ouest*, Tome X, 1883. Bulletin de la Société des Sciences, Lettres & Arts d'Agen. Information specifically about Louise Chancy Louverture's late life, following her widowhood, is found in Sally McKee's *The Exile's Song. Edmon Dédé and the Unfinished Revolutions of the Atlantic World*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017). McKee gives an extensive discussion of how Isaac and Louise Louverture's home became a gathering point for black and mixed-ancestry individuals arriving from the Caribbean and U.S. Something confirmed in Volume 6 of Thomas Madiou's *Histoire d'Haïti* and Nemours' account of the Louvertures' life in Bordeaux.



Bernard Chancy's biological father is not known, but when Marie-Anne Rousseau married Antoine-Armand Langlois, écuyer, seigneur de Chancy around 1736, her son, Bernard, was given a land and monetary concession by his stepfather as well as the last name Chancy.<sup>23</sup> The African-born, formerly enslaved Geneviève Affiba was Louise Chancy's mother. Tradition indicates that Geneviève Affiba's father, Hyppolite Gaou-Guinou, was the son of the king of Arada or Allada, which is in modern-day Benin.<sup>24</sup> Gaou-Guinou entered an alliance with a woman named Affiba, the daughter of a neighboring king, and together they had two children. According to Alfred Nemours, Gaou-Guinou, Affiba and their two children were captured in Africa and transported to Saint-Domingue where they were enslaved and separated. Affiba was baptized and renamed Catherine and she and her children, Geneviève and Augustin, were purchased by a certain Monneront Lafontaine, a surgeon, who eventually took them to the southern province of Les Cayes. Lafontaine allowed them to keep the name Affiba so any relations could find them in the future. Gaou-Guinou, for his part, remained in the northern province of the colony on the Comte de Noé's plantation. Gaou-Guinou subsequently had

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<sup>22</sup> Jacques Petit, "Descendance de Bernard Chancy," in *Généalogie et Histoire de la Caraïbe*, (2002): 2, accessed March 15, 2018, <https://www.ghcaraibe.org/articles/2012-art26.pdf>. Marie Anne Rousseau's father was Pierre Rousseau from Brittany, her mother, Elizabeth Spincer was English. By the time Marie Anne Rousseau married Antoine Armand Langlois de Chancy she was an orphan and mother to a "natural child," a euphemism for children born outside the bonds of marriage, this "natural child" was Bernard Chancy.

<sup>23</sup> de Cauna, *Toussaint Louverture et l'indépendance d'Haïti*, 260. See also Turnier, "Séquestre des Biens de Toussaint Louverture," 32. Petit, "Descendance de Bernard Chancy," 2, 3. Petit explains that the tradition in France was to give children born outside of marriage the name of the land, thus explaining how Bernard ended up with the last name Chancy (see Petit, "Descendance de Bernard Chancy," note 19, page 7).

<sup>24</sup> Theresa A. Singleton, "The Slave Trade Remembered on the Former Gold and Slave Coasts," in *From Slavery to Emancipation in the Atlantic World*, Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood, editors, (Portland: Frank Cass, 1999), 159.

several children with an enslaved woman, Pauline, including the illustrious Toussaint Louverture.<sup>25</sup>

Geneviève Affiba and Toussaint Louverture were thus half-siblings, who found each other during the Haitian Revolution. Turnier says that sometime at the beginning of August 1800, following the civil war in the south of Saint Domingue, Toussaint Louverture, who was in the region, inquired as to the whereabouts of his sister. Thanks to the surviving name Affiba she was found and brought to him. Toussaint showered his sister and her children with affection and when he returned north brought the three youngest with him, Bernard (fils), Eléonore, and Louise.<sup>26</sup> Gragnon-Lacoste's 1877 Toussaint Louverture biography provides a similar story of the reunion. In Gragnon-Lacoste's version, it was the younger Bernard Chancy, a lieutenant in the army, who asked for an introduction and informed the general of the family connection. As in Turnier's account, the three youngest accompanied their newly found uncle on his return voyage to the northern provinces.<sup>27</sup> Thus, both Turnier and Gragnon-Lacoste provide an

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<sup>25</sup> The sources agree about Geneviève Affiba's parentage, connection to Toussaint Louverture, and how she ended up in Saint-Domingue's southern provinces. See Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, Tome V, 173-174; Nemours, *Histoire de La Famille et de la Descendance de Toussaint-Louverture*, 18 and 143; Turnier, "Séquestre des Biens de Toussaint Louverture," 32, and de Cauna, *Toussaint Louverture et l'indépendance d'Haïti*, 260.

<sup>26</sup> Turnier, "Séquestre des Biens," 32. "Toussaint les combla tous d'affections et ramena avec lui dans le Nord les trois plus jeunes, Bernard devenu son aide de camp, Eléonore et Louise qui, déportées avec la famille Louverture, épousa son cousin Isaac à Agen en 1803."

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Prosper Gragnon-Lacoste, *Toussaint Louverture Général en Chef de l'Armée de Saint-Domingue*, 237. It must be noted that there is at least one discrepancy in Gragnon-Lacoste's version of T. Louverture's reunion with his sister's family in Les Cayes, including identifying Toussaint Louverture's sister as Catherine, and Geneviève as his niece. Madiou, Nemours, Auguste and Auguste, Turnier, and de Cauna concur that Catherine was Gaou-Guinou's first companion and no relation to Toussaint Louverture, his half-sister was Geneviève. The nineteenth-century Haitian historian, Beaubrun Ardouin tells a similar story of the reunion see, *Études sur l'Histoire d'Haïti*, Tome 5, (Paris: Desobry et E. Magdeleine, Lib.-Éditeurs, 1854), 198-199, Footnote 1, accessed October 19, 2019, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.hnkfi7>.

explanation how Louise Chancy ended up being deported to France with her uncle and his family.

Louise Chancy and the Louverture family were among many prominent Saint-Domingois deported by French forces in 1802. These deportations executed by Général Charles Victoire Emmanuel Leclerc on Napoléon Bonaparte's behalf, were not an innovation. History is filled with examples of dominant powers displacing those who resist their expansionist efforts. The resulting exile thrusts the deportee into an unfamiliar area and is intended to make them more malleable and submissive.<sup>28</sup> In June 1802, Leclerc used subterfuge and managed to arrest Toussaint Louverture. His plantation at Ennery and one of his holdings in Gonaïves were ransacked and looted as the Louverture family was taken into French custody. Also rounded up and deported were several of General Louverture's supporters, and others who wielded power. These arrests and deportations were because "[Bonaparte] wanted to break the colony's spinal cord" in an effort to reestablish slavery as practiced during the era of the *ancien régime*.<sup>29</sup> The family, including Toussaint, his wife Suzanne Simon Baptiste Louverture, their sons, Placide, Isaac and Saint-Jean, along with their niece, Louise Chancy was reunited on the French ship, *Le Héros* moored in Cap Français. The Louvertures and two servants set sail for France where they arrived in August 1802.<sup>30</sup> They carried only the clothing they were

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<sup>28</sup> Auguste and Auguste, *Les Déportés de Saint-Domingue*, 21.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 33. "[Bonaparte] voulait briser l'épine dorsale de la colonie."

<sup>30</sup> The sources generally agree on the unfolding of events in terms of Toussaint Louverture's arrest and his and his family's deportation to France. See Gagnon Lacoste, "La Famille Toussaint-Louverture," 100; Nemours, *Histoire de la Famille*, 47; Auguste and Auguste, *Les Déportés de Saint-Domingue*, 44; Turnier, "Séquestres des Biens...", 10; de Cauna, *Toussaint Louverture et l'Indépendance d'Haïti*, 203-204.

wearing at the time of their arrest since they were not permitted to take anything from their homes.<sup>31</sup>

*Le Héros* arrived in Brest sometime in mid-August of 1802 and the family was separated as quickly as possible. August 11 found Madame Louverture, her younger sons Isaac and Saint-Jean, her niece Louise Chancy and one servant put to shore. In September they boarded another ship for the city of Bayonne where they spent a year before being transported again in 1803 further inland to the town of Agen.<sup>32</sup> On August 17, 1802, Toussaint Louverture was taken from the ship and began the trek to the Fort de Joux prison located in the Jura mountains of Northern France where he died sometime in April 1803. Also on August 17, his adopted son Placide, was transported to the prison at Belle-Isle En Mer, where he spent two years before being reunited with his mother, surviving brother and cousin.<sup>33</sup> It is in Agen that Toussaint Louverture's youngest son Saint-Jean, aged thirteen/fourteen, died in January 1804. It is also in Agen that Isaac Louverture married his cousin and fellow exile, Louise Chancy. Toussaint Louverture's widow, Suzanne Simon Baptiste Louverture, died in 1816 after an illness, perhaps breast cancer. In 1816 Isaac and Louise Louverture left Agen and settled in Bordeaux where both lived out their lives, Isaac died in 1854. Placide remained in Agen and married a local woman with whom he had one daughter, Rose Zora Louverture Lavergne. He died in 1841,

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<sup>31</sup> Turnier, "Séquestres des Biens..." 10. "Quand Toussaint et sa famille fut arrêté ils n'ont pu prendre que les vêtements qu'ils portait sur le dos."

<sup>32</sup> De Cauna, *Toussaint Louverture et l'Indépendance d'Haïti*, 204. De Cauna says the family was transferred to Agen because the French government was concerned that in Bayonne there would be more of an opportunity for escape and a return to Saint-Domingue/Haiti. McKee, *Exiles Song*, 155, and Gragnon Lacoste, 100, also discuss the relocation from Bayonne to Agen.

<sup>33</sup> Auguste and Auguste, *Les Déportés de Saint-Domingue*, 44 and 98.

estranged from Isaac and Louise Louverture, his brother and sister-in-law, after a drawn-out legal battle over the Louverture name and ultimately Toussaint Louverture's assets in Haiti.<sup>34</sup>

Louise Chancy was nineteen, nearly twenty, when she arrived in France in the waning days of summer 1802. She was, as with most exiles then and now, landing in an unfamiliar land surrounded by strangers. The social mores and expectations for a young woman of her class and family would not have been entirely foreign, however. Several factors help support this assertion. Louise Chancy was born and spent a large part of her childhood in and around the Saint-Domingue city of Les Cayes in the colony's southern provinces. This was a region populated by wealthy people of color who were part of the elite in Saint-Domingue society. Louise Chancy's father was white and a landowner, thus making her part of this class. Furthermore, the southern provinces had always been somewhat separate from the colony's other regions and its distinct identity developed largely as the result of wide contact and connections with other Caribbean islands and their residents.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, when she moved to the northern provinces to live with her uncle Toussaint Louverture, his wife, Suzanne Louverture and her youngest cousin, Saint Jean in 1800, the sixteen- to seventeen-year-old Louise Chancy entered another area with a

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<sup>34</sup> Nemours' *Histoire de la Famille et de la Descendance de Toussaint-Louverture*, is one of the sources that details the rift between Placide and Isaac Louverture. He reproduces letters written by Rose Zora Louverture Lavergne to Haitian President Florvil Hyppolite in the 1880s as she sought restitution of her father's lost inheritance, 33.

<sup>35</sup> Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World the Story of the Haitian Revolution*, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 232.

tremendous mix of people. Cap Français while segregated in certain respects was in others a zone of integration between white colonists, African- and Caribbean-born enslaved, free-born and freed people color and visitors from other Caribbean colonies.<sup>36</sup> From these facts it is possible to determine that Louise Chancy was brought up in relatively sophisticated environments. Her familial relationship with Toussaint Louverture added to her status as the legitimate, free-born daughter of a white landowning colonist, cemented her position in the upper echelons of Saint-Domingue society.

The aforementioned social dynamics from her early life left her equipped with the necessary tools to negotiate spaces for herself in upper class French society. Gragnon-Lacoste writing about the family's time in Agen states that as a young woman "she brought together the emotional and physical qualities that were characteristic of the creole," she was thus able "to easily make friends among the ladies of the best class."<sup>37</sup> Confirming Gragnon-Lacoste's assessment is an 1803 letter Chancy Louverture wrote where she made plans with one of her friends from Agen [See Figure 4]. The unidentified woman planned to visit Chancy Louverture so they could attend a musical afternoon in the home of a certain Madame Daubry.<sup>38</sup> The letter shows Chancy Louverture's appreciation for music as she anticipates hearing the vocal talents of a "famous musician"

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<sup>36</sup> Lorelle Semley, *To Be Free and French. Citizenship in France's Atlantic Empire*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 31.

<sup>37</sup> Gragnon-Lacoste, "La Famille Toussaint-Louverture A Agen..." 102. "...elle unissait aux qualités de Coeur les qualités physiques qui sont l'apanage du sexe créole: elle trouva donc facilement des amies parmi les dames du meilleur monde."

<sup>38</sup> Louise Louverture, Lettre de Visite, *Archives Nationale d'Haïti*, 1803, Digital Library of the Caribbean, accessed September 14, 2019, <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/CA00510287/00001>. The letter, dated 1803, is signed

1803.

Madame,

Un domestique est venu ce  
Matin m'apporter de votre part un  
Billet dans le quel vous m'annoncez  
votre visite pour l'après midi: je serai  
cette contente de vous voir, j'irai avec  
vous au cercle de notre bonne amie  
Madame D Daubray; nous aurons  
le plaisir d'entendre ce fameux musicien  
qui doit chanter plusieurs beaux morceaux  
des grands maîtres d'Italie.

Louise Louverture;

**Figure 4:** Louise Louverture, Lettre de Visite, Archives Nationales d'Haïti, 1803, Digital Library of the Caribbean, accessed September 14, 2019, <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/CA00510287/00001>.

**Translation:** Madam, A servant came this morning and brought me your note wherein you let me know that you will be visiting this afternoon. I will be very happy to see you, I will go with you to the circle/salon of our good friend Madame Daubry; we will have the pleasure of hearing this famous musician who is supposed to sing several beautiful pieces from the famous Italian masters. Louise Louverture

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"Louise Louverture," though the marriage to Isaac Louverture did not take place until December 1804. See de Cauna, *Toussaint Louverture et l'Indépendance d'Haïti*, 264.

who was slated to “sing several beautiful pieces by famous masters from Italy.”<sup>39</sup> In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries part of an upper-middle class woman’s education focused on several artistic endeavors including music.<sup>40</sup> The letter provides additional evidence of Chancy Louverture’s elevated status and level of education from the legibility of the handwriting, the spelling and control of French grammar.

The letter further demonstrates the social exchanges that occurred in the nineteenth century among the elite bourgeoisie, the class to which Louise Chancy Louverture belonged. These exchanges were a means of building and maintaining the family’s social capital within the community. Using the example of Victorian-era England, John Tosh explains how the social call, such as the one discussed in the 1803 letter, was an integral part of middle-class society, especially as the middle class expanded. Tosh focused not just on the exchange of visits but whether or not the caller chose to leave a calling card. Leaving or not leaving a card became “a means of identifying which channels should be kept open and which ones must be blocked.”<sup>41</sup> The family’s social standing was largely acquired and maintained through the efforts of women, particularly wives.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, it was the woman who, through her dress and social activities, “projected the family’s image to the community” and helped to define

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<sup>39</sup> Louverture, *Lettre de Visite*.

<sup>40</sup> Perkins, “The Impact of the “Cult of True Womanhood” on the Education of Black Women,” 18.

<sup>41</sup> Tosh, *A Man’s Place. Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, 23.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 145.



their status.<sup>43</sup> The surviving 1803 *Lettre de Visite* evidences Louise Chancy Louverture's participation in these important social interactions that created a space not only for herself but also for her family in French society. It is yet another example of her embrace of the domestic ideal and her role as a true woman. She further demonstrates these in the characteristics she cultivated and developed.

The 1803 *Lettre de Visite* also shows that Louise Chancy Louverture integrated into, and was accepted by French society, this, it, seems was different from other women of similar background. In her essay, "What's in a Name? Mixed-Race Families and Resistance to Racial Codification in Eighteenth-Century France," historian Jennifer Palmer brings to light the life of Marie-Jeanne Fleuriau Mandron and her sister Marie-Charlotte, the mixed-ancestry daughters of one of the wealthiest men in La Rochelle, Aimé-Benjamin Fleuriau. When their father left Saint-Domingue and returned to La Rochelle in the 1750s the sisters along with three of their brothers accompanied him. Marie-Jeanne and Marie-Charlotte Fleuriau Mandron lived out their lives in France. As mixed-ancestry children of a prominent white planter the Fleuriau Mandron children were, like Chancy Louverture, in the upper echelon of Saint-Domingue society. Their illegitimacy, however, meant that even in Saint-Domingue, their status was below Chancy Louverture's. In La Rochelle their social circumstances were severely reduced despite their father's wealth. While it appears white Agen society and later Bordeaux society made room for Louise Chancy Louverture the same was not true with white La Rochelle society which was "unwilling to absorb these dark-skinned children of one of

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<sup>43</sup> Rachel G. Fuchs and Victoria E. Thompson, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 51.

their most vaunted members.”<sup>44</sup> Unlike Chancy Louverture who was an active member of society, the Fleuriau Mandron sisters remained “outsiders” even from their own white family despite the fact that they appear to have presented themselves and lived their lives within the boundaries of true womanhood, though they never married.<sup>45</sup> Their exclusion from La Rochelle society may have been partially tied to their African ancestry, but it was perhaps also likely the result of their illegitimacy. The stigma of illegitimacy likely reaffirmed the negative stereotypes about African-descended women and ran counter to the ideals of true womanhood.

The published popular nineteenth-century gender discourses were clear about which attributes women should strive for to attain true womanhood. The domestic ideal had the woman firmly in the home with her fulfillment and happiness deriving from “the warmth and love of human attachments.”<sup>46</sup> A key means of attaining the status of true woman and reaching the ideal of domesticity was through marriage. These notions were widely circulated in Europe, the United States and among the colonist population in the Caribbean. Thus these were not new concepts introduced to Chancy Louverture when she arrived in France. Toussaint and Suzanne Louverture had instilled these ideas in their

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<sup>44</sup> Jennifer Palmer, “What’s in a Name? Mixed-Race Families and Resistance to Racial Codification in Eighteenth-Century France.” *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (Summer 2010), 367. In her essay Palmer explains that while Fleuriau recognized his paternity he never legitimized his mixed-ancestry children, nor did they carry his name. Rather, at their baptism they were given the name Mandron. Marie-Jeanne appropriated the name Fleuriau as an adult. As Palmer argues this was a way for her to use family ties in her negotiation for space in La Rochelle. The story of the Fleuriau Mandron sisters is also included in Olivette Otele’s *African Europeans An Untold History*, (New York: Basic Books, 2021), 87.

<sup>45</sup> Palmer, “What’s in a name...,” 376.

<sup>46</sup> Beth Maclay Doriani, “Black Womanhood in Nineteenth-Century America: Subversion and Self-Construction in Two Women’s Autobiographies” in *American Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (June 1991): 205, accessed August 22, 2018, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2712924>.

children and niece by the example they set personally. Toussaint Louverture further emphasized them politically through the policies he instituted as governor of Saint-Domingue and in the 1801 Constitution he drafted for the colony.

In his essay on the Louverture family in Agen, Gragnon-Lacoste made sure to state that Toussaint and Suzanne Louverture had not followed the usual path taken by enslaved and formerly enslaved people in Saint-Domingue since they opted “to marry before a priest, and before God” thereby “setting a good example.”<sup>47</sup> Article Nine of Toussaint Louverture’s 1801 Constitution stressed the importance of marriage and recognized the institution as both civil and religious. Couples who remained true and virtuous were given government protection and recognition.<sup>48</sup> The family headed by a patriarch was foregrounded both in fact and symbolically. Even in 1801 this was nothing new in Saint-Domingue which in 1793 proclaimed that one avenue to freedom for enslaved women was for them to marry “newly freed insurgents who joined the French cause.”<sup>49</sup> One of Chancy Louverture’s fundamental steps on the path to fulfilling the tenets of true womanhood came when she married her cousin Isaac Louverture on December 19, 1804 in Agen.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Gragnon-Lacoste, “La Famille Toussaint Louverture a Agen,” 98. “Toussaint-Bréda donna le bon exemple en épousant devant le prêtre [sic], *dovan bon Dié*, disaient les créoles, une femme de sa race et de sa couleur, Suzanne Simon-Baptiste...”

<sup>48</sup> Haïti Constitution du 3 juillet 1801, accessed, September 4, 2018, <http://mjp.univ-perp.fr/constit/ht1801.htm>. “Le mariage, par son institution civile et religieuse, tendant à la pureté des mœurs, les époux qui pratiqueront les vertus qu’exige leur état seront toujours distingués et spécialement protégés par le gouvernement.”

<sup>49</sup> Semley, *To be Free and French*, 40. This idea is discussed in the context of the July 1793 Proclamation issued by the French colonial administrators, Etienne Polverel and Léger Félicité Sonthonax.

<sup>50</sup> De Cauna, *Toussaint Louverture et l’Indépendance d’Haïti*, 264.



**Figure 5:** Séjour Legros, Louise Chancy Louverture, Ca. 1822-1825, Oil on Canvas, 94 x 75.5 cm. Courtesy of Musée du Panthéon National Haïtien (MUPANAH), Port-au-Prince, Haiti

The above makes it apparent that Louise Chancy Louverture satisfied the precept of domesticity as seen in her devotion and dedication to her family's and particularly her husband's comfort and contentment. The material evidence, in the form and composition of Louise Chancy Louverture's surviving portrait, which she commissioned illustrates how she epitomized the cardinal virtues of true womanhood, modesty, piety and submission [See Figure 5]. Moreover, the portrait also exemplifies her dignity and control, characteristics prized and cultivated on the path to ideal womanhood. Louise Chancy Louverture's representation and the elements she likely chose for incorporation within her portrait highlight that she was, in fact, an ideal Atlantic true woman.

Surprisingly, it is not as easy to define a portrait as one might think. Typically and traditionally a portrait is an artwork representing a unique, specific, individual. A portrait involves creating a likeness in terms of the subject's physical features, while at the same time also conveying "social position, 'inner life...' character or virtues."<sup>51</sup> Louise Chancy Louverture's portrait was painted by the French-trained, Haitian artist Séjour Legros, sometime between 1822 and 1825. It was during this period that Chancy Louverture was in Haiti managing her father-in-law's land holdings on behalf of her husband. She arrived in Cap Haïtien (Cap Français in the colonial era) in 1822 and returned to her home and husband in Bordeaux in 1825. Over the course of about three years, Chancy Louverture settled her father-in-law's estate, sold some properties and arranged for the management of others. Chancy Louverture's activities during her stint in Haiti were carried out on behalf of and for the benefit of her family (i.e., her husband). They strongly illustrate the

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<sup>51</sup> Shearer West, *Portraiture*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 21.

way she interpreted, modified and expanded the ideology of domesticity and cult of true womanhood to include conducting and taking charge of family business affairs. The latter is something black women in the Caribbean and the United States did regularly.<sup>52</sup> She kept to the tenets of true womanhood by using her own talents “to work for her husband.”<sup>53</sup> Moreover, as a child growing up in Saint-Domingue Louise Chancy Louverture had the example of free women of color, like herself, wielding tremendous economic power. These women lead their households and conducted real estate transactions with greater frequency than their white counterparts.<sup>54</sup>

Chancy Louverture’s portrait captures the efficiency and resourcefulness she exhibited as she organized her family’s affairs in Haiti. In the past, portraiture has been likened to copying since one of its key functions is to capture what an individual looks like. Fortunately, both Madiou and Nemours provide physical descriptions of Chancy Louverture allowing us an opportunity to see how close Legros’ work was to reality. Nemours’ description comes from the records of France’s La Police Générale du Royaume from Chancy Louverture’s application for a passport, when she was thirty-eight:

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<sup>52</sup> Doriani, “Black Womanhood in Nineteenth-Century America,” 211. Doriani’s article is about two black female authors, Harriet Jacobs, a former slave, and Harriet Wilson, a freeborn woman. Both Jacobs and Wilson, illustrates black women gaining economic independence, which was inextricably tied to freedom and the expression of personhood, through their literary work. These works, *Incidents from the Life of Slave Girl: Written by Herself*, by Jacobs, and *Our Nig: or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black*, by Wilson, were written and published with the intention of gaining financial security so each could establish a household and raise their children.

<sup>53</sup> Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” 160.

<sup>54</sup> John D. Garrigus, ““Sons of the Same Father” Gender, Race, and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue, 1760-1792,” in *Visions and Revisions of Eighteenth-Century France*, edited by Christine Adams, Jack R. Censer, and Lisa Jane Graham, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 149.

Height one meter, sixty-four centimeters [approximately five feet, four inches tall], hair black, short forehead, black eyebrows, black eyes, ordinary nose, medium mouth, round chin, oval face, olive skin tone. Distinguishing marks: of color.<sup>55</sup>

Madiou's description dates to about 1835, when Chancy Louverture was in her early fifties. Madiou found her to be a tall, beautiful woman "full of nobility in her manners, and very spiritual."<sup>56</sup> Legros' portrait accurately captures Chancy Louverture's physiognomy as detailed by the general police document and by Madiou.

Chancy Louverture's portrait fits the most familiar definition for a work of this type: a likeness of an individual's physical features, which at the same time conveys "social position, 'inner life...' character or virtues."<sup>57</sup> A portrait is largely an assemblage of personal identity markers that the patron, usually the sitter, chooses to have incorporated. Clothing was and remains a key marker of expressing and projecting identity. Chancy Louverture's choice of clothing gives a good indication of how she wanted to be seen. Her dress is dark-colored with strategically placed lace details at the collar, sleeve cuffs, and day-cap. The lace softens the severe attire while at the same time stressing that she is a model of femininity and delicacy. The lace details also place her in the upper echelon of bourgeois society. Since its introduction in the sixteenth century, lace was seen as a sign of luxury indicative of the wearer's social station.<sup>58</sup> Despite these

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<sup>55</sup> Nemours, *Histoire de la Famille*, 207 (« Agée [sic] de 38 ans taille d'un mètre 64 centimètres, cheveux noirs, front court, sourcil noirs, yeux noirs, nez ordre (ordinaire), bouche moy (moyenne) menton rond, visage oval, tein olivatre [sic]. Signes particuliers: de couleur »).

<sup>56</sup> Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, volume 6, 228, "C'était une femme belle, d'une taille élevée, pleine de noblesse dans ses manières, et très spirituelle").

<sup>57</sup> Shearer West, *Portraiture*, 21.

touches of luxury her clothing is modest, which further highlights her conformity to the feminine ideals of the time since a woman's modesty was prized.<sup>59</sup> Her clothing is also practical, bordering on the austere, with a minimum of adornment. Following the *ancien regime* and the French Revolution, styles became simpler and more down-to-earth. Simplicity in women's clothing came to signal virtue and decorum.<sup>60</sup> The dark color and lack of elaboration were also sensible since the painting was executed while Chancy Louverture was travelling extensively through Haiti. This choice of clothing would wear better as she undertook her dusty, wearying mission. Her hair, covered by the lace day-cap, is plainly styled. This too is a sign of her modesty and in keeping with the move away from the complicated hair styles and headdresses in vogue prior to the French Revolution.<sup>61</sup>

The Legros portrait positions Chancy Louverture in a three-quarter turn and depicts her to the waist. Her posture is upright, her head elevated, and her gaze focused on someone or something beyond the artist who once stood before her. Her carriage is dignified and proud. Her hands are neatly folded in front of her, her lips curved into a controlled, small smile. The portrait's background is a muted, neutral color. These elements come together to convey the notion of self-control, which in the late eighteenth

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<sup>58</sup> Janine Montupet and Ghislaine Schoeller, *Lace The Elegant Web*, translated by Anthony Zielonka, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1990), 19.

<sup>59</sup> Jennifer J. Popiel, *Rousseau's Daughters: Domesticity, Education and Autonomy in Modern France*, (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2008), 101.

<sup>60</sup> Susan Hiner, *Accessories to Modernity. Fashion and the Feminine in Nineteenth-Century France*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 29.

<sup>61</sup> James Laver, *Costume and Fashion a Concise History*, fifth edition, (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2012), 153



and nineteenth century was considered a “crucial civic characteristic,” that placed women “in a unique position to shape the future.”<sup>62</sup> The ability to exercise self-control was believed to be a choice and further that it made women strong and capable.<sup>63</sup>

Legros’ composition recalls the sixteenth-century Italian High Renaissance portrait of Baldassare Castiglione by Raphael.<sup>64</sup> Chancy Louverture, like Castiglione, is reserved but approachable and warm. The color palette is limited and the figure is bathed in light. Most significant is the projection of inner calm, what the Italians call *riposo*. Chancy Louverture’s figure radiates *riposo* embodying notions of seriousness and control. Legros was one of several Saint-Domingue youths who received scholarships to study in France “by a decree of the Directoire” to demonstrate “the close ties of friendship between France and her colony.”<sup>65</sup> Placide and Isaac Louverture were also part of this contingent of young Saint Domingois men who studied in France. Pursuing artistic studies in France meant that Legros learned by studying and copying the works of the old masters, such as Raphael. The Castiglione portrait is one Legros would have likely seen since, according to the Musée du Louvre, it was part of King Louis XIV

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<sup>62</sup> Popiel, *Rousseau’s Daughters*, 9.

<sup>63</sup> Popiel, *Rousseau’s Daughters*, 101 and 105. Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood,” also touches on the idea of female self-control. As she explains, household tasks, such as bed making, in its repetitive nature helped a woman “develop her patience, judgment, and self-possession,” 165.

<sup>64</sup> To see Raphael’s Portrait of Baldassare Castiglioni, please see link below, accessed October 27, 2019, <https://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/portrait-baldassare-castiglione-1478-1529>.

<sup>65</sup> Gérald Alexis, *Peintres Haïtiens*, (Paris: Éditions Cercle d’Art, 2000), 17.

collection.<sup>66</sup> The Louvre became a museum to display the nation's masterpieces in 1793. Legros left Saint-Domingue to study in France circa 1799.<sup>67</sup>

Chancy Louverture's portrait emphatically conveys the cardinal virtue of piety, which was considered to be at "the core of woman's virtue, [and] the source of her strength."<sup>68</sup> Chancy Louverture holds a rosary loosely in one hand, while a book rests close to the other. Based on its size and decorated cover, this is either a prayer book or a Bible. Reading religious texts, and religious biographies was a highly encouraged activity for the nineteenth-century true woman.<sup>69</sup> Further evidence of Chancy Louverture's piety is that she is depicted kneeling or sitting at a prie-dieu, "a narrow, desklike kneeling bench with space above for a book or the elbows, for use by a person at prayer."<sup>70</sup>

Christianity, specifically Roman Catholicism, was a daily part of Chancy Louverture's life arguably from the moment she was born. She was baptized in the village of Torbek in the colonial southern province of Les Cayes in February 1783, six months after her birth.<sup>71</sup> In the Roman Catholic tradition, baptism is a way of bringing a child into both the religious and civic community. Once more it is her uncle, Toussaint

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<sup>66</sup> Portrait of Baldassare Castiglioni (1478-1529), accessed October 27, 2019, <https://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/portrait-baldassare-castiglione-1478-1529>.

<sup>67</sup> Alexis, *Peintres Haïtiens*, 17. Alexis indicates that Legros left for France in 1899, this is a typo since he subsequently states that Legros "joined Isaac and Placide Louverture" (17). The Louverture brothers were studying in France at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries and by 1899 both had died.

<sup>68</sup> Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood..." 152.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 166.

<sup>70</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, third edition, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992), 1437.

<sup>71</sup> Jacques Petit, "Descendance de Bernard Chancy."

Louverture and his wife who provide evidence of religion's importance in day-to-day life for Saint-Domingue. Politically Article Six of Toussaint Louverture's 1801 colonial Constitution explicitly stated that the only publicly recognized religion in Saint-Domingue was Roman Catholicism.<sup>72</sup> Privately the elder Louvertures adhered to religious beliefs and practices setting the example for the younger generation, their sons and niece. As previously illustrated, Toussaint and Suzanne Louverture opted to marry before a Catholic priest, rather than following the tradition of other enslaved and formerly enslaved individuals in Saint-Domingue who did not necessarily have their unions sanctioned and recognized by the Catholic Church. Following her exile, Suzanne Louverture continued to be a strong influence and example of feminine piety for her niece, Louise Chancy Louverture. According to a French government surveillance report dated 1804/1805 and recorded in Nemours: "the widow [Suzanne Louverture] is typically in the churches."<sup>73</sup> Auguste and Auguste concur indicating that "the widow found her consolation in prayers and in the affection of her surviving sons..."<sup>74</sup> Thus piety, as with the other cardinal virtues of true womanhood, was one that Louise Chancy Louverture was well familiar with, long before she arrived in France. It is also one she embraced and chose as a marker of identity in her portrait.

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<sup>72</sup> Haïti Constitution du 3 juillet 1801, « La religion Catholique, apostolique et romaine y est la seule publiquement professée. »

<sup>73</sup> Nemours, *Histoire de la famille et de la descendance...* 188. "La veuve est habituellement dans les églises..."

<sup>74</sup> Auguste and Auguste, *Les Déportés de Saint-Domingue*, 101. "La veuve trouva sa consolation dans la prière et dans la tendresse dont l'entouraient ses fils survivants..."

While perhaps not as apparent, Chancy Louverture's portrait also manages to convey that she submitted to her husband's expectations, submission being another cardinal virtue of the true woman. In an 1823 letter Isaac Louverture instructed his wife to "comport herself in a dignified manner worthy of the illustrious name she carried."<sup>75</sup> Isaac and Louise Louverture were both conscious of the import of their name and the ancestry from which they derived. In a conversation with the historian Madiou, Chancy Louverture expressed her belief that should she and her husband return to Haiti as Toussaint Louverture's son and niece, they would be acclaimed as sovereigns. Moreover, they were both well aware that their shared grandfather, Gaou-Guinou, was supposedly of African royal blood.<sup>76</sup> Her portrait shows a stately woman who knows her station in society and her place in history. *This* was the daughter of a prominent colonial family. *This* was the niece and daughter-in-law of *Le Premier des Noirs*. *This* was the great-granddaughter of African kings. *This* was an Atlantic woman of color who persevered and survived hardship but thrived in the face of such, all the while main.

In the port city of Bordeaux Louise Chancy Louverture held a position of prestige especially within the community of exiles and refugees of African-descent from the Caribbean and the United States.<sup>77</sup> Among this group, as well as others of upper bourgeois Bordeaux society, Chancy Louverture and her husband were well-known. Her

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<sup>75</sup> Turnier, "Séquestres des Biens..." 34. "Il attendait d'elle un comportement digne du nom illustre qu'elle portait."

<sup>76</sup> Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, volume 6, 228.

<sup>77</sup> McKee, *Exile's Song*, 146.

home was a destination for people of color where they came to discuss a variety of topics and, according to nineteenth-century historian Thomas Madiou, Chancy Louverture had political opinions. In his epic history of Haiti Madiou records that he spent quite a bit of time with Louise Chancy Louverture in Bordeaux and during his frequent visits “she gave me good advice with regard to my country.”<sup>78</sup> In their conversations she counseled him on the social and political pitfalls in Haiti that he, as a young man raised and educated in Europe, would know little about. Her understanding of Haitian politics, more precisely of President Boyer, whom she knew, is suggested with the following bit of advice imparted to Madiou: “if one day you want to be a senator, learn well to flatter the little Boyer.”<sup>79</sup> As mentioned above Chancy Louverture participated in *salon* culture. The *salon* was a space of social interaction presided over by women of the upper classes.

It is likely that because of Chancy Louverture’s position in the upper bourgeoisie in addition to her family connections her experience with color prejudice was not as pronounced as what Sarah Parker Remond and Edmonia Lewis experienced in the United States. This can perhaps be attributed to the fact that Chancy Louverture’s uncle/father-in-law was Toussaint Louverture. When the Louverture family debarked in Bayonne, France on September 3, 1802 “they received a triumphal welcome” greeted by the city’s mayor, garrison, and city functionaries, who accompanied them with “great ceremony” to their lodgings.<sup>80</sup> The family’s early days in Bayonne were filled with visitors including

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<sup>78</sup> Madiou, *Histoire d’Haïti*, Volume 6, 228. “Elle me donnait de bons conseils à l’égard de mon pays et me signalait tous les dangers sociaux et politiques auxquels était exposé un jeune homme élevé en Europe qui ne savait pas se conformer aux mœurs et usages du milieu où il retournait.”

<sup>79</sup> Madiou, *Histoire d’Haïti*, Volume 6, 228. “*Mon jeune homme quand vous arrivez dans votre pays, si vous voulez devenir un jour sénateur, apprenez à bien flatter le petit Boyer.*”

town dignitaries, French veterans of the Saint-Domingue military campaign, and Isaac and Placide Louverture's school friends from their time at l'École de la Marche in Paris.<sup>81</sup> Reports indicate that as Toussaint Louverture's caravan crossed France eastward, from the Atlantic coast city of Brest to Fort de Joux on the Swiss border, veterans – officers and regular soldiers - who had served under him in Saint-Domingue “stood along the route to pay tribute.”<sup>82</sup>

Toussaint's cruel treatment in Fort de Joux and the fourteen-year long surveillance to which his family was subjected can arguably be attributed to politics more than to the color of their skin. French prejudice based on skin pigmentation, however, cannot be discounted or ignored. Since their earliest encounters with Africans the French have had, to put it mildly, a complicated relationship with non-whites.<sup>83</sup> There are perhaps two possibly concurrent reasons for Toussaint Louverture's terrible experience at Fort de Joux in the last months of his life. These reasons also account for the years long government monitoring of his family and they are tied to politics and money. By 1799/1800 as Napoléon Bonaparte was consolidating his power in France, Toussaint Louverture had himself accrued tremendous power in Saint-Domingue. Louverture had

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<sup>80</sup> de Cauna, *Toussaint Louverture et l'Indépendance d'Haïti*, 204. “elle y reçut un accueil triomphal sur le port avant d'être accompagnée en grande pompe à l'ancien évêché (le Château-Vieux, sur les remparts)...” McKee, *The Exile's Song*, 154.

<sup>81</sup> McKee, *The Exile's Song*, 154. See also, Charles Bonaparte Auguste and Marcel Bonaparte Auguste, *Les Déportés de Saint-Domingue*, 98.

<sup>82</sup> McKee, *The Exile's Song*, 152.

<sup>83</sup> See William B. Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans: White Response to Blacks, 1530-1880*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003 originally 1980). Cohen outlines the relationship and perceptions French people had with Africans and those of African descent from the sixteenth through the late nineteenth centuries.

defeated the English, one of his former allies, negotiated peace with them independent of Bonaparte and the metropole, and had “become the uncontested master of the island.”<sup>84</sup> Further, by 1801 Toussaint Louverture had invaded the eastern portion of Hispaniola, brokered trade agreements with the United States and in May 1801 circulated a colonial constitution that left Saint-Domingue a French colony but made her, in significant ways, autonomous of the metropole.<sup>85</sup> Toussaint Louverture challenged Bonaparte’s authority and the First Consul could not allow this to stand.

A second motive rests in the rumors that Toussaint Louverture had stockpiled and hidden a considerable treasure in the mountains of Saint-Domingue. The possibility that a treasure existed became an obsession for Bonaparte, who had exhausted French financial resources to support his wide-ranging military campaigns. Bonaparte and his generals on the ground in Saint-Domingue were convinced Toussaint Louverture had taken and hidden a fortune. Their goal in isolating and vigorously questioning Toussaint Louverture at Fort de Joux was to discover the location. It should be noted that Toussaint Louverture always insisted that such a treasure did not exist and he further stated that the French general Rochambeau took whatever might have existed, along with Toussaint Louverture’s personal fortune.<sup>86</sup> No secret treasure allegedly hidden by Toussaint Louverture has ever been found.

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<sup>84</sup> de Cauna, *Toussaint Louverture et l’Indépendance d’Haïti*, 8.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, 8

<sup>86</sup> Alain Turnier, “Séquestre des Biens de Toussaint Louverture,” *Quand La Nation Demande Des Comptes*, volume 3, (Port-au-Prince: Publisher not indicated, 2017. Original publication, Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie Le Natal, 1989), 10.

The Louvertures remained Bonaparte's political pawns even after Toussaint Louverture's ignominious death in April 1803. The latter is evidenced by Bonaparte's granting permission for Isaac Louverture to marry his cousin Louise Chancy in December 1804, a year after the French army had been defeated by the Saint-Domingue forces. Bonaparte's sanction of the marriage was a way of obtaining a measure of favor with the family and more importantly to gain and/or retain the support of the family's champions. To these ends Bonaparte also increased the family's monthly government stipend.<sup>87</sup> Sources give ample evidence of the political reasons for the Louverture family's treatment, but they provide just one concrete incident that can be identified as racist and it is tied to their monthly government stipend. The miserly amount the family received for their basic needs was further reduced in an arbitrary decision by the *Ministre de la Marine*. At the time the family of five was receiving a stipend of four hundred and fifty francs a month. According to the Minister the amount

seems to me to be rather considerable and it should be reduced as soon as possible; the Louverture woman was not raised to maintain a household and this amount of four hundred fifty francs a month seems above the needs of this *négresse*.<sup>88</sup>

It is important to note that the Minister's argument and objection to the stipend amount were tied to ideas of true womanhood and domesticity. His decision to reduce the

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<sup>87</sup> Thomas Prosper Gragnon-Lacoste, "La Famille Toussaint-Louverture A Agen (1803-1816)," 102

<sup>88</sup> Quoted in Auguste and Auguste, *Les Déportés de Saint-Domingue*, 99. "Ceci me paraît cependant considérable et devra être réduit aussitôt que possible; la femme Louverture n'a pas été élevée pour tenir un train de maison et cette somme de 450 fr. par mois semble au-dessus des besoins de cette *négresse*." McKee, *Exile's Song*, 155 also relays the same incident. The Louverture woman was Toussaint Louverture's widow, Suzanne Simon Baptiste Louverture.



Louverture family's stipend reflected the racist notion that black women, like Suzanne Louverture, Toussaint Louverture's widow, were incapable of adhering to these ideologies in the same way as their white counterpart. It also highlights that the expenses incurred in the domestic, and largely feminine domain, were not viewed as significant when compared to those incurred in the public and predominantly male realm. The family's frequent financial constraints notwithstanding, the Louvertures seem to have had a convivial life in Agen. When Isaac and Louise Louverture left Agen for Bordeaux in 1816, Isaac wrote to a certain M. X and a Madame Clairfontaine detailing the warmth and affection with which he and Louise Louverture held their adopted city. To both his correspondents Isaac Louverture expressed his heartfelt thanks for their hospitality, support and friendship during their time in Agen.<sup>89</sup>

Louise Chancy Louverture, as demonstrated herein, adopted and largely adhered to the precepts of true womanhood and the ideology of domesticity. These notions would not have been completely foreign to her when she arrived in France in 1802. Her ability to follow and incorporate the theories into her life, in part, helped ease the transition into her new living situation in what eventually became her adopted homeland. Madiou indicates that she and Isaac Louverture "very much liked France" and that they were both "greatly respected and highly regarded in Bordeaux."<sup>90</sup> Nemours, who was not always flattering in his treatment of the two, similarly noted the level of respect they garnered in

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<sup>89</sup> Gagnon-Lacoste, "La Famille Toussaint-Louverture," 103.

<sup>90</sup> Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, Volume 5, 418. "Isaac Louverture, fils de Toussaint et Madame Chancy, son épouse, étaient des personnes d'une très haute respectabilité et très estimées à Bordeaux... Ils aimaient aussi beaucoup la France..."

Bordeaux because they lived a “simple and retiring” life with dignity while being charitable to the less fortunate.<sup>91</sup> The latter was in keeping with the social responsibilities of people of upper-bourgeois status.

Much of the respectability and the high regard they acquired were the result of Louise Chancy Louverture’s efforts to build the family’s social capital in the city, as the 1803 surviving *Lettre de Visite* illustrates. Her domestic focus, determination in the face of adversity and incorporation of the cardinal virtues of true womanhood into her day-to-day life were also significant in this endeavor. It is also clear, from reports of her time in Haiti in the 1820s, that Chancy Louverture was not averse to expanding the boundaries of domesticity and what it meant to be a true woman. It is important to note that Chancy Louverture’s conformity to the tenets of domesticity and true womanhood should not be seen as attempts to set aside or conceal her African mixed-ancestry. Rather, her adherence to these ideologies countered the typical narrative ascribed to black women and those of mixed-ancestry by demonstrating that they were as capable as their white counterparts of being domestic, moral, pious, and pure. Her efforts and the way she chose to be represented in her portrait indicate that she engaged with the ideologies of the predominantly white society in which she lived. Though she was likely simply living as a woman of the upper bourgeoisie whose life-span and experiences encompassed the waning days of the *ancien regime*, the Revolutionary era, as well as the Republican and Empire periods in French society, she made life choices so that she could live the best life possible. Whether on a conscious level or not, these choices to use the cultural mores of

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<sup>91</sup> Nemours, *Histoire de la famille*, 84 (“Leur existence simple et retirée. La dignité de leur vie, et le bien qu’ils faisaient, leur attirent la sympathie et le respect de tous”).

white society were typical of the Black Atlantic and the way Chancy Louverture practiced *sociogenic marronage*. The subsequent chapters illustrate that other African-descended women of the middle class, like Sarah Parker Remond and Edmonia Lewis, also engaged with and challenged the dominant culture in their performance of *marronage*. Their efforts, as younger women, were more public and moved the boundaries of acceptable behavior by ideal women further.

### Chapter 3

#### **Atlantic Racism and Redemptive Womanhood in the Long Nineteenth Century**

One of Sarah Parker Remond's surviving portraits is a grainy black and white photograph housed in the Peabody Essex Museum in the city of her birth, Salem, Massachusetts [See Figure 6]. This is the image most likely to come up following an internet search of her name. The portrait has many of the hallmarks of a mid-nineteenth-century studio photograph: a single seated figure, with a large column and base on the left, what appears to be a cloth-covered table with a book on the right, along with a plain background. Many of these were probably props in the photographer's studio. Similarly, as in many portrait photographs of the age, the book would also have been a prop conveying notions of erudition and knowledge even if the sitter was not literate.<sup>1</sup>

Remond, however, was not only literate she was highly educated and well-read. The book was thus more than a prop. It easily could have belonged to her.

In many ways Remond's photograph recalls Louise Chancy Louverture's portrait painted some thirty to forty years earlier [See Figure 5]. For example, both are centrally placed in the composition, and their pose forms a pyramid, a standard in portraiture since the sixteenth-century. Remond and Chancy Louverture are both dressed in conservative, sober styles reflecting the fashion of their times. Remond wears a

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Warner Marien, *Photography a Cultural History*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002), 68. Marien explains that from photography's early years higher-end studios had people to style clothing and hair, while establishments catering to a less affluent clientele had accessories so sitters could project "personal achievement and economic success." Typical props in a photo studio included: "columns, chairs, tables, rugs, books, sculptures, and flowers" which helped the sitter symbolize and convey their "interests, attitudes, or aspirations."



**Figure 6:** American Photographer, Sarah Parker Remond, ca. 1865, Albumen Print, 2 ¾ x 2 3/16 inches (6.985 x 5.493 cm). Gift of Miss Cecilia R. Babcock. PH322. Courtesy of the Peabody Essex Museum. Photography by Kathy Tarantola.

voluminous dark gown, black embroidered or appliquéd details highlight the torso and upper arms, while a wave pattern is appliquéd on the hems of the wide sleeves. Small buttons run from collar to waist. Other than her head and hands, not an inch of skin is revealed. Much like Chancy Louverture, the austerity of Remond's gown is relieved by bright white details at the collar and the wrists. In a difference with Chancy Louverture's gown, the white elements in Remond's dress are not done in lace. The appliqué details, however, serve a purpose similar to the lace seen in the older portrait and that is to enhance Remond's feminine character. Remond's hair, split down the center and gathered at the back, further reflects Victorian style, right down to the curls framing her face. Her hands are loosely folded in her lap, which again recall the relaxed position of Chancy Louverture's hands in her portrait. While she is not shown with symbols of piety like Chancy Louverture, Remond continues the tradition seen in Chancy Louverture's portrait of visually conveying her respectability and adherence to the notions of true womanhood.

Remond's and Chancy Louverture's attire deserves attention as it is an important aspect of the identity the two have chosen to highlight and document for posterity. Their clothing demonstrates two black Atlantic women who are staking a claim to both space and class position within their world. Their conservative dress convey notions of personhood, worth, citizenship and true womanhood. Simultaneously their dress helps in the visualization of dignity as they faced oppression and racism. The latter is particularly true of Remond who spent the first thirty-four years of her life in the severely racially segregated United States. Clothing, the fabric with which it is made and the fashion in

which it is styled has power and becomes a means for the wearer to express themselves.<sup>2</sup> Remond and Chancy Louverture, women of the Atlantic, were cognizant that their clothing choices – the color, the pattern, the fit – all came together to communicate “self-respect and agency” not only for themselves but for the collective people they represented, African-descended women and men of the Atlantic.<sup>3</sup> Their clothing and comportment become a tactic in the practice of racial uplift. Dressing in fashions similar to their white contemporaries was also a form of *marronage* as the two expressed their non-submission and denial of the systems that attempted to marginalize them because of their African ancestry.

Remond, as a black U.S. American woman, also understood that for her voice to be heard and further for her calls to end enslavement and discrimination to be heeded, she had to live a life that reflected the tenets of true womanhood and be above reproach. Though Chancy Louverture was not focused on abolition or elevating other Atlantic people of mixed ancestry she understood that living an exemplary life allowed her to participate in French upper bourgeois society. It was the assumption of the nineteenth-century middle class “that personal character was expressed through personal appearance,” and both Remond’s portrait photograph and Chancy Louverture’s older painted portrait reflect this belief. It is in large part communicated through the clothing and accessories incorporated in their representations.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Monica L. Miller, “Crimes of Fashion Dressing the Part from Slavery to Freedom,” in *Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Diasporic Identity*, 77-136, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 83, accessed June 4, 2020, <https://archive.org/details/slavestofashionb0000mill/mode/2up>.

<sup>3</sup> Miller, “Crimes Of Fashion...” 91.

<sup>4</sup> Marien, *Photography A Cultural History*, 40.

Remond successfully suggested that she was an exemplar of ideal womanhood, despite her presence in the public sphere.<sup>5</sup> An account of one of her first appearances in England attests to her success. The January 24, 1859 edition of *The Warrington Times* reported that her abolitionist speech, “Slave Life in America,” was delivered to a full house. The audience was captivated in large part, according to the *Times*, because of Remond’s “gentle and easy manner,” along with her animated and intelligent facial expression, which were enhanced by “her conventional womanly attributes and ladylike behavior.”<sup>6</sup> A popular speaker on the British abolition lecture circuit beginning in 1859 and up to the mid-1860s, Remond garnered great interest from the British press and from her large audiences. The level of attention centered on the fact that she was a freeborn black U.S. American female speaking publicly. In fact, Remond was one of the first women in Britain to address “mass mixed audiences on the anti-slavery issue.”<sup>7</sup> While it was common to see black male abolitionists on the lecture circuit, including Sarah

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<sup>5</sup> Sarah Parker Remond, “A Colored Lady Lecturer,” in *English woman’s Journal*, June 1, 1861, in the Nineteenth-Century Serials Edition (2008;2018): 269, accessed June 8, 2020, [nncse.ac.uk/periodicals/ew/issues/ewj\\_01061861/page/53](https://nncse.ac.uk/periodicals/ew/issues/ewj_01061861/page/53). In the introduction of Remond’s autobiographical essay the editors of the *English Woman’s Journal* identify Sarah P. Remond as one of their exemplars of womanhood.

<sup>6</sup> Sirpa Salenius, *An Abolitionist Abroad. Sarah Parker Remond in Cosmopolitan Europe*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016), 94.

<sup>7</sup> Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), 143 and 170. Midgley mentions that Remond was the first public speaking female at least twice in her book. Sibyl Ventress Brownlee, “Out of the abundance of the heart: Sarah Ann Parker Remond’s quest for freedom,” PhD Dissertation, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1997), 127, accessed December 26, 2019, [https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/bfb1/ebfd3e62b30c0b6d9c9cdcdfe38eddd41384.pdf?\\_ga=2.76653020.858256105.1577376586-1254671509.1577376586](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/bfb1/ebfd3e62b30c0b6d9c9cdcdfe38eddd41384.pdf?_ga=2.76653020.858256105.1577376586-1254671509.1577376586); Willi Coleman, “Like Hot Lead to Pour on the Americans...’: Sarah Parker Remond – From Salem, Mass., to the British Isles,” in *Women’s Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery in the Era of Emancipation*, James Brewer Steward, Kathryn Kish Sklar editors, (New Haven: Yale University press, 2007), 179.



Remond's older brother Charles Lenox Remond, it was not at all typical for black or white women to take the stage.<sup>8</sup> The British fixated on her "lady-like manner," which the press noted, reflected "all the qualities Victorian society cherishes in its women: cultivation, refinement, and modesty."<sup>9</sup>

Even in the early days of her public speaking career in the United States, Remond's appearance and demeanor were noted in newspaper stories of her speeches. Sarah Remond joined the U.S. American abolition lecture circuit in 1856 and travelled with her brother Charles, a long-time and well-known abolitionist in his own right. The Remond siblings' first lecture tour together was through New York where they shared the stage with the well-known and respected abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. Garrison reported on Sarah Remond's earliest public speaking efforts in the *Liberator*, remarking that she "commanded the respect and secured the attention of" her audience. Garrison noted that Sarah Remond gained and retained their attention and respect in part through "her calm, dignified manner."<sup>10</sup> Women publicly participating on the U.S. American abolition lecture circuit was also not typical, though it occurred more frequently than in

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<sup>8</sup> Teresa Zackodnik, *Press, Platform, Pulpit Black Feminist Publics in the Era of Reform*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2011), 58.

<sup>9</sup> Fisch, Audrey A., *American Slaves in Victorian England. Abolitionist Politics in Popular Literature and Culture*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 85.

<sup>10</sup> *The Liberator* quoted in Bert James Loewenberg and Ruth Bogin, editors, *Black Women in Nineteenth-Century American Life: Their Words Their Thoughts Their Feelings*, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), 223, accessed May 17, 2020, <https://archive.org/details/blackwomeninnin000unse/page/n11/mode/2up>; Ruth Bogin, "Sarah Parker Remond: Black Abolitionist from Salem," *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, Vol. 110, No. 1 (January, 1974), 129, accessed April 17, 2019, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027.wu.89067299339>; and Sirpa Salenius "Negra d'America Remond and Her Journeys," *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature* 14.5 (2012), 2, accessed August 24, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481.4374.2156>, all mention the 1856 New York tour as the first time Sarah Remond took on a public speaking role.

Britain. Sarah Remond was one of a small group of public speaking black female abolitionists which included Sojourner Truth, Mary Ann Shadd Cary and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper.<sup>11</sup> In Britain she was a curiosity because of her gender and skin color. These served her well as the novelty of seeing the black lady abolitionist speak resulted in a resurgence of British interests in abolition, which had waned.<sup>12</sup> Abolitionists, regardless of gender, used all the tools at their disposal to influence international public opinion in an effort to change minds at home.<sup>13</sup> In Britain the goal was to convince Britons to speak for the abolitionist cause, put pressure on their southern slave-holding associates in the United States and provide financial support for anti-slavery organizations on the other side of the Atlantic.<sup>14</sup>

The reports from the *Warrington Times* and *The Liberator* both show the British and U.S. American press and lecture audiences focused on how Sarah Remond suggested many of the attributes of the true woman (piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity) while she countered that ideology by assuming a very public role in the campaign against

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<sup>11</sup> Salenius, “Negra d’America...” 2 and Sibyl Ventress Brownlee, “Out of the abundance of the heart...,” 163.

<sup>12</sup> Brownlee, “Out of the abundance of the heart...,” 127 and Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England*, 84.

<sup>13</sup> Audrey A. Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England. Abolitionist Politics in Popular Literature and Culture*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000) see Chapter 4 “Negrophilism’ and nationalism: the spectacle of the African-American abolitionist.” Fisch contrasts Sarah Remond’s more conservative, cultured approach on the British anti-slavery lecture circuit, with Henry “Box” Brown’s more flamboyant lectures. “Box” Brown, as Fisch explains would have himself shipped to the lecture venue in a box, which was how he had fled enslavement, his lectures leaned more toward showmanship and buffoonery. Both Remond and “Box” Brown, in their own style, made the point that American enslavement society was backward and debasing (9).

<sup>14</sup> Ruth Bogin, “Sarah Parker Remond: Black Abolitionist from Salem,” in *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, Vol. 110, No. 1 (January 1974), 132, accessed April 17, 2019, <http://hdl.handle/net/2027.wu.89067299339>.

enslavement. It is not a surprise to note that another similarity Sarah Parker Remond and Louise Chancy Louverture share is the influence of the philosophy of true womanhood on their lives which both were raised to follow. In reality, it can only be inferred that Chancy Louverture followed the tenets of true womanhood. The surmise, while reasonable, is primarily based on what others, mostly men, have written about the way Chancy Louverture lived her life.<sup>15</sup> Chancy Louverture herself remains silent on the subject. Remond's own words on the other hand make clear how her mother, Nancy Lenox Remond, ingrained notions of domesticity and true womanhood into her daughters. In an autobiographical essay, Sarah Remond described her mother as "possessing every characteristic which can adorn or ennoble womanhood."<sup>16</sup> Sarah Remond further stated that her mother taught her and her sisters "domestic duties" including how "to knit, sew, and to cook every article of food placed upon the table."<sup>17</sup> This engagement with the norms of the dominant culture as a means of rejecting marginalization, was *marronage*, and it was practiced by her mother.

To better understand Sarah Parker Remond and how she became a powerful voice for abolition and for the rights of black women and men, she needs to be considered in several contexts including that of her family and the cities where she lived. Also of import is the role racism had in her life. It is by contemplating these that one is able to glean a fuller picture of the cosmopolitan Atlantic woman who successfully negotiated

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<sup>15</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>16</sup> Remond, "A Colored Lady Lecturer," 270. Also Quoted in Salenius, *An Abolitionist Abroad*, 30.

<sup>17</sup> Remond, "A Colored Lady Lecturer," 270. Also quoted in Salenius, *An Abolitionist Abroad*, 30. Brownlee, "Out of the abundance..." 55.

spaces for herself in Europe as she straddled true womanhood and new womanhood by adopting the values of redemptive womanhood. Among the black and white middle class redemptive activities undertaken to redeem the sins of society were seen as an extension of a woman's domestic responsibilities. In her role as a redemptive woman, Sarah Remond advocated for equality, fought political and social wrongs, which, at times, put her "in the center of controversies."<sup>18</sup> She used those controversies to highlight inequities, which were solely based on skin pigmentation and to underscore that "to be black was no crime, but an accident of birth."<sup>19</sup>

Reconstructing Sarah Parker Remond's life and contextualizing her experiences in terms of nineteenth-century notions of gender, race and class is easier than it is for Louise Chancy Louverture. Documentary information on Chancy Louverture's life is perhaps most accurately described as fragmentary. Remond's family life and her career as an abolitionist are better documented and information can be found in at least one full-length biographical monograph and several biographical essays.<sup>20</sup> Additionally,

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<sup>18</sup> Salenius, *An Abolitionist Abroad...*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Remond, "A Colored Lady Lecturer," 270.

<sup>20</sup> For biographical essays and books about Sarah Parker Remond see: Dorothy B. Porter, "Sarah Parker Remond, Abolitionist and Physician," in *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 20, No. 3, (July 1935): 287-293, accessed August 24, 2018, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2714720>. Ruth Bogin, "Sarah Parker Remond: Black Abolitionist from Salem," in *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, Vol. 110, No. 1 (January 1974): 120-150, accessed April 17, 2019, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027.wu89067299339>. Sibyl Ventress Brownlee, "Out of the Abundance of the heart: Sarah Ann Parker Remond's Quest for Freedom," Ph.D. Dissertation, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1997), accessed December 26, 2019, [https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/bfb1/ebfd3e62b30c0b6d9c9cdcdf38eddd41384.pdf?\\_ga=2.76663020.858256105.1577376586-1254671509.1577376585](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/bfb1/ebfd3e62b30c0b6d9c9cdcdf38eddd41384.pdf?_ga=2.76663020.858256105.1577376586-1254671509.1577376585). Brownlee's dissertation is unpublished. Willi Coleman, "Like Hot Lead to Pour on the Americans...": Sarah Parker Remond – From Salem, Mass., to the British Isles," in *Women's Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery in the Era of Emancipation*, James Brewer Steward and Kathryn Kish Sklar, editors, 173-187, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). Sirpa Salenius, *An Abolitionist Abroad. Sarah Parker Remond in Cosmopolitan Europe*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016). *An Abolitionist Abroad* is a full monograph entirely focused on Sarah Parker

Remond's abolitionist efforts are included in several works discussing the larger nineteenth-century abolition movement.<sup>21</sup> Another contrast with Chancy Louverture is that Sarah Parker Remond's own words survive in the form of newspaper reports and reprints of her abolition speeches in Britain, as well as her own writing on the subject of black citizenship and rights.<sup>22</sup> The most complete documentation comes from the very public phase of her life, her time on the abolition lecture circuit. The more private period in her life, after she moved to Italy, married, and the years leading up to her death, is not as well documented.

Sarah Parker Remond was born in 1824 in Salem, Massachusetts, which she described as a "healthy and pleasant" New England town, whose population of twenty-five thousand she characterized as being of "general intelligence, industry and enterprise."<sup>23</sup> Nineteenth-century Salem was home to a small but thriving black

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Remond's life. Sirpa Salenius, "negra d'America Remond and Her Journeys," in *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature Culture*, 14.5 (2012), accessed August 24, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481.4374.2156>.

<sup>21</sup> For discussions on Sarah Parker Remond's abolition efforts and participation on the abolition circuit, particularly in Britain, see: R.J.M. Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall. Black Americans in the Atlantic Abolitionist Movement, 1830-1860*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983); Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870*, (New York: Routledge, 1992); Dorothy Sterling, editor, *We Are Your Sisters Black Women in the Nineteenth Century*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984, reissued 1997); Audrey A. Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England. Abolitionist Politics in Popular Literature and Culture*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists A Study in Activism, 1828-1860*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992); Teresa Zackodnik, *Press Platform, Pulpit Black Feminist Publics in the Era of Reform*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> See: *The Black Abolitionist Papers, Vol. I: The British Isles, 1830-1865*, Peter C. Ripley, editor, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), EBSCO Publishing: eBook Collection, accessed January 8, 2020. Ripley reprints her speeches from the Red Lion Hotel in Warrington, February 2, 1859, from the Athenaeum in Manchester, September 14, 1859, letters to Boston-based Maria Weston Chapman, October 6, 1859, a series of letters centering on the denial of an American visa to a Scottish newspaper as well as to George Mifflin Dallas and Benjamin Moran of the American Legation from December 1859, and an 1865 letter to the London *Daily News*; Her speech, "The Negroes in the United States of America," is reprinted in *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 27, No. 2, (April 1942), 216-218, accessed December 4, 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2614735>.

community.<sup>24</sup> Some of the town's earliest black residents were enslaved and probably arrived in the seventeenth century; records from the Salem Witch trials of 1692 mention blacks as being in the town.<sup>25</sup> By the early eighteenth century, circa 1705, anti-slavery sentiments were developing in New England and by circa 1755 Salem was strongly anti-slavery for humanitarian reasons. Residents of Salem passed a ban on the importation of slaves in 1773, though it should be noted that Massachusetts did not abolish the enslavement of blacks until 1783.<sup>26</sup> Thus, abolitionist feelings were present in Salem long before the U.S. Revolutionary War. To learn, therefore, that Salem's free black female residents were the first to organize a female antislavery society in 1832, is not surprising. The organization raised funds and, in addition to abolition, was focused on racial uplift and advocating for equal rights.<sup>27</sup>

The Remond family was well-to-do and unlike many other freeborn and freed blacks, financially comfortable. The patriarch, John Remond, was from the Caribbean island of Curaçao, freeborn and of mixed ancestry. He arrived in Massachusetts as a child in 1798 where he trained as a caterer and barber.<sup>28</sup> John Remond was an entrepreneur who ran several business ventures, including as a "hairdresser, caterer, and merchant

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<sup>23</sup> Remond, "A Colored Lady Lecturer," 269.

<sup>24</sup> Coleman, "Like Hot Lead...", 174

<sup>25</sup> Brownlee, "Out of the Abundance of the Heart," 11-12.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 11-13.

<sup>27</sup> Coleman, "Like Hot Lead...", 176. Brownlee, "Out of an Abundance of the Heart," 26, also mentions the 1832 start date for the Salem Female Antislavery Society and that the women were focused on the "mutual improvement" and welfare of people of "our color."

<sup>28</sup> Brownlee, "Out of the Abundance of the Heart," 42. Brownlee indicates that John Remond's mother was also freeborn of African and French ancestry, while his father was a Dutch Jew. Coleman, "Like Hot Lead...", 174 also states that John Remond was from Curaçao and arrived in Massachusetts as a child.

trader of wine and other [imported] goods.”<sup>29</sup> In 1807 he married Nancy Lenox a freeborn Massachusetts native. Her father, Cornelius Lenox, had fought with the Patriots during the U.S. Revolutionary War, and, beginning in 1800, appeared as a landowner and tax payer in Newton, Massachusetts records.<sup>30</sup> Nancy Lenox and her siblings were educated and trained in various professions. She was a caterer and fancy cake maker.<sup>31</sup> The Remond parents were financially successful, owned property and held leadership positions in society. These factors along with their respectability, education, business successes and role in the community placed them in the ranks of the upper-middle class.<sup>32</sup>

Sarah Remond was the ninth of ten Remond children.<sup>33</sup> By Sarah Remond’s own account, her mother was the one who taught the Remond siblings to be self-sufficient and to accomplish all tasks, big or small, well. In Sarah Remond’s estimation, her mother’s exactitude was done in an effort to prepare her children to recognize their duty and to face the trials of life as people whose skin color would too frequently lead to prejudice.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists*, 15.

<sup>30</sup> Coleman, “Like Hot Lead...,” 174; Brownlee, “Out of the Abundance of the Heart,” 46, Salenius, *An Abolitionist Abroad*, 30 identify Cornelius Lenox as a Revolutionary War veteran.

<sup>31</sup> Brownlee, “Out of the Abundance of the Heart,” 46 and Coleman, “Like Hot Lead...,” 174; Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists A Study in Activism, 1828-1860*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 16.

<sup>32</sup> Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia’s Black Community, 1720-1840*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 217, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.01388> EPUB.

<sup>33</sup> Brownlee, “Out of the Abundance of the Heart,” 47 identifies the Remond Children as: Nancy born 1809, Charles Lenox born 1810, John Lenox born 1812, Susan born 1814, Cecelia born 1816, an unnamed son born 1817 died 1821, Marticha Juan born 1818, Mary born 1821 died at six months, Sarah Parker, 1824, and Caroline born 1826.

<sup>34</sup> Remond, “A Colored Lady Lecturer,” 270.

In the education of her children, Nancy Lenox Remond, followed the notions of Republican Motherhood. In white households Republican Mothers imparted the lessons of duty and citizenship onto their sons. In black households, however, that sense of duty and citizenship was taught to the daughters as well.<sup>35</sup>

As a prominent upper-middle-class black family in Salem, the Remond parents recognized that with their social position came social and civic responsibility. They instilled this sense of duty in their children. One of the ways the family demonstrated its sense of civic responsibility was through their advocacy for “racial and gender emancipation” and by adding their voices to the fight “against legalized discrimination,” a reality even in the northern United States.<sup>36</sup> Both John and Nancy Remond were staunch abolitionists and their children were raised in the antislavery movement. John Remond was a lifelong member of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, while Nancy Remond and her daughters were part of the Salem Female Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>37</sup> The family home often played host to luminaries of U.S. American abolition, both black and white, including William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, and William Wells Brown.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Salenius, *An Abolitionist Abroad*, 31. Republican Motherhood is discussed by Linda Kerber in “The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment – an American Perspective,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2, Special Issue: An American Enlightenment, (Summer, 1976): 202, accessed October 2, 2019, [www.jstor.org/stable/2712349](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2712349). Kerber explains that the Republican Mother’s political role was defined by U.S. American thinkers following the Revolutionary War, when women’s political role was seen as being in the domestic realm and focused on civic virtue and duty. The Republican Mother saw to it that her sons were educated as to their civic duty, while their husbands were reprimanded and corrected when they faltered in their civic duty. The Republican Mother had to be well informed so she could create virtuous citizens.

<sup>36</sup> Salenius, *An Abolitionist Abroad*, 38.

<sup>37</sup> Sterling, *We Are Your Sisters*, 175; Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England*, 83; Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists*, 16.



That the Remond children were also staunch abolitionists as adults is not surprising. Children raised in activist, abolitionist households often followed the example set by their parents.<sup>39</sup> In the Remond family, education on abolition and an emphasis on ideas of equality started early, were practiced at home and were reinforced through actions.

An important civic and racial responsibility the Remond family recognized was the acquisition of an education. This was true of other freed and freeborn black families. John Remond first came to Massachusetts to be educated in a trade and Nancy Remond and her siblings were also educated. In the black community getting an education was prized. Since it was so often a denied opportunity, it was, arguably also a form of resistance because it was seen as a way to show that black men and women had “intelligence, morality, and ingenuity.”<sup>40</sup> To combat the negative perception that blacks lacked intellect, the importance of education was stressed for both males and females.<sup>41</sup> This differed from white households where formal education was bestowed on boys while girls were educated in the domestic skills of a wife and mother.<sup>42</sup> By her own account Sarah Remond’s fondest wish was “to be educated.”<sup>43</sup> A voracious reader who “longed for more,” she found her education to be sporadic and, though her parents sought

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<sup>38</sup> Sterling, *We Are Your Sisters*, 175; Bogin, “Sarah Remond: Black Abolitionist...,” 127 also mentions the contact with William Wells Brown.

<sup>39</sup> Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists*, 16.

<sup>40</sup> Perkins, “The Impact of the “Cult of True womanhood...,” 19.

<sup>41</sup> Linda Perkins, “Black Women and Racial “Uplift” Prior to Emancipation,” in *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally*, edited by Filomena Chioma Steady, 317-334, (Cambridge, MA: Schenckman Publishing Company, Inc., 1981), 323.

<sup>42</sup> Perkins, “The Impact of the “Cult of True Womanhood” ...,” 17

<sup>43</sup> Remond, “A Colored Lady Lecturer,” 270.

schooling for her and her siblings, they were often refused because of the color of their skin.<sup>44</sup> One of her earliest experiences with racial injustice came when she was between the ages of nine and eleven. Having completed the course of schooling at the local primary school she and her older sister, Maritche, had passed the entrance exam to enter the Salem secondary school which was white. The white community did not want blacks attending the school and exerted tremendous pressure to have the girls expelled, something to which school officials eventually bowed. Years later, in her autobiographical essay, Sarah Remond recalled that when she was dismissed from school she “wept bitter tears” and reflected upon “the great injustice practised [sic] upon” her as she was “robbed ... of my personal rights.”<sup>45</sup>

In the nineteenth century it was not uncommon for black families, with the financial wherewithal, to temporarily relocate so their children could pursue their studies. The Remonds responded to the inadequate schooling opportunities for black children in Salem by moving to Newport, Rhode Island and enrolling their three youngest children, Maritche, Sarah and Caroline in a private school for blacks.<sup>46</sup> In Newport, the Remonds found themselves living in a predominantly black neighborhood, surrounded by black-owned businesses. This differed from their experience in Salem, where they lived on the

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<sup>44</sup> Remond, “A Colored Lady Lecturer,” 270.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 271.

<sup>46</sup> Perkins, “The Impact of the “Cult of True Womanhood” ...,” 20. Perkins makes this point of black families moving for the educational benefit of their children in relation to a college education. Sterling, *We Are Your Sisters*, 176, also discusses the Remonds move to Rhode Island, as does Brownlee, “Out of the Abundance of the Heart,” 62, 83. Brownlee explains that some of the older siblings remained in Salem tending to the family business enterprises. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists*, 35 mentions the school incident as well.

periphery of a white neighborhood separated from their neighbors. John Remond's businesses and abolitionist activities had put him, and thus his family, in contact with affluent individuals as well as activists both black and white. In Newport, however, the family found an even more activist black population than they had left in Salem.<sup>47</sup>

The move to Newport and the reasons for it, were foundational in Sarah Parker Remond's life. While Nancy Remond had tried to prepare her children for the inevitable discrimination they would face because of their skin color, Sarah and her siblings as children of the middle class likely lived a relatively sheltered existence. Their parents had held significant social positions and garnered respect among Salem's black and white residents. Sarah and Maritche's expulsion from Salem's high school was perhaps the girls' first experience with overt color discrimination. Sarah Remond saw the segregation of schools in Salem as a public branding of degradation.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the time in Newport illustrated that moving was a means of attaining freedom and rights. Further, the seven years in Newport exposed the Remonds and their children to a black community that did not wait for white residents to give them their due. They created their opportunities and forged their own paths.<sup>49</sup> These were lessons Sarah Remond learned early and well and she applied them to her life when she reached adulthood.

The racial experience between Sarah Remond and Louise Chancy Louverture does not appear similar, their exposure to strong women of color actively participating in

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<sup>47</sup> Brownlee, "Out of the Abundance of the Heart," 83.

<sup>48</sup> Remond, "A Colored Lady Lecturer," 271.

<sup>49</sup> Brownlee, "Out of the Abundance of the Heart," 92.

business and the public sphere is a commonality. As demonstrated earlier, when she was a child and young woman in Saint-Domingue, Louise Chancy Louverture saw women of mixed ancestry, like herself, wielding tremendous financial power. These women conducted business in the public sphere for the benefit of their families. The evidence indicates that when Chancy Louverture travelled to Haiti in the 1820s she spent about three years “recovering Toussaint Louverture’s scattered fortune and managing various properties [Isaac and she] had inherited.”<sup>50</sup> Notably, these external, and rather public activities were done outside of France and away from the watchful eyes of bourgeois French society where Chancy Louverture had established herself and her family. As has been previously argued, however, Chancy Louverture’s efforts in Haiti were executed for the good of her family and therefore fall within the realm of domesticity and would not have been perceived as being counter to the tenets of true womanhood.

Sarah Remond had similar examples of free black women engaging in the public sphere. Though financially comfortable, the Remonds, as with other middle class free black families, did not sequester females.<sup>51</sup> Free black communities while adhering to the ideas of true womanhood pushed the traditional boundaries of domesticity through the modification and expansion of “strict standards of female propriety” in service of the larger effort of uplifting the race.<sup>52</sup> This differed from white middle class communities

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<sup>50</sup> Alfred Nemours, *Histoire de la famille et de la descendance de Toussaint-Louverture*, (Port-au-Prince: Editions Presses nationales d’Haïti, Collection Mémoire Vivante, Juin 2008, originally 1941), 129. See also Jacques de Cauna, *Toussaint Louverture et l’Indépendance d’Haïti*, (Paris: Éditions Karthala et Société française d’histoire d’Outre-mer, 2003), 250.

<sup>51</sup> Coleman, “Like Hot Lead...,” 175.

<sup>52</sup> Yee, *Black Abolitionists Women*, 46.

where women were perceived as incapable and too delicate to take part in politics or business. Free black women, in contrast were not excluded from these aforementioned public spheres. Within the Remond household, Sarah Remond's sisters and their mother operated several lucrative businesses. Nancy Lenox Remond, the matriarch, was a caterer known for her cake making, a business her daughter Susan took over.<sup>53</sup> The other sisters, Cecilia Remond Babcock, Maritche Remond, and Caroline Remond Putnam owned a hair salon and wig factory, the latter the biggest in Massachusetts.<sup>54</sup> The elder Remond sisters and their mother not only operated successful businesses they simultaneously held leadership positions in Salem's abolitionist society. Sarah Remond herself worked in the various family business enterprises and was a member of the abolition society before embarking on her public lecturing career. The example set by her mother, sisters and other free black women in her community was that adhering to the principles of true womanhood and exhibiting lady-like manners did not preclude one from taking public action.<sup>55</sup>

Freeborn and freed black women in the United States like the Remonds used their talents and education for both profitable and civic charitable endeavors. Typically their civic and charitable efforts were focused on elevating the position of blacks within society and advocating for the liberation of the enslaved. The black woman's responsibility to her family and to the black community – free, freed and enslaved – was

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<sup>53</sup> Yee, *Black Abolitionists Women*, 16.

<sup>54</sup> Sterling, *We Are Your Sisters*, 96; Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists*, 16; Salenius, *An Abolitionist Abroad*, 38.

<sup>55</sup> Yee, *Black Abolitionists Women*, 46.

reinforced by African American newspaper editors and letter writers. Published pieces called for and “actively encouraged black women to become more involved in redemptive activities,” which was recognized as a significant means of countering white color prejudice.<sup>56</sup> In yet another instance of using established systems to effectuate social change, the idea of the redemptive woman, which first appeared in white communities in the early nineteenth century, was also adopted by black women.

Black and white women’s redemptive undertakings included organizing fundraising activities such as fairs and sewing circles. The money collected funded causes - typically those tied to antislavery - paid for speakers, printed materials, and the circulation of those materials. The redemptive women became effective organizers and political activists, “justifying their actions by referring to their moral duty to become involved in antislavery campaigns.”<sup>57</sup> By the 1830s black newspapers and writers were fully on board with the notion of woman as redeemer and in this role it became more acceptable for women to speak in public since the cause was righteous. By the 1850s, when Sarah Remond began speaking in public, the concerns over womanly propriety which peppered the black press early on was less of a worry.<sup>58</sup> Black women were in fact urged to become redemptive women first to bolster their community which was weakened by racism, and second to counter the stereotypical narrative that blacks were

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<sup>56</sup> Barbara Cutter, *Domestic Devils, Battlefield Angels. The Radicalism of American Womanhood, 1830-1865*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University, 2003), 70.

<sup>57</sup> Salenius, *An Abolitionist Abroad*, 51.

<sup>58</sup> Cutter, *Domestic Devils, Battlefield Angels*, 95.

inferior, incapable of civilized behavior and unable to be virtuous.<sup>59</sup> The theme of redemption became an important one for Sarah Remond the more involved she became in the cause of abolition.

Sarah Remond, along with her mother and sisters, was a member of the Salem Female Antislavery Society. Unlike the other Remond women, who held leadership positions in the Society, it seems Sarah Remond's involvement was limited to attending lectures.<sup>60</sup> Always close to her older brother, Charles Lenox Remond, a well-known abolitionist, antislavery lecturer and advocate, Sarah Remond's early approach reflected his influence. Charles Remond's style was one "of public confrontation."<sup>61</sup> Her brother's influence likely explains Sarah Remond's highly visible skirmish at Boston's Howard Athenaeum in 1853. The Howard Athenaeum incident is discussed in several of the sources and the facts are consistent in all. Sarah Remond, her sister Caroline Remond and a family friend, William Cooper Nell, held tickets for an opera performance. The tickets, acquired via an agent, were in the theater section reserved for whites. Rather than seating them in the seats purchased, theater officials tried to seat them in the section reserved for blacks. When the Remonds rejected the new seat assignments, they were offered a refund, which they also refused. The police were called and in the ensuing altercation, Sarah Remond was pushed down stairs, injured, and her dress torn. She and her sister brought suit and prevailed, receiving an award of five hundred dollars. More

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<sup>59</sup> Cutter, *Domestic Devils, Battlefield Angels*, 66 and 68.

<sup>60</sup> Coleman, "Like Hot Lead..." 176. See also, Brownlee, "Out of the Abundance of the Heart," 102.

<sup>61</sup> Coleman, "Like Hot Lead...", 176.

significantly, Sarah Remond's lawsuit resulted in the Howard Athenaeum instituting an integration policy, blacks and whites were admitted equally.<sup>62</sup>

Both Sibyl Ventress Brownlee and Willi Coleman posit that Remond deliberately engineered the Boston incident, and a similar less successful one at a Philadelphia exhibition "to test the foundations of racism and discrimination" in public places.<sup>63</sup> Markedly, Sarah Remond chose two venues associated with culture and refinement for these conspicuous conflicts, sites of middle- and upper-class socializing not typically associated with blacks. Appreciation of the fine arts, like opera and art, were also marks of femininity and a means of garnering social capital for oneself and/or family. Louise Chancy Louverture engaged in similar social activities in France as her note about an 1803 musicale previously demonstrated. Remond's encounter at the Howard Athenaeum is an example of her active engagement in the reordering of society, an example of *sociogenic marronage*. It also illustrates how her approach was completely different from Louise Chancy Louverture who was older and more traditional.

Until the Howard Athenaeum incident, Sarah Remond's abolitionism can best be described as passive and observational. Even for activist black females, orchestrating an episode that could easily incite a physical confrontation was not expected. At the same time, the black female was also not expected to quietly acquiesce when treated badly.<sup>64</sup> Following Boston Sarah Remond became more vocal and active as an abolitionist and

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<sup>62</sup> Porter, "Sarah Parker Remond," 288; Sterling, *We Are Your Sisters*, 176; Brownlee, "Out of the abundance of the heart," 70; Coleman, "Like Hot Lead..." 177; Salenius, "negra d'America," 3.

<sup>63</sup> Brownlee, "Out of the abundance of the heart," 70; Coleman, "Like Hot Lead..." 177.

<sup>64</sup> Coleman, "Like Hot Lead..." 177.



anti-segregationist and she seemed to create situations where she would be discriminated against and would then have to fight back.<sup>65</sup> The Athenaeum contretemps and ensuing legal action ushered Remond's move into the public arena though it was still another three years before she took the stage and began lecturing publicly.

Sarah Remond's reticence was tied to her insecurities about her education and language skills which she felt were lacking. In a December 1858 letter to abolitionist Abby Kelley Foster, Remond attributed her initial reluctance to speak publicly because she "felt that I was in need of a good English education."<sup>66</sup> Additionally, the gender norms of the day and the notions of domesticity meant that women could not be away from home for extended periods of time. A lecture tour through several states definitely entailed long absences from home, hearth, and family domestic responsibilities.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, the black middle-class community, to which the Remonds belonged, had adopted and adapted white gender norms in an effort to fight prejudice based on skin color. While they recognized the importance of public lecturing against enslavement, sending women so completely into the public arena, thwarted efforts "to create middle-class gender roles."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Coleman, "Like Hot Lead..." 177.

<sup>66</sup> Sarah Parker Remond, and Abby Kelley Foster, "Letter from Sarah Parker Remond, to Abby Kelley Foster, December 21, 1858." Correspondence, December 21, 1858. American Antiquarian Society, Digitized Manuscripts, Box 2, Folder 12: 1858, accessed September 11, 2020, <https://www.americanantiquarian.org/abby-kelley-foster-papers-finding-aid>.

<sup>67</sup> Brownlee, "Out of the abundance of the heart..." 108. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists*, 116.

<sup>68</sup> Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists*, 117.

By 1856, however, the urgings and encouragement she received from both her brother Charles Remond and her friend Abby Kelley Foster prompted Sarah Remond to embark on a lecture tour. She and her brother Charles toured New York, Ohio, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Canada as agents of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Though they toured in the northern, i.e., free states, the Remond siblings still confronted racism. Often as the only blacks on the tour the Remonds were greeted with insults and not given hotel accommodations because of their skin color.<sup>69</sup> This was not an unusual occurrence for black speakers on the lecture circuit. Mary Ann Shadd Cary wrote of similar experiences.<sup>70</sup> William Lloyd Garrison also alludes to the difficulty black speakers encountered on the U.S. American abolition lecture circuit. In a letter to his wife, dated February 9, 1857, Garrison specifically mentions the Remond siblings “Charles L. Remond and his sister,” though stating they were in good health and spirits Garrison added, “they have had a hard time of it for the last two months.”<sup>71</sup>

Despite the negative reactions engendered because of her skin color, Sarah Remond remained passionate about the anti-slavery cause. Her December 1858 letter to Abby Kelley Foster indicates that her one regret was not embarking sooner “in this particular field of labour [sic]...although my heart was in the work.”<sup>72</sup> Her fervor for the cause was conveyed in her lectures, even during her early days on the tour as her

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<sup>69</sup> Porter, “Sarah Parker Remond, Abolitionist and Physician,” 288; Brownlee, “Out of the abundance of the heart...” 108.

<sup>70</sup> Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists*, 36.

<sup>71</sup> William Lloyd Garrison and Helen Eliza Garrison, “Letter from William Lloyd Garrison, Rochester [NY], to Helen Eliza Garrison, Feb. 9, 1857.” Correspondence, February 9, 1857, *Digital Commonwealth*, accessed September 9, 2020, <https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/cv43rh86d>, 3.

<sup>72</sup> Sarah Parker Remond to Abby Kelley Foster, correspondence December 21, 1858.

oratorical skills developed. Garrison, in a February 12, 1857 letter to his wife, remarked on Sarah Remond's potential:

Sarah spoke but once in our meetings, but acquitted herself admirably. She only needs a little more confidence and a little more practice to make her a good lecturer.<sup>73</sup>

By December 1858 she had developed her skills enough to decide to sail for England. As she intimates in her December 21, 1858 letter to Kelley Foster, Remond remained aggrieved since she was so frequently denied her rights as an American, and only “because I was the possessor of an unpopular complexion...”<sup>74</sup> In England she anticipated finding more freedom while maintaining her connections to the anti-slavery movement.<sup>75</sup> These intentions emphasize her mobility within the Atlantic world. Her plan to remain connected to the U.S. American anti-slavery cause mark her as a member of the diaspora. Her emigration was in essence *marronage* in a more traditional sense, since her flight was an escape indicative of her refusal to submit to oppression and discrimination.

Sarah Remond left the United States in December 1858 and arrived in Liverpool, England in January 1859. Shortly after debarking she began a grueling two-year tour of the United Kingdom. Between January 1859 and January 1861, the popular speaker and well-known reformer addressed audiences in Warrington, Lancashire, Manchester, Liverpool, Dublin, and Scotland.<sup>76</sup> After two years on the U.S. American abolition

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<sup>73</sup> William Lloyd Garrison and Helen Eliza Garrison, “Letter from William Lloyd Garrison, Syracuse [NY], to Helen Eliza Garrison, Feb. 12, 1857.” Correspondence, February 12, 1857, *Digital Commonwealth*, accessed September 11, 2020, <https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/cv43rh918>.

<sup>74</sup> “Letter from Sarah Parker Remond to Abby Kelley Foster, December 21, 1858.”

<sup>75</sup> Salenius, *An Abolitionist Abroad*, 96.

<sup>76</sup> Zackodnick, *Press, Platform, Pulpit*, 75.

lecture circuit her public speaking skills were polished. Remond had a talent for eliciting sympathy and outrage for the mistreatment of enslaved women and men which often generated tangible action from her British audiences. Though she touched on several themes, she tended to stress subjects that were most appropriate for her specific audience. Thus, in Manchester where a laboring class received and manufactured southern U.S. American cotton by the tons, Remond began her talk by outlining the differences between the social life for whites in the northern “free” states and the life of whites in the southern “slave” states. According to Remond whites living in the north could at least entertain notions of democracy, equality and financial success. In the south, on the other hand, the “five million poor whites” lived in degradation, ignorance and poverty while elite aristocratic whites looked upon labor as dishonorable no matter who was laboring.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, Remond added that neither the enslaved, nor the poor white laborer, benefited financially from cotton, the multi-million-dollar commodity they toiled to grow, reap, and process.<sup>78</sup>

Remond was at her most eloquent and effective, however, when she invoked the plight of enslaved women before her largely female audiences. She tapped into the Victorian/Antebellum woman and sister narrative, which stressed the common humanity and community of all women, regardless of skin color.<sup>79</sup> The woman and sister approach

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<sup>77</sup> Sarah P. Remond, Speech delivered at the Athenaeum, Manchester, England, 14 September 1859. Reprinted from the *Manchester Weekly Times*, 17 September 1859, in *The Black Abolitionist Papers: Vol. I: The British Isles, 1830-1865*. Peter C. Ripley, editor, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 457.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, 458.

<sup>79</sup> Jean Fagan Yellin, *Women & Sisters. The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), XIV and 26.

became a way for “white women to identify with black women” who bore the shackles of slavery.<sup>80</sup> As Remond and other abolitionists presented it, females, regardless of race, experienced different degrees of oppression because of their gender.<sup>81</sup> As an adult Sarah Remond continued to heed the exhortation heard in her youth when William Wells Brown called on women to “rise to the defense of women who were enslaved.”<sup>82</sup> This focus is reflective of both her role as a redemptive woman and her social position as upper-middle-class. Remond’s lectures usually addressed the sexual exploitation of enslaved women, making her one of the first abolitionists of any color or gender to broach the topic.<sup>83</sup>

During her first lecture in Warrington, England on January 24, 1859 Remond referred to “the most pitiable condition” of the enslaved female who too often was powerless in the face of “the licentious slaveholders” heaping “cruel outrage” on her.<sup>84</sup> In Dublin in March of 1859 she invoked the “defenceless [sic] female” who was subject to the unwelcome desires of “the veriest [sic] scoundrel” who plotted her ruin.<sup>85</sup> The population of mixed ancestry individuals living in the southern United States and

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<sup>80</sup> Yellin, *Women & Sisters*, 171.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, 171.

<sup>82</sup> Bogin, “Sarah Parker Remond: Black Abolitionist from Salem,” 127.

<sup>83</sup> Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England*, 84.

<sup>84</sup> Sarah P. Remond, “Slave Life in America,” Music Hall, Warrington, England, January 24, 1859. Reprinted from *Warrington Times*, 29 January 1859, in *The Black Abolitionist Papers: Vol. I: The British Isles, 1830-1865*, Peter C. Ripley, editor, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 437.

<sup>85</sup> “Miss Remond’s First Lecture in Dublin,” *Anti-Slavery Advocate*, Volume 2, No. 28 (April 1859). Dorothy Porter Wesley Collection (BCL0903, Special Collections and Archives, African-American Research Library and Cultural Center, Broward County Library, accessed September 9, 2020, <https://digitalarchives.broward.org/digital/collection/antislavery/id/275/rec/8>, 223.

numbering in the hundreds of thousands gave proof to the indignities enslaved black women forcibly endured at the hands of white male slave holders.<sup>86</sup> As Remond detailed, enslaved women of mixed ancestry were even more likely to experience sexual exploitation, since “the more Anglo-Saxon blood mingles with the blood of the slave,” the higher the enslaved woman’s sale price and the greater chance she would become a white man’s concubine.<sup>87</sup>

The subject of the sexual exploitation of enslaved women was particularly aimed at the females in her audience as were the details of countless enslaved black families torn apart at the behest of a cruel master, “husband and wife...continually separated and sold...children torn from their parents, and mothers bereaved of their beloved little ones.”<sup>88</sup> Remond’s aim with these themes was twofold: first to highlight that though enslaved black women made every effort to maintain their virtue and purity – a principle of true womanhood – they were often the victims of sexual predation. Second, she emphasized how their attempts to build families that resembled traditional white middle class families were hindered by cruel, immoral and sinful white slave holders. No story better illustrated her point than the case of the enslaved Kentucky woman Margaret Garner.<sup>89</sup> In January 1856 the pregnant Garner, her husband, their four children, and her

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<sup>86</sup> The theme of the mixed ancestry population in the south as proof of the sexual exploitation of enslaved black women is one Sarah Remond brought up in her speeches in Warrington on January 24, 1859 and February 2, 1859. She also mentioned it in her September 14, 1859 speech in Manchester. Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, 144, also mentions this recurring theme in Remond’s British speeches.

<sup>87</sup> Remond, “Slave Life in America,” 438, Zackodnick, *Press, Platform and Pulpit*, 80.

<sup>88</sup> “Miss Remond’s First Lecture in Dublin,” 222, Zackodnick, *Press, Platform and Pulpit*, 76.

<sup>89</sup> Julius Yanuck, “The Garner Fugitive Slave Case,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (June 1952), accessed September 7, 2020, <https://www.jstor.com/stable/1897542>, gives a detailed

mother- and father-in-law escaped enslavement and headed to Cincinnati, a “main starting point on the Underground Railroad.”<sup>90</sup> Slave hunters discovered the family hiding in a cabin and though the Garner men tried to fend them off their efforts were futile. In the midst of the stand-off, Margaret Garner grabbed a butcher knife and proceeded to kill her three-year-old daughter and called to her mother-in-law to “help me kill the children.”<sup>91</sup> When the knife was finally pulled from her hand, one child was dead (or nearly so), two others were bleeding, and the fourth was bruised. Garner cried “that [she] would rather kill every one of her children than have them taken back...” into enslavement.<sup>92</sup> This horrific tale was one Remond revisited again and again. In her hands Garner became the ideal mother figure who demonstrated her devotion to her children by choosing to “return them to the bosom of God” rather than to the degradation of enslavement.<sup>93</sup> Garner, as presented by Remond, was not only a true woman and ideal mother, in her own way she attempted to redeem her children from the sin of enslavement thrust upon them at birth.

Remond never lost sight of her role as a redemptive woman as her focus on the immorality of enslavement, a significant aspect of her speeches, illustrates. She often invoked God and the rights guaranteed by God, including that “of liberty and the right to pursue happiness,” and expressed how the taking of those rights violated the “higher law

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account of the Garner case, including the legal proceedings between the pro-slavery faction and the supporters of abolition.

<sup>90</sup> Yanuck, “The Garner Fugitive Slave Case,” 50.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>92</sup> Yanuck, “The Garner Fugitive Slave Case,” 52.

<sup>93</sup> Remond, “Slave Life in America,” 437.

of God.”<sup>94</sup> In her January 24, 1859 speech in Warrington, for the sake of argument Remond posited that even if blacks were inferior – a notion she emphatically rejected - it was thus the white community’s duty, as the Christians they claimed to be, and in “the name of humanity to protect them because [blacks] were weak.”<sup>95</sup> Remond’s approach in her lectures proved quite successful in reaching her audience and prompting them to take action. Her three appearances in Warrington, January 24 and 31, and February 2, 1859, resulted in three thousand five and twenty-five local signatures on “an address condemning slavery” and a donation of “\$100 to the American Anti-Slavery Society.”<sup>96</sup> Moreover on February 2, according to the *Warrington Times* and a letter written by William Robson to William Lloyd Garrison,

The ladies of the town made Miss Remond a present...[a] silver watch with an inscription, ‘Presented to Miss S.P. Remond by Englishwomen, her sisters in Warrington.’<sup>97</sup>

When she left the U.S. in December 1858, one of Sarah Remond’s goals was “to serve the anti-slavery cause.”<sup>98</sup> This, as demonstrated, she accomplished with tremendous success. Another aim was to continue her education, because for black U.S. Americans an education was a basic right that they were too often denied. As black U.S. Americans

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<sup>94</sup> Remond, “Slave Life in America,” 437.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 439.

<sup>96</sup> Remond, Speech Delivered at the Red Lion Hotel, Warrington, England, 2 February 1859, 445.

<sup>97</sup> William Robson and William Lloyd Garrison, “Letter from William Robson, Warrington [England], to William Lloyd Garrison, 1859 March 3.” Correspondence. March 3, 1859, *Digital Commonwealth*, accessed September 9, 2020, <https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/2v23x252>. See also Remond Speech Delivered at the Red Lion Hotel, Warrington, England, 2 February 1859, 446.

<sup>98</sup> Salenius, “negra d’ America,” 3.



like Sarah Remond saw it, an educated individual had a space in society, was able and encouraged to participate in the political process and their education was “a significant factor leading to greater self-esteem and respect.”<sup>99</sup> It was both a form of resistance to color prejudice and a response to the denials of black humanity and rights. By October 1859, in addition to her demanding speaking schedule, Sarah Remond began a course of study at London’s Bedford College for Ladies. In the beginning her coursework was more about fulfilling her intellectual curiosity than about acquiring a degree. Thus, she took a variety of, what today would be called, general education classes – “ancient history, mathematics, geography, French, Latin, elocution and vocal music.”<sup>100</sup> Sometime in or after 1861, Remond’s interests turned to the medical arts and she “enrolled at the All Saints University College to study nursing.”<sup>101</sup> The department, run by an Anglican Sisterhood, was affiliated with University College Hospital which was used as the training environment for nurses in the All Saints program. Sarah Remond took her training in surgery finishing in 1865. The last according to her friend, Giuseppe Mazzini, exiled leader of the Italian Nationalists.<sup>102</sup>

In August 1866, Sarah Remond decided to leave London.<sup>103</sup> Once a haven for black U.S. Americans searching for freedom and opportunity, British attitudes towards

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<sup>99</sup> Salenius, *An Abolitionist Abroad*, 129.

<sup>100</sup> Salenius, “negra d’America,” 6.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>103</sup> Brownlee, “Out of the Abundance of the Heart,” 155; Coleman, “Like Hot Lead,” 182; Salenius, “negra d’America,” 6 all give the 1866 date for Remond’s departure from England.

blacks had undergone a change. Rather than accepting blacks and welcoming them into society, by the mid-1860s Britons found them lacking and unworthy. The change is attributed to economic downturns that resulted in part from the U.S. American Civil War.<sup>104</sup> The Civil War severely curtailed the availability of products from the slave-dependent South thus affecting trade and the economy. Also contributing to the British economic downturn were sustained financial setbacks experienced in the British Caribbean colonies. There was a decrease in sugar production following emancipation and this was attributed to black laziness.<sup>105</sup> The 1865 uprising among Afro-Jamaicans in Morant Bay, Jamaica, further contributed to the economic constraints and confirmed to the British that blacks, no matter their education, were inferior and incapable of civility.<sup>106</sup> Treatises promoting scientific and anthropological racism helped reinforced the British position.

Confronted with these changing attitudes, Sarah Remond had three choices: remain in England, return to her U.S. homeland, or move somewhere else. Her critics, and even some of her friends, believed that Remond's nursing skills and education would have been better used had she returned to the U.S. where she could have assisted the newly emancipated blacks. Remond, however, chose a different path and instead headed

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<sup>104</sup> Douglas A. Lorrimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians. English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1978). Lorrimer traces the change in Victorian British attitudes towards blacks. He describes an increasingly racialized perception of blacks and a growing lack of acceptance toward black people no matter how educated since it was perceived that blacks lacked gentility.

<sup>105</sup> Lorrimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians*, 126.

<sup>106</sup> Lorrimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians*, 15 and 16. For information on the Morant Bay Rebellion see, Thomas C. Holt, "War of the Races," in *The Problem of Freedom. Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

to Italy where more opportunities awaited her. She arrived in Florence and applied for admission to medical school at Santa Maria Nuova Hospital School in Florence, and “was admitted to audit classes.”<sup>107</sup> In their letters of recommendations her former supervisors praised her describing her as “dedicated to her work...competent, energetic, [giving] unwavering attention and kindness to the ailing under her care.”<sup>108</sup> By November 1867 Remond had applied for full admission to study obstetrics and received top marks on the entrance exam. By July 1868 her coursework and practical training completed, Sarah Remond took the final examinations and established herself as a physician in Florence.<sup>109</sup>

Notably, Sarah Remond’s choice of profession, nurse and doctor, meant she continued to adhere to notions of domesticity and true womanhood, even as she pushed their boundaries. Nurturing, which certainly falls within the scope of a nurse and doctor’s duties, was seen as being in the domestic, i.e., female, realm.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, the true woman was expected to offer comfort and to nurse the sick.<sup>111</sup> Time and again Sarah Parker Remond pushed and broadened the boundaries of ideal womanhood. In becoming first a nurse and then a doctor she widened those borders once more. Her marriage in 1877 to Lazzaro Pintor, an office worker originally from Sardinia, was in part a step toward more traditional expectations of womanhood. Yet, here again, Remond pushed

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<sup>107</sup> Salenius, “negra d’America,” 7.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 6

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>110</sup> Rachel G. Fuchs and Victoria E. Thompson, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, 2 and 158.

<sup>111</sup> Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” in *American Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 2, Part I (Summer, 1996): 163.

boundaries – her husband was white and about six years younger.<sup>112</sup> The marriage, of which little is known, seems to have lasted only about two years. Though they never divorced and she added Pintor to her name, the two lived separately.

By the time she died in Rome in 1894, Sarah Parker Remond Pintor had crossed the Atlantic and evolved from redemptive womanhood into the realm of new womanhood, while at all times recalling and adhering to the tenets of true womanhood. Educated women like Remond Pintor, who took part in revolutionary protests realized their potential as individuals, as actors and as agents.<sup>113</sup> Remond Pintor was a role model and an inspiration for younger women, including the professional U.S. American sculptor Edmonia Lewis. Remond and Lewis arrived in Italy at around the same time, knew each other and socialized on several occasions. Remond's example of living her life on her own terms, creating and pursuing her own opportunities without a doubt inspired Lewis the new woman of this project.

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<sup>112</sup> Coleman, "Like Hot Lead," 184; Salenius, "negra d'America," 9; Salenius, *An Abolitionist Abroad*, 185, all mention her marriage of which little is known other than the date and her husband's name.

<sup>113</sup> Fuchs and Thomson, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, 3

## Chapter 4

### Atlantic New Womanhood in the Long Nineteenth Century

In the Spring of 1988 Marilyn Richardson, an independent art historian, curator and scholar entered the dark storage area of a suburban Chicago shopping mall. Sitting among the out-of-season holiday decorations was a five-foot by two and a half-foot by four-foot marble statue. The sculpture was covered in latex house paint and extensively damaged. The pock marks on the face served as testimony to the many years it had spent outdoors exposed to the vagaries of the weather and pollution. Richardson, however, was sure this was the statue she had been seeking for years. The name etched along the base, Edmonia Lewis, made the identification undeniable. Lost to the art world for a little over a century, Richardson had finally found *The Death of Cleopatra*, Lewis' masterpiece [See Figure 10].<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lizzie Peabody, "Finding Cleopatra," *Sidedoor* (Podcast), Season 4, Episode 14, original air date December 11, 2019, accessed February 11, 2021, <https://www.si.edu/sidedoor/ep-14-finding-cleopatra>. Between 1878 and 1988 it appears *The Death of Cleopatra* was in a saloon on Chicago's Clark Street. It was acquired at some point by the gambler "Blind John" Condon, who used it as a grave marker for his favorite racehorse, Cleopatra. The statue stood where Condon placed it until the 1970s as the site went from racetrack to golf course, to torpedo plant in World War II. It was moved to a storage yard when the United States Postal Service slated the site for one of its facilities. At the storage yard a troupe of Boy Scouts painted it with latex house paint. The Forest Park, Illinois Historical Society took possession of the statue in 1985 and made inquiries about it to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, which is how Richardson heard about the work and made her way to the Forest Park Mall and rediscovered *The Death of Cleopatra*. Within a year the statue was donated to the Smithsonian American Art Museum where it underwent extensive conservation and restoration. Costing \$30,000 and lasting one year, the restoration included reconstructing the nose, chin, headdress and left hand; replacing the asp and fingers of the right hand and restoring the sandals. The conservation/restoration was done using one surviving photograph. Should more photographs or information come to light giving more accurate details, everything done in the 1990s can be reversed. *The Death of Cleopatra* was placed on view in 1994. For details of *The Death of Cleopatra's* colorful journey from the 1876 Philadelphia International Exhibition, where it was first shown, to its current location in Washington, DC's Smithsonian American Art Museum, see: Stephen May, "The Object at Hand," in *Smithsonian Magazine*, (September 1996), accessed February 19, 2021, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/the-object-at-hand-4-121205387/>; and Michael Faris, "The Strange Case of the Missing Sculpture of Cleopatra," *Arts, Artists, Artwork Blog*, (June 13, 2017), accessed, February 8, 2021, <https://artsartistsartwork.com/the-strange-case-of-the-missing-sculpture-of-cleopatra/>. May's article details the conservation/restoration efforts.

When it was shown for the first time at the 1876 Philadelphia International Exposition *The Death of Cleopatra* was lauded by the U.S. American and International press: “Cleopatra Dying is the only thing of interest in the southwest pavilion,” said the *New York Tribune*.<sup>2</sup> Another publication, *The Golden Rule*, proclaimed that Lewis’ *Cleopatra* was “the only representation of that queen I have ever seen worthy of her historical character.”<sup>3</sup> *The Sunday Mercury* pronounced that it deserved to be called a masterpiece and further stated it was “one of the grandest statues in the Exposition.”<sup>4</sup> Rounding out the accolades was the *Daily News* of London, England whose writer expressed the “hope that this work will not remain in America, but that it will find its way in to our Royal Academy.”<sup>5</sup> The statue was popular among Exposition attendees as well, the *Sunday Mercury* reported that it was impossible to walk around the piece to observe the details since *Cleopatra* was usually surrounded by a crowd.<sup>6</sup> Of the artist, Edmonia Lewis, the nineteenth-century art critic, William J. Clark, Jr. declared that such a

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<sup>2</sup> The New York Tribune, reproduced in *The Death of Cleopatra a Colossal Statue of Marble* executed by Edmonia Lewis in Rome Italy. A Sketch of the Life of Cleopatra with Antony, (Rome: Printed by Simimberghi, 1878), 47, accessed February 22, 2021 <https://archive.org/details/deathofcleopatra00unse>. This appears to be a promotional booklet perhaps prepared for an exhibition in Chicago in 1878. The first part provides a historical summary of Cleopatra’s reign and her death, the second features a poem about Cleopatra’s death, and the final section includes a series of newspaper clippings with reviews from the 1876 Philadelphia International Exhibition.

<sup>3</sup> *The Golden Rule*, August 9, 1876, reproduced in *The Death of Cleopatra a Colossal Statue of Marble*, 42. It should be noted that Cleopatra was a popular subject among nineteenth-century artists. The white male American artists, William Wetmore Story and Thomas Ridgeway Gould, both better known than Edmonia Lewis had produced their own versions of Cleopatra, Story in 1858 (carved in 1869) and Gould in 1873.

<sup>4</sup> The Sunday Mercury, 1876, reproduced in *The Death of Cleopatra a Colossal Statue of Marble*, 46.

<sup>5</sup> Dally [sic]-News London-England, September 1876, reproduced in *The Death of Cleopatra a Colossal Statue of Marble*, 54. The booklet’s author misspelled Daily.

<sup>6</sup> The Sunday Mercury, 1876, reproduced in *The Death of Cleopatra a Colossal Statue of Marble*, 46.

sculpture “could only have been produced by a sculptor of very genuine endowments.”<sup>7</sup> Though it was available for purchase *The Death of Cleopatra* did not sell in Philadelphia and was next shown at the 1878 Chicago Interstate Exposition, where it was again a popular attraction. Once more, however, the sculpture remained unsold and after the Chicago Exposition it disappeared from the art world.

The disappearance of a three-thousand-pound marble sculpture which received considerable attention whenever it was exhibited seems incredible. For such a celebrated piece, its late twentieth century location and state were ignominious, but, as Richardson says, at least it was indoors.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, *Cleopatra’s* tale is all too familiar for an artwork produced by a woman. Add to the mix that the artist was of mixed African and Chippewa ancestry and the work’s disappearance becomes a bit easier to understand.<sup>9</sup> In the western art tradition, which is dominated by white men, it is somewhat typical for art produced by women to not only be undervalued but for it to vanish, as *The Death of Cleopatra* did for one hundred and ten years.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, female artists, once well-known in their time, also regularly disappear from the art historical record and often have their work attributed to their better known male contemporaries.<sup>11</sup> Edmonia Lewis, who

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<sup>7</sup> William J. Clark, Jr., *Great American Sculptures*, (Philadelphia: Gebbie & Barrie, 1878), 142, accessed February 19, 2021, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/gri.ark:/13960/t3225b84g>.

<sup>8</sup> Peabody, “Finding Cleopatra.”

<sup>9</sup> According to Dr. Randall J. Schaetzl, the Chippewa were also known as Ojibwe/Ojibway an indigenous people in the United States who spoke a version of Algonquian. Chippewa is a variation of the same word Ojibwe/Ojibway. “Geography of Michigan and the Great Lakes Region,” Michigan State University Course Website, accessed March 12, 2021, <https://geo.msu.edu/extra/geogmich/ojibwe.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society*, second edition, (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1996): 17.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

was, for all intents and purposes, a celebrity in her day, vanished like her masterpiece. The fate of *The Death of Cleopatra* as well as Edmonia Lewis' exemplify how influential categories of difference, such as race and gender, were in the nineteenth and into the twentieth century in disappearing those proclaimed to be dangerously different.

To be fair, Lewis' disappearance was not as complete as *The Death of Cleopatra*. Lewis garnered tremendous notice as "the first black-Native sculptor of either sex to achieve international recognition within a western sculptural tradition."<sup>12</sup> Black scholars and writers who wrote about black achievements were well aware of her and of her accomplishments. Pauline E. Hopkins a prominent journalist, writer and historian included Lewis in her 1902 article series "Famous Women of the Negro Race." In the issue discussing artists, Hopkins identified Edmonia Lewis as one of the rare female sculptors of the time and described her as "one who has made famous not only her race, but the American people, over the entire globe."<sup>13</sup> Information on Lewis, however, has always been somewhat elusive. As early as 1908 Frances Hoggan, a Welsh doctor and researcher, contacted black intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois for information on Lewis, to which Du Bois responded: "Miss Edmonia Lewis is a very difficult person to get

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<sup>12</sup> Charmaine A. Nelson, *The Color of Stone. Sculpting the Black Female Subject in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 26. Marilyn Richardson, "Edmonia Lewis at McGrawville: The Early Education of a Nineteenth-Century Black Woman Artist," in *Nineteenth Century Contexts*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (2000): 239, accessed March 9, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08905490008583510>; 239. Kirsten Buick, *Child of the Fire. Mary Edmonia Lewis and the Problem of Art History's Black and Indian Subject*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), xxi. Buick identifies her as "the first documented woman of African and Native American descent to work abroad as an artist."

<sup>13</sup> Pauline E. Hopkins, "Famous Women of the Negro Race. X. Artists," in *The Colored American Magazine*, Vol. 5, 1902, (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969): 363, Accessed February 11, 2021, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044005009899&view=1up&seq=396>.



information from.”<sup>14</sup> Du Bois and his wife Shirley received a similar request in 1959 from Cedric Dover who was writing a book on “American Negro Art.” Dover asked for “any reminiscences, however hurriedly jotted down....”<sup>15</sup> Du Bois replied that while he knew of Edmonia Lewis he had never met her but “there is some information...scattered around...”<sup>16</sup>

When it comes to Edmonia Lewis the notion of scattered information appears rather apt. She was very successful in her time, but today concrete evidence about her life is hard to come by. According to Richardson, a leading expert on Lewis:

There are no journals. There’s no cache of letters. If you find one thing about her, the next thing you find will contradict the first.<sup>17</sup>

Kirsten Buick, another Lewis expert, concurs, describing Lewis as a shadowy figure whose life is difficult to fully understand.<sup>18</sup> Lewis herself complicated matters as she tended to shroud her biography in mystery.<sup>19</sup> She also embraced and perpetuated myths that emphasized and exaggerated her exotic ancestry.<sup>20</sup> Her celebrity in the nineteenth

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<sup>14</sup> Du Bois, W.E.B and Frances Hoggan. “Letter from W.E.B. Du Bois to Frances Hoggan,” Correspondence, Atlanta (GA), February 26, 1908, *Digital Commonwealth*, accessed February 21, 2021. <https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth-oai:ff36m218f>.

<sup>15</sup> Cedric Dover and Shirley Graham Du Bois, “Letter from Cedric Dover to Shirley Graham Du Bois.” Correspondence. Middlesex (England), August 7, 1959. *Digital Commonwealth* accessed February 21, 2021, <https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth-oai:ff3690842>.

<sup>16</sup> W.E.B Dubois and Cedric Dover, “Letter from W.E.B. Du Bois to Cedric Dover,” Correspondence, Brooklyn (New York, NY), December 1, 1959, *Digital Commonwealth*, accessed February 21, 2021, <https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth-oai:ff36jz796>.

<sup>17</sup> Peabody, “Finding Cleopatra.”

<sup>18</sup> Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 31.

<sup>19</sup> May, “The Object at Hand.”

<sup>20</sup> Richardson, “Edmonia Lewis at McGrawville,” 239; Susanna W. Gold, “The Death of Cleopatra/The Birth of Freedom: Edmonia Lewis at the New World’s Fair,” in *Biography*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Spring 2012):

century is, however, undeniable as the plethora of mentions in the U.S. American and international press dating from about 1864 until about the 1890s confirms. Newspapers and journals published during her active period as a professional artist regularly had stories, small and large, about Lewis. They reported on her more noteworthy activities, e.g., establishing her studio in Rome, her exhibitions in San Francisco and the success of *The Death of Cleopatra* at the Philadelphia International Exposition. There were also more mundane articles that focused on Lewis' many Atlantic crossings, the sale of an art piece, or potential commissions that may or may not have come to fruition.<sup>21</sup>

The press attention given to Lewis recalls that received by Sarah Parker Remond at the height of her career on the abolition lecture circuit. Lewis, like Remond, was perceived as a curiosity and the amount of press coverage is attributable to her mixed ancestry and gender. Henry Wreford writing in the British publication, *The Athenæum* indicated this clearly in his article, "A Negro Sculptress," wherein Wreford is sure to state that she is the only black U.S. American woman to specialize in sculpture and this makes her "so remarkable and unique," that it is his belief the journal's readership would find it acceptable to read "a brief sketch of her life."<sup>22</sup> Additionally, Lewis' choice to

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322, also discusses Lewis' penchant for "embellished details of her family's history to accentuate her unique experience."

<sup>21</sup> From circa 1864 to about the early 1890s Lewis was featured in myriad newspapers, small and large, including: *The Liberator*, *The New York Times*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Lorain County News*, of Oberlin, Ohio, *The Plaindealer*, of Detroit Michigan, and *The Cleveland Gazette* among others. The stories range from two or three sentence blurbs to lengthier accounts that provide biographical information and talk about her work, her exhibitions, commissions, and sales. Among the international press coverage are: *The Scotsman* published in Edinburgh, Scotland, the *Art Journal*, published in London, England, and the *Journal Pour Toutes* published in Paris, France.

<sup>22</sup> Henry Wreford, "A Negro Sculptress," in *The Athenæum*, no. 2001 (March 3, 1866), 302, accessed March 23, 2021, [https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.31158010315801&view=1up&seq=322&q1=edmonia%20Lewis](https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.31158010315801&view=1up&seq=322&q1=edmonia%20Lewis;); Laura Curtis Bullard, "Edmonia Lewis," in *New National Era*, Washington, DC, May 4, 1871, accessed

eschew marriage and children in pursuit of a career made her even more of a curiosity. Sarah Remond, who also prioritized her education and career, did eventually somewhat conform to societal expectations and marry. Lewis never married and in her last will and testament described herself as “spinster and sculptor.”<sup>23</sup> Increasing Lewis’ novelty was her choice to become a professional artist. Traditionally, unmarried nineteenth-century women who had to support themselves became teachers, or, if they pursued an artistic career, they painted or they drew.<sup>24</sup> Lewis chose to sculpt.

Lewis fit none of the stereotypes and expectations for a mixed ancestry woman in the nineteenth century. While most of the items written about her introduce her as “the Negro sculptress,” they are quick to bring up her Chippewa ancestry and focus on this aspect of her identity. Lewis did not discourage this approach. In fact she told Wreford that her mother “was a wild Indian,” and that she and her brother “were brought up in the same wild manner.”<sup>25</sup> Lewis’ reasons for perpetuating these fictions appear to be two-

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February 11, 2021, <https://www.loc.gov/item/sn84026753/1871-05-04/ed-1/>. In her article says she was interested in Lewis and in visiting her studio in Rome “not only because of her sex, but her race...”

<sup>23</sup> Talia Lavin, “The Decades-Long Quest to Find and Honor Edmonia Lewis’s Grave,” in *Hyperallergic*, March 28, 2018, accessed February 27, 2021, <https://hyperallergic.com/434881/edmonia-lewis-grave/>. Marilyn Richardson found Lewis’ grave in London, and with the help of a lawyer in the U.K. also found Lewis’ last will and testament and her burial records.

<sup>24</sup> Rachel G. Fuchs and Victoria E. Thompson, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). Fuchs and Thompson explain that unmarried middle-class women had the choice to become governesses or serving as companions to elderly relatives. Poorer women entered domestic service (see page 46). Women with artistic talent could opt for a career as an artist but because of their gender their opportunities were severely limited in the more prestigious art genres, such as History painting, and media, such as sculpture. Moreover, women were prevented from studying anatomy and life drawing, leading to their work not being taken as seriously (see page 104). Some artists, like Edmonia Lewis and the French painter Rosa Bonheur managed to break through the many barriers, Lewis as a sculptor, Bonheur in her subject matter, she painted animals (See *Dictionary of Women Artists*, Volume 1, edited by Delia Gaze, (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997), 289). Other successful female artists, Lewis’ contemporaries, like the Impressionist painters Mary Cassatt (see *Dictionary of Women Artists*, Volume 1, 367) and Berthe Morisot (see *Dictionary of Women Artists*, Volume 2, 978-980), tended to focus on domestic scenes of upper-class women and children.

fold. First, her Chippewa identity made her more exotic which generated interest and attracted visitors to her studio in Rome resulting in the sale of her sculptures. Second, it put potential white patrons more at ease since she then became representative of a lost people engendering a sense of nostalgia for bygone days and traditions. This was an aspect of Lewis' autoethnographic expression and a way for her to make a space for herself on the international art market and in cosmopolitan Rome. Because she was self-sufficient and independent, she did not fit the molds white society created for black women – the tragic mulatta or the hardy enslaved woman. In point of fact, neither Louise Chancy Louverture nor Sarah Parker Remond fit these expectations either. Chancy Louverture was a respectable, wife of the upper bourgeoisie who adhered to and exhibited all of the characteristics of true womanhood. Remond and Lewis as black females who ventured into the public sphere and did not adhere to the traditional feminine domestic realm and more specifically to the idea of subservient black females were “troubling and uncontrollable presences.”<sup>26</sup>

The latter partially explains why Lewis, and to a degree Remond, faded from people's consciousness after their deaths. As Nell Irvin Painter explains, when black females did not keep to a naïve easily understood persona, a persona given to them by white society, they tended to be forgotten except by individuals who specialized in African American history. Painter goes on to say that intelligent, self-sufficient and

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<sup>25</sup> Wreford, “A Negro Sculptress,” 302.

<sup>26</sup> Juanita Marie Holland, “Mary Edmonia Lewis's “Minnehaha”: Gender, Race and the “Indian Maid”,” in *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, vol. 69, no. 1/2 (1995): 28, accessed December 4, 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41504904>.

successful black women like Edmonia Lewis and Sarah Parker Remond made white society uncomfortable. It is therefore no accident that two of the most famous nineteenth-century black women, Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman, had and maintained the persona of “untutored ex-slave,” even though they were highly intelligent and resourceful women.<sup>27</sup>

When studying Edmonia Lewis, matters are further complicated since just a few of her personal letters survive and scholars must rely on the aforementioned newspaper coverage.<sup>28</sup> In this, Lewis is similar to Louise Chancy Louverture whose story must be reconstructed based on what others have written. In Chancy Louverture’s case most of the surviving primary literature was written by men who focused on her more famous male relatives. She was little more than an addendum or a passing mention in the tales of heroic male deeds. In contrast, it was mostly women who wrote about Lewis and they focused on her background and career.<sup>29</sup> The newspaper coverage, the interviews and the

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<sup>27</sup> Nell Irvin Painter, “Sojourner Truth in Life and Memory: Writing the Biography of an American Exotic,” in *Gender & History*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (Spring 1990): 10-11.

<sup>28</sup> Three of Lewis’ letters addressed to Maria Weston Chapman are part of Mrs. Chapman’s papers in the Massachusetts Digital Commonwealth Archive. Dating from February 5, 1867, August 6, 1867 and May 3, 1868, the letters concern Lewis’ group now known as *Forever Free*. In them Lewis discusses her desire to give the finished piece to William Lloyd Garrison, “who has in deed been the friend of the poor slave,” (August 6, 1867). The May 3, 1868 letter focuses on the money and disposition of the now finished group. Lewis sent the statue unsolicited to a Mr. Sewall along with a bill for \$800 in the hopes that he would collect the money. In the letter Lewis asks Chapman to “be so kind as to let me know what has become of it?”

<sup>29</sup> As examples, Lydia Maria Child, a Boston abolitionist and, an early and long-time Lewis supporter, wrote several articles about Lewis in *The Liberator* as well as other publications. Lewis also features in some of Child’s personal correspondences. Laura Curtis Bullard, a nineteenth-century feminist and woman’s rights supporter, wrote an article about visiting Lewis’ Rome studio in 1871. Similarly, Boston educator, Elizabeth Peabody wrote of her visits to Edmonia Lewis’ Rome studio, which she visited several times during her time in the city. E.P. Peabody, “Miss Edmonia Lewis’ Works,” in *Elevator* (published as *The Elevator*), August 13, 1869, San Francisco, California. News Article, Volume V, No. 19. Buick’s *Child of the Fire*, 12-13 identifies the many women who wrote about Lewis and the publications in which she appeared.

information Lewis shared with her supporters are now understood to be a mix of facts, fabrications and exaggerations. Many of the latter propagated and promoted by Lewis herself. Art historians, the scholars who tend to write about Lewis, are faced with the task of trying to discern what is true from what is fiction.

The rediscovery of *The Death of Cleopatra* and its reintroduction into the art world leads to another difficulty, the proliferation of less than scholarly articles and blog posts since the 1990s and 2000s. Some of these border on the juvenile when addressing aspects of Lewis' lived experiences. For example, one blogger states that Lewis attending Oberlin College is "a pretty big deal," and goes on to characterize a violent attack on Lewis as "some nasty racist incident."<sup>30</sup> These blog posts and articles, aimed at a general audience typically increase during Black History month.<sup>31</sup> Despite their shortcomings, the less-than-ideal publications serve the purpose of introducing Edmonia Lewis and her work to a wider public. The increased interest in Lewis has meant that, at times, unexpected people have found some of her works long-believed lost.<sup>32</sup> The rediscovery

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<sup>30</sup> Alexandra Kiely, "The Fabulous Sculpture and Mysterious Life of Edmonia Lewis," in *Daily Art Magazine* (February 13, 2020), accessed February 8, 2021, <https://www.dailyartmagazine.com/the-fabulous-sculpture-and-mysterious-life-of-edmonia-lewis/>.

<sup>31</sup> As an example, on February 1, 2017, in honor of the beginning of Black History Month, Edmonia Lewis was the subject of the day's Google Doodle. The Doodle shows her in the process of carving *The Death of Cleopatra*, accessed March 16, 2021, <https://www.google.com/doodles/celebrating-edmonia-lewis>.

<sup>32</sup> In 2011 an art student discovered a grainy black and white photograph taken around 1886 in the archive of a Baltimore Catholic Church. The photo shows a religious sculpture made by Lewis and delivered to the church in 1883. The photo is the only thing that survives of the Baltimore piece since the original was destroyed in a 1947 fire (see "Evidence of Edmonia Lewis's Lost Work Found in Baltimore Church," in *Artfix Daily*, February 4, 2011, accessed February 11, 2021, <https://www.artfixdaily.com/artwire/release/5021-evidence-of-edmonia-lewis-s-lost-work-found-in-baltimore-church>. Even more recently, 2015, conservators in Scotland discovered a *Bust of Christ* carved by Lewis in ca. 1870 as part of the Marquess of Bute's collection, (Susannah Thompson, 2021, "A Rediscovery?: Edmonia Lewis's Bust of Christ (1870)," March 12, Rediscovering our Sculpture: An Art UK Symposium, Virtual Conference).

of *The Death of Cleopatra's* has also resulted in more scholarly research on Lewis' life and work.<sup>33</sup>

With these difficulties recognized, in order to reconstruct, understand and contextualize Edmonia Lewis as a mid- to late-nineteenth-century new woman, it is necessary to turn not only to the written primary and secondary sources, but also to the material evidence in the form of Lewis' sculptural work featuring black women, and one of her surviving *carte de visite* portrait photographs.<sup>34</sup> Lewis' choice of subjects and the didactic elements incorporated into and suggested in her compositions support the idea of her evolution into a self-sufficient, self-supporting, professional woman, in other words, a new woman. In the nineteenth century, new women were independent and focused on their career. They challenged and resisted the norms and limitations imposed upon them

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<sup>33</sup> Marilyn Richardson has written extensively about Lewis discussing various aspects of her life and career including: "Edmonia Lewis's *The Death of Cleopatra: Myth and Identity*," in *The International Review of African American Art*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (1995). Richardson discusses Lewis' early education in "Edmonia Lewis at McGrawville: The Early Education of a Nineteenth-Century Black Woman Artist," in *Nineteenth Century Contexts* Vol. 22, No. 2, (2000). Richardson addresses Lewis' circle of friends and colleagues during her time in Italy in the book chapter, "Friends and Colleagues: Edmonia Lewis and her Italian Circle," in *Sculptors, Painters, and Italy: Italian Influence on Nineteenth-Century American Art*, Sirpa Salenius, editor, (Saonara, Padova: Il Prato, 2009). Lewis is a key figure in art historian Charmaine A. Nelson's, *The Color of Stone. Sculpting the Black Female Subject in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007) where Nelson examines how the representations of Africa and Cleopatra became black and female in neoclassical sculpture in the context of nineteenth-century society, politics and culture. Kirsten Pai Buick's *Child of the Fire: Mary Edmonia Lewis and the Problem of Art History's Black and Indian Subject*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010) is one of the only full-length biographies which analyses Lewis and her work in the context of nineteenth-century American sculpture. Another full-length biography by Harry and Albert Henderson, *The Indomitable Spirit of Edmonia Lewis: A Narrative Biography* was published as an eBook in 2013.

<sup>34</sup> According to Mary Warner Marien, the *Carte de visite* "was a small portrait photograph originally intended to be pasted on the back of a regular visiting card." Marien, *Photography a Cultural History*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002), 84. These cards were first introduced in the 1850s and were extremely popular for about ten years. Though the craze for *carte de visite* waned, they continued to be produced until the end of the nineteenth century and into the early years of the twentieth century. Edmonia Lewis also produced works featuring First People – female and male. These are not examined here as the focus of the project is on African-descended women.

by a white, male dominated patriarchal society.<sup>35</sup> New women tended to be unmarried, well-educated and economically independent. They also “fought for professional visibility.”<sup>36</sup> Women like Edmonia Lewis and her role models, such as Sarah Parker Remond a proto-new woman herself, reinvented themselves and used the means at their disposal to create a space where they gained autonomy and financial independence on their own terms. This achievement was doubly significant since both Remond and Lewis, while of the middle class, were not white.

In an 1873 interview about her chosen career and art medium, Edmonia Lewis said to the reporter: “Well, it was a strange selection for a poor girl to make, wasn’t it?”<sup>37</sup> It was definitely an unexpected one since subtractive sculpture where material is chipped away was considered the purview of males in part because of the physical strength required to carve a figure.<sup>38</sup> Lewis’ gender, mixed ancestry and her size, she was said to be below medium height and her passport indicates she was four feet tall, certainly would lead many to see her vocation as surprising. Mary Edmonia Lewis, according to her August 1865 passport application, was born on or about July 4, 1844 in Greenbush, New

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<sup>35</sup> Sirpa Salenius, “US-American New Women in Italy 1853-1879,” in *CCLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, Vol. 14, No. 1, (March 2012): 2, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol14/iss1/2>.

<sup>36</sup> Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct. Visions of Gender in Victorian America*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 245.

<sup>37</sup> “Edmonia Lewis: The Famous Colored Sculptress in San Francisco. A Chronicle Reporter Interviews Her at Her Hotel,” in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, August 26, 1873, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Fred S. Kleiner, *Gardner’s Art Through the Ages, The Western Perspective*, Volume II, 15<sup>th</sup> Edition, (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2017), 536. Kleiner discusses the proscription female artists faced in terms of studying the nude figure, and points out that the path for a female to become a professional sculptor was further hindered “by the physical demands of the medium.” Kleiner’s definition for subtractive sculpture is: “A kind of sculpture technique in which materials are taken away from the original mass” (9270).



York.<sup>39</sup> As Lewis told Lydia Maria Child, a Boston abolitionist, on their first meeting she had

not a single drop of what is called white blood in my veins. My father was a full-blooded negro, and my mother was a full-blooded Chippewa.<sup>40</sup>

Kirsten Buick who has studied Lewis' life extensively indicates that indeed Edmonia Lewis' father was a black man originally from the Caribbean. As best as Buick has been able to determine, however, Edmonia Lewis' mother, Catherine Lewis, was not a full-blooded Chippewa. Rather, like her daughter, Catherine Lewis' father was a black man who had escaped enslavement, and her mother was of mixed African American and Chippewa descent.<sup>41</sup>

Edmonia Lewis' parents died when she was somewhere between the ages of four and nine and she and her older brother Samuel born in 1832 went to live with their mother's two sisters near Niagara Falls.<sup>42</sup> Lewis claimed that while living among her mother's people she followed Chippewa ways making baskets, decorating moccasins and

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<sup>39</sup> "United States Passport Applications, 1795-1925," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QGKJ-2P1F> : 16 March 2018), M Edmonia Lewis, 1865; citing Passport Application, United States, source certificate #, Passport Applications, 10/31/1795 - 12/31/1905., 133, NARA microfilm publications M1490 and M1372 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

<sup>40</sup> L. Maria Child, "Letter from L. Maria Child," in *The Liberator*, February 19, 1864, William Lloyd Garrison and James Brown Yerrinton, Newspaper, Boston, Massachusetts, *Digital Commonwealth*, accessed February 21, 2021, <https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/5h742w18n>. Lewis' statement was made in response to Child's comment that she suspected Lewis had white ancestry, which she called "white blood."

<sup>41</sup> Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 4. Richardson, "Edmonia Lewis's The Death of Cleopatra," 44. Richardson identifies Edmonia Lewis' father as possibly being Haitian.

<sup>42</sup> Richardson, "Edmonia Lewis at McGrawville," 239; Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 4; "Miss Edmonia Lewis," in *Elevator* (published as *The Elevator*), August 30, 1873, San Francisco, California, News Article, vol. 9, no. 21. Newsbank, Inc. Buick says that Lewis lost her parents by the time she was nine; the *Elevator* article indicates she was four. Richardson only says Lewis was young. All agree that after her parents' death she went to live with her aunts.

traveling to the city to sell them.<sup>43</sup> She remained with her aunts for three or four years when her older brother insisted she receive some schooling. She told Lydia Maria Child that her brother said to her: “Edmonia, I don’t want you to stay here always, I want you to have some education.”<sup>44</sup> As previously illustrated with Sarah Parker Remond and her siblings, education was a highly prized commodity among African Americans who understood its value since it was a basic right so often denied to them. As previously illustrated, among blacks of the middle class, especially in the United States educating their children was not only a hallmark of their social position it was also a way of countering racism. It is therefore not surprising that Samuel Lewis having made his fortune as a gold prospector in California not only insisted on educating his younger sister but also underwrote the expense.<sup>45</sup> It is through her education that Edmonia Lewis was able to move from what can at best be called a working class background to the middle class. Lewis’ transition into the middle class enabled her to not only contemplate but to actually pursue a career as a professional artist.

According to Census records Edmonia Lewis spent at least part of her childhood in Newark, New Jersey as the ward of a Captain S.R. Mills. This placement appeared to have happened sometime in 1852 when her older brother left to prospect for gold in California. Samuel Lewis dutifully sent money to Captain Mills for Edmonia Lewis’

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<sup>43</sup> Child, “Letter from L. Maria Child,” in *The Liberator*, February 19, 1864; see also “Miss Edmonia Lewis,” in *The Elevator*, August 30, 1873.

<sup>44</sup> Child, “Letter from L. Maria Child.”

<sup>45</sup> Child, “Letter from L. Maria Child,” in *The Liberator*, February 19, 1864, Lewis specified to Child that her brother had gone “to California and dug gold.” See also “Miss Edmonia Lewis,” in *The Elevator*, August 30, 1873. In the article Lewis states that her brother “was much older than myself, and ... had made a great deal of money in California.”

care.<sup>46</sup> The childhood spent in the wilds of upstate New York as described to Lydia Maria Child and others was perhaps in part, an exaggeration. Around 1856, Samuel Lewis enrolled his younger sister at Central College in McGrawville, New York. The College was a progressive Baptist school run by staunch abolitionists who believed that women, blacks, whites and those of mixed ancestry should be given “access to all levels of education.”<sup>47</sup> Her time at Central College exposed Lewis to advocates of both abolition and women’s rights. Individuals like Henry Highland Garnet, a formerly enslaved man, James McCune Smith, a black doctor trained in Glasgow, Scotland and Lucretia Mott, a feminist activist, all spoke at Central College.<sup>48</sup>

Lewis spent about three years at Central College. In her interview with Wreford, Lewis said she left Central College because she “was declared to be wild – they could do nothing with me.”<sup>49</sup> In reality, it can be inferred from both Buick’s and Richardson’s work and the fact that Lewis went on to Oberlin College that she successfully completed her coursework and could go no further academically at Central College. In 1859, at

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<sup>46</sup> Richardson, “Edmonia Lewis’s The Death of Cleopatra: Myth and Identity,” 44 and Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 4.

<sup>47</sup> Richardson, “Edmonia Lewis at McGrawville,” 241.

<sup>48</sup> Richardson, “Edmonia Lewis at McGrawville,” 246. These individuals are cited as examples of the types of speakers invited to address the student body at Central College. It is not known if Edmonia Lewis heard these specific speakers during her time there. It should be noted that McCune Smith believed in using the Haitian Revolution as a model to “[demonstrate] some of the political possibilities open to McGrawville students,” while Mott spoke on women’s rights, 246.

<sup>49</sup> Wreford, “A Negro Sculptress”, 302. The notion that Lewis left Central College because she was too wild was repeated, without further analysis, as late as 1968. Geoffrey Blodgett in his article “John Mercer Langston and the Case of Edmonia Lewis: Oberlin 1862,” in *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (July 1968) said Lewis arrived at Oberlin “although she had earlier been thought too wild for much booklearning...” 202.

about fifteen years old, Lewis was enrolled at Oberlin College in Ohio. Once again Lewis found herself in an abolitionist stronghold and in a school that stressed morality and equality. The town of Oberlin, Ohio was home to several free blacks and Oberlin College, like Central College, was co-educational and accepted black, white and mixed ancestry students.<sup>50</sup>

In 1859, Lewis was one of about thirty non-white students and perhaps the only student of mixed African and First People ancestry at Oberlin.<sup>51</sup> She followed the standard courses for students enrolled in the Preparatory Department. In an interview with a San Francisco newspaper, *The Elevator*, Lewis indicated that she enjoyed studying Mathematics, and had made progress with Algebra and Geometry.<sup>52</sup> During her years at Oberlin Lewis completed her classes “with reasonable diligence.”<sup>53</sup> The ideology of education at Oberlin, particularly as it pertained to black women, centered on preparing a woman “for the duties of her ‘sphere’ – as mother or teacher of the young.”<sup>54</sup> So while the education of the female was deemed important, it was tied to her domestic role. The ideas of true womanhood were thus part of the curriculum and Edmonia Lewis was instructed in the domestic ideology during her time at Oberlin.

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<sup>50</sup> The town and college at Oberlin are briefly discussed in Blodgett, “John Mercer Langston and the Case of Edmonia Lewis,” 201 and 203. Lizzie Peabody also touches on the Oberlin college incident with Kirsten Buick in the Podcast, “Finding Cleopatra.”

<sup>51</sup> Blodgett, “John Mercer Langston and the Case of Edmonia Lewis,” 202.

<sup>52</sup> “Miss Edmonia Lewis,” in *Elevator* (published as *The Elevator*), August 30, 1873, San Francisco, California, News Article, vol. 9, no. 21, Newsbank, Inc.,

<sup>53</sup> Blodgett, “John Mercer Langston and the Case of Edmonia Lewis,” 202.

<sup>54</sup> Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 7.



**Figure 7:** Edmonia Lewis, *Forever Free*, 1867, Carrara Marble, 42 x 21 inches (106.7 x 53.3 cm). Photo: Gregory R. Staley. Howard University Gallery of Art, Washington DC/Licensed by Art Resource, NY.

Lewis' *The Morning of Liberty/Forever Free* from 1867 reflects the tenets of true womanhood she learned at Oberlin [See Figure 7]. The piece was carved soon after she had established her studio in Rome and she intended to dedicate and give the group to William Lloyd Garrison because he "has done so much for the race."<sup>55</sup> The piece was eventually dedicated to the Reverend Leonard A. Grimes for reasons that remain unknown.<sup>56</sup> *Forever Free*, as it is now known, is actually the second statue group she created commemorating the Emancipation Proclamation.<sup>57</sup> The first, showing a freed woman and her child, is lost. *Forever Free* features a standing male figure and a kneeling female figure. The broken manacle on the male's upraised left hand and the ball beneath his left foot which was once attached to the now broken shackle on the female's left leg identify them as formerly enslaved. The standing male is the dominant figure in the group, an idea further conveyed by the protective hand he places on the female's shoulder. The male's protective role is additionally emphasized since the gesture of his right hand brings the female closer to his body and in a way he shelters her. Traditional, white middle-class gender dynamics are at play in the composition. Though Lewis depicted a muscular male, she softened the muscles of the arms and abdomen perhaps in

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<sup>55</sup> Edmonia Lewis and Maria Weston Chapman, "Letter from Edmonia Lewis, Rome, to Maria Weston Chapman, Feb. 5<sup>th</sup> [18]67," Correspondence, February 5, 1867, *Digital Commonwealth*, accessed February 21, 2021, <https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/dv144240v>; see also Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 52.

<sup>56</sup> Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 52.

<sup>57</sup> Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. In it he liberated all people held in enslavement "within the rebellious states." "The Emancipation Proclamation," United States National Archives, accessed April 6, 2021, <https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation>.

an effort to make him appear less aggressive which would put her white patrons more at ease.

As is somewhat typical of her work, Lewis ascribed the characteristics of the true woman to a non-white female figure. As previously discussed, black women, especially enslaved and formerly enslaved black women, were perceived as incapable of following the cardinal virtues expected of the true woman, especially the virtue of purity. Lewis, however, suggested the female's purity by clothing her in a simple dress that leaves only her head, hands and feet visible. This differs from her white male contemporaries who traditionally opted to represent black females as unclothed and chained which both objectified and sexualized them [See Figure 2 above for comparison].<sup>58</sup> The female is kneeling and her hands are clasped in prayer. She thus exhibits the virtue of piety. Her uptilted head and eyes underscore that this is a prayerful moment of thanksgiving. Finally, the figure is submissive, another characteristic of the true woman, as she appears subordinate to the more powerful male figure. Both the male and female figures conform to expected nineteenth-century white middle-class gender roles.

*Forever Free* further obeys nineteenth-century societal mores in that the composition evokes notions of traditional domesticity with the man's hand on the woman's shoulder. This pose is intended to convey the idea that they are married and a family. With emancipation and the end of the U.S. American Civil War, black couples were able to marry and establish families. Marriage and the creation of stable families were particularly important to black U.S. Americans since these were regarded as signs

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<sup>58</sup> Nelson, *The Color of Stone*, 171.

of civilization and signaled “their moral commitment to social progress.”<sup>59</sup> The advent of emancipation meant that black men were now in the position to head a household and assume the role of provider and protector to their families, something they were not able to do during enslavement.<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile the woman, like her white counterpart was “the purveyor of Christian virtue within the family,” an idea stressed by the piety of Lewis’ prayerful female figure.<sup>61</sup> The two figures in *Forever Free* illustrate how Lewis used her art to visually show the expansion of who could be included in civil society and who could be counted as a true woman. The composition of *Forever Free* with its application of white middle-class social mores to black figures is an example of how Lewis practiced *sociogenic marronage*.

Her education at Oberlin instilled notions of domesticity and true womanhood in Lewis, which she applied to her black female subjects. It is also at Oberlin when she was in her late teens that Lewis learned other lessons that fundamentally marked her. She was embroiled in three incidents, two criminal accusations and an assault related to the first accusation. These may well explain why she lived as she did, her choice of artistic subjects and, more importantly, why she was so determined to control and manage the narrative of her life. In January 1862 she was accused of poisoning two of her white

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<sup>59</sup> Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 56.

<sup>60</sup> Kirsten P. Buick, “The Ideal Works of Edmonia Lewis: Invoking and Inverting Autobiography,” in *American Art*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Summer 1995), 5-6. See also Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 58 and Melissa Dabakis, *A Sisterhood of Sculptors. American Artists in Nineteenth-Century Rome*, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014), 174.

<sup>61</sup> Dabakis, *A Sisterhood of Sculptors*, 174.



housemates, Maria Miles and Christina Ennes, with cantharides-laced wine.<sup>62</sup> Miles and Ennes who had been Lewis' friends were quick to identify her as the person who poisoned them. The story of the poisoning was quite sensational as it involved two young white women from prominent and wealthy Ohio families and a poor, orphan girl of mixed African and Chippewa ancestry who did not come from a prominent or wealthy family. A sexual element was also featured since the alleged poison was the aphrodisiac commonly known as Spanish Fly and Ennes and Miles were on an unchaperoned sleigh ride with two young men.<sup>63</sup> Though Oberlin began an investigation, local law enforcement officials were ill equipped to handle such a case. Lewis was not immediately arrested perhaps in part because she was a student at Oberlin College and college administrators protected her.<sup>64</sup> The allegations, however, were too tantalizing to keep out of the press and the newspaper from the neighboring city of Cleveland soon picked up the story.

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<sup>62</sup> Information on the Oberlin poisoning case can be found in one chapter of John Mercer Langston's autobiography, "A Rare and Interesting Case Which Tested his Powers," in *From the Virginia Plantation to the National Capital or The First and Only Negro Representative in Congress from the Old Dominion*, 171-180, (Hartford: American Publishing Company, 1894). Geoffrey Blodgett, a professor in the Department of History at Oberlin College, used Langston chapter as the basis for his article on the case, "John Mercer Langston and the Case of Edmonia Lewis: Oberlin, 1862," in *The Journal of Negro History*. Kirsten P. Buick, also gives details of the case in her book *Child of the Fire*, see pages 8-9. Based on these sources, it appears Lewis, Ennes and Miles were friends. Just before leaving for a sleigh ride to the Ennes home with two young men, Lewis offered her two friends some warm wine, which is odd since Oberlin administration in temperance and alcohol was prohibited to students. About halfway to destination, Ennes and Miles became violently ill. Upon arriving at the Ennes home, doctors were summoned who declared the girls had been poisoned with cantharides, the supposed aphrodisiac known as Spanish Fly. Based on Langston's account, there was little forensic evidence that Ennes and Miles had in fact been poisoned, and even less evidence that Lewis had done anything to them. Ennes and Miles were ill for two weeks but eventually recovered.

<sup>63</sup> Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 8. Langston, "A Rare and Interesting Case..."172, discusses the wealth and prominence of the Ennes and Miles families in Ohio.

<sup>64</sup> Blodgett, "John Mercer Langston and the Case of Edmonia Lewis," 206.

*The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, which held anti-abolitionist sentiments, published multiple stories on the case, especially the fact that though Lewis stood accused of poisoning two white women she had not been arrested by Oberlin authorities.<sup>65</sup> Despite the tensions between the Oberlin abolitionists and the supporters of enslavement at the *Plain Dealer*, the newspaper did not identify Lewis by name until after the case had been decided. The latter is surprising since the newspaper was known for taking every opportunity to publish items that highlighted the drawbacks of having blacks and whites intermingle as equals.<sup>66</sup> The poisoning case was thus tailor-made for the *Plain Dealer's* preferred narrative and there were stories in several issues.<sup>67</sup>

The coverage by the *Plain Dealer* and the fact that Lewis appeared to suffer no consequences for her alleged criminal act enraged the victims' families and friends as well as other white residents in the Oberlin community. The biased news coverage likely resulted in someone attempting to shoot John Mercer Langston, a young black lawyer who represented Lewis in the case, while he investigated the allegations in Ennes' hometown.<sup>68</sup> In his autobiography written a little over thirty years after the whole affair Langston stated that after three weeks of unrelenting coverage people in the community were "moved to the depths of their feelings," especially since there appeared to be no

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<sup>65</sup> Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 9.

<sup>66</sup> Blodgett, "John Mercer Langston and the Case of Edmonia Lewis," 207.

<sup>67</sup> *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* published at least three stories about the case on January 25, 1862, February 11, 1862 and March 3, 1862. In comparison the local Oberlin newspaper, *The Lorain County News*, had one story on February 19, 1862.

<sup>68</sup> Langston, "A Rare and Interesting Case..." 176. Blodgett indicates that Langston was an Oberlin graduate and the first, and perhaps the only, black lawyer in 1862 Ohio. See "John Mercer Langston and the Case of Edmonia Lewis..." 209.

movement in the case.<sup>69</sup> They thus took matters into their own hands and Lewis was assaulted. Langston reported the attack as follows:

One evening, just after dark, as she was passing out of the back door of the house in which she still roomed, she was seized by unknown persons, carried out into the field lying to the rear, and after being severely beaten, with her clothes and jewelry torn from her person and scattered here and there, she was left in a dark, obscure place to die.”<sup>70</sup>

Even though Lewis was severely injured and the evidence against her was, at best, circumstantial, Oberlin College administration had to allow her “to be arrested because she would be safer in prison.”<sup>71</sup> As Buick speculates, it is likely that the vigilantes did not limit the assault to a beating, Lewis may also have been raped.<sup>72</sup> Lewis’ injuries were so extensive that the hearing to determine whether or not to indict her had to be postponed, and when it did occur she was carried into the proceedings. The hearing which took place before two justices of the peace lasted two days and Lewis “remained silent” throughout.<sup>73</sup> She was eventually exonerated of the poisoning charges and allowed to return to school. The calm lasted until about 1864 when Lewis was once more ensnared in another legal matter. One of the professors at the College accused her of stealing art supplies. Despite there being no evidence of theft few at Oberlin came to her defense, and

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<sup>69</sup> Langston, “A Rare and Interesting Case...” 176.

<sup>70</sup> Langston, “A Rare and Interesting Case...” 176. The story of Lewis’ assault was also reported in “A Trial Prospect,” in *The Lorain County News*, February 19, 1862, 2, V.A. Shankland, Publisher, accessed February 17, 2021, <https://cdm15963.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15963coll38/id/504/rec/8>. See also, Blodgett, “John Mercer Langston and the Case of Edmonia Lewis...” 206 and Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 9. Buick indicates that the vigilantes who assaulted Lewis were never found because no one ever tried to find them.

<sup>71</sup> Peabody, “Finding Cleopatra.”

<sup>72</sup> Peabody, “Finding Cleopatra.”

<sup>73</sup> Blodgett, “John Mercer Langston and the case of Edmonia Lewis...” 211.

with one term left to complete her studies, Edmonia Lewis was dismissed from the College and not allowed to register for her final term or complete her last exams.<sup>74</sup>

For Lewis the accusations of poisoning, the physical assault and her dismissal from Oberlin were, much to her detriment, played out in the press. Perhaps because of her youth she maintained her silence as her rights were taken from her. Similarly, Louise Chancy Louverture, because of her advanced age, appears to have also retained her silence when members of her family in Haiti conspired to take the properties which sustained her financially. An announcement of the court decision stripping Chancy Louverture of her Haiti properties was carried in the Haitian newspaper, *Le Moniteur*, on November 20, 1867.<sup>75</sup> The latter may, in part, explain why Chancy Louverture died nearly destitute. Beyond this legal case and brief public announcement Chancy Louverture, as a true woman, did not often have her name published in the newspaper. It should be noted that at this point, because of the significant difference in their ages and of the times in which they lived, there is little evidence that Chancy Louverture and Lewis shared comparable experiences.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Peabody, "Finding Cleopatra," and Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 10.

<sup>75</sup> In 1867 members of the Legros family brought a case against Louise Chancy Louverture in Haiti to gain control of all the properties that once belonged to Toussaint Louverture that had been inherited by Isaac and Louise Louverture. The Legros argued that since Chancy Louverture did not reside in Haiti she was not entitled to the land or the profits it generated. Chancy Louverture's older sister Adélaïde Chancy was married and had children with a Général Léon Legros and the case appears to have been brought either by their children or their grandchildren. "Avis aux Hériteirs [sic] de Madame Isaac Louverture," in *Le Moniteur*, 20 November 1867, accessed March 29, 2021, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1265020m/f4.item.r=Louise%20chancy%20louverture.zoom>.

<sup>76</sup> When Edmonia Lewis was born in 1844 Louise Chancy Louverture was approaching her mid-sixties. When the Oberlin Poisoning case, the assault, and Lewis' expulsion occurred between 1862 and 1864, Chancy Louverture was in her eighties. Chancy Louverture died at almost ninety in 1871, which was about the time Lewis, in her late twenties to early thirties, was gaining more professional recognition.

On the other hand, there are corresponding experiences between Sarah Parker Remond and Edmonia Lewis. Akin to Lewis, Remond often dealt with instances of color prejudice that played out in the press. Unlike Lewis' 1862 and 1864 experiences, Remond typically exerted some control over how the story was told. In fact, the press coverage was often at her instigation as an 1859 episode illustrates. In November of that year, Sarah Remond who was residing in London, presented herself and her passport to the U.S. American Legation to request a visa so she and her sister, Caroline Remond Putnam, could visit Paris. The Assistant Secretary of the Legation, Benjamin Moran, refused to stamp the passport on the grounds that Remond, as a person of color, was not a U.S. citizen. Moran based his position on the U.S. Supreme Court decision in the case of *Dred Scott v. Sandford*.<sup>77</sup>

Remond exchanged a series of increasingly contentious letters with Moran and with the Minister of the Legation, George Mifflin Dallas, a career diplomat. Remond also sent the letters to newspapers in Britain and the story was picked up not only by publications in the United Kingdom but also by U.S. American newspapers. In a December 20, 1859 letter published in *The Scottish Press* Remond detailed the incident and asked the reader "to judge what the spirit of a country is that will allow such treatment of its citizens..."<sup>78</sup> To Dallas, on December 12, 1859 and published in the

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<sup>77</sup> *Dred Scott v. Sanford*, 60 U.S. 393 (Supreme Court 1856), accessed March 31, 2021, <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/60/393/>. Scott, an enslaved man, argued that since his enslavers had transported him and his wife to states where enslavement was banned, and they had lived in those states for a time, he and his wife were emancipated. Chief Justice Roger Taney, writing the majority opinion stated that "a free negro of the African race, whose ancestors were brought to this country and sold as slaves, is not a 'citizen' within the Constitution of the United States."

<sup>78</sup> Sarah P. Remond, "Sarah P. Remond and the Passport Issue," in *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, Volume I: The British Isles, 1830-1865, Peter C. Ripley, editor, 469-473, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 471.

London *Inquirer* January 7, 1860 Remond wrote: “I respectfully demand as my right, that my passport be *vised* by the minister of my country.”<sup>79</sup> Perhaps the most combative letter was sent to Moran on December 15, 1859 and published on January 25, 1860 in *National Principia*, a New York publication. In it Remond evoked one of the principals over which the U.S. American Revolutionary War was fought by stating that free-born people in the United States who pay their taxes and meet their obligations as citizens “are to be deprived of their rights as such, merely because their complexions happen to be dark...” In her vociferous claim to U.S. American citizenship and all the rights that accompanied such a claim, she went on to state that those same tax-paying citizens “contribute to pay” the salaries of the country’s ministers.<sup>80</sup> According to Sirpa Salenius, Remond’s letters were reprinted in their entirety by several British newspapers, while others, including the *New York Times* wrote about the incident.<sup>81</sup>

Eventually, the British government issued Remond a passport and visa so she could travel to France.<sup>82</sup> While the whole affair began with Remond’s desire to get a visa, it evolved and became a way for her to once more publicize an incident where her rights had been denied because she was black. Remond wanted to embarrass the United States

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<sup>79</sup> Remond, “Sarah P. Remond and the Passport Issue,” 471.

<sup>80</sup> Remond, “Sarah P. Remond and the Passport Issue,” 471.

<sup>81</sup> Sirpa Salenius, *An Abolitionist Abroad. Sarah Parker Remond in Cosmopolitan Europe*, 107. Salenius also discussed the visa incident in her article, “negra d’America Remond and Her Journeys, 4. It is also discussed in Sibyl Ventress Brownlee’s “Out of the abundance of the heart: Sarah Ann Parker Remond’s quest for freedom,” 134-136; and Dorothy B. Porter’s “Sarah Parker Remond, Abolitionist and Physician,” 291-292. *The New York Times* published two articles on the subject, “Colored Persons and Passports” on January 24, 1860, and “The Question of Passports” on January 25, 1860.

<sup>82</sup> Porter, “Sarah Parker Remond, Abolitionist and Physician,” 292.

government for its racist policies and she used the press to accomplish her goal and controlled the narrative in the process. Whether Edmonia Lewis read any of the stories about Sarah Remond's passport contretemps is impossible to determine. She was about fifteen when it happened. What does appear to be true, however, is that following the events at Oberlin Lewis seemed to realize that the press could be useful rather than hurtful when the subject of the story exerted some control over the narrative. The use of the newspapers in this fashion can be constituted as another example of the *sociogenic marronage* Remond and Lewis practiced since they used an existing structure in an attempt to change the status quo.

Lewis left Oberlin in 1864 "uncowed" as Buick says, and used her move as an opportunity to reinvent herself by the time she arrived in Boston.<sup>83</sup> Armed with letters of introduction to prominent abolitionists, Lewis created a new history and in this new narrative she was not a victim and the incidents at Oberlin were stripped from her biography.<sup>84</sup> The biographical stories Lewis circulated fall into the type known as the tall tale, which is defined as a U.S. American form of expression that is both written and oral. The tall tale, though not invented by U.S. Americans, became associated with them as it developed in the nineteenth century. Via the tall tale a person could create the public image they wanted, for some it was "a significant component of...public self-construction."<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Peabody, "Finding Cleopatra."

<sup>84</sup> Penelope Green, "Overlooked No More: Marie Edmonia Lewis, Sculptor of Worldwide Acclaim," in *The New York Times*, July 25, 2019, accessed September 12, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/25/obituaries/overlooked-edmonia-lewis-sculptor.html>.

Sojourner Truth mastered the art of the tall tale. On the lecture circuit she boasted about having as many muscles and as much strength as a man. Alison Piepmeir argues that in so doing, Truth redefined women's roles and defined herself in terms of strength.<sup>86</sup> Nell Ivins Painter goes on to indicate that Truth was quite deliberate in this endeavor, Prior to the U.S. American Civil War when Truth emphasized this aspect of her biography, her aim "was to sell copies of her *Narrative* and *carte de viste*, which were her main sources of income."<sup>87</sup> There are several instances of Lewis similarly stressing and exaggerating aspects of her Chippewa heritage and childhood. For example, in an 1873 interview published in *The Elevator*, Lewis explained how strange it was to put on a dress for the first time because "I had never worn anything but blankets," but she said it gave her an opportunity to study the nude.<sup>88</sup> To Lydia Maria Child in 1864 and Henry Wreford in 1866, she indicated her longing to return to the wilds and only "my love of sculpture forbade it."<sup>89</sup> A sign that the desire to return to the wilds was likely fiction can be found in *The Lorain County News*, the local Oberlin newspaper. The publication, which was familiar with Lewis from her time at the College, reprinted Wreford's article and in their introduction added that "the naïve reference to Miss Edmonia's thought of returning to

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<sup>85</sup> Alison Piepmeir, *Out in Public. Configurations of Women's Bodies in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 103. Sojourner Truth mastered the art of appropriating the tall tale and using it to critique notions about black women and true womanhood, see Piepmeir, 104 and 109.

<sup>86</sup> Piepmeir, *Out in Public*, 109.

<sup>87</sup> Painter, "Sojourner Truth in Life and Memory..." 11.

<sup>88</sup> "Miss Edmonia Lewis," *Elevator* (published as *The Elevator*), August 30, 1873, Vol. 9, No. 21, Newsbank, Inc.

<sup>89</sup> Child, "Letter from L. Maria Child," *The Liberator*, February 19, 1864, "I would not stay a week pent up in cities, if it were not for my passion for art," she told Child. Wreford, "Lady Artists in Rome," 177.



wild life again, and her ‘much simplicity’ will amuse those who knew her here we think.”<sup>90</sup> Similarly to Sojourner Truth, Edmonia Lewis’ goal in adopting the tall tale narrative was to generate interest, make herself known and sell her sculptures. This is also an example of what Jessica Marie Johnson terms Black Femme Freedom. Lewis used the tools at her disposal to control her destiny and her means of earning a living.<sup>91</sup>

In her practice of Black Femme Freedom Lewis used both her Chippewa and black ancestry, as well as her youth to create a naïve persona which she presented to the press and to her supporters. This is particularly evident in the early days of her career when she was beginning to make a name for herself and was probably most in need of an income to support herself. She disregarded traditional business practice for an artist by undertaking works that had not been commissioned by anyone. Notably, many if not all these pieces centered on abolitionist themes. The completed pieces were shipped to her frequently unsuspecting supporters in Boston with the request that they raise money to pay for the material and shipping.<sup>92</sup> Such was the case with *Forever Free*. In 1868 Lewis sent *Forever Free* to Samuel Sewall, an abolitionist lawyer in Boston. Sewall had no idea the piece along with a bill for eight hundred dollars was arriving. Lewis’ expectation was that Sewall would find someone to buy it and that he would send her the money from the

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<sup>90</sup> “Miss Edmonia Lewis,” *Lorain County News*, April 4, 1866, 3, accessed February 17, 2021, <https://cdm15963.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15963coll38/id/1520/rec/2>.

<sup>91</sup> Jessica Marie Johnson. *Wicked Flesh. Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 173.

<sup>92</sup> Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society*, 30. See also Nelson, *The Color of Stone*, 43.

sale. This he eventually did.<sup>93</sup> Her payment for the sculpture was, however, much delayed as she lamented in a letter to Maria Weston Chapman dated May 3, 1868. According to Lewis, none of her friends had mentioned the sculpture to her and she asked if Chapman could “let me know what has become of it?”<sup>94</sup> Lewis’ flouting of business conventions was attributed to her youth and impetuous naivete and further “was perceived as a product of her infantilized racial position.”<sup>95</sup> The tactic was, for the most part, a successful one, thus demonstrating Lewis’ savvy and grasp of her Boston patron-base and of white abolitionist society.

At least on the surface Lewis cultivated the notion that she was a simple naïve girl who was half wild and was only tamed and civilized by her love of sculpture. As she told both Child and Wreford on separate occasions the only reason she had not re-adopted the ways of the Chippewa was because of her love for sculpture and art. She also cultivated the notion that she was largely an untrained artist. One of the oft circulated tales about Lewis was that until her arrival in Boston she had never seen a sculpture:

One day I was walking down School Street; I saw the first statue I had ever seen. I don’t know how I felt; it struck me in a most remarkable way. I went and asked Mr. Wm. Lloyd Garrison what it was. He told me it was a statue, and also explained the nature of sculpture. I said, ‘I will be a sculptor.’<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Karen Chernick, “The Unlikely Success of Edmonia Lewis, a Black Sculptor in 19<sup>th</sup> Century America,” in *Artsy* (February 1, 2018), accessed February 19, 2021, <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-success-edmonia-lewis-black-sculptor-19th-century-america>.

<sup>94</sup> Edmonia Lewis, and Maria Weston Chapman, “Letter from Edmonia Lewis, Rome, to Maria Weston Chapman, May 3<sup>d</sup>, [1868], Correspondence, May 3, 1868, *Digital Commonwealth*, accessed February 21, 2021, <https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/7s75f449r>.

<sup>95</sup> Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society*, 30 and Nelson, *The Color of Stone*, 43.

<sup>96</sup> “Miss Edmonia Lewis,” *Elevator* (published as *The Elevator*), August 30, 1873, Vol. 9, No. 21, Newsbank, Inc. The quote is taken from this publication, but Lewis told a version of this story to several people including a reporter from *The San Francisco Chronicle*, “Edmonia Lewis. The Famous Colored Sculptress in San Francisco. A Chronicle Reporter Interviews Her at Her Hotel,” August 26, 1873, 3. Laura

Lewis likely did not invent this story but she adopted and repeated it for years.<sup>97</sup> The idea that someone who had never been exposed to art could quickly pick-up the tools of the sculptor and carve portraits and other statues after having received the bare minimum of training stretches the bounds of credulity.<sup>98</sup> Journalists and Lewis' abolitionist supporters, however, were willing to accept Lewis' naivete at face value and they reinforced it in the stories they published. For example, in his *Athenæum* article Henry Wreford describes Lewis as "naïve in manner, happy and cheerful, and all unconscious of difficulty," she is driven by impulse he added and "prattles like a child..."<sup>99</sup> Laura Curtis Bullard said of Lewis that "her manners are child-like, simple, and most winning and pleasing."<sup>100</sup> In truth, these types of descriptions were not limited to Lewis, other professional female artists were similarly described. Harriet Hosmer, one of Lewis' white colleagues in Rome, and also a sculptor of note, was depicted in the press as childlike and as being a tomboy.<sup>101</sup> Hosmer, Lewis, and other members of the female U.S. American expatriate community in Rome were all infantilized to one degree or another and this made what

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Curtis Bullard also included it in her article, "Edmonia Lewis," *New National Era*, Washington, DC, May 4, 1871.

<sup>97</sup> Richardson, "Edmonia Lewis at McGrawville," 240. Richardson indicates the story may have first appeared in an anonymously authored pamphlet published at some point in the late 1860s.

<sup>98</sup> Richardson, "Edmonia Lewis at McGrawville," 240. Holland, "Mary Edmonia Lewis's "Minnehaha": Gender, Race and the "Indian Maid," 29, also voices doubts that Lewis had never seen a sculpture by pointing to her education but states that Lewis perpetuated this story.

<sup>99</sup> Wreford, "A Negro Sculptress."

<sup>100</sup> Bullard, "Edmonia Lewis." See also Nelson, *The Color of Stone*, 8.

<sup>101</sup> Holland, "Mary Edmonia Lewis's "Minnehaha": Gender, race and the "Indian Maid," 29.

was perceived as their eccentricity in foregoing the traditional female domestic role somewhat more acceptable.

In Lewis' case, the exaggerated naivete and seemingly prodigious artistic abilities suited white abolitionists. The latter used Lewis as an example of black accomplishments in their arguments for giving enslaved, freed and free blacks their full rights.<sup>102</sup> A portion of the white population was eager to embrace a black-Chippewa artistic prodigy, which they could present as an "accident of nature," who, since she was untaught, did not challenge the long-standing notion that blacks were inferior.<sup>103</sup> Though she often did little to dispel these stories, because they helped her sell her work, Lewis chafed at the patronizing attitude and this is evident within a few months of her arrival in Boston. In 1864 she invited Lydia Maria Child to see one of her works and preemptively admonished Child that:

I don't want you to praise me...for I know praise is not good for me. Some praise me because I am a colored girl, and I don't want that kind of praise. I had rather you point out my defects for that might teach me something.<sup>104</sup>

Child, who was one of Lewis' Boston supporters, took this directive to heart and often conveyed patronizing and judgmental suggestions to Lewis. In "A Chat with the Editor of the Standard," Child conceded that while Lewis had an eye for forms, she questioned the wisdom of Lewis' choice to become a sculptor. As Child put it, at her age, sixty, she felt

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<sup>102</sup> Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 3.

<sup>103</sup> Richardson, "Edmonia Lewis at McGrawville:" 240.

<sup>104</sup> Child, "Letter from L. Maria Child," in *The Liberator*, February 19, 1864. See also Nelson, *The Color of Stone*, 17.

she “knew better than [Lewis] could what a long and difficult hill she had to climb...”<sup>105</sup>

Commenting on Lewis’ youth and upbringing in a letter to Sarah Shaw, Child said that Lewis was “younger than young – brought up, as she was among the Chippewas and negroes without any education. I think it is a pity that she has undertaken to be a sculptor.”<sup>106</sup> These anecdotes are illustrative of the unintentionally racist attitudes women like Lewis, Remond and Chancy Louverture encountered probably on a daily basis. It is not difficult to imagine that when Lewis, an educated, aware and independent woman, learned of these or similar comments, her reaction was not docile. When she resisted the helpful advice Child was put off by her stubbornness.<sup>107</sup>

It comes as little surprise that in reminiscing to the New York Times in 1878 about her initial departure for Europe that Lewis said:

I was practically driven to Rome...in order to obtain opportunities for art-culture, and to find a social atmosphere where I was not constantly reminded of my color. The land of liberty had no room for a colored sculptor.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Lydia Maria Child, “A Chat with the Editor of the Standard,” in *The Liberator*, January 20, 1865, Newspaper, *Digital Commonwealth*, accessed February 21, 2021, <https://ark.digitalcommonealth.org/ark:/50959/5h742w18n>.

<sup>106</sup> Benjamin Quarles, “A Sidelight on Edmonia Lewis,” in *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (January 1945): 85, accessed December 4, 2019, [www.jstor.org/stable/2715271](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2715271). Sarah Shaw was Robert Gould Shaw’s mother. Robert Gould Shaw was a Colonel in the Union army who died leading one of the first black regiments during the Civil War. Lewis was moved by Shaw’s tragic end and touched that he had fought for the liberation of her father’s people and thus undertook to carve Shaw’s portrait. She based the bust on photographs of the fallen soldier and presented the completed piece to Shaw’s family, who subsequently gave her permission to create copies of the bust which she then sold. It is through the sale of the copies of Shaw’s bust that Lewis was able to finance her move to Rome. See Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society*, 30

<sup>107</sup> Holland, “Mary Edmonia Lewis’s “Minnehaha”: Gender, Race and the “Indian Maid,” 30.

<sup>108</sup> “Seeking Equality Abroad: Why Miss Edmonia Lewis, the Colored Sculptor, returns to Rome - - Her Early Life and Struggles,” in *The New York Times*, December 29, 1878, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1878/12/29/817397889.html?pageNumber=5>.

Lewis seemed to realize two things in 1865 when she sailed to Europe: first, her white abolitionists patrons would never see her simply as a sculptor but as a black-Chippewa sculptor.<sup>109</sup> Second, by crossing the Atlantic, much like her predecessor Sarah Parker Remond, she was creating new opportunities to, yet again, redefine herself, and more opportunities for her professional development. Thus like Remond Lewis also engaged in the more traditional form of marronage, flight. While Remond distinguished herself first as an anti-slavery advocate and later as a medical doctor, Lewis became “part of the international art world” and attempted to recast herself as a mainstream U.S. American artist who happened to be black, rather than simply a black artist.<sup>110</sup>

Lewis arrived in Florence, Italy in November 1865 and by January 1866 had established herself in Rome.<sup>111</sup> In Rome Lewis became part of a close-knit Anglo-American community comprised of white women who worked as professional artists.<sup>112</sup> The Eternal City offered Lewis and the other female expatriate artists a welcoming environment that encouraged their artistic endeavors. They were able to live what was called “the Art-Life” surrounded by artist and photography studios, public and private art galleries and bookshops and libraries that catered to the growing Anglo-American

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<sup>109</sup> Nelson, *The Color of Stone*, 19.

<sup>110</sup> Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 3.

<sup>111</sup> Dabakis, *A Sisterhood of Sculptors*, 166, provides the November 1865 arrival date. Henry Wreford, “Lady Artists in Rome,” in *The Art Journal*, (April 1866), accessed February 21, 2021, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015009234686?urlappend=%3Bseq=247>. Wreford’s article has a dateline of March 1866 and mentions that Lewis does not have many examples of her work in studio as “she has only been here two months” 177.

<sup>112</sup> Dabakis, *A Sisterhood of Sculptors*, 4 and Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 3.

community.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, Rome provided the opportunity to study antique sculptures in person, gave more ready access to Italian marble quarries and finally it was more affordable for artists to hire skilled Italian carvers to help them execute their pieces.<sup>114</sup>

Even in Italy, Lewis continued to be a curiosity who was regularly “identified as a ‘negresse’ or ‘colored sculptor,’” with remarks often made about the contrast of her dark hands against the white marble.<sup>115</sup> She was, nevertheless, able to create the identity of a “cosmopolitan expatriate artist,” and she expanded her choice of artistic subjects.<sup>116</sup> In Boston she was known as the youthful, black-Chippewa sculptor who created clay and plaster medallions with the portrait busts of important abolitionists. Her financial windfall came with her bust of fallen Union Army hero Robert Gould Shaw.<sup>117</sup> In Italy, however, while she continued to incorporate abolitionist themes in her work to appeal to her established patron-base in the United States, these were not her exclusive focus. Lewis’ sculptures featured biblical, historical, literary and mythological figures, just like the white artists with whom she associated.<sup>118</sup> While showing her efforts to be seen as a

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<sup>113</sup> Dabakis, *A Sisterhood of Sculptors*, 4.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>115</sup> Gold, “The Death of Cleopatra/The Birth of Freedom...,” 325.

<sup>116</sup> Gold, “The Death of Cleopatra/The Birth of Freedom...,” 325. Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 3 also makes a similar statement on the artistic freedom and cosmopolitan nature of Lewis’ life in Rome.

<sup>117</sup> Nelson, *The Color of Stone*, 29. See also Marilyn Richardson, “Friends and Colleagues: Edmonia Lewis and her Italian Circle,” in *Sculptors, Painters, and Italy: Italian Influence on Nineteenth-Century American Art*, edited by Sirpa Salenius, (Saonara, Padova: Il Prato, 2009), 100; Alice George, “Sculptor Edmonia Lewis Shattered Gender and Race Expectations in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century America,” in *Smithsonian Magazine*, (August 22, 2019), accessed February 19, 2021, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/sculptor-edmonia-lewis-shattered-gender-race-expectations-19th-century-america-180972934/>.

<sup>118</sup> Peabody, “Finding Cleopatra.”

mainstream U.S. American artist, her sculptures increasingly illustrate Lewis' evolution into the new woman since her subjects were independent women who had taken charge of their own destiny. They further demonstrate how she ascribed the notions associated with middle-class white womanhood onto the representation of the black female. This artistic development can, at least in part, be attributed to the strong, liberated women she encountered and socialized with in Italy.

The Roman expatriate community of which Lewis was a part was comprised of women from diverse social and economic backgrounds – some were from wealthy upper-class families, others from professional middle-class families and some were from the working class. Their ages varied widely with the oldest among them born in 1815 and the youngest in 1847.<sup>119</sup> Though they shared the aspiration of being recognized as professional and self-sustaining artists, the women were vastly different from each other and far from the homogenizing monolith evoked by Henry James' derogatory moniker the "white marmorean flock."<sup>120</sup> Lewis was likely introduced into the group by Harriet Hosmer, whom she knew in Boston. Upon first arriving in Rome she visited her old acquaintance.<sup>121</sup> As Lewis recalled to the *New York Times* in 1878, "Miss Hosmer became a fast friend and defender..."<sup>122</sup> Hosmer, who was one of the better known

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<sup>119</sup> Dabakis, *A Sisterhood of Sculptors*, 2 and Nelson, *The Color of Stone*, 10 identify members of the expatriate community as: Sarah Clappitt Fisher Ames (1817-1901), Margaret Foley (1827-1877), Florence Freeman (1836-1876), Harriet "Hattie" Hosmer (1830-1908), Lavinia "Vinnie" Ream Hoxie (1847-1914), Louisa Lander (1826-1923), Mary Edmonia Lewis (1844-1907), Blanche Nevin (1838-1925), Emma Stebbins (1815-1882), and Anne Whitney (1821-1915).

<sup>120</sup> Dabakis, *A Sisterhood of Sculptors*, 3.

<sup>121</sup> Richardson, "Friends and Colleagues," 105.

<sup>122</sup> "Seeking Equality Abroad," in *The New York Times*, December 29, 1878.



female sculptors of the time, had established a thriving studio in Rome in the 1850s and she was seen as “an advanced and ‘emancipated’ female...”<sup>123</sup> The long-standing friendship between Hosmer and Lewis likely guided the younger artist.

The other artists in the Roman expatriate community, which was both “social and artistic” in nature, encouraged Lewis and were also influential on her growth as an artist and as a new woman.<sup>124</sup> These types of female centric communities, where members helped and supported each other, were not unusual in nineteenth-century Europe. Within them the message “that women could not succeed as artists and writers” was countered, and members were encouraged to follow “their artistic calling” passionately and with resolve.<sup>125</sup> One of the more famous among the U.S. American expatriates in Rome, and ostensibly the leader of the group, was the actress Charlotte Cushman who helped Lewis by raising money in Boston so the Young Men’s Christian Association could buy one of Lewis’ pieces.<sup>126</sup> Thus Lewis’ immediate exemplars were strong, independent women who were generous with their support.

Sarah Parker Remond was probably another role model for Lewis. Unlike the white female artists she met in Rome, Remond and Lewis had lived experiences that were

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<sup>123</sup> Richardson, “Friends and Colleagues...” 105.

<sup>124</sup> Joy S. Kasson, *Marble Queens and Captives. Women in Nineteenth-Century American Sculpture*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 11. Richardson, “Friends and Colleagues,” 105-106. Richardson identifies Cushman as a supporter of women in the arts as “the center of a community of independent women...” (106).

<sup>125</sup> Rachel G. Fuchs and Victoria E. Thompson, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 109. Fuchs and Thompson provide examples of these female centric communities in England, specifically mentioning the community of writers and painters that gathered around Barbara Smith Bodichon, and the Society of Female Artists founded by Harriet Grote in 1856.

<sup>126</sup> Richardson, “Friends and Colleagues....,” 106.

more closely akin to each other. Though it is impossible to pinpoint exactly when the two met, it is almost assured that they did meet. Both were in Florence at around the same time and had many friends and acquaintances in common in Boston and in Florence. Additionally, there were several social occasions where the two could have met.<sup>127</sup> Given her education at two staunchly abolitionist schools, it is highly probable that Lewis was well aware of Remond's activities on the abolition lecture circuit, especially since Remond's speeches and writings were extensively covered by the press on both sides of the Atlantic. Remond also believed in supporting and advocating for opportunities for black men and women. It is likely that Remond befriended a younger compatriot of color who, like herself, was trying to establish herself professionally in a foreign country. Moreover, Remond had benefited from the support of progressive women as she worked to attain her educational and professional goals. It is therefore not outside the realm of possibility that she would do no less for another.<sup>128</sup> There can be little doubt that Lewis admired and took inspiration from Sarah Parker Remond, a strong, professional, independent and educated black woman. Lewis' familiarity with Remond's work and advocacy is seen in the way she came to understand and depict strong black females.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Nelson, *The Color of Stone*, 167. Nelson indicates that Lewis and Remond both knew William Lloyd Garrison in Boston, though they probably met in Italy since both arrived the same year. Nelson offers several possibilities for their meeting including Easter Sunday festivities hosted by Anne Whitney in 1868; they both socialized with the art critic James Jackson Jarves, and in 1886 Frederick Douglass visited Rome and, in his diary, indicated that Lewis was part of the multi-ethnic expatriate community in Rome along with the Remonds who lived at Palazzo Moroni. Richardson, "Friends and Colleagues..." 103. Both Nelson and Richardson who address the acquaintance between Edmonia Lewis and Sarah Parker Remond, do not do so in definitive terms. For example, Nelson says "they probably met," and the meeting could have happened. Richardson for her part indicates that a friendship with Remond "must have been a source of enormous support and encouragement for Lewis" (103).

<sup>128</sup> Salenius, "negra d'America," 2.

<sup>129</sup> Nelson, *The Color of Stone*, 167.

Lewis' 1875 piece, *Hagar*, which is also known as *Hagar in the Wilderness*, is a good illustration of Remond's impact on Lewis [See Figure 8].<sup>130</sup> *Hagar* is classified as an ideal sculpture, which is "a sculpture based on a narrative from literature, mythology or the Bible."<sup>131</sup> Ideal sculptures tended to be three-dimensional, figurative, rendered at life-size, or slightly smaller, and whether the artist was male or female the subject was usually a woman.<sup>132</sup> This type of sculpture is an ancillary to the larger Neoclassical art style and was popular with U.S. Americans from about the 1830s to about 1880.<sup>133</sup> Neoclassical art, which was rarely created as art for the sake of art, was typically narrative in nature and the intention for both artist and patron was for the artwork to convey a moral message.<sup>134</sup> Because of its connection to antiquity, Neoclassicism became associated with notions of "liberty, freedom and republicanism."<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> The 1875 *Hagar* is the second version of the biblical figure Lewis created. The first rendition is lost. Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 187.

<sup>131</sup> Buick, "The Ideal Works of Edmonia Lewis," 7.

<sup>132</sup> Kasson, *Marble Queens and Captives*, 1.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

<sup>134</sup> Nelson, *The Color of Stone*, xiii. Kasson, *Marble Queens and Captives*, 32.

<sup>135</sup> Dabakis, *A Sisterhood of Sculptors*, 6.



**Figure 8:** Edmonia Lewis, *Hagar (Hagar in the Wilderness)*, 1875, Marble, 52 5/8 x 15 1/4 x 17 1/8 inches (133.6 x 38.8 x 43.4 cm). Smithsonian American Art Museum. Gift of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Free of Copyright.

These ideas were seen as key for the formation of a civilized society and, because of print culture, the Neoclassical ideology was more widespread and populist than many think.<sup>136</sup>

Lewis' *Hagar* has all the hallmarks of an ideal sculpture. It is thematically biblical, it features a woman and it conveys a story with a moral message. Hagar appears in the Book of Genesis as part of the patriarch Abraham's story, she was "an Egyptian slave-girl" who belonged to Abraham's wife Sarah.<sup>137</sup> Abraham, who was in his eighties, and Sarah, who was not much younger, remained childless, so Sarah urged Abraham to "go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I obtain children by her."<sup>138</sup> Since Egypt was read as black in the nineteenth century, Hagar symbolized "chattel slavery and the indignities that black women suffered."<sup>139</sup> Hagar, like so many enslaved black women, was given to a man without her consent and forced to bear a child. When the usefulness of the enslaved mother and her child came to an end they were cast out into the wilderness.

Lewis' composition is simple and, as with most sculptures, the details are abbreviated and provide just enough visual clues allowing the viewer to identify the narrative and grasp the message.<sup>140</sup> Hagar is the lone figure and is shown standing upright. Her head has a slight upward tilt as do her eyes. Her brow is furrowed. Her hands are at chest level and clasped in supplication and prayer. Hagar wears a simple dress, which gathers in bunched folds at her waist and legs. It falls off her right shoulder and

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<sup>136</sup> Dabakis, *A Sisterhood of Sculptors*, 6.

<sup>137</sup> Genesis 16:1-2. At this point Abraham and Sarah are called Abram and Sarai. God renames Abram, Abraham in Genesis 17:5 and Sarai becomes Sarah in Genesis 17:15.

<sup>138</sup> Genesis 16:2.

<sup>139</sup> Buick, "The Ideal Works of Edmonia Lewis," 10. Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 67.

<sup>140</sup> Nelson, *The Color of Stone*, xiii.

barely covers her breast on that side. The disposition of the clothing, along with the furrowed brow convey Hagar's distress. The fallen jug at her feet identifies that Lewis depicted one of two possible moments when Hagar was wandering in the wilderness. The first occurred when a pregnant Hagar ran away after Sarah "dealt harshly with her," and an angel conveyed God's message to "return to your mistress, and submit to her."<sup>141</sup> Hagar, as a true woman, demonstrated her obedience to God by returning to Abraham and Sarah where she birthed her mixed ancestry son, Ishmael. The second moment comes when Abraham accedes to Sarah wishes after the birth of their son Isaac, to "cast out this slave woman with her son," with a ration of food and skin of water.<sup>142</sup> With the water depleted, Hagar shelters Ishmael and pleads with God to "not let me look on the death of the child."<sup>143</sup> Upon hearing her cries and her weeping, God made a well of water appear.<sup>144</sup>

Lewis' choice of Hagar as a subject, recalls Sarah Remond's focus on the sexual abuse of enslaved women in her abolition speeches. Hagar further evoked the enslaved mothers who, like Margaret Garner, did all in their power to shield their children from the scourge of enslavement.<sup>145</sup> Using the biblical narrative, Lewis' *Hagar* commented on "the sexual violation of black women" while at the same time showing that they were

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<sup>141</sup> Genesis 16:4-9.

<sup>142</sup> Genesis, 21:10.

<sup>143</sup> Genesis, 21:15-17.

<sup>144</sup> Genesis, 21:19-19.

<sup>145</sup> See previous chapter for the Margaret Garner case.

viewed as commodities and that they and their children were expendable.<sup>146</sup> Remond brought forth similar points in her earlier abolition speeches. Just as with the female figure in *Forever Free*, Lewis' *Hagar*, a black woman, reflects the tenets of true womanhood, particularly the characteristics of piety and submission. Hagar is additionally a devoted mother. It is understood that Hagar cannot conform to the characteristic of purity, not because she is a sexual aggressor or hyper-sexual, but because she is sexually abused as a result of her status as an enslaved individual. The implication is that she is enslaved because of color prejudice.<sup>147</sup> The sensitivity with which Hagar's plight is represented shows that Lewis had, as she told Laura Curtis Bullard, "strong sympathy for all women who have struggled and suffered."<sup>148</sup> It also shows Lewis' continued connection to her homeland and her awareness of the plight of newly emancipated women in the United States.

At the same time, the choice to show Hagar in the wilderness, illustrates the enslaved woman's agency. Hagar decided to make her own way in the world after being mistreated by Sarah, though she returned at the behest of God. Moreover, when cast out in the wilderness with Ishmael, Hagar turns to God rather than seeking protection or assistance from a man to save her son. These interpretations reflect the influence of the new women with whom Lewis associated. Lewis, Hagar and the new women were creating their own path and were largely reliant on themselves for their survival. Hagar's

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<sup>146</sup> Nelson, *The Color of Stone*, 166.

<sup>147</sup> Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 51.

<sup>148</sup> Bullard, "Edmonia Lewis." See also Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 70.

motherhood differentiates her from the new woman of Lewis' era and brings her closer to the true woman. *Hagar* and the female figure in the earlier *Forever Free* are endowed with many of the virtues of the true woman while they thematically refer "to the plight of African American" women.<sup>149</sup> That Lewis represented them with straight hair and fine features, was her way "to broaden the category of 'woman'" so that non-European Americans were also included.<sup>150</sup> Moreover, since Lewis worked in the Neoclassical style and idealized her figures, it indicates she was attempting to render universalizing representations of women, rather than "ethnographic curiosities."<sup>151</sup> These representational choices went along with Lewis' goal to be seen as a mainstream artist who just happened to be a woman of black-Chippewa ancestry. These compositional choices that aligned her with more conventional artists, i.e., white male artists, are thus a form of autoethnographic expression.

*Hagar* and *Forever Free* both conform to accepted nineteenth-century gender ideology, ideas which Lewis herself did not completely follow in her day-to-day life. Lewis did not marry or have children, she pursued a profession and she dressed in what was seen as an odd fashion. The art historian Albert Boime said of Lewis that "she wore mannish costumes" and played the exotic and eccentric.<sup>152</sup> Her circa 1870s *carte de visite* portrait photograph shows Lewis' mannish costume and how she chose to play the exotic

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<sup>149</sup> Buick, "The Ideal Works of Edmonia Lewis," 11 and Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 71.

<sup>150</sup> Buick, "The Ideal Works of Edmonia Lewis," 11.

<sup>151</sup> Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society*, 225.

<sup>152</sup> Albert Boime, *The Art of Exclusion. Representing Blacks in the Nineteenth Century*, (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), 169.





**Figure 9:** Henry Rocher, Edmonia Lewis, ca. 1870, Albumen Silver Print, 3 5/8 x 2 1/16 inches (9.2 x 5.2 cm). National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. Copyright Free.

[See Figure 9]. Lewis is represented in her sculptor's clothing, emphasizing her desire to be seen and remembered first and foremost as a professional artist. In her portrait she wears a simple light gown, with a white collar, black tie and a jacket. The clothing's light color would have been practical since Lewis was surrounded by marble dust in her studio. In its practicality Lewis' clothing recalls Louise Chancy Louverture's black gown which would wear better as she travelled all over Haiti.

Overall Lewis' dress is plainer and not as voluminous as the gown Sarah Parker Remond wore for her portrait. Lewis' dress sports no lace detail as seen in Chancy Louverture's clothing, nor is there a decorative pattern as seen in Remond's gown. Lewis bowed to middle-class feminine adornment with the small ruffle at the bottom of her dress and the ring on her finger.<sup>153</sup> Just as Chancy Louverture's and Remond's clothing signaled their conformity to the tenets of true womanhood, Lewis' clothing marked her as an independent woman who did not necessarily focus on many social conventions.<sup>154</sup> The simple dress with few frilly adornments gave Lewis greater freedom of movement as she moved about her studio carving marble. The photograph clearly indicates how Lewis wanted to be seen and remembered, as an artist, something she also conveyed in her last will and testament as cited above.

Lewis' red tasseled cap, which she wears in the Rocher portrait, can be called her signature accessory and it seems she wore it everywhere. Many people remarked on it in articles and letters. For example, Laura Curtis Bullard said that Lewis "wears a red cap in

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<sup>153</sup> Dabakis, *A Sisterhood of Sculptors*, 167.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid*, 167.

her studio, which is very picturesque...”<sup>155</sup> In a letter sent to Boston, Anne Whitney a fellow expatriate sculptor in Rome, wrote that a visiting Lewis “looks quite handsome in her crimson working cap.”<sup>156</sup> Lewis donning the red fez is another illustration of her desire to be seen as a professional, mainstream artist. Both male and female artists in nineteenth-century Europe wore outlandish clothing to attract attention. For example, commercial French photographers in the late 1850s wore exotic clothing, adopted accents and created unusual personal styles with the goal of attracting the public strolling the boulevards into their studios.<sup>157</sup> Similarly, in Rome where artist studios were tourists destinations, both male and female artists created eccentric personas to attract visitors, which typically resulted in the sale of their work. In a *New York Times* article the writer described a U.S. American male sculptor as wearing a costume fashioned in the style of the sixteenth-century Northern Renaissance painter Albrecht Dürer, which helped to emphasize the artist’s shoulders and chest. The artist also donned a velvet beret which barely cover his “ample curls.”<sup>158</sup> For female artists in Rome their studios were often visited out of curiosity and their clothing and hairstyle was more remarked upon than their work.<sup>159</sup> Lewis’s studio was popular among visitors from the United States and

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<sup>155</sup> Bullard, “Edmonia Lewis.” See also Nelson, *The Color of Stone*, 8,

<sup>156</sup> Anne Whitney, “Letter from Anne Whitney, Rome, Italy, 1868 April 17,” Correspondence, April 17, 1868, Wellesley College Archives, accessed February 5, 2021, <https://repository/wellesley.edu/object/wellesley11740>

<sup>157</sup> Elizabeth Anne McCauley, *Industrial Madness Commercial Photography in Paris, 1848-1871*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 22.

<sup>158</sup> “Roman Studios. Among American Artists – Miss Hosmer’s Sanctum – Story’s Atelier – A Colored Sculptures,” *The New York Times*, May 17, 1873. The writer specifically mentions seeing the piece “Nydia” in this artist’s studio. The “Nydia” referred to is likely *Nydia the Blind Flower Girl from Pompeii* by Randolph Rogers and dating between 1853 and 1854.

<sup>159</sup> Dabakis, *A Sisterhood of Sculptors*, 63.

Europe, and the tourists likely came to see the black-Chippewa, female sculptor who dressed in mannish fashion and wore a jaunty red cap.<sup>160</sup>

In the Rocher portrait [See Figure 9], Lewis's torso, arms, and one shoulder are covered by a dark shawl, bordered by a Greek key pattern. Some view the shawl as yet another bow to middle-class feminine sensibilities. Marilyn Richardson, however, argues that with the shawl Lewis was making a reference and connection to the Egyptian goddess Isis.<sup>161</sup> Isis was known to wear a pitch black cloak that passed under her right arm and went over her left, just as Lewis wears in the Rocher portrait.<sup>162</sup> The last Egyptian pharaoh, Cleopatra, claimed the cult of Isis and adopted the ancient mother goddess' characteristics both physically and as part of her duties as pharaoh.<sup>163</sup> Thus, in addition to making a visual connection to the goddess Isis, Lewis also showed her affinity to Cleopatra. It is no surprise that Cleopatra is the subject of what is considered Lewis' masterpiece.

As a nineteenth-century sculptor, Lewis needed at least one masterwork to her credit and for her it was *The Death of Cleopatra* [See Figure 10].<sup>164</sup> Several factors likely drew Lewis to depict the last Egyptian Pharaoh: Cleopatra was both a popular and well-

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<sup>160</sup> May, "The Object at Hand."

<sup>161</sup> Richardson, "Edmonia Lewis's *The Death of Cleopatra*," 50.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>164</sup> Peabody, "Searching for Cleopatra."



**Figure 10:** Edmonia Lewis, *The Death of Cleopatra*, carved 1876, Marble, 63 x 31 ¼ x 46 in. (160 x 79.4 x 116.8 cm). Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC. Gift of the Historical Society of Forest Park Illinois. Free of Copyright.

known subject at the time probably because her biography, both actual and in its fictionalized versions, was full of “pomp and splendor, oriental mystery, and seductive sensuality.”<sup>165</sup> In the representation of the biblical Hagar, Lewis had already shown an attraction for Egyptian subjects. Finally, since white male and female artists represented Cleopatra she was a mainstream subject. Thus Lewis’ rendition was another way for her to make clear that she was no different than her white contemporaries.<sup>166</sup>

*The Death of Cleopatra* shows the ancient-era pharaoh sitting on a throne, which is rendered symmetrically in the Egyptian artistic fashion dating back to the time of the Old Kingdom. Cleopatra’s head is titled back and turned to the left. Her right hand rests on her lap while her left arm hangs down. Unlike her male predecessors and contemporaries, William Wetmore Story and Thomas Ridgeway Gould, who both depicted Cleopatra before her death, Lewis chose to represent the moment of, or the moment just after her death.<sup>167</sup> Lewis’ Cleopatra wears drapery that falls in soft folds around her body. In keeping with Story’s and Gould’s versions, Lewis rendered the drapery so it falls off and exposes one of Cleopatra’s breasts. Lewis depicted Cleopatra wearing the royal regalia of the pharaoh, including the royal *nemes* headdress topped with the *uraeus* cobra. These are symbols of royalty worn by Egyptian pharaohs since the days

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<sup>165</sup> Kasson, *Marble Queens and Captives*, 208.

<sup>166</sup> Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 187.

<sup>167</sup> William Wetmore Story’s *Cleopatra* dates to 1858, it was carved in 1869 and can be seen at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Thomas Ridgeway Gould’s *Cleopatra* dates to 1873 and is at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

of the Old Kingdom.<sup>168</sup> Lewis further stressed Cleopatra's regal position by adorning her with necklaces around her neck, a bracelet on her left wrist, and a ring on the fourth finger of her left hand.

Whether Cleopatra was black African or white European was a hotly contested topic in the nineteenth century. Story opted to represent her as an African, where for abolitionists and supporters of equal rights for blacks she served as an example to show that African-descended people could not only self-govern but could also "sustain a great civilization."<sup>169</sup> When represented so that her white Greek heritage was emphasized, Cleopatra became a symbol for those who supported enslavement and the continued marginalization of black people. Lewis seemed to skirt the debate since she used ancient Roman coins to get her closest to the historical Cleopatra.<sup>170</sup> It should be noted that by the time Lewis carved her version, Cleopatra was "readily identifiable as a black female subject."<sup>171</sup>

Whether understood as black, white or of mixed African and European ancestry, Cleopatra was primarily seen as a woman driven by lust and an unwomanly craving for power. She was not the proper Greek or Roman matron. Cleopatra came to epitomize improper behavior by a woman and as people saw it she was brought down by passion.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Kleiner, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, defines the *nemes* as the ancient Egyptian "linen headdress worn by the pharaoh with the Uraeus cobra of kingship in front," 443. The Uraeus is defined as "an Egyptian cobra, one of the emblems of pharaonic kingship," 447.

<sup>169</sup> Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 182.

<sup>170</sup> Richardson, "Edmonia Lewis's The Death of Cleopatra," 40.

<sup>171</sup> Nelson, *The Color of Stone*, 159.

<sup>172</sup> Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 181.

The latter may explain why nineteenth-century artists and audiences tended to focus on Cleopatra's death rather than her many accomplishments while she lived. Her death by suicide was seen as reflecting "her disgust and weariness of life" since her past held no satisfaction or hope for the future, she chose to "cast away the precious book of life" to ease her "remorse and disappointment."<sup>173</sup> Lewis, however, had access to historical sources in Rome, she thus likely knew that in the ancient period, when Cleopatra lived, suicide rather than capture was considered the honorable and preferred act of male leaders on the losing side of battle.<sup>174</sup> Cleopatra's suicide exhibited her agency and control since it denied Octavian "the ultimate victory of having her paraded through the streets of Rome in chains."<sup>175</sup> The slight smile on Cleopatra's face in Lewis' sculpture shows the pharaoh choosing and controlling how her final chapter was written.

The historical Cleopatra must have served as inspiration for new women like Edmonia Lewis. She was also an inspiring figure for black women. Cleopatra, like the new woman and the black woman, resisted marginalization. The new woman, as seen in the example of female artists like Lewis, fought the hostility of their male contemporaries who were threatened by their attempts to create a space for themselves in the international art world.<sup>176</sup> *The Death of Cleopatra* and its references to feminine strength,

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<sup>173</sup> Ben Beverly, *What Ben Beverly Saw at the Great Exposition*, (Chicago: Centennial Publishing Co., 1876), 188.

<sup>174</sup> Kleiner, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, Volume 1, 154. Nancy H. Ramage and Andrew Ramage, *Roman Art*, Fifth Edition, (Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2009), 219. Kleiner discusses the choice of suicide rather than capture in the context of a battle between the victorious Hellenistic Greeks and the Gaul chieftain. Ramage and Ramage discuss it in the context of *The Column of Trajan*, which features one scene of the defeated Dacian leader committing suicide to avoid capture and humiliation.

<sup>175</sup> Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 187.

<sup>176</sup> Nelson, *The Color of Stone*, 38.



authority, agency, and self-sufficiency signal Edmonia Lewis' full evolution into the new woman. Her affinity for her chosen subject is also easy to understand. Both were complicated women who attained success despite societal obstacles. Both were independent women who exerted power and control over their lives and they were survivors.<sup>177</sup> Both were actors who made history and as narrators gave the story meaning.

After the success of *The Death of Cleopatra*, Lewis turned away from these types of subjects. Her sculptures became more religious, though she continued to create portrait busts. Her focus on religious subjects reflects her devotion to her Catholic faith and it also demonstrates how her years in Rome had helped her expand beyond the abolitionist patron-base and subjects.<sup>178</sup> In 2011 evidence of one of Lewis' lost religious pieces was found in Baltimore, Maryland, a bas-relief sculpture delivered to the Chapel of St. Mary's in March 1883. Her subject was the three wise men whom she depicted as African, Asian, and white – the African wise man was most prominently placed. Unfortunately, the piece was lost in a 1947 fire and the only surviving evidence of what it looked like is a grainy circa 1886 photograph.<sup>179</sup> At age fifty, as a March 1893 edition of *The Cleveland Gazette* reported, Lewis was still actively working. The Ladies of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, a group of black women had commissioned Lewis to create a bust that would be exhibited at the World's Fair in Paris. Lewis, who by this time was living in

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<sup>177</sup> Richardson, "Edmonia Lewis's *The Death of Cleopatra*, 40, 42 and 50.

<sup>178</sup> Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 207.

<sup>179</sup> "Evidence of Edmonia Lewis's Lost Work Found in Baltimore Church," in *Artfix Daily*, February 4, 2011, accessed February 11, 2021, <https://www.artfixdaily.com/artwire/release/5021-evidence-of-edmonia-lewis-s-lost-work-found-in-baltimore-church>. The evidence of this lost sculpture was found by Holy Solano, an art student.

Paris, in her correspondence with the group leader, Miss McCandless, Lewis stated that “I will not stand on price” since “never before have the colored people given me such recognition.”<sup>180</sup> The commission was initially for a life-size bust of Charles Avery, a white benefactor, but the ladies changed their mind and instead requested a bust of the black poet Phillis Wheatley. Whether the commission ever came to fruition is unknown.

Lewis died in London on September 17, 1907 and for over one hundred years the exact year of her death and the location of her grave was unknown. Until the rediscovery of *The Death of Cleopatra* in 1988, Lewis herself was relatively unknown. Her art creation, however, was an act of agency, as was the control she exerted over her biography. She chose to downplay, and sometimes outright ignore, the negative and violent incidents in her life that were tied to color prejudice because she wanted to be seen as a mainstream artist first, foremost and always and not simply as a black artist. In this, as Kirsten Buick says, Lewis was “the *producer* of race...rather than a *product* of race.”<sup>181</sup> Stylistically her work may not be seen as an influence on later generations of artists, but she and the other women with whom she worked in Rome, became successful professional artists, and that “helped establish a place for women in the field of sculpture.”<sup>182</sup> It is also perhaps safe to say that without Edmonia Lewis’ success as a mainstream artist in the nineteenth century, twentieth century artists such as, Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller (1877-1968), Augusta Savage (1892-1962), Beulah Woodward (1895-

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<sup>180</sup> “Miss Edmonia Lewis. Our Sculptress, Now in Paris,” in *The Cleveland Gazette*, March 11, 1893, Cleveland, Ohio, News Article, NewsBank, Inc. Lewis’ letter to Miss McCandless was reprinted as part of the *Cleveland Gazette* article.

<sup>181</sup> Buick, *Child of the Fire*, 21.

<sup>182</sup> May, “The Object at Hand.”

1955), Selma Burke (1900-1995), Gwendolyn Knight (1913-2005), Ruth Inge Hardison (1914-2016), and Elizabeth Cattlet (1915-2012), all black women, who would have had a much harder time establishing themselves as professional artists, if not for the space Edmonia Lewis created for herself as an artist who happened to be female and of black-Chippewa ancestry.

## Conclusion

### Atlantic Legacies

In the long nineteenth century the ideas of equality circulating around the Atlantic impacted nearly everyone, in one way or another. In 1776 the United States' Founding Fathers declared in the Constitution that "All men are created equal." This was reaffirmed a little over a decade later in 1789 by the French National Assembly in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. Of most significance to this narrative is Toussaint Louverture's 1801 Saint-Domingue Constitution which applied the tenets of equality and freedom to blacks and the formerly enslaved. Louverture's Constitution established the colony of Saint-Domingue as an independent entity though it remained part of the French Republic's empire. While many of the Saint-Domingue Constitution's articles conform to the views enumerated in the U.S. American Constitution and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, Louverture took the unprecedented step of extending citizenship rights and universal freedom to blacks as he declared

slaves no longer exist in this territory, slavery is forever abolished. All men born, living and dying here are free and French.<sup>1</sup>

Though flawed in certain ways, Louverture's 1801 Constitution established the possible reality that people could be black, free, and French.<sup>2</sup> The latter was reaffirmed and pushed even further three years later in 1804 when Haiti declared its independence from France and established itself as the first free black republic in the western hemisphere. A

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<sup>1</sup> Haïti Constitution du 3 juillet 1801, accessed, September 4, 2018, <https://mjp.univ-perp.fr/constit/ht1801.htm>. "Il ne peut exister d'esclaves sur ce territoire, la servitude y est à jamais abolie. Tous les hommes y naissaient, vivent et meurent libres et Français."

<sup>2</sup> Lorelle Semley, *To Be Free and French. Citizenship in France's Atlantic Empire*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 54.

republic governed by black and mixed ancestry individuals, many of whom were formerly enslaved.

Though the promises of rights, freedom and equality were intended to pertain only to men, Louise Chancy Louverture, Sarah Parker Remond, Edmonia Lewis applied the universalizing message of freedom and equality to themselves as women as well. They lived in ways that fulfilled the promises of the revolutionary world they had inherited. Their successes and accomplishments which took many forms were reached while confronting tremendous odds. In fact, they lived lives that were largely unthinkable for African-descended women of their era when one considers that the nineteenth-century Atlantic world was also dominated and defined by the enslavement and the marginalization of African-descended individuals. In Chancy Louverture's, Remond's and Lewis' reality people who looked like them were typically seen as little more than commodities.<sup>3</sup> This project shows that to stake their claims to personhood and social space in a society that favored white males, Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis had to overcome negative stereotypes specifically bound to black women, including the belief that in general black women were hypersexual, lacked agency and intelligence and were fundamentally incapable of adhering to the tenets that defined ideal women and womanhood.

In order to contravene these deleterious perceptions that all too frequently resulted in real discrimination and physical harm, the three women crafted their lives in ways that asserted that they belonged in mainstream (i.e., white) upper and middle-class society.

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<sup>3</sup> Charmaine Nelson, *The Color of Stone. Sculpting the Black Female Subject in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 118.

They made claims to the same rights and opportunities as their white counterparts. These assertions were a rejection of the social structures built on the basis that women in general were inferior to men and that black women were lesser still. Their resistance to the denial of their value and worthiness was studied herein as a type of *sociogenic marronage*, since each adopted and adapted the systems of white upper and middle class society to live good and fulfilling lives. Paul Gilroy identifies this use of the dominant culture's social and cultural mores as key to the Black Atlantic experience.<sup>4</sup>

This project has shown that the actions and the steps each took in their individual practice of freedom differed. Coming from an older generation Chancy Louverture's form of *marronage* was to embrace the ideology of domesticity and to model the virtues of true womanhood. A true woman was expected to follow "four cardinal virtues – piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity."<sup>5</sup> As depicted in her portrait [See Figure 5] she was modest in her dress, signaling her adherence to the virtue of purity, while the religious accessories speak to her piety. In his correspondence her husband, Isaac Louverture, made reference to her submissiveness and called attention to her devotion to family. She further demonstrated her qualities as an angel in the house, an attribute given to ideal women in a domestic context, by nursing her young brother-in-law and her mother-in-law when they were sick and dying.<sup>6</sup> Even when Chancy Louverture ventured

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 1 of Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," in *American Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 2 Part 1 (Summer, 1966):152.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the idea of The Angel in the House (or the Angel of the Hearth) see Grace Russo Bullaro's essay "Salvatore Morelli, John Stuart mill and the Victorian 'Angel of the Hearth' Feminine role Paradigm," in *Forum Italicum*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (March 2005), 157-166, accessed July 31, 2021, doi:10.1177/0014580503900109.

outside the domestic realm as she did on her 1822-1825 trip to Haiti, it was done in service of her family's well-being and thus fell within the boundaries of her domestic duties.

Chancy Louverture further lived up to the expectations of women of her class, the upper bourgeoisie, and extended her feminine and domestic responsibilities into the community which garnered social capital for herself and her husband. The 1803 *Lettre de visite* [See Figure 4] demonstrates one of her early endeavors to that end. Later, after she and her husband had settled in the port city of Bordeaux, their home became a gathering place for émigrés and visitors of color from the Americas where, as the Haitian historian Thomas Madiou states, the politics of Haiti were discussed. These gatherings were a type of *salon*, a social space presided over by women of the upper-class and was one way for them to edge along the border of the public sphere while remaining in the domestic one.<sup>7</sup> Chancy Louverture's adherence to the tenets of domesticity extended to the rendering of aid to visitors and émigrés from the Caribbean who found themselves in financial difficulties. The Louverture home in Bordeaux became known as the house of the poor since "all who knew the way knocked at their door incessantly."<sup>8</sup> In fact, "the considerable alms" distributed by the Louvertures are said to be one reason for their poverty as they aged.<sup>9</sup> Chancy Louverture's accomplished her good works for the benefit

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<sup>7</sup> Leora Auslander, *Taste and Power, Furnishing Modern France*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 66.

<sup>8</sup> Alfred Nemours, *Histoire de la famille et de la descendance de Toussaint-Louverture. Avec des Documents inédits et les Portraits des Descendants de Toussaint-Louverture jusqu'à nos jours* (Port Au Prince: Editions Presses nationales d'Haïti, Collection Mémoire Vivante, Juin 2008, originally 1941), 84-85. « ...A maison était la maison des pauvres, et la misère, qui en connaissait le chemin, frappait sans cesse à la porte du noir bienfaisant. »

<sup>9</sup> Nemours, *Histoire de la famille et de la descendance de Toussaint-Louverture*, 84-85. Nemours indicates that Isaac Louverture received a substantial pension from the French government, about five thousand

of the less fortunate within the private sphere, but this sense of social responsibility continued to evolve eventually leading to the rise of the redemptive woman whose civic role was to battle social ills as exemplified by Sarah Parker Remond.

A Redemptive woman ventured into the public sphere advocating to redeem the sins of society, including enslavement. Remond cultivated and displayed appropriate feminine characteristics through modest dress and manner even as she broke barriers by becoming the first woman in Britain, black or white, to address “mass mixed audiences on the anti-slavery issue.”<sup>10</sup> Her portrait photograph [See Figure 6] illustrates her modesty and other attributes of ideal Victorian womanhood which were lauded by the British press. Remond was well versed in the notions of middle class domesticity and womanhood which she credited her mother, Nancy Lenox Remond, for instilling in her and her sisters.<sup>11</sup> Nancy Remond and her daughter Sarah Remond both understood that to gain acceptance and greater equality for themselves in the United States their lives needed to reflect the tenets of white middle-class womanhood. They further realized that their acknowledgement by wider society would by association uplift other black women and their families. This was thus one form of *sociogenic marronage* practiced by Remond.

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francs, but these funds were insufficient because of the financial help the Louvertures provided to the poor. “Isaac L’Ouverture vivait d’une pension assez considerable (cinq mille francs) que lui faisait le gouvernement, mais ses revenus ne suffisaient pas à ses nombreuses aumômes.”

<sup>10</sup> Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), 143 and 170; Sibyl Ventress Brownlee, “Out of the abundance of the heart: Sarah Ann Parker Remond’s quest for freedom,” PhD Dissertation, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1997), 127.

<sup>11</sup> Sarah Parker Remond, “A Colored Lady Lecturer,” in *English Woman’s Journal* (1858-1864), June 1, 1861, Nineteenth-Century Serials Edition (2008; 2018), 270.



The redemptive activities Sarah Remond engaged in were more public than Chancy Louverture. Remond's activities were, however, deemed acceptable since they were tied to women's domestic duties. Women were believed to be more moral and were therefore more responsible for tending to the nation's ethical and religious well-being. The redemptive woman took on vices, from drinking and prostitution to the enslavement of people. For many women, Sarah Remond included, publicly denouncing enslavement was a calling, and staying silent while safely ensconced in their domesticity constituted an even greater sin.<sup>12</sup>

Redemptive women like Remond who had a significant public presence were regularly vilified and had their physical safety threatened. It was not unusual for individuals who supported enslavement and held anti-black feelings "to attack meetings, harass abolitionists, and destroy the homes of members of free black communities."<sup>13</sup> Redemptive women also had to contend with the fact that their presence outside the home publicly addressing an audience meant that people saw their bodies as "available and on display."<sup>14</sup> The latter was an even greater problem for black women who were already perceived as sexually available no matter the setting. Undaunted, Remond continued to advocate widely for equality and the end of enslavement. She also worked to right political and social wrongs all while remaining ladylike and modest.

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<sup>12</sup> Barbara Cutter, *Domestic Devils, Battlefield Angels. The Radicalism of American Womanhood, 1830-1865*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University, 2003), 4.

<sup>13</sup> Sirpa Salenius, *An Abolitionist Abroad. Sarah Parker Remond in Cosmopolitan Europe*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016), 58.

<sup>14</sup> Teresa Zackodnick, *Press, Platform, Pulpit. Black Feminist Publics in the Era of Reform*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2011), xvi.

Remond's emigration from the United States, initially to England and then to Italy exemplifies a more traditional understanding of *marronage* since it entailed leaving a repressive environment. Her emigration to Europe was a form of resistance since she refused to submit to oppression, discrimination and mistreatment because of the color of her skin. By leaving the United States, and later Britain, Remond had the opportunity to further her education, first becoming a nurse and later a practicing physician specializing in obstetrics. Remond's acquisition of an education and advancing in a professional career paved the way for younger women like Edmonia Lewis to journey even further into the public arena by joining the workforce and establishing themselves as working professionals. Thus, the redemptive woman ceded to the new woman embodied by Edmonia Lewis in this project.

Lewis, like Remond, was well-known in her day. She forged a new path as the first sculptor of black and First People ancestry, of either gender, to gain international recognition in the western tradition.<sup>15</sup> As a typical new woman Lewis was well educated, did not marry and was focused on developing and advancing her career. She, and other new women, challenged the norms and limitations the patriarchal society tried to impose on them.<sup>16</sup> While women in the nineteenth century could pursue artistic careers, they tended to focus on painting or drawing. Lewis defied these norms not only by becoming a sculptor but also by choosing to depict historical, biblical and mythological themes.

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<sup>15</sup> Charmaine Nelson, *The Color of Stone. Sculpting the Black Female Subject in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 26; Marilyn Richardson, "Edmonia Lewis at McGrawville: The Early Education of a Nineteenth-Century Black Woman Artists," in *Nineteenth Century Contexts*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (2000), 239.

<sup>16</sup> Sirpa Salenius, "US-American New Women in Italy 1853-1879," in *CCLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, Vol. 14, No. 1, (March 2012): 2, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol14/iss1/2>.

These subjects, like the medium of sculpture, were seen as being within the purview of male not female artists. Lewis, like Chancy Louverture and Remond, practiced her own form of *sociogenic marronage* in that she used the preconceived notions about African-descended individuals and First People, and, in the early days of her career, also her youth, to garner patrons and sell her work. To that end she exaggerated her exotic ancestry while, at the same time, cultivating the idea that she was a naïve simple girl.

Lewis maintained her respectability even as she lived independently in Rome where she emulated the other professional white female artists among whom she resided and worked. As a working artist her livelihood depended on the sale of her work and on her pristine reputation. Since the era of the Renaissance, an artist's reputation was deemed as significant to a patron as the quality of their work.<sup>17</sup> Unlike Chancy Louverture and Remond, she did not personally conform to the ideologies of white middle-class domesticity and womanhood though she was versed in both. These ideologies, however, are most evident in her works as she ascribed the characteristics of ideal womanhood, domesticity and motherhood to the black female body. As with Remond, Lewis' emigration from the United States also approached a more traditional definition of *marronage* as she fled the United States where she faced discrimination, marginalization and bodily harm. Similarly to Remond, Lewis' *marronage* created new opportunities for her professional development and it allowed her to fashion herself as an international artist of some renown who just happened to be a woman of mixed African

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<sup>17</sup> Fred S. Kleiner, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages, The Western Perspective*, Volume II, 15<sup>th</sup> Edition, (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2017), 493. Kleiner explains that in the Renaissance an artist's reputation was carefully researched since their employment reflected on the patron. As illustrated with Louisa Lander in the Introduction above, a lost reputation almost assured the end of an artistic career since no patron would purchase Lander's work after her fall from grace.

and Chippewa ancestry. Her successful career opened the way for later black and mixed ancestry female sculptors to have a professional career.

Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis as black Atlantic women negotiated spaces for themselves in a hierarchical society that advantaged white European and European-descended men. These women were determined and took action using the social and political systems already in place to make claims to opportunities, rights and class standing. All three resisted the historic and systemic prejudices intended to keep them and other African-descended individuals marginalized and oppressed.<sup>18</sup> Through the use of these specific biographies this project has demonstrated several often overlooked facts about life for African-descended people in the nineteenth-century Atlantic world. First, people of African ancestry were not solely relegated to the downtrodden lower social orders. Rather, much as in white society, people of African descent occupied different social classes and, for some, upward mobility was possible through education and hard work. Second, the negotiations for social space among women of African ancestry was not monolithic. Each of the women studied here approached the endeavor in ways that suited their choice of lifestyle and the times in which they lived. Third, women, like Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis lived layered and complex lives and often contended with different societal circumstances simultaneously. As women they managed expectations inherent to their gender, regardless of color. At the same time they challenged the prejudices and negative stereotypes specifically attached to black women.

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<sup>18</sup> Kendahl Radcliffe, Jennifer Scott, and Anja Werner, "Introduction: The Black Atlantic Revisited. Methodological Considerations," Introduction to *Anywhere But Here. Black Intellectuals in the Atlantic World and Beyond*, edited by Kendahl Radcliffe, Jennifer Scott, and Anja Werner, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 6.

Louise Chancy Louverture, Sarah Parker Remond, Edmond Lewis and other African-descended and mixed ancestry women in the Atlantic world faced seemingly overwhelming obstacles. Yet they often managed to shatter the traditional frameworks by which African and African-descended women were understood and pigeonholed. They were undaunted by what was and instead focused on what could be.<sup>19</sup> They thus exercised control over their destinies and practiced freedom in a variety of ways all in an effort to live full and rewarding lives to the extent that “their inner resources and external circumstances allowed.”<sup>20</sup> Though held in high esteem it is important to remember that these women had foibles. As the sources indicate Chancy Louverture, Remond and Lewis were at times superior and could be manipulative, thus revealing their humanity. It is upon this complex Atlantic legacy that women today, especially those of African and mixed ancestry, stand.

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<sup>19</sup> Kamala Harris, “Undaunted by the Fight,” Transcript of a lecture delivered at Sisters Chapel, Spelman College, October 26, 2018, <https://www.spelman.edu/about-us/news-and-events/kamala-harris>. This is an adaptation of a sentence from Harris’ speech: “...being undaunted by the fight means being unburdened by what has been, and instead knowing what can be.” Harris adapted the phrase “undaunted by the fight” from the *Spelman Hymn* written by Spelman alumna Eddy Mae Money Shivery, class of 1934. See “The Spelman Hymn,” accessed, November 13, 2021, <https://www.spelman.edu/about-us/hymn>.

<sup>20</sup> Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: the Formation of Philadelphia’s Black Community, 1720-1840*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 7, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.01388> EPUB. For information on black women of the Atlantic world practicing freedom see Jessica Marie Johnson, *Wicked Flesh. Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 9.

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## PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

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