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The white Creoles of Saint Dominique facing Revolution

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Date: 12/9/2013

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of (Fine) Arts of
the City College of the City University of New York

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Introduction

The literature revolving around the Haitian Revolution highlights its huge impact on black slaves and free people of color. The Revolution becomes a process throughout which oppressed groups entered a power struggle with the white elite with the hope to gain more rights and respect, in the case of the free people of color, and the right to be considered no longer as property but as legally free men with rights in the case of the slaves. Based on that interpretation, the birth of Haiti is the result of a failure to reconcile whites and non-whites under the umbrella of equality for all. The purpose of this thesis is to look at the Revolution from the other side of the spectrum, it will move away from the usual focus put on the transformation and the evolution of the non-white sectors of the population to take a closer look at the transformations within the white creole elite. To illustrate that point I will focus closely on how elite households of Saint Domingue experienced and responded to the transition from old to new regime, bearing in mind the threat that transition posed to the values and foundations upon which creole hegemony was built. I am using collections of letters and excerpts from diaries delivering intimate accounts that tie together issues such as the place of gender and family relationships within the broader narrative of the French and Haitian Revolutions.

This thesis is an attempt to shed light on the issues tackled in those documents and to understand what the questions they raise reveal about their authors and the social and racial group they belong to. It will also analyze the answers they try to bring to the issues raised and assess the strengths and weaknesses of those explanations. Those issues are grouped by themes that turn out to be recurrent in letters from the same authors but also in other

documents from the same time period written by other authors. My analysis will center on two time periods. The first period analyzed extends from 1791 to 1794, and the second one from 1802 to 1803. These two specific time periods coincide with the early stage and the final stage of the Haitian Revolution and allow studying how the social and political disturbances occurring on the island transformed the White elite.

To understand the issues the primary sources rise and to highlight the contribution of this thesis to the existing research on the Haitian Revolution more credit will be given to literature that focuses not only on the Haitian Revolution, but also on the transition of the French Empire from a monarchy to a republic. There are striking parallels but also interesting differences between gender history in France during the 18th and early 19th century and what is happening between genders in Saint Domingue around the same time. The metropolis is the one defining marriage laws in the colony therefore the structuring of marriage within the white Creole community is built upon the model of the metropolis with common values such as the importance of the father but it becomes clear that Creole households have to face very challenging situations epitomized by the relationships between masters and slaves and the products of immoral sexual intercourse between masters and slaves. It is also interesting to pay attention to how lawmakers would use concepts such as manhood, womanhood and parenthood as key elements in their struggle to elaborate an accurate definition of citizenship and how it impacted the white Creoles' definition of themselves.

While reviewing two secondary sources, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* by Lynn Hunt and an article by Elizabeth Colwill entitled "Fetes de L'Hymen, Fetes de la Liberte: Matrimony, Emancipation, and the Creation of New Men." one cannot help but noticing that every time the French Empire took a new political direction during the French Revolution, the terms defining citizenship derived from the restructuring of household.¹ In other words, the government tied together the private and the public sphere in its attempt to reach an accurate definition of the term "citizenship", with for instance the redefinition of patriarchy and gender

¹ Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (University of California Press, 1993)
Elizabeth Colwill "Fetes de L'Hymen, Fetes de la liberte" in *The World of the Haitian Revolution* ed. David Patrick Geggus & Norman Fiering (Indiana University Press, 2009), 125 - 155

relationships. Consequently, depending on the kind of citizenship the government in power was trying to promote, the laws would also make important changes regarding the definition of marriage and the future structuring of French household. For instance, Hunt points out that to make a transition from old to new regime, the revolutionary government strived to replace the concept of paternal authority, embodied by the king for the state and the father for the household, by a discourse promoting brotherhood and equality between men. Hunt's point is to illustrate that brotherhood established equality between fathers and sons, once they have become adult, so their relationship was no longer based on obedience but on mutual respect. The discourse of brotherhood should also be understood as an attempt to exclude women from the public sphere and to place them under male authority. In other words, that discourse denies women any form of autonomy and independence.

In the case of Saint Domingue, the discourse of brotherhood and equality was expressed through a decree voted on April 4, 1792 conferring the status of citizen, with the political rights attached to it, to every free man on the island regardless of their color. Elizabeth Colwill's article summarizes and analyzes what happened when the two civil commissioners tried to implement this law between September 1792 and August 1794. The mistrust of the white Creole population towards the commissioners because of the latter's sympathy for the free colored population led to an uprising in the city of Le Cap on June 21, 1793, and this forced the commissioners to turn to the slaves for help. This context was provided in order to show how the tables were about to turn for the white Creole elite between 1792 and 1794, which is the period throughout which the marquis and marquise of Rouvray wrote to their daughter. The letters offer a detailed account of that transition.

Primary Sources and Methodology

The goal here is to use the primary sources as intimate interpretations by white Creole households of those "assaults" on marriage, manhood and citizenship, and also to look at how

they responded to the social upheaval. The marquise of Rouvray and Leonora Sansay have different conceptions of marriage, manhood and citizenship. Sansay suggests that influential white Creole families, such as the Rouvrays, failed to embrace changes that could have preserved the prosperity of the colony². She feels that at last, the terms upon which elite households are built will have to be renegotiated and elite men should take responsibility for the chaos their households and the whole colony were facing. In other words, unlike the marquise the Rouvray who identifies an assault on marriage and manhood coming from outside, Sansay argues that the problem is coming from within elite households.

Why these two sources? Besides the fact that the information contained in both sources revolve around racial tensions interpreted within an unofficial context mixing the private and the public spheres, the structure of elite households and the burning of Le Cap, they also draw an interesting parallel between the daughter of the marquis and marquise de Rouvray, the countess of Lostanges, and Leonora Sansay. Metaphorically, the countess embodies those numerous people who lived outside of Saint-Domingue and who learned what was happening at the time through personal correspondences with their relatives, friends or lovers or from the mouth of refugees, but who never had the chance to verify those facts by having their own experience of the Haitian revolution. Leonora Sansay can be seen as one of those outsiders who after having heard stories and anecdotes finally gets the chance to have their own experience and verify those stories, but who also finally gets the chance to write their own version of the facts. Therefore to some extent, Leonora Sansay is responding to the marquis and the marquise

² Leonora Sansay, *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo* ((Bradford & Inskoop. R. Carr Printer, 1808). Reprinted and newly edited by Michael J. Drexler (Broadview edition, 2008) & *Le Marquise & la Marquise de Rouvray, Une Correspondance Familiale au temps des troubles de Saint-Domingue, lettres du Marquis et de la Marquise de Rouvray a leur fille Saint Domingue-Etats-Unis (1791-1796)*. Edited by M.E McIntosh et B. C. Weber (1959)

de Rouvray. Sansay's work here is studied along with the story of a memoirist named Elie-Benjamin-Joseph Brun-Lavainne who arrived in Saint Domingue with his father in 1803 at the aged of 12, as a musician accompanying the French army sent By Napoleon.

Regarding the methodology, the epistolary genre is very complicated so it is imperative to adopt a form of an analysis that will take into account the content of the sources but also their form. Mary A. Favret's work on the epistolary genre and its use in history throughout the 18th and early 19th century has turned out to be very useful.³ Favret points out the danger the circulation of letters represented since until the improvement of the post office system during the late 18th century, the state had no real control over the circulation of letters and the information being shared. Therefore, the circulation of letters could undermine the authority of the state, especially due to its lack of control over the information they contained. Madame de Rouvray mentions several times in her letters how the embargo imposed by the local government had severed the communication between her and her family, but she often found a way to get around it. Favret argues that initially the epistolary genre was associated with women and the feminine sphere since letters were highly charged with emotions. She puts it in the following terms: "Traditionally, the letter has not been read as having a "public" voice. Its literary history has been associated with a "feminocentric age" – the eighteenth century – and "a collective obsessing idea called 'woman'."⁴ She goes further and adds that "letters become the repository for "private emotions," a confessional form whose "privacy, like virginity, invites violation."⁵ Therefore, Favret invites those who decide to analyze letters, fictional or not, to take into account their emotional content but also the strong connection they establish between the private and the public sphere since often an "emphasis on the "private moment"

³ Mary A Favret, *Romantic Correspondence: Women, politics and the fiction of letters* (Cambridge University Press, 1993)

⁴ Favret, *Romantic Correspondence*, 19.

⁵ Favret, *Romantic Correspondence*, 20

expressed in letters tends to erase the outside world and ignore the structures of time and distance which, in fact, dictate the letter's form."⁶

The discussion revolves around three major points of comparison divided into subsections. The first section sheds light on the Creoles' need and struggle to define who they are and the greater struggle of Creole women to fit into that definition. The second section analyzes the different explanations the Creoles provided about the uprising and what they actually reveal about their authors. The third section sheds light through Sansay's work on a concept that has been overlooked which is the process of re-colonization caused by the arrival of the French army in 1802.

I Identity and Process of Criolization

A) 1791-1793: The Rouvray and the first phase of the Revolution

The letters the Marquis and Marquise de Rouvray wrote before the slave uprising of August 1791 already make a clear distinction between the concepts of "metropolis" and "motherland." The Rouvrays do not open a clear discussion about those two terms but they make it clear that their allegiance belongs to Saint Domingue and to any superior Empire that would guarantee their rights as plantation and slave owners. In that regard, in the case of white elite families such as the Rouvray, their allegiance to France is simply a means to an end, that end being the continuity and survival of the sugar industry at any cost. Those letters

⁶ Favret, *Romantic Correspondence*, 19.

involuntarily explore the deep sense of fragmentation existing within the population of Saint Domingue on the eve of the proclamation on May 15, 1791 of a decree granting equal rights to free people of color born of free parents. Those various definitions of the term “motherland” explain the contradicting forms of patriotism often expressed in those letters within the same racial and social groups. The quotations used in this section show that it is difficult for the different members of the population to look at each other as brothers of the same motherland because each group has a different conception of what the motherland actually is. Those differences of opinions can also be noticed within the same racial and social groups. The diverse reactions to the decree of May 1791 within the white elite are a clear example. We get in these letters a very personal and non-official account of the colonial opinion following the decree of May 1791. They offer a better understanding of the conditions through which the slave uprising broke out and how it evolved. These letters have a strong sense of authenticity since they succeed in escaping the censorship in place. The facts are described as such, written in a time of panic. Memories are still fresh and this is not a reconstruction but actual testimonies of the anxiety that built up among the white population when thinking of a possible slave uprising they would not be able to contain.

The correspondences of the Marquise and Marquis de Rouvray with each other and with their daughter represent a bridge between the official and the unofficial or between the public and the private sphere since they are an analysis of the information collected by the Marquis as a highly ranked officer and a politician. However, since these letters were supposed to remain private, the Rouvray family expresses their real feelings in a very carefree manner. The letters selected in this thesis reveal a strong sense of concern of the white Creole elite with issues such what distinguishes them from the rest of the population besides their social status since it was now very common to have free people of color as wealthy if not wealthier than white Creoles. The theme of identity in itself is important among the white Creole elites. That theme revolves around notions such as the true meaning of “patriotism” and questions such as: who is a patriot and who is not? Patriot to which motherland? Where is the motherland? And finally, is there an actual motherland? The white creoles are concerned about how they portray themselves and how they could potentially be seen by the outside world. Those testimonies point towards a

redefinition of the word “Creole” often understood as someone born in the colonies. They argue in the case of the white elite that being Creole does not necessary mean being born in a colony but it has more to do with a state of mind and the ability to develop and embrace certain convictions. What stands out is the existence of a subconscious process of creolization. The point just mentioned is illustrated by the contrast between the biographical information of the Rouvray family and the shaping of their political beliefs and views regarding Saint Domingue and its dynamic with France. The Marquise of Rouvray was born Rose-Angelique d’Allesso d’Erargny, her family was from Martinique but she lived in France for many years, she returned to settle down in Saint Domingue in early 1791. Her political views are strongly influenced by those of her husband and the information he decides to share and not to share with her, but her own contact with highly ranked officials also allow her to have her own voice and not merely repeat her husband’s words. It becomes clear throughout the letters that being a woman under a strong patriarchal system triggered many insecurities and a need for white elite women to prove their superiority to men and particularly to women from the other racial castes. Unlike her husband, the Marquise de Rouvray is particularly prejudiced against the people of color especially against women. The Marquise has a stronger opinion than her husband about the rebel slaves and the people of color. Laurent-Francois Le Noir, Marquis de Rouvray was born in 1743 from a Norman family. He quickly developed great skills as a soldier and became at an early stage of his career very sensitive to questions regarding people of color. His letters, unlike those of his wife, reveal a particular sympathy for the cause of the people of color. The Marquis developed a particular interest for the political affairs of the colony, the rights of the planters and the relationship between the colony and the metropolis. He was elected deputy. The punctual accounts that those letters represent offer a bridge between the public sphere, with the Marquis de Rouvray at the front seat as a politician and a high ranked soldier, and the private sphere with the details shared between the Marquis, his wife and their daughter. Thanks to that element one can argue that the Rouvrays offer a quite comprehensive coverage of the Haitian Revolution as it was lived by the white population. The testimonies from other sources included show relevant similarities and contrasts among the white creoles that raise relevant questions about the process of “criolization” discussed in the following

section. The wide range of resources at the disposal of the white population makes it arguably the most powerful caste on the island. However, the way the white Creoles chose to use those resources illustrate the difficulty to analyze that faction of the population as a single entity.

B) The slave uprising: the climax of the crisis of identity

The different testimonies of the white population display a wide range of opinions concerning the slave uprising and the question of the rights of the free people of color and the trust that should be put into them. They also testify of one common theme: certain rules have to be followed in order to guarantee the survival and continuity of not only the sugar industry but the colonial life as it has been known since the colony was officially acquired by France in 1697. Those rules reflect a process of assimilation that could be very successful as it could sometimes be a failure with potentially dangerous consequences for the white Creoles. It appears that each sector of the population is expected to fulfill its role in order to maintain a balance. Another written account of life in Saint Domingue worth quoting is the work of an anonymous author who started writing his story on the island starting in 1785. That testimony is a good example to understand the transition from French patriot to Creole. The man who tells his story did not grow up in a slave society but he slowly adopts the customs and views of the white Creoles and finally becomes a slave master. It is worth quoting here a few lines of the testimony of that anonymous author who was born in France and arrived in Saint Domingue in 1785 as a soldier. By 1791, he had already succeeded in acquiring his own plantation. His testimony can be used as an example of what is expected from the whites who decide to move to Saint Domingue, what they should avoid doing in order to maintain the balance that has been established for over a century now. He writes about a plantation owner who had hired him as the manager his plantation a few years after he had arrived on the island: "He had at least one hundred blacks, the handsomest and healthiest in the district. Instead of the fifty thousand [pounds] of coffee he made every year, he should have made a hundred thousand...."

It was his folly to spoil them [his slaves] to an unheard-of degree... An *économe* didn't have the right to punish a black without his permission."⁷ He goes on to add: "Thus the two *commandeurs* [who were black] took a malicious pleasure in undermining me; even though I was alert and energetic, I was reduced to suffering."⁸ The rest of the testimony explains how the anonymous author succeeds in restoring the "correct order" of things by scaring the blacks on the plantation and earning the total trust of his employer. He presents his testimony as a counter example of the perfect white Creole plantation owner. The plantation owner he describes is presented as a man who has failed to assimilate the values of Saint Domingue society expected from the white Creoles. A key element to these values is white supremacy at any means. The author suggests that if the plantation owner had respected that code of conduct he would have been more prosperous. His slaves would have worked harder and would have been less confident. The author saw the slaves' confidence as an attack on his pride not just as a plantation manager but also as a white man and he felt it was his duty to make the black submit in order to regain his honor as a white man but also as a way to reestablish the order of things. The anonymous author uses this anecdote as a warning of what could happen if the white creoles failed to play their role correctly by not maintaining their slaves in a state of submission. He suggests that the role of the colonists is to remind the slaves that their only duty is to obey to white authority. He is appalled by the possibility that a slave would be allowed to confront a white man and he dwells on how perverted and arrogant they become. Despite the abuses that the anonymous author confesses to have been victim of as a child in the hands of an extremely violent father, which the reason why he ran way to Saint Domingue, he clearly feels no compassion for the slaves. To some extent in his account one cannot help but noticing a striking parallel between the blacks imported from Africa and forced into bondage in a foreign land, learning each day to take on the role of submission that colonial society has forced upon them, and the whites coming from the metropolis who slowly and sometimes very quickly absorb the values promoted by the colonists. This excerpt describes the fast adjustment or sometimes the difficulty to adjust to the racial hierarchy. The process of

⁷ Jeremy Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution. Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection* (Chicago university Press, 2007) , 41

⁸ Popkin, *Facing Tacial Revolution*, 41

criolization was not always a success since at the time the uprising broke out the majority of the slaves were blacks who had freshly arrived from Africa. Based on the criticisms the anonymous author makes on certain slave masters, one could argue that from his point of view the slave uprising broke out from many masters inability properly to manage the newly arrived slaves and instill in them the new values they needed to adopt. As it will be more broadly discussed in the following sections, the Rouvrays also put the blame on the attitude of many plantation owners and the staff they had hired while being abroad. These arguments are part of a narrative that tries to deny that the possibility that the outbreak and the duration of the uprising was actually encouraged by the slaves' growing intelligence and interest in elements that are the pillars of a community such as religion, with the growth of voodoo mixed with an heterodox understanding of Catholicism and growing interests for political affairs but also to their bravery choosing to die in order to also gain more rights and to make their voice heard.

The last point mentioned in the previous paragraph becomes very noticeable in the accounts of those who have been in direct contact with the slaves during the uprising. Many authors of those accounts chose to remain anonymous. They choose not to reveal their names but are open enough to reveal their professions. It is worth mentioning here an interesting account that the director of the Clément plantation in the Parish of Acul outside of Le Cap wrote after he was abducted by a group of insurgents. He was taken prisoner on the first night of the uprising and had the opportunity to be in close contact with the leader of the uprising, Boukman, and his men. Before becoming the leader of the uprising of August 1791, Boukman was already very respected among the slaves because of his prominent role among voodoo practitioners and particularly because he presided the voodoo ceremony of Bois Caiman, the ceremony during which the slaves agreed on destroying their white masters. To make his account as unbiased as possible, the author describes the violence he witnessed on both sides, the violence of the blacks towards the whites and of the white Creoles towards the blacks. His letter describes the decline of the leaders of the insurrection, they go from the state of leaders to the one of victims of persecutions that the author judges sometimes unnecessary. He describes the use the blacks make of weapons such as riffles and sabers. The tone of his

account raises the question of who introduced those weapons into the colony and who taught the blacks how to be so brutal and how to use those weapons. His narrative becomes a mirror questioning long time stereotypes. He describes the blacks' ability to show mercy and insists on the fact that they were not killing people indiscriminately. He quotes the word of Boukman to his men about him the night he was abducted: "Don't kill him, he's a good white and knows more than the others around here."⁹ The words just quoted reveal two things, first that the blacks at specific targets and clearly made the distinction between who they considered their enemies and who they had nothing against. Secondly, this quotation also reveals that unlike what Madame de Rouvray and many Creoles thought, the black insurgents had a plan more complex than the mere idea of exterminating the white population. The author himself does not realize the full meaning of Boukman's action. The anonymous author was very surprised by Boukman's words and of the mercy he showed him. He expresses his stupefaction in the following terms: "I was quite surprised to hear such words because I would not have thought him susceptible, in these circumstances, of such humanity."¹⁰ The tone of his narration conveys a realistic aspect to the transformation of the black insurgents in the eyes of the author. For instance there is a clear contrast between the fear he confesses to have felt when he found out an uprising had just broken out, the slaves had entered his plantation looking for him and they had massacred his family versus how he starts looking up to Boukman after he spared his life and protected him from the rest of his men. The first lines of his account depict the blacks as cannibals performing a sacrifice ritual. In the early pages of his account he often uses terms such as "animals," "bloody horde," and "savage horde" in reference to the insurgents. Then step by step in the eyes of the author these cannibals start displaying features that inspires him fear, then respect and pity, finally. He often uses the word "sacrifice" to refer to the whites the slaves slaughtered. Though his captivity was relatively short, being deprived from his freedom forced the author to relate to the slaves' daily experience in the hands of their white masters. His account illustrates the transition from master to slave. Looking at the great number of slaves in revolt around him he confesses: "The brigands who were already at this moment numerous on the plain ran all over, which made me very uneasy and almost completely robbed

⁹ Popkin, 51

¹⁰ Popkin, 51

me of the hope I had had of recovering my freedom.”¹¹ He describes this experience of reversed order as something apocalyptic: “Oh God! I cried, is this the day you have fixed for the end of our existence and that of one of the most beautiful countries in the world? The cruel notions that came to my mind kept me awake.”¹² He experienced something very few white Creoles got to experience and that makes him able to compare more objectively both sides of the history of the slave uprising. During his captivity he admits that he took the opportunity to engage in conversations with the slaves when he had the chance in order to understand their views and the reasons behind their decision to rebel against their masters after so many years of servitude. He mentions the information he collected during one particular conversation he had with two of his guards. He recalled this conversation as such: “Finally, I started a conversation with the two black guards, Jean Jacques, who belonged to the comte de Noe, and Vincent, who belonged to my cousin. I asked them who could be the instigators of such a vast event and what their purpose was in committing so many crimes.”¹³ The guards were not afraid to reply to his question: “They answered that it was the high-ranking whites of France, that their goal was to punish us for having dethroned the king, and because we no longer had either faith, or law, or religion, and because we had burned the royal decree that gave the blacks three free days a week at Port-au-Prince.”¹⁴ The author shows that though the slaves had a distorted sense of politics, religion, integrity and rights, they were paying attention to those values and identified them as the pillars of the society they lived in. In the eyes of the slaves, whoever attacks those pillars has to be destroyed as they explain here.

Many Creoles, the Rouvrays included, thought it impossible that the slaves had the intelligence to plan such a well-coordinated uprising. They often describe the uprising as a plot orchestrated by a higher power. They see it as a conflict opposing one group of whites to another. Those two factions of the white population often cast into two categories: Revolutionaries against counterrevolutionaries. Before exploring the explanation the Rouvrays

¹¹ Popkin, 53

¹² Popkin, 53

¹³ Popkin, 53

¹⁴ Popkin, 53

give to the uprising, it is worth pointing out the explanations of other Creoles such the anonymous author mentioned in the previous paragraph. Reflecting on the conversation he had with the two guards, he later confesses: “The two blacks said that if they had not received orders from these important whites to revolt in order to contribute to the restoration of the king to his throne, the question that concerned them would not have driven them to such extremes, seeing that in any event they were not intelligent enough and lacked the facilities to conceive such a vast project...”¹⁵ Though the author seems to see this explanation as a valid one, his account is filled with a few elements that contradict the explanation the guards gave him but which also contradict his own belief in the fact that some counterrevolutionary whites could be the actual orchestrators and leaders of the slave uprising. For instance, he notices and points out that the slaves decided to spare the lives of the whites “who didn’t own property, some priests, some surgeons, and some women,” and he also argues that he suspects they were planning on “setting fire to all the plantations and making themselves masters of the country.”¹⁶ As mentioned earlier, though the author does not explore the meaning of those words, he does point out elements that suggest when starting the uprising the slaves already had a desire to reverse the order of colonial society for their own interests. It is worth mentioning here the rest of the conversation between the guards and the author. It sheds light on the idea just mentioned: “I simply asked them why they were sparing the priests, the surgeons, and the women. They replied that they were keeping the priests so that religious services could be held, the surgeons to heal their maladies, and the women to take for their own and get pregnant, as well as a few whites to organize them, in view of their lack of industriousness and abilities.”¹⁷ The final explanation the black slaves give the anonymous author goes against his previous theory that the white counterrevolutionary had planned to unleash chaos on the island. Realizing that he can no longer deny the reality that the slaves were establishing and pushing their own agenda the author is attacked by a fear of a different origin, not just for his own life but also for the survival of his kind. He then focuses on the impact that the fear of a possible reversed order have on the rest of the white population. To

¹⁵ Popkin, 53

¹⁶ Popkin, 53

¹⁷ Popkin, 53

illustrate his observations he describes the first assault of the army on a camp of insurgents. He notices that seized by panic, rage and fear the white population start committing atrocious and often unnecessary crimes towards the black population. He quotes that: "On the 24th, from the crack of dawn, two detachments made up of residents of the Acul quarter went to hunt down the rebels. M. Dubuisson, commanding one of the detachments, went to the Clément plantation, where he killed six blacks who were chained up in the hospital and two negroes who were completely blameless."¹⁸ He describes a process through which the white population go from a rational, intellectual and civilized cast to an irrational barbaric and blood thirsty people blinded by fear and vengeance. They unconsciously adopt the primitive and barbarian features of the slaves that they have been criticizing. He further adds: "Twenty-eight Negroes and Negresses taken prisoner by our troops at the Petite Anse, brought to the town to be judged by the provost's court, were hacked to death on Champ-de-Mars [on 25 August] by citizens burning to assuage their thirst for vengeance."¹⁹ He gives a long list of similar atrocities which the whites committed days after the beginning of the insurrection. His account allows one to draw an interesting parallel between the desire of the slaves he was in contact with to build a society where religion and the values associated with the aristocracy would be respected and the rage of the white population against the religious men who decided to remain among the slaves to preach the Gospel during the uprising. He mentions the story of a particular priest who stayed among the blacks to preach during the first weeks of the uprising. Despite the atrocities he describes the author still sides with the white population and blames the few whites who provided any kind of assistance to the rebels, medical or spiritual. He talks about the priest just mentioned with a negative connotation: "This unworthy minister of religion, according to the testimony of the white women and the sailor who were rescued, was imprisoned the day after his arrival in Le Cap, and in order not to scandalize the public and above all the blacks, he was done away with a few days later in an ugly manner, and the rumor was spread in town that he had been sent back to France."²⁰ Once he regains his freedom, he dismisses the apocalyptic vision of a reversed order and he relocates once more the uprising

¹⁸ Popkin, 56

¹⁹ Popkin, 56

²⁰ Popkin, 57

within the context of a conflict between revolutionaries and counterrevolutionaries. The existence of a few whites in favor of the uprising, such as the priest just mentioned, is most likely the reason why he brings back that argument. He adds one more element to the theory of a conspiracy: “Alas, it was not only the aristocracy that we should have blamed for our disasters; the clergy caused the woes of France, and contributes to ours.”²¹ In his account the plantation director makes an assumption that is worth pointing out. He argues that the Aristocracy and the clergy are responsible for the slave uprising and that was part of a plan whose aim was “the destruction of all whites except some who didn’t own property, some priests, some surgeons, and some women...”²² That assumption implies that neither members of the clergy nor the aristocrats on the island had interests in the plantation system. That is debatable since many aristocrats such as the Rouvrais and the friends they mention in their letters own plantations and lived and supported their families from those revenues. Besides, that assumption raises the issue of defining who the genuine white Creoles are.

The first letter of the Marquise de Rouvray to her daughter written on July 12, 1791 expresses the need that the white creoles were starting to feel to define themselves as a group. That need originates from the political pressure they feel coming from the metropolis. They feel they are being imposed decisions by a government that is somehow estranged to them and which is unable to grasp the depth of the complexity of Saint Domingue caste system. The white Creoles feel misunderstood by the Revolutionary government in place and the only way they have to protest against those decisions is to show that they are one single entity ready to use all the means at their disposal to fight for what they believe is right. The Marquise confesses to her daughter that: “A la nouvelle du décret il y a eu un train au Cap dont on ne se fait pas l’idée. On y a pris cent résolutions plus folles les unes que les autres... Tous les partis se sont réunis et se sont jurés unanimité de principe si la force était employée.”²³ The expression “unity of principle” is explained further in that first letter. The Marquise depicts the white creoles as a group that the French revolution has drawn closer. She describes them as a well-

²¹ Popkin, 57

²² Popkin, 53

²³ Rouvray, 13

connected and very influential community with common interests, and a strong political and social position. This strength is displayed in the white creoles' ability to create a huge network beyond the physical borders of the colony, which is undeniably a very powerful asset. They make use of that asset by creating an embargo to protest against some sections of the Decree of May 15. That embargo seems to have had a strong impact not only on the local population but also on the metropolis and on all those who had commercial interests in Saint Domingue. That embargo also affects the communication between family members as it is shown in the Marquise de Rouvray's words: "Je ne les reparerai pas aujourd'hui parce que j'ai à peine le temps de finir cette lettre pour le courier sans que j'aie cependant l'espérance qu'elle parte à cause de l'embargo mis sur tous les navires. S'il en échappe un j'espère qu'elle sera dessus."²⁴ In the first lines of her first letter she sees absolutely no danger in the new decrees because she believes the white creoles are the only ones who have the power to change the course of history in Saint Domingue. Her opinion is framed by the information received from her husband as a politician and also based on his interpretation. That confidence comes from the fact that the decrees of October 12, 1790 and the ones of May 15, 1791 had recognized the legislative autonomy of the Colonial assemblies regarding questions related to slavery. She also includes in her letter a short analysis of the revolution raging in France and compares the metropolis to Saint Domingue. She argues that Saint Domingue is a safer place and presses her daughter to leave the metropolis for the colony as soon as possible. However, as time goes by, the Marquise shows more and more signs of concern regarding the impacts of the Decree of May 15. In her second later to her daughter, written on July 17, 1791, she admits that: "Ce n'est pas le décret en lui-même qui choqué davantage mais c'est la violation de notre droit à prononcer sur cette caste d'hommes qui doit entrainer l'assemblée a des conséquences terribles."²⁵ The fact that the Marquise de Rouvray uses the term "our" to describe what she believes is a right that belongs to the white Creoles illustrates a new definition of what being creole means but also answers, according to the Rouvrays, the question of where the white creoles' loyalty lays. The biographical information about the Marquise which was mentioned earlier shows that the Marquise the Rouvray and her husband spent most of their lives living in France, one would

²⁴ Rouvray, 15

²⁵ Rouvray, 18

therefore expect them to be more in favor of French domination and more inclined to work with the metropolis, unlike a white person who was born in the colony and who therefore would have no particular emotional ties to it. However, the Marquise's attitude towards the metropolis creates the need to redefine the word "Creole" since being a white creole here becomes more about one's ability to adopt values that will maintain the highly ranked status of that entrepreneurial class. That could be done by being a firm slave and plantation owner or a politician that puts the interests of the colonists first. The skills and values acquired should be transferable to whatever colony the Creoles should have to move to. In a letter written on September 15, 1791, the Marquise explains to her daughter the intentions they have to move to Cuba in order to start a new fortune: "Votre père paraît toujours décidé à passer à la Havane, capital de l'île de Cuba, avec son atelier s'il peut obtenir de le transporter... en prenant le parti de passer à la Havane il peut jeter les fondements d'une nouvelle fortune que ses enfants achèveront..."²⁶ The words of Madame de Rouvray show that being a white Creole is about adopting an entrepreneurial state of mind which would enable them to make a fortune in whatever colony they decide to live in. In that sense Saint Domingue becomes more a means to an end. The discussion about Leonora Sansay's analysis of 1802 to 1804 will also prove that point and will discuss its flaws and its limitations.

Madame de Rouvray's words also illustrate the Creoles' loose notion of patriotism. Less than a month after the outbreak of the slave uprising Madame de Rouvray already communicated to her daughter the Creoles' hopes that Saint Domingue would soon be taken over by England. In other words, they were no longer looking for a way to solve the issue of the slave insurrection by working with the metropolis but were looking to grant their allegiance to a power that matches with their economic interests. She argues in a letter she wrote on September 10, 1791 that: "Votre père, ma chère amie, est toujours dans l'intention de quitter le pays aussitôt qu'il y aura une apparence de calme, qui ne pourra pas durer si nous restons, comme il faut le craindre, sujets de la France. Les divers intérêts font qu'on s'aveugle sur la

²⁶ Rouvray, 33

seule mesure qu'il y avait à prendre pour se sauver, qui était de se donner à l'Angleterre."²⁷ She is also suggesting here that the Creoles have the legislative authority to hand the island over to whatever imperial power they decide to but were unable to reach that decision because of a conflict of interests. However, one could say that the slave insurrection was used as an excuse to urge the faction of Creoles who were still against an alliance with England to change their mind. A large number of Creoles had already started to contemplate the idea of an alliance with England since the decree of May 15, 1791 and if not even before. In a letter written on July 18, that is to say around a month before the slave uprising, she confesses to her daughter that: "On commence à croire que l'assemblée revoquera le decret du 15 mai. Des lettres de Paris du 16 disent qu'elle venait d'envoyer des commissaires à l'hotel de Messiac, aux Americains qui s'y étaient assemblés. Pour proposer un amendement. Ils ont refusé et demandent que le decret fut retiré."²⁸ She goes on to add: "Les memes lettres disent que les propriétaires ont fait le serment de revenir sur leurs biens... C'est d'ici qu'on parera les coups bien plutot que de France et que la coalition avec la Jamaïque sera plus aisée; ... un chargé d'affaires n'ose pas ce que peut faire un propriétaire."²⁹ The excerpts just quoted are examples proving how difficult it is to define the Creoles' understanding of the concept of citizenship. There is a clear discontinuity between the effort of the Revolutionary government to establish a society where all men would be equal to one another and would look at each other as brothers and the concept of racial hierarchy that the Creoles strive to maintain in order to guarantee their supremacy. The Creoles, as Madame de Rouvray' words express it, see a threat in the discourse of brotherhood and they believe that the metropolis' decision to abolish the discriminative laws against free people of color is a step towards the abolition of the slavery which also means the end of the white Creoles' supremacy. On July 30, 1791 she writes to her daughter that: "Tous les deputés qui doivent former l'Assemblée generale sont partis avant-hier pour se rendre à Léogane. S'ils se conduisent sagement leur première action doit être d'envoyer des députés à toutes les puissances qui ont des colonies à esclaves pour les prévenir du décret et des conséquences qui doivent s'en suivre, leur demander secours dans le cas que

²⁷ Rouvray, 31

²⁸ Rouvray, 19

²⁹ Rouvray, 19

l'Assemblée arrive à prononcer l'abolition de l'esclavage, ce qu'elle fera surement."³⁰ The Creoles do present the symptoms of a counterrevolutionary class because of its position towards the metropolis but they were more aiming towards a change of protectorate than a full blown independence.

Consequently, the concept of citizenship is meaningless in one's attempt to define what being a white Creole means in 18th century Saint Domingue. Their sense of patriotism seems almost inexistent they are not worried about losing their land in itself. Their land and their properties are not the reflection of a place they are sentimentally attached to. Unlike Leonora Sansay, Madame de Rouvray does not romanticize the idea of leaving Saint Doming for Cuba. She looks at things from a very practical point of view. Her first concern, and also the one of her husband, is to find a colony hospitable enough and in favor of slavery where they will be able to rebuild a fortune that will guarantee the wellbeing of their children. As mentioned earlier the Rouvrays reach the decision to leave for Cuba and start making arrangements just weeks after the outbreak of the slave uprising. Madame de Rouvray's letters suggest that the Creoles' counterrevolutionary plan was to switch protectorate from French to possibly a British or a Spanish one. That plan failed but Madame de Rouvray is very vague about the reasons behind the Creoles' failure.

C) Marrigae, Manhood& Patriarchy

The letters of the Marquise de Rouvray reveal that while the Creoles are busy fighting the Revolutionary government, within their own circle is being created another revolutionary force embodied by female white Creoles. White Creole women become a threat to Creole patriarchy

³⁰ Rouvray, 23

during the uprising because of their level of education. Those women have the ability to read but also to write. Writing being a very powerful tool in a group's ability to leave a trace and defend its actions, the female authors studied take advantage of that opportunity to leave their own marks. In the case of the slaves no written trace was left behind therefore most interpretations have to be done through letters and other documents left by the white population. In the case of white Creole women, writing give them the power to convey their own experience of not just the slave uprising but the role they took on as wives, mothers, widows but also as slave owners especially during the period they were left alone since their husbands had to enroll in the army fighting against the slaves. The Marquis de Rouvray wrote a few letters to his daughter but the Marquise is the one who wrote most of the letters. In that sense she becomes a bridge linking all the members of her family. In her letters she explains to her daughter how the money sent to her has to be spent. She is also her daughter's main informer of the tragic events taking place in Saint Domingue. Her daughter then passes that information to her husband, his family and their circle of friends. The Marquise's husband relies on her when it comes to networking with family, friends and business partners. He often requests her to write to his business partners within and outside the colony. The Marquise has the power to decide what information to pass on and what information to occult. She does so in many instances. Letter writing becomes a very important skill to master. She often mentions to her daughter how one should be careful in their choice of words. Her husband also relies on her skills as the runner of the plantation to inform him about her estimations of expenses and revenues. There is a clear contrast between urban white Creole ladies and those who live in the rural areas. Unlike Sansay, Madame de Rouvray has learned to become part of the plantation system. She is very business-oriented. In her letters she never talks about hobbies or any kind of entertainment. Her main concern is how to make ends meet in order to provide for her children living abroad. However, she complains a lot about how monotonous and tedious life in the countryside can be, especially for a woman.

Though Madame de Rouvray collects most of her accounts from her husband, there are instances where she takes it upon herself to go and find out things for herself. For instance in the same letter of July 30, she explains to her daughter that: "Je vous écris du Cap ou je suis

venue voir comment les esprits étaient montés.”³¹ The reason behind that decision to go to see things with own eyes is that she felt she could not trust the public opinion. She confesses that: “J’ai trouvé qu’on avait beaucoup trop de sécurité sur les méchantes intentions de ces Messieurs de France... Je crois aussi que si nous échappons au plan de la propagande ce sera par le secours de la Providence...”³²

One can notice a clear transformation in the role Madame Rouvray plays as wife and a mother. Her first letter suggests that she embraces patriarchy unlike her youngest daughter who she complains is too rebellious and admits she would love to marry her as soon as possible to no longer have to take care of her. Madame de Rouvray depicts herself as an advocate of patriarchy and women submission to their fathers and their husbands. In her letters she appears as a woman who does not challenge her husband but who would rather submit to his will. However, the confessions she makes to her daughter reveal that her submission to patriarchy is actually part of a plan to guarantee her children wellbeing but she does not agree with the system in itself. In many instances she encourages implicitly the Countess of Lostanges to resist patriarchy. For instance in a letter written on July 30, 1791 after her husband required their daughter and her husband to come join them in Saint Domingue, Madame de Rouvray writes back to her daughter and says: “Mais vous connaissez votre père; il veut toujours que partout où il est, tout le monde y soit... Moi, je pense, ma chère amie, que si cela vous arrange vous viendrez; si cela ne convient point à vos calculs de fortune vous ne viendrez pas.”³³ In the following letter she writes on August 1, 1791 she again encourages her daughter to do what she believes is right for her despite her father’s opinion: “ Il convient d’avantage il me semble que vous restiez en France... et il me paraît que ce serait plus convenable que de venir ici. Votre père lorsqu’il se monte la tête veut toujours que tout arrive comme il l’a prédit.”³⁴ It is interesting how Madame de Rouvray always bow to her husband’s will but she encourages her daughter to do the opposite though her father is the one supporting her and her family financially. Madame de Rouvray elaborates a very well thought stratagem to prevent her

³¹ Rouvray, 23

³² Rouvray, 23

³³ Rouvray, 23

³⁴ Rouvray, 24

husband from forcing her daughter to move to Saint Domingue against her will. She further adds: "Il est possible que votre père écrit a M. de Montaudouin , qu'il lui parle du désir qu'il a que vous veniez. Ce sera a vous a démontrer alors a M. de Montaudouin que ce la vous est impossible et vous lui donnerez vos raisons."³⁵ It is obvious that her husband is unaware of those conversations between her and her daughter. Despite those strategies the Marquise invents to make her husband change his mind, those letters reflect the power and weight the patriarchal system set in place in Saint Domingue had on Creole women. Despite their intelligence, their education and their good skills in economics they seem unable to make any important decision without their husbands' consent. That seems to be more of a moral agreement than a legal one. In most of her letters she states that whatever decision she made she always did so by consulting her husband first and with his consent. In the section dedicated to womanhood a discussion around Sansay's work will show the depth of the impact of colonial patriarchy on women. Madame de Rouvray does not discuss that issue in depth with her daughter but from her letter one can see that this lady is a very intelligent and educated woman who could be much more independent but she chooses not to. Her youngest daughter refuses to walk in her mother's steps. The Marquise describes her youngest daughter has a very disobedient, greedy and moody young woman. She complains about her behavior the few times she mentions her in her letters. The demands of the Marquis to his married daughter show that in the patriarchal system in place, the father's authority comes before the one of the husband. In none of the letter written to their daughters the Marquis de Rouvray asked his son-in-law his opinion about moving to Saint Domingue. He considers neither his opinion nor the one of his daughter. He places them both under his authority. It is also worth pointing out that though his daughter is married, the Marquis is the one supporting her, her husband and their daughter. To maintain that deal, the Marquise encourages her daughter to play with her father's feelings for her. She ensures her that that is the best way to get whatever she wants out of him. She argues: "Seulement, en repondant a votre père, faites-le avec adresse pour ne pas le facher. Amadouez-le un peu. Vous savez qu'il aime cela..."³⁶

³⁵ Rouvray, 27

³⁶ Rouvray, 25

It is therefore legitimate to question the reasons why Madame de Rouvray got married to the Marquis and remained by her husband's side. Madame de Rouvray mentions many other couples who own plantations in Saint Domingue whose children also live abroad. In her letters she does not dwell about the intimate bond she shares with her husband. She does not give romanticized descriptions of her marriage. Her letters revolve around the dynamic between them two and how it affects their revenues and the lives of their children abroad. The experience of the Rouvrays depict Creoles' wives as women who look up to their husbands because he is able to build up a fortune, he is also able to protect his family. In other words, the criteria for choosing a husband are his ability to be a good businessman and a good soldier. Those are qualities that inspire respect within the colonial society. Madame de Rouvray dwells a lot in her letters on her husband's accomplishments as a general of the army during the slave uprising. She points out how thanks to him many plantations have been preserved and many families feel safe. In a letter written on September 10th she explains that: "Il n'est encore rien arrive a nos propriétés. Jusqu'a present votre père a empêché les brigands d'aller plus loin qu'ils n'étaient, en plaine au moins. Depuis qu'il a place son camp a la dernière plantation brulée de Limonade il n'a pas perdu un pouce de terrain."³⁷ She further argues that her husband could have already exterminated the slave rebels but the slaves being expensive commodities, doing so would be damaging their own goods: "Comme il faut tout garder a la fois, il n'est pas possible d'attaquer ces coquins-la avec la vigueur qu'il faudrait mettre pour les détruire."³⁸ Despite her effort to promote the patriarchal model she has lived under Madame de Rouvray realizes that the Revolution seriously challenges the values she has believed in for a long time. She had never experienced financial difficulties before and she had never had to fear for her safety before. These are issues that force her and other white Creole women to question the moral foundation of colonial patriarchy. For instance the financial difficulties caused by the Revolution and the restricted budget many white Creole women were forced to live under increased their hatred towards their husbands' mulattoes mistresses. They now

³⁷ Rouvray, 30

³⁸ Rouvray, 30

revolt against things they had turned a blind eye on before. Madame de Rouvray finally opens up to her daughter about her husband's multiple affairs two years after the beginning of the slave uprising. At the time she decides to make those confessions to her daughter the finances of the Rouvrays have reached a critical point, her husband is no longer able to support their daughter and her family. In a letter dating from August 13, 1793, she expresses those thoughts in the following terms: "C'est la fin du monde mon enfant, et c'est aussi la fin des honnêtes gens car comment espérer réparer tant de malheurs surtout avec un père comme vous l'avez? De toutes nos calamités c'est la plus grande, et vous allez juger si je vous dis rien de trop fort."³⁹ That quotation shows that the Revolution somehow transformed the white Creoles to the point of no return according to Madame de Rouvray. The men that she and other women looked up to and called "honnêtes gens" have been so transformed by the Revolution that there is no remedy. She suggests that the Revolution brought out their darkest sides. She further adds in the same letter: "Dans ce moment-ci ou nous vivons sur un peu de capitaux sauvés par miracle, qui seront les seuls que nous auront peut-être, il a à sa suite une quarteronne et son batard pour lesquels il fait une dépense, telle qu'elle soit, qui est beaucoup trop forte pour notre position."⁴⁰

II Explaining the slave uprising and its success

Most information Madame de Rouvray receives from the slave uprising come from letters from her husband. One therefore gets an interesting perspective from a woman married to a soldier who has the responsibility to then to translate the pieces of information she receives to her daughter through a conversation of woman to woman but also as a comforting and caring

³⁹ Rouvray, 102

⁴⁰ Rouvray, 102

mother. Therefore one cannot always take at face value the stories shared. Madame de Rouvray often attempts to spare her daughter the gory details of the slave uprising. In a letter written to her son-in-law on September 8, 1791 she tells him that: "J'ai eu l'imprudence, mon cher gendre, d'écrire à votre femme dans le premier moment d'effroi et je crains de lui avoir causé un bien grand qui peut-être lui aura fait beaucoup de mal. J'eusse bien mieux fait de vous charger de lui apprendre nos malheurs qui sont toujours bien grands mais pas augmentés depuis ma dernière lettre."⁴¹ Madame de Rouvray's words to her son-in-law suggest that the Revolution was a very brutal process especially for women. Despite her education and her manners, she lost her composure and wrote a terrifying letter to her daughter. Therefore, when analyzing the letters that relate the slave uprising one has to read between the lines to decipher not just what is being said but also what is being kept secret or said in a very implicit manner. Among the first pieces of information she passes on to her daughter are the reasons why according to many Creoles the slave uprising broke out at that particular time and why the Creoles have not been able to put an end to it. Among the first reasons for not being able to end the uprising is the importance of the slaves as expensive commodities, a reason mentioned in the previous paragraph. However, though Madame de Rouvray does not dwell on the subject, in the same letter she mentions quickly a key element which is the numerical superiority of the slaves. It seems that the slaves' numerical superiority was not taken seriously as this brief statement suggests it: "Si on était en force, il y a longtemps que ce serait une querelle jugée."⁴² Her decision to use the word "quarrel" to describe the uprising illustrates how much the Creoles underestimated the slaves at first. Madame de Rouvray is aware that the one who reads that letter will question the truthfulness of that statement since earlier in her previous letter she had mentioned her husband's intentions to leave the country just a few weeks after the beginning of the uprising. This statement is either the Marquise's attempt to keep up appearances in front of her daughter and her friends who live in the metropolis as she attempts to maintain that image of the white Creoles being a class of powerful masters that a group of rebelled slaves will never be able to defeat or she and the rest of the Creoles genuinely underestimated the slaves. She then feels the need to justify the reason why her husband has

⁴¹ Rouvray, 28

⁴² Rouvray, 30

decided that they would eventually leave despite the apparent idea she conveyed that the Creoles were regaining control: “Notre atelier n’a pas bronché de même que tous ceux de nos quartiers a l’exception d’un ou deux ou il a fallu faire quelques justices particulières qui ont suffi pour contenir le reste.”⁴³ As one can see in this excerpt, she avoids giving details about the types of punishments the Creoles applied to their slave rebels. Despite the idea of apparent calm on her plantation she adds: “Mais a l’avenir pourra-t-on s’y fier, surtout si nous restons a la France ou les formes de gouvernements adpotés depuis la Revolution mettront dans la police une publicité, une langueur dans l’exécution qui replongera le pays dans les mêmes malheurs?”⁴⁴ She blames the metropolis and the French Revolution for the slave uprising. She does not believe the rebellion comes from a desire of the slaves to put an end to their bondage. Finally she explains that leaving Saint Domingue is just a preventive measure and a way of protesting against the French Revolution: “C’est cette crainte qui fait prendre a votre père le parti de quitter le pays pour aller chercher a faire une nouvelle fortune sur une autre terre.”⁴⁵ She is even more explicit in the letter she writes to her son-in-law, she confesses to him their intention to move to Cuba and let out her hatred and the one of many white Creoles towards the metropolis: “Munissez-vous de toutes les lettres de recommandation que vous pourrez pour vous et M. Rouvray et demandez les pour quelqu’un qui quitte la domination française par haine pour les comites, assemblées, constitutions, etc...”⁴⁶ It is safe to say that at first she, and possibly her husband too, perceived the slave uprising as part of a political conflict between the Creoles and the metropolis. The slaves are described as mere pawns manipulated by a higher power. She mentions many times the absence of most of the plantation owners and how those tragic events would have taken a different turn if they were present in the colony at the moment of the uprising. According to Madame de Rouvray they are the ones who have the power to hand the island to England. She argues that: “Si nous eussions été en force nous serions déjà aux Anglais; c’est la seule mesure qui peut nous sauver et il ne peut être que des propriétaires qui puissent prendre un parti vigoureux comme celui-la.”⁴⁷ Though she deplores

⁴³ Rouvray, 31

⁴⁴ Rouvray, 31

⁴⁵ Rouvray, 32

⁴⁶ Rouvray, 29

⁴⁷ Rouvray, 31

many times the absence of the owners, she does not explain what strategy they would have adopted to reach their goal. One can assume that they had a very influential role within the local assembly but also in the metropolis.

It is relevant to remind at this point that Madame de Rouvray, and most of the white Creoles one can assume, places the slave uprising within a larger context which is the one of the French Revolution. As a consequence, her early letters about the uprising do not focus on the potential of the slaves and do not explore the possibility that the uprising could have been orchestrated in Saint Domingue. She does not place the uprising in the context of the general need on the island for more freedom and rights with on one hand the white Creoles pushing for more autonomy and the free people of color pushing for more political rights and recognition within the local society. Her failure to locate the uprising within the local frame makes her and many Creoles unable to call what is happening in Saint Domingue a “revolution” despite the fact that the uprising gradually destroys the pillars of the Creole society such as family bonds, political power but also religion. In the letters Madame de Rouvray wrote during the first weeks of the uprising she focuses more on the impact the uprising will have on her daughter and her family who live abroad. She does not raise questions such as the meaning of a group socially oppressed and morally and physically abused who decide to enter an armed struggle. She does not talk much about how it will impact life on the island regarding the racial hierarchy and the political or social balance. She analyzes the immediate effects which are the violence, the vandalism and their impact on their revenues. She argues: “En supposant même que nous échappions au feu nous n’avons pas échappé déjà a l’effet du désordre et du trouble qui nous a, comme tout le monde, empêchés de faire notre revenue.”⁴⁸ This raises the issue of pointing out when the Creoles realized that Saint Domingue was living her own revolution. The tone of the letters of Madame de Rouvray and her husband starts to change around December 1791. Though they are still concerned by their daughter and how they will be able to keep supporting her they now try to understand the slave uprising, its origins, what could have been done to avoid it and what should be done in the future. In a letter the Marquis wrote to his daughter on December 7, 1791 he reassesses the uprising and its duration. He does identify many external

⁴⁸ Rouvray, 36

factors but he thinks most of the issues are internal and the way the colony has been operating needs to be reassessed. Here is a worth quoting excerpt of his letter: “Nous avons tout contre nous ma chère enfant: un gouverneur imbécile, sans courage et incapable de suivre de bons conseils, une assemblée de sots intrigants (the colonial assembly) et dans laquelle il n’y a pas six hommes qui eussent ou du talent ou de bonnes intentions, des propriétaires ignorants, imprévoyants et sans energies, des principes de démagogie et d’égalite qui débattus devant nos esclaves même ont du les armer contre nous..”⁴⁹ The Marquis does not try to praise the white Creoles or the white race in general. He believes the white Creoles are not mere victims, in the case of the plantation owners for instance, they plotted against their own kind but he believes that in many instances it was not intentional but mainly caused by a lack of knowledge and determination. He also accuses those of his own kind who had been less successful to have fallen in corruption. That corruption slowly undermined the balance of the plantation system. In the same letter he denounces: “des regisseurs d’habitation d’une lacheté et d’une corruption effrayantes.”⁵⁰ That letter also reveals how fragmented of a class the white Creoles actually were, they are not as united as one would imagine. Monsieur de Rouvray believes that though: “Les Amis des Noirs ont sans doute été la cause première de nos malheurs, ma chère enfant. Il m’est évident qu’ils nous ont envoyé beaucoup de leurs émissaires et on en a pendu deux.. Mais il est encore très certain que des partisans de la contre-revolution y ont eu une grande part dans l’espérance qu’ils l’opéreraient par la fureur des provinces maritimes qu’ils seraient aise d’exciter si Saint-Domingue était perdue.”⁵¹ By December 1791, the colony had reached a level of tension between all the racial groups, the free people became more inflamed and enraged against the white population. Monsieur de Rouvray also discusses the possible political maneuvers that should have been undertaken to prevent the situation from worsening. Here he does not advocate the use of strength but the use of reason and skilled political strategies. He argues that the white population is divided in two groups with the lower classes being strongly attached to racial prejudices, something that he deplors. Here is another excerpt of the same letter from December 7th which is worth quoting: “Les gens de couleur se sont mis en

⁴⁹ Rouvray, 39

⁵⁰ Rouvray, 40

⁵¹ Rouvray, 40

insurrection et se tiennent en mesure hostile vis-à-vis des blancs a l'effet d'obtenir les mes droits qu'eux. Si l'on eut suivi mes avis ce nouveau malheur ne serait point arrivé et nous serions en pleine paix."⁵² He goes further to add: "Mon opinion était que l'on cédat à l'empire des circonstances et nous serions actuellement tranquilles de ce coté, mais les basses classes de la ville du Cap, qui font ici ce que les sans-culottes font a Paris, s'y sont opposés et L'Assemblée générale, qui en a une frayeur épouvantable[...] s'est refusée à tous moyens de conciliation ou de paix."⁵³ Here Monsieur de Rouvray admits that the uprising has forced him and the white population in general to engage in an important debate about the legitimacy of the racial barrier and the legal privileges differentiating the whites from the free people of color. He argues that the current circumstances require a reevaluation of those values. He is forced to admit that: "Ce n'est cependant, ma fille, que par les gens de couleur que nos ateliers peuvent être forcés de rentrer dans le devoir. Mais les anciens préjugés, qui ont toujours sur le bas peuple plus d'empire que les principes de la droite raison et d'une saine politique, ont prévalu."⁵⁴ Monsieur de Rouvray speaks with the authority and the knowledge of a white man, a Creole, a plantation owner, a soldier and a politician. The final words of this excerpt suggests that though the white Creole population was refraining from using the word "Revolution" clearly the colony was now entering a new era where old values and prejudices were no longer viable. The Marquis points out how the lesser educated section of the white population fail to notice the important changes that need to be made to reestablish peace on the island without requiring help from outside.

III 1802-1804: Revolution & Reassessment

⁵² Rouvray, 40

⁵³ Rouvray, 40

⁵⁴ Rouvray, 42

A) From predator to prey

Unlike the Rouvrays, Leonora Sansay experiences the impact of the Revolution in the urban areas. She arrives on the island on June 7, 1802, the night of Toussaint Louverture's arrest. The first very element that strikes the reader's attention is the description of the city of Le Cap she gives on the day she arrives. She describes it as a city that has fallen into decay and she associates that image of decay with what the city used to be. She explains that: "On landing, we found the town a heap of ruins. A more terrible picture of desolation cannot be imagined. Passing through streets choked with rubbish, we reached with difficulty a house which had escaped the general fate."⁵⁵ Besides being the former capital of the colony, Le Cap was the pride of the Creole population with an architecture that shared many similarities with the one found in the metropolis. It was also the main port of the island and the political center. The symbolic description Sansay gives of the city in ashes reflects the fallen prestige of the Creole elite. She mentions the vain attempts to rebuild the city and the hope that it could soon regain its luster and the pity she feels for the Creole: "The people live in tents, or make a kind of shelter, by laying a few boards across the half-consumed beam."⁵⁶ She confesses: "But to hear of the distress which these unfortunate people have suffered, would fill with horror the stoutest heart, and make the most obdurate melt with pity."⁵⁷ Sansay tries very hard to dissociate herself from the Creoles especially from the other women she meets. However, as her account goes along that effort becomes less and less realistic because she is soon forced to pick a side. By the time Sansay starts writing, the racial hierarchy on the island has changed and superficially the binary aspect of the conflict has intensified. At the time Sansay opens her story, to the world the Haitian Revolution has become a war between whites and blacks, with

⁵⁵ Sansay, 61

⁵⁶ Sansay, 61

⁵⁷ Sansay, 61

no middle ground, the free people of color being now identified as part of the black population. Sansay wants to test and verify that idea of a binary conflict. In her narrative she raises the question of whether the factor of color is enough to define what is happening in Saint Domingue since the arrival of the French army. The Creoles are now victims. The image of the powerful Creole patriarch has vanished and is now replaced by the helpless father unable to protect his family from enemies coming from within, the blacks, and coming from outside, the French soldiers. She describes the situation of the white Creole daughters, wives and mothers as such: "Here they suffered all the pains of hunger, and thirst: the most terrible apprehensions for their fathers, husbands, brothers and sons: to which was added the sight of the town in flames: and even these horrors were increased by the explosion of the powder magazine."⁵⁸ When juxtaposed with the description Madame de Rouvray gives a few years earlier of the brave Creole father able to protect his family, Sansay's description shows that the uprising greatly changed the power dynamic which existed on the island. The white Creoles went from dominating and hunting down their slaves to fearing them and being at their mercy. Besides, Sansay points out that the revolutionary process is no longer a bipolar conflict. She argues that the arrival of the French soldiers further undermined what was left of the Creoles' prestige and authority. She points out that a simple explanation of the Revolution would be to define it as a conflict opposing the blacks and mixed-race members of the population to the whites but that explanation would be overly simplistic since there have been deep conflicts within the white faction of the population. She agrees that by calling the French army to their rescue, the Creoles mistakenly put the survival of their kind in their hands, assuming that the racial factor would be strong enough to unite the white Creoles and the whites coming from the metropolis. However, she argues that it was a terrible mistake since the white men coming from France arrived with an agenda differing greatly from the one of the white Creoles. Shortly after her arrival she already notices the tensions between the white Creoles and the French soldiers. For instance she writes that: "The Creoles shake their heads and predict much ill. Accustomed to the climate, and acquainted with the manner of fighting the Negroes, they offer advice, which is not listened to; nor are any of them employed, but all places of honor or emolument are held

⁵⁸ Sansay, 62

by Europeans, who appear to regard the island as a place to be conquered and divided among the victors...”⁵⁹ Sansay gives many examples of this, such as General Leclerc’s decision to work with black officers like Dessalines to stop the rebels. She explains that the white Creoles voiced their disagreement but the French general ignored their opinion. At this point of the Revolution, the population no longer talks about an insurrection but of a civil war. She underlines that at this point, explaining the origins of the uprising no longer matters what has become important is the explanation of its duration and the means that can be used to reverse the damage done. The facts she collects prove that it is still difficult for the Creoles to acknowledge the military skills of the insurgents and they would rather blame the French army for the duration and the strengthening of the movement: “The natives of this country murmur already against the general in chief; they say he places too much confidence in the Negroes. When Toussaint was seized he had all the black chiefs in his power, and, by embarking them for France, he would have spread terror throughout the Island, and the Negroes would have been easily reduced, instead of which he relies on their good faith...”⁶⁰

B) 1802-1804: Revisiting the process of Criolization

Sansay makes a point here that many had not considered before. She suggests that Creoles should ask themselves who their real enemy is or more precisely who they should fear the most, the blacks fighting in the countryside or the French soldiers present everywhere on the island. Sansay’s narrative turns the word “revolution” into a synonym for “repetition” or even “regression.” What makes this possible is her lack of contact with the slave population, since she lives in the city, combined with the fact that she is not accustomed to the colonial system. She uses the white Creoles as a topic for her analysis of colonial life. She studies their mentality and their behavior and what becomes striking is the similarities that still exist

⁵⁹ Sansay, 66

⁶⁰ Sansay, 65

between the Creole population of 1791-1794 and the one of 1802-1804. She describes the Creole as such: "The Creole is generous, hospitable, magnificent, but vain, inconstant, and incapable of serious application; and in this the abodes of pleasure and luxurious ease vices have reigned at which humanity must shudder."⁶¹ Sansay uses her analysis as a mirror forcing the Creoles to look within their own community for explanations for their current predicaments. The final stage of the Revolution would be in that sense the results of decades of vices within the Creole community, among those vices she includes the Creoles' inability to respect a racial hierarchy that they had themselves established. She mentions the sexual relationships between white men and black or colored women and how those relationships destroyed the credibility of many households. She describes the Revolution as the consequence of the white Creoles' abuses of power: "Every inhabitant lived on his estate like a Sovereign ruling his slaves with despotic sway, enjoying all that luxury could invent, or fortune procures."⁶² She attempts to give a list of abuses that depict the white Creoles' lack of morals and restraint: "The jealousy of the women was often terrible in its consequences. One lady, who had a beautiful negro girl continually about her person, thought she saw some symptoms of *tendresse* in the eyes of her husband, and all the furies of jealousy seized her soul. She ordered one of her slaves to cut off the head of the unfortunate victim, which was instantly done."⁶³ Unlike Madame de Rouvray who describes the process of Criolization as a beneficial and upgrading tool for the whites who decide to settle down in a colony, Sansay describes it as a slow process of moral decay where power and money were misused forcing the victims of that system to revolt. She raises the question of whether or not the riches earned through slavery were worth the sufferings the white Creoles are now enduring: "Dearly have they paid for the luxurious ease in which they revelled at the expense of these oppressed creatures."⁶⁴ The point of view of Sansay and the Rouvrays differ because the latter assess the Creoles' evolution and the impact of the uprising from a political and economic angle whereas Sansay looks at it from a moral point of view. Yes, she agrees that slavery contributed to the social uplifting of the White

⁶¹ Sansay, 70

⁶² Sansay, 70

⁶³ Sansay, 70

⁶⁴ Sansay, 77

Creoles and made them very influential and powerful but that process of economic uplifting destroyed them morally and set in motion of process of self-destruction. When referring to the slaves she adopts a philanthropist tone: "More than five hundred thousand broke the yoke imposed on them by a few thousand men of a different colour, and claimed the rights of which they had been so cruelly deprived."⁶⁵ She suggests that there is no need to look for an explanation for the uprising outside of the colony, being free is the natural right of any man therefore the white Creoles should have expected the slaves would reclaim that right sooner or later. She also refers to the numeric differences between slaves and white Creoles as another natural explanation. That numeric difference made it impossible for the slave masters to maintain the blacks in bondage. Her account testifies of how over ten years after the beginning of the Revolution, the blacks have learned to reorganize themselves and redefine their political convictions whereas the Creoles have not been able to reinvent themselves, they still hang on to past values that have been destroyed long time ago. The Creoles lack the flexibility that would help them start afresh. She constantly mentions how they dwell on their past : "I have become acquainted with some Creole ladies who, having staid in the island during the revolution, relate their sufferings in a manner which harrows up the soul; and dwell on the recollection of their long lost happiness with melancholy delight."⁶⁶ In another instance she comments about one of the Creoles who would gather at her house every evening. That man, she explains, lost everything he had and is now forced to live in a hut: "Yet he still hopes for better days, in which hope they all join him."⁶⁷ Elie-Benjamin-Joseph Brunlavainne, a twelve year old boy who arrived on the island with his father at the same time as the soldiers, later recalls the Haitian Revolution and particularly the Creoles' inability to compromise and how it further undermined their social status and doomed their fate. He believes if the Creoles had been able to put racial prejudices behind them they would have secured the support of the free people of color against the black insurgents since that caste was despised on both sides: " The mulattoes being put in second place by both parties, the simplest good sense said that, in order to have them on our side, it was necessary to dismantle all the barriers, welcome into our ranks

⁶⁵ Sansay, 77

⁶⁶ Sansay, 70

⁶⁷ Sansay, 74

men who, after all, were as good as we were, give them equal rights to military promotions and civilian jobs; they would have thought like lions for us.”⁶⁸ However, as it was mentioned earlier, the Creoles remained unwillingly to compromise. In her first ten letters, Sansay raises the question of what the Creoles actually learned during the first stages of the uprising and she struggles to give an answer. She depicts the revolution within the Creole community as an attempt to reapply the same values that she believed led to the slave uprising.

C) The arrival of the French soldiers: The Re-Colonization

Sansay explores the impact the arrival of the French army had on the local population. As mentioned before she notices that having the same color is not enough to unite the French soldiers and the white Creoles. She notices the strong contrast between the white Creoles’ attachment to the colony as a motherland and the soldiers’ emotional detachment towards the situation. Whereas the Creoles hoped that the arrival of the soldiers would restore them to their former social status, they failed to take into consideration that those soldiers had absolutely no emotional connection with the colony and they had no particular interest in the plantation system since most of them had not planned on staying after the war. She argues that: “Indeed the professed intention of those who have come with the army, is to make a fortune, and return to France with all possible speed, to enjoy it. It cannot be imagined that they will be very delicate about the means of accomplishing their purpose.”⁶⁹ Since her first letter she notices the danger of the presence of the French army on the island and she sees General Lelcerc’s decision to work with black officers as a confirmation of her doubts. Sansay describes what could be called a form of re-colonization of the island. The French army arrives with new rules and new traditions that they try to impose to every member of the population regardless of his color or his status. Again it is worth quoting an observation she makes about

⁶⁸ Popkin, 334

⁶⁹ Sansay, 66

the reorganization of the military and administrative life on the island and the purpose of this new form of organization: "all places of honour or emolument are held by Europeans, who appear to regard the Island as a place to be conquered and divided among the victors..."⁷⁰ The notions of space and territory become once more very important. In the narrative of Madame de Rouvray one can see how the notion of space and landownership is important to the Creoles when it comes to defining who they are and talk about their social status. The Rouvrays refer many times to how much acres they own and how much they produce. Placed within the context of the abrupt slave uprising, that information the Rouvrays constantly repeat testifies of their fear to lose little by little that territory which has made them who they had been so far. The Creoles living in the rural areas derived their power and respect within the colonial society from the size of their plantations and the number of slaves they own, these were the main components of their wealth, deprived from those they felt lost. Besides the lack of safety, the need of landownership stands out as one of the main reasons the Creoles felt they had to relocate between 1791 and 1794. Of course, it goes without saying that within the Creoles' mindset landownership is always associated with slave ownership. When Sansay starts writing in 1802 there are now two kinds of white Creoles present on the island: those who stayed throughout the Revolution and those who relocated to other places such as Cuba, the metropolis and America. The former had the opportunity to live the three phases of the Revolution, the initial uprising between 1791 and 1794, the governance of Toussaint Louverture from 1794 to 1802 and the final stage of the Revolution starting in early 1802. She does notice some differences between those two kinds of Creoles and makes the following comment on those who emigrated at the early stage of the uprising: "Some of the ancient inhabitants of the island, who had emigrated begin to think that their hopes were too sanguine, and that they have returned too soon from the peaceful retreats they found on the continent."⁷¹ These are comments coming from the disillusion many faced as they saw the hope of regaining what they used to have slip further away each day. Those Creoles associate the arrival of the French army with their final demise since they instilled in them false hopes. Concerning those who decided to stay throughout the governance of Toussaint Louverture, she collects a few comparisons

⁷⁰ Sansay, 65-66

⁷¹ Sansay, 76

they make between Toussaint's regime and the French occupation: "Many of the Creoles, who had remained on the island during the reign of Toussaint, regret the change, and say they were less vexed by the negroes than by those who have come to protect them."⁷² The space being now reduced with the fear of venturing in the rural areas to avoid being attacked by the blacks, the white Creoles are forced to remain in the urban areas such as Le Cap, where they are victim of numerous injustices under the French army. The Creoles, who once colonized the island, are now themselves victims of a form of re-colonization epitomized by the arrival of the French soldiers. Their customs, traditions and their social status are violated. Sansay's letters raise the question of who is the worst oppressor: the blacks fighting for their right to remain free or the French army who prey on the white Creoles daily. Her narrative builds up details around two forms of re-colonization shaped on two different military regimes. General Leclerc's military regime embodies the first form of re-colonization. Though the Creoles already started to complain about the presence of the French, Leclerc's form of re-colonization is relatively mild. At that stage the Creoles mainly complain about Leclerc's inability to set up an efficient military strategy. Leclerc proposes a form of ruling that would reconcile races rather than pit them one against the other. That strategy was discussed earlier. It was very unpopular among the white Creole population who was seeking to destroy all the black insurgents without making any kind of distinctions between good or bad blacks. The second major complain the Creoles had against Leclerc was about his tendency to focus too much on his own comfort at the cost the population and the army. She comments on the economic hardships the soldiers had to face under Leclerc's regime: "He [General Leclerc] has the reputation of being very eloquent, but he has shocked everybody by having ordered a superb service of plate, made of the money intended to pay the army, while the poor soldiers, badly clothed, and still more badly fed, are asking alms in the street, and absolutely dying of want."⁷³ The form of re-colonization Leclerc promotes can be considered mild since he does not direct his attacks at the Creoles' culture and principles and he still feels a sense of accountability towards the local population. She describes the General in chief's reaction after a plot the mulattoes and black officers he trusted orchestrated and was sabotaged. That incident took place three days before he died from

⁷² Sansay, 76

⁷³ Sansay, 66

yellow fever and his reaction is filled with shame and embarrassment to the point where he refused to face the local population: “The General, shut up in his house, would see nobody; ashamed of the weakness which led to this disastrous event, and of the want of courage he had betrayed: a fever seized him and he died in three days.”⁷⁴

General Rochambeau, the successor of Leclerc adopts a military regime that reflects a more aggressive form of re-colonization. He attacks directly what is left of the Creoles’ culture such as their strong patriarchal values and the sacred aspect of marriage. Sansay points out how under General Rochambeau, the army would openly prey on the Creoles’ wives leading to many incidents and bloody confrontations between Creoles and French. She observes that: “The Creoles do not relish the attacks made on their wives by the officers.”⁷⁵ Sansay carefully mentions an affair she had with Rochambeau while being married, forcing her husband to send her away since he felt powerless. Under the Creole culture, husbands were the ones known for cheating but with the rise of Rochambeau in power it was now not so uncommon for a married Creole lady to have openly an affair with a French soldier, which was a novelty that arrived with the French soldiers as Sansay comments in a private letter she sent to Blurr outside of the novel’s frame: “but a grief of new kind was that of a troubling ménage, not that fidelity was ever known or thought here; but it was a novelty to see a husband concern himself about such an affair, & it was at least as great a one to see a simple individual propose a challenge to a general-in-chief.”⁷⁶ As a foreigner and a feminist, Sansay is opposed to the threats the French pose to the traditional foundations of Creole marriages. She sees it as a form of liberation for Creole women, the opportunity to free themselves from the yoke of an oppressive patriarchy that had bought their submission with wealth and luxury.

On the ninth letter she writes, Sansay starts talking more openly about the abuses the white Creoles were victim under Rochambeau’s regime. She confesses that: “He gives splendid balls, and elegant parties; but he neglects the army, and oppresses the inhabitants.”⁷⁷ From that letter onwards one can notice the fear building up towards Rochambeau’s regime. The

⁷⁴ Sansay, 69

⁷⁵ Sansay, 77

⁷⁶ Popkin, 324

⁷⁷ Sansay, 91

Creole population does not know where to turn since, as mentioned earlier, the rural areas are filled with blacks who hate them and the French army under Rochambeau's command rules the urban areas with an iron fist. The extremes of Rochambeau's tyranny provoke in the Creoles a sense of compassion for the blacks who fall victim of that system: "Three negroes were caught setting fire to a plantation near the town. They were sentenced to be burnt alive; the sentence was actually executed... This cruel act has been blamed by everybody..."⁷⁸ In the same letter she also confesses that: "Everyone trembles for his own safety, and silent horror reigns throughout the place."⁷⁹ Those two last quotations shed light on an aspect of the Haitian Revolution that has been explored very little. The fear of the French army surpassed the fear the war with the slaves caused. The Creoles were submitted to an arbitrary justice sparing no one regardless of their gender, their skin color or their social status.

Conclusion

This analysis of the two periods of war of the Haitian Revolution sheds light on how white Creoles lived their confrontation with the slaves but also with their own kind, white Creoles against white Creoles and whites Creoles against whites from the metropolis. The uprising increased the need among that faction of the population to define who they were in order to assess whether or not they would be able to work together as a class fighting one common enemy. The documents used show that the definition varies based on different factors such as the time period in which the author is writing, his or her gender, the location from which the authors are writing. The Creoles from the rural areas seem more attached to a definition that is centered on the plantation system and the slave trade whereas the Creoles from the urban areas are more in favor of a definition that is centered on the political and administrative rights of the white Creoles. Madame de Rouvray defines the true Creole through his ability to be a great entrepreneur with skills that can be transferred from one colony to another other, his

⁷⁸ Sansay, 103

⁷⁹ Sansay, 103

ability to be feared as slave master and his ability also to generate a fortune that allows him to support his family.

Those documents also proved how difficult it was for the Creoles to define a common enemy. That difficulty is expressed through the noticeable struggle to explain the origins of the slave uprising some go for an explanation that blames *Les Amis Des Noirs*. On the contrary, another group of white Creoles sees the insurrection as part of a conspiracy whose aim was to destroy all the white Creoles on the island. That plot would in that case involve not the Revolutionary government but its enemies who were believed to be the aristocracy and the Church. Despite a few contradictory elements, the explanations the white Creoles provided between 1791 and 1794 have one major point in common: though they provide facts that go against this, they all reject the possibility that the slaves could have been the main orchestrators of the uprising and that they actually had their own political and social agenda no matter how distorted it was. The white Creoles' refusal to acknowledge the blacks' sense of organization makes the former unable to call the uprising a revolution though it challenges and then destroys all the pillars of colonial society as it had been known since the colony was founded. Therefore the authors feel the need to justify to the ones they write to but also to themselves the duration of the uprising and its strengthening. They give a wide range of reasons. Between 1791 and 1793 they put the blame on the tensions between the white Creoles living in the urban areas and those living in the rural areas. The latter feel that the former has more political authority but they lack the knowledge in dealing with rural slaves. They also blame the white Creoles from the urban areas for being more preoccupied by political rivalry than the uprising. The white Creoles' refusal to analyze the strength of the slaves as a potential major factor also caused them to be unable to let go off the status quo when needed and reinvent themselves in order to adapt to the social and political changes taking place around them and also in order to guarantee the survival of their kind on the island. Their stubbornness makes them unable to compromise with the free people of color, turning a potentially great ally into an enemy.

Sansay is the only one that approaches the explanation of the uprising from a philanthropic and moral point of view seeing it as a natural effect caused by decades of bondage and abuses.

Her moral approach presents the white Creoles as a morally decadent group who has doomed its own cause. In other words, for Sansay there is no need to look for an explanation outside of the colony or even outside of the white Creoles' circle. Among the authors reviewed she is the only one that uses the word "revolution" to describe what is happening in Saint Domingue. She explores the Creoles' inflexibility and the cost they paid for it. She also explores something that historians have often overlooked which is the concept of re-colonization. That concept challenges the binary aspect of the Haitian Revolution and tests the definition of colonial racial hierarchy by shading light on a conflict of another kind: white Creoles against Whites from the metropolis.

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