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Remembering the Haitian Revolution Through French Texts:

Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal* and Alphonse de

Lamartine's *Toussaint Louverture*

Irene Stone

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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November 2013

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## ABSTRACT

Remembering the Haitian Revolution Through French texts:  
Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal* and Alphonse de  
Lamartine's *Toussaint Louverture*

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The Haitian Revolution was the first successful slave revolt in history. And even though Haiti declared independence from France in 1804, most French civilization textbooks do not include this important event. From an economic standpoint, France depended on its imports from Saint-Domingue (Haiti's pre-revolutionary name); and from a philosophical standpoint, the slave revolt in Saint-Domingue originated from ideas that came from French philosophers preaching the Rights of Man.

Studying the Haitian Revolution within the context of the French Revolution provides a perspective that highlights the complex relationship between France and its colonies as well as religion's displaced role after 1789. While France tried to rid the country of anything religious, its rebirth still had references to its Christian past. Two French works, Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal* and Alphonse de Lamartine's play, *Toussaint Louverture*, can provide great insight into these two sides of France—the religious and the secular. Both take place in Saint-Domingue during its Revolution, and both not only include a different perspective on the French and Haitian Revolutions, but also expose events that French history books routinely omit.

In Hugo's *Bug-Jargal*, one main character and hero of the book is the eponymous slave. He is represented as a Christ-like figure: a slave of royal birth that sacrifices himself to save others on many occasions. The French hero, d'Auverney comes to realize that he shares more values with this slave than with the French people around him. Corrupt French officials, rebel leaders, and heroic slaves surround d'Auverney and he must choose which set of beliefs and values best align with his own. His friendship with Bug-Jargal surprises him, and teaches him the importance of loyalty to a personal code of honor rather than to a country or society. The characters in the novella reflect a number of ways of thinking following the Revolution. The novella features nostalgia for the past and also confusion about France's new identity.

In Lamartine's *Toussaint Louverture*, Toussaint relies on religion as he looks to God and past prophets for inspiration and motivation. He believes in sacrificing everything for his country. The contrasting characters symbolize the New France and follow a new god, Napoleon, and focus on reading, writing, and money. All the characters must pick a side: France or Haiti. Lamartine's narrative articulates the rupture between a secular France and a Catholic one.

Keywords: Saint-Domingue Revolution, Bug-Jargal, Toussaint Louverture, Les Deux France, Teaching the French Revolution

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the BYU French department, Scott Sprenger, and my husband for their patience and support while I completed this thesis.

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## Les Deux France and Colonization

Currently in its fifth republic, the Hexagon has endured multiple changes in its government since 1789: empires in between republics, a restoration of the *ancien régime*, and various governments and occupations during the Second World War. Among the many identity crises that France has undergone, one struggle has remained constant and is what Paul Seippel calls *les deux France*: “la France de l’église, et la France de la Révolution.” Two separate identities of France: one that was founded on Christianity, and one after the Revolution that eradicated religion by ousting the monarchy and bringing down the Church, seizing its lands and denying it political power (xii). After creating a lay or secular society in the wake of the Revolution, the State drew a clear boundary between itself and the Church; marriages, deaths, and births were no longer under the control of the Church—they were turned over to the “état civil.” In creating its new secular identity, France instituted along with it a new constitution, new national institutions, a new government, even a new calendar, naming 1792 year I. The calendar lasted only fifteen years, and the governments varied in lifespan from two years to seventy. The explanations for these revolutions are multi-faceted: societal, cultural, economic, and philosophical, while the issue of religion has always been either displaced or occulted. Our question here is: what role did religion play after the Revolution?

In this thesis, I will analyze the representations of religion in two Romantic texts: Victor Hugo’s *Bug-Jargal* and Alphonse de Lamartine’s *Toussaint Louverture*. These texts provide not only a means by which we can view France and its dichotomous identity, but also a way to see religion played out in France’s colonies in Saint-Domingue, present-day Haiti, bringing a new perspective to this complex relationship, which is generally considered in a post-colonial context. Because these narratives are set in Saint-Domingue, the religion versus non-religion debate

becomes more complicated. Not only did religion build a strong foundation in France, but the tradition was also carried out to the colonies. Baptisms, marriages, and church services all became a part of slave-life in Saint-Domingue, and illustrate part of the philosophy of colonization and imperialism into the Caribbean. As we look at religion in the texts, we can see the face of a changing society—black heroes represent religion, and while certain characters strive for good but their honor and good works do not save them in the end. Through these works, we see the changing role of religion in France, as well as the idea of what it means to be French as the country changes its religious foundation to a secular one. These texts can bring a valuable and important perspective to analyzing these drastic changes in French civilization.

### The Forgotten Caribbean

Studying these works presents an opportunity to delve into a part of French history that is often forgotten in French civilization manuals. Even though Haiti has a strong national history, its relationship with France was long buried and erased from France's official memory. Cécile Vidal expands on this national amnesia that France's historiography has created. In her article "The Reluctance of French Historians to Address Atlantic History," Vidal goes into great detail about the France's "non-integration of colonization and slavery into French collective history and memory" (155). She says that despite many works and studies (mostly done outside of France), most French textbooks do not even use the term "Haitian Revolution." Vidal points out that the Old Régime was one of the greatest colonizing powers in Europe, but it is given a minor role in France's history "because colonization puts under question the construction of French identity around the concepts of republicanism and universalism" (160). Yves Bénot, French historian, gives examples of specific books like "*le Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution*

*française* qui ne consacre pas une seule rubrique à la Révolution Haïtienne” (qtd. in Hoffmann xxxv).

Even though France had been involved in Saint-Domingue since 1663, the wealth of the country and the success of the French economy increased exponentially just before the French Revolution. Saint-Domingue was the basis and center of most of France’s wealth in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the most prosperous colony in the world at the time. Coffee, tea, and indigo had been harvested there for decades, but large sugar plantations changed the nature of slavery in the colony. Production in Saint-Domingue almost doubled between 1783 and 1789 (James 55). From 1764 to 1787, the number of slaves that the colony imported quadrupled from around 10,000 per year to 40,000 (55). This extreme increase in slaves and production meant France was economically strong and thriving: the maritime bourgeoisie was extremely rich and most of the goods from Haiti were exported to other parts of Europe (only 71 million pounds of 218 million produced were consumed in France) (Stoddard 16; James 49).

France depended greatly on Haiti for its economic success; however, this success depended on the extensive slavery system on the island. Ironically, the ideals regarding humanity and equality, originating in France, led to the start and success of the Haitian Revolution. According to C.L.R. James, Toussaint Louverture was inspired and greatly influenced by French thought and writings. He was deeply influenced by the works of Abbé Raynal, who wrote often about his strong position against slavery. In Raynal’s famous work *Philisophical and Political History of the Establishments and Commerce of the Europeans in the Two Indies*, he talks about the rights and liberties of each individual, illustrates the atrocities committed against the slaves, who were treated like brutes, worse than animals, and tries to encourage breaking away from tradition and the rest of the world (“Antislavery Agitation”). Toussaint believed in a universal



humanity and was even appointed by French leaders to govern a free Saint-Domingue; he considered Saint-Domingue betrayed when Napoleon sent in French forces to try to re-establish slavery. When Toussaint fought against France's effort to reintroduce slavery, he was sent to a prison in Fort de Joux, France, and eventually died there from tuberculosis. Dessaline took over Toussaint's leadership and with the help of Saint-Domingue forces as well as diseases that afflicted the French, the Caribbean colony eventually defeated Leclerc and his troops. Saint-Domingue renamed itself Haiti and declared independence in 1804.

### Race and Religion in Romantic Works

Even though Hugo and Lamartine often appear on college syllabi and in academic writings, *Bug-Jargal* does not fall in that same category. Most academic writing about *Bug-Jargal* delves into the deeper understanding of racial issues or analyzes Hugo's political biases. Most often, however, these texts are read for the racial issues that they bring to the surface. In an article from *Nineteenth Century French Studies*, Katherine Bonin examines the language in the context of race and how they are interconnected. Bonin examines the infiltration of the white population on Saint-Domingue and underscores contrasts between the use of language among whites, blacks and mulattoes. Arthur F. Saint-Aubin goes deeper into racial issues by analyzing the assumptions regarding biological differences between blacks and whites at the time. Timothy Raser analyzes the difference between the first draft of *Bug-Jargal* and the second, contending that the additions actually neutralize many political aspects of the novel, and make a true Hugolien work. He argues that adding different characters creates the sublime versus grotesque elements that exist in other Hugolien novels, and these opposing characters being white and black create a neutral stance on race. Raser also comments on the contradictory parallels between

the French and Haitian Revolution: “Bug-Jargal offers a reversed image of the French revolution: slaves revolting against their masters, but those masters are ‘enlightened;’ a king dying, but that king is a king of slaves; mass decapitation, but of the insurgents, not of the masters” (Raser 307). As evidenced here, most scholarship is based on the racial or political issues that the novella presents. We see similar work written about Lamartine’s play, *Toussaint Louverture*.

The play obviously deals with race, as the piece was written to promote abolition (Lamartine 4). Saint-Aubin examines—as he did with *Bug-Jargal*—the white and black masculinity in the text. Added complexities can be examined in Lamartine’s work, precisely because it is a play for a white audience, whose lead role, Toussaint, was played by a well-known white actor disguised as black. Saint-Aubin also studies the added dimensions of performing on stage in front of a white audience, and writes in depth about the actors and their black face, the relationship between spectator and performer, and the anxiety that it provokes and reveals. He brings up compelling points about the portrayal of race in the play, which will be discussed later. John R. Whittaker also probes racial issues and concludes that the text tries to reconcile the characters’ racial identities. Through images of exile, the characters are able to strengthen national unity (5). Pratima Prasad analyzes the text’s interracial romance and intimacy and the struggles that characters face due to their love and where their allegiances lie. Prasad interprets the text to show “interracial intimacy as a means to transcend racial categories all together” (1).

These two texts could be a profound study on race in French literature, racial issues in Haiti, and race during and after the French Revolution. However, these two works, while provoking critical questions on race, also present the reader with another overlooked dimension:

religion. Religion and race are intricately connected in French history, as French colonists explored and invaded foreign lands, motivated by the conviction that religion would overcome barbarity and superstition (Stovall 5), and instituting Catholicism as a way of life. However, after the Revolution, when France was established as a secular nation, a land reborn under democracy and Reason, religion lost its place and France was forced to recreate itself with a displaced God. This period of rebirth can be analyzed through these texts—a lost France ruptured from religion, and what that meant on a foreign land whose mother country faced these major overturns of government, society, and way of life.

While the religious influence in these works is strong, it is never one-sided; these works show France's complexities, with an identity constantly in flux during multiple government regimes. Hugo's *Bug-Jargal* takes place in Saint-Domingue before, during, and after the major slave revolt in 1791. Hugo's use of religious symbols and allegory show the France's inability to efface a part of their past like the Revolution desired. Readers see how the complicated relationship with Saint-Domingue and its colonies made erasing religion from the regime impossible. Lamartine's play also uses religion as a literary tool to show France's transition into a secular state; the play's most religious character is Toussaint Louverture, whereas the French represent a Godless people relying on Reason. Lamartine critiques this new version of France because it betrays its beliefs in trying to reinstate slavery. Toussaint is the clear hero, and France is left to reflect on her contradictions.

#### Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal*

*Bug-Jargal* was Hugo's first novel, written in 1818, published first in 1826, and after some additions and revisions, republished in 1832. Like many Romantic works, this novella is set in a foreign land, the island of Saint-Domingue. The main character, an honorable French

royalist and general goes to the island to marry his cousin; while there, the slaves and mulattoes revolt against the French slave owners. This story carries some conventional traits of a Romantic novel: a setting in a foreign land and a portrayal of unattainable desires, but it also uses many references to the past that show France's inability to escape its past, most notably, its religious past. This novella was written during the Bourbon Restoration, a government that tried to re-establish the Catholic monarchy that existed before the Revolution. Hugo uses many medieval references to set up a religious allegory that portrays the main slave character as a type of Christ; I will provide evidence of this allegory below. This unconventional symbolism illustrates the role of religion before the revolution, and its unrecognizable purpose since being displaced after establishing a secular state.

#### References to the Medieval Past

In a number of examples, d'Auverney's uncle represents France's past way of life. When the reader is first introduced to d'Auverney's uncle, a wealthy plantation owner and master of 800 slaves, he says he likes being around domestics that are dressed like Europeans "à l'imitation des ces anciens princes féodaux qui avaient des bouffons dans leurs cours" (26). Later, when this slaveowner's daughter is soon to wed d'Auverney, she convinces him to give her a gift before the wedding: "Je l'ai prié de me promettre l'octroi d'un don à la manière des anciens chevaliers ; tu sais qu'il aime qu'on le compare aux anciens chevaliers" (57). These two references set up the conflict in the narrative: this man is nostalgic for life before the fall of the Bastille, where serfs and jesters were part of courtly life, and aristocrats and clergy had full power and ownership of the land. However, France had changed. The story takes place in 1791, two years after the French Revolution, and a century after philosophers like Raynal and Diderot denounced the

*Traite des Nègres* and the treatment of slaves. It also sets up a frame of reference in which the story can be read: several references to the past show that honor was the most noble of values, coming from a Christian set of values. His uncle reveals and represents the flaws in the system as his religion became synonymous with corruption, slavery, and power.

There are two heroes in the story: the first is Pierrot, later discovered to be Bug-Jargal, an African king turned slave, and the second is Léopold d'Auverney, a French royalist and general in the army. Both of these characters' most powerful motivation is honor; their actions and decisions are driven by their loyalty to a moral good, to what they believe to be right. This theme parallels a pre-revolutionary context as well, where the heroes always strive to embrace and exemplify noble values. When d'Auverney first arrives at his uncle's plantation, he is not impressed with the conditions of his uncle's successful plantation. "Huit cents nègres cultivaient les immenses domaines de mon oncle. Je vous avouerai que la triste condition de ces esclaves était encore aggravée par l'insensibilité de leur maître" (24). Throughout multiple examples in this novel, the reader sees that d'Auverney is honorable and loyal, and he eventually realizes that his family and maybe even his country do not share the same moral code as he. Instead, this French commander unexpectedly finds more in common with someone else and develops a strong and close relationship to a slave, Pierrot. This friendship shows the Frenchman's earnest search for a common moral ground, and someone that models and exhibits values like his own. In this time of extreme change for France, ridding itself of religion, its citizens are forced to look in unconventional places and to unexpected people to find and remember their Christian values. The overthrow of the Church seemed necessary, and in doing so removed the problem, but as we see with d'Auverney, they are still searching for a solution.

D'Auverney's value of personal honor can be seen in the way he keeps his commitments, despite the sacrifices. At the end of the novel, when the rebels start to attack Le Cap, the French part of the island, d'Auverney is captured. His captor, Biassou, allows him to leave after d'Auverney has given his word that he will return by sundown. During this period, d'Auverney discovers that his wife is alive and he has a chance to escape his captor indefinitely; however, he chooses to go back to Biassou, the leader of the rebel mulattoes because, he says, "J'ai donné ma parole d'honneur." When Bug-Jargal tries to convince d'Auverney that he needn't return, the French general says, "Je ne puis, frère, j'ai promis" (179). D'Auverney's values are clear: he is true to his word, even if great sacrifice is at stake. He represents a France that has values and is the model of honor and virtue, but d'Auverney is the only Frenchman in the novella that exhibits these characteristics, illustrating the confusion of French society at the time of a changing government, and also showing as the hero, the timelessness and universality of Christian values. Those values remained obviously good and honorable in the book as the two heroes bonded over and demonstrated their belief system.

Bug-Jargal differs from other Haitian rebels, as d'Auverney differs from his compatriots. While Biassou and Boukman, two mulatto leaders, are focused on revenge, Bug-Jargal tries to teach them that it's not about revenge; rather, defeating the French is a way to show the value of all humans. Bug-Jargal tells him

Ne soyons pas moins cléments qu'eux, c'est aussi notre intérêt. Notre cause sera-t-elle plus sainte et plus juste quand nous aurons exterminé des femmes, égorgé des enfants, torturé des vieillards, brûlé des colons dans leurs maisons? Ce sont là pourtant nos exploits de chaque jour. Faut-il, répondez, Biassou, que le seul vestige de notre passage soit toujours une trace de sang ou une trace de feu? (162)

While his peers are fixated on murdering the French, Bug-Jargal shows his honor in his choices. For him, who has seen the atrocities of slave owners, and whose wife and children were victims to it, he does not enjoy seeking revenge on the white man, but rather he chooses a more noble and benevolent path. Pierrot does not seem like he has learned these behaviors; it is just a part of who he is. We see that even though this character is a slave and could easily have reason to avenge the life he was forced to live, he instead portrays honorable values and makes good choices. Symbolically, in a time where the Christian government was deemed corrupt and unprincipled, the solution in France was to throw it all away: all reminders, symbols and memories of that way of life. Bug-Jargal reflects a difficult time in French history, where one had to reflect and compartmentalize the Church, the values it demonstrated, and the original values of the Christian religion. Perhaps Bug-Jargal is a reminder that Christian values are still respectable, no matter who demonstrates them.

While there are no knights and no King Arthur, *Bug-Jargal* does make reference to a courtly time, where honor and chivalry were of the utmost importance to its heroes. Mystical aspects are even included to the story, adding a medieval atmosphere to the novella, as this book has sometimes been categorized as “fantaisie” (Toumson 16). After first hearing a mysterious voice singing a love song in the forest intended for Marie, d’Auverney goes out to find who dares pursue his betrothed. After looking everywhere, he comes up with nothing: “Je fouillai le bois dans tous les sens, je plongeai le canon de mon mousqueton dans l’épaisseur de toutes les broussailles, je fis le tour de tous les gros arbres, je remuai toutes les hautes herbes. Rien! Rien, et toujours rien!” (39). Once he is in the forest and fails to find the source of his worry, he hears his fiancé’s screams as a crocodile tries to attack her. Upon rushing to her cries, he comes upon Pierrot, and after Marie is safe and Pierrot “disappears” (42), he asks where the large slave came

from. Marie answers: “Du côté opposé à celui d’où partait le voix l’instant d’auparavant et part lequel tu venais de pénétrer dans le bosquet” (43). Pierrot’s ethereal presence is like magic to the other characters and it immediately creates intrigue. His mystical powers reveal a certain quality found in characters of medieval tales.

I point out the medieval characteristics of this work because they lead to a particularly intriguing reading if interpreted as a medieval allegory, a time when Christianity was a universal assumption in French literature and a motivator for good overcoming evil. However, we see the contrast in this work, written originally during the Restoration, where Catholicism, a once ubiquitous certainty, had been displaced. We see both sides of “les Deux France” where it is nearly impossible to escape centuries of tradition and national identity associated with Christianity and replace it with the order of secularism and a new republic.

#### Bug-Jargal as Christ archetype

As many medieval works contain allegories to reflect Christianity, a national identity or allegiance to the monarchy, this particular Romantic work contains an allegory that portrays Bug-Jargal, a former king, turned slave, as a type of Christ. The first time d’Auverney sees Pierrot, he described him as “gigantesque” and knew from the sole loin cloth covering his body that the slave “appartenait à la dernière classe des habitants de l’île” (43). Soon after meeting him, d’Auverney discovers he was of royal birth, born to become a king. Along with these humble beginnings, there are other parallels to Jesus Christ; we see symbolic undertones as well as more obvious traits like universal love and self-sacrifice that this mysterious slave represents the Christian savior. We see in the end that Bug-Jargal does not prevail (also like Christ in the New Testament), signifying an inability to establish a significant role for religion in the New



France; however, we find in the text that even though the new republic tries to displace and even erase Catholicism from their society and government, it is impossible to dissipate its influence from their national identity.

In another example that strengthens the allegorical context, a subtle, but important detail strengthens the comparison. Pierrot uses a weapon called a *bisaïgue* to fight the crocodile that is threatening the life of Marie (42). A *bisaïgue* is an ancient carpenter's T-shaped tool with two different types of chisels extending from the handle ("Bisaiguë"). The tool can be seen as a symbolic reference to Jesus Christ's occupation in the Bible as a carpenter, and the shape of the tool itself looks like a cross. The fact that it is a black slave representing Christ shows the changing face of religion in French society as a whole. While many Europeans regarded blacks as a different species, anatomically and biologically different from white men (Saint-Aubin), Pierrot represents the ideal of mankind. These resemblances to a Christ-like figure continue to extend throughout the novel and are used as a way to represent the changing face and role of religion in the French society.

Even though by the end, d'Auverney and Pierrot become like brothers, it took the Frenchman almost the course of the whole book to fully trust the slave. He first sees him appear and disappear, he then builds a strong relationship with him in prison, and then feels betrayed when Pierrot escapes. After the rebels attack Le Cap, where his uncle and other prominent French people live, d'Auverney sees his beloved wife in the arms of Pierrot. He thinks that the slave is kidnapping his wife and once again loses trust and only wants to claim vengeance (74). "Un grand noir sortit de derrière une palissade enflammée, emportant une jeune femme qui criait et se débattait dans ses bras. La jeune femme était Marie ; le noir était Pierrot." He cries, "Perfide!" (74). D'Auverney's relationship with Pierrot is like that of a doubting disciple. Pierrot

assured him of a true friendship and a true brotherhood between them, and even insists they call each other brothers (55). Yet d'Auverney continues to doubt that Pierrot is keeping his word. It is not until the very end, when Frenchman discovers that Pierrot had kept Marie safe throughout all the fighting that d'Auverney is finally convinced that Pierrot deserves his trust. Extending this parallel further into an analysis of France at the time, perhaps it represents a people confused and wary of trusting an institution that for so long perverted the principles that it stood for, unsure where to place their confidence after so many extreme changes.

Another illustration in the novella of the typification of Christ can be found in Pierrot's traits as a loving and loyal respecter of persons, and an advocate for peace and fairness; so much so that he will sacrifice comfort, freedom, and even his own life to protect his friends and show his loyalty. After noticing his large stature and physical presence, d'Auverney recognized that he was a leader, but not by force or through fear and threats. The people respected him because of his honor and protection:

On m'apprit que ses compagnons semblaient avoir le plus profond respect pour ce jeune nègre. Esclave comme eux, il lui suffisait d'un signe pour s'en faire obéir. Il n'était point né dans les cases ; on ne lui connaissait ni père ni mère ; il y avait même peu d'années, disait-on, qu'un vaisseau négrier l'avait jeté à Saint-Domingue. Cette circonstance rendait plus remarquable encore l'empire qu'il exerçait sur tous ces compagnons, sans même en excepter les noirs créoles, qui, vous ne l'ignorez sans doute pas, messieurs, professaient ordinairement le plus profond mépris pour les nègres *congos* ; expression impropre, et trop générale, par laquelle on désignait dans la colonie tous les esclaves amenés d'Afrique (48).

Pierrot is a mysterious character—we don't know where he came from, and he seems to have this tacit power over those who normally would despise him. His universal values extend beyond simply a "power" over the Créoles but show themselves in numerous examples of self-sacrifice. In one incident, the slave raises his hand against d'Auverney's uncle, the owner of the plantations, to protect a fellow slave from being whipped, and is consequently sent to jail (46). Knowing that he has committed an act that could get him killed, he insisted to the master "Punis-moi, car je viens de t'offenser ; mais ne fais rien à mon frère, qui n'a touché qu'à ton rosier !" (46). After this incident, he was sent to prison, living in an almost windowless cell as punishment. In another example, "il lui arrivait souvent de faire en un jour l'ouvrage de dix de ses camarades, pour les soustraire aux châtimens réservés à la négligence ou à la fatigue" (49). He is mindful of those who need help and offers it to them, even if it means sacrificing himself, his limited freedom, his time, and his energy. His sacrifice not only helped this slave, but he also saved d'Auverney and Marie multiple times. These acts of self-sacrifice not only saved multiple people from danger or punishment, but also show that Bug-Jargal acted more than a hero; he was a savior to many. These grand acts of devout service echo similar stories from verses of scripture that describe the life of Jesus Christ.

Of course, while this comparison unfolds throughout the novella, there is an interesting incongruity that cannot be ignored. The character that Hugo chose to represent the ultimate, divine hero is a black slave. This unconventional decision could represent a myriad of thoughts and conclusions, giving the reader insight into the atmosphere of France at the time. Not only was the Jesus figure black, but the main French character distrusted him almost throughout the whole story. Bug-Jargal represents a Christianity that has existed for as long as anyone can remember, but which is unrecognizable at first to the confused French person. In the end,

d'Auverney and Bug-Jargal share a strong bond and lifelong friendship. D'Auverney shares the story of their friendship as a life-changing event, however in the end, this loyalty does not save him; it is the cause of his destruction.

### France's Evolving Identity

From the very beginning of the book, commentary by d'Auverney's crew of soldiers shows the importance of religion in defining themselves and others. French soldiers mock the English, referring directly to their supposed lack of religion. When Thad goes to search for Rask, the former domestic pet of Bug-Jargal who had been captured by the English army, Thad describes them as "nus jusqu'ici comme des payens" (17) and once he starts to run away with Rask, "ce diable d'homme s'acharnait-il après moi, comme un pauvre après un séminariste" (18). To describe the people they are at war against, to mock and insult a group of their other soldier friends, Thad uses expressions indicating that the English are godless. He uses words like "payen" (pagan) and uses "seminariste" to represent the French, conjuring the image of an ill-clad uneducated man, chasing a well-dressed, educated man. This seems strategically placed in the beginning of the novel to again highlight the conflict of a changing France; religion seems to be at the center of France's struggle to find a new France with no trace of the former one. It is clearly not one or the other, because to completely erase what has defined them in the past seems to constantly seep through and define not only themselves, but people around them.

This conflict between new and old France is represented more fully in the allegory throughout the novella. As the typification develops, Bug-Jargal continues to prove himself as a contrasting figure from the other rebel leaders, who seem to be more focused on revenge and are less "civilized" than he. When Bug-Jargal is imprisoned and d'Auverney makes daily visits, he

finds that “Il parlait avec facilité le français et l’espagnol, et . . . son esprit ne parassait pas dénué de culture” (54). He speaks well in multiple languages, and not only that, d’Auverney notices he reads and writes as well. This contrasts directly to the other rebel leaders, Biassou in particular, who keeps d’Auverney as a prisoner to write a letter to the white leaders, demanding their independence. Biassou says to d’Auverney: “Ni Jean-François [another rebel leader], ni moi, n’avons été élevés dans les écoles des blancs, où l’on apprend le beau langage. . . . Nous ne savons point écrire. . . . Corrige les fautes qui pourraient, dans notre dépêche, prêter à rire aux blancs” (149). We see a difference not only in scholarly type characteristics, but also religious. While at Biassou’s camp, d’Auverney witnesses tribal ceremonies with griotes (90) and strange mixtures that were meant to heal the sick (108). These obviously stereotypical ceremonies that are depicted, however, do not imply a racial difference, for Bug-Jargal tells Biassou that to lead an army with people from so many countries, “un lien commun vous est nécessaire ; mais ne pouvez-vous le trouver autre part que dans un fanatisme féroce et des superstitions ridicules?” (162). There are two very important features that separate Biassou and Bug-Jargal, criteria that the French hold in high value because they are marks of civility. Stovall says one condition of French identity is the ability to speak a standardized French, which is one of the reasons schools in the colonies always taught in French (8–9). Also, the French felt justified in their colonial endeavors because they felt they needed to save natives from their barbarity and superstitions (5). Of course, Bug-Jargal both speaks and writes French like a Frenchman, and rejects the barbarity and superstition that the rebel leaders embrace, and allows him to be the hero, and also allows d’Auverney to eventually trust him. We see here France’s transition from a nation that identified and founded itself with religion, and later to a nation where “civility” has taken priority and a more important role.

The nuances of confusion show an important aspect of life for the French during this time. D'Auverney's back-and-forth loyalty towards Bug-Jargal eventually leads to deep respect and veneration, but he did show resistance at first. First, the "doubting" that parallels the Christ typification is expressed in this allegory because for d'Auverney, a royalist and believer, Catholicism was intertwined in all aspects of life: politics, economics and an identity were all wrapped around the idea of a blessed Christian nation. However, when d'Auverney sees the atrocities in Saint-Domingue that this previously trustworthy institution had never exposed, he is confused. He is surrounded by French compatriots who do not share similar values regarding the slaves and the treatment of other humans and also by rebel leaders who solely seek revenge on the white man, which includes himself. After some hesitation as to whether or not he should believe and trust Bug-Jargal, the slave says to the Frenchman, "Ne me soupçonne pas, je t'en conjure. Je te dirai tout cela ailleurs. Tiens, aime-moi comme je t'aime, avec confiance" (157). And even though he feels he should despise and kill this man, he expresses the following: "Malgré toutes mes préventions contre cet homme, sa voix faisait toujours vibrer une corde dans mon coeur. En l'écoutant, je ne sais quelle puissance me dominait. Je me surprénais balançant entre la vengeance et la pitié, la défiance et un aveugle abandon. Je le suivis" (158). When Bug-Jargal expresses the comforting, familiar, and powerful words that soften d'Auverney's vengeful attitude, it is as if d'Auverney realizes that he cannot fully reject or accept the past, for it still is part of him, where he must find a balance between bitterness and appreciation.

When d'Auverney discovers that Bug-Jargal has been protecting the lives of Marie and her littlest sibling, and later when Bug-Jargal and his dog save the French general yet another time, d'Auverney rededicates his loyalty to the African king. However, even though d'Auverney and Marie had not just known, but truly witnessed, the miracles and sacrifices of Bug-Jargal, in

the end, their dedication, loyalty, and belief did not save them, or even himself. The story ends by Thad painfully recounting that he shot Bug-Jargal. In the process, Bug-Jargal saved ten of his men that were about to die in his name, and he also spared Thad's life by calling Rask off of his neck. Marie died shortly thereafter, and in the "Notes" section, similar to an Epilogue, the reader discovers that d'Auverney is accused as a traitor, and is put to death "d'avoir raconté dans un conciliabule de conspirateurs une prétendue histoire contre révolutionnaire tendant à ridiculiser les principes de l'égalité et de la liberté, et à exalter les anciennes superstitions connues sous les noms de *royauté* et de *religion* " (213). Two definitions of "superstition" are expressed in this book – the superstitions in Saint-Domingue: the works of the griots, the tribal dances, and potion-like medicine, and by the end, "superstition" had evolved to mean the religion that had once grounded France since the Middle Ages. By the end of the work, we can see through the deaths of Bug-Jargal, the object of his affection, Marie, and his most tried and true disciple, d'Auverney, that religion was no longer a source for strength and energy; in fact, it no longer had any driving force.

#### Alphonse de Lamartine's *Toussaint Louverture*

Lamartine's play, *Toussaint Louverture*, shows the complex role that religion played in the colonies and the new France, as well as the birth of a new, free nation, Haiti. The play points out the Haitian struggle of whether to be grateful to the French, or to despise them; this is mostly shown through the portrayal of religion in the play. As in the Hugo novel, it is never a clear-cut picture of how it should be or how it was; the effacement of religion from the Old Regime caused an identity crisis in the colonies where this religion was instituted and accepted. The play shows us that religion is not just a matter of preference or belief, but it can define who you are

and who you are not. In this play, religion and the power of Christian tradition plays a major role in defining national identity and the fight for independence, but only for the Haitians; on the French side, religion has clearly been replaced with allegiance to the Republic, and the omniscient leader is no longer God—it is Napoleon.

### Defining France and Haiti

From the beginning of the play, we see an illustration of the complexity of this question of religion, as it has been established on the island: this, a Western cultural institution that has shaped the identity of all the nations in Europe in one way or another, and now affects a French colony across an ocean. Even on the first page of the play, two minor characters mention “God” while discussing “La Marseillaise Noire”. “La Marseillaise Blanche a guidé les Français / Aux combats ; mais les noirs, grâce à Dieu sont en paix” (1264). From this simple sentence, we see the complexity of the whole play and of France and Haiti’s relationship at this time. Since the Revolution, the New France no longer believed it was a nation that God had destined to become the most cultured and cultivated in the world; it was simply this because it *was*. God was no longer the reason; and it was a powerful nation, under a powerful leader. However, these two characters are talking about a white and a black Marseillaise, two versions of France’s national anthem. Using a version of France’s anthem, specifically for blacks, presents the conflict debated throughout the play: France wants Saint-Domingue to be a part of France; however, they can’t share the original French version of their anthem.

Whittaker points out that the Marseillaise Noire celebrates an ideal of humanity, and not just one nation; however, as the play continues, events prove to be more like the original Marseillaise: “the threat of returning people to an ancient form of slavery, as in the second



strophe; foreign soldiers killing sons and establishing despots, as in the third; the endless slaughter of heroes in the fourth; despots ensnaring the gullible in the fifth” (2). But, in fact, the Marseillaise Noire belittles the blacks and glorifies the French, and even in a song that celebrates humanity, it portrays the French as heroes and the blacks as indebted to them. In the lyrics, it starts off, “Enfants des noirs, proscrits du monde / Pauvre chair changée en troupeau, / Qui de vous-même, race immonde, / Portez le deuil sur votre peau” (I. i.). In this song, the whites define blacks: that they are “proscrits du monde” (banished from the world) and of an “immonde race” (revolting race). The chorus sings, “Offrons à la concorde, offrons les maux soufferts, / Ouvrons aux blancs amis nos bras libres de fers” (I. i.). Not only do the lyrics disturbingly insult the Haitians, but it also alludes to attributing their freedom to the whites.

In the second verse:

Un cri, de l’Europe au tropique,  
Dont deux mondes sont les échos,  
A fait au nom de République  
Là des hommes, là des héros.  
L’esclave enfin dans sa mémoire  
Epelle un mot libérateur,  
Le tyran devient rédempteur :  
Enfants, Dieu seul à la victoire ! (I. i.)

Here, we see a France that is trying to convince Saint-Domingue that both countries working together can make the Republic, to convince Saint-Domingue that one can only be a hero if partnered with France. Even though at this time, Reason replaced religion, there is a mention of God in this verse, as if to draw in the Saint-Domingan even more, because at this time, Christianity still plays an important role for the leadership on the island. Unlike some of the depictions in Bug-Jargal of the rebel slaves who practiced religious ceremonies foreign to European culture, in Lamartine’s text, Toussaint Louverture speaks and acts like a Frenchman.

Worried about his family and his country, he looks to God for guidance and motivation and looks to prophets of the past as models and examples to follow.

### Toussaint's calling

In the first scene with Toussaint, he is on stage with a crucifix hanging on the wall as well as a prie-dieu resting underneath. Toussaint's monologue reveals his responsibility as the leader to secure Saint-Domingue's independence from France. The year is 1801, ten years after the first slave revolt that *Bug-Jargal* depicted; Toussaint Louverture is governor of Saint-Domingue, and has declared the island a sovereign state. Once sided with the French in efforts to defeat the British and Spanish parts of the island, tables turn when Napoleon sends French forces to reinstate French leadership, and unbeknownst to the Saint-Domingans, to restore slavery. The fictional play uses true historical events to set the stage for Lamartine's story, representing France and its new political situation juxtaposed with its former one.

Toussaint's first monologue is a self-declaration of authority and destiny, a speech to animate the leader in him, to defeat the French, and to receive strength from a higher power. He takes strength from examining Moses's ascent to Sinai and from asking God, "ne marches-tu donc pas devant la liberté?" (II. i). He is unsure whether or not he is capable to lead his nation to liberty, but becomes more confident as he continues to pray and call on God: "Dans un pauvre vieux noir, cependant, quelle audace! / De prendre seul en main la cause de sa race ; / . . . Ah ! combien j'ai besoin d'intercéder celui / Dont l'inspiration sur tous mes pas à lui" (II. i.). In the next scene, he gains even more momentum: "Il agit seul, c'est vrai, mais il agit par l'homme : / Nul ne sait par quel nom dans un people il se nomme ! / Moïse, Romulus, Mahomet, Washington ! Qui sait si dans les noirs il n'aura pas mon nom ?" (II. ii). These examples show a motivating

force and enabling power that religion gives to Toussaint in this play. Our first look at him is on his knees, pleading with God for a whole scene, and then declaring himself called by God to lead his people. His actions are determined by the spiritual force that once founded France as a nation, and ironically that France introduced to the colonies.

Toussaint points out the irony of the situation: “Quelle amère ironie ! / Où se heurte mon coeur lorsque je veux prier ? / Quoi ! c’est le Dieu des blancs qu’il nous faut supplier ?” (II. i). However, when we are introduced to the French forces that are sent in, namely Leclerc, his wife, and Rochambeau, it is notable that there is almost no mention of God. Whereas God was mentioned in the third dialogue exchange from a Saint-Domingan, the only higher power that the French rely on, or even mention, is Napoleon. Upon arriving on the island, a soldier, Boudet, speaks to Rochambeau, talking about the set up of the camp: “Le Français n’est pas fait pour cette guerre impie / Où la fourbe le mine, où la fuite l’épie, / Où dans les yeux baissés, dans les discours soumis, / Il lui faut soupçonner des desseins ennemis” (III. ii). His discourse mentions several times the importance to be able to see the enemy, and how not being seen will protect them from the enemy. The focus on sight is in direct contrast to Toussaint’s discourse in the previous act. His power and strength draws from a higher power that he cannot see, and in this very act proves his faith and devotion. For the French, their power draws from what is visible, palpable, and reasonable.

“Les Deux France” manifested in characters

These two sides of France, from before and after the revolution, are personified in Toussaint’s sons. When we are first introduced to his sons, Isaac, the younger one who never fails to show an allegiance first to his father and his homeland, speaks of God in his first few

lines. Isaac and Albert are brought to Saint-Domingue without the knowledge of their father. After having lived many years and attended school in France, Isaac is happy to be home and struck by the beauty of the landscape around him. He beholds the mountains and valleys and inhales the rich fragrance of the pine-laden woods and cries, “O Dieu ! Si je pouvais me rouler à leur ombre” (III. iv). The mere mention of God indicates that Isaac still holds a strong connection to this religious force, whereas in response, Albert only praises the gifts that the French have given. This juxtaposition extends beyond two disagreeing brothers; it symbolizes the conflicts that the French experienced, and it introduces the complicated issues that include colonization and race.

Albert scolds his brother for being ungrateful towards the French as Isaac describes their state as birds stuck in a cage (III. iv). Albert says, “Quelle enfance, Isaac, ou quelle ingratitude !” He continues to say that they should be grateful “Pour nous civilizer, empruntés à nos pères ; / Prevenir apporter la science à nos frères ; Déchirer le bandeau de superstition / Que dépouille à nos yeux la grande nation ; / Être appelés d’en bas pour mieux voir la lumière / Dans cette Europe en feu qui la vit la première” (III. iv). Albert’s fidelity to France is obvious, and one sided, whereas Isaac is clearly on his father’s and home country’s side. His argument is made more poignant as Albert tries to convince his brother with the phrase, “Parlons raison” (III. iv). “Raison” at this time, and possibly ever since the Enlightenment and the Revolution, is a word charged with a sense of the new France, a France without religion or the corruption of the Church.

The Napoleon and Toussaint characters of this play address the role of God, and what he represents in divided France. Earlier, we saw Toussaint take strength from a belief that God is just and he and his country will receive help because of values and goals that are in line with

God's will. Toussaint is later compared to God when the Haitians find out that 40,000 Frenchmen are coming to their island. Believing that Toussaint can defeat them, the *Pétion* shouts, "Toussaint sur Haïti ! comme Dieu sur le monde !" (II. viii). Later, when Toussaint is conversing with his adopted daughter, Adrienne, he tells her, "Il faut être invisible et présent comme Dieu" (II. ix). This description parallels Toussaint and God, a symbol that gives him strength and motivation. It also somewhat describes Napoleon's presence in the play.

Even though Napoleon is not a character, he is omnipresent—in reference, conversation, and symbolism. Napoleon and Toussaint are subliminally at odds throughout the play. When the French arrive, a letter officially notifies Toussaint; after looking at the signature, Toussaint cries, "Bonaparte !" The monk responds: "Qu'un nom a sur nous de pouvoir !" and Toussaint confirms the comparison: "Lui, le premier des blancs, moi, le premier des noirs !" (II. vii). Napoleon achieves this God-like presence throughout the play that Toussaint described as being "invisible et présent" (II. ix). Saint-Aubin notices this "Napoleon, is completely absent from the text but appears as a disembodied voice twice removed. Napoleon *speaks*, as it were, through a determinant letter . . . that he addresses to Toussaint. It is as though the French ruler, like Jehovah, cannot be represented. Yet, his specter haunts the entire play and he motivates all of the characters and all of the action" (336). Characters effortlessly mention and reference Napoleon, whereas Toussaint must disguise himself and essentially become a different person to put his plans into action. The Haitian leader struggles throughout the play between what is best for his family and feelings of doubt as a leader and a father. Napoleon's facility in influencing everyone, even Albert who declares "Bonaparte est mon dieu !" (III. iv), shows the replacement of a spiritual God for something tangible—a person that even though the Haitians can't see across the ocean, is definitely real.

While Napoleon is always present yet invisible, the same technique is used for France as well. The Republic represents an ideal not solely for the French, but for the Saint-Domingans, offered to Toussaint as a lofty prize if he surrenders. Leclerc tells the disguised Toussaint “S’il meurt, la république adoptera sa fille ; / S’il revient, tous les blancs seront de sa famille. . . . / La France lui fera le sort d’un citoyen” (III. ix). The commander speaks as though the greatest prize of all would be for the French to accept him, for Haiti to be able to claim France as its peer. Leclerc also mentions, “Entre le mendiant et le riche, la France / Ne met dans son amour aucune différence. / Qui sert la république est grand devant ses yeux” (III. ix), claiming that the new France has now made everyone equal, and the greatest gift is to simply serve the country; to Leclerc, this exceeds any desires for an independent Saint-Domingue.

However, when we look at the interaction between Mme Leclerc when she first meets the beggar-version of Toussaint, we see another aspect to “becoming” French. Unlike her husband, who states that no lines exist between “mendiant” and “riche,” she notices that “Ce vieillard parle bien, je veux qu’on le respecte, / Qu’on lui laisse son gîte” (III. vii). Toussaint’s notable language skills allow him his life and security while in the French camp (again we see the connection between language and civility). Later, after a lengthy monologue from Toussaint as the blind man, Rochambeau, a French soldier, reaffirms Mme Leclerc’s initial reaction saying, “Quel langage !” (III. ix). Even though the ideal France wants to accept people without any modifying factors, good language indicates someone who is civilized, and this makes the French more inclined to want to help Toussaint’s alter ego, much like what we saw in *Bug-Jargal*. However, for the French, the only way to “help” this old, disabled man is of course to integrate him into French society; much like the only way to save Haiti is to make them French, dedicated to the goals of the Republic and assimilating into French culture.

These are of course the founding principles of the *mission civilisatrice*, a term originating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when France started to colonize West Africa, Algeria, and Indochina. Justified by principles of spreading “civilization” to native peoples around the world, the French started this tradition long before the phrase was born. Louis XIV created the Code Nègre in 1685, which dictated the lives of slaves. Included in this list of 60 articles were laws stipulating everything from food rations to clothing allowances, and of course religious requirements. All slaves had to be Catholic—baptized and taught in the Catholic religion (Art. II). Those who failed to follow this rule were punished: “Voulons que les contrevenants soient punis comme rebelles et désobéissants à nos commandements” (Art. III). Their baptism decided their ability to marry, their ability to keep their children (Art. VIII), and where they could be buried when they died. When France established these rules in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, they were still practiced during the economic boom before the French Revolution, and even after. However, when France’s Revolution of 1789 was based on equality and the Rights of Man, the same rules did not apply in their colonies. Toussaint Louverture rose as a leader, inspired by the writings of Abbé Grégoire and philosophies that advocated the freedom that every man deserves, yet when French forces came back to reestablish slavery, this directly contradicted the basis of the New France.

### Making a Statement on Stage

Even though there are black characters in *Toussaint Louverture*, the play debuted on a Parisian stage starring all French actors. Lamartine’s purpose for this play was to “populariser la cause de l’abolition” (Lamartine, 4), and he did so in a way that put French people face-to-face with their history, and with a brute idea of themselves as a nation. It is no surprise that spectators did not receive the play well, calling it “anti-française, anti-nationale, and anti-patriotique”

(Hoffmann xxviii). It was performed a total of 27 times from April 6, 1850 to the end of May of the same year (Hoffmann x). The actor who played Toussaint, Frédéric Lemaître was known for his experience in representing blacks on stage and “le rôle principal ne pourrait être confié qu’à Frédéric Lemaître” (Hoffmann x). The duality in both the character of Toussaint as well as the actor is important to note. While Toussaint’s sons separately embody two different philosophies regarding France and Saint-Domingue, the conflicting visions of each country battle each other within Toussaint’s single character on stage.

While Toussaint feels chosen to lead his country to independence, he is also confused by the good influences that France has had. Leclerc asks the blind beggar, “Quel sentiment pour nous [Toussaint] nourrit-il dans son sein ?” (III. ix). Toussaint replies, “Peut-être, il l’ignore lui-même. / De la haine à l’amour flottant irresolu / Son coeur est un abîme où son oeil n’a pas lu, / Où l’amer souvenir d’une vile naissance / Lutte entre la colère et la reconnaissance. / Le respect des Français du monde tromphants, / L’orgueil pour sa couleur, l’amour de ses enfants” (III. ix). As Toussaint speaks for himself, he is disguised as a beggar; as his emotions are mixed between a desire for an independent Saint-Domingue and a gratitude to the French for religion and the ideas of liberty, this duality is manifested in his two identities as a beggar and a leader. This mise en abyme continues to accumulate as we think about the character playing Toussaint on stage. Frédéric Lemaître is a white actor, playing the part of a black man; in a way, both parts of Toussaint’s character come through with the performance of the play—he is black, yet part of his identity comes from France.

As with *Bug-Jargal*, this play shows not only insight into racial issues in French historiography, but also the struggles to define roles for religion and nationalism. The text shows a France that is tied up in complex relationships with its colonies due to economic and religious



reasons for invasion and slavery, and characters reflect the intricacies of this duality. Characters are forced to choose between France or Haiti, God or Reason, family or country, just as France itself redefined its identity without religion as part of its present or future. These characters and their decisions show that the once natural decision to side with France *and* God is now no longer an option. Each Haitian character battles with this choice and each choice clearly shows that France represents Reason and an allegiance to Napoleon, while Haiti represents a country that still depends on God. Ironically, it was France that brought this religion to the natives and it is the Saint-Domingans in the play that embrace and use it to empower themselves. Reading these works can not only serve as a different perspective from which to study the Revolution, but it also depicts a major world event that is often forgotten from French civilization textbooks and teaching.

### The Impact of the Haitian Revolution

Through these works, we can see how Romantic writers dealt with the changing government. They provide another perspective because they are set in Saint-Domingue during different periods of the Haitian Revolution. Because French identity is inextricably tied to the land of France, French history usually focuses on the events that take place in the French *métropole* overlooking French influence on an international level. Especially in the colonization and Saint-Domingue where the slave population totaled around 500,000 by the time of revolt, the treatment of slaves and the existence of slaves threaten the concepts of French republicanism and universalism (Vidal 160).

The leaders in Saint-Domingue, Toussaint Louverture, and Jean-Jacques Dessaline, led the first and only successful slave revolt in the world. Even though slavery existed in the world

after Saint-Domingue declared independence and renamed itself Haiti in 1804, it stood as a symbol of “black power and authority” (Blackburn 17), and showed the world that a slave-free nation was possible (Davis 4). Frederick Douglass attributed all success of abolition in the world to the Haitian Revolution (qtd. in Davis 3). David B. Davis, author of "Impact of the French and Haitian Revolutions", says, “Haitian Revolution impinged in one way or another on the entire emancipation debate from the British parliamentary move in 1792 to outlaw the African slave trade to Brazil’s final abolition of slavery ninety-six years later” (4). Again, it is important to remember that this intensely inspiring and world-changing event originated from ideals and philosophies that came specifically from French thought and religion, thereby later provoking Haitian leaders and people, specifically Toussaint Louverture.

Alice Conklin, specialist of French colonization, argues it is important to teach Saint-Domingue in teaching about the French Revolution, but she also admits that it is difficult. Given the underrepresentation of the Caribbean in context of French history, she argues for less focus on the events in Paris before the Revolution, and in a course limited to the French Revolution, half devoted to the events in France and half to Saint-Domingue (218). To discuss later movements, she uses literature and films to discuss the duality of France’s identity: “I looked for texts that either highlighted the degree to which cultural and political transformations occurring in France had their echoes overseas or illustrated the empire’s material, cultural and even political traces in the metropole” (218). In her studies she focuses more on the events after the Revolution like the conquest in West Africa and later the Algerian war; however, this method of choosing materials is the same that can be used for teaching Saint-Domingue in the context of studying the global effect of the French Revolution. While Saint-Domingue has a very rich and widely studied national history, it is rarely connected with the influence and relationship it had

with France before, during and after the slave revolt. Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal* and Alphonse de Lamartine's *Toussaint Louverture* both show a perspective from Romantic authors about the complexities of human rights and French identity, yet are not extensively studied in this perspective. Not only is the reader exposed to forgotten events, but they also gain insight to the confusing period after the Revolution. The definitions and implications of *les deux France* goes beyond simply knowing what the two sides are, but the reader can examine how difficult it was for the French to reconcile a past that hurt them and a future that they could not predict.

## Conclusions

As *Bug-Jargal* and *Toussaint Louverture* show, the Haitian Revolution, although often excluded in French history textbooks, are fascinating tools to discover a forgotten event and its ties to France. As Conklin states, the French Revolution should be studied with the Haitian Revolution as its companion. These texts give a rich resource to do so as one can study the texts by looking at issues of race, but also issues of French society in context of religion, Reason, and its new nation after the Revolution. These texts show the complexities of religion as a part of French history, for the Revolution did not only affect the Hexagon, but it also affected various parts of the world, both inspiring nations to be free, as well as threatening to enslave them.

While uncovering these paramount events, complexities in French culture also exude from these works. In *Bug-Jargal*, the characters represent different periods of France, one where God and honor are intertwined, and one where religion is replaced by the State. The heroes are punished for their beliefs and their noble actions, showing a France whose societal values are changing. In *Toussaint Louverture*, religious undertones are powerfully connected to the Saint-Domingan characters and starkly absent from those whose allegiance lie with France. Both of

these Romantic authors allow us to peek into the mindset of French society at the time and allow the reader to see the ironic effects of the Revolution and of colonization. Among other reasons, religion played a large role in France's colonization practices. Demanding baptism and Sunday worship from natives was only part of the French method, yet when ideas of the Enlightenment arose, religion and colonization were both threatened. While a secular France was born, the Revolution also allowed the ideas of freedom and the rights of man to spread into the rest of the world, giving power to the first nation to declare abolition, which later became a beacon for the rest of the world. France never embraced this, as Napoleon wanted to re-instate slavery in Saint-Domingue, and Haiti was virtually erased from French history. All of these aspects of France's national history are included in these works and should be included in a French civilization context to show the forgotten events of a triumphant revolt, as well as to show the complexities of France as a nation, and religion as a tool that conquers and divides.

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