

Colour Concerns:

The Palette of Race and Ecology in French-Martinican Art, 1847-1887

Helena Neimann Erikstrup

St John's College

Faculty of History

University of Oxford



A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History of Art

Michaelmas 2024

ABSTRACT

Colour Concerns:

The Palette of Race and Ecology in French-Martinican Art, 1847-1887

Helena Neimann Erikstrup

St Johns College

Faculty of History

University of Oxford

This thesis offers a new perspective on imperialist art-making in the nineteenth century in the French Antillean Island of Martinique. The central argument is that the artistic practices of three newly arrived French male artists – the naval lieutenant Francois Lacour (1821-unknown), drawing teacher Victor Fulconis (1851-1913) and artist-traveller Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) - negotiated race and environment through their palettes. In their works they grapple with what they experienced as the ambiguous complexities both of Martinique’s population of colour and of Caribbean ‘nature’ – a landscape indelibly marked by colonial trade and exchange. Their diverse responses to the island reveal their attempts to make sense of the colony and to fashion whiteness in Martinique. The artists’ works assume and assert authority and mastery of such sites, but, as the thesis demonstrates, also reveal moments of ambivalence and uncertainty in their experience of the colony in the wake of the 1848 abolition of slavery.

A central concern of the thesis is the multiple and shifting meanings that attached to *colour* -as a pigment, as a racial marker, and as an artistic tool – in Martinique and more broadly in the French imperial imagination. I offer a critical examination of the imbrication of pigment and artistic experimentation in constructions of whiteness and Blackness and racial codification. I also draw

on ecocriticism alongside post-colonial and de-colonial thinking to unpack the intersections between imperial discourse and the exploitation and destruction of Martinique's environment. In examining these histories, the thesis contributes to our understanding of French colonialism in the Caribbean, of Caribbean art history, and of the varied roles played by makers of imagery in the imperial project. I also argue for the relevance of these histories to our own moment. Throughout the thesis I juxtapose the three nineteenth-century artists with contemporary Caribbean art and exhibitions, works of fiction, and present-day events. These heterogeneous materials open up new ways of thinking not only about histories of colonialism but also about neo-colonialism and its ongoing legacy for Martinique, for the island's inhabitants, and for the Martinican diaspora.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	4
List of Illustrations	6
Introduction	26
Chapter One: ‘Unruly contours’: Jean François Lacour’s land and landscape	82
Chapter Two: Chromatic Experiments: Victor Fulconis’ drawings of the human and non-human	158
Chapter Three: ‘I will take my paints’: Gauguin’s works of Martinique	236
Epilogue	306
Illustrations	317
Bibliography	481

Acknowledgements

This thesis is the culmination of a ten-year journey that began when I moved from Denmark to a small Scottish town for my undergraduate studies. I have been lucky enough to have family, friends and teachers supporting and guiding me. I want to take a moment here to express my gratitude.

My biggest thanks are dedicated to Alastair Wright for taking me on as his student four years ago. His academic rigor, support and patience during this DPhil have been invaluable. I thank him for reading countless of drafts (of varying quality...) and continuing to believe that this project could flourish even when it was difficult.

I also want to thank Amy Mooney, who encouraged and supported my DPhil application. Participating in her module as a master's student has hugely influenced my thinking and my research path.

Arisa Loomba has been by my side since I started thinking about doing a DPhil. Her insanely sharp intellect, her fierce proofreading and editing and most importantly, her unconditional love, has made all this possible. Anything good in this thesis has sprung from our conversations, which started five years ago and just never ended.

My final year as a RHS Marshall Fellow at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London, was crucial for giving me the financial breathing space to finish writing. I am too grateful for my time as a Fellow at the Danish Academy in Rome. Financial assistance from Augustinus

Fonden, Beit Fund, St John's College, Funds for Women Graduates and the History Faculty at University of Oxford have also been crucial in supporting my research travels and general subsistence. I am, above all, indebted to the support and knowledge of the archivists I have met during my research, particularly the team at Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique has been invaluable.

I dedicate this thesis to my brother, Alexander Neimann Erikstrup, and my parents, Lise Neimann Sørensen and Lars Erikstrup for their limitless support every step of the way.

List of Illustrations

Fig. 1a. Laurent Valère, *Mémorial Cap 110 -Mémorial de l'Anse Cafard*, 1998. Author photograph.

Fig. 1b. Laurent Valère, *Mémorial Cap 110-Mémorial de l'Anse Cafard*, 1998. Author photograph.

Fig. 2a. Julien Creuzet, *Attila cataracte ta source aux pieds des pitons verts finira dans la grande mer gouffre bleu nous nous noyâmes dans les larmes marées de la lune*, April 20 - November 24, 2024, French Pavilion, 60th Venice Biennale, Italy. Courtesy of Julien Creuzet.

Fig. 2b. Julien Creuzet, *Attila cataracte ta source aux pieds des pitons verts finira dans la grande mer gouffre bleu nous nous noyâmes dans les larmes marées de la lune*, April 20 - November 24, 2024, French Pavilion, 60th Venice Biennale, Italy. Courtesy of Julien Creuzet.

Fig. 2c. Julien Creuzet, *Attila cataracte ta source aux pieds des pitons verts finira dans la grande mer gouffre bleu nous nous noyâmes dans les larmes marées de la lune*, April 20 - November 24, 2024, French Pavilion, 60th Venice Biennale, Italy. Courtesy of Julien Creuzet.

Fig. 3. Logo of Caribbean Tourism Organization. Source: <https://www.onecaribbean.org>. Accessed June 2025.

Fig. 4a. Map of Martinique. Generated by Google Maps. Accessed June 2025.

Fig. 4b. Map of the Caribbean. Generated by Google Maps. Accessed June 2025.

Fig. 5. Jean-Baptiste Labat, *Nouveau Voyages aux isles de l'Amérique: Antilles, 1693-1700* (A la Haye: Chex P. Husson, T. Johnson, P. Gosse, J. van Duren, R. Alberts, and C. Levier, 1724).

Fig 6a. Raphaël Barontini, *We Could Be Heroes*, 19th October - 11th February 2024, Panthéon.
Author photograph.

Fig 6b. Detail, Raphaël Barontini, *We Could Be Heroes*, 19th October - 11th February 2024,
Panthéon. Author photograph.

Fig. 6c. Detail, Raphaël Barontini, *We Could Be Heroes*, 19th October - 11th February 2024,
Panthéon. Author photograph.

Fig. 7a. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Négresse de Gorée*, 1847, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale
de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/13.

Fig. 7b. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Pomme d'Acajou*, 1847, Coll. Collectivité
Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/13.

Fig. 7c. Detail, Jean Francois Lacour, unsigned, *Pomme d'Acajou*, 1847, Coll. Collectivité
Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/13.

Fig. 7d. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Pomme d'Acajou*, 1847, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/13.

Fig. 8. Jean François Lacour, *Martinique. Habitation coloniale*, 1847, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/4.

Fig. 9. Jenny Prinssay, *View of Martinique*, undated, Oil on panel, 28 x 40 cm
Musée du Nouveau Monde de La Rochelle.

Fig. 10. Jules Vernet, *Portrait de Mr Lagrange planteur en Martinique*, 1835
Oil on canvas.

Fig. 11. William Clark, 'Slaves cutting the sugar cane' from *Ten Views in the Island of Antigua*, 1823.

Fig. 12. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Lavandière. Nègre d'Habitation*, 1847, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/6.

Fig. 13. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Martinique*. [Deux femmes en costume dont l'une porte un plateau sur la tête], 1847, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/2.

Fig. 14. Jean François Lacour, *Fort de France (Martinique) Le matin*. Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/17.

Fig. 15. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, Martinique [Femme en tenue républicaine et portant un Drapeau] 1848, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/10.

Fig. 16. Auguste Biard, *L'abolition de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises (27 avril 1848)* Oil on canvas, 260 x 392 cm. Château de Versailles.

Fig. 17. Eugène Delacroix, *La Liberté guidant le peuple*, 1830, Oil on canvas, 260 cm x 325 cm, Louvre.

Fig 18. Still shot, Axelle Saint-Cirel, 2024 Olymmpic Games, Paris.

Fig. 19a. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Fort-de-France. Ilet Marolles près Fort de France*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/23.

Fig. 19b. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Fort-de-France. Ilet Marolles près Fort de France*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/23.

Fig. 19c. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Fort-de-France. Ilet Marolles près Fort de France*, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/23.

Fig. 20a. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, [Martinique] *Palmiers*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/32.

Fig. 20b. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, [Martinique] *Palmiers*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/32.

Fig. 20c. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, [Martinique] *Palmiers*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/32.

Fig. 21a. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, [Martinique] *Bananniers. Papayer*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/29.

Fig. 21b. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, [Martinique] *Bananniers. Papayer*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/29.

Fig. 21c. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, [Martinique] *Bananniers. Papayer*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/29.

Fig. 22. Jean François Lacour, *Martinique. Fort-de-France. Une Averse en ville*, undated, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/18.

Fig. 23a. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Canot-paquebot de Fort de France à Saint-Pierre* 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/25.

Fig. 23b. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Canot-paquebot de Fort de France à Saint-Pierre*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/25.

Fig. 24a. Jean François Lacour *Bamboula* [Scène de danse], 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/16.

Fig. 24b. Detail, Jean François Lacour, *Bamboula* [Scène de danse], 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/16.

Fig. 24c. Detail, Jean François Lacour, *Bamboula* [Scène de danse], 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/16.

Fig. 25. Richard Bridgens, Day & Haghe lithographer, *Negro Dance* [between 1838 and 1845], Library of Congress.

Fig. 26. Auguste Earle, *Negro Fandango at Campo de St. Ann, Rio de Janiero* 1822, Watercolour, 21 x 34 cm, National Library of Australia.

Fig. 27a. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Martinique. Saint Pierre. Cascade du Jardin des Plantes*, 1847, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/5.

Fig. 27b. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Martinique. Saint Pierre. Cascade du Jardin des Plantes*, 1847, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/5.

Fig. 28. *L'isle de la Martinique*, 1667, 21.6 cm x 30.2 cm.

Fig. 29a. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Fort de L'Îlet à Ramiers* [Plan], undated, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/8.

Fig. 29b. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Fort de L'Îlet à Ramiers* [Plan], undated, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/8.

Fig. 30. Jean François Lacour, [Martinique. Paysage et voilier], undated, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/31.

Fig. 31a. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Martinique. Fort-de France à vol d'oiseau*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/22.

Fig. 31b. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Martinique. Fort-de France à vol d'oiseau*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/22.

Fig. 31c. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Martinique. Fort-de France à vol d'oiseau*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/22.

Fig. 32a. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Martinique. Baie de Case-Navire*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/24.

Fig. 32b. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Martinique. Baie de Case-Navire*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/24.

Fig. 33a. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Martinique. Anse Cocotiers. Bellevue*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/26.

Fig. 33b. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Martinique. Anse Cocotiers. Bellevue*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/26.

Fig. 34. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, [Martinique] *Branche de Cotonnier*, undated, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/27.

Fig. 35. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, [Martinique] *Tamarin*, undated, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/28.

Fig. 36. George Baxter after James Bartholomew Kidd, *The Ordinance of Baptism, as administered by missionaries connected with the Baptist Missionary Society to 135 persons near Brown's Town, in Jamaica*, 1843, Coloured wood engraving, Victoria and Albert Museum.

Fig. 37. Keith Piper, *The Coloureds' Codex, An Overseers' Guide to Comparative Complexion* 2007, National Museums Liverpool. Author photograph.

Fig. 38. Suchitra Mattai, *An Ocean Cradle*, 2022.

Fig. 39. Victor Fulconis, *Macon et femme indiennes manœuvres*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/2.

Fig. 40a. Le Masurier, *Marché à St Pierre de la Martinique*, 1750, Oil on canvas, 162 cm x 227.5 cm, Cavlet Museum.

Fig. 40b. Detail, Le Masurier, *Marché à St Pierre de la Martinique*, 1750, Oil on canvas, 162 cm x 227.5 cm, Cavlet Museum.

Fig. 40c. Detail, Le Masurier, *Marché à St Pierre de la Martinique*, 1750, Oil on canvas, 162 cm x 227.5 cm, Cavlet Museum.

Fig. 41. Victor Fulconis, *Poissons*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/57.

Fig. 42. *Martinique. Jardin botanique de Saint Pierre* [1901], Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 2F113.

Fig. 43. Victor Fulconis, *Serpents tués dans la maison du directeur du jardin des plantes*, 1884, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/35.

Fig. 44. Victor Fulconis, *Fleurs du Coton*, 1884, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 2F11/23.

Fig. 45. Victor Fulconis, *Corossol*, 1884, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/24.

.

Fig. 46a. *Martinique. Saint-Pierre. Jardin Botanique*, 1898, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 9FI296.

Fig. 46b. Detail, *Martinique. Saint-Pierre. Jardin Botanique*, 1898, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 9FI296.

Fig. 47. Victor Fulconis, *Mabolo*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/25.

Fig. 48. Victor Fulconis, *Tabernac citrifolia, Gingembre and Duranta plumier (vanillier)*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/26.

Fig. 49. Victor Fulconis, *Tulipes et autres variétés*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/47.

Fig. 50. Victor Fulconis, *Roses et autres variétés*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/48.

Fig. 51a. Victor Fulconis, *Equipage d'un navire*, 1882, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/94.

Fig. 51b. Victor Fulconis, *Equipage d'un navire*, 1882, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/95.

Fig. 51c. Victor Fulconis, *Equipage d'un navire*, 1882, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/96.

Fig. 51d. Victor Fulconis, *Equipage d'un navire*, 1882, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/97.

Fig. 52. Victor Fulconis, *Poissons: patate, bourse, juif, vermeil, carangue, souris*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/54.

Fig. 53. Victor Fulconis, *Poissons: patate, chat, maryand*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/58.

Fig. 54a. Victor Fulconis, *Orfi, Patate*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/92.

Fig. 54b. Victor Fulconis, *Poissons: watalibi*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/61.

Fig. 54c. Victor Fulconis, *Torpedo marmorata, (raie torpille)*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/67.

Fig. 55. Victor Fulconis, *Coquillages*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/56.

Fig. 56. *Holacanthè à demi-cercles*. In George Cuvier and Achille Valenciennes, *Histoire naturelle des poissons* (Paris: Chez F.G. Levrault, 1828), plate 183.

Fig. 57. *Chaetodon à house*. In George Cuvier and Achille Valenciennes, *Histoire naturelle des poissons* (Paris: Chez F.G. Levrault, 1828), plate 174.

Fig. 58. Victor Fulconis, *Langouste, trompette, ravet de mer*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/66.

Fig. 59. Victor Fulconis, *Hippolite, Zilerone, crabe*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/68.

Fig. 60. Victor Fulconis, *(vive) Labous - (coffre) Tetradon- (poisson armé) Diodon maculatum*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/81.

Fig. 61. Victor Fulconis, *Raie*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/33.

Fig. 62. *Martinique. Saint Pierre. Lac du Jardin botanique*, 1898, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 9FI297.

Fig. 63. Victor Fulconis, *Femme du peuple ramassant un poisson*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/17.

Fig. 64. Victor Fulconis, *Etoile de mer, oursin (chadron)*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/65.

Fig. 65. Victor Fulconis, *Femme du peuple*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/31.

Fig. 66. Victor Fulconis, *Femmes du peuple*, 1884, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/13.

Fig. 67. Paul Broca, 'Tableau Chromatique'. In *Les Instructions Générales pour Les Recherches et Observations Anthropologiques (Anatomie et Physiologie)*, 1865, Gallica.

Fig. 68a. Victor Fulconis, *Indiens Coolies*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/6.

Fig. 68b. Detail, Victor Fulconis, *Indiens Coolies*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/6.

Fig. 69a. Victor Fulconis, *Femmes Indiennes Coolies, Riches et Pauvre*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/8.

Fig. 69b. Detail, Victor Fulconis, *Femmes Indiennes Coolies, Riches et Pauvre*, 1883, Coll.

Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/8.

Fig. 69c. Detail, Victor Fulconis, *Femmes Indiennes Coolies, Riches et Pauvre*, 1883, Coll.

Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/8.

Fig. 70. *Type et costume de femme indienne*, 1904, postcard, 9x14 cm, Musée de l'Homme (Photothèque).

Fig. 71 *Type et costume de femme indienne*, 1904, postcard, 9x14 cm, Musée de l'Homme (Photothèque).

Fig. 72. Victor Fulconis, *Cayenne. Cour intérieure du bagne des Îles du Salut*, 1882, Coll.

Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/52.

Fig. 73a. Victor Fulconis, *Rivière du Fort Saint Pierre. Blanchisseuse*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/14.

Fig. 73b. Detail, Victor Fulconis, *Rivière du Fort Saint Pierre. Blanchisseuse*, 1883,

Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/14.

Fig. 74a. Victor Fulconis, *Blanchisseuse*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/4.

Fig. 74b. Detail, Victor Fulconis, *Blanchisseuse*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/4.

Fig. 74c. Detail, Victor Fulconis, *Blanchisseuse*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/4.

Fig. 74d. Detail, Victor Fulconis, *Blanchisseuse*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/4.

Fig. 75. Victor Fulconis, *Femmes du peuple*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/15.

Fig. 76a. Victor Fulconis, *Blanchisseuse*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/11.

Fig. 76b. Detail, Victor Fulconis, *Blanchisseuse*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/11.

Fig. 77a. Victor Fulconis, *Rivière du Fort Saint-Pierre. Femmes au bain*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/9.

Fig. 77b. Detail, Victor Fulconis, *Rivière du Fort Saint-Pierre. Femmes au bain*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/9.

Fig. 78. Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Moorish Bath*, 1870, Oil on canvas, 50.8 x 40.6 cm, Museum of Fine Arts Boston.

Fig. 79a. Victor Fulconis, *Rivière du Fort Saint-Pierre. Blanchisseuse*, 1883
Archives Territoriales de Martinique.

Fig. 79b. Detail, Victor Fulconis, *Rivière du Fort Saint-Pierre. Blanchisseuse*, 1883
Archives Territoriales de Martinique. Author photograph.

Fig. 80a. Detail, David Gumbs, *CIP Gauguin*, Vimeo, 2022.

Fig. 80b. Detail, David Gumbs, *CIP Gauguin*, Vimeo, 2022.

Fig. 80c. Detail, David Gumbs, *CIP Gauguin*, Vimeo, 2022.

Fig. 80d. Detail, David Gumbs, *CIP Gauguin*, Vimeo, 2022.

Fig. 81. Paul Gauguin, *Coming and Going, Martinique*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 72.5 x 92 cm,
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza.

Fig. 82. Paul Gauguin, *Women Carrying Fruit on the Beach of Anse Turin*, 1887, Oil on canvas,
46 x 61 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 83a. David Gumbs, *Waves*, Vimeo, 2021.

Fig. 83b. Detail, David Gumbs, *Waves*, Vimeo, 2021.

Fig. 83c Detail, David Gumbs, *Waves*, Vimeo, 2021.

Fig. 84. *The Unknown Maroon*, 1967, Albert Mangonès, 3.60 m x 2.40 m, Bronze, Rue Pavee, Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

Fig. 85. Map of Gauguin's whereabouts in Martinique with corresponding artworks. From Dijk, Maite van and Joost van der Hoeven, eds. *Gauguin and Laval in Martinique* (Bussum: Thoth Publishers, 2018), 81.

Fig. 86. Paul Gauguin, *Near the Huts*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 90 x 55 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 87. Paul Gauguin, *Study*, 1888, Watercolour and charcoal on paper, 11.9 x 19.5 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 88a. Paul Gauguin, *Sitting Martinican Woman in a Green Dress, Viewed from the Back and a Bust of a Martinican in a Red Blouse* (recto). Black chalk and watercolour on paper (recto). Private collection.

Fig. 88b. Paul Gauguin, *Sketch of Several Figures, Flowers and Animal* (verso), 1887, black chalk, pencil, pen and ink and watercolour on paper (verso), 20.4 x 27 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 89a. Paul Gauguin, *Study of Figures* (recto), black chalk and watercolour on paper. c. 20 -26 cm. Private collection.

Fig. 89b. *Study of a Woman, Hen and Chicken* (verso), 1887, black chalk on paper (verso), c. 20-26 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 90. Paul Gauguin, *Sketch of Several Figures, Flowers and Animal* (recto), 1887, black chalk and watercolour on paper, 20.4 x 26.5 cm

Fig. 91. Paul Gauguin, *Study of a Martinican Woman*, 1887, Charcoal on paper , 15.6 x 10.8 cm, Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac.

Fig. 92. Paul Gauguin, *Head of a Man*, 1887, Charcoal on paper, 12 x 13.6 cm, Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac.

Fig. 93. Paul Gauguin, *Portrait Studies* (verso), 1887, Black chalk on paper, c. 16 x 11 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 94. Paul Gauguin, *Still Life with Profile of Laval*, 1886, Oil on canvas, 46 x 38.1 cm, Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields.

Fig. 95. Paul Gauguin, *Still Life with Mangoes and Hibiscus Flower*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 32.4 x 47 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

Fig. 96. *Fruits de la Martinique*, c. 1890, Print, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 15FI8.

Fig. 97. Paul Gauguin, *Two Tahitian Women*, 1889, Oil on canvas, 94 x 72.4 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 98. Paul Gauguin, *Study of a woman from Martinique*, 1887, Coloured chalk on paper 36 x 27 cm, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Fig. 99a. Paul Gauguin, *The Mango Trees, Martinique*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 86 x 116 cm. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Fig. 99b. Detail, Paul Gauguin, *The Mango Trees, Martinique*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 86 x 116 cm, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Fig. 99c. Detail, Paul Gauguin, *The Mango Trees, Martinique*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 86 x 116 cm, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Fig. 100. Paul Gauguin, *Tropical Conversation*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 61 x 67 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 101. Paul Gauguin, *Sketch in the Blue-Grey Sketchbook*, Black Chalk, 1887, gouache and watercolour on paper, 20.3 x 26.7 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 102. Paul Gauguin, *Martinique Landscape*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 117.00 x 89.80 cm, National Galleries of Scotland.

Fig. 103. Paul Gauguin, *Path under the Palms*, 1887, oil on canvas, 90 x 60 cm, Private collection.

Fig. 104. Charles Laval, *Martinique Landscape*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 91.1 x 71.1 cm Private collection.

Fig. 105. Paul Gauguin, *Martinique Landscape*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 90 x 115 cm, Staatsgalerie Moderner Kunst, Munich, Germany.

Fig. 106. Paul Gauguin, *On the banks of the River at Martinique*, Oil on canvas, 54.5 x 65.5 cm, Van Gogh Museum.

Fig. 107. Paul Gauguin, *The Bathers*, 1897, Oil on canvas, 60.4 x 93.4 cm, National Gallery of Art.

Fig. 108. Paul Gauguin, *Bathers in Tahiti*, 1897, Oil on sacking, 73.3 x 91.8 cm, The Barber Institute of Fine Arts.

Fig. 109. Paul Gauguin, *Coastal Landscape from Martinique (The Bay of St. Pierre, Martinique)* Oil on canvas, 50 x 90 cm, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek.

Fig. 110. *Saint-Pierre. La Martinique. La plage*. Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 2F131.

Fig. 111. *Plage et warfs de débarquement* [1901]. Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 2FI332.

Fig. 112. Paul Gauguin, *Les Cigales et les Fourmis. Souvenir de la Martinique*, 1889, Zincograph on yellow paper, image (borderline); 19.8 x 26.1 cm., Sheet: 50 x 65 cm, Museum of Fine Arts Boston.

Fig. 113. Paul Gauguin, *Self-Portrait Dedicated to Carrière*, 1888 or 1889, oil on canvas. overall: 46.5 x 38.6 cm (18 5/16 x 15 3/16 in.), framed: 66 x 58.7 x 8.2 cm (26 x 23 1/8 x 3 1/4 in.). National Gallery of Art.

Fig. 114. Victor Anicet, *Caravelle*, 2010, 31 x 48 x 22 cm. Fondation Clément.

Fig. 115. Victor Anicet, *Caravelle*, 2012, 31 x 44 x 24 cm, Fondation Clément.

Fig. 116. Victor Anicet, *La Vision du vaincu*, 2014, Habitation Saint-Etienne Le Gros-Morne, Martinique.

Fig. 116. Leasho Johnson, *Jaw bone (man looking back at the cane fields)*, 2019, 61 x 76.2cm Charcoal, watercolor, distemper, acrylic, oil stick, oil paint on canvas, Art Gallery of Ontario.

Introduction

Scene I: ‘Can you hear the sea?’

Something interesting happened in front of Laurent Valère’s sculpture *Mémorial Cap 110 – Mémorial de l’Anse Cafard* (1998) in the commune of Le Diamant in Martinique one day in February 2024. The memorial, a must-visit for tourists on their way to the famous, picturesque beach nearby, comprises 16 stone figures, which stand upright as they overlook the sea, out to the Windward Islands and, further ahead, the coast of Venezuela [Fig. 1a and 1b]. Inaugurated on the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery, the memorial commemorates the enslaved who tragically died in a shipwreck by the same coastline in 1830, and more generally, all the lives lost to Transatlantic Slavery, a history that runs deeply through every part of the island’s history and present day.

Sitting in a half-moon, the international art press faces the memorial, eyes directed towards the man sitting in the centre of the group, for whom the international art press have made the trip.¹ It is the French-Caribbean multimedia artist Julien Creuzet (b. 1986), who grew up in Martinique before moving to the continent to pursue his artistic career. Between the memorial and the deadly rocks below them, he asks the crowd, ‘Est-ce que vous entendez la mer?’² The visit to the memorial site was the part of the announcement of Creuzet as the creator of the France Pavilion for this year’s 60th Venice Biennale, the first Afro-Caribbean person to receive this honour and the first time the launch had ever taken place outside of Europe.³ The next stop for the press was the

¹ Skye Arundhati Thomas, “Julien Creuzet: Beyond the Shore,” *Art Review*, 12th April 2024, <https://artreview.com/julien-creuzet-beyond-the-shore-venice-biennale-french-pavilion/>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

garden of the famous Martiniquan writer Édouard Glissant, where a larger press conference took place, with the President of the Executive Council of Martinique and the Préfet de la Martinique in attendance, suggesting the national and local importance of Creuzet's achievement.⁴ Cindy Sissoko, one of the co-curators of the pavilion, said in an interview on the day that choosing Martinique was a way to decentralise Paris and bring attention to the island, which has been marginalised in art history and contemporary art.⁵

Two months later, and on the other side of the Atlantic, the biennale is open, with the theme 'Stranieri Ovunque-Foreigners Everywhere'.⁶ Creuzet has made himself at home at the French pavilion with his multi-sensory installation with the poetic title *Attila cataracte ta source aux pieds des pitons verts finira dans la grande mer gouffre bleu nous nous noyâmes dans les larmes marées de la lune* [Fig. 2a, 2b and 2c].⁷ Combining video, sounds, textiles and sculpture, the immersive installation references the sea and sea voyages, the ultramarine overseas territory and the ultramarine sea, metamorphic avatars and human shapes floating in digital, blue spaces. As we move around the rooms, the viewer is encouraged to interact with the sculptures that hang from the ceiling to the floor. Draped in colourful fabrics, the sculptures take on different abstract shapes and materialities, using yarn, peals, wires and robes to do so. In the accompanying description of the work, it is revealed that Creuzet was inspired by the *matoutou falaise*, an endangered tarantula from Martinique that is famous for its change of colour as it grows older.⁸ To spot the spider, one

⁴ Christian Baena and Marny Garcia Mommertz, "A Journey into the Mind and Work of Julien Creuzet," *C& América Latina*, 20th April 2024, <https://amlatina.contemporaryand.com/editorial/a-journey-into-the-mind-and-work-of-julien-creuzet/>.

⁵ Institut Français, "Présentation du projet de Julien Creuzet pour la Biennale de Venise 2024," *YouTube*, accessed 20th May 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8d-ftS7SiA8>.

⁶ La Biennale di Venezia, accessed 25th May 2024, <https://www.labiennale.org/en/news/biennale-arte-2024-stranieri-ovunque-foreigners-everywhere>

⁷ La Biennale di Venezia, "France," accessed 25th May 2024, <https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2024/france>.

⁸ *Ibid.*

must have ‘a deep connection to the environment; an eye that sweeps the contours and glides over the textures.’⁹ The concentrated, ecological vision needed to see the spider is similar to what Creuzet wants to stimulate in the pavilion, awakening the audience to their senses. The pavilion is described as a space of ‘liberation’, with his forms emerging ‘from a locus of emancipation, which must be felt to truly see.’¹⁰ It might seem too naive and hopeful to imagine that emancipation and reconciliation can be found and felt in the pavilion embedded in the web of the global art industry, yet Creuzet’s work brings the *outré-mer* experience to the centre of the contemporary art scene, and the representation of France. In an interview after the opening, Creuzet explains that his pavilion is ‘a joyous celebration’, which he hopes will bring people to the biennale for the first time and encourage more people from Martinique make the journey.¹¹

Creuzet’s fragmented, collage-like way of mixing references, materials and mediums to create a patchwork of meaning-making about the past and present Antillean experience is one that this thesis emulates in its own way. Opening this thesis with a contemporary artwork might seem odd and out of place, given the research focuses on nineteenth-century art from Martinique. Like Creuzet, who shepherds the audience on a mental journey, this thesis similarly takes the reader on a trip that jumps from the centre of the contemporary art scene to a desk in an archive; from the drawing books of an amateur to the work of a world-famous artist; from white artists to artists of colour; from the land and the volcano to the ship and the sea. It navigates its way through multiple different scenes, which come together to expand our understanding of colour and ecology and how these themes are visualised, negotiated and responded to by the different artists working in

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ “Julien Creuzet and Chanel at the Venice Biennale 2024 - CHANEL Culture Fund,” *YouTube*, accessed 20th May 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGxKwJQ5cF0>.

Martinique. Creuzet's installation is widely different from the nineteenth-century works discussed in this thesis, but it responds to colonial representations of Martinique and the Caribbean as a region and encapsulates these very themes running through this thesis. His attention to materiality through the dangling threads of fabric, his focus on the Antillean environment through human and non-human interaction and his interest in colour as a political mode, as subject, and as an artistic tool, all work to negotiate and make sense of the Antillean experience at the heart of the global art stage.

Using Creuzet's work to open this thesis provides a new perspective on art-making in the nineteenth-century French Antillean island of Martinique, now part of the Département d'Outre Mer [Fig. 3a and 3b]. It shows how the artistic practices of three newly arrived French male artists – the lieutenant Jean François Lacour (1821-unknown), drawing teacher Victor Fulconis (1851-1913) and artist-traveller Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) – negotiated race and environment through their palettes. The thesis is divided into three case studies of artistic endeavours in Martinique, spanning from the mid- to late-nineteenth century and covering three different male artists with a variety of artistic skill and enduring legacy. Two of the artists, Lacour and Fulconis, are largely unknown to art historical discourse and their work is held in Archives Territoriales de Martinique. This is one of the first sustained account of their work, whereas Gauguin is a household name, a frequently analysed figure in art history whose work is held in collections world-wide.¹² By analysing lesser-known or even completely unknown amateur artists, who made art alongside

¹² It is important to mention Remi Poindexter's unpublished PhD thesis "Exotic and Familiar: Constructing Martinique, 1763–1902", PhD thesis (The Graduate Center, CUNY, 2025). One of the artists discussed in his thesis is also Fulconis. However, as the study remains unpublished and was developed concurrently with my thesis, I have not yet had the opportunity to engage with his research in a comprehensive manner. I am also looking forward to reading and engaging with Dani Ezor, "Whiteness at the Dressing Table: Race, Gender, and Materiality in Eighteenth-Century France and the French Caribbean", PhD thesis (Southern Methodist University, 2023).

other careers, in conjunction with a canonical artist like Gauguin, the thesis experiments with a relational, non-hierarchical way of thinking, taking seriously the chromatic explorations of subjecthood and ecology that each of the artists made.

This thesis makes three interconnected arguments overall. First, the thesis asserts the significance and richness of the artwork produced by these three different makers, working in nineteenth-century Martinique, and contends that they reveal much about how authority and knowledge over environment and people were manifested and visualised in the colony. It is in the works of these artists – a military man, a drawing teacher and a traveller – that we see how the environment and the body of colour were two sites that were recognised and placed as crucial for making sense of the colony and for fashioning their own whiteness in Martinique. Each artist did so in different ways – and I will pick out how in the thesis – but, as I argue, these two sites were prevalent and ingrained features of the visual language that transcended across all three, despite their background, artistic skill and the length and period of their stay in Martinique. It was against these two sites that they made sense of and affirmed themselves as white makers in the colony, through the connectedness of whiteness with knowledge and authority. Whilst the three artists assumed and asserted authority as knowledge-gathers, the thesis also demonstrates how moments of ambiguity and uncertainty are captured in their work, and more broadly, part of experiencing the colony, particularly after the 1848 abolition of slavery. Paying attention to acts of questioning and “making sense of” open up opportunities to engage with artists and sources re-working the histories of colonialism and Transatlantic Slavery from the Caribbean and Caribbean diaspora, juxtaposing contemporary art, fictional stories, and current events alongside nineteenth-century works.

Second, I assert that looking towards the work of artists who travelled to Martinique, regardless of whether their work is held in an archive or in museum collections, expands discussions of empire beyond its usual focus on artists who have gathered legitimacy and recognition in the metropole. By paying attention to artists specifically working in Martinique, I show how a localised study is one that effectively anchors global questions of ecology, race and gender. I argue that the tensions between the local and the global in this thesis are productive ones for art history as a discipline, for not only does it allow for specificity, but it also opens up conversations about multiplicity and heterogeneity in the colony and the image-making that occurred there. I further situate the Caribbean as a productive site that prompts art history as a discipline to embrace uncertainty, doubt and fragmentation, as well as the amateur or lesser-known artist to make sense of the imperial experience and how art was used in its service, on a personal and a macro level. This thesis demonstrates how everyone entangled within the colonial web was involved in the production or consumption of images, and that the colonial landscape became a dominant visual language, a way of seeing, understanding and fixing the world around them.

Thirdly, this thesis underscores the importance of these three makers to the study of colonial and racial discourse by looking at them through the prism of *colour*, which affords the thesis a sensitivity to colour's various manifestations in the imperial world in this period. I take colour to manifest in a multitude of ways that underpin empire and can be seen across all its parts. Colour is expansive and we find it in the global flows of material and biological matter as dyes and pigments that were valued commodities, as an artistic tool of image-making, and as a central consideration within the changing discourses of racial categorisation. The thread of colour is discernible in the structures of whiteness that lurk within the work of all three artists, in the relationship between race and skin colour, and the emerging forms of categorisation that attributed characteristics to the

shades and hues of human beings. We see colour as visualised across the thesis through image-making, which I argue was a crucial way that knowledge-production and categorisation facilitated by whiteness was shared, made understandable and palatable. An eye for colour, as natural substance and idea, leads this thesis to its attention to the environment and climate, gender, class, labour and the connections all of these have with nineteenth century race-making in the aftermaths of the abolition of slavery. In this thesis, colour is doing work. It is complicating and destabilising boundaries, even as it is used as or to justify those very boundaries in the first place. It works for and against, in service of, and in resistance to, empire; it changes shape and size, sometimes highly visible and sometimes almost completely invisible. I understand colour as a productive lens and framework through which to understand the imperial entanglements between humans and nature and how these are translated and conveyed on paper or canvas, anchored in my analysis of the three artists in Martinique.

The thesis is at once unusual and familiar in the way it is shaped. It is nothing new for an art historical thesis to examine artists who have not been studied before. It might even be desired. It is also a common pursuit to use the archive to find something original, maybe make a discovery that will contribute to existing scholarship. Even more common is it to (re-)consider an already canonical artist and add a new perspective to the existing scholarship, adding to the thesis' scholarly interest and currency. However, art historians rarely examine hobby or amateur artists in the same plane as the work of Gauguin, as this thesis does. It might be uncommon for a thesis on French art history to only focus on works that are made in or depict Martinique, not looking towards Paris or other European metropolises. It is also less frequent to juxtapose nineteenth-century art to contemporary artwork, collapsing the clear sense of chronology and linearity of what

Edward Kamau Brathwaite labels the ‘gentleman scholar.’¹³ Instead, the thesis takes up the ‘fragmentary’, as visualised in Creuzet’s work, as a way of organising and moving between pieces. It emphasises interconnectedness across space and time, across media and techniques, across education and social class but sees colourful threads connecting the parts. In the introduction that follows, I begin by presenting my three approaches – colour making, environmental thinking and working with silences. In the second section, I will sketch out the historical context of French colonialism in Martinique and introduce influential art histories that have shaped my thinking while writing this thesis, and finally, in the last section, I will provide a provide a summary of each chapter.

¹³ Edward Kamau Brathwaite, “Caribbean Man in Space and Time,” *Small Axe: A Journal of Criticism*, 25, vol. 3, 90–104. <https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-9583432>, 91.

Section I

Ways of making, thinking and listening

In the following, I will introduce how I practice art history in the thesis; how I approach the visual material examined, and what scholarship I rely upon to do so. While they are all interconnected, I have divided it up into three different modes of doing and thinking – listening to silences, colour making, and ecological thinking. With the title of each approach, I emphasise that it entails an active pursuit of assembling and working with the artistic material that anchors and shapes my analysis and the conclusions that I will draw. In doing so, I recognise that there is potential for future scholars to look through different lenses and contribute to my research. This section is one where I introduce the reader to the larger, global conversations that this thesis takes part in, before in the next section, which zooms into the specifics of Martinican and Caribbean Art histories.

Listening to silences

At the centre of my work is Archives Territoriales de Martinique from which I analyse two drawing albums in Chapters One and Two. The material discussed in Chapter Three is not held in an archive per se, but instead public and private collections. I nonetheless see it as a part of a collection of imperial matter, deemed valuable enough to be gathered and kept, and in this case, even sold. As such, in this thesis, the archive serves not only as a physical storage space, as in the case of Archives Territoriales de Martinique, which sits in Fort-de-France overlooking the Caribbean Sea, but also as a broader collection of material, which is not bounded by a specific location or shelf-space, but which come together only through my selection and curation. The choice of having the well-known, canonical Gauguin alongside two unknown artists is part of this collage is an example of my attention to the non-hierarchical and the importance of understanding

the archive as expansive, physical, immaterial and ‘hazy’ around the edges.¹⁴ Building on the classic work of Jacques Derrida on archives and knowledge-making, scholars of postcolonialism have similarly turned their attention to the colonial archive as source, which at once holds significant documents collected and categorised by the imperial state and its administrators, but which in this very act of making and collecting is a physical and immaterial manifestation of imperial power.¹⁵

In this part of the introduction, I want to reflect on the silences of the archive, and how I have approached a conscious decision to not *fill* these silences but to bring other voices into the conversation. I follow Michel-Rolph Trouillot who highlights that silences is an inescapable part of history writing, famously arguing that ‘Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of sources); the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of history in the final instance).’¹⁶ As part of this process, I draw on the statement of Donna Haraway, who writes of her own aim and role as a scholar, ‘I want to know how to help build ongoing stories rather than histories that end. In that sense, my kinships are about keeping the lineages going, even while defamiliarizing their members and turning lines into webs, trees into esplanades, and pedigrees into affinity groups.’¹⁷ My project shares a similar sensibility to Haraway expresses here, in its attempt to create interlinked scenes and histories, which can grow and unfold into ‘esplanades’, guiding the reader through webs of interconnection and continue along paths which this thesis has not taken.

¹⁴ Anjali Nerlekar and Francesca Orsini, “Introduction: Postcolonial Archives,” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 45, no. 2, 211-219 (2022), DOI:10.1080/00856401.2022.2040803, 212.

¹⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Archive fever: a Freudian impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996);

¹⁶ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015), 26.

¹⁷ Donna Haraway, *The Haraway Reader* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), 1.

Patricia A. Morton argues that the archive is the ‘supreme technology’ of the imperial state and ‘the products of state machines and technologies in their own right that bolstered the productions of those states themselves.’¹⁸ As such the colonial archive as an institution is one that is deeply entangled within the imperial enterprise and its pursuits, and the material gathered and kept is what has been deemed valuable to serve those needs. Yet, Ann Laura Stoler argues as part of her own work on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Dutch colonial archives, the ‘documents in these colonial archives were not dead once the moment of their making had passed. What was “left” was not “left behind” or obsolete.’¹⁹ Similarly to this but in connection to the Caribbean, Roshini Kempadoo argues that ‘the contiguous Caribbean archive is not only concerned with a “laying to rest” and the appeasement of spirits but also with convoking past materials as “living witnesses”’, emphasising the archive as relational.²⁰ Stoler points out that this does not entail looking for a ‘hidden message’ or finding ‘the real’, but rather means to think critically about and question the material at hand, not simply leaving it there in the archive.²¹ Although the subject of our research is different, Stoler similarly looks for the uncertainty and doubt in the material, like this thesis, but I also understand and demonstrate how such material seeks to create an *illusion* of certainty about, for example, race and skin colour, and in doing so, representing projection, regardless of reality, of colonial knowledge and authority. This is not to suggest that the three artists at the centre of my analysis were producing knowledge that was widely disseminated. Indeed, Lacour and Fulconis were not actively producing knowledge, instead their work exemplifies the persistence of a visual language even in the work of amateurs without an external audience.

¹⁸ Patricia A. Morton “Decolonising ACHAC Collection,” in *Visualizing Empire: Africa, Europe, and the Politics of Representation*, edited by Rebecca Peabody, Steven Nelson, and Dominic Thomas (Getty Publications, 2021), 35.

¹⁹ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 3.

²⁰ Roshini Kempadoo, *Creole in the Archive: Imagery, Presence and the Location of the Caribbean Figure* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International), 33.

²¹ Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 3.

It has then been a deliberate goal not to “get stuck” in the archives I am using but rather to position the material in dialogue. Saidiya Hartman’s method of ‘critical fabulation’ to ‘attend to the fictions in history’ immediately comes to mind here, when working with the archive and seeking to rethink how to write histories of enslavement and colonialism.²² Whereas this thesis will not ‘fabulate’ as Hartmann does in her writing, it will imagine and make connections, re-reading and connecting material (scholarship, literature, contemporary art) in order to add moments of making anew and bringing in different voices, sources and stories but to tell a different narrative that expands, disrupts and adds dimensions and contexts, an approach we have also seen, for instance in the work of Anna Arabindan-Kesson.²³

By emphasising the multidirectional, the thesis leans on Erica James’ argument that in order ‘to write Caribbean art histories in the present, one must decolonize time.’²⁴ James examines this in relation to nineteenth-century Haitian portraiture, but I will use her emphasis on anachronism instead to underline the possibilities arising from working across spatial and temporal modes to analyse and recenter art production in nineteenth-century Martinique. The work of Lacour and Fulconis particularly presented challenges with how little I am able to know about their lives, their work and their artistic practice. For all three artists, I have, and as have other scholars, been confronted with the lack of personhood of people of colour in archives and in collections, which again has led me to reach for other material like postcards, photographs, anthropological material

²² Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Small axe : a journal of criticism* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1–14.

²³ Anna Arabindan-Kesson, *Black Bodies, White Gold: Art, Cotton, and Commerce in the Atlantic World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021). The book investigates the interconnectedness between cotton (‘white gold’) and Blackness in the long-nineteenth century and similar to this thesis draws upon the work by contemporary artists such as Lubaina Himid and Yinka Shonibare.

²⁴ Erica James, “Decolonizing Time: Nineteenth-Century Haitian Portraiture and the Critique of Anachronism in Caribbean Art,” *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* 2019, no. 44 (2019): 8-23.

of the same period as well as literary works and contemporary art creating a collage-like structure throughout. One specific way that the thesis does this is through the two scenes of contemporary works, which begins and frames each chapter. Making such juxtapositions shows how the histories of colonialism's making of subjecthood and Empire's occupation and deconstruction of the environment continues today, evidencing the persistence and very real continued presence of (neo-)colonialism in Martinique, which shapes daily realities like high food prices, high unemployment rate and the political system. The thesis is then part of an increasing focus on contemporary art from the Caribbean and the Caribbean diaspora, with multiple exhibitions in America and United Kingdom having been staged in recent years.²⁵ Masha Pearce writes that in contemporary Caribbean art, 'history is constantly being leveraged and reimagined as part of a process of identifying new vantage points.'²⁶ The works selected for this thesis follow Pearce's statement, responding or drawing upon 'history' as a way to memorialise and to think of the contemporary moment.

Colour Making

In this first section, I outline how I understand colour as a 'colonial subject', as skin colour and race and as colour pigment, showing why and how Martinique was a place in which colour was made as a construct and as an actual matter.²⁷ From Lacour's interruption of the warm colours of the picturesque in Chapter One, to anthropologist Paul Broca's 'Tableau Chromatique' in Chapter Two and to Gauguin's 'imperial palette' in Chapter Three, colour runs through thesis, as an

²⁵ Exhibitions include, "Entangled Pasts, 1768-now," Royal Academy of Arts, London, June 15–September 10, 2023; "Life Between Islands: Caribbean-British Art, 1950s–Now," Tate Britain, London, December 1, 2021–April 3, 2022; "Forecast Form: Art in the Caribbean Diaspora, 1990s–Today," Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, October 5, 2023–February 25, 2024; "Caribbean: Crossroads of the World," El Museo del Barrio; Studio Museum in Harlem; Queens Museum, June 2012–January 2013; "Fragments of Epic Memory," Art Gallery of Ontario, September 1, 2021–February 21, 2022.

²⁶ Marsha Pearce, "Reimagining History as Narrative in Contemporary art," in Julie Crooks, et al. *Fragments of Epic Memory* (DAP/Distributed Art Publishers, 2022), 163.

²⁷ Michael T. Taussig, *What Color Is the Sacred?* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 159.

expression, as a racial marker and material.²⁸ It follows the sentiment of Natasha Eaton, who writes in the context of her chromatic analysis of South Asia between 1750 and 1970 in which she takes ‘colour as its subject and as a device for thinking about how we can approach anew the question of cultural exchange, violence and resistance.’²⁹ The thesis’ attention to colour is part of an expanding field of interdisciplinary scholarship in recent years.³⁰ This might be a reaction to the wakeup call from David Batchelor in his book *Chromophobia* (2000) in which he argues that colour has been an ‘object of prejudice’ in Western Europe and has therefore ‘remained unchecked and passed unnoticed, echoing the work of John Gage.’³¹ It could also be an effect of ‘the material turn’ that has taken place across the humanities in the past two decades, which recentres the significance of the physicality of the artwork: the politics of how it has been created and the materials required for its making and the networks in which they were (and still are) part of, including colonialism and racial capitalism.³² The Caribbean has often been thought of in terms of vibrant colours, from its lush nature to its flamboyant carnivals – one needs only look at the logo of the official Caribbean Tourism Organization, which writes the ‘Caribbean’ with each letter in a different colour next to a Robinson-Crusoe-like deserted island [Fig. 4]. However, this thesis does

²⁸ Jordanna Bailkin, “Indian Yellow: Making and Breaking the Imperial Palette,” *Journal of Material Culture*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2005, pp. 197–214, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359183505053075>. The period covered in this thesis also coincides with the industrialisation of colour-making. Please see, Anthony S. Travis, *The Rainbow Makers: The Origins of the Synthetic Dyestuffs Industry in Western Europe* (Lehigh University Press, Bethlehem, PA, 1993); Philip Ball, *Bright Earth: Art and the Invention of Color* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) and Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *The Color Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012).

²⁹ Natasha Eaton, *Colour, Art and Empire: Visual culture and the nomadism of representation* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 2.

³⁰ Publications include: Charlotte Ribeyrol et al. *Colour Revolution: Victorian Art, Fashion & Design* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 2023), Kirsty Sinclair Dootson, *The Rainbow’s Gravity: Colour, Materiality and British Modernity* (London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2023).

³¹ David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (London: Reaktion, 2000), 22. The colour historian John Gage insists on humanities’ ‘failure to look at colour comprehensively’ and Laura Anne Kalba starts her analysis by asserting that ‘color has received scant sustained attention’. See John Gage, *Colour and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 7; Laura Anne Kalba, *Color in the Age of Impressionism: Commerce, Technology, and Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017), 3.

³² Giorgio Riello, “The ‘Material Turn’ in World and Global History,” *Journal of World History*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2022, pp. 193–232; Michel Pastoreau, “Pour une histoire sociale des couleurs,” in *Couleur, travail et société: Du Moyen Âge à nos jours* (Paris: Somogy éditions d’art, 2004).

not seek to mirror or replicate contemporary or earlier colonial visions of the Caribbean as a place of saturated colours that overwhelmed the European body and its senses or today's tourism industry reproducing a colonial idea of the fantastically pleasure-filled sensory experience offered by the region.³³ Rather the thesis investigates how colour was a colonial material and biological matter used as a tool that helped to produce that very colourful vision of the region that persists today.

Race as a 'Floating Signifier'

In this part, I want to sketch out how I understand race in this thesis, introducing Stuart Hall's concept of race as a 'floating signifier', which anchors how I think about race as a construct, made through culture, and I outline relevant scholarship on skin colour, whiteness and the female body. It is a common trope that the French Revolution brought about the universalist ideals that all men are born free, and all men are equal before the law, as proclaimed in the 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*. France has since praised itself to be a nation that does not legally accept race as a category, with the National Assembly removing 'race' from the French constitution, reasoning that it is not a factual category.³⁴ As much scholarship has shown, race made and manifested difference in the past and continues to do so in present-day France.³⁵ In discussing race in the thesis, I am not trying to carve it in stone as a fact or as real, but rather, I seek to think through how such a construct was created and grappled with through the material discussed.

³³ Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*; Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics*.

³⁴ Marine Cellier, Amina Damerджи and Sylvain Lloret, "Introduction: Entre racialisation et tabou: l'état de l'assignation," in Cellier, Damerджи and Lloret, eds. *La Fabrique de la race dans la Caraïbe de l'époque moderne à nos jours* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2021), 15.

³⁵ Pap Ndiaye, *La condition noire: essai sur une minorité française* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2008), 1; Gracen Eiland, "Erasing Race: The Role of Republicanism and Racism in French Constitutional Jurisprudence," *Temp. Int'l & Comp. LJ* 35 (2021): 167.

In doing so, I draw on Stuart Hall's definition of race as a 'floating signifier' as the backbone for my analysis, because it does the opposite of what the artists discussed are trying to do; namely it underlines that race is a fabrication, or an 'invention', as Henry Louis Gates and Andrew S. Curran would say.³⁶ Hall argues that 'racialised behaviour and difference needs to be understood as a discursive, not necessarily as a generic or biological fact.'³⁷ Then, race is 'formulated and defined by the dominant culture, like representations, and writings, and perceptible to the changing narratives, and definitions happening in the society defining it.'³⁸ By thinking through Hall, the thesis underlines how these acts of making race were products of culture, rather than biology, despite what the visual language might attempt to assert. This conception allows me to work against the artists, whose work articulates that race exists and ought to be categorised and enacted upon, whilst also giving space and acknowledgement to the very serious realities created by the idea of race and its impact on people of colour and how they see themselves. An experience of Frantz Fanon exemplifies how race is made through relationship and language. He recounts being called 'Dirty Nigger' and hearing 'Look, a Negro!', writing of the experience that 'the glances of the Other fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye.'³⁹ Racialised tropes are likened to the permanent staining of a dye, washing bright, stark colour over him and fixing it irreversibly in place. The chemical solution of the dye works to make race visual, marked and noticeable – and very real in its consequences, pointing to one of the central arguments of my thesis, that colour and colouring-production are crucial for understanding race-making.

³⁶ Hall, "Race, the Floating Signifier"; Henry Louis Gates and Andrew S. Curran, eds., *Who's Black and Why?: A Hidden Chapter from the Eighteenth-Century Invention of Race*, trans. Karen C. C. Dalton and Susan Emanuel (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press, 2023).

³⁷ Hall, "Race, the Floating Signifier", 361.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 362.

³⁹ Frantz Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness," in *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto, 2008), 82.

Thinking of Fanon's experience of having his racialised status highlighted as something that sets him apart as primarily produced in relation to words and labels reflects Laura Tabili's argument that 'Race is a relationship, and not a thing.'⁴⁰ She writes that racial difference must be located historically and draw upon the lessons of class analysis to trace precisely 'how, when, where and by whom racial and imperial processes have been reproduced through historical practices that can be documented and analysed.'⁴¹ It is in relation to one another that varied groups of colonised peoples are compared, contrasted and set against in order to categorise and define who and what they are, thus making race, through colonial disciplines like anthropology and phrenology.⁴² This thesis follows Tabili's prompt to critically engage with race by identifying the evasive workings of race, interrogating art-making as precisely one of those historical practices of empire and race-making.

One of the ways the thesis does this is by showing how the three artists participate in the process of indigenising the Black figure in the Caribbean, drawing and painting the Black figure within the well-established trope of 'the native.'⁴³ Renisa Mawani describes how colonial capitalism brought Africans, Indigenous peoples and Europeans into 'close physical and figurative proximities, producing new terrains of [...] racial taxonomies and hierarchies.'⁴⁴ Bennett Brazelton believes that though there were key initial differences in the treatment and racialisation of Black and Native populations, the colonial machine saw both peoples in terms of their supposedly alternative relationship to the land and to place, meaning that they could not be seen as settlers.⁴⁵ As Shona

⁴⁰ Laura Tabili, "Race is a relationship, and not a thing," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1 (2003): 125-130.

⁴¹ Ibid, 129.

⁴² Ibid, 125.

⁴³ Shona N. Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

⁴⁴ Renisa Mawani, "Specters of indigeneity in British-Indian migration, 1914," *Law & Society Review* 46, no. 2 (2012): 371.

⁴⁵ Bennett Brazelton, "On the erasure of Black Indigeneity," *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 43, no. 5 (2021): 387.

Jackson's novel work shows, Black subordination and Indigenous dispossession are related, contingent processes that unfolded hand in hand, native displacement being 'the *necessary* or enabling condition of Black being in the Caribbean.'⁴⁶ Jackson contends that Afro-Caribbeans have articulated their own indigeneity in terms of the enforced agricultural manual labour that brought them into close connection to the land.⁴⁷ As such, in the Caribbean we see what Melanie Newton refers to as 'the web of intertwined African and Carib historicity.'⁴⁸

Jackson coins the term 'Creole Indigeneity' as a conceptual lens to understand Caribbean history as driven by the oppositions between settler, creole and indigenous practices of belonging, which are primarily articulated through differing relationships and alignments to modern labour and capital as well as forms of cultural expression, building upon the seminal work of Sylvia Wynter who sees the history of the creolization of the Black man in the Caribbean as the history of his indigenization.⁴⁹ As well as the imaginative Africanisation of Caribs, who were suspected of being Black or ethnically related to Africans, we see here and throughout the Caribbean how the Black body is continually constructed through the visual language of being 'native', thereby contributing to their indigenisation.⁵⁰ Mawani explores how indigenous people came to occupy a temporal 'before' in the European imagination.⁵¹ Indigenous spaces, such as the islands' mountainous interiors that were taken up by the maroons 'come to be associated with an underdeveloped, wild, and raced space that is largely outside the plantation economy and society [...] the indigenous

⁴⁶ Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity*, 28.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Melanie J. Newton, "Returns to a Native Land: Indigeneity and Decolonization in the Anglophone Caribbean," *Small Axe* 1, no. 2 (2013): 17, 108-122.

⁴⁹ Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity*, 5 Sylvia Wynter, "Jonkonnu in Jamaica: Towards an Interpretation of Folk Dance as a Cultural Process," *Jamaica Journal* 4, no. 2 (1970): 34-48.

⁵⁰ Peter Hulme, "Dominica and Tahiti: Tropical Islands Compared," in *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire*, eds. Felix Driver and Luciana Martins (Chicago University Press, 2005).

⁵¹ Mawani, "Specters of indigeneity", 371.

body, collapsed with this space, remains that which must be but cannot fully be integrated, civilized, or developed.⁵²

Taking this argument a step further, I argue that the artists I study struggle to position their Black subjects as modern citizens and wage-labourers. They depict the outside-ness (of time and space) of the Black body, and thus their indigeneity, primarily through their close connection and rootedness within the land. Hence, I draw discourse on indigeneity into conversation with scholars who have examined how the Black body was seen as plant-like and animalistic, with Monique Alleweart crucially arguing that the Black human body was ‘beside the human’, it was ‘parahuman’ through its degenerate likeness to animal bodies, plant matter and the climate.⁵³ David Arnold has similarly argued that tropical people, perceived as part of the primitive tropical environment and landscape, were inevitably also primitivized and naturalised, ‘dwarfed by the landscape around them.’⁵⁴ The modernity of the non-indigenous was proven by their mastery over nature, in contrast to the domination of nature over the native. As Arnold writes, ‘in the tropics nature’s rule still seemed absolute. If the tropics were an Eden, it was one in which indigenes remained lost children.’⁵⁵ Indeed, Savage finds that in Martinique, Afro-Caribbeans have historically been seen as inalienable feature of the ‘imbalanced environment’, ascribing demonic ‘physical pathology and moral decadence’ for ‘African bodies were unable to resist the toxic natural forces surrounding them.’⁵⁶ The indigenisation of the Black body within the land and the climate simultaneously domesticates them, and heightens the threat they pose. Fears of

⁵² Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity*, 12.

⁵³ Monique Alleweart, *Ariel's ecology: Plantations, personhood, and colonialism in the American tropics* (Lanham: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

⁵⁴ David Arnold, “Illusory Riches”: representations of the Tropical World, 1840–1950.” *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 21, no. 1 (2000): 11.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ John Savage, “Slave Poison/Slave Medicine: The Persistence of Obeah in Early Nineteenth-Century Martinique,” *Obeah and Other Powers: The Politics of Caribbean Religion and Healing* (2012): 162, 164.

contamination, ruin, death and disease through both the climate and proximity to Blackness recur throughout the thesis.⁵⁷

Bazelton and Jackson both maintain that much existing scholarship on indigeneity in the Caribbean ‘disavows an enduring Native presence’, implying that following ‘extinction’ there was nothing more to say about them. Instead, the question asked has been at what point settlers, even enslaved ones, become native.⁵⁸ As such, here the placement of the Black body as indigenous to the Caribbean denies and obscures histories before European colonisation.⁵⁹ This erasure is something that this thesis risks perpetuating, but it hopes to recognise and attend to what Mawani calls the ‘spectre of indigeneity’, as haunting and persistently resurfacing in colonised places in ways we must not ignore.⁶⁰

One of the key visually legible markers of race, which emerged during the Enlightenment, was skin colour, defined by Mechthild Fend as ‘a biopolitical concept in which differences in colour marked social differences thus naturalising inequality and hierarchies.’⁶¹ She finds that it was only in the nineteenth century that ‘race became the dominant concept for the division of humans’ in terms of being a biological concept with fixed boundaries, based on phenotypes and genetics, whilst the more visual focus skin colour had been a schema for the ‘visualisation of difference’ for far longer – thus skin and colour remain powerful modes for understanding race in our study.⁶²

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Brazelton, “On the erasure”.

⁵⁹ Danielle C. Skeeahan, *The Fabric of Empire: Material and Literary Cultures of the Global Atlantic, 1650-1850* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020).

⁶⁰ Mawani, “Specters of Indigeneity”, 371.

⁶¹ Fend, *Fleshing out Surfaces*, 160.

⁶² Roxann Wheeler, *The complexion of race: categories of difference in eighteenth-century British culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

The three protagonists of this study were interested in capturing and categorising figures with legible skin colour or other signifiers, like occupation and clothing. A scholar I will here rely upon is Danielle Skeehan, who recognises ‘textiles as books’, which can show the life and experience of subject, otherwise denied in the archive through ‘the language of cloth.’⁶³ Art history has been attentive to how race has been depicted in visual material, with one of the most of relevant publications being Mia Bagneris’ book *Coloring the Caribbean: Race and Art of Agostino Brunias* (2018) on the eighteenth-century Agostino Brunias. His work of Dominica and St Vincent has been the topic of much scholarship on Caribbean visibility.⁶⁴ Responding to previous literature only considering Brunias as an extended arm of the plantocracy, Bagneris shows that an attention to skin colour demonstrates that the artist troubled fixed categories of race and showed ‘the slippery state of race in the British colonial world’.⁶⁵ Bagneris’ work is an important contribution to how art historians can productively read unstable representations of race, as not only signs of the ambiguity but finding real meaning through close analysis. Bagneris’ work, in conversation with Fend, has been crucial in informing the thesis’ interest in how colour functioned across Empire and how both connected the seemingly disparate fields of art, science, materiality and anthropology.

In thinking about the art pieces as products of and inextricable from their artists’ whiteness in their gaze and subject matter, I draw upon critical whiteness studies. It is a field that has flourished since Richard Dyer’s 1997 publication *White: Essays on Race and Culture*, which brought attention to the need for analysing the meanings of and ‘dismantling what had heretofore been the

⁶³ Danielle C. Skeehan, *The Fabric of Empire*, 2, 87.

⁶⁴ Mia Bagneris, *Colouring the Caribbean: Race and the Art of Agostino Brunias* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018).

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 6 and 188.

invisible and unexamined category of “whiteness.”⁶⁶ When taking on the lens of race as a constantly evolving ‘floating signifier’, we see that whiteness is not something that is static, but also continually formulated anew in terms of who is included and excluded within the dominant conception of ‘being white’ and who can attain whiteness and who can receive its privileges. Gloria Wekker’s work on ‘white innocence’ in the context of the Dutch Empire labels whiteness as ‘emptiness incarnated’, a category with no defining characteristics.⁶⁷ She sees centuries’ long white presence in colonised spaces as possessing an ‘unacknowledged reservoir of knowledge’ that ‘plays a vital but unacknowledged role in meaning making processes.’⁶⁸ Sara Ahmed’s work enhances this positioning by understanding whiteness as a habit and orientation in the world: a way of being and a set of rules that are so deeply understood by the members of its community that they go unacknowledged, unremarked and naturalised.⁶⁹ Ahmed argues that whiteness ‘is lived as a background to experience’ in occupying the position of the default: there is nothing unusual to be remarked upon, whilst a person of colour will always be perceived as out of place and visually noticeable, even in a colonial setting, as we will see throughout the work of the artists in this thesis.⁷⁰

Whereas much work within critical whiteness studies has focused on the American and British context, the thesis focuses on Martinique, where long histories of slavery, indenture and racial mixing mean that the black-white binary was not so clearly boundaried. Indeed, as Ruth Wilson Gilmore has shown, race as a concept and construct is geographically contingent and is shaped not

⁶⁶ Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (London: Routledge, 1997).

⁶⁷ Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 2.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁹ Sarah Ahmed, “A Phenomenology of Whiteness,” *Feminist Theory* 8, no 2 (2007), 156 and 152.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 150.

only by ‘gender, class and scale’, but also by ‘space, place and location.’⁷¹ Whiteness and racial difference thus have different boundaries, meanings and consequences attached in different spaces. Maeve McCusker argues that the Antilles ‘remains a society obsessed with gradations of skin colour and with social hierarchies that largely reflect, or are determined by, racial identity.’⁷² Indeed, in Martinique, there was a complex system of racial signifiers, with four main designators being *béké* (the land and plantation owner class), the *petit blanc* (white working class who arrived in the colony to take benefit from the colonial profits but often failed) and *gens de couleurs* (free people of colour) as well as *creole* (people born in the colonies of both European and African ancestry).⁷³ Examining the *béké* figure in Antillean literature, McCusker has argued, being white, meaning being *béké*, is not a ‘noncolor’, but rather a highly visible category given that it only constitutes a small minority of the population.⁷⁴

Unlike McCusker’s work, this thesis does not examine whiteness in terms of the *békés* but goes further in investigating the manifestations of another kind of whiteness in Martinique, that of a travelling class who were not born on the island but assumed a position of authority through their artistic representations of the colony.⁷⁵ Whiteness was experienced by the three artists in this thesis differently in Martinique than they would have experienced it in the spaces they inhabited before – the military man of Lacour from continental France, Fulconis, a drawing teacher who had lived in Algeria and Gauguin, who was a struggling artist. Despite, their different backgrounds and social

⁷¹ Ruth Wilson Gilmore, “Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference: Notes on Racism and Geography,” *The Professional Geographer* 54.1 (2002): 1 and 22.

⁷² Maeve McCusker, *Fictions of Whiteness: Imagining the Planter Caste in French Caribbean Novel* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2021), 8.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 2; Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, *Creole: Portraits of France’s Foreign Relations During the Long Nineteenth Century* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2022), 6; Paul Butel, *Histoire des Antilles Françaises* (Paris: Perrin, 2002), 199-202.

⁷⁴ Grigsby, *Creole*, 9.

⁷⁵ David Lambert, and Alan Lester, eds. *Colonial lives across the British Empire: Imperial careering in the long nineteenth century* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

class, they had the shared privilege of accessing the island. Throughout the thesis, I keep returning to Irishman Lafcadio Hearn's (1850-1904) book *Two Years in French West Indies* (1890), a collection of so-called sketches that he wrote for the American magazine *Harper's Bazaar* during his stay in the French Antilles between 1887 and 1889.⁷⁶ Although the life and positionality of Hearn is, of course, significantly different from the three artists – he lived in New Orleans before travelling to Martinique and subsequently lived in Japan - I draw upon the writings of Hearn as another example artist-travellers in late nineteenth-century Martinique.⁷⁷

Looking at Lacour, Fulconis, Gauguin and occasionally Hearn, the thesis engages with the access and mobility through space of a class of men that David Lambert and Alan Lester call 'imperial careerers', defined by their consistent movement across different spaces of empire and professional engagement with the colonial machine, and a desire for adventure.⁷⁸ As Ahmed argues, whiteness is a bodily form of privilege: the ability to move through the world without losing one's way. To be Black in 'the white world' is to turn back towards itself, to become an "object."⁷⁹ As we see throughout the thesis, even though the artists were a minority on the island, they assumed an authoritative vision of the colony through what Mary Louise Pratt calls 'imperial eyes,' even at times of uncertainty, seen particularly in the work of Lacour, which placed the Black body as the object of that gaze, and emplaced them within the colonial landscape.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Lafcadio Hearn, *Two Years in French West Indies* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1890).

⁷⁷ See Kirsten H. Pope, "Gauguin and Martinique" (PhD thesis, The University of Texas, 1981), in which she also draws extensively on Lafcadio Hearn in her analysis of Gauguin's work in Martinique.

⁷⁸ David Lambert, and Alan Lester, eds. *Colonial lives across the British Empire: Imperial Careerers in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Richard Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire: Geographies of Adventure* (London: Routledge, 2013); Catherine Hall, "Going a-Trolloping: Imperial man travels the Empire." *Gender and Imperialism*, eds. Clare Midgley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 180-199.

⁷⁹ Ahmed, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness", 161.

⁸⁰ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008)

Nicholas Mirzoeff, who I will continue to draw upon through the thesis, formulates the concept of ‘White Sight’ in his most recent book (2023), building on his work on colonial ways of seeing, such as the watchful eye of the plantation Overseer.⁸¹ He positions ‘White Sight’ as a collective structure, a white reality, as the most dominant way of being in the world. ‘Always seeing from above’, he explains that ‘white sight surveys land and places all life under surveillance.’⁸²

Mirzoeff’s concept of White Sight attunes us to how although whiteness might not be visually articulated on paper, it is there implicitly as a mode of looking and experiencing in the work of the three artists. Mirzoeff argues, ‘This visible is not “natural,” even when expressed through bodily characteristics like skin tone and skull shape. It is a relation of force.’⁸³ As such, together with Ahmed and Wekker, we see how whiteness is a reservoir of knowledge, habits and a way of looking, which assumes invisibility but governs the reality experienced both by white and people of colour.

The work of Lacour, Fulconis and Gauguin, in their varied ways, then represent moments of white self-fashioning in which the artists establish their own whiteness against the boundary of the racialised woman and the colonial environment in a ‘contact zone.’⁸⁴ Pratt has coined the concept of ‘contact zone’ to explain ‘the space of imperial encounters’, in which peoples came into contact with one another ‘often in highly asymmetrical relations’ like the artists and their subjects in this thesis.⁸⁵ This often-quoted concept understands how relations existed and shaped the colonial experience, and I will add more to her concept in my approach on ecocriticism, where I will expand it to include the encounter with the natural world.

⁸¹ Nicholas Mirzoeff, *White Sight: Visual Politics and Practices of Whiteness* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2023); Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look a Counterhistory of Visuality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

⁸² Mirzoeff, *White Sight*, 1.

⁸³ Ibid, 4.

⁸⁴ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 7-8.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 7-8.

One of the ways in which whiteness was confirmed in the imperial encounter was through the female body of colour. Here, Anne McClintock's work on the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British Empire has been extremely influential in understanding how colonialism was tied to the female.⁸⁶ Drawing on the work of Mary Douglas, and her notion of 'matter out of place', (which Hall also finds inspiration from in his work), McClintock writes that the woman was the 'boundary and metaphoric limit' and women served as 'boundary makers'.⁸⁷ Here, the edges or limits of the known world is the colonial land, which ought to be 'discovered, entered, named inseminated and above all, owned.'⁸⁸ Moreover, Ann L. Stoler shows convincingly how the 'very categories of "coloniser" and "colonised" were increasingly secured through forms of sexual control' over the female body, and that the boundaries of race were enforced through European notions and conventions of gender respectability, morality, purity and hygiene.⁸⁹ Stoler, McClintock and subsequent work on women as 'space invaders' have shaped my thinking in how the artists repeatedly depicted the racialised woman and in doing so, explored the limits of themselves as meaning-makers and their known world through the figures of women.⁹⁰

One of the most-quoted examples of how womanhood was interrogated and (literally) dissected is the 'scientific experiment and scientific spectacle' of the South African woman Sarah Baartman (pre-1790–1815).⁹¹ She was displayed in a cage and labelled the Hottentot Venus in traveling

⁸⁶ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995): <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203699546>.

⁸⁷ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003): <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315015811>; McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 24.

⁸⁸ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 43.

⁸⁹ Ann L. Stoler "Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th-Century Colonial Cultures," *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 4 (1989), 635, <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1989.16.4.02a0003>.

⁹⁰ Nirmal Puwar, *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

⁹¹ Katherine McKittrick, "Science Quarrels Sculpture: The Politics of Reading Sarah Baartman," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, 43, no. 2 (2010), 117.

shows across England and France and the frequent subject of widely circulated illustrations, exemplifying and shaping the perception and treatment of Black men and women.⁹² After her death in 1815 in Paris, she was dissected by the French comparative anatomist George Cuvier (who we will return to in Chapter Two) in the name of a pseudo-scientific attempt to understand Black sexuality.⁹³ Baartman is an example of how the Black body was a site of intense public and scientific scrutiny in the nineteenth century, and how people racialised as white were occupied with proving their whiteness against colour and asserted their superiority in doing so. Katherine McKittrick argues that Baartman marks an origin point for the perception of Black womanhood as a public object of racist pornography, sexual desires and disgust and has become a ‘template’ for understanding how Black femininity has been shaped both in the past and today.⁹⁴

McKittrick calls us to attend necessarily to how we understand bodies and flesh through language, discourse and image, and the meanings they carry, how the stereotypical features associated with the Black body, such as ‘thick lips’, ‘kinky hair’ and large posteriors, are “‘languaged” into existence.”⁹⁵ She writes that visually, the artist ‘fuses the self and flesh with “the word”’; the biological is bound with the creative.⁹⁶ It highlights the centrality of art and visuality to how Europeans produced power and authority, defining spaces, places, people and blending them together on paper, whether on maps, botanical drawings, sketches or paintings. It helps us situate the role of the three artists in shaping and contributing to nineteenth-century perception of womanhood through their art.

⁹² Robin Mitchell, “Vénus Noire: Black Women and Colonial Fantasies in Nineteenth-century France,” *Race in the Atlantic World, 1700-1900* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2020), 31.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 35.

⁹⁴ McKittrick, “Science Quarrels Sculpture”, 118.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 121.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 121.

bell hooks has correctly noted that much emphasis has been given to how the colonial imperialist traveller perceives Blackness, like this thesis admittedly does, and too little attention has been paid to the representation of whiteness in the Black imagination.⁹⁷ I attempt to deal with this challenge through the very structure and method of my work, and taking up the hopeful call of McKittrick, by bringing works that are products of the white gaze into continual conversation with contemporary artworks by makers of colour that are political in nature and attempt to speak back to ways that Martinique, the Caribbean and the Black body have been defined by outsiders. The contemporary artists that I examine were not necessarily interested in whiteness per se, but they are included in the thesis to provide counterpoints through manifestations of the Black imagination and the Black being, not defined through the gaze of the white traveller.

Ecological thinking

My second approach is ecocriticism, which recognises the importance of considering the natural environment as one of the spaces where we see the ‘most intense form of demonstration of power’ throughout history.⁹⁸ Daniel Maximin identifies ecology as central to the history of the Caribbean, and identifies four elements shaping the history of the region – the earthquake, the cyclone, the tidal wave and the volcanic eruption, writing that the islands have been ‘bent by the cyclones, drowned by the tidal waves, fractured by earthquakes and grilled alive by volcanoes.’⁹⁹ To Maximin, such elements have challenged European understandings of climate and time, by both entailing unpredictable factors like the earthquake and the repeated, seasonal events, like the cyclone and tidal waters.¹⁰⁰ From the winds coming from Gorée to the plants that have been

⁹⁷ bell hooks, “Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination,” in *Black Look: Race and Representation* (New York; Oxford: Routledge, 2015); <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315743226>, 166.

⁹⁸ Mary Couglin, “Biotopes and Ecotones: Slippery Images on the Edge of the French Atlantic,” *Landscapes: The Journal of the International Centre for Landscape and Language*, vol. 7, no. 1, (2016), 4-5.

⁹⁹ Daniel Maximin, *Les fruits du cyclone: Une géopoétique de la Caraïbe* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2006), 79-121.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 97.

transported from Asia, Caribbean nature is one that exists outside of human objectives and follies, one that sabotages and assists in Caribbean history, like the eruption of Mount Pelée, which Maximin understands as an act of mocking revenge against the arrogance of the human striving to alter the path of its all destroying lava.¹⁰¹ Environmental disaster past and present, natural and man-made, will show itself time and again across the thesis.

To ‘think ecologically’ about art is not simply to consider pieces that depict plant life – like landscape or botanical drawings – rather it involves sustained attention to how human ideas and views about nature and non-human species have been represented in art.¹⁰² Further, it focuses on how art is intrinsically ecological, as it is made of materials, like pigments, and exists in the world.¹⁰³ Here, I build on the work done by art historians like Andrew Patrizio, Karl Kusserow and Alan Braddock who have been behind the newest introductory volumes on the subject matter, which all effectively show how productive it is to look towards ecocriticism for understanding art.¹⁰⁴

It might not seem particularly critical or innovative to think about Martinique for its environment, as it is a trope that is consistently repeated and sold to tourists. The island is known for its lush mountainous rainforest in the north and a hilly region of white sand beaches in the south, with the biggest selling point attracting cruise ships – known to be major polluters that destroy local marine life – being the dreamlike imagery of ‘laid-back beaches’, ‘colourful culture’ and ‘tropical

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 102.

¹⁰² Marco Armiero and Richard P. Tucker. *Environmental History of Modern Migrations* (London; New York, New York, 2017), 4.

¹⁰³ I am here drawing on Timothy Morton. *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010), 5.

¹⁰⁴ Karl Kusserow and Alan C. Braddock eds, *Nature’s Nation: American Art and Environment* (Princeton: Princeton Art Museum, 2018) and Kusserow and Braddock, eds. *Picture Ecology: Art and Ecocriticism in Planetary Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021).²

flowers.’¹⁰⁵ Without participating in further idealisation of the island environment, the thesis argues that ecocriticism is a productive ‘mindset’ for understanding the art works and the context in which they sit. Working with ecocriticism has proved particularly fruitful when thinking about empire, prompting Deborah R. Coen to write that the imperial exhaustion of natural resources, disrupting ecosystems and introducing invasive species, relied upon environmental knowledge generated by empire.¹⁰⁶ The attention to the environment across the humanities is undoubtedly a response to the current human-powered climate crisis, which has prompted scholars to look back and examine what Yates McKee describes as ‘the entwinement of ecological damage with already-existing patterns of social inequality in terms of geography, race, class and gender.’¹⁰⁷

Donna Haraway has coined the term Plantationocene to describe how the current climate crisis can be intrinsically linked to the plantation system.¹⁰⁸ She proposes it as an alternative periodisation of modernity, founded upon the ‘devastating transformation of diverse kinds of human-tended farms, pastures, and forests into extractive and enclosed plantations, relying on slave labour and other forms of exploited, alienated, and usually spatially transported labour.’¹⁰⁹ Haraway’s concept of the Plantationocene captures the lasting impact of the plantation world and its use of humans, land and natural resources, as one that continues to move along racially defined lines of inequality.

¹⁰⁵ “Cruises to Fort de France Martinique”, *Celebrity Cruises*, accessed 3rd September 2024, <https://www.celebritycruises.com/gb/ports/martinique>; “Say “Oui” to Adventure”, *Royal Caribbean Cruises*, accessed 3rd September 2024, <https://www.royalcaribbean.com/cruise-to/fort-de-france-martinique>; Fort de France Cruise” MSC Cruises, accessed 3rd September 2024; <https://www.msccruises.com/int/our-cruises/destinations/caribbean-and-antilles/martinique/fort-de-france>.

¹⁰⁶ Deborah R. Coen, *Climate in Motion: Science, Empire, and the Problem of Scale* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2019), 4.

¹⁰⁷ Yates McKee, “Art History, Ecocriticism, and the Ends of Man,” *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2011, pp. 125–29, 123.

¹⁰⁸ Donna Haraway, “Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin,” *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2015, pp. 159–65. <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3615934>. Donna Haraway et al. “Anthropologists Are Talking - About the Anthropocene,” *Ethnos*, vol. 81, no. 3, 2016, pp. 535–64, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2015.1105838>.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 162.

Leading on from the interventions of Haraway emerges the work of Malcolm Ferdinand, who interrogates history of the climate emergency from the Caribbean as the ‘eye of the storm’ and a place of ‘ecological thinking’ which ‘proposes an epistemic shift in the conceptualizations of the world and the earth at the heart of ecology, meaning that there is a change of scene from which discourses and knowledge are produced.’¹¹⁰ He formulates the term of Negrocene as a way to describe colonial inhabitation, where the ‘Negroes are the many (human and non-human) off-worlders whose vital energy is forcibly dedicated to fuel the lifestyles and ways in inhabiting the earth of a minority while being denied an existence of their own in the world.’¹¹¹ This is part of his work in which he writes about modernity’s ‘double fracture’, in which he articulates how the terror of colonialism has been ‘fractured’ away from the destruction of the environment, underlining how colonialism (physical inhabitation, modes of thought, ways of being) is intrinsic to the current climate crisis and social injustice still present in the Caribbean today.¹¹² Ferdinand thinks of ‘decolonial ecology’ as the search for where human and non-human can be free of the hold of the persisting injustice of colonialism. Ferdinand’s work has been essential for my thinking on Martinique through an environmental lens. I draw particularly on his work in my first chapter on Lacour, but his work has more broadly served as an example of how to approach linking Martinique and the environment both in the past and in the present.

Earlier in the introduction, I mentioned Mary Louise Pratt’s concept of ‘contact zones’ as a useful but flawed way to think through how people encountered each other through imperial networks.¹¹³ Here, I want to add the perspective of Londa Schiebinger, who in her work on the long eighteenth-

¹¹⁰ Malcolm Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology: Thinking from the Caribbean World*, translated by Anthony Paul Smith (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019), 2, 3, 12.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 21.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 3.

¹¹³ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 7-8.

century's botanists and their expeditions in the Atlantic World uses biocontact zones as a way to conceptualise how naturalists come into contact with each other.¹¹⁴ While I am not specifically interested in naturalists, I am interested in how the artist-travellers came into contact with and depicted humans and non-humans in their work. The added attention to 'bio' in the contact zone highlights that the artists were not only in a contact zone with humans but also non-humans, like the plants, the flora and the animals of the island. In the thesis, I pay particular attention to rivers and waters, foodways and fruit, landscapes and land, and even umbrellas and (un)dress as sites in which such biocontact zones were visualised and that reveal how European colonial powers sought to control, exploit and transform and which has been used to establish and confirm the primitive nature of the colonial subject and colonial land as available for the taking.

Such biocontact was shaped by what Alfred W. Crosby has termed the 'Columbian Exchange', a key concept throughout this thesis.¹¹⁵ Thinking beyond the nation state and using ecocriticism, Crosby argues that Christopher Columbus' 1492 expedition to the Americas began a human-directed movement of plants, animals, diseases, ideas and people along trade networks in Europe, China, Africa and the Americas, which was first felt globally in 1610.¹¹⁶ The geographers Mark Maslin and Simon Lewis argue that this movement and mixing 'contributed to a swift, ongoing radical reorganization of life on Earth without geological precedent.'¹¹⁷ Expanding Crosby's conception of the Columbian Exchange, Judith Carney positions Africa as crucial in transnational exchange.¹¹⁸ She shows that plants and botanical knowledge arrived together with the enslaved in

¹¹⁴ Londa Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 2007), 82-83.

¹¹⁵ Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: biological and cultural consequences of 1492* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2003).

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Mark Maslin and Simon Lewis, "Defining the Anthropocene," *Nature* 519, no. 542 (2015):171-80: <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature14258>.

¹¹⁸ Judith Ann Carney, "Seeds of Memory: Botanical Legacies of the African Diaspora," in *African Ethnobotany in the Americas*, pp. 13-33 (New York: Springer, 2013).

the plantations and contributed significantly to their (and Europeans’) survival in tropical New World environments.¹¹⁹ With them, the enslaved brought with them more than two dozen plants during the Transatlantic Slave Trade to the plantations and carried with them their knowledge on ‘how to eat’ and ‘use things.’¹²⁰ African food staples, like okra, plantains, black-eyed peas and sesame, also became part of the slaveholders’ diet, through the dishes of their enslaved cooks. Daniel Maximin concurs that West Indian folklore describes how enslaved peoples, before enduring the Middle Passage, hid seeds known to be good for their health in their hair to sow when they arrived in the unknown land, suggesting the other modes of movement of seeds outside the European depots.¹²¹ Mary Kuhn encapsulates the interwoven histories of the ecological with labour, race and colour matters in arguing that the material foodstuffs and biological matter of the plantation, which may not leave archival records, provide traces of the ways in which enslaved Black bodies used food and plants as resistance, meanwhile being forced through agricultural labour and the continual planting, tending and harvesting of cash crop commodities into ‘intimate and monotonous relationships’ with the natural environment and its plant matter.¹²²

One of the specific natural elements, which I will keep returning to, is water, drawing on scholarship of ‘wet ontologies’ and ‘blue humanities’ within ecocriticism.¹²³ As Corey Ross, who I will draw on more in the second chapter, writes: ‘Just like the vegetal and mineral resources of the colonies, their waters were valuable assets that people sought to understand, control and

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 15.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 16.

¹²¹ Maximin, *Les fruits du cyclone*, 94.

¹²² Kuhn, *The Garden Politic*, 17.

¹²³ Philip Steinberg, & Kimberley Peters, “Wet Ontologies, Fluid Spaces: Giving Depth to Volume through Oceanic Thinking,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 33(2), 247-264 (2015): <https://doi.org/10.1068/d14148p>; Serpil Oppermann, *Blue Humanities: Storied Waterscapes in the Anthropocene* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023); Steve Mentz, *An Introduction to Blue Humanities* (New York; London: Routledge, 2024)

exploit.¹²⁴ During the period of this thesis, the sea was a space of connection, bridging the colony to mainland France and vice versa, transporting goods (tobacco, sugar, indigo, correspondence) and people back and forth, with the ports being important meeting points of exchange.¹²⁵ It was also a space of disconnection and disaster on which the Middle Passage took place, which carried slave ships from West and Central Africa, which brutally transported enslaved people from their homeland to the Antilles, where the enslaved were forced to work on the many plantations.

Colour sample: Indigo

I bring together the above approaches in the next section, where I will further build on why it makes sense to understand Martinique as a place in which colour – as a racial marker, as a material and as an expression – was made and formulated, now by paying attention to production of the one-time plantation cash crop, indigo. Race and pigment came together in the plantation regime, with one the most profitable crops being the natural blue dye of indigo, cultivated and harvested by the hands of enslaved African labourers. Andrea Feeser has clearly summarised these imperial connections of colour eloquently as ‘the interrelationships of imperialism were shaped by colour through two intertwined dimensions: people of different colours came into contact with one another, and dyes and paints as well as goods coloured by them became important trade stuffs among these diverse populations.’¹²⁶ Michael Taussig spells out indigo’s position within a network of race making, overseeing and colonial power with the example Napoleon’s Grand Armée, which imported 150 tons of indigo to dye 600,000 uniforms a year by the eighteenth century.¹²⁷ These

¹²⁴ Corey Ross, *Liquid Empire: Water and Power in the Colonial World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2024), 7.

¹²⁵ Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun, *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean* (London: Routledge, 2012); Antonio, and Mark W. Hauser, eds. *Islands at the Crossroads: Migration, Seafaring, and Interaction in the Caribbean* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011).

¹²⁶ Andrea Feeser, Maureen Daly Goggin, and Beth Fowkes Tobin, *The Materiality of Color: The Production, Circulation, and Application of Dyes and Pigments, 1400-1800* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 9.

¹²⁷ Michael T. Taussig, “Redeeming Indigo,” *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2008, pp. 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276408090655>, 3.

French soldiers, dressed in uniforms made of the indigo produced by the enslaved, were deployed to quash slave revolts erupting on these very same indigo plantations at Saint Dominique, where the enslaved fought for the world's first successful slave revolt and established the independent nation of Haiti.¹²⁸ Taussig's example shows the complex routes that dyestuff such as indigo were taking across the French empire, and utilised for opposing positions, being an agent for both military officials and revolutionaries.

The blue colour of indigo manufactured on plantations in the Caribbean was predominantly used to dye textiles for the French army. It brings attention to colour as a material, which was produced on colonial plantations, where, as Jorge L. Giovannetti has argued, race was made and enacted.¹²⁹ Furthermore, being attentive to the colour blue is part of the field of blue humanities (which I will return to in the next section) and follows Susanne Ferwerda's argument that a focus of indigo is an example of 'thinking with blue', which 'attends to the powers at work that have always already entangled blue as pigment, as textile, as rock, and as symbolic of water, sea, and ocean.'¹³⁰ It shows how 'blue has long been an actant in the transoceanic movement of power: of riches, trade violence, and the consequences of imperial extractive policies.'¹³¹ Blue, in the varying shapes it comes, is then a colour that is entangled into the fabric of colonialism. Indigo here, as a plant, and as one that has to be processed with water.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 3.

¹²⁹ Jorge L. Giovannetti, "Grounds of Race: Slavery, Racism and the Plantation in the Caribbean," *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2006, pp. 5–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17486830600594276>.

¹³⁰ Susanne Ferwerda, "Blue Humanities and the Color of Colonialism," *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-10943081>, 15.

¹³¹ Ibid, 15.

Martinique was ‘the leading center for indigo plantations’ in the seventeenth century.¹³² The colony was an appropriate place to grow indigo, as the warm climate was ideal for its production, as with other products like sugar, coffee, and cotton. With the efficient production and the increasing demand for the blue dye in Europe, indigo became among the key commodities arriving in the ports of Bordeaux and Marseilles, destined both for the expanding textile industries of France and for re-export.¹³³ The *indigoteries* where the material was produced for the European markets were a place of terror. In the context of the 1993 film *Daughters of Dust*, Tiffany Lethobo King writes that the indigo plantation was a ‘fly- and insect-infested contact zone, rife with the potential for the transmission of disease’, ‘deemed uninhabitable, even for animals.’¹³⁴ Here, she writes about how indigo stains and runs through the pores of the Black body, stating that ‘Black bodies may merge/mate with plants and create the commodity dye.’¹³⁵

One of best-known writers on the production of indigo was the missionary Jean-Baptiste Labat, who arrived in Martinique in 1693 and spent twelve years in the Antilles.¹³⁶ After he had returned to metropolitan France, he wrote the popular *Nouveau Voyages aux isles de l’Amérique: Antilles, 1693-1705*.¹³⁷ In the volume, he writes an educational guide for potential planters of the *indigoteries*, based on what he had seen in the region of Macouba in Martinique.¹³⁸ He details how

¹³² Prakash Kumar, *Indigo Plantations and Science in Colonial India* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 17.

¹³³ R.C Nash, “South Carolina Indigo, European Textiles, and the British Atlantic Economy in the Eighteenth Century,” *The Economic History Review* 63, no. 2 (2010): 362–92, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0289.2009.00487.x>, 365.

¹³⁴ Tiffany Lethobo King, *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 113.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 132.

¹³⁶ Kumar, *Indigo Plantations*, 17; April Shelford, *Caribbean Enlightenment: Intellectual Life in the British and French Colonial Worlds, 1750-1792* (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 17.

¹³⁷ Jean-Baptiste Labat, *Nouveau voyage aux isles de l’Amérique, 1693-1705* (A la Haye: Chex P. Husson, T. Johnson, P. Gosse, J. van Duren, R. Alberts, and C. Levier, 1724), pp. 90-99.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 90-99.

to grow and harvest the plant and turn it into the profitable dyestuff known ‘to the whole world.’¹³⁹ Accompanying the text is an illustration that shows the indigo plantation [Fig. 5], positioned in the landscape and with access to water, with its three vats where the blue dye was fermented, boiled and strained, and afterwards carried away in bags to be dried and protected from the climate.¹⁴⁰ The master’s house is removed enough from the production to be out of the risk from the deathly fumes – thus affording the enslaved some small measure of independence and relief from relentless supervision - but still close enough to overlook the scene.¹⁴¹ Its position is mirrored in the plantation owner, who stands on a hill and overlooks the production. Mirzoeff reads the plantation owner, as an example of the figure he names an ‘overseer’, ‘a surrogate of the sovereign’, who surveilled and managed the enslaved, their labour and bodies and land on which they exist. The Overseer’s way of looking – his ‘White Sight’ – was an essential tool in regulating and managing the plantation and the enslaved.¹⁴² The illustration is a guide to the Overseer of how to ‘keep an eye on’ the plantation, which is just another element of the illustration that guides the reader on how to the make indigo. We see across the image how numbers are written that correspond to the numbers written below the illustration, each with a description, so the reader can follow the process of making indigo, controlling the enslaved workers and effectively using the natural world, from extracting the indigo plant to building on the land.

The Haitian Revolution resulted in the demise of indigo production in the French Antilles, but a revival was attempted through the efforts of the Director of Jardin des Plantes in Saint Pierre, Martinique. Armand-Justin Thierry, a figure we will return to in the second chapter as a close

¹³⁹ Ibid, 91.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 90.

¹⁴¹ King, *The Black Shoals*, 113.

¹⁴² Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look*, 48-76.

friend of Fulconis,¹⁴³ wrote a detailed account of indigo production in his *Notes sur la Culture et La Fabrication de l'Indigo à La Martinique* (1893) in which he sets out to help potential planters who wanted to re-introduce the manufacture of indigo at Martinique, but without any luck.¹⁴⁴ Although the production of indigo was non-existent in the mid-nineteenth-century French colonies, the island's harbours were still being used as a stop for the ships carrying indigo on the way to the European market. Tristan Yvon finds 1435 kg of indigo were imported into Martinique from abroad in 1858, including 903 kg by foreign ships and 532 kg by French ships.¹⁴⁵ In the same year, 184 kg of indigo coming from the warehouses of France and the French colonies were unloaded in Martinique.¹⁴⁶ Paying attention to Martinique's history at the centre of indigo production in the Caribbean might seem like a sidetrack, but actually this section anchors our discussion of colour throughout, in the varied ways it comes – from Lacour's depiction of emancipation and his landscapes, to Fulconis' representations of people and nature and lastly on to Gauguin's work of mangoes and people. Furthermore, it is an example of how concerns of racial and ecological matters come together through colour.

¹⁴³ Tristan Yvon, *La production d'indigo en Guadeloupe et Martinique (XVIIe-XIXe siècles). Histoire et archéologie* (Paris: Karthala, 2015),

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 125

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 131.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 131.

Section II

Martinique at the Centre

Historical Context and Art Histories of the Caribbean

In this section, I want to very briefly introduce the reader to the island of Martinique, its history and its complicated relationship to metropolitan France in order to make sure that the following three chapters are well anchored in a basic historical context of French colonialism in Martinique and of the island as a territory of France, both of which are key to understanding how I interpret the art works examined. But first, I want to explain how and why Martinique is at centre of this thesis and add a few thoughts on the thesis' position within a local setting but part of global framework, looking towards the scholarship of Global History.

The thesis exists *in relation*. On the one hand, it focuses on Martinique and makes no attempt to look beyond or make extensive connections to the French or European continent or to other Caribbean islands, like Guadeloupe or Jamaica. This thesis focuses on the single island of Martinique not only because it has been - and continues to be -an important resource for France, but also because it functioned as a site of “colour-making,” where particularly revealing dynamics of race, environment, and colour in artistic production were actively negotiated and expressed. It was a deliberate decision to primarily focus on artworks made after the artists' arrival in Martinique and to keep the thesis firmly situated in Martinique, as a specific place of making and being. On the other hand, the thesis repeatedly looks outwards towards contemporary art, literary work and existing literature done on other Caribbean islands. All three artists examined were also part of this imperial infrastructure of people who moved (both forced and willingly) across areas of the empires through established networks, leaning on Andrew Thompson's assertion that the

'raison d'être of empire lay in the constant shifting of people between different parts of the world in ways that were likely to destabilise old identities and forge new ones.'¹⁴⁷ As a researcher, I have similarly relied on travel – in my case not a ship, but a domestic flight connection between Paris and Martinique, which enabled me to easily travel to see the archives needed for this thesis. Although it could be seen as a relation of tension, torn between the local and global, this thesis leans on the scholarship of Global History, which embraces how localities inform us about the global. As such, the thesis focuses on Martinique, looking for specificity, for instance with artists, textiles and plants of the island in the nineteenth century but sees it as part of a globally connected space, part of what Tony Ballantyne calls 'the webs of empire', in which larger processes of belonging, race, gender and labour are localised.¹⁴⁸ Such 'webs' are used to perceive the imperial enterprise as a large interconnected system made of particular encounters between human and non-human.¹⁴⁹ Sebastian Conrad says that it is exactly at the juncture 'where global processes intersect with their local manifestations' that interesting histories of empire can be told', histories which we will see throughout the thesis.¹⁵⁰ Like any scholarly work, this thesis operates within a defined scope, which necessarily entails certain limitations. The most immediate of these is its focus on Martinique—a single island within the Caribbean region. More specifically, Martinique belongs to the French Caribbean, alongside Guadeloupe and the French overseas collectivities of Saint Martin and Saint Barthélemy, and it shares a colonial history with Haiti too (formerly Saint-Domingue). While this thesis does not engage directly with these other territories, its focused examination of Martinique lays the groundwork for future research that might expand into the wider Caribbean context with greater depth and nuance.

¹⁴⁷ Andrew Thompson, "Introduction," in *Writing Imperial Histories*, eds. Andrew Thompson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016); <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526112552>, 10.

¹⁴⁸ Tony Ballantyne. *Webs of Empire Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014).

¹⁴⁹ Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, "Introduction: Bodies, Empires, and World Histories," in *Bodies in Contact* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005) 11.

¹⁵⁰ Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 12.

Martinique 'in the spiral chaos of the Milky Way'

Martinique is one specific island, but part of a global and imaginary Caribbean. On the map, Martinique is an island of the Lesser Antilles in the Eastern Caribbean Sea, located between its neighbours of Dominica and Guadeloupe in the north and Saint Lucia in the south [Fig. 4a]. It is part of the Caribbean, a region that is notoriously hard to define [Fig. 4a]. It is a space which has repeatedly been asked to define itself and justify what countries are included and excluded: who and where its diaspora is. It is at once a geographical area with a past and present that are real and exists and simultaneously an imaginary space, here leaning on Edward Said's notion of the 'imaginary geography' which has been forged by European ideas of the Caribbean as an empty space available to be exploited and turned into a paradise.¹⁵¹ As such, the artists examined arrived in Martinique, walked the streets and were there as people, but they also produced works, which despite their difference in circulation, were influenced by and influenced imaginary tropes of how the island and its inhabitants impacted the reality on the island. For this study, the real and the imaginary exists alongside each other, resting upon the work of Antonio Benitez-Rojo who, like other scholars before and after him, emphasised the 'chaos' and 'flux' of the Caribbean. He writes of the difficulty of how to visually explain the Caribbean to someone unfamiliar, commenting that he would 'refer him to the spiral chaos of the Milky Way, the unpredictable flux of transformative plasma that spins calmly in our globe's firmament, that sketches in an "other" shape that keeps changing, with some objects born to light while others disappear into the womb of darkness; change, transit, return, fluxes of sidereal matter.'¹⁵²

French colonialism in Martinique

¹⁵¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). Mimi Sheller makes a similar point in her book, *Consuming the Caribbean: from Arawaks to zombies* (London: Routledge, 2003), 4.

¹⁵² Antonio Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: the Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 4.

While the thesis plays with contemporary sources, it is also grounded in a significant and transformative period in Martinican history during which the three artists in question were on the island. Armand Nicolas states that the earliest Arawak settlement in Martinique, migrating from what is now Venezuela, dates back to around 180 AD. The eruption of Mount Pelée around 300 AD destroyed much of the population, but the community rebuilt—only to be eventually wiped out by what Nicolas describes as the "brutal intrusion" of the Caribs, who arrived in the Lesser Antilles from Guiana around the 9th century.¹⁵³ Christopher Columbus arrived in Martinique in 1502 (following his initial arrival in the Americas at Hispaniola in 1492) making the starting point of a centuries-long (and perhaps still continuing) European – English, Dutch, Danish, Spanish and French – colonisation of the island. This would kill the Indigenous population of Arawaks and radically change the natural environment and the population's makeup with the onset of the Transatlantic Slavery Trade that forcibly moved 12 million people from their homes in Africa, leading to imprisonment and often death on the tortuous cross-oceanic journeys aboard slave ships. They arrived on land greeted by the auction block and then the plantations that produced the addictive commodities desired by the European market.¹⁵⁴ After Columbus, Schloss outlines that the French firm, Company of the American Islands, arrived on the northwestern coast of Martinique in 1635.¹⁵⁵ In 1664, Louis XIV established the West India Company and the island became part of the French Crown's possessions in the Caribbean, including Saint-Dominique (now Haiti), Guadeloupe and North America.¹⁵⁶ In 1665, in order to regulate the enslaved labourers, the short legislative text *Code Noir* was put to practice in the French colonies, controlling the lives of the enslaved, explaining how they could be bought and sold at the whip of their master, their

¹⁵³ Armand Nicolas, *Histoire de la Martinique. Tome 1: Des Arawaks à 1848* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996), 10.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 1. The data on the number of enslaved who crossed the Middle Passage is taken from the platform *Slave Voyages*, accessed 31st May 2024, <https://www.slavevoyages.org>.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 1.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 1.

working hours on the plantations, their food and clothes, their conversion to baptism and with their right to gather being prohibited.¹⁵⁷ According to Fend, the *Code Noir* collapsed the colour term *négre* with slave, entrenching a black-white hierarchy that made Blackness as a colour and skin colour inherently synonymous with the condition of slavery, unfreedom and inferiority.¹⁵⁸ The *Code Noir* was, as Madeleine Dobie writes, a ‘regime of legal exception applied exclusively to the colonies’, which sought to ensure the master’s control and discipline of the enslaved.¹⁵⁹ The law positioned the enslaved as non-human chattel, under the sole ownership of their master, without any right for self-determination or self-creation. The enslaved, seen as commodities, were used as resources to make profit for France, which allowed her to roll with the waves of modernism. Through colonialism, the island was transformed into a space of industry, labour and violence, in order to serve as a major breadwinner for metropolitan desires and dreams.¹⁶⁰ Here, Blackness was a key identifier for the enslaved and we will see throughout the thesis how colour was grappled with.

After two centuries of systematic enslavement, abolition was at last carried out in Martinique in 1848, with the birth of the Second Republic, which promised the revolutionary ideals of ‘Liberty, Equality and Freedom’ for the emancipated.¹⁶¹ The emancipation of enslaved people was not the end of racial inequality, as Silyane Larcher and Myriam Cottias have also shown.¹⁶² I particularly

¹⁵⁷ Le Code Noir ou recueil des reglements rendus jusqu'a present (Paris: Prault, 1767) [1980 reprd. by the Societé, d'Histoire de la Guadeloupe], trans. John Garrigus, Washington State University, <https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/1205/2016/02/code-noir.pdf>.

¹⁵⁸ Mechthild Fend, *Fleshing Out Surfaces: Skin in French Art and Medicine, 1650-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 158.

¹⁵⁹ Madeleine Dobie, *Trading Places: Colonization and Slavery in Eighteenth-Century French Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), 5.

¹⁶⁰ Dale Tomich, “Rethinking the Plantation: Concepts and Histories,” *Review* (Fernand Braudel Center 2011), 32.

¹⁶¹ See Myriam Cottias, “La seconde abolition de l’esclavage dans les colonies francaises (1848),” in Nicolas Bancel, et al. eds., *Histoire globale de la France coloniale* (Paris: Philippe Rey, 2022), 97-102.

¹⁶² Silyane Larcher. *L’autre citoyen: l’idéal républicain et les Antilles après l’esclavage* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2014); Larcher, “L’égalité divisée. La race au cœur de la ségrégation juridique entre citoyens de la métropole et citoyens des

take on the framework of Thomas Holt who employs the influential phrase ‘The Problem of Freedom’ in relation to emancipation in the British Caribbean, as it eloquently captures the idea that freedom is contentious.¹⁶³ Abolition did not guarantee universal freedom, but rather the freedom of emancipation was a ‘historically particular and socially constructed phenomenon’, which rested on the formerly enslaved’s agreement to continue to work on the plantations and participate in the metropolitan economy.¹⁶⁴ Mickâella Périna reiterates this in the context of the French Antilles, arguing that while the abolition of slavery proclaimed the humanity and freedom of Black people, planters shifted from masters to employers upon the plantation, transforming very little about the structure of Martinican society.¹⁶⁵ Laurence Brown, building on the work of Dale Tomrich, has similarly argued that most of the formerly enslaved continued to work on the plantations in Martinique, yet he shows that they did so with a new independence and mobility, to such a degree that it threatened the effective production on the plantations and left the plantation with a labour shortage, which was aimed to be filled with indentured labour, first experimented upon with transporting workers from Madeira, other Caribbean islands, and the African continent, and eventually primarily from Asia after 1852.¹⁶⁶ The construction of a new indentured labour force was, according to Brown, ‘shaped more by the desire for coercion and control of labour, rather than economic necessity.’¹⁶⁷ Indentured labour served as a method for the planters to continue to control their workers and production. Moreover, scholars have found that both in the

« vieilles colonies » après 1848,” *Mouvement social*, vol. 252, no. 3, 2015, pp. 137–58, <https://doi.org/10.3917/lms.252.0137>.

¹⁶³ Thomas Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, labor, and politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, xxii.

¹⁶⁵ Mickâella Périna, *Citoyenneté et sujétion aux Antilles francophones: Post-esclavage et aspiration démocratique* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1997), 19.

¹⁶⁶ Laurence Brown, “The three faces of post-emancipation migration in Martinique, 1848-1865,” *The Journal of Caribbean History*, 36(2) (2002), 310-IX. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/three-faces-post-emancipation-migration/docview/211144756/se-2, 311>.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 328.

British and French Caribbean, the years surrounding emancipation also saw a major rise in the numbers of imprisoned and incarcerated members of the population, many enslaved revolutionaries and suspected rebels even being evicted from Martinique to other parts of the world. The end of slavery saw an adaptation towards new and creative ways of accessing unfree manual labour, restricting the mobility and shaping the labour and economic outcomes of the formerly enslaved.¹⁶⁸ Abolition, which might have looked like the prime manifestation of French universalism, did not stop questions of the subjecthood and rights of the formerly enslaved and indentured workers. The questions of whether abolition really made a difference, of the inclusion of the formerly enslaved into the nation of France, is central to this thesis, because the artists examined in this thesis are asking similar questions in their work, trying to make sense of and understand the racial makeup of Martinique through legible markers like skin colour, labour, dress and environment and through methods of categorisation, comparison and mapping. In the following section of this introduction, I will offer an overview of art historical scholarship on the Caribbean, which has influenced my thinking from the initial stages and to this final product. As Jacques Dumont importantly points out, it is crucial to recognise that colonisation took place over three hundred years which left its mark, with the long dependence on slavery and racial hierarchy leaving its mark.¹⁶⁹

Caribbean Art Histories

This thesis sits between focuses on race, ecology and materiality in the visual arts created in the Franco- and Anglophone Caribbean in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This section will

¹⁶⁸ Diana Paton, *No Bond but the Law: Punishment, Race, and Gender in Jamaican state formation, 1780–1870* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); John Savage, “Unwanted Slaves: The Punishment of Transportation and the Making of Legal Subjects in Early Nineteenth-Century Martinique,” *Citizenship Studies* 10, no. 1, 35-53; Melaine Newton, “Freedom’s Prisons: Incarceration, Emancipation, and Modernity in No Bond but the Law,” *Small Axe* 15 no. 1 (2011) 164-175, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/426768>.

¹⁶⁹ Jacques Dumont, *L’arrière-patrie. Histoire des Antilles françaises au XXe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2010), 12.

lay the groundwork for the upcoming chapters, providing further insights into where this thesis has grown from and what scholarship it is in dialogue with. But before delving into the extant scholarship, I want to pause and introduce a specific example of art from Martinique, which encapsulates how questions of race, skin colour, materiality and the histories of enslavement are still current and contested in the urban space of Fort-de-France and come together in the writing of one art history.

The example begins at The Musée de la Pagerie in Trois-Ilets, which is located in the grounds of the childhood home of the French Empress Joséphine de Beauharnais Tascher de la Pagerie, the first wife of Napoleon Bonaparte. The museum is dedicated to the life of the Empress and to the enslaved who lived on the family's plantation.¹⁷⁰ The family owned 200-300 enslaved who produced cacao, indigo, cotton and cane on the 500-hectare plantation, making the Empress intimately entangled in the French execution of colonialism on the island, as a figure who benefited from slavery and had, according to folklore, personally convinced Napoleon to re-establish slavery in Guadeloupe and Saint Dominique in 1802, after its initial abolition in 1794.¹⁷¹ The controversial legacy of the Empress has particularly played out at the sculpture of the Empress, which once stood by the public park of La Savane in the centre of Fort-de-France. The sculpture was erected in 1859 and created by the Frenchman Gabriel Vital Dubray after he was commissioned by the island's group of *békés*, who sought to commemorate their link to the Napoleon family after the declaration of the Second Republic, led by Joséphine de Beauharnais'

¹⁷⁰ "Musée de la Pagerie," *Fondation Pour la Mémoire de l'esclavage*, accessed 1st June 2024, <https://memoire-esclavage.org/domaine-et-musee-de-la-pagerie>.

¹⁷¹ Ulrike Schmieder, "Controversial Monuments for Enslavers, Enslaved Rebels and Abolitionists in Martinique and Cuba" *Comparativ: C: Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung*, 31 (2021): 382, <https://doi.org/10.26014/j.comp.2021.03-04.05>,

grandson.¹⁷² In the process of making the sculpture, Kylie Sago found that there were debates about the materiality of the sculpture, citing a quote from a letter in which the Governor of Martinique wrote to the *Ministre de la Marine et des Colonies* in 1854 to explain his preference: ‘White marble is the only material that can be used for the project, its splendour harmonises with the radiance of our climate. The sombre colour of bronze will not fulfil the same goal and what’s more, will give rise to suggestions amongst the population that His Excellency can imagine without my having to suggest them here.’¹⁷³ Undoubtedly, the commission is here concerned that the materiality of the bronze will suggest that the Empress is a person of colour or racially undefined. To overcome this issue, they instead picked white marble, despite its fragility in the humid climate, to emphasise the whiteness of the Empress, leaving no doubt that she belonged to the white colonial elite. The sculpture sought to represent the strength of the island *békés* and the metropolitan government, as well as memorialise the Empress as a key figure in the history of Martinique, one that connected the planters to the highest seat of power. It is exactly these connections which positioned the sculpture as a debated site in Martinique. In 1991, the Empress was beheaded (and the head never found again) and has since been the target of multiple interventions, most recently in 2020 when Black Lives Matter protesters tore down the sculpture. Following this, it was completely removed from view.¹⁷⁴ The sculpture is an example of how questions of colour, materiality, race and national belonging come together both historically and in the present, in debates about the legacy of the Empress and French colonisation on the island. It shows how colour, as a racial marker and as a matter, was and continues to be at centre of

¹⁷² Kylie Sago, “Beyond the Headless Empress: Gabriel Vital Dubray’s Statues of Josephine, Edouard Glissant’s *Tout-monde*, and contested monuments of French empire,” *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 41, no. 5 (2019); Laurence Brown, “Creole Bonapartism and Post-Emancipation Society: Martinique’s Monument to the Empress Joséphine,” *Outre Mers* 93, no. 350 (2006).

¹⁷³ Gueydon to Ducos, 27 June 1854, Fonds ministériels, Série géographique Martinique, 30/262, ANOM. Cited in Kylie Sago, “Beyond the headless Empress,” 503.

¹⁷⁴ “Statue de Joséphine de Beauharnais (Détruite),” *Fondation Pour la Mémoire de l’Esclavage*, accessed 3rd September, 2024, <https://memoire-esclavage.org/statue-de-josephine-de-beauharnais-detruite>.

representation, linking the materiality of colour with the ideology of race, which I will return to later in this introduction and repeatedly throughout the thesis. Finally, it reminds us that art history is not an isolated pursuit, distanced from public history and identity politics, but rather it is a discipline that works with objects that hold power and continually mean *something* in the communities they concern, outside of academia. Now, let us move from the centre of Fort-de-France and return to scholarship to understand where this thesis emerges from and what literature it extends from and engages with.

The thesis is undoubtedly a product of the humanities-wide attention to the entangled histories and legacies of European colonialism, which emerged with the movement and mode of thinking of Postcolonialism, spearheaded by the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978.¹⁷⁵ Postcolonialism is an attempt to undo the imaginations of Europe as the centre, and reposition the former colonies at the heart of scholarly analysis, rather than at the periphery. Art history has not been immune to the aims of Postcolonialism with Linda Nochlin's article 'The Imaginary Orient' being the first to draw upon Said's work to show how an artwork participates in formulating stereotypes that justify colonial rule.¹⁷⁶ The effects of postcolonialism have also prompted art historians to look towards the European colonisation of the Caribbean and the art that it produced on both sides of the Atlantic. In recent years there have been an increasing focus on art production in the Antilles, with one of the most prominent voices on French art and colonialism being Anne Lafont, whose work has greatly shaped my thinking from the beginning of this thesis, particularly her attention to race as a material matter, created and made real by artists.¹⁷⁷ She understands

¹⁷⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

¹⁷⁶ Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," in *The Politics of Vision: Essays On Nineteenth-century Art and Society* (London: Routledge, 1989), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429495960-3>.

¹⁷⁷ Anne Lafont, "Fabric, Skin, Color: Picturing Antilles' Markets as an Inventory of Human Diversity," *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de La Cultura* 43, no. 2 (Dec. 2016): 121–154. See also, Lafont's book, *L'Art et la*

artists as actors who manifested race through ‘reliable and legible corporeal signs, revealing itself to sight independently of its bearer’s will.’¹⁷⁸ This emphasis on race as made through art runs through the thesis, as I examine how artists make and negotiate race through their artistic practice. Another scholar who like Lafont, is interested in French Caribbean art history is Christelle Lozère. She has completed a publicly-focused overview of Antillean art and continues to incorporate artists from the French Antilles into larger histories of European modernism.¹⁷⁹ Her work serves as an example of making and doing postcolonial art history from the French Antilles. The former student of Lafont and Lozère, C.C. Mckee is a scholar whose thesis on the visual culture in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Caribbean (Martinique, Saint Dominique and St Thomas) serves as an important example of how to conduct art history of the Caribbean, particularly through an environmental lens. Mckee analyses the works in their thesis through the lens of Freudian psychoanalysis and its concept of sublimation as a method to understand how Black labour is represented in the paintings they examine.¹⁸⁰ Despite the research differences in scope and approach, my work follows their lead in placing the environment at the centre of analysis when considering how race was created and confirmed in French Caribbean visibility. For example, I will return to McKee’s analysis of a painting by Le Masurier in my second chapter on

Race: L’Africain (tout) contre l’œil des Lumières (Dijon: Les presses du rée, 2019), which focuses on the representation of race in the eighteenth century.

¹⁷⁸ Anne Lafont, “How Skin Color Became a Racial Marker: Art Historical Perspectives on Race,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 51, no. 1 (2017), 95.

¹⁷⁹ Christelle Lozère, “Order and Disorder: The Iconography of Morality and Colonial Enslavement,” *Journal18*, Issue 13 *Race* (Spring 2022), <https://www.journal18.org/6322>; Lozère, “Artists from the Antilles in Interwar Paris,” in *The Harlem Renaissance and Transatlantic Modernism* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2024); Lozère, “The Major Role of Women Artists in the History of Art of the French Antilles in the Context of Slavery and Post-slavery,” AWARE Archives of Women Artists, Research and Exhibitions, accessed 5th May 2024, <https://awarewomenartists.com/en/magazine/le-role-majeur-des-artistes-femmes-dans-lhistoire-de-lart-des-antilles-francaises-en-contexte-esclavagiste-et-post-esclavagiste/>

¹⁸⁰ C. C. McKee, *Cultivating Visible Order: Representations of Race and Ecology in the French Atlantic*, PhD Thesis, Northwestern University, 2019, 24.

Fulconis, where we see an example of how McKee establishes a connection between the Black body and the natural world in the work's visual language.¹⁸¹

One cannot work on the Caribbean as an art historian without mentioning the work of Krista Thompson. In her analysis of photographs of Jamaica and Bahamas she effectively demonstrates how nineteenth- and twentieth-century photographers attempted to show the Anglophone Caribbean as a tropical space attractive to tourists. Whereas Thompson is particularly interested in the 'tropicalization' of the Caribbean, that is, the region being imagined and physically made to tailor to touristic consumption, this thesis is not. The following chapters will not pay extensive attention to creation of the Caribbean as a tourist destination, which as scholars have pointed out, in many ways, is a neo-colonial plantation complex. This thesis does build upon Thompson's basic premise that images of the Caribbean influenced how the island and its inhabitants were imagined, which in turn impacted the actual physical and social spaces of the Caribbean. Furthermore, it also draws specifically on her knowledge on colonial photographs, particularly in my analysis of the figure of the laundress in Chapter Two.

The selected art histories on the Caribbean are examples of the current state of art histories of the Caribbean that, similarly to this thesis, primarily investigate the works of European artists who travelled to the Caribbean, with the important exception of Lozère and occasionally McKee. It is a major gap in the current literature, partly due to historically limited access to education and spaces for Caribbean-born artists and, more importantly, telling of the intrinsic Eurocentrism of the

¹⁸¹ Ibid. The thesis will undoubtedly also be in conversation with Remi Poindexter's 2024 PhD thesis 'Exotic and Familiar: Constructing Martinique, 1763–1902' when his research is published and I am looking forward to learning from his work and expanding my own as a result. See Poindexter, 'Exotic and Familiar: Constructing Martinique, 1763–1902'. See also Poindexter's introductory article to Gauguin in Martinique, Remi Poindexter, "Gauguin and Laval in Martinique," in Smarthistory, September 28, 2020, accessed June 14, 2025, <https://smarthistory.org/gauguin-laval-martinique/>.

discipline that persists, even when moving the scholarship outside of Europe. This thesis attempts to push the current scholarship of how to write art histories of the Caribbean by emphasising the fractured, the multiple, and heterogenous, rather than the linear and canonical, following Erica James' quest to decolonise time, borrowing Maximin's prompt to understand the temporalities of Martinique as defined by the elements, and thinking of the alternative temporalities and spatialities engendered by the production of a racialised indigeneity, and resistance against it.¹⁸² Rather than looking towards Europe, it keeps returning to the island and its mode of making. This thesis focuses on three white male artists—not because they were the only ones producing art at the time, but because they are the specific focus of this study.

On the island, there was a large community of colour which produced works but that is not the focus of this thesis, and the 19th-century artists examined. In the conclusion, I will say more about what is at stake for art history in embracing the Caribbean as a region, not only because Europeans went there, but because a focus on the Caribbean can unfix the discipline through an embrace of the region's 'flux of transformative plasma', which prompts the scholar to find new ways of approaching being an art historian.¹⁸³

¹⁸² Maimin, *Les fruits du cyclone*, 105; Angela Last, "Fruit of the Cyclone: Undoing Geopolitics through Geopoetics," *Geoforum* 64 (2015): 56–64.

¹⁸³ Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 4.

Section III:

Thesis structure

This thesis broadly covers the period from 1847 to 1887 with the start and end point defined by the first art piece in the collection of the three artists and the year of the last one. The project also has important offshoots that take place outside of this time frame. I examine Lacour, Fulconis and Gauguin in chronological order and devote one chapter to each artist, with each chapter divided into separated but interlinked sections. In the thesis, I focus on the work of three male travellers, ‘imperial careers’, from metropolitan France, who are making sense through the act of making art.¹⁸⁴ Here, colour emerges as a key tool for the artists to capture what they were experiencing; colour as a racial marker also presents a challenge and a concern and colour as tied to the environment underlines the web of human, non-human, material and non-material which the artists were a part of. Together, the three chapters are unique interventions into the understanding of nineteenth-century French colonialism as seen from the perspective of three makers, but they also speak much louder and broader than that by adding to conversations about how contemporary artists are grappling with colonial legacies and the neo-colonial presence; how we can re-make art histories to include the amateur and the hobby-artist alongside the canonical artist; how we can think of art history *from* the specificity of the Caribbean and how we can use something as hard to define as colour to open up new ways of bringing the materiality of the object, the act of making, questions of race and skin colour and the products of the natural world into fruitful, chromatic dialogues. While this thesis brings together three artists, it does not seek to suggest that they shared the same positionality. At the beginning of each chapter, I provide biographical details to situate each artist within their specific context, which I then draw upon in my readings of their

¹⁸⁴ Lambert, and Lester, eds. *Colonial Lives across the British Empire*.

work. That said, there are inevitable gaps in my knowledge of their individual political views, due in part to the limitations of this study, including constraints related to funding and limited access to archival materials.

Chapter One opens with the contemporary art installation *We Could be Heroes* (2023-24) in the Panthéon created by Raphaël Bartontini, as a way to frame the following discussion of the history of enslavement and freedom in Martinique. The focus of the chapter is on the album of drawings made by the French lieutenant Jean François Lacour when he was stationed in Martinique between 1847-1851. Divided into two overall sections, the first section starts by introducing the reader to the colonial plantation system in Martinique and to Lacour as a maker that captures the unsettled status of the plantation just before the 1848 abolition of slavery, by seeing his work in relation to the genre of colonial picturesque. The section moves on to examine how Lacour represents people of colour in a multitude of different scenes in which he captures moments of slipperiness and blurring of boundaries. The chapter argues for a distinction in the work of Lacour between the land and the landscape, showing how Lacour positions as the Black body as belonging to the land, but not the landscape. It contends that Lacour captured a moment of uncertainty in the French colonisation of Martinique, a moment in which he mapped legible markers like occupation, clothing and proximity to nature as more prescriptive than skin colour in positioning a person within the social hierarchy. His work shows how colour as a primary signification was as unstable as the crumbling plantation and decaying palm trees he depicts. In the second section, I move away from Lacour's representation of the inhabitants of colour in Martinique to examine a selection of drawings that he made of the natural world, positioning him as a mapmaker of territory. Depicting the French fortifications from different viewpoints and showing the landscape from a bird's eye view, the section shows that Lacour visualises how the landscape continued to be

controlled and surveilled and as an ecological resource that could continue to be extracted after abolition. The chapter demonstrates how Lacour grappled with people and land through sites of gender, skin colour and environment, which in turn reflects how he positioned himself as a lieutenant in a colony undergoing a major transformation. Thinking ecologically about his work shows that the imperial experience was one that entailed uncertainty and confusion alongside dominance and authority, and as one where the lieutenant brings a different perspective to how making sense of the artist's craft went hand-in-hand with making sense of the colony.

Chapter Two takes its starting point at two 2024 exhibitions on each side of the Atlantic, one entitled 'Entangled Pasts:1768-Now' and the other called 'Forecast Form: Art in the Caribbean Diaspora, 1990-Today', both of which set the scene for discussing the work that the drawing teacher Victor Pierre Fulconis created in 1883 in Martinique, with one work commenting upon the ordering of skin colour and the artistic palette and the other art piece visualising the Indian presence in the Caribbean, a rare contribution to the representation of the Indo-Caribbean population on the island. The chapter is indebted to the scholarship of environmental history, with the first part of the chapter focusing on Fulconis' close connection to Jardin de Plantes in Saint Pierre through his friendship with the Director Armand-Justin Thierry (who I mentioned earlier) and positions the botanical gardens as a nucleus of empire and artistic exercises. Opening with the chlordecone scandal unfolding in the French Antilles, this section in particular analyses his repeated studies of aquatic animals as an attempt to categorise the colony through the language of botanical drawings, whilst also practising his craft as an artist, experimenting with colours and shapes. The section argues that Fulconis' repeated attention to flora and fauna shows the significance of claiming authority over nature through a process of identifying and depicting. In the second section of the chapter, I begin with outlining the French anthropologist's Paul Broca's

guide 'Tableau Chromatique' to travellers to illustrate the contemporary dedication to encounter and map colonial subjects, particularly their skin colour. This moves me on to understand Fulconis' drawings of the labourer – the laundress and members of the Indo-Caribbean population – as carrying an anthropological sensibility in how he again uses categorisation and isolated study to represent them, very similarly to his approach to the natural world. In doing so, he collapses the distinction between studying people of colour and animals, as we also see in the pseudo-scientific work of Georges Cuvier. The chapter shows how colour was to Fulconis a tool of order and identification: it allowed him to pick out the individual characteristics of the subject and create categories, following Broca's prompt to clearly use colour as a guide of how to understand spaces of Otherness. In doing so, Fulconis' works tells us that his position of white privilege and access in the colony was predicated upon his ability to make sense of colour: his own whiteness does not need categorisation, but it underpins his work, as a translator and communicator of the colour he encountered in the colony, and in so doing, he fashioned himself as a knower of the island.

Chapter Three begins with a poem by poet Derek Walcott and a sound and light installation at Centre D'interprétation Du Patrimoine Paul Gauguin in Martinique, created by contemporary artist David Gumbs. The chapter attends to Gauguin and, occasionally, his travel partner Charles Laval and their works of Martinique, created both during their four-month stay in 1887 and after their trip. In the introductory part of the chapter, I introduce Gauguin as a much-debated figure in art historical literature and public opinion and provide an overview of his escapist trip to Martinique, both used to set the scene for the following analysis, which particularly sees his work through environmental lenses. As Gauguin's work has previously undergone pigment analysis, this chapter is the one in which colour features most prominently in the literal sense of pigments and paint choices. I extend the work of conservator Luc Megens by connecting his findings to wider themes

of race and ecology, gender and labour. In the first section of the chapter, I again draw on ecocriticism and bring Gauguin's repeated depictions of the non-native fruit of the mango and of the agricultural labourer harvesting mangoes in conversation with his palette of pigments (including indigo), arguing that we see in the very makeup of his paint that he contemplated the perceived illegibility of skin colour, and was attuned to it not as one-dimensional and static, but rather as an unfixed site of artistic representation.¹⁸⁵ In these scenes of agricultural toil, he contemplates the meanings of leisure and labour at a time in which colonial emancipation and metropolitan industrialisation worked hand-in-hand to fundamentally transform the meaning and look of both concepts. The second section opens with the current chlordecone scandal in the French Antilles, and focuses on Gauguin and Laval's representation of water, arguing that their depictions of rivers and the sea are deeply entangled in histories of colonialism, from the Middle Passage to enslaved fishing practices, to conceptions of the water as spaces of clean and unclean womanhood, a previously overlooked aspect of their work. The final part of the chapter looks briefly forwards to the Volpini exhibition in 1889 to illustrate how Gauguin's first time in the tropics had a profound impact on his later practice as an artist. While much has been said about Gauguin, this is the first time he is being positioned as part of a network of makers in Martinique and that understands his visual language as anchored and participating in a collection of visual material of the island.

¹⁸⁵ In this chapter, I am indebted to the generosity of conservator Luc Megens for sharing his unpublished research reports of Gauguin's works with me. I draw on Megens, "Pigment analysis of P. Gauguin, The Mango Trees, Martinique, 1887" (Van Gogh Museum, October, 2017) and "Pigment analysis of P. Gauguin, On the Banks of the River at Martinique, 1887" (Van Gogh Museum, October 2017).

Chapter One

‘Unruly contours’: Jean François Lacour’s land and landscape

Scene I: *We Could be Heroes*

Between October 2023 and February 2024, the Panthéon, a mausoleum in the Latin Quarter of Paris, was transformed by the contemporary French artist Raphaël Barontini (b. 1999) [Fig. 6a, 6b, 6c]. He received *carte blanche* from Centre des Monuments Nationaux and took over Jacques-Germain Soufflot’s architectural space with massive, colourful textile compositions, creating what he termed an ‘imaginary patheon.’¹⁸⁶ With the title *We Could be Heroes*, the bold installation honours and remembers the collective heroism and resistance during French colonialism in the Caribbean, Guiana, and Reunion Island. Like a collage mixing ethnographic photography, portraiture, drawing, sculpture and fabric, Barontini’s work is beautiful and disturbing at once, using bright colours of blues, purple, yellow and pinks against the whiteness of the space, remembering the known and unknown heroes alongside the greatest of French citizens. In his textile montages, he draws on his personal experiences formed between Guadeloupe, Seine-Saint Denis and Italy, as he layers and reassemble objects and representations from different geographies, sources and time periods, with which he wants to create ‘harmonious shocks’ in the viewer, making us pause as we walk around in the space.¹⁸⁷ He challenges the very function of the monument – who is remembered and why – inside one of the grandest monuments of Republican France and uses the installation to open up the multitude of histories known and unknown, and the legacies of cultural mixing and making, emulated in the very technique of his work. As the title alludes to, Barontini goes right to the core of how historical narratives are constructed, what

¹⁸⁶ “Le « Panthéon imaginaire » de Raphaël Barontini,” *Panthéon Paris*, accessed 10th September 2024, <https://www.paris-pantheon.fr/le-pantheon-imaginaire-de-raphael-barontini>.

¹⁸⁷ *Un Artiste / Un Monument: We Could be Heroes* (Éditions du patrimoine, Centre des Monuments Nationaux, Paris, 2023), 13

individuals and histories are remembered and memorialised in spaces of national meaning-making and by extension who are considered citizens and part of the French nation, key questions that anchor this chapter and the thesis at large.

As we enter the Panthéon, we are greeted by ten larger-than-human colourful banners [Fig. 6a], which are lined up in a row, demanding the space. Each of the banners portrays a person or a couple who have participated in the freedom fight and each banner has been used in the performances that Barontini staged as part of the exhibition, where he collaborated with local carnival bands. In the two transepts [Fig 6b and 6c] surrounding Léon Foucault's pendulum experiment, Barontini creates two large-scale rectangular textile pieces. The North transept [Fig. 6b] composition captures the Middle Passage and the arrival in the Caribbean. The piece in the middle shows a man as he dramatically freefalls. The winter sunshine lights up his body from the window behind him as he falls into the unknown, into the dehumanisation and suffering without anything to hold on to, to stop him from falling. On a different piece of the same size, a man is depicted, with parts of his torso taken from classical sculpture, in the middle of sugar canes with his knife under the red sun. On the other side, another textile piece presents the singing and music traditions of Lewoz, which first appeared on the plantations in Martinique and Guadeloupe.¹⁸⁸ It presents a woman as she dances to the rhythm of the drum. As she lifts her thick monochrome skirt, she looks down at us with fierce eyes – and we look up to her, as we walk through the Panthéon alongside the other visitors. All three pieces capture parts of the experience of enslavement, from the hard manual labour in the burning heat to the collective moments of dance. Below the three pieces, Barontini narrates the journey that brought the enslaved to the Caribbean on a long rectangular piece, in which a slave ship, made up of different fragmented diagrams of the

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

inside – row after row of enslaved peoples lying horrifyingly close together – is at the centre. A reaching hand, crying for help, emerges from the deck. What looks like sharp teeth dangerously stick out from the side of the ship, which is about to arrive at the Guadeloupe plantation of Marie Galante, where iron shackles hang above in the sky. In the south transept [Fig. 6c], Barontini continues to tell the story of the experience of enslavement but does so here through the fight for abolition with one portrait of Toussaint Louverture riding on a horse with a gold cape and one of female freedom fighter of Solitude hanging above a scene of the Battle of Vertières of 1803, which led to the establishment of the first nation created from a slave uprising, Haiti. Although it is noteworthy that the intervention is temporary, not permanent, it is a testament that the narratives being told in a national epicentre like the Panthéon are expanding to include the achievement and histories of the enslaved, as one of the first large-scale exhibitions in France to reckon with and highlight the country's histories of colonialism. I open this chapter with Barontini's large-scale installation as it powerfully captures the experience of enslavement as well as the cast of heroes, known and unknown, who fought for abolition of slavery and the continued emancipation of people of colour.

Scene 2: 'none of our words or our riddles can say Abolition'¹⁸⁹

In Patrick Chamoiseau's book *Texaco* (1997), we meet Marie-Sophie Lobrieux, 'ancestor and founder' of the quarter of Texaco located in the outskirts of Fort-de-France.¹⁹⁰ The story begins with the arrival of an urban planner, called Christ 'the angel of destruction', 'the angel of doom' who is sent to renovate and civilise Texaco, meaning erasing it.¹⁹¹ The urbanisation had already led to the establishment of a road to the centre of the city which brought the 'ever-so-well-to-do' to

¹⁸⁹ Patrick Chamoiseau, *Texaco*, trans. Rose-Myriam Rejouis and Val Vinokurow (Granta, 1997), 100.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 24.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 25, 26, 10 and 21.

drive by the quarter.¹⁹² Christ is greeted by getting hit by a stone, leaving him bleeding on the ground. He was carried to Marie-Sophie, who after providing him with a glass of rum starts to tell him the sweeping history of Texaco from 1820s to the 1960s as an effort to save their home.¹⁹³ Through a multi-authored layered approach of storytelling, incorporating notebooks, myths and footnotes, the story starts with the ‘Age of Straw’ (1823 (?) - 1920), where Marie-Sophie accounts the experiences of her father Esternome, who was a domestic slave, ‘ a house servant’ and who secured his freedom after shooting down a maroon that tried to kill the plantation owner.¹⁹⁴ After gaining his freedom, he moved to Saint Pierre to work as a carpenter and from here we follow the father as he falls in love and later experiences the abolition of slavery. One of Marie-Sophie’s notebook entries rhetorically asks in the voice of Esternome, ‘Marie-Phie, my lump of barley-sugar, in Creole we know how to say slavery, or the chains or the whip, but none of our words or our riddles can say Abolition. Do you know why, huh?’¹⁹⁵

Esternome, who had been freed before abolition, knew that freedom was not the end of life as it was, preparing his partner Ninon for the disappointment on the eve of abolition, ‘sweet Ninon dear, freedom is not as simple as pulling out a chair by a plate of yams...’¹⁹⁶ Not managing to hammer down Ninon’s high spirits, Esternome accompanied her into Saint Pierre, to join the celebratory crowds, noticing the *békés* who now ‘had less confident airs’ and carried their trunks down to the harbour to escape. ‘Carrying freedom is the only load that straightens the back. The blacks flew, light like yellow butterflies. Reflexes of angst only came back to them around the militia which went up and around without really knowing what to do. Having no papers to ask for,

¹⁹² Ibid, 10.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 26.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 44.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 100.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 103.

no affranchi to check, and nothing to say to those fellows in rags who were once maroons.’¹⁹⁷ As the celebrations died down, Esternome’s predictions came true and both he and Ninon were back working in the plantation-turned-cooperative, ‘even if the overseer no longer had a whip, he stood in just the same old way. Citizen béké despite his citizenship came by at the same time and on the same horse, gauged the work with the same eyes. The sweat, Marie-Sophie, had that same old taste, the snakes hissed just the same, and the hadn’t changed either.’¹⁹⁸ This recounting of the story of Texaco is intended to demonstrate how the abolition of slavery, or the lack thereof, continues to weave the past and present together through its enduring legacies in Martinique. The novel highlights the limitations of abolition, which could not be fully captured as a concept within the language or vocabulary of the Black population. Speaking from his own experience, Esternome seeks to warn others not to fall for the illusion of something as seemingly simple as “abolition” or “freedom.” The reality was far more complex and fraught, and the plantation system would endure in myriad ways. These ideas will frame the following discussion of Martinique’s abolition of slavery, which is necessary to contextualise and understand the work of Lacour.

On the top of a steep hill in a suburban area of the capital of Fort-de-France lies the Archives Départementales de Martinique. In my rental car, I slowly manoeuvred my way through the curved roads to the parking lot of the archive, whose collection I had only seen parts of online and via email exchange, as fuzzy thumbnails and low-resolution hints, that did not belie the richness of the album I was about to lay my hands on. The archivist first brings out a thick red album, which at first sight might look worn-out, ordinary, with no indication of what is inside. Yet, when opening the album and carefully turning the pages, one quickly realises that this album is a unique source

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 101.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 113.

of visual material on life in mid-nineteenth-century Martinique. We find 41 drawings (only 11 signed), which cover a multitude of scenes of Martinican life and the island environment: we see individual studies of women of colour; detailed illustrations of the island's plants and fauna; depictions of estates located in the lush landscape; and aerial views of the landscape. Some of the drawings have been directly drawn on the album's pages and others have been glued on. The drawings in the album were created by the French military man Jean François Lacour when he was stationed as a Lieutenant on the island between 1847-1851. Although not all of the drawings are signed by Lacour, I understand them to all be made by him, because there is an easily recognisable continuity in the visual language across the album. To be able to touch and see his material today is the result of extraordinary – and very lucky – circumstances. The album somehow made its way to a bookshop on the island and was subsequently bought by the Collectivité Martinique and is now part of their archival collection.¹⁹⁹ It is a moment of luck that an album such as this one managed to be saved from obscurity, and it reminds us of the number of albums, like this one, made by hobby artists, which have been completely lost with time or are still stored away in commercial shops.

This chapter is the first substantial analysis of the drawings in the album, scholarly or otherwise. It is in the works of this self-taught artist that we find new visions of the colony, in which his pictorial language reveals how he works through the experience of the tropics, a space that is undergoing dramatic change after the 1848 abolition of slavery and the decline of the plantation system. Little is known about Lacour except for his basic career details, which the archivists of Archives Territoriales de Martinique have recovered. He was born in Metz in 1821 and was a student of the Ecole Polytechnique where he graduated from in 1841 and afterwards entered the

¹⁹⁹ Archives Départementales de Martinique, accompanying notes to album 26 FI 1

Marine artillery, where he climbed through the ranks. He was made second lieutenant in 1843, lieutenant in 1845, second captain in 1854 and first captain in the following year. After this time in Martinique, he also served in Cochin in India in 1860, where parts of his travel notes were published from.²⁰⁰ As far as we know, Lacour had no formal training in the arts and practised as an amateur artist alongside his position in the French Navy. As mentioned in the thesis introduction, the opportunity and ability to travel was central to the construction and maintenance of the empire.²⁰¹ Lacour is an example of how military men were part of this infrastructure that enabled movement across far distances and within the island. He was a representative of the French state on the island, yet it would be too quick to assume that Lacour's position as a military man would make his drawings simply an extension of the pursuits of the French military. In his work, we see Lacour's inclination to map, his interest in ships and forts, but as previously mentioned, we also see something else: there is consistently an ambiguity that runs through his work, which reflects Lacour's attempts to make sense of his surroundings and his position on the island by exploring different settings and different viewpoints. As a white maker employed by the French military and stationed in Martinique to uphold French colonisation of the land, his work was undoubtedly coloured by that. Yet, it is not so straight-forward: there are moments in his work which undo any pre-assumed readings of his work as simply an extension of the French military. Moments that reveal ambiguity in his work, asking us, as viewers and as scholars, to reposition the amateur artist of empire as an important maker, who produces multifaceted works of enslaved and freedom, labour and gender, climate and non-whiteness, mapping and drawing. As the first study of Lacour, the thesis demonstrates that his collection of work reveals a maker, who, in his practice, seemed to sense that the colony was no longer holding together in the wake of the 1848 abolition of slavery,

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Thompson, "Introduction," in *Writing Imperial Histories*, edited by Andrew Thompson, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526112552>; Lambert and Lester, *Colonial Lives*.

as seen in moments in which the natural environment no longer conforms to the entrapments of colonial rule. The chapter is divided into two overall sections, with the first section focusing on his depiction of free and unfree people and the second one attending to his depiction of the landscape. The first section is an investigation of the different ways in which Lacour depicts people and land both before, in the moment of and after abolition, providing an in-depth analysis of his works which shows a maker who was repeatedly interested in the people of Martinique and the blurred boundaries between enslaved and free, labour and leisure, wet and dry, fruit and race. The section takes its starting point with one page in Lacour's album to unfold histories of indigeneity, colour change and resistance. From there, I examine Lacour's drawing of the plantation which I put in an uneasy dialogue with the aesthetics of the 'colonial picturesque' as exemplified by the work of Jenny Prinssay and continue to outline the horrific realities of the plantation, as enacted by the plantation owner, hidden from view through the rose-tinted lenses of the picturesque. An important part of this section is to situate the plantation regime of Martinique and the Caribbean, as this and its lasting legacies will be a crucial part of the thesis. In this section I analyse Lacour's entanglements of the people and the land through close visual analysis of several works and move on to focus on Lacour's representation of the landscape in the second section. Here, I begin with two snapshots, an account of an eruption of Mount Pelee and a poem by Kei Miller, which frames my analysis of three coastal landscape scenes by Lacour in which attends to the French habitation of the island. The landscape is tamed, regulated and undoubtedly French, proving the successful construction of towns and infrastructure in a map-like fashion with no signs of the population. Looking at the drawings in the album, we see how Lacour moves between different scenes taking place on the island. He uses drawing as a method of making sense of and decoding his surroundings, where he captures uncertainty and confusion across his drawings of free and enslaved people before abolition, and workers after abolition. The most prominent way in which

he tries to make sense of the colony is through the environment. As we will see in the first section, he depicts the figure of colour as part of the land, dominantly through close-up scenes with no references to the surrounding area and removes the figure in his birds-eye overview of the landscape. In doing so, he entrenches them permanently within the natural, the rural and the agricultural, as belonging and indigenous to the land, and as not part of the vision of the French territory. Lacour uses the natural world to pick out the uneasiness and slipperiness of the moments he experiences, using an island produce like the banana to signify primitivity and showing the decay of the palm trees to capture the demise of the plantation system, both of which illustrating how nature was a key site that was used to grapple with the colony in transformation. In the following, I will look closely at Lacour's depiction of the plantation and his position in relation to the colonial picturesque, which serves as an appropriate starting point to introduce the long history of the plantation economy and enslavement in Martinique; the legacies of which will continue to weave through the rest of the thesis.

Section I:

Grounded in the Land: Lacour's drawings of people

Fruit and skin: indigeneity, colour change and resistance

We begin by pausing at two small postcard-size drawings, placed next to each other on the same page in the album. The two drawings open a multi-layered conversation on Transatlantic Slavery, colour change and indigeneity, which we will keep seeing running through the thesis and is as such important to introduce from the beginning. The drawing on the left is entitled *Negresse de Gorée* (1847) [Fig. 7a] and renders a woman bare-chested and adorned with jewellery walking with a clay bowl balanced on her head. The title notes that the woman depicted is from the small island of Gorée, which sits off the coast of present-day Senegal and was controlled by France at the time of the drawing. It was an important stopover and slave trading centre for European colonising powers. This is the only drawing in the album in which Lacour explicitly acknowledges the slave trade's mass displacement of people and its transformation of the Caribbean's demographic make-up. Kenneth J. Banks writes that using Gorée as the point on which to load slaves proved to be an efficient decision, as it made the journey much shorter with a length of four to six weeks, rather than around six months and it was "merely" a question of sailing west before reaching the harbour of Saint Pierre where the plantation awaited the enslaved.²⁰² In decades before the abolition of slavery, Martinique saw waves of rebellion and threats against the increasingly anxious and fearful plantocracy, which posed the problem of how to best punish and surveil the growing numbers of so-called rebels that were becoming overwhelming, with John Savage detailing how one solution settled upon was to simply remove them from Martinique through a process of transportation to

²⁰² Kenneth J. Banks, *Chasing Empire Across the Sea: Communications and the State in the French Atlantic, 1713-1763* (Montreal; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002).

other Caribbean islands and locations in Africa.²⁰³ One of the locations for such displacement was Senegal, the closest mainland to Gorée.²⁰⁴ Here then, Gorée emerges not only as a stopping point on the Transatlantic Slave Trade but as entangled into discussions of abolition and the punishment, incarceration and forced mobility of Black bodies.

One of the most prominent fears of plantation owners was poisoning at the hands of their enslaved, with one potential source being the toxic outer shell of the cashew nut, causing skin rashes and inflammation. The cashew fruit is depicted in the drawing to the very right of the *Negresse de Gorée*, named *Pomme d'Acajou* (1847) [Fig. 7b]. Still widely used in the tropics, Indigenous people and enslaved Africans have a long history of engagement with the fruit, including as a food, tea, wine and a sweet juice with the ability to remedy fevers, influenza, diarrhoea and colic.²⁰⁵ It was therefore favoured by early Europeans, for whom it helped against the many tropical illnesses bringing on fevers and dysentery.²⁰⁶ The cashew is an example of a biological matter that could enact natural poisoning, similar to that of the cassava fruit, both possibly used as modes of resistance that utilised the natural world to counter the plantation complex. This Afro-Caribbean mastery of nature was personified in the figure of the maroon, who we will return to in the final chapter, and who were feared for the tinctures and herbs they might supply to the enslaved on the roads to pollute and disrupt the plantation order. The anxious planters of the French Caribbean, according to Andrew Dial, often conflated with African healing practices with poisoning, sorcery, and subversive religious practices like vodou and obeah, with healers frequently accused of plotting against the plantation system.²⁰⁷ It is therefore interesting that a

²⁰³ John Savage, "Unwanted Slaves: The Punishment of Transportation and the Making of Legal Subjects in Early Nineteenth-Century Martinique," *Citizenship Studies* 10, no. 1 (2006), 44.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

²⁰⁵ Savage, "Slave Poison/Slave Medicine," 149-171.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ Andrew Dial, "Antoine Lavalette, Slave Murderer: A Forgotten Scandal of the French West Indies," *Journal of Jesuit studies* 8.1 (2021): 37-55.

useful yet toxic fruit has been placed next to a woman who is labelled in terms of her “African-ness”, signalling her foreign origins, or perhaps destination of punishment.

However, the fruit of the cashew is complex, as it was also adopted as a cosmetic by eighteenth-century women, as has been found by Diedre Coleman.²⁰⁸ She contends that the extracted cashew oil was applied to the faces and bodies of white Creole women seeking to maintain the whiteness of their skin, which might tan, burn or freckle under the harsh Caribbean sun, making them appear closer in colour to the growing mixed-race population, leading to the unwelcome but inevitable blurring of boundaries between being white and Black.²⁰⁹ Coleman quotes a Jamaican doctor, who wrote that cashew oil was used by women who wanted to ‘acquire a new skin.’²¹⁰ The use of the corrosive cashew nut oil to bleach skin shows the lengths to which the Creole population would go to confirm, define and accentuate their whiteness. The cashew’s ability to whiten skin and the desire to do so suggests the deep-seated fear pervading across the white population of Martinique and reveals the boundaries and binaries of a multi-racial society as hinging so clearly on colour matters. In whitening their already white skin, these women hoped to ensure there could be no mistake about their whiteness, that the blurring of boundaries would not implicate themselves.²¹¹ To the rest of the study, it underscores the necessity of considering the whiteness of the three makers in this thesis, as not an invisible trait, but as one that was invented, remade and embedded in anxieties that it would wash out in the Caribbean.

While the cashew oil was used for bleaching, the cashew is depicted by Lacour as brightly coloured, in red, light oranges and deep brown colours shares the same colour palette as used for depicting the woman, with her skin colour being almost the same colour as the bare, muddy

²⁰⁸ Deirdre Coleman, “Janet Schaw and the Complexions of Empire,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36 no. 2 (2003) 171.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 170.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, 171.

²¹¹ *Ibid*, 181.

ground she stands on [Fig. 7c]. The nut that protrudes from the red cashew apple fruit is again a similar deep brown colour, which indicates that the cashew is ripe and ready for consumption with its curvaceous brownness echoed in the shapes of the woman [Fig. 7d]. By placing the woman and the fruit next to each other and completing them in a similar colour range, Lacour creates a direct association between the woman and the cashew fruit, closely aligning the woman of colour to the land and its produce. It suggests that even an amateur artist like Lacour was familiar with the colonial trope of representing the figure as belonging to the land and utilising the environment to visually emplace them there.

Lacour's depiction of the Afro-Caribbean figure as part of and belonging to the land speaks into a broader discussion of the indigenisation of the Afro-Caribbean population in the Caribbean. She is not only indigenised through the land, but also through climate, for as Savage insists, 'Just as the African population was assimilated to the "animal" environment of the tropics... acts of malevolent witchcraft were described in this period as analogous to forces of nature. In a sense, poisoning was depicted as being a toxin endemic to the tropical environment, just as hurricanes characterized the climate at certain times of the year.'²¹²

Experimenting with the land and the landscape, we see how Lacour visualised the 'problem' that Charmaine Nelson describes as posed by the Afro-Caribbean body in the wake of abolition.²¹³ As Africans, they embodied the uncomfortably violent histories of how and why they inhabit the Caribbean, recalling their displacement and enslavement, but also their foreignness.²¹⁴ As Melaine Newton and John Savage show, enslaved people's (self-)association with Africa was indeed heavily wrapped up with abolition, either in the displacement of the unruly back to the continent or

²¹² Savage, "Slave Poison/Slave Medicine", 164.

²¹³ Charmaine Nelson, *Slavery, Geography and Empire in Nineteenth-century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica* (London: Routledge, 2017), 229-230.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, 229-230.

in the increasing identification of free Blacks with their African origins as a way to advocate for their human rights.²¹⁵ European visual and discursive languages at this moment of imperial expansion were preoccupied with establishing clear boundaries between the native and foreign. Enslaved Africans did not fit tidily within either category. As such, ‘they had to be indigenized in order to repress the memory of the inherent carnage of their diasporization.’²¹⁶ In Lacour’s two drawings, we see how he grapples with seeing the Black body as both foreign, in its explicit eroticism of the woman’s partly naked body and her connection to Goree and the non-native fruit of the cashew; and as native to the land by grounding and localising her on the land of Martinique, being a produce important to the island, like the fruit.

One of the most prominent voices on the indigenisation of the Afro-Caribbean is Sylvia Wynter, who has examined how the Afro-Caribbean population became ‘indigenised’ in the popular understanding of Caribbean demographics, which, according to Mark Rifkin, ‘threatens to situate non-native people of African descent in a relation of substitution/replacement to Native peoples rather than one of mutual engagement and negotiation within landscapes shaped by the dynamics of empire.’²¹⁷ Specifically, Wynter positions the process of indigenisation in the Caribbean as beginning in the seventeenth-century, when maroon communities moved to island interiors once inhabited by the indigenous people, and took up their spaces of self-functioning entities, enacting ownership and spiritual connections and as such resisting slavery through land practices ranging from maroonage to botanical healing practices to tending to provision gardens.²¹⁸ Rifkin points out that while the indigenisation of the Afro-Caribbean obscures the erasure of the Indigenous people

²¹⁵ Savage, “Unwanted Slaves”; Melanie Newton, “The children of Africa in the colonies” (PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 2001).

²¹⁶ Nelson, *Slavery, Geography and Empire*, 229-230.

²¹⁷ Mark Rifkin, *Fictions of Land and Flesh: Blackness, Indigeneity, Speculation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 13.

²¹⁸ Sylvia Wynter, “Jonkonnu in Jamaica,” 36.

of the Caribbean, it also offers a framework for understanding Blackness as inhabiting a specific place as part of a collective, ‘grounding’ them as being irrefutably and originally *from* and *of* the Caribbean.²¹⁹

As such, the cashew, depicted by Lacour not only functioned to tie the woman to the island’s produce and to the soil, it was also used for the opposite purpose, that of establishing whiteness. In Lacour’s drawing, the woman is both a sign of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, she is a sexual object and she is rooted to the land, yet also a foreign body connected to the African continent. Her position next to the cashew suggests fertility, pleasure and consumption, but with the toxicity of the cashew’s outer shell, it also speaks to the lurking danger and polluted nature of the woman. She is both things at once, a duality. Beginning my discussion of Lacour with these two drawings is an appropriate jumping-off point for the rest of the chapter and the thesis as it exposes the complex connections to be made between the skin colour, fruit produce and women, land and landscape, all in which colour is at the centre of such conversations.

The (in) Habitation

Lacour’s drawing, *Habitation Coloniale* (1847) [Fig. 8] portrays a colonial plantation: it renders the plantation owner’s house, nestled in the middle of the green landscape with mountains in the background and a river running in the foreground of the image, seen slightly from below.

Ferdinand points out that the word ‘habitation’, the name of the house of the plantation owner, suggests that the male occupant of this grand estate is a habitant or inhabitant, pointing to how colonial inhabitation was ‘based upon a set of actions that determined the boundaries between those inhabit and those who do not inhabit, a question which as we have seen is also tangled up

²¹⁹ Rifkin, *Fictions*, 8, 13.

with questions of being native versus foreign.²²⁰ Another smaller house is placed closer to the river, likely meant to suggest the accommodation of the enslaved. Lacour represents the houses and their surrounding grounds as unoccupied, with no people or animals in sight, but he does include a path to the house from outside the drawing, which signifies that the plantation is part of an infrastructure and network of the surrounding area, and in a broader perspective, part of the French colonial enterprise. I start my investigation of Lacour's album with this small drawing of a Martinican plantation in the year before the abolition of slavery, as it not only demonstrates Lacour's attention to the existence of plantation complexes on the island but also opens up an overview of the aesthetic of the 'colonial picturesque' and juxtaposes this against the cruel realities of the experience on the Martinican plantations, as told through a French administrator.

European establishment of the plantation economy in the Caribbean completely transformed the makeup of the region. Indigenous people were decimated by European-imported diseases and violence, landscapes were divided and turned into monocultures and human bodies were moved. A 'synthesis of field and factory', the plantation complex comprised the cultivated field, the workshops and factory, the plantation owner's house, and it influenced the location of ports, the creation of roads and railways and the construction of parishes.²²¹ The successful running of a plantation was dependent upon the import of enslaved peoples from the African continent, who were first sold via middlemen and traders and then brought to the harbours of the Caribbean via the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Arriving on land after an unimaginably horrendous journey, during

²²⁰ Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology*, 27.

²²¹ Ferdinand, *A Decolonial Ecology*, 32; Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 44.

which many would commit suicide or attempt an insurrection, the enslaved were sold, as commodities, to the highest bidder and forced to work on the plantation.²²²

The 'colonial picturesque' plantation

The plantation was a place of extreme violence and industrial production, which transformed the Caribbean and was reliant upon an enslaved workforce. Despite the actual horrors of the plantation, it was a favourite motif for European artist-travellers, who with their paint brushes turned the site into a space of tranquillity and order, a natural part of the landscape. This depiction of the plantation accommodated the plantocracy's desire to see the Caribbean colonies as peaceful and humane.²²³ Tim Barringer calls these lenses on the plantation 'the colonial picturesque' to convey how British artists in the Caribbean leaned upon the late eighteenth-century popular aesthetic of the picturesque, which proved to be an effective visual language for hiding the harsh colonial realities of oppression and torture behind domesticated landscapes, bathed in a golden light.²²⁴ The colonial picturesque is characterised by turning the colonial plantation, a space of terror and torture, into a dreamscape, 'tranquil and contented, prosperous and refined' and 'seductively beautiful.'²²⁵ The enslaved are only occasionally included in representations of the colonial picturesque, and if they are, they are depicted as docile, content workers of the land.

²²² Terri L. Snyder, *The Power to Die: Slavery and Suicide in British North America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Robert L. Stevenson, *Jumping Overboard: Examining Suicide, Resistance, and West African Cosmologies During the Middle Passage* (PhD thesis, Michigan State University, 2018); Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A human History* (London; Penguin, 2017); Sowande M. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage* (Urban: University of Illinois Press, 2016).

²²³ Tim Barringer, "Picturesque Prospects and the Labor of the Enslaved," in *Art and Emancipation in Jamaica: Isaac Mendes Belisario and His Worlds*, eds. Tim Barringer and Gillian Forrester and Barbaro Martinez-Ruiz (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 2007). Accessed July 2nd, 2024. https://aaeportal-com.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/?id=18627#A-18627_49, np.

²²⁴ Ibid, np. See also: Jeffrey Auerbach, "The picturesque and the homogenisation of Empire," *British Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (2004); Sean P. Smith, "Aestheticising Empire: The Colonial Picturesque as a Modality of Travel," *Studies in Travel Writing* 23, no. 3 (2020): 280–97. doi:10.1080/13645145.2019.1710903; Elizabeth Mjelde, "Colonial Violence and the Picturesque," in Philip Dwyer and Amanda Nettelbeck, eds. *Violence, Colonialism and Empire in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

²²⁵ Barringer, "Picturesque Prospects", np.

Barringer articulates this problem in the context of Jamaica: ‘The labour of the enslaved featured as an inevitable part of an unchangeable system while remaining unobtrusive, almost virtually invisible.’²²⁶ Mia Bagneris argues that the ‘colonial picturesque’ plantation is also characterised by an absence of the white population.²²⁷ She explains that such absence is indeed not a coincidence: the presence of white people would uncomfortably remind the viewer of the role of dark-skinned figures as enslaved, taken from their homeland and violently placed in the Caribbean.²²⁸ This subject would not have been of interest, either, to the European viewer, for whom such art provided the opportunity to escape to the dreamscapes of the Exotic. White bodies would further normalise the space, a space that is supposed to be one of difference. Bagneris continues to argue that Black people appear as the indigenous inhabitants of the Caribbean and as such the images erase both the Middle Passage and the killing of native Amerindians.²²⁹ Hence, the formula of the picturesque was unable to visually articulate the violence inherent to slave labour, as it did not fit in with the fantastical version of the Caribbean the picturesque aesthetic promised. Indeed, Ian MacLean proposes that the success of the picturesque depended upon its ability to act as a language across social classes and geographical locations as it was adaptable, general, and inclusive, rather than specific and exclusive.²³⁰ It was a visual language that would connect far-flung territories into what Elizabeth Maddock Dillon terms ‘intimate distance’, describing how crucial imagined connection between the metropole and the colonies was for maintaining and asserting the structure of empire.²³¹

²²⁶ Ibid, np.

²²⁷ Mia Bagneris, *Colouring the Caribbean: Race and the art of Agostino Brunias* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 103.

²²⁸ Ibid, 103.

²²⁹ Ibid *Caribbean*, 103.

²³⁰ MacLean, “The Expanded Field of the Picturesque,” 26.

²³¹ Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, *New World Drama: The Performative Commons in the Atlantic World, 1649-1849* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 16

Whereas most of the literature on colonial picturesque has focused on Anglo-Caribbean art, Jenny Prinssay's paintings from the French Antilles are examples of how the formula of the picturesque was also used to portray the French Antilles. Lozère finds that Prinssay, with the maiden name of Jeanne Pauline Bouscare (b. 1771), was one of the few artists native to the French Antilles, whose work was recognised by the Salon.²³² In her *View of Martinique* (undated) [Fig. 9], Prinssay depicts a collection of buildings, the plantation complex, which sits on top of a hill. It sits within a landscape that is carefully curated and tamed, with palm trees planted perfectly on a line along the buildings and areas that are trimmed, probably by the trail of animals grazing in the foreground of the painting and with other parts dedicated to curated wilderness. In the mix between the finely trimmed and dense vegetation, the eyes of the viewer repeatedly find new features to explore in Prinssay's landscape, and it demonstrates how the land had been successfully colonised. In placing the houses as a casual sight in the landscape, she also naturalises the plantation as a part of the landscape, which has always been *there*.

Prinssay's visual language offers an experience of the plantation that is characterised by an atmosphere of peace and control and expresses no signs of how the land and people came to be controlled, nor the violence of the current status quo. Instead, the painting further confirms control. The painting confirms how the picturesque could be easily used in the colonies and create a vision through which to look at the land and the people. Prinssay was a skilled and accomplished artist, able to learn the language of the picturesque, whereas Lacour may have only received training as

²³² Christelle Lozère, "The Major Role of Women Artists in The History of Art of the French Antilles in the Context of Slavery and Post-slavery," *AWARE*, 12th April 2024, <https://awarewomenartists.com/en/magazine/le-role-majeur-des-artistes-femmes-dans-lhistoire-de-lart-des-antilles-francaises-en-contexte-esclavagiste-et-post-esclavagiste/>.

Prinssay is also briefly mentioned in Séverine Sofio, "Méthodes quantitatives et terrain historique: quels outils pour une sociologie des artistes Femmes au XIXe siècle?" *Sociologie de l'Art* (2006), p.47-67.

In a thesis focusing on three men, Prinssay is a welcome addition. Another female artist who is worth mentioning is the Martinican-born arts teacher, Alice Albane (b. 1871), who created quick sketches of the women, held at Archives Territoriales de Martinique and most of them done in 1915. See, Pierre Osenat and Ina Césaire, *Les Passantes du Fort de France populaire, 1913-1930* (Centre d'Art Mémorial Musée Paul Gauguin).

part of his employment, if even that. We can imagine that he would have encountered and consumed the picturesque vision of the colonies. Yet, despite their different levels of skill, there are similarities between their work: they both depict the plantation from a distance, either across a valley or a river; they both use palm trees as clear indicators that the subject matter is Caribbean and positions the plantation within a diverse landscape with mountains and cultivated fields, which imply that both shared a familiarity of how the Caribbean landscape was to be depicted within accepted tropes.

However, it becomes acutely clear how Lacour fails to fulfil the aesthetics of the picturesque in his drawing in multiple ways. He does not use the warm, dusted colours that bathes Prinssay's scenes in a dreamlike atmosphere that confirms the plantation as a pleasant and peaceful space. Instead, he uses the cold colours of moss green, pale tones of brown and greys. Further, his dimensions are awkward: the proportions of the house are poorly aligned, particularly the side of the house; the trees are too tall compared to the rest of the scene and the riverbank is oddly shaped and lacks depth. The unskilled, amateur hand of Lacour destabilises the orderly, idealised image of the plantation expected from the colonial picturesque, and instead exhibits the plantation as a man-made object, an industrial construction which disrupts the island landscape and sits with difficulty in the landscape, which is hidden in picturesque visions like Prinssay's. Lacour's clumsy depiction of the plantation scene captures how he struggled to pictorially make sense of the scene because of his limited experience in positioning the plantation in the landscape up-close, which by extension reveals how he had trouble personally comprehending the environment surrounding him.

In his uncertain lines, we see drawing as a method of comprehending not only the subject matter but also the technique. Conversely to Pratt's concept of 'imperial eyes', which encapsulates how the eyes of the white viewer authoritatively possess the surroundings, Lacour presents an unstable

and blurred view of the plantation with his lack of skill.²³³ He establishes, entrenches, and protects an ideal view of plantation society, but Lacour's drawing unfixes this settled view in the year before the abolition of slavery. For our analysis, the comparison to Prinssay underscores that the work of an amateur exposes the process of making sense of the surroundings, not as a natural process, but as one that was reworked with pen and paper. By extension, Lacour's drawing asks us, as viewers, to make sense of it, just as he himself tries to do. That we cannot easily add Lacour to the corpus of picturesque representations unveils not only the limitation of the category of the colonial picturesque but it also points to the significance of including amateur-hobby artists like Lacour in our art historical conversations about the art of empire. He is an example of how ideas about the Caribbean were not only negotiated through Salon paintings, like Prinssay's, but also through individual moments of capturing the surroundings in private albums. Whereas Lacour's drawing never made it further than to his album, Prinssay's would have gathered the attention of the plantocracy and the metropolitan elite, who wished to see their colonial affairs through the rose-tinted glasses that the genre of the picturesque provides and keeps repeating. In contrast, Lacour's drawing of the plantation is an example of how his unsteady hand records his own doubt about the plantation complex one year before abolition. While Lacour tries to speak into a visual vocabulary of the plantation and position himself as an artist with access to and knowledge of the plantation like that of Prinssay, he instead captures dissonance between the plantation he sees and his attempt to remake it on paper, exposing the process of making sense of the colony as deeply tied to controlling one's artistic skill.

People of the plantation

In both Lacour's and Prinssay's images, the plantation buildings are inescapable fixtures in the

²³³ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*.

landscape. Obscured from view is the figure that owned the land, the buildings, the enslaved and the one benefitted from the wealth it accumulated – the plantation owner. Remembering Bagneris' comment that the white population is consistently hidden in the colonial picturesque, it is no surprise that the master behind it all is nowhere to be found. However, before proceeding, I will look at a drawing of a Martinican plantation owner to begin our discussion, before moving on to explore the people and experiences of the plantation that lie beyond and behind the fictionalised dreamscape of the picturesque.

Jules Vernet portrays the plantation owner of Habitation Lagrange in the commune of Le Margiot in Martinique in his painting *Portrait de Mr Lagrange planteur en Martinique* (1835) [Fig. 10]. Lagrange stands in front of a field of sugar canes, dressed in a fine white suit and hat while holding on to a long wooden stick, which may be used to beat the enslaved men hard at work in his fields behind him. He looks to his left side, as if he is keeping an eye on someone beyond the picture plane, making his watchful eyes a part of his portrait. The enslaved bodies are anonymous and a unified mass in the background, merging together with the tall sugar canes, intimately linking the slaves and nature. Lagrange stands in the front, at a distance from the fields and dressed in clothing which protects him from the hot climate. The whiteness of his suit is echoed in the uniform of the enslaved, who wear long white shorts, yet he is fully dressed, indicating that the enslaved people belong to him. As with other portraits of the planter class, the painting puts on view the undistributed wealth and success of the plantation owner and his control of the enslaved workers in the fields. The portrayal of the plantation owner together with the enslaved working on the plantation was also the subject matter for William Clark's print 'Slaves Cutting the Sugar Cane', which he made as part of his series *Ten Views of the Island of Antigua* (1833-1837) [Fig. 11]. Although done in a different visual style, the scene is similarly of enslaved workers in the process of cutting over-human-sized sugar canes, but it is an expansive view of the landscape,

rather than an enclosed one as with Vernet's painting. The enslaved workers are depicted in one long line with their cane knives out, repeated as far as the eye can see. In the right foreground, the plantation owner on horseback is drawn, in the middle of giving money to a young, enslaved worker, exemplifying his wealth and generosity. Both depictions demonstrate the enslaved workers as a unified mass with the plantation owner in the foreground and confirming the position of the plantation owner as *doing good* in the Caribbean colonies. Like the picturesque landscape of Prinssay, the two drawings, including the plantation owner, depict the colonial scene as one that is controlled and efficient under the watchful eyes of the generous and wealthy plantation owner.

Yet, the distance between the representation and the realities of the plantation experience could not be starker: countless scholars have detailed its horrific and tortuous conditions, a far cry away from the peace and ease rendered in Prinssay's, Vernet's and Clark's picturesque pieces. We get a glimpse into the Martinican plantation and the administrative concerns from the then French Inspector of Finances Paul Lavollée (1795-1886), who describes life on the sugar plantations of slave society in his 1839 *Notes sur les cultures et la production de la Martinique et de la Guadeloupe*. Lavollée perceived the plantation as an agro-industrial site of constant production with an eye on efficiency and end-results and his account is a valuable and necessary insight into what is missing and erased from Lacour's and Prinssay's vision of the empty plantation site. In the following, Lavollée explains the disciplined work and food schedule of the enslaved:

The work on the land starts at 6 o'clock in the morning. Interrupted at 8 o'clock for three-quarters of an hour for a break, it continues until noon. It resumes at 2 o'clock and ends at sunset in winter and at 5 o'clock in summer. The work of the sugar factory occupies about a dozen male and female slaves, who stand up in shifts throughout the night [...]. The

slaves receive, per week, 2 and a half pots of manioc (each pot contains 2 3/4 pounds of flour) and 2 1/2 pounds of cod. This is the general practice in Martinique.²³⁴

Lavollée's precise measurements of the food that the enslaved labourers are given does not reveal the history of food scarcity and insecurity, which Bertie Mandelblatt highlights as a common aspect of the experience in the seventeenth- and eighteenth century French Antilles, where strong natural forces, such as earthquakes, hurricanes and periodic draughts disrupted and ruined food supplies for the enslaved.²³⁵ The attention to the impact of the weather conditions foreshadow the upcoming discussion of nature as a defining force in the colonial experience and as a destabilising threat to empire, a discussion we will return to later in this chapter.

Lavollée further writes that the enslaved wasted their free time and it gave them time to potentially plot a rebellion, perhaps by poisoning as discussed earlier.²³⁶ To Lavollée, these moments of amusement were useless, although scholars today have shown how the decision to allow the enslaved free time was part of the regime to manage the slave body and make it even more productive.²³⁷ He continues to write that the work of the enslaved is actually easier than the plantation owner's and writes that the enslaved are stronger and happier here than the masters. Further, giving the enslaved 'their emancipation would compromise everything.'²³⁸ Lavollée's

²³⁴ Paul Lavollée, *Notes sur les cultures et la production de la Martinique et de la Guadeloupe* (1839), 122-123: 'Le travail de la terre commence à 6 heures du matin. Interrompu à 8 heures, pendant trois quarts d'heure, pour le déjeuner, il continue jusqu'à midi. Il est repris à 2 heures et se termine au coucher du soleil, en hiver, et à 5 heures en été. Mais le travail de la sucrerie occupe environ une douzaine d'esclaves hommes et femmes, qui se relèvent par quart pendant toute la nuit. Ils s'en servent pour animer les paresseux ou pour châtier ceux qui ont commis quelque faute grave. C'est aussi par des coups de fouet que les commandeurs annoncent l'heure du lever, de la prière et de sous les exercices. Les esclaves reçoivent, par semaines, 2 pots et demi de manioc (chaque pot contient 2 livres 3/4 de farine) et 2 livres 1/2 de morue. Tel est l'usage général à la Martinique.'

²³⁵ Bertie Mandelblatt, "'A Land where Hunger is in Gold and Famine is in Opulence': Plantation Slavery, Island Ecology, and the Fear of Famine in the French Caribbean," in *Fear and the Shaping of Early American Societies*, eds. Lauric Henneton and Louis Roper (London: Brill, 2016).

²³⁶ Lavollée, *Notes* 123-124.

²³⁷ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 17-49.

²³⁸ Lavollée, *Notes*, 120.

written notes indisputably support the status quo in production methods, of relying on the labour of the enslaved and making the system ever more efficient. Plantations were spaces in which these ideas came from, were formulated, and in which productivity became racialised and laziness pathologised.²³⁹

Here, the enslaved peoples are therefore once again emplaced within the ground through a discursive language and imagery that would have been recognisable to Lavollee's contemporaries as a form of racialisation and indigenisation. Their relationship with nature was seen as nothing more than one of spontaneously receiving its fruits, relying on the tropical landscape's fertility and abundance, embracing laziness and inertia.²⁴⁰ This entirely erases any pre-Columbian agricultural systems, and the depth of relationship Indigenous or African peoples might have to the land on their own terms.²⁴¹ Its resplendent abundance becomes a curse rather than a blessing in the laziness it causes.²⁴² This is, along with disease and death in paradise, Hulme writes, the 'fatal gift of the tropics.'²⁴³ There is a link once more between the idea of racial constitution and climate as leading to laziness and slowness, and of indigenised peoples existing outside of European conceptions of time and temporality, unwilling to labour productively - unless forcibly. This reflects the positioning of 'the native' as in opposition to modern capitalism and labour, an existing in a prior temporality.²⁴⁴ The human, animal and plant lives of the region were seen as all intertwined, shaped by the tropical climate.²⁴⁵

²³⁹ Rebecca Hartkopf Schloss, *Sweet Liberty: The Final Days of Slavery in Martinique* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 2.

²⁴⁰ Hulme, "Dominica and Tahiti: Tropical Islands Compared," 88.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 86.

²⁴² Arnold, "Illusory Riches", 12; Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics*.

²⁴³ Hulme, "Dominica and Tahiti", 89.

²⁴⁴ Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity*; Mawani, "Specters of Indigeneity," 372.

²⁴⁵ Alleweart, *Ariel's Ecology*.

What the scholarly discussions of the colonial picturesque have shown is that, perhaps not surprisingly, the aesthetic played a key role in formulating and maintaining the idea of the colonies as places of industrial labour, sites of healthy soil and docile labourers, denying the horrific reality of the enslaved.²⁴⁶ Created a few years later, closer to the abolition of slavery, Lacour's work of the plantation renders a different kind of plantation that is no longer securely picturesque, but rather looks hauntingly empty with the windows shut and with the grey sky looming over the scene, as if he is witnessing a scene that is about to disappear. Analysis of Lacour's different drawings of the free and enslaved figure is important as we move forwards to the next section, where we will see how he removes these figures from the landscape scenes, instead tying them to the ground.

The enslaved and free labourer

While the work of Vernet and Clark confines the enslaved to the plantation fields and, in so doing, confirms their inescapable position within the plantation, Lacour shows a different version of the enslaved, as not confined to the plantation grounds, yet still placed within signifiers which entrenches them into the natural, as outlined in the beginning of the chapter, indigenising the people in the Caribbean. Created in the same year as his drawing of the plantation, Lacour made the drawing *Lavandière. Nègre d'Habitation* (unsigned) (1847) [Fig. 12], which is a conflicting drawing in some respects. In the drawing a man walks across a riverbank while carrying a large bottle, of what might be water, on his head, and a bunch of bananas in his other hand. Lacour writes, 'Nègre d'Habitation' beneath the depicted man's feet, identifying the man as enslaved, making this his only explicit drawing of an enslaved person in the album. As we saw earlier with the juxtaposition of the woman from Gorée and the cashew fruit, Lacour here again uses a piece of

²⁴⁶ Nelson, *Slavery, Geography and Empire*, 231-233, 359.

fruit as a legible sign that connects the figure of colour with nature, thus suggesting he is animalistic and primitive. Yet, what is curious about the drawing is that Lacour presents an enslaved man, not amongst other enslaved people working in the field, as we saw for example in Clark's illustration but as in-between two, probably free, laundresses hard at work. One of the laundresses stands barefoot in the river where she washes a white piece of clothing on a large washing stone while smoking a cigarette. Although this woman is lighter in skin tone, Lacour positions her through several visual tropes that tells us she is a woman of colour – the revealing dress, the bare feet, the cigarette, and the manual work. As such, although the laundresses are a part of the working population, they are still placed as connected to nature, with their bare feet in the water and their use of water to complete their work as well as their nakedness, which suggests their eroticism.

However, one could say that by placing free washerwomen next to the enslaved, Lacour collapses the distinction between free and forced labour, normalising the possibility of moving beyond the plantation's restrictive borders. As such, not only does this drawing further support our idea that Lacour was not interested in voicing or giving space to the horrors of the plantation, but it also adds another dimension to the representation of the enslaved as one who gathers his own food and carries his own water, not relying on the plantation owner's rations, as outlined by Lavollée. Depicting the enslaved, albeit still within the stereotypes of bananas, bare-chested and bare-footed, Lacour exhibits a potential to imagine the enslaved as outside of the plantation, beyond the watchful eyes of the plantation owner, and as a subject, eating, carrying and walking by themselves, as someone more than just a slave. Years after Clarke and Vernet's work, Lacour here portrays the figure of the enslaved man as one not constrained to his status in the fields but as mixing with the rest of the freed population. In doing so, he captures the approaching reality that the enslaved population would become a part of the island's wider population, which was not, and

could not be, imagined in the picturesque work discussed earlier. Moving between the free but stuck as an enslaved, his work demonstrates that being free did not mean being free from the stereotyping and categorisation according to their labour, lack of clothing, connected to nature, and ultimately their difference from Lacour as a maker, observing the scene at a distance.

The Porteuse

The two free laundresses in the above drawing are examples of Lacour's ambiguous attention to the free labour force in Martinique. One of the most repeated figures in the visual representations of Martinique is the *porteuse*, a woman carrying goods across the island from the agricultural fields to the market and who became 'stock image' of the Caribbean through artists' and writers' obsession with this female labourer.²⁴⁷ I include two of Lacour's drawing of the *porteuse* here, two examples of how Lacour represents the free labourer before abolition, experimenting with the *porteuse* as a figure and collective being independent from the plantation complex.

In the drawing, *Martinique. 1847* (1847) [Fig. 13], Lacour depicts two *porteuse* who are at a moment of stillness after they have just crossed paths on a road. Facing the viewer with downcast eyes, one of the women carries a coin pouch in her hand, which indicates that the woman makes her own money through her work as a *porteuse* and is free from the enslaved labour on the plantation. With her back towards the viewer, the other woman has her hands on her back, with one of them suggesting that she might have held the purse before, or she wishes for her hands to cling onto a purse too. It expresses the freedom of the two women depicted, a subjecthood that is denied in the genre of the picturesque. The drawing further supports the idea that the plantation

²⁴⁷ Paulette Anneita Richards, "Airing the dirty linen: A critical introduction to Mayotte Capecia's strategies of reading colonial history in 'Je suis martiniquaise'" (PhD thesis, University of Virginia, 1996), 111.

was as unstable as Lacour captured, one year before abolition, with the growing and rising working class.

The body and the labour of the *porteuse* was a romantic site in which questions of race, gender, climate and labour were frequently played out. Hearn writes of the *porteuse* as ‘a remarkable type’ and ‘half-savage beauty’²⁴⁸. He continues, ‘Here they come, the girls – yellow, red, black. See the flash of the yellow feet where they touch the light! And what impossible tint the red limbs take in the changing glow.’²⁴⁹ Hearn sees one of the key characteristics of the *porteuse* as their variety of skin colours and how their colours change with the light as they work, dismantling contemporary anthropologists’ and artists’ attempts to define racial categories through fixed colour charts, as we will explore more in the following chapter. Instead of embodying one colour that can be easily pinpointed and labelled, and marked as Black, Hearn implies that these women are many colours at once. Here, he indicates a slipperiness of race which, without the strict binaries of slavery and freedom, is a prominent concern, which led to greater interest and anxieties in the many intersections and shades of colour a Black, and even more concerningly, a mixed-race, person could be, no longer purely defined in relation to enslavement.

Lacour draws the *porteuse* again in *Fort de France (Martinique) Le Matin* (no date) [Fig. 14], which has the accompanying title ‘Immediately as the light/they open their sleepy eyes, they start their work, by emptying the vases.’ It is a busy morning street in Fort-de-France in which we stand on the opposite side of a main street, where we look towards the town’s wooden houses and with a side street providing a deeper view further into the city. Thinking back to Lacour’s depiction of the empty plantation, this is an entirely different view: it introduce a collective of working women out

²⁴⁸ Hearn, *Two Years*, 104.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 119

and about in the city. The street in front of the houses is filled with *porteuses* of all ages and children walking, sitting and talking to each other, with no men present at the scene. As the accompanying title alludes to, the women and one child carry their tall vases on their heads, ready to be filled with the goods of the day: the vases are repeated across the drawing, making the women mirror each other and underlying their position as carriers. Lacour's portrayal of the women's labour is again conflicting: on the one hand, he points out their early start in the accompanying title and the scene correspondingly witnesses a morning start before the shops and the other homes have even opened their shutters, proving the women's industrious and hardworking character, earning their own income. On the other hand, the painting's warm colours and tones as well as the leisurely interactions between the women romanticise their work and do not convey the realities of back-breaking labour. It remains picturesque, feminine and with a relaxed air to it, undermining the seriousness of their work. Whereas in Lacour's drawing of the *porteuse* made before abolition, he zooms in on the two individual female figures, he here provides a comprehensive study of the different *porteuses* as part of a free collective and a workforce of manual labourers in the city, dismantling any conceptions of the non-white as bound to the plantation.

The Moment of Abolition

In one drawing [Fig. 15], Lacour captures a very specific moment in the history of Martinique, namely the final abolition of slavery, and in this drawing, he turns away from the natural environment and focuses only on the Black woman as a symbol of emancipation. The 1848 abolition was kickstarted with the demise of the July Monarchy on 23rd February 1848 but it had been long underway.²⁵⁰ The provisional government declared France a Republic the following day

²⁵⁰ Schloss, *Sweet Liberty*, 144; Butel, *Histoire des Antilles Françaises*, 15.

and Victor Schoelcher was appointed as the Deputy-Secretary of State in charge of the colonies.²⁵¹ On 5th March, François Arago, Minister of the Navy and Colonies, issued that a commission should be formed to prepare the decree securing emancipation and Schoelcher presided over the work until the signing of the abolition law on 27th April, which promised that the law would be applicable in two months.²⁵² However, as Glissant writes, ‘the slaves of 1848 did not fall for these pretty words.’²⁵³ The tension escalated when a manager of a plantation decided to forbid the usual drumming that marked the beginning of the work of grinding manioc into flour.²⁵⁴ On 20th May, an enslaved man named Romain decided to drum anyway and was arrested and put in jail in the northern capital of Saint Pierre.²⁵⁵ This led to more than twenty thousand enslaved workers and free people of colour crowding the streets of Saint Pierre on 22nd May, demanding Romain’s freedom and their own.²⁵⁶ The owner of one of the most productive plantations in Martinique, the Frenchman Pierre Dessalles, wrote of the uprising the day before proclamation: ‘we spent the whole night on the bridge, deploring the fate of our poor Martinique and that of its unfortunate planters whom the government had delivered to the fury of the blacks and people of colour.’²⁵⁷ The following day on 23rd May the abolition of slavery was officially proclaimed across the empire. 250,000 enslaved people across the French colonies were freed, and the plantation that Lacour depicted in 1847 was changed forever.²⁵⁸ Romain’s radical act was a direct catalyst for these momentous changes. On the day of the proclamation, Dessalles notes down in despair: ‘The

²⁵¹ Ibid, 144.

²⁵² Ibid, 144.

²⁵³ Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 30.

²⁵⁴ Semley, *To Be*, 142.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 142; Richard D. E. Burton, *La famille coloniale: La Martinique et la mère patrie, 1789–1992* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1994), 56.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, 143.

²⁵⁷ Pierre Dessalles, *Sugar and Slavery, Family and Race: The Letters of Pierre Dessalles, Planter in Martinique, 1808–1856*, ed. Robert Forster (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 214.

²⁵⁸ Silyane Larcher, “L’égalité divisée. La race au cœur de la ségrégation juridique entre citoyens de la métropole et citoyens des «vieilles colonies» après 1848,” *Le mouvement social* 252, 3 (2015),139.

streets are full of shouting and screaming negroes who stop all passers-by and force them to shout, “Long Live the Republic! Long Live Liberty!” The women in particular are rabid; one has to shake hands with all of them.’²⁵⁹ In the days following the abolition, Dessalles writes with great fear of the new situation unfolding as he hides in the boat away from the celebratory crowds. Silyane Larcher and others have demonstrated that the abolition of slavery did not happen overnight but was the culmination of a long process of rebellion and resistance, which all fueled the fire which eventually led to abolition – it was not given but fought for both in colonies and in continental France.²⁶⁰

Lacour’s drawing of abolition of slavery, *Martiniquaise Portant un Drapeau* (1848) [Fig. 15] shows a different vision of abolition than Dessalle’s description of the formerly enslaved as maniacal, unruly and on the barricades. The drawing pictures a dark-skinned woman, who holds a large Tricolour flag in her right hand and a straw wreath in her left. She stands next to a low stone monument with six Tricolour flags placed on its top. The monument is inscribed with the year of 1848 and ‘Republique Francais’ as well as a simplified coat of arms, which includes a bundle of oak branches with an undefined object in the middle, alluding to fasces but not clearly articulated. It is encircled by a straw wreath, similar to the one the woman holds. The woman wears a white short-sleeved dress with an empire silhouette, exposing her bare shoulders and bringing attention to her bosom and small waist. Her dress is laden with French national symbols: across the dress, the French Revolution’s quintessential motto, which also came into use during the 1848 revolution ‘Liberté, Égalité Fraternité’, is written. The lower part of the dress is decorated with two lines of

²⁵⁹ Dessalles, *Sugar and Slavery*. 206.

²⁶⁰ Silyane Larcher, *L’Autre citoyen: l’idéal républicain et les Antilles après l’esclavage* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2014); Mickaëlla Périna, *Citoyenneté et sujétion aux Antilles francophones: post-esclavage et aspiration démocratique* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1997).

blue and red, making the Tricolour flag, which matches the Tricolour ribbon around her waist and her headscarf, also adorned with the Tricolour. Dessalles describes, in a tone of bitterness and anger, that the Tricolour was repeatedly used during celebrations of the abolition: 'Tricolor flags are hanging from every window. One is supposed to wear three ribbons in one's buttonhole, and those who do not have them are forced by the populace to put them on.'²⁶¹

Naturally, Lacour was not the only artist who sought to immortalise and idealise the abolition of slavery. Most famous is the 1849 Salon painting *Proclamation of the Abolition of Slavery in the French Colonies 27 April* [Fig. 16] by François-Auguste Biard. To the left side, a white colonist, dressed in a dark suit, declares the abolition of slavery in an unspecified colony. He stands on a podium draped in red cloth under the Tricolour on the coast of an indistinct colony. Behind them stands a group of sailors in uniform. Sharing the podium is a dark-skinned woman seated crossed legged with downcast eyes as she tightly holds on to the cloth around her body. Her muted reaction is contrary to the African Caribbean group at the centre of the canvas. The group surrounds two slaves uniting, with the man breaking his shackles and the bare-breasted woman embracing him. To their right side, a lighter-skinned woman, only wearing a skirt and a headscarf kneels in front of the two young white women who may be her former owners, who look perplexed and bewildered as to what is happening around them. Her kneeling position represents the woman's supposed and expected gratitude to the white French, granting her freedom. Behind them, there is a mixed crowd of African Caribbean and formerly enslaved people who respond to the news. Biard stages here the moment of the proclamation, so momentous a historic occasion that it must be captured, worthy of being preserved and immortalised in the space of the Salon. The artist Nicolas Auguste Gallimard wrote in 1849 after seeing Biard's painting: 'these Negroes

²⁶¹ Dessalles, *Sugar and Slavery*, 216.

to whom it was no doubt right to restore freedom, will always show up badly as principal figures in a picture.’²⁶² Gallimard conveys here an artistic concern for how the painter should include dark-skinned people as subjects in paintings. This was not only a concern amongst the commentators immediately after abolition, but a concern for artists too, in terms of which kinds of models were appropriate to capture on canvas. A further concern was how best to capture the nuances and varieties of the human complexion through the physical mixing of the paints.²⁶³

Biard’s depiction of the various emotional reactions to hearing the abolition of slavery contrasts with Lacour’s depiction of the expressionless face of the woman. At a momentous occasion such as this, her face is surprisingly unemotional, and her eyes seem empty and do not confront the viewer. The muted expression makes the celebratory flags, the monument and the dress seem like performative props put on for the viewer, pointing to the impossibility of its abstract ideals of gender and racial equality. The woman’s headscarf leaves parts of her curly brown hair on display and frames her face. James Smalls explains that the headscarf served not only the practical use of preventing infestation of scalp diseases, but it also became an imposed mark of one’s status as an enslaved labourer and subsequently ‘a uniform of communal identity that encoded resistance to one’s enslaved condition.’²⁶⁴

Here, the female figure and her headscarf also plays on the figure of the female allegory of Liberty, most famously depicted in the 1830 painting of the French Revolution, *La Liberté guidant le peuple* [Fig. 17], by Eugène Delacroix. The figure of freedom, often personified as Marianne, is

²⁶² Nicholas Auguste Gallimard, *Examen du Salon de 1849* (Paris, 1849), 78. Cited in Hugh Honor, *The Image of the Black in Western Art from the American Revolution to World War I, Vol. 4, Part 1, Slaves and Liberators* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 172.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ James Smalls, “Slavery Is a Woman: Race, Gender, and Visuality in Marie Benoist's Portrait D'une Nègresse (1800)”, *Nineteenth-century Art Worldwide* 3, no. 1 (2004): <https://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring04/slavery-is-a-woman-race-gender-and-visuality-in-marie-benoists-portrait-dune-negresse-1800>.

recognised by wearing the Phrygian cap, a symbol of liberty since Ancient Rome, during which time slaves were given caps upon manumission, and ‘to call slaves to the cap’ was a call for slaves to take up arms with the promise of later being freed.²⁶⁵ In the drawing, Lacour plays with the similarities between the Phrygian cap and Black female headscarf to contemplate what a new vision of the female allegory of liberty might look like, pointedly posing the question of whether Marianne can be Black. Lacour dwells on the female figure of liberty in the drawing, yet also captures an ambivalence through his rehearsed symbolism of the French nation and who belongs as part of it post-abolition. As outlined in the thesis introduction, the inclusion of people of colour in French identity and nationality post-1848 was still a site of struggle and resistance and they were not recognised as equal participants in the making of modern France. In the years after the abolition of slavery, the previously enslaved were still working under horrific and violent conditions, rendering the abolition of slavery little more than wishful thinking, defeated by the persistence of the economy built on cheap and extractive labour.²⁶⁶ Lacour commemorates the abolition of slavery and with that the new citizens of France, yet there is an ambivalence to this; it was made a moment of celebration but also created uncertainty for the future, which was not only a political concern, but also artistic, thinking about the formerly enslaved as a subject matter. Looking forwards to today, we see how the imagery of the Black Marianne was utilised in the opening ceremony for the 2024 Olympics Games. The Black Marianne was personified through the Guadeloupean mezzo-seprano Axelle Saint-Cirel who stood on the roof of the Grand Palais in Paris while she sang the French national anthem, La Marseillaise, as part of the grand, albeit very wet, ceremony. Dressed in the blue, red and white colours of the Tricolour, she personifies the

²⁶⁵ Edith Hall, “Introduction: A valuable lesson,” in Edith Hall, R. Alston and J. McConnell (eds), *Ancient Slavery and Abolition: From Hobbes to Hollywood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 19.

²⁶⁶ C. C. McKee, *Cultivating Visible Order: Representations of Race and Ecology in the French Atlantic* (PhD Thesis Northwestern University 2019), 221.

female allegory of liberty – the ultimate symbol of France’s revolutionary ideals – as a Black woman in the middle of a political climate of far-right popularity, suggesting the power of the image of the Black Marianne as still prevalent, and one that taps into contemporary political discussions of France [Fig. 18].

Decaying palm trees

We begin our discussion by looking at his drawing *Îlet Marolles près Fort-de-France* (1851) [Fig. 19a], because it captures the lingering connection between pre- and post-enslavement societies.

We look at the scene from inland with the land in the foreground and the sea in the background. In the middle to the right foreground of the drawing, Lacour draws a river cutting through the land to the sea, dividing the pictorial image in two, with the piece of land on the right side just being a small triangle with a few bushes and one tree.

In between the two houses, Lacour includes people in four groups of two, positioned at different spots in the land, but all mirroring each other: they wear similar clothes and are in similar positions. In the left foreground, Lacour draws two women, one of them rests against the tall palm tree in a dark red skirt and white top, and the other woman looks down from a standing position and wears a lime-green skirt and white top. In the same posture, diagonally positioned further in the middle of the land, a man similarly rests against the palm tree, wearing white trousers, a grey jacket and a light brown straw hat, while a woman stands next to him. Further in the background and a bit to the right, two women walk towards the viewer, one wears a yellow skirt and the other one wears a blue dress, both with white tops. Lacour makes a connection between the land and the figures by drawing the leaves and the soil in the same brown nuances as the skin colour of the people, making a connection between race and landscape, between the colouring of the land and the people, confirming the figures are tied to the land. Yet, the woman with the blue skirt is white

in skin tone and disrupts any simplified reading of this as a scene of formerly enslaved on the land or a white-black binary, but rather presents Lacour's attention to the multiplicity of people on the land, mixing together.

Across the drawing, he repeatedly draws the trees with unrealistically thin trunks, just one line of brown, which carries the heavy crown of bouncing leaves. Nancy Lees Stepan argues that the trees were often employed by European artists to signify that the scene takes place in the tropics, even though the plant is not native to the Caribbean but was imported by early European settlers via the Columbian Exchange.²⁶⁷ Roland Barthes adds that the image of the palm tree is a sexualised form which holds a particularly sensual longing: 'Most commonly it (the palm tree) is shown not upright, not erect, but lounging across the frame, often heavy with fruit – as though swooning, yielding, "falling back" across the path of the viewer; a feminised entity proposing a languorous eroticism.'²⁶⁸ Lacour's repetition of the palm tree in the drawing dominates the left side of the image and with Barthes' argument in mind, implies a relationships between the multiple couples presented, using the natural environment to add to the narrative of the people and emphasises Anne McClintock's influential argument, outlined in the introduction, that the colonial landscape was feminised and eroticised under the colonial gaze.²⁶⁹

Stereotypically in colonial artwork, the crown of the palm tree is depicted in a vibrant green, evoking the fertility and abundance of the place, but Lacour includes dead leaves, some of which have fallen to the ground and some still clinging on to the tree [Fig. 19b and Fig. 19c]. He struggles to depict how decomposing leaves lie on the ground; telling of his troubles with placing objects in space, like we saw with his depiction of the plantation. In a deep brown, like the soil of

²⁶⁷ Nancy Stepan, *Picturing Tropical Nature. Picturing History* (London: Reaktion, 2001), 19.

²⁶⁸ Cited in Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics*, 108.

²⁶⁹ McClintock, *Imperial leather*, 21-75.

the ground, the leaves are in the process of decaying. It is significant that Lacour includes the decay of nature on the island, a key part of the European imagination and consumption of the Caribbean natural world as Eden.

Lacour's invocation of rot and decay conveys that time has passed since the dream of the Caribbean as a natural and – to use Barthes' argument – sexualised paradise with unlimited human and non-human resources. Instead, that vision is dying, alongside and while the depicted figures enjoy their downtime undisturbed by the decomposition occurring around them, but rather interested in their introspective worlds and coupling, which the viewers are distanced from. The use of decay to signal the ending of this vision and moment in history is interesting given the centrality of rot to long histories of slavery and power in the Caribbean, since its earliest moments. To Justin Linds, rot, fermentation and decay are at the very centre of the project of Atlantic slavery, from the uncontrollable rot and ingestion by organisms of wood aboard slave ships to the necessity of mastering and controlling processes of rot via the fermentation of natural substances like sugarcane and indigo to produce profitable commodities.²⁷⁰ Rot could simultaneously make or break fortunes, and, as with the natural environment, needed to be heavily controlled. Linds continues to write that enslaved people had long existed 'in close proximity to rotting things and decaying environments' and 'nineteenth-century constructions of Blackness rely on representations of altered, fouled, putrefying environments' producing a 'Blackness affixed to chemical volatility', tying the processes of plantation production, colour change and race-making

²⁷⁰ Justin Linds, "Fermentation, Rot, and Power in the Early Modern Atlantic," *Edge Effects*, 11th August 2020, <https://edgeeffects.net/fermentation-rot-and-power/>. For an examination of the impact of the tropical climate, see for example, Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003).

closely together.²⁷¹ Thus, biological breakdown also went hand in hand with the history of colour as we saw in the introduction in reference to indigo.

In the drawing *Palmiers* [Fig. 20a], Lacour again renders the decay of the palm tree leaves; this time two tall palm trees are depicted next to a road, where a man, wearing blue trousers and a white shirt, carries a bowl with green contents and a bunch of bananas in one hand, and a large knife in another. Despite the man's successful harvest, the leaves of the palm trees are again depicted with brown leaves, which are about to fall off [Fig. 20b and 20c]. Again, the decay evokes the loss of a paradisiacal dream with the palm tree as its main symbol. The harvest of the man, even at a time of decay, suggests an undercurrent of anxiety in the work of Lacour, an anxiety that the Black body was able to thrive in the nature, whereas the white body might be corrupted by the climate.²⁷² Lacour's repeated depiction of the decaying palm trees, the dominant symbol of the Caribbean tropics, is unlikely. As a counterpoint, Hearn describes the embodied presence of the palm tree, felt as he sees them along the road. He writes:

In the marvellous light, which brings out all the rings of their bark, these palms sometimes produce a singular impression of subtle, fleshy, sentient life,- seem to move with a slowly stealthy motion as you ride or drive past them. The longer you watch them, the stronger this idea becomes, - the more they seem alive, - the more their long silver-gray articulated bodies seem to poise, undulate, stretch.... Certainly the palms of a Demerara country-road evoke no such real emotion as that produced by the stupendous palms of the Jardin des Plantes in Martinique.²⁷³

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Arnold, "Illusory Riches".

²⁷³ Hearn, *Two Years*, 71.

To Hearn, the palm trees in Martinique are made of flesh: they are like bodies but made and cultivated in the botanical garden of Martinique, a prime site of French dominance over the environment, which Hearn was a particular fan of, as we will see in the next chapter. By likening the palm trees to human beings, Hearn speaks to a human-nature connection, where nature here takes on human attributes, making it even more clear how the decay of palm trees is not just the decay of nature but also a potential decay of the human in the Caribbean. Lacour's attention to a slow but spreading sense of decay encapsulates the loss of control over the plantation system and a landscape that had previously been a carefully managed, controlled and groomed glistening jewel, and would now be left to fall untended into disrepair. We will see echoes of this sentiment once more in the second chapter's discussion of botanical gardens and post-emancipation labour, in Hearn's horror at the corruption of the island's ecology, such as the burning of trees into charcoal.

Lacour homes in even more closely on the motif of natural deterioration in the drawing *Bananniers. Papayer* (1851) [Fig. 21a], where he studies up-close two banana trees and one papaya tree, as they stand isolated on a flat field. He again renders the decay happening to the banana trees, with parts of their leaves turning brown and one already hanging dead from the trunk [Fig. 21b, 21c and 21d]. We saw earlier how Lacour depicted the enslaved carrying a bunch of bananas, suggesting their animalistic nature as well as the successful cultivation of the fruit, whereas in this drawing, he isolates both trees on the page, with no produce and as decaying.

Lacour's continuous attention to the decay of the plant life on the island hints to us that the natural world is no longer under complete French control after emancipation. Its decay indicates a space that is no longer static and governed by plantation owners or other colonial authority; instead, it is left dying, alluding to a changing and unruly social and political environment post-emancipation, which creeps into Lacour's otherwise ordered visions of the island. Here, nature is a force which has the potential to disrupt and lead to the demise of civilised order, a central objective of the

French imperial enterprise. The depiction of rot is closely connected to notions of whiteness. Not only was the rotting nature a sign of white colonial power festering away, it was also intimately tied to colonial processes of fermenting and bleaching Caribbean nature. For example, in her discussion of early-modern colonial commodities, Elizabeth Heath has argued that the bleaching of sugar was part of a centuries-long project of assimilating and acclimatising European bodies and senses to the exotic commodity of sugar.²⁷⁴ Sugar's marketing, Heath notes, involved training consumers to recognise 'a well-established hierarchy ranging from the modest brown *sucre brut*, or muscovado, to the more refined crystallized brown sugar (cassonades) and the highly desirable white sugars, crystallized or powdered.'²⁷⁵ As such, the making of sugar exemplifies the importance of the ability to read colour and know the intrinsic value and safety of whiteness, compared to the darker shades of brown, its colour signifying its degeneration. We will return to the legibility and illegibility of nature's colours in the final chapter on Gauguin, where we will see how he reads the colour-changing mango.

In the rain and at sea

While the two previous drawings emphasised decay of the environment, in the next drawing Lacour uses another feature of the Caribbean environment – heavy, sporadic bursts of warm tropical rain – now to expose the eroticism of the woman of colour. In *Une averse un ville* (no date) [Fig. 22], Lacour renders a scene in which five figures are unluckily captured in the pouring rain, which dramatically overflows the street of Rue Henri in Fort-de-France, and the possible dangers of wetness are played out. Rendered in pencil, three women – one in the centre, one at the right and one further to the left – make their way across the street, despite the rain reaching knee height and the women having to lift their skirts so as not to get them wet. The dark-skinned woman

²⁷⁴ Elizabeth Heath, "Sugarcoated Slavery: Colonial Commodities and the Education of the Sense in Early Modern France," *Critical Historical Studies* 5, no. 2 (2018).

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 194.

in the centre of the image wears a white top in empire style, a muted grey-coloured and patterned skirt and a headscarf with a pattern of blue and brown colours. On top of her headscarf, she carries a load of freshly washed, white laundry in a basket, suggesting that she works as a laundress. The volatile weather might make the clean white laundry dirty and contaminated, unusable and in need of another wash. She lifts the skirt high on her thighs, leaving them exposed. The copious rain is beginning to make her white top see-through and the shape of her breasts visible. The woman slightly faces the other woman at the left side of the image, who is dressed in a similar fashion but with a green scarf across her shoulders, a reddish skirt, a deep red and blue-red scarf and the same white top that appears see-through around her bosom. She also lifts her skirt high up her thighs, just enough so one of her buttocks is slightly uncovered. A finely dressed man stands on the footpath about to walk onto the flooded street. He hesitates, leaning forward over the street of swirling water, clearly deliberating whether to stay dry or plunge in, with the umbrella in his hand not helping him much. He peers over, gravitating towards the water, but something seems to hold him back. He looks straight ahead to the side, not paying attention to the two women. Instead, his gaze is in the direction of the woman on the left side, who wears a blue skirt with a high-neck and red bow, a yellow headscarf and who also carries an umbrella. She lifts her skirt, revealing her white stockings and thighs (though not as high as the other women). Her high-necked dress conceals what we are not meant to see of a woman, evidencing her greater respectability and higher-class status. The umbrella of the two well-dressed figures evokes not only their social position, but also the fragility of their bodies against the weather, in need of a physical, material barrier to protect them both from the sun and the rain. Nelson establishes how the brightly coloured, fashionable parasol served as a shield against the sunshine and downpour, it also a protection against changing complexion: it ensured that a ‘polite and genteel, delicate complexion’

was maintained.²⁷⁶ The two dark-skinned women in contrast have no protection from the climate, but instead stand unconcerned and unhindered (even with a slight smile) knee-height in the water, reflecting their familiarity and effortlessness in the climate, as well as the continuous darkening of their skin that they have no qualms about exposing themselves to.

The dangers of the unpredictable climate lead directly to the dark-skinned woman becoming dangerously exposed, with the heavy rainfall used as an appropriate reason to depict otherwise covered parts of the female body. As with Lacour's depiction of decay, he troubles the island as a space only of paradise. It was a space in which nature decomposes, and where the heavy rain not only brings obstruction to civil order but also carries danger and diseases for the white man and makes the people of colour less civilised and more sexually available to the male encountering them. It is not a coincidence that Lacour decides to include the white man in the same image as the exposed women, positioned higher and looking down over them, alluding here to the dangers of the unpredictable tropical environment for the physical and racial constitution of the European body. The wet weather is implied to possess corrupting force, as though being exposed to it, and surviving it, could change one's body, and make a European person less civilised and closer racially to the Afro-Caribbean body, and thus to savagery and nature. Racial mixing and environmental concerns were thus closely intertwined in the nineteenth-century Caribbean, and both protection from the climate and the population of colour through spatial separation were strictly pursued.²⁷⁷ The man is protected by his European clothing, particularly by the umbrella that both he and the finely dressed woman carry, which functions as a sign of their affluence and assumed civilised status, whereas the female labourers remain exotic and erotic. Historians, including Suman Seth, John R. McNeil and many others, have documented white anxieties

²⁷⁶ Nelson, *Slavery, Geography and Empire*, 316.

²⁷⁷ Savage, "Slave Poison/Slave Medicine", 174-178; Coleman, "Janet Schaw," 169-193.

surrounding climate and degeneration as a crucial part of the experience of being in the colonies.²⁷⁸ Here, the weather, whether heat or rain, was thought to be the cause of the degeneration of whiteness, a fear that we saw in our earlier discussion of the use of cashew-nut oil as a bleaching substance.²⁷⁹

Lacour continues to dwell on the white and body of colour in the climate in *Canot-paquebot de Fort-de-France à Saint Pierre* (1851) [Fig. 23a and 23b], which takes on a different kind of watery setting – the sea. It records a boat, which as the title informs, sails, under the French flag, from Fort-de-France and Saint Pierre, towards Mount Pelée and the northern tropical rainforests and mountains. The boat is divided into two sections, with the dark-skinned workers, bare-chested and wearing white trousers and straw hats sitting in the front of the boat. In the other half of the boat sits a group of finely dressed white people underneath a gazebo. Close to the group of white people, a dark-skinned captain awkwardly sits. He comfortably controls the steering wheel and is dressed in a white shirt and trousers. With the two divided sections, Lacour makes a distinction between white people and people of colour: the white people are protected from the forces of the natural environment (the sea, the sun and the wind) with the gazebo and they wear coats and hats for further safety. In contrast, the Afro-Caribbean men are bare-chested with three of them sitting on the edge of the boat clearly with no fear of falling off or feeling the impact of nature. Whereas in his drawing before abolition [Fig. 10], Lacour only depicted the manual labourer and the enslaved together, after abolition he pays greater attention to and more frequently captures the inter-class and -racial encounters too. In positioning the white elite in the same pictorial and urban space as the manual labourer, perhaps formerly enslaved, Lacour illustrates how different groups

²⁷⁸ Suman Seth, *Difference and Disease: Medicine, Race, and The Eighteenth-century British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); John R. McNeil, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

²⁷⁹ Coleman, "Janet Schaw," 186; Savage, "Slave Poison/Slave Medicine," 161.

shared public spaces in the colonial Caribbean, which came with the risk of an unpredictable environment, further washing out sexual and social boundaries and leading to a decay of an existing order. Together, the pouring rain and the rotting nature tells us that Lacour sensed the loss of an old peaceful world order post-abolition and used the natural environment to document it. In the following drawing, we look at another scene in which people mix and boundaries blur in the context of a moment of Creole entertainment and performance, yet race and class boundaries and separations continue to be inscribed and enforced through dress and the spectre of white surveillance over Black society and culture.

Bamboula

Across the section so far, we have examined several of Lacour's drawings, looking closely at how he depicts a range scenes of the people and nature, as the people within the land. Now, we turn to a drawing in which he depicts a group of people at a dance happening in the darkness of the forest [Fig. 24a]. Historian Edwin C. Hill Jr. asserts that 'European and colonial writers inscribe their New World trips in sound from the moment of departure from the Old World to that of the arrival in the New World and all the way back again. If at times subtle or disavowed, travel writers often found soundscapes one of the "newest"—that is, "strangest," most "foreign," most "other"—aspects of the New World.'²⁸⁰ He asks us to think about not only the imperial eyes but also the imperial hearing ear or the hearing man in accounts of empire.²⁸¹ Sarah Thomas argues that 'the slave dance is one of the most common tropes in the iconography of slavery throughout the Americas and the Caribbean. The images are most often celebratory in spirit, the African drum and other instruments are usually prominent, and the dancers are often represented in an apparent state

²⁸⁰ Edwin C Hill, Jr.. *Black Soundscapes White Stages* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 4.

²⁸¹ Hill, Jr. *Black Soundscapes*, 4.

of jubilant self-sufficiency.²⁸² One of the examples that Thomas uses to illustrate this visual recipe of enslaved joy and entertainment is Richard Bridgens' *Negro Dance* (between 1838 and 1845) [Fig. 25]. She continues to argue that there were increasing fears about social gatherings between the enslaved after the successful uprising in Saint Domingue in 1804, and a soldier is therefore frequently depicted as surveilling the scene, as seen in a painting such as Auguste Earle's *Negro Fandango* (1822) [Fig. 26]. Times of amusement such as a dance were allowed on the plantation, because it was believed that they made the enslaved more productive upon the field.²⁸³ Plantation owners felt that their slaves worked more effectively when they sang while working and in the slave auction the slaves with the strongest voices attracted the highest prices.²⁸⁴ Thus the act of singing and dancing was part of plantation life, but only sanctioned when occurring within the institution of captivity and subjugation, not as free agents, as Saidiya Hartman has argued.²⁸⁵ This is evident in the journal notes of Dessalles in which he repeatedly writes of enslaved dance, as approved and regulated by him. For example, he writes in January 1837: 'My young negro Nicaise asked me to let the people do some square dancing and I consented. The same fiddlers who serenaded me returned at two o'clock; at six it was all over. Many negroes from other places took part in this little party, which came off in the best order.'²⁸⁶ Dessalles positions himself here as the humane plantation owner, who approves of a 'party', which even attracts enslaved people from other plantations. That Dessalles was serenaded and knows when the 'party' ended tell us that he was present at the scene or kept a watchful eye on the event from his house. This supports Hartman's argument that events like dancing were not episodes of freedom but acts of surveillance

²⁸² Sarah Thomas, "On the Spot: travelling artists and Abolitionism, 1770-1830," *Atlantic Studies* 8 (2), p. 11.

²⁸³ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 17-49.

²⁸⁴ Martin Munro, *Different Drummers: Rhythm and Race in the Americas* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2010), 16.

²⁸⁵ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 17-49.

²⁸⁶ Dessalles, *Sugar and Slavery*, 91.

under the pretence of allowing the enslaved an evening of entertainment.²⁸⁷ His comment that the party ‘came off in the best order’ further points to the argument that Dessalles was apprehensive of such events which, like Thomas explained, was the cause of anxieties about slave rebellion after the successful establishment of Haiti, but Dessalles proves that he successfully managed to control it.

Standing underneath two tall trees, an interracial audience forms a half-circle surrounding the dancing couple in Lacour’s drawing [Fig. 24a]. The half circle goes from the lower left to the lower right corner of the image, positioning the performers’ dance in the middle of the drawing with the crowd facing the viewer and encircling our view. The crowd is made up of a mix of women and men, all coming together to watch the performance across class and racial divisions. The women are all similarly wearing wide, patterned skirts in different colours but with different tops. The men’s dress depends on their skin colour: the white men wear formal clothes with top hats and suits, and the dark-skinned men wear workers’ clothes with straw hats and hard-worn clothes. The performers are a dark-skinned woman and a dark-skinned man. The woman faces us as she waves her red skirt and the man stands with his back towards us, as he holds out his hat with his right hand [Fig. 24b]. They are both barefoot on the ground, a ground that is depicted with fine strokes of grey, green and orange. The couple dances to the music created by the two dark-skinned male figures in shorts, sitting on the left side of the drawing, playing the drums [Fig. 24c].

Chenzira Davis Kahina insists that European colonial authorities, have always treated the drum with a sense of apprehension and ambivalence.²⁸⁸ Afro-Caribbean dance, music, and song, as represented in the drawing, was banned across the Caribbean by European colonialists, including

²⁸⁷ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 17-49.

²⁸⁸ Chenzira Davis Kahina, “An Introduction to Bamboula,” *YouTube*, 04: 24, 26th March 2017, accessed 20th July 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1SbQh9qKkk>.

in Martinique through the law *Code Noir*, as it was viewed as a dangerous and demonic act.²⁸⁹ As such, the persistence and survival of Afro-Caribbean dance is a celebration of the African roots, resistance, and resilience of the enslaved.²⁹⁰ As Kahina stresses, it is not just a dance or song, it is a form of communication, an ancestral communication between the drummer, the dancer and the spirit that moves beyond words.²⁹¹

The power of the drum was the subject matter in the French Caribbean folktale “Pè Tambou a” [Don’t Play the Drum], described by Brenda F. Berrian.²⁹² Here, the drummer Kinsonn asks the parish French Catholic priest how much it would cost to have the bells ringing for his marriage ceremony, but it turns out, it is too expensive.²⁹³ Kinsonn instead plays the bèlè drum underneath the catalpa tree during the Sunday church ceremony, disturbing the priest and making the congregation lose their interest. Instead, all join Kinsonn outside and are mesmerised by the drum.²⁹⁴ The folktale not only relates the expensiveness of church bells, but more importantly, it attests to how the drum subverts church teachings and the spiritual awakening of the congregation.

In stark opposition to the dancing couple, the crowd appears static in Lacour’s drawing. The only four figures that move are the women, who hold fire lanterns in stretched arms to light up the scene in the right and left corners and in the middle of the crowd. The most prominent figure in the group is the broad-shouldered man dressed in a French military uniform, who stands tall and stiff, to the right from the centre, reminding us of the soldier depicted in Earle’s work. Compared to the rest of the crowd, with their blurred faces and non-distinctive facial expressions, the military man here is depicted as he observes the dance. He is not the only military man present at the scene: in

²⁸⁹Ibid.

²⁹⁰Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Berrian, *Awakening Spaces*, 206.

²⁹³Ibid, 208-209.

²⁹⁴Ibid, 208-209.

the left lower corner stands a soldier in a different uniform with his arms behind his back. He is placed in the shadow and with his back towards us, blacking out any details about him, except for the characteristically white trousers of the uniform. By rendering the French military men, perhaps drawn like self-portraits of himself, Lacour represents the continued policing of the African Caribbean body, signaling white anxieties surrounding the newly freed Black body. It is not purely a celebratory gathering but one that may possess an element of risk or fearfulness that must be watched. This is an act of looking at Creole amusement and enjoyment as yet another way to maintain power over the Black body, both during enslavement and after abolition, reminding us of the 'theatre of the marketplace' in which the enslaved were forced to appear content, smiling and dancing, with past or present trauma.²⁹⁵ Lacour's drawing can therefore be seen as implicated in this wider French surveillance of the dance.

Mary Lou Emery insists that the colonial relationship is one of vision, in which seeing becomes matter, an active movement with power that structures the unequal colonial relationship.²⁹⁶ The crossing of multiple looks and overlooking here echoes what Fred Morton describes as the intersection of 'looking and being looked at, spectacle and spectatorship, enjoyment and being enjoyed', that which Hartman names hypervisibility.²⁹⁷ Nonetheless, Lacour again troubles a straightforward reading of the scene as merely an act of one-way looking: as viewers, we are positioned as standing on the opposite side of the circle not depicted and watching the performance together with the rest of the crowd. Our perspective on the scene is slightly elevated, and thus we look downwards, leaving us as part of the scene, yet still not quite. Furthermore, no one else

²⁹⁵ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 39.

²⁹⁶ Mary Lou Emery, *Modernism, the Visual, and Caribbean Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 15.

²⁹⁷ Fred Morton, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 1.

watches from this side of the circle, as the two women with the lanterns end the half circle with no immediate onlooker to stand next to them. The confrontation of the half circle prompts us to think about whether the crowd is also watching us, watching them. Indeed, the front-facing circle formed around us reminds us that we are being looked back at and being confronted with our own looking. The audience reminds us of our position as onlookers, staring at and surveying the performance, and in doing so, Lacour destabilises our easy, pleasurable looking at entertainment and challenges us to confront our modes of looking. It speaks into bell hooks' assertion that looking back is an act of rebellion, holding the potential to recalibrate power imbalances and restore the agency and subjecthood lost in a one-way exchange.

Indeed, in the title of the image, Lacour identifies the dance as Bamboula, yet we cannot rely on him as a reliable source for identifying African Caribbean cultural forms, and his drawing lacks detail and specification to support any claims about which dance this is. Furthermore, the writer Susanna Sloat explains that although Bamboula was reported in Trinidad in the 1700s and St Lucia in 1844, there is not enough evidence to determine whether the Bamboula was widely danced in Martinique.²⁹⁸ As Sloat further writes, there was a widespread reductionism amongst white colonialists, where the differences between the wide variety of dances in the Caribbean were described as if they were the same. She follows the argument made by the anthropologist Harold Courlander, who writes: 'It is evident that writers tended to use a single name, such as Chica or Bamboula, to cover virtually any kind of dance festivity...'²⁹⁹ Even if white observers such as Lacour tried to describe the dance correctly and tried to depict the dance seriously, he would not have had the cultural knowledge to recognise the differences between the dances, musical

²⁹⁸ Susanna Sloat, *Making Caribbean Dance: Continuity and Creativity in Island Cultures* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2010), 17.

²⁹⁹ Harold Courlander, *The Drum and the Hoe: Life and Lore of the Haitian People* (Berkeley: University of California, 1960), 127. Cited in Susanna Sloat, *Making Caribbean Dance*, 27.

instruments, and their meanings. Thus, although Lacour identifies the dance as Bamboula, we cannot trust him as a bearer of meaning; as with other white colonists who were part of the imperial machine, we cannot trust his knowledge of the dance and his visual representation is so non-descriptive that it is not a portrait of a dance or its performers. Adding to the previous point about the audience looking back at the viewer, the limitation of Lacour's knowledge opens up the possibility of the agency of the dancers depicted, as carriers and markers of knowledge, traditions and experience which a viewer, like Lacour, cannot capture or comprehend.

Underneath the trees and in the dimmed light of the night with no sign of urban space nearby, we are confronted with the missing pieces of our knowledge. The scene is filled with people, unlike some of Lacour's other works. Yet, it remains a similar sense of trepidation, for unlike the work of Bridgens and Earle [Fig. 25 and 26], in which the familiar sights of buildings and houses can be seen in the background, there are no indications of human settlement. Ultimately, *Bamboula* captures the process of making sense of a changing island and of human societies and their place in the non-human world, which, as argued, is a central feature across Lacour's drawings.

This section of the chapter has shown the ways in which Lacour grapples with the possibilities of being French before, at the moment of, and after the abolition of slavery in his album, which he bends and troubles through themes of skin colour, labour, gender and climate. We have seen how Lacour begins with depicting the plantation and ignores the Black population, and how he, after the abolition of slavery, becomes occupied with depicting the newly emancipated female subject, still in relation to labour but also as a subject and as a maker of performance. This section has looked at the natural environment as a space in which such questions were being asked and contemplated upon, which I will look at in even more detail in the second section, in which Lacour's landscapes take the centre stage.

Section II:

Mapping a shifting ground: Lacour's Landscapes

Scene I: The volcano

They shouted "Do you not hear that noise?"

I answered, "Yes, it is thunder!"

*"No, it is the Soufriere."*³⁰⁰

It is 5th August 1851, and the physician Étienne Ruzf de Lavison (1806-1884) writes of the moment he realised that the noise he could hear from his home was not just the temperamental Martinican weather, but rather stemmed from the island's northern volcano, Mount Pelée.³⁰¹ Serving as a landmark or signpost both for those on the island, and those approaching by ship, the volcano is a foreboding reminder of nature's potential to destroy human life and society. On this day, the volcano was erupting on an otherwise peaceful day. Ruzf de Lavison continues to recount that he spent the night in a state of great anxiety and saw the torches of people fleeing away from the volcano.³⁰² The following morning, Ruzf de Lavison observes that 'roofs, pavements, leaves of trees, all were covered by a thin layer of greyish cinders, which made the town look like a European city covered by the white frost of the early days of autumn' and the people of Saint Pierre were frightened.³⁰³ In the following days and as part of a government-appointed investigation committee, Ruzf de Lavison walked towards the crater of the volcano and saw the aftermath of the eruption in 'all its extent and horror', with the lush vegetation now burned and

³⁰⁰ Étienne Ruzf de Lavison, "L'éruption de la montagne Pelée", trans. Thomas Jaggard Jr. *The American Naturalist* 38, no. 445 (1904), 53.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 53.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 53.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 53.

dried black mud covering the green, in an atmosphere of dread silence.³⁰⁴ After the excursion, he and the committee concluded that the eruption was a local event with no significant damages beyond the area close to the crater. He further confirms that the capital city of St Pierre, more than ten kilometres away, appears to be out of danger from eruptions considerably greater than this one, and reassures that the volcano is an interesting curiosity and picturesque addition to Martinique.³⁰⁵ Rufz de Lavison's comforting account of the unarmful volcano precedes the massive 1902 volcanic eruption which destroyed Saint Pierre and killed most of its inhabitants, in one of the largest natural disasters of the twentieth century. This type of fast and deadly volcanic explosion is now known as a Pélean eruption, closely linking Martinique with this type of natural disaster.³⁰⁶ The 1851 and 1902 eruptions of the volcano are powerful reminders of the natural world's potential to destruct human habitation, ultimately demolishing the infrastructure, housing and goods which the empire had built across centuries on the island, encroaching upon the island's natural landscape in an ironic twist of fate, or perhaps, revenge. We remember from the introduction that the volcano is one of the four ancient elements that shapes the Caribbean, according to Maximin. The origin stories of the islands themselves are the formation of lava-land in the midst of the ocean, out of the remnants of those angry volcanic eruptions that long precede any European empire.³⁰⁷ Recalling McNeill's focus on the historical transformations brought about by the agencies of ecological events and its interactions with human societies, we are once again drawn away from the concepts of time engendered by the modern colonial intervention, and

³⁰⁴Ibid, 56.

³⁰⁵Ibid, 72.

³⁰⁶ Christopher Church, *Paradise Destroyed: Catastrophe and citizenship in the French Caribbean* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 2; Jean-Claude Tanguy, "The 1902–1905 Eruptions of Montagne Pelée, Martinique: Anatomy and Retrospection," *Journal of Volcanology and Geothermal Research*, 60, no. 2 (1994): 87–107,

³⁰⁷ Maximin, *Les fruits du cyclone*.

reminded that nature remains in control – of Martinique’s time, space, culture and history – and that it cannot be conquered by outside human forces.³⁰⁸

The threat of the volcano looms over the landscape as an ever-lasting menace, a dark foreboding of the eventual wrecking of the settlement the occupiers have made themselves, foolishly or arrogantly, vulnerable by occupying land so close to the volcano. Part of what was destroyed by the 1902 explosion was the botanical gardens in Saint Pierre, which we will also return to in the next chapter, and which the deputy commissioner in the French Navy, Louis François Elisabeth Rémy Reisser, described as a ‘picturesque’ place, particularly useful for the naval station in Fort Royal, where Lacour was also stationed, because the doctors and pharmacists of the Navy could study the plants of the New World up close.³⁰⁹ In two 1847 pencil drawings, both glued onto one album page next to each other, one untitled and the other with the name *Cascade du Jardin des Plantes (St Pierre)* (both unsigned) [Fig. 27a and 27b], Lacour draws the garden in tones of grey and black with touches of white gouache, strangely not fully capturing the lush and colourful nature as vividly as it would have appeared to him in real life. To the right, Lacour renders the waterfall in the botanical garden that Reisser believed was created by the volcano. Lacour underlines the impressive height of the waterfall by including a figure of a finely dressed woman, who serves as a measurement to communicate the grandness of the volcano. What Lacour could not have known was that the botanical gardens with its wealth of native and imported plant life would all be gone in a few decades. The uncontrollable volcano would destroy this grand example of the empire’s control over nature, the botanical garden, exemplifying the inescapable limitation of human pursuit in the face of nature.

³⁰⁸ McNeill, *Mosquito Empires*, 6.

³⁰⁹ Rémy Reisser, *Historique du Jardin-des-plantes de Saint-Pierre-Martinique* (Fort-Royal h. Arnaud, 1846), 30.

Scene II: The Mapmaker

On this island things fidget.
Even history.
The landscape does not sit
Willingly
as if behind an easel
holding a post
waiting on
Someone
to pencil
its lines, compose
its best features
or unruly contours.
Landmarks shift,
become unfixed
by earthquake
by landscape
by utter spite.
Whole places will slip
Out from your grip.³¹⁰

The poet Kei Miller imagines a discussion between a European cartographer who wishes to create a map of Jamaica, and a local rastaman who challenges the cartographer's pursuit through his own

³¹⁰ Kei Miller, *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2014), 15.

mapping to the city of Zion. In the collection, Miller dismantles the map as a visualisation of scientific knowledge, and positions it instead as a tool of colonialism, reflecting on how it has been used to create spatial and geographical knowledge to assert and order colonial power over the natural environment and people. In one of the first poems of the collection, 'What the Mapmaker Ought to Know', the rastaman gives the cartographer a forewarning. He articulates the impossibility of mapping the Jamaican landscape as it is always in the process of transformation. It is 'unfixed', it 'slips' and 'leaves your grip', impossible to capture.³¹¹ Like Mount Pelee, land can be mapped, and thus domesticised and familiarised, but its unpredictability could not. It retains its will to act randomly and violently, to completely flatten the fruits of human toil, irrespective of events and circumstances on the ground. It is the opposite of a landscape painting that is fixed with pencil on an easel. The poem articulates the perspective of a local, a carrier of knowledge and experiences of the landscape, in dialogue with the cartographer – a personification of the larger mission of the colonial regulation and ordering that often took place through mapmaking as well as landscape painting, a landscape he can never truly understand or obtain. In writing: 'The rastaman thinks, draw me a map of what you see then I will draw a map you never see and guess me whose map will be bigger than those? Guess me whose map will tell the larger truth?'³¹²

Aimé Césaire contests the marks left upon Martinique by the clueless mappings of the European cartographer, wishing to rewrite 'my original geography also; the map of the world drawn for my own use, not dyed with the arbitrary colours of men of science but with the geometry of my spilt blood, I accept.'³¹³ Here, we return once more to the currency of colour in making and challenging colonial knowledge and subjugation. The coloniser's colours, used for drawing maps and people have characterised and defined the Caribbean in terms not its own, unconsented to by its

³¹¹ Ibid, 15.

³¹² Ibid, 19.

³¹³ Aimé Césaire, *Return to my Native Land* (London:Random House, 2011), 125.

inhabitants. What we might infer from Césaire's words is the way in which throughout this thesis, the artist's colour selections betray much about their attitudes towards what was important and unimportant in the landscape; what was worthy of being recorded through complex colour mixing and detailed combinations and layers, and what could be washed over using standard shades repeatedly, seemingly with little interest. What we find throughout this thesis is that European makers of the Caribbean landscape used their colour palette in such a way that the Black population is cast as native, fixed to and part of the ground, which we also saw in Lacour's earlier drawing [Fig. 5a], where he visually roots her to the land. In contrast, Césaire responds to this mode of situating the Black body by reclaiming his own belonging to the land on his own terms, defined by the blood, sweat and tears spilled by himself and his ancestors into the ground through centuries of enslaved and indentured labour. He wants to produce a map that seeks to reclaim and repair the damage of those toxic dyes that have been poured carelessly and arbitrarily over the island.³¹⁴ Such histories and the substances that remain are what give one the true depth of embodied knowledge and understanding of the land, as opposed to the illusions of knowledge provided by science, observation, paint and paper, according to Césaire.

Miller similarly dissects the map as a material object and mapping as an act and imagination in his collection through the figure of the rastaman. In refusing to be mapped, the rastaman and the landscape refuses to be tamed, contained and explained through the tools of the cartographer, who stands in for the imperial man, and instead exposes the illusion of power and authority that a map – and landscape painting – assumes. The assumed authority of colonial maps has not stopped scholars, such as Lambert from examining and rereading Black and indigenous voices and resistance into these sources, because of course, cartography was never the pursuit of a single man

³¹⁴ Nelson, *Slavery, Geography and Empire*, 230.

but a complex process of exploration, measurement and recording that relied heavily on the concept of “captive knowledge”, memories and relationships to land of the enslaved and colonised.³¹⁵ Hence, Miller is part of a larger conversation within postcolonial scholarship that investigates imperial mapmaking as a mode of power and world-making that confirmed European ideas of the Caribbean as empty and available, needing to be mapped, to be mastered.

In their analysis of early modern Caribbean maps, Sutton and Yingling include a 1667 map of Martinique, in which the entire west-side of the island is drawn in the greatest detail, with the mountains mapped out and with places named, whilst the east side of the map is left largely empty with only ‘Deumeure des Sauvages’ written across it [Fig. 28].³¹⁶ The ‘dwellings of the savages’ was, according to Sutton and Yingling, either not mapped because the Europeans did not think it was needed to map, not yet being French, or because they were not in control of that part of the island and did not possess sufficient knowledge to map it.³¹⁷ As such, the empty east side of the map signifies the limitations of cartographers’ knowledge in their mapping of the land – their inability to know everything – the opposite of what the map was meant to communicate: the conquering of territory through knowledge. Miller’s story of Cartographer and the Rastaman confronts this task of trying to pin down a landscape, both in visual and written form, as one lost from the beginning. It is impossible to record and map the surroundings, it is always in a process of changing – whether it is the fruits ripening, the waves moving or the volcano erupting – and in doing so, the land refuses to be mapped, leaving cartographic knowledge always limited. As David Arnold asserts, the tensions between the tropical landscape’s appearance and subsequent

³¹⁵ David Lambert, “‘Taken captive by the mystery of the Great River’: Towards an historical geography of British geography and Atlantic slavery,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 35, no. 1 (2009): 65.

³¹⁶ Angela Sutton and Charlton W. Yingling, “Projections of Desire and Design in Early Modern Caribbean Maps,” *The Historical Journal*, 63, no. 4, 805: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X19000499>; Vincent Brown, “Narrative Interface for New Media History: Slave Revolt in Jamaica, 1760–1761,” *American Historical Review* 121, no. 1 (2016): 176–86.

³¹⁷ *Ibid*, 805.

representation by Europeans as ‘a landscape in which the power of nature dominated human existence’ determined the characteristics and quality of everything that lived within it.’³¹⁸ Yet, the desire to control and know the landscape rages on. I began this section with two scenes that capture this constant tension – one scene illustrates the attempt to record a natural catastrophe and the other, a contemporary intervention, articulates the limitations of such a pursuit. While the work of Lacour might at first seem to assert the control of the landscape, we also find moments where the force of the environment doggedly creeps through.

As a lieutenant working in the Navy, maps were not unfamiliar to Lacour and we see in his album that he was, indeed, intrigued by maps and mapping the land and drew upon them as part of his visual language. He produces a map of *Fort de L’Îlet à Ramiers located outside Trois Islet* [Fig. 29a] as a floor plan and as cross-sectioned. The floor plan of the fort maps the different functions of the fort, including accommodation for the soldiers, the kitchen, the barracks and the canons. Surrounding the floor plan, Lacour diverts from this rigour and close attention to detail and incorporates surrounding rocks and vegetation. Here, the floor plan is framed by the natural environment, emerging around the static nature of the fort [Fig. 29b]. In order to make such detailed maps of the fort, Lacour must have frequently visited the place as a lieutenant: it expresses his in-depth knowledge of the place and its layout, which he knows well enough to draw. That Lacour decides to map the fort further entangles mapping as an instrument of power: the fort was used as a military defence and as a point surveillance of who is arriving and who is leaving. It is an example of how the French Antilles was created through brick and mortar, but also through

³¹⁸ Arnold, “Illusory Riches”, 8.

drawings like Lacour's map, which asserts a military presence in Martinique and makes visible the enactment of power on people, who are removed from the drawing.

In the drawing [Fig. 30], Lacour returns to the fort but this time, it is not a floorplan, but a drawing adopting the view from the fort, looking onto the sea and the land ahead. Reminiscent of Foucault's always seeing, always watching panopticon, the fort similarly assumes a panoptic gaze that surveys the people and the environment within its line of view, keeping track of the island's goings on. By positioning the viewer on the same level as the fort, we too come to embody its view, taking on the vision of the French coloniser and military official over the colony. In doing so, Lacour illustrates that the fort was not only a built defence shield but also a way of looking – a way of overseeing – which we also saw at play with his depiction of the military men, looking at the Bamboula [Fig. 24a] In the scene of the Bamboula, the act of overseeing was an everyday occurrence like a dance, whereas in this drawing, we take a wider view of the land that such soldiers would have had. They are two different acts of looking at two different scales, but both with similar goals and both need to work together to maintain the military apparatus. The two drawings of the fort suggest Lacour's work as a lieutenant as part of the French military presence in Martinique, and further confirms his interest in drawing his surroundings from different viewpoints. Another colour concern is then central to our discussion: Lacour's whiteness, as an identity that informs and shapes his gaze. As Ferdinand writes, solitary empire men like Lacour (or as Lambert and Lester dub them, 'Imperial Careerers') make a living 'in slave-making and post-slavery societies gazing out over what is then referred to as "nature"', nurturing the 'sweet illusion' of the objectivity and comprehensiveness of their translation of those sights onto paper.³¹⁹ Though most of Lacour's works are not concerned with military subjects, Nelson aptly

³¹⁹ Lambert and Lester, *Colonial Lives*; Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology*, 6.

reminds us that we must not separate the claims made by these images from the identities of their white male producers, who were simultaneously lone individuals displaced from their far-away European homelands, but also a ‘human element of a military infrastructure.’³²⁰ Both of these factors shaped what they produced, and lent the ‘air of scientific authority’ and accuracy that made them legitimate.³²¹ I use Lacour’s two drawings of the fort as a starting point for the following discussion because it anchors Lacour’s work firmly in the colonial pursuit to map and control the land. As we move forward in our discussion of Lacour’s works, we keep in mind the volcano, ever-presently looming as a cinematic but deadly backdrop, a reminder of the power of the natural environment, which cannot be controlled.

An impossible view: Three vistas from the sea

The landscape drawings [Fig. 31a, 32a, 33a] were made at three distinctive stops along Martinique’s western coast, between Fort-de-France and Saint Pierre, and exhibit the coast through a similar formula: with the sea in the foreground, the beach and hills in the middle ground and the sky taking up almost half of the space. Lacour uses the same colour palette for all three drawings: deep and light greens for the tropical vegetation, beige for the beach and tones of red for the inhabited land, light blue for the sea and diluted greys and touches of pink to capture the sky. The similarity between the drawings is not only in the colour palette but in the subject matter and the viewing position indicates that these works were created in relation to each other. However, despite their close resemblance, the drawings do not immediately follow each other sequentially in the album, suggesting that they have not been made immediately after each other, but instead that Lacour returned to the subject on three separate occasions. The other three drawings, which sit before and in between the related landscape drawings in the album, will also be examined, looking

³²⁰ Nelson, *Slavery, Geography and Empire*, 44.

³²¹ *Ibid*, 44.

particularly at how they differently intervene and disrupt the landscape series through their zoomed-in representation of the Afro-Caribbean figure in nature. With the two different sets of drawings, one with the landscape seen from afar and above, and the other one zoomed-in onto a scene, Lacour moves between two different modes. From afar, the land is connected to France and has access to global infrastructure and the capitalist economic system. In contrast, the close-up drawings of the African Caribbean are concerned with positioning the figures in nature, removed from the orderly, regulated landscape, and hence France. As pointed out with his depiction of the fort, it is similarly no surprise that Lacour devoted time to depict Martinique's coastal landscape, considering his position in the French Navy, and it being this role that brought him to Martinique. Arriving by ship, he would have seen the island for the first time from the seaside and probably became even more familiar with this view in his work in the Navy. Lacour's background and experience as a lieutenant, familiar with reading maps, also likely influenced his choice to depict the landscape in a cartographic fashion, as it was a method of communicating knowledge and navigating the land that he was familiar with. The landscape scenes of Lacour are at first sight what Nelson labels the 'topographical landscape', which combines the informational, scientific geographical map with landscape paintings into a 'masterful' view from which to gaze down over the landscape, a view that professes power, surveillance and justification of empire.³²² Often completed by men, such as Lacour working in the service of the empire, the topographical landscape enthusiastically and strategically oozes pro-slavery ideology, which required the land to be empty, free of people and animals and refuses of any signs of the crimes taken place against them.³²³ When we examine the drawings further, we will see how Lacour also disrupts such categorisation in his continued incorporation of rot and decay.

³²² Ibid, 54.

³²³ Ibid, 54.

They share a bird's eye view position, where the scene is approached from an elevated position at the seaside, looking onto the beach and its surroundings, offering a wide, broad survey of the coast. In drawing the scene from afar, rather than zoomed-in and close-up, as in the previous section, Lacour maps the land and positions himself as capable of surveying the landscape, detached from the embodied experience of being in the land. Tim Ingold writes that the position of the bird's eye 'describes how we imagine the world would look from a point of observation so far above the earth's surface that the entire territory with which we are familiar from journeys made at ground level could be taken in at a glance.'³²⁴ Obviously, this is an impossible viewpoint to occupy at this moment in history, so far away from land, and so high in the air, both for the viewer and Lacour. They transcend the physical boundaries of human biology and technological innovation, taking on a visual position only accessible by airborne animals. Hence, Lacour inscribed within the drawings that they are the work of the imagination, allowing him and the viewer to occupy a position they could never have, hence underlining that the drawings are man-made, made by him. His portrayal of the island landscape, as drawn from this inaccessible position, functions to exhibit his in-depth knowledge of the colonial territory: he knows the intricacies of the land so well that he can imagine how it would look from the air. In appropriating and melding the cartographic gaze with his artistic practice, Lacour thus straddles the space between an 'on the ground explorer' charting the exact coordinates of a place he sees with his own eyes, and 'an armchair geographer' working from imagination, hearsay and secondary sources. Natalie Cox adds to this, arguing that the explorer and the map-maker became the soldiers on the ground servicing the empire, which depended upon transoceanic travel and mobility, moving across imperial territories and into unfamiliar environments.³²⁵ Looking at images by James

³²⁴ Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling & Skill* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 227.

³²⁵ Natalie Cox, "'Easy chair geography': The fabrication of an Immobile Culture of Nineteenth-century exploration," in *Empire and mobility in the Long Nineteenth Century*, eds. David Lambert and Peter Merriman (Manchester,

Hakewill or Joseph Kidd (who I will also draw upon in the final painting), known for their landscape depictions of Jamaica, Nelson terms their paintings ‘documents of denial’ and ‘soothing propaganda’, where any sign of the slave villages or enslaved workers were erased to soothe the metropolitan audience, and which relied on the free movement across the landscape which the Native and enslaved populations were set in opposition to.³²⁶ As King has argued, the removal of any human figures affirms that any rebellion or unrest has been skilfully and definitively crushed, rather than the ongoing source of existential concern that it was in reality.³²⁷ It is a representation of the makers white self-fashioning in its attempt to evidence the artist’s access and intimacy with the land and its people and culture, whilst maintaining sufficient distance to avoid becoming part of the land. In the previous section, we saw how Lacour depicts the Black body as connected and tied to the land, showing intimate scenes of life *on the ground*. In contrast, across the landscape scenes, where the land is presented useful, profitable and connected to France, we see how the Black body can no longer feature as part of the scenes, suggesting that their presence on the island is one not connected to France.

The emptiness of the hills confirms the land as available, docile and mastered, underlining that the land is a resource that can still be reaped for profit post-abolition: more land can be cleared, plantations can grow and towns and harbours can be expanded, with no objection from its inhabitants who are systematically denied representation. With the supposed emptiness of the land, the clearing of land and building of infrastructure such as forts, bridges and wharves implied an ownership of the land, according to Nelson, and suggests an ‘interaction with its materiality and replication of home.’³²⁸ Looking closer at the drawings by Lacour, which undoubtedly belongs to a

England: Manchester University Press, 2020), accessed 11th October, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526126399.00012>.

³²⁶ Nelson, *Slavery, Geography and Empire*, 22.

³²⁷ King, *Black Shoals*, 75-77, 101, 108-9.

³²⁸ Nelson, *Slavery, Geography and Empire*, 20.

corpus of colonial mappings of the land, we see also moments of where he is different from, for instance, Hakewill's by showing nature growing and pushing beyond the edges of the ordered landscape. Not unlike the decaying and rotting nature in the last section, here we continue to see how Lacour captures, nature, similar to those perennial weeds that keeps growing and returning despite the efforts of the landscaper. As such, the boxed category of the topographical landscape applies in some ways to the works of Lacour, but he also disrupts the simplicity of such an identification which does not leave room for the intrusion of nature.

Fort-de-France à vol d'oiseau: the encroaching nature

The first drawing of the three landscape scenes is *Fort-de-France à vol d'oiseau* (1851) [Fig. 31a], which renders the small town of Fort-de-France and its surroundings, raised above with an expansive view over the land. A steamship lies in the middle of the bay, with its smoke trailing behind and the French flag waving on its back. Five people stand on the deck, looking at the shore. The ship, firmly depicted in the middle of the drawing, confirms that the sea continues to be a space that is governed and overseen by the French. A fort on the top of the hill overlooks the sea and the surrounding area, with walls surrounding it and the French flag waving on its left side alongside a thick line of smoke [Fig. 31b]. This could be a form of signage used to warn vessels that they were approaching land. Compared to Lacour's other two drawings of fortifications, he here asserts how a fort dominates the landscape to the extent that it can be seen from afar. It is seen as an integral part of the landscape, and collectively the three drawings manifest the idea that the fort was an integral part of the experience of Martinique. He leaves no doubt that the island is controlled and overseen by the French and with no presence of the local population or opposition to colonial rule. With the bright colours of the Tricolour as a declaration of unquestioned conquest, Lacour emphatically proclaims and celebrates the settlement of the French.

Lacour presents the town on the left side as one contained plot of inhabited land, which lies at the foot of a hill and consists of densely built houses with a few patches of green. The administration buildings are positioned on the far-left side on the edge of the beach, protected by man-made rock walls in the sea, demonstrating a governmental ability to alter the natural environment to protect and secure their presence on the beach site. The church is similarly positioned in the far-left corner of the town, perfectly aligning with the side of the hill, again indicating how the natural environment is modified to fit with the townscape, or the townscape is made to fit around nature. On the right side, there is a cliff, most of it cut off by the drawing's edge, yet we notice that despite the impossibility of climbing it, Lacour draws a bridge that two people are walking on. Even on a site as dangerous as the cliff, the French have still managed to connect it with the rest of the beach and make it walkable. Lacour's placement of the town, surrounded by less developed hills, allude to the fact that the town has grown and overtaken more and more of the land, and that the French have cut down plant life to build and expand the town. The continued expansion of the town is presented on the right side, where there are a few rows of houses behind the trees on the beach, which indicates more will be built to match the left side of the town. The town, with its buildings, church, bridges and roads, suggests what Nelson names the colonial victory; achieved 'not through force, but through its imagining of a peacefully attained domestication.'³²⁹ It underlines that the island is part of the nation and that visitors arriving in Fort-de-France are immediately made aware that this is a French territory, even after abolition, with no sign of rebellion, nor the indigenous or Afro-Caribbean population, which would remind the viewer of how this land came to be French. The environment is owned, controlled, and illustrated by the French, and the rest of the population is absent.

³²⁹Ibid, 230.

However, in between the densely built townhouses, Lacour includes patches of green trees or bushes, which appear unruly and misplaced amidst the neatly constructed town, denoting the lush nature as uncontrollable, perpetually encroaching upon human civilisation [31c]. This reveals a tension between the tamed landscape surrounding the town and the nature that still finds its way into human-inhabited spaces, despite French efforts to control and build up the land. Lacour's works evidence how, ultimately, nature takes back: it reclaims and imposes itself back over that which the French built, always threatening to overtake it. Perhaps then, the landscape is not quite as ordered and controllable as initially thought. In his attempt at a masterful topographical aesthetic, we see hints of the limits of that control, as has appeared throughout his work, namely in the frequently decaying palm trees and the encroaching nature. Lacour once again fails to conform to the trope of domesticated scenes of a docile Caribbean landscape; instead, he shows something that is normally carefully and intentionally hidden - the power of the natural world, its decay and untameable growth, the space that the French Empire possesses formal power, but lacks true mastery, nor even full understanding, over. The loopholes and limits of French power in the Martinican mountains and rainforests is something we will return to in the third chapter.

This illustrates the possibilities and productivities of journeying into the work of the amateur artist. In the amateur, we find different visions of the Caribbean landscape, for if we think back to the picturesque vision of Prinssay, who showed the lush landscape, all under control, in the work of Lacour, we contrastingly see how he does not strictly obey such visual codes and captures, however intentionally, moments of tension between the French colonial project and the Caribbean landscape. Lacour's slippages away from pristine order and his carelessness in allowing the nature to creep onto his page, nods towards all that is untameable and unmanageable in colonial space, for if maps and visual art of the colony seek to exaggerate a control over nature, they also exaggerate their control over its people. In the simultaneous fusing and fracturing of people and

nature by the colonial mouthpiece, we might take one to represent the other. Further, we can also read the subversive and resistive relationship between the two that developed under that subjugation, for as Deckard writes of the triumphant wreckages of natural disasters upon colonial ports and plantations: ‘this has the possibility of engendering in the oppressed a dream of revolt, to imitate a nature which says ‘no.’”³³⁰

Baie de Case-Navire, Martinique: the plantation

Lacour continued his travel up along the western island coast, moving closer to the ever-looming volcano, and made the drawing *Baie de Case-Navire, Martinique* (1851) [Fig. 32a], in which he renders the small town of Case-Navire with a beach on each side and positioned within the vast landscape. Compared to his depiction of the town of Fort-de-France, Case Navire appears much smaller with fewer buildings and less infrastructure, yet the natural environment still appears as ordered and regulated. In hills above the town, on both the left and right side are two alike building compounds, with one main building with a chimney and smaller houses behind it, which suggests that they are a part of the agro-industrial plantation factory [32b]. They are made part of the landscape, given no particular pictorial attention, but just *there*. Compared to Lacour’s drawing of *Habitation Coloniale* [Fig. 8], the plantations are not the focus of the drawing, the vastness of the landscape is. Gone is the awkwardness and failed composition of *Habitation Coloniale* and instead here the plantations seem naturally located in the landscape with no specificity to them as individual entities. Three years after his first depiction of a plantation, Lacour has developed his artistic skill and his own grasp of the island: there is no longer any unease or instability in his approach to the complex island. Instead, the drawing aims to confirm Lacour’s familiarity and knowledge of the land and how the plantation sits in the landscape from an aerial position. From

³³⁰ Deckard, “The Political Ecology of Storms”, 31.

this position, one can see plenty of open land that could still be utilised and developed, suggesting that the abolition of slavery was not the end of the French colonisation of the land, but a moment to look towards the land with renewed interest for alternative forms of revenue that could be exploited.

I will return to botanical drawings and the post-emancipation possibilities of the botanic garden in the next chapter but intend for now to mention Lacour's *Branche de Cotonnier* (undated) [Fig. 34] with which he honours the cotton plant's rich history, memorialising it at the moment of slavery, and perhaps cotton's demise. Imported via the Columbian Exchange, grown on plantations like the one he depicted, and sold as a commodity to European markets, Lacour depicts the cotton plant as it begins to blossom with white flowers, but not the actual cotton ball that is harvested by manual labourers.³³¹ As the trope of the botanical drawing prescribes, he does not depict the plant as part of its natural environment; rather, he isolates the plant on the page, and in doing so he demonstrates his ability to not only depict the plant but also to identify and possess it.³³² More crucially, he depicts the plant at a moment in which its currency was changing with the abolition of slavery, as well as changes to the plantation system. Thinking back to his similar drawing of the cashew fruit, placed next to his depiction of a woman from Gorée [Fig. 7a and 7b] in the album, further underscores that close connection between the importation of fruit and people, as well as how botanical drawings such as these were part of a knowledge-system which extracted plant and people from other places and collapsed the difference between people of colour and nature, as we will continue to explore in the coming chapters. He continues his botanical style in *Tamarin* (undated) [Fig. 35], in which he renders branch of the non-native tamarind tree, with four fruits hanging from the top of the page. By abstracting the plants from their environment of its tropical

³³¹ Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange*.

³³² Beth Tobin, "Imperial Designs: Botanical Illustration and the British Botanic Empire," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 25, no. 1(1996): 265-292. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sec.2010.0188>.

vegetation, he points once more to how nature has been moved and made to service the French nation in the Caribbean. And so, we are brought once more to the fundamental fusions between science, art and empire. In Lacour's work, in his experimentation with aesthetically rendering nature, using and disrupting aspects of colonially entangled modes of geography and botany, we see how the landscape was visually mapped and controlled even in the works of a hobby-artist, but also how this very artist contributes to our understanding of the boundaries of such a pursuit up against the forces of nature.

Anse Cocotiers. Bellevue: A scene of baptism

In the third drawing of the landscape series, *Anse Cocotiers. Bellevue* (1851) [Fig. 33a], the land is scarcely inhabited, with only a plantation estate with one grand house and three shacks behind it positioned on the right side of the drawing. In contrast to the previous drawing, the plantation owner's grand house is more present in the landscape, with its prominent position in the landscape, overlooking the sea and the enslaved's former houses behind it. Ferdinand points out that the master's habitation and the shacks have different temporalities: the master's house is meant to last, giving the colonisers' place in the world a form of permanence, whereas the shacks have a temporary nature, which also leads Lizabeth Paravisini-Gerbert to propose that the post-emancipation decline and subsequent decay and debris of the agro-industrial sugar plantation functions as a poignant visual image of the 'environmental violence' and the 'colonial ruination' brought about by the plantation system.³³³ The findings of the archaeologist Kenneth G. Kelly support both scholars as he proves that the slave villages are largely invisible in the French West Indian landscape today because they were built of decomposable materials, for example with walls of wattle and daub and thatch for roofing, making it difficult now to interpret the daily life of the

³³³ Lizabeth Paravisini-Gerbert, "Bagasse: Caribbean art and the debris of the sugar plantation," *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities* (London: Routledge, 2015), 7.

enslaved and their households.³³⁴ This contrasts with the continued presence of the massively built windmills and water mills, the sugar factories with their thick masonry walls, and the masters' houses. Kelly uses the archaeological evidence he found in Habitation Crève Coeur in Martinique to demonstrate that houses in this village were placed across the hillside above the planter's house, somewhat alike to Lacour's rendition in this drawing. Again, he makes the plantation compound seem like a non-negotiable part of the landscape. It is represented as tranquil, not revealing the actual horrors of the space, yet he still marks the difference in wealth and power visible through the housing, embedded into the landscape. He makes the racial difference and racial separation legible in the landscape through the different habitations. The plantation is still there after abolition, but it does not take centre stage, the landscape does, confirming that the empty landscape is the biggest resource of the island that the French can keep exploiting post-abolition.

However, there is a tension within that as he again includes the decay of palm trees and other vegetation along the beach. This is different from Lacour's earlier landscape drawings where the scenery appears lush, pristine and thriving. He moved away from the landscape as an agro-industrial site of settlement, productivity and economic gain towards an unstable one with subtle hints of looming death and destruction. In the post-emancipation era, the utility and purpose of the plantation and its location in the landscape are called into question for the first time. Like the threatening presence of the volcano foreshadowing the loss of complete control over this island and its economy, Lacour hints at how the natural landscape once more takes on a life and intention of its own. In deciding to depict this decay, Lacour reveals a moment in which he can no longer fix on paper the naturalness of the plantation in a landscape whose sole purpose is productivity to

³³⁴ Kenneth G. Kelly, "Sugar Plantations in the French West Indies: Archaeological Perspectives from Guadeloupe and Martinique," in Elizabeth M. Scott ed., *Archaeological Perspectives on the French in the New World* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2017), np.

serve the French nation. As argued, like the non-native plant life decaying, the unnatural, imported plantation machine is also crumbling. Throughout this chapter, we have seen how Lacour has continued to capture the inability and failure to manage or prevent the rapid disintegration of biological matter in an apparently hostile environment and climate, symbolising the loss and limits of control over it and its inhabitants, which were never seen as separate.³³⁵

Looking closer at the beach tucked in between two tall cliffs, Lacour renders a group gathering, with all the involved dressed in white, some of them standing on the beach and others on their way into the water and some already in [33b]. Lacour captures religious participants lining up to complete a full-immersion baptism. Sue Peabody writes how it was believed that the conversion to Catholicism could regenerate and restore the Africans' physical bodies to make them more beautiful to the missionaries' eyes.³³⁶ She uses the example of the missionary Pelleprat, who wrote: 'There is nothing that the charity of Jesus Christ does not render lovable... After [the Negroes'] baptism, I usually found them well made and agreeable.'³³⁷ She continues by quoting Bouton, who asserted that baptism can 'whiten' enslaved Moors: 'Some of these Moors are already regenerated and whitened [blanchis] in the waters of holy Baptism.'³³⁸ As Peabody explains, the missionaries here play with the metaphorical associations between sin, blackness, and Africans' colouring. The emphasis is on the primacy of spirituality over physical manifestations of race. It is interesting that Lacour decides to incorporate this act of baptism in the landscape drawing. It is the only drawing of the three landscapes that incorporate African Caribbean figures as part of the scene, yet he does so in a moment when they convert to Catholicism and are seen in connection to the master's house, following a continued French post-emancipation desire to

³³⁵ Linds, "Fermentation, Rot, and Power".

³³⁶ Sue Peabody, "A Nation Born to Slavery: Missionaries and Racial Discourse in Seventeenth-Century French Antilles," *Journal of Social History* 38, no. 1 (2004): 113-126.

³³⁷ Cited in Peabody, "A Nation Born to Slavery", 115-116.

³³⁸ *Ibid*, 121.

civilise. In the earlier drawing of pouring rain [Fig. 22], in which the Europeans were involuntarily in contact with water, which brought them closer to the sexual availability of women of colour, here the people of colour are in contact with water in a way that is orchestrated and instead transforms them to be more civilised.

The ocean, a space of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, is still controlled and used by the French empire to enlighten the African Caribbean population; again, nature is utilised and exploited to serve the mission of empire. Baptism is also the subject in George Baxter's print of Kidd's drawing *The Ordinance of Baptism, as administered by missionaries connected with the Baptist Missionary Society to 135 persons near Brown's Town, in Jamaica* (1843) [Fig. 36], a scene of people of African descent in Jamaica lining up in two long rows (from the beach out into the water), as they wait for their turn to be baptised in their white vestments by missionaries, confirming the success of the Baptist Church's mission to convert free and enslaved to Christianity. Opposite to Lacour's drawing, where the act of baptism is seen from a distance, in this print we are positioned right next to the ritual taking place and watching the scene, like the rest of the audience. In Kidd's drawing, the act of baptism is the primary subject matter, whereas in Lacour's, the vast landscape is still the focus. The sea purifies and gives new life to the new believers, in a twist of fate in which the once deadly sea of the Transatlantic Slave Trade provides their salvation and gives them renewed validity in the eyes of the French.

Compared to the other landscape scenes, Lacour here hints at the potential of subjecthood, yet only being possible through the ritual of baptism. The natural decay happening also corresponds to the baptism, as the believers are saved from their decay by getting baptised. This is the last time in the album that Lacour returns to depicting the expansive landscape of Martinique, marking the end of his pictorial journey along the island coastline. Through Lacour's fixation on the landscape, the

drawings seek to claim the colony at a moment of great uncertainty in which the industrial factory of the plantation was in danger with the abolition of slavery. His drawings confirm that the island's landscape and its natural resources are still French and useful for the imperial enterprise, and that the figure is not a threat to the tamed, regulated landscape; rather they are a part of it, still confined to the land of their former enslavement. Yet subtly, perhaps cautiously but still intentionally, through light touches of yellow and brown, Lacour alludes to the decay occurring across the island's plant life, quietly commenting upon the changing position of Frenchness in the colony and at home during a moment of great social and economic upheaval. Martinique remains a colony, and an alluring tropical space but a fundamentally different one henceforth.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter is an example of the importance of expanding our visual vocabulary of empire to include the works of an amateur like Lacour and to look towards the archives for a better understanding of imperial image-making, not only in Martinique but also for the entire Caribbean region. The chapter has sought to show that the drawings give us a unique representation of how the French colony was experienced and imagined by a French marine at a moment when the political, social, and environmental climate was changing with the abolition of slavery.

Post-emancipation, Lacour repeatedly tries to fix the unstable and the insecure on paper. It is in the works of this hobby-artist, working for the colonial project, but not catering to a plantocracy or metropolitan audience, we recognise how pervasive and insistent the visual language of placing the colony as a picturesque place of tranquil calm and order. But, it is not so simple, because when we look closer at the work of Lacour, that it is here we find moments where the vision is subtly challenged with nature pushing through the cracks of an otherwise secure image of a stable imperial machinery: the cashew lies elegantly on the table but conceals impending danger; the town seems orderly at first but in-between the city walls the green vegetation is growing uncontrollably; the leaves of the palm trees are rotting, all small but powerful signs resistance which Lacour leaves open in his work. While resistance was mapped out of the picturesque and the topographical landscape, we find that in the practice of Lacour, he did not fully obey genre rules or conventions and captured slippages of the colonial mastery. It is perishing like the palm trees on the beach. The decay and rot are intimately tied to his depiction of the female figure, using the colours of brown and skin to colour her skin, the same as the rot and soil of the land, grounding her to the land, and not the landscape. In the next chapter, I will examine another album of

drawings: this time created by Fulconis in 1882-1884. The chapter considers how his systematic approach to depicting the variety of peoples, particularly French Indo-Caribbeans, and plant life on the island demonstrates alternative ways that colour and ecology continued to be intertwined, two decades after emancipation.

Chapter Two:

Chromatic Experiments:

Fulconis' drawings of the human and non-human

Scene 1: *An Overseer's Guide*

It is one of the last days before the closure of the exhibition *Entangled Pasts: 1768-Now* at the Royal Academy in London after its three-month run in early 2024. The galleries are buzzing with people who, like me, are trying to get the last glimpse of the exhibition before it is all taken down. Like this thesis, the exhibition juxtaposes historical and contemporary art pieces alongside one another, creating conversations about the histories and presences of colonialism and enslavement, resistance and the agency of empire. As I walk through one of the galleries, I stop at a piece, displayed in the middle of the room [Fig. 37]. It captures my eyes because it is oddly familiar and strange at the same time. It is a wooden paintbox placed inside a museum vitrine. The box is wide open so I can see its contents of fifteen different pigments placed in black containers with no lids. The colours range from the starkest white to the deepest black, with nuances of orange, brown and pinks in between. The containers are systematically and carefully placed in marked-out squares. On the left side, the categories 'Field Negroes', 'House Negroes' and 'Whites' are written, corresponding to each of the three rows of five containers. In the last chapter, we saw how Lacour connected Afro-Caribbean skin colours to the colours of the ground. Here, the artist applies the term 'Field Negroes' to cover dark shades from deep red to black; 'House Negroes' is the colours from light pinkish to orange; and 'Whites' are different shades of white and light pink. Underneath each paint container further descriptions are added, such as 'Standard Field' or 'White Artisan.' The interior of the lid is bolstered with a velvet blue fabric, with two of the same illustrations, showing a man measuring an enslaved man on each side of a framed phrenology drawing. I look

down at the paintbox, standing beside another pair of museum-goers, who interpret this piece as a real historical piece that blends comfortably in with space, expressing horror and disgust – and no wonder, its wooden quality, cursive text and pigment pots all suggest an a “old” museum object. But surprisingly, it is actually a contemporary work entitled *The Coloureds’ Codex, An Observers’ Guide to Comparative Complexion* (2007) and made by the British-Caribbean artist Keith Piper. It is one element of a larger work, named *Lost Vitrines*, which was commissioned by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London as part of their exhibition ‘Uncomfortable Truths’ in 2007 that marked the bicentennial of the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade in the United Kingdom.³³⁹ *The Coloureds’ Codex* might at first seem simple: an old wooden paint box – a painter’s tool box. On the other hand, this paintbox belongs to no-one. But it contributes to discussions about histories of the relation between the classification of pigments and skin colour; between the scientific study of people of colour and the work of artists, which is at the core of this thesis and this chapter. Furthermore, the artwork’s title references Mirzoeff’s scholarship on the visual regime of ‘overseeing’ in relation to the plantation complex, which positioned whites as looking, and Blacks being looked at and overseen.³⁴⁰ Here, Piper’s work *guides* the Overseer to identify and depict different skin colours and to know what ‘type’ of human belongs to each colour classification. As a tool that assists in pinpointing skin colour through pigment, Piper’s work visualises how colonial relationships centred the experience of seeing and being seen as coloured. It understands how race was made real and upheld through pigment and paper.³⁴¹ It visualises Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler’s important point that ‘The otherness of colonized persons was neither inherent nor

³³⁹ “Keith Piper “Lost Vitrines”, *keithpiper.info*, accessed 10th August, 2024, <https://www.keithpiper.info/lostvitrines.html>.

³⁴⁰ Mirzoeff, “Oversight: The Ordering of Slavery,” in *The Right to Look*, 48-76.

³⁴¹ I here lean on James Poskett’s argument that race was not just an idea, it was made through action. See James Poskett, “Racial science,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Science and Empire* (London: Routledge, 2021). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429273360-4>

stable; his or her difference had to be defined and maintained.’³⁴² The two authors speak of the ‘grammar of difference’ – or what we might call here ‘the palette of difference’ – as one that ‘was continuously and vigilantly crafted as people in colonies refashioned and contested European claims to superiority.’³⁴³ Piper’s work grapples with the making and remaking of race through pseudo-scientific categorisation using colour, a concern that this chapter will similarly engage with through its discussion of Fulconis’ phrenological drawings of subjects of colour.

Scene 2: *An Ocean Cradle*

Across the Atlantic, the exhibition *Forecast Form: Art in the Caribbean Diaspora, 1990s – Today* travelled from The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago in 2023 and to the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston to the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego.³⁴⁴ A collection of thirty-seven works by artists of the Caribbean and the Caribbean diaspora, the exhibition is intriguing in its conceptualisation of the Caribbean as not only a region on the map but also as a way of thinking of identity and place, which ‘continue[s] to shape our contemporary moment, from emancipation and human rights to colonialism and climate change.’³⁴⁵ One of the pieces in the exhibition calls me back. I am first drawn to its size and its texture. Its colour scheme of oranges, reds, purple and blues threaded with pieces of gold take over the wall. It is almost overwhelming to look at, even on a digital screen. The piece is named *An Ocean Cradle* (2022) [Fig. 38] and is created by the artist Suchitra Mattai, who was born in Guyana and whose grandparents, she describes, were ‘lured’ by the British to Guyana to work as indentured

³⁴² Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1997), 3–4, 7.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁴⁴ “Forecast Form: Art in the Caribbean Diaspora, 1990s–Today,” Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, accessed 15th July 2024, <https://visit.mcachicago.org/exhibitions/art-in-the-caribbean-diaspora-1990s-today/>.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

labourers.³⁴⁶ This large-scale wall hanging is made of saris, collected from family and friends of the South Asian diaspora, and stitched together. The colourful, interwoven saris create a sea-like pattern that is embedded with clusters of ghungroo bells. White-golden robes hang across the piece, fastened at different spots of the fabric. The artist Christopher Cozier, whose work is also part of the exhibitions, says that the ‘assemblages’ of sari ‘is a narrative of both her [Mattai’s] labour in making this work and the labour through domesticity, through all kinds of social labour. Their presence is indexed or carried in the configuration of saris.’³⁴⁷ The fabric creates an abstract ocean map, pointing to the experience of mobility in the South Asian diaspora in the golden ropes that tie the distant places together. Cozier says of the piece that it carries ‘the burden of responsibility [...] ‘to make the Caribbean space something meaningful for the people who find themselves there, who were simply brought there to labour, to create wealth elsewhere [...].’³⁴⁸ Mattai’s large-scale textile illustrates how the Caribbean continues to be reimagined and rethought from the people who inhabit it. It is a way to honour the Caribbean as a space that is heterogeneous and in flow, like the pattern of *Ocean Cradle*. Alongside Piper’s work, the two opening pieces explore how race was made and defined through material matter like pigments and textiles, a discussion which will run through this chapter.

This chapter takes as its object of study an album of drawings made by the French drawing teacher Victor Pierre Fulconis on Martinique between 1882 and 1884 and now kept at the Archives Territoriales de Martinique. This chapter is the study of the work of this drawing teacher, whose

³⁴⁶ Suchitra Mattai, “Visiting Artist Lecture Series Spring 2021,” *YouTube*, 10th February 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMMVHrxgDGA>.

³⁴⁷ Christopher Cozier, “Object Lesson: Christopher Cozier on Suchitra Mattai,” *YouTube*, 13th May 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWKjABKSj-o>.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

records have largely remained sequestered in the archive, despite it being a unique and rich source for understanding French colonial artmaking in the post-emancipation Atlantic. Fulconis' anonymity makes him emblematic, as just one example of how art and its production at an amateur level were central to the processes of understanding Empire, its colonies, nature and people. As we also saw in the case of Lacour, amateur works are materials not part of the formal circulations of art or grand art historical narratives, but importantly evidence the persistence of a visual language and inquiry into the relationships between and relatedness of race and ecology, decades after emancipation. Fulconis' repeated, intricate representations of the tropical environment and people are attempts to not only capture but also to categorise life on the island, as a means of managing and making sense of the position of the labourer of colour within or as part of the natural environment. Throughout the chapter, I will henceforth continue to place Fulconis' works in conversation with other forms of visual art production such as photographs and postcards, which enrich my analysis and shed light upon how Fulconis was part of an expansive network of image-producers who used the visual to confirm, entrench and categorise race and ecology. As with the thesis as a whole, the chapter employs an environmental lens throughout, but particularly in the first section which pays heed to botanical illustrations and drawings of submarine life. But it is not only by looking at 'something green' that the chapter draws on environmental history; it is through my broader focus on the natural world as a 'concept and as a fact' through which to understand these works and contribute to our understanding of the centrality of visual languages, translation and exchange to the making of race and empire.³⁴⁹

Through his art practice, Fulconis positions himself as an observer and as a translator of his surroundings: he draws people of colour and the natural environment through a well-rehearsed

³⁴⁹ Elle Stroud, "Does Nature Always Matter? Following Dirt through History," *History and Theory* 42, no. 4 (2003): 80–81, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3590680>.

visual formula, which presents both as objects to be scrutinised and identified, easily movable out of their context and easily legible for him and others. In doing so, his album is an example of colonial image-making as a form of self-fashioning which seeks to perform or profess its makers' access to and knowledge of the colony. Consequently, the album is a demonstration of whiteness: how a white maker used colour and depicted people of colour to establish and confirm his own whiteness.

Fulconis' album houses a sustained and continuous stream of systematic studies threaded together. What links them is his repetitive articulation of human and non-human life through similar isolated studies that map a conscious collapsing of the boundaries between the two. Whereas his visual language connects the drawings and, in doing so, equates nature and people through the same lens, I will separate the two subject matters in my analysis throughout this chapter, as imposing this structural separation will enable me to illustrate just how pervasive his vision was across people and nature. And yet simultaneously, I will continue throughout to draw out, emphasise and examine the complex and often contradictory links between both. Whereas we saw in the last chapter how Lacour connected the people through the colours of their skin with the colours of the soil, we see here how Fulconis connects them through the way in which he depicts them, visually collapsing the distinction between the human of colour and nature.

Chapter structure

The chapter is, therefore, divided into two core thematic sections. The first, named *Fulconis' Natural World*, is split further into two main subsections: *The Vegetal* and *The Aquatic*. This first section focuses on how Fulconis systematically draws the natural environment surrounding him. It takes its starting point in the Jardin de Plantes in Saint Pierre, where he lived whilst in Martinique,

and unfolds to provide a discussion of his visual language, heavily indebted to botanical and ichthyological illustrations. I look closely at how he at once conforms to the visual formulas that these provide and simultaneously uses the medium of drawing and nature as a way for him to experiment with colour and shapes. Fulconis fuses two tropes for visualising both the vegetal and aquatic he encounters on the island: the scientific and the artistic. In conjunction with the following section, it denotes how the natural world was heavily racialised. The cataloguing and portraying of plant and animal life as controlled and ordered is, as we will see, strongly connected to the view of people of colour as immovable, as decontextualised and as worthy of close study.

The second section is named Fulconis' People and divided into two further themes: The Indo-Caribbean and The Laundress. In this section of the chapter, I focus on Fulconis' figural representations, particularly his drawings of Indo-Caribbean people and laundresses. The section opens by introducing Fulconis as a maker and interpreter shaped by the discipline of anthropology and looks particularly towards the work of the French anthropologist Paul Broca (1824-1880) to understand the nineteenth-century mapping of skin colour as seen in Fulconis' works. In the first part, on his representation of Indo-Caribbean people in Martinique, a rare source of a history that is often overlooked, I start by charting the historical context and move on to closely examine his works and emplace them in relation to photographs. I then go on to examine the movement of Coolitude. In the next part, I focus on his repeated representation of the Martiniquan laundress, thinking through linked questions of eroticism, racialised labour and white laundry and colourful textiles. As previously, I draw on a literary contribution, Mayotte Capécia's *Je Suis Martiniquaise* (1948), to incorporate a multitude of voices and positionalities in the chapter.

Introducing Fulconis and his biographer

Fulconis was born in Algeria, as the son of the sculptor Louis Guillaume Fulconis (1818-1873) but, when only a few months old, he and his parents moved to Paris, where they settled in a house on Avenue de Ségur.³⁵⁰ He went to school in the area of Gros Caillou, leaving at the age of fourteen when he joined his father's sculpture studio as an apprentice.³⁵¹ He took evening classes at the *École Spéciale de Dessin et de Mathématiques Appliqués aux Arts Industriels* and was admitted to the *École des Beaux-Arts* where he was taught by the sculptor François Jouffroy, a friend of his father.³⁵² In 1880, Fulconis moved back to Algeria with his mother and sometime during their first two years there, Fulconis applied for an available position as a drawing teacher at the newly opened lycée in Saint Pierre in Martinique. He arrived on the island in mid-September 1882 and started working as the first drawing teacher at Lycée de Saint Pierre and at Colonial Boarding School for Young Girls in Saint Pierre. The papers are still kept at the Archives Territoriales de Martinique.³⁵³ He additionally offered free drawing courses for adults who employed drawing in their profession, such as decorators, workers and draughtsmen.³⁵⁴

The establishment of new schools in Martinique and the recruitment of a drawing teacher was part of a larger political plan of the Third Republic to expand the number of schools and human services in the colonies to continue to civilise and unify French territory.³⁵⁵ The so-called Ferry Laws of 1881 and 1882, named after its initiator, the Minister of Education Jules Ferry, radically changed education in France by making primary schooling compulsory for children between the

³⁵⁰ Ibid, 144.

³⁵¹ Ibid, 146.

³⁵² Ibid, 147.

³⁵³ Daum, 189. Archives Territoriales de Martinique, Pensionnat Royal des Dames de Saint-Joseph de Saint-Pierre, Album 26Fi2.

³⁵⁴ Daum, "Vie et oeuvre", 188.

³⁵⁵ Daum, "Vie et oeuvre", 191.

ages of six and thirteen, cost-free and secular.³⁵⁶ Walter Kusters and Marc Depaepe argue that the ‘School of the Republic’ was an essential institution in which the republican values and unification of French identity were formed.³⁵⁷ Speaking of the Antillean context for these reforms, Clara Palmiste writes this happened earlier in the colonies, where the governor of Martinique called upon teachers from metropolitan France to substitute teaching of the Congregation of the Ploërmel Brothers in Fort-de-France’s primary schools.³⁵⁸ This move was replicated in other parts of the island, with the Lycée Schoelcher in Saint Pierre established in 1880, followed by courses to train local primary teachers and the secularisation of girls’ education in 1882.³⁵⁹

The biographical details outlined above draw on Patrick Daum’s 1986 PhD thesis ‘Vie et oeuvre des sculpteurs Guillaume Fulconis (1818-1873) et Victor Fulconis (1851-1913)’ from the University of Lille, which is the only sustained account of Fulconis. Daum’s thesis is a curious chronological narration of the artistic father and son duo, Guillaume and Victor’s life, but is currently the most detailed source on their life and work. However, Daum’s thesis is a complicated source to work with as a researcher for two main reasons. First, it is unclear to the reader how Daum obtained his information. He occasionally cites the Fulconis family archive as a source, but it is unknown where this is and whether Daum had a personal relationship with the family through which he therefore gained access.³⁶⁰ Second, Daum writes in a particularly expressive way, and it is unclear whether this is his personal writing style or whether he borrows the tone taken from letters, oral histories, or other archival material that he had access to. As such, the issue lies in

³⁵⁶ Walter Walter, and Marc Depaepe, “The French Third Republic: Popular Education, Conceptions of Citizenship and the Flemish Immigrants,” *Historical Studies in Education*, 23, no. 1 (2011), 34.

<https://doi.org/10.32316/hse/rhe.v23i1.2375>.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 34.

³⁵⁸ Clara Palmiste, “The Secularization of Teaching Staff in Guadeloupe (1880-1914): Gender and Race Issues in a Colonial Context,” *Clio. Women, Gender, History*, no. 50 (2019), 48.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid*.

³⁶⁰ Daum, “Vie et oeuvre”, 226.

Daum's overly embellished and enthused writing, to the extent that we cannot pinpoint with certainty where Fulconis' perspective ends and Daum's begins. This becomes particularly problematic and prevalent given that the writing style uncritically reinforces degrading stereotypes about the Caribbean and its people. A writer like Daum perpetuates the racism of Fulconis' drawings in the 1980s by continuing uninhibited the racialised language that the drawings themselves visualise. It is a troubling scholarly work that does not achieve a separation between the colonial mindsets of the author and the subject. Keeping that in mind, I, with caution and awareness of the instability and unreliability of this source, employ Daum's thesis out of necessity given the lack elsewhere of biographical details. His work illustrates the significant lack, in both quantity and quality, of writing on Fulconis and contributes to our understanding of how colonial language and attitudes continue to be echoed and extolled centuries after in art historical writing.

The most recent contribution to the study of Fulconis (and more broadly, Antillean art) has been Christelle Lozère's work, some of which was created as part of a *carte blanche* at the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art in Paris.³⁶¹ One public outcome of this was a short educational video, which introduces the work of Fulconis, specifically discussing his position as a drawing teacher within the context of Republican educational reforms.³⁶² The video zooms particularly in one drawing, which is part of a double spread [Fig 39]. The drawing is of a group of figures working. Whereas the woman in the centre of the image stands still with a heavy load of laundry on her head; the other figures surrounding her are busy building the road and fixing the wall. The focus of the drawing is the manual labourer, both male and female, developing the city, which Lozère and her team argue is part of a late nineteenth-century corpus of work, particularly photographic, of the

³⁶¹ "Rendez-vous numériques en histoire de l'art des Antilles I Victor Fulconis," *YouTube*, accessed 15th July, 2024. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkCPRc7oo2c&list=PLsl8NWzVv6T2nsvxr8KtOI_INcqXzGa8W&index=5.

³⁶² *Ibid.*

Caribbean, which recorded the new labourer.³⁶³ Placing Fulconis' work as part of the other work made in the Caribbean recognises connections and themes repeated across the islands, which this chapter (and overall thesis) does not do at an extensive length with its focus on centring Martinique. Yet, such transnational and interconnected collage remains informative for positioning Martinique within the context and tightly woven networks of the broader region. The biography of Fulconis reveals a man who used the infrastructure of the empire to move between metropole and colonies and in the service of the republic took on the job of teaching drawing in schools, swiftly establishing himself as part of the political and cultural elite on the island colony, keen to, like the manual labourers in the above drawing, develop the island to expand artistic refinement.

³⁶³ Ibid.

Section I:

Fulconis' Botanical and Underwater Subjects

In the first section of this chapter, I focus on a selection of Fulconis' drawings in which he studies the flora and fauna and a range of different animal species of Martinique. Illustrating Fulconis' systematic and repeated scrutiny of the environment surrounding him, the drawings reveal how he attempted to categorise life on the island, as a means of accumulating and claiming knowledge of the natural world. Like Lacour's botanical illustrations [Fig. 34 and 35], Fulconis follows a similar visual language by isolating the object on the page and picking out their attributes on a blank background, removed from their natural habitat, which visualises the method of the botanical garden, moving and studying the natural world. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Tobin argues that the language of the botanical illustrations assumed that the object could easily be picked up, studied and utilised.³⁶⁴ The work of Lacour and Fulconis are examples of how the formula of representing nature was not only reserved for natural scientists but made it into the work of a range of practitioners, including the military man and art teacher, and was a way of seeing nature. Whereas Lacour infrequently depicted individual plant species, Fulconis consistently experiments: again and again, he turns to capturing, identifying and categorising nature, and thus gathering and demonstrating his knowledge. Yet, although Fulconis borrows the language of botanical illustrations, he does not assume its scientific accuracy. He does not dissect the plant or animal, provide measurement or other specific horticultural characteristics of the plant, like its roots. Rather, I argue, Fulconis uses the plants and animals as subjects to experiment with colours and shapes.

³⁶⁴ Tobin, "Imperial Designs".

The market of Le Masurier

Before looking closely at the work of Fulconis, I will introduce an earlier artwork from Martinique, which exemplifies how non-human subjects were part of the daily lives of people and were sold and bought on the market, and were a means of agency and selfhood. It illustrates how food and race were deeply interlinked. The painting in question is *Marché à St Pierre de la Martinique* (1750) [Fig. 40a], made by the Martinican Le Masurier. The painting reveals a busy market situated in a town square, in which people of different colours and classes have come to commune, to sell and buy goods. The market scene is a display of how the natural and human world interconnect through the exchange of natural resources. Schiebinger builds from Pratt's concept of the 'contact zone' (as discussed in the introduction) through her notion of the 'biocontact zone' which focuses on the contact between European, Amerindian and African naturalists in the exchange of plants.³⁶⁵ Here, I will use Schiebinger's concept in this initial formulation; I find her focus upon the 'bio' to be a powerful framing with which to highlight how plant and animal life more broadly was part of a network of contacts between groups of people and the natural world. In the middle of the composition, the artist pictures a seated Black woman with the goods she sells laid out in front of her: piles of bananas, breadfruit, soursop, guavas and a white tortoise [Fig. 40b]. Standing next to the woman, a man holds a bundle of freshly caught red snappers in his hand, probably ready to be sold too [Fig. 40c]. Both figures are in close contact with their products – they have caught, cleaned and brought them to the market.

CC Mckee reads the painting as interlinking Blackness and the vegetal, noticing that: 'The tripled gesture—of the man cupping the woman's chin in the palm of his hand as she in turn cups the

³⁶⁵ Londa L. Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007), 83.

corossol and hands a piece to her child—visually draws the vendor’s personhood into the vegetal.’³⁶⁶ I use Mckee’s observation on how the human and natural world are pictorially connected in the painting when looking towards its display of fruits and dead animals intended for the customer. The produce sold by the woman in the centre of the composition lies out on the sheet in such a way that the viewer can easily identify what is being sold, almost like individual botanical illustrations [Fig. 40b]. In the right-sided foreground of Le Masurier’s painting, two women are in the middle of cleaning and arranging the fish they sell. Looking closer, we see how the fish is seen in profile and displays their specific features, suggesting how he again borrows the language of botanical illustrations. We will see later in this section how Fulconis draws fish in a similar manner, with just one example being *Poissons* where he records three different fish in profile (1883) [Fig. 41].

Though Le Masurier’s painting is significantly earlier than the work of Fulconis, it is revealing when considered in conversation with dominant visual formula of botanical illustrations. Further, it provides an additional visualisation of how natural resources were turned into produce to be sold at a Martinican market, part of the community, contextualising richly the drawings of Fulconis, which simply portray animal and plant life as contextless, isolated on the page. It signifies how race and the natural world were interlinked, even in representations like Fulconis’ that include no people but cannot fully conceal the reality that they are central components of a ubiquitous racialised network of contact and exchange. Both artists render their encounter with the natural world as one characterised by observation and inspection, and knowledge collecting. In the following part of this section, I turn to look closely at Fulconis’ illustrations of plant life in relation to the botanical gardens of Saint Pierre, and the gardens as a space in which imperial mastery over

³⁶⁶ CC Mckee, “Cultivating Visible Order”, 64.

the environment was powerfully enacted and embattled. Although Fulconis' drawings might not have reached a wide audience, the act of collecting information and making drawings was nevertheless a production and mapping of colonial knowledge, and, as we saw with Lacour, they reveal the interactions and practice of amateur artists as important actors of the French apparatus of power in the colony of Martinique.

The Vegetal: The Botanical Garden in Saint Pierre

Fulconis gained intimate contact with flora, fauna and animals and expanded his knowledge of the natural world after he, shortly after arriving, befriended the Director of Jardin de Plantes in Saint Pierre, Justinien Thierry, and arranged to live in one of the cottages in the botanical gardens while working as a drawing teacher.³⁶⁷ Alongside the botanical garden in Saint Dominique, the botanical garden of Saint Pierre was created in 1777.³⁶⁸ Fulconis stayed on the grounds of the botanical garden until he married Louise Dupuy, a white Creole woman and the daughter of the former mayor of Saint Pierre, Louis Etienne Dupuy.³⁶⁹ From his cottage, we can imagine that he would have been able to wander daily around in the botanical garden, practise his artistic skills and learn from the botanists. In one postcard, made by an anonymous maker (1901) [Fig. 42], a cottage sits in the middle of the thick vegetation, belying its inhabitation by people residing and labouring there. A cottage such as this might have housed the staff of the gardens or botanical explorers on a visit, to be close to the gardens and observe its changing cycles across the day. From Daum, we know that Fulconis lived and created his herbarium in a cottage such as this, embedded into the vegetal fabric of the place.³⁷⁰ The bridge from the cottage, running across the river stream,

³⁶⁷ Daum, "Vie et oeuvre", 194.

³⁶⁸ Sarah Easterby-Smith, "Recalcitrant Seeds: Material Culture and the Global History of Science," *Past & Present*, 242, no 14 (2019) 230, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtz045>.

³⁶⁹ Daum, "Vie et oeuvre", 200.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 195.

demonstrates how nature was made and altered for the convenience of the people living and using the gardens. In March 1884, Fulconis took on the responsibility of the Jardin des Plantes for a few months while Thierry was away in Jamaica, further evidencing their friendship and Fulconis' passion and knowledge of the gardens and its plants.³⁷¹ In one sketch (1884) [Fig. 43] from February and March of that year, Fulconis draws the heads of snakes that have been killed in the botanical gardens, suggesting a developing relationship with the animal life of the garden. With open mouths, poised to bite into human flesh, the snakes also suggest that the botanical gardens were not only a peaceful Edenic paradise but that it had dangers, moving through the otherwise manicured gardens, reminiscent of the Devil's slithering serpent. Nonetheless, they were a threat that the European was also able to kill to protect themselves from, as Fulconis asserts through the ultimate expression of human domination, rendering and memorialising its maimed body on the page even after the threat has been extinguished.

That the gardens might be a place of danger as well as potential destruction is demonstrated in a footnote of Lafcadio Hearn, the Irish writer who visited the islands.³⁷² Hearn writes that after his visit to the botanical gardens that he was shocked to learn that the old trees in the garden were to be cut down and used for the new schools.³⁷³ Hearn expresses a connection between the increasing number of Black and mixed-race men infiltrating Martinican politics and the deconstruction of the 'generations old' natural world, which as Bailey analyses is Hearn protesting against 'the ecological cost of assimilating Blackness into the nation.'³⁷⁴ As such, the botanical garden was a space which continuously placed a threat to the white body, either through dangerous animals or

³⁷¹ Ibid, 195.

³⁷² Peter Bailey, "Deforestation and Decolonization: Lafcadio Hearn's French Antillean Writing," *Volupté* 6, no. 1 (2023): 1-19.

³⁷³ Ibid, 17.

³⁷⁴ Ibid, 17.

through larger political transformations, against both of which the white man must to protect himself and the colony. This deepens our conversation in Chapter One, regarding how Lacour grounds people visually to the land: here Hearn expresses the implications of the human of colour no longer ubiquitously powerful over both the natural and the political sphere, as a shift that would ruin the very nature to which they were positioned as belonging.³⁷⁵ To reach its full potential then, the land must be governed and nurtured by white men, who were thus entitled to its yield. It was therefore not seen as possible for Afro-Caribbean people to draw prosperity to the land or to France, their governance could only lead to environmental ruination.³⁷⁶

It is in this period of flux and uncertainty that Fulconis' entanglement in the botanical garden positions him at the heart of an imperial enterprise frantically trying to retain its hold on the natural and human world. This is exemplified with his drawing of the cotton plant, a crop reliant upon the work of enslavement and crucial to the wealth of the colonisers [Fig. 44]. Whereas we saw earlier how Lacour included parts of the cotton's stem and three different bulbs, all of them closed and with leaves surrounding them, Fulconis renders the cotton plant in different stages from bulb to blossom, demonstrating that he knew of the growth of the plant through close observation. It exemplifies how his drawings are entangled within scientific explorations and extraction, ecological violence and destruction, but they also show that the fruits and the botanical garden at large was a place of both scientific and aesthetic value. Like Le Masurier, Fulconis also captures the common tropical fruit of soursop in a drawing [Fig. 45]. He similarly details its irregular shape and unusual textures, rendering in detail the prickly spikes of its skin. Whereas Le Masurier paints the soursop as already harvested, Fulconis represents the fruit as hanging on a branch, still in

³⁷⁵ Arnold, "Illusory Riches".

³⁷⁶ Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, "Bagasse: Caribbean art and the debris of the sugar plantation," *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities* (London: Routledge, 2015), 73.

nature, and with another branch showing the flowers of the soursop, typical of a botanical drawing. Yet, contrary to Le Masurier, Fulconis does not illustrate the inside of the fruit, the white pulp with black seeds, nor its practical use for people. It remains suspended in space as an object of beauty and scientific interest, rather than a fruit that is integrated and implicated into the day-to-day realities of island society. The drawing of the soursop is an indication of Fulconis' access to the natural world and keenness to experiment with drawing it, returning again and again to nature as his subject matter. Together, the drawings demonstrate that Fulconis felt it important to demonstrate his possession of knowledge and power of the environment but that he also masters it, or sought to master it, as an artistic pursuit. Crucially, though he appropriates its visual language and modes of representation, he is not so interested in the practical use, scientific knowledge and financial gain that can be drawn from the plants, as was the primary aim of the colossal imperial industry of economic botany of the day, which was the primary purpose of botanic gardens.³⁷⁷

The botanical gardens were, as H el ene Blais proposes, spaces in which the 'mastering of nature and displaying this mastery' was played out.³⁷⁸ Gardens, like Fulconis' home, were also 'laboratories' of experimentation 'in which colonial power was literally rooted.'³⁷⁹ The characteristics and usefulness of plants and seeds were examined and tested, and plant materials were carefully transferred between the metropole and the colony. Londa Schiebinger's work on the subject reveals how botany was both 'big science and big business' intertwined from the eighteenth century, a burgeoning system which intricately connected the Jardin du Roi and

³⁷⁷ Taylor Duncan, "Botanical Gardens and Their Role in the Political Economy of Empire: Jamaica (1846–86)," *Rural History* 28, no. 1 (2017): 47-68, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0956793316000169>.

³⁷⁸ H el ene Blais, "Le commerce des plantes: empires, r eseaux marchands et consommation (XVIe–XXe si ecle) – P epini eres coloniales: de la valeur des plantes des jardins botaniques au XIXe si ecle," *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine* 67, no. 4 (2020), 81

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 81. Baber Zaheer, "The Plants of Empire: Botanic Gardens, Colonial Power and Botanical Knowledge," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 46(4), 659–679. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2016.1185796>, 678.

Martinique through the transfer of plants across the ocean, just one example being the coffee plant, carefully imported to the island by a colonial physician that later became one of the largest crops in the French Antilles.³⁸⁰ Work by historians of environmental science, like Scheibinger and Taylor Duncan, on the role of botany in the making of empire has productively added to the understanding of the environment as an actor, and colonial officials' persistent attempts to use, exploit and benefit from the environment as 'agents of empire.'³⁸¹ At its core, this work recognises that a scholarly focus on the environment opens up a deeper analysis of how the European imperial project was fought for, and manifested, through nature. It thinks about how the environment shaped and was itself shaped by entangled discourses of civility and wildness, of the exotic and of danger and protection.

In a photograph of the botanical garden (1898) [Fig. 46a] we see how such questions played out in practice. Here, we look down a wide road with an open gate. Alongside the road, tall trees and dense vegetation grow. A man, dressed in a suit and carrying an umbrella, stands on the right side of the road and looks in the direction of the photographer, seemingly aware of being photographed. As we saw in the previous chapter on Lacour, the umbrella was used against the heavy rainfall and as a symbol of protection against the fluid sexual boundaries emerging from the uncivilised tropical location, its wildness represented in natural terms by the onslaught of heavy rain. In her work on nineteenth-century Jamaica, Nelson has argued that the umbrella or parasol was a shield that protected white Creoles and colonials from being corrupted by the climate, particularly the threat of being burned or tanned by the sun, of one's skin turning a darker shade and compromising your outward display of whiteness, and perhaps one's internal too.³⁸² In this

³⁸⁰ Londa Scheibinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in The Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 4.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, and Duncan, "Botanical Gardens".

³⁸² Nelson, *Slavery, Geography and Empire*, 315.

photograph too, the man carries the umbrella to protect him from the stark sunshine or the unpredictable tropical showers. In both representations, the umbrella is a barrier against natural forces and indicates the civility of the man carrying it, not unlike the road, the low stone wall and the drainage system: all man-made impositions to order and contain nature at a larger scale.

On the other side of the road, a figure sits in between the plants and similarly faces the camera [46b]. Wearing a headdress and a smock and having darker skin than the other man, the figure is likely included in the image to suggest the looming incivility that is associated with nature, a reminder of the primitive that is waiting if it is not kept intact. Here, the edge of the botanical gardens becomes a place in which incivility and civility are contested. The garden is wild and natural, like in the previous photograph [Fig. 42], but is simultaneously highly curated and tamed through the colonial structure. The seated man – presented as little more than the canonical stereotype of the primitive savage, embedded into, and part of, the landscape – functions as a reason or justification for why this taming (and wielding an umbrella) is necessary and urgent: closeness to nature (and its people) renders human beings uncivil and exotic. We can therefore also understand Fulconis' cottage with his herbarium, like the umbrella, as another form of protection from the dangers of nature, whilst professing and performing closeness to it, with an eye to study and control it. One of the ways in which the gardens were tamed, and presented as tamed, was through botanical illustrations, like those made by Fulconis.³⁸³

Looking at the drawings, we can easily see how Fulconis was proficient in collecting information about the natural world, identifying plant and human species and depicting them with accuracy. As mentioned, he draws on the popular visual formula of botanical illustrations in his work,

³⁸³ Tobin, "Imperial Designs: Botanical Illustration".

recognised by isolating the plant on the page, portraying its features and writing its name underneath. However, he also leaves out established features of botanical illustration; for example, the roots or the insides of the plant, which are included to inform the reader of the plant's essential features and use. Fulconis' drawings indicate that the botanical garden to him was not only a scientific laboratory, but it was also a site of artistic experimentation in which he practised shapes, patterns and colours. On one sheet of paper, he draws the fruit of the velvet apple (1883) [Fig. 47], also identified by him in the writing underneath. Here, Fulconis captures the colour nuances of the fruit, experimenting with how the fruit changes colour from beige to red, which suggests that the botanical garden was not only a space of scientific investigation, as scholars have established, but also a place of artistic experimentation, where artists like Fulconis could encounter the plant life of the tropics. I will return to the meanings of fruit and colour change in the next chapter, where I examine Gauguin's representation of the mango.

But as we saw earlier, within the garden, knowledge remained unstable. In the drawing *Tabernac citrifolia*, *Gingembre* and *Duranta plumier (vanillier)* (1883) [Fig. 48], he draws three flowers. He includes another yellow flower but does not identify and name it on the page; perhaps he did not himself know its proper name. In the *Tabernac citrifolia* he crosses out the name he originally labels the plant again: we see how Fulconis' knowledge of plants might have been tested, suggesting that he had initially identified the plant wrongly and had later been corrected, or somehow realised his mistake. It is an example of how the drawings in the album were not illustrations of complete or finished knowledge but were part of the process of acquiring knowledge and learning how to depict and recognise the plants. Moreover, elsewhere, Fulconis draws tulips and pansies (1883) [Fig. 49], but the flowers' names are unusually absent; these names and labels being one of the characteristics of a drawing that it is for scientific use. Instead,

he captures the shape of the flowers on the paper, particularly the colour-makeup of the head of the tulip and how it changes as it blooms, from closed to more open. He makes a similar kind of drawing of roses (1883) [Fig. 50]. Again, Fulconis does not identify the flowers but rather studies them freely to get a sense of how to place them on the page.

The artist's repeated recording of the vegetal underscores how central the encounter with the Martinican natural world was to a foreigner like Fulconis: it was a subject matter which underlined the tropicity of the island and confirmed the abundance of plant life of the colony, which was managed and secured by the infrastructure of the botanical garden and its resultant overarching, all-seeing vision of nature, as able to be ordered and tamed for layman pleasure and scientific study. Fulconis' drawings indicate that the botanical garden was not only a scientific laboratory, but also an aesthetic site of artistic experimentation in which Fulconis used the plants as objects to practise shapes, patterns and colours. In the next part, I move on from Fulconis' depiction of plant life to examine his rendering of life underwater, which confirms how persistent the vision of the natural environment, whether terrestrial or underwater, as known and mastered, was to colonial visions of the tropical colony. The colonial mastery of the waters and the ecosystem is currently being replayed in the French Antilles, through what Ferdinand aptly calls 'The Master's Chemistry.'³⁸⁴

The Aquatic

On 15th April 2013, the streets of Fort-de-France were taken over by 500 fishermen.³⁸⁵ They were demonstrating in large numbers because the source of their livelihood, spiny lobsters, were

³⁸⁴ Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology*, 106.

³⁸⁵ Martine Valo, "Guadeloupe and Martinique threatened as pesticide contaminates food chain," *The Guardian*, 6th May 2023.

deemed unfit for humans to eat because of chlordecone (also known as Kepone) contamination.³⁸⁶

The same situation unfolded in Guadeloupe. Used to get rid of banana weevil between 1972 and 1993, fifteen years after the World Health Organization had first warned against it, the chemical had now poisoned the whole ecosystem and the food chain on the islands, from the fields and gardens to the rivers and coastal waters.³⁸⁷ Today, almost 90% of the adult population in the French Antilles has the cancerous chlordecone in their blood, with the result that the islands' number of cancer diagnoses are some of the highest in the world.³⁸⁸ In January 2023, a high-stake criminal investigation into the use of the pesticide was dropped by Paris Prosecutor's Office, with the explanation that it was not possible to gather enough evidence after so long.³⁸⁹ Yet humans and non-humans, from the mangroves to the vegetables grown in private gardens, to the health of citizens, have been impacted by the chlordecone disaster.

The demonstrations for reparations and the French state's moral responsibility continue. The metropolitan agency in the use of pesticides in the natural environment (approved by former French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac) across the ocean uncomfortably echoes centuries of colonial power.³⁹⁰ The banana industry's control by profit-driven *békés* and its exploitation of low-wage workers exposed to harmful pesticides highlights the ongoing legacy of colonialism—

³⁸⁶ Ibid. Sophie Coat, Gilles Bocquené and Eric Godard, "Contamination of some aquatic species with the organochlorine pesticide chlordecone in Martinique," *Aquatic Living Resources* 19, no. 2 (2006) 181-187.

³⁸⁷ "Scandale du chlordécone: plusieurs milliers de manifestants en Martinique contre 'l'impunité,'" *Le Monde*, 27th February 2021, accessed 20th May 2024, https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2021/02/27/scandale-du-chlordecone-plusieurs-milliers-de-manifestants-en-martinique-contre-l-impunite_6071431_3244.html.

³⁸⁸ Luc Multigner, et al., "Chlordecone Exposure and Risk of Prostate Cancer," *Journal of clinical oncology* 28, no. 21 (2010): 3457-3462; Dominique Belpomme et al., "Prostate cancer as an environmental disease: An ecological study in the French Caribbean islands, Martinique and Guadeloupe," *International Journal of Oncology* 34, no. 4 (2009): 1037-1044. <https://doi.org/10.3892/ijo.0000022>; Laurent Brureau, et al., "Endocrine Disrupting-Chemicals and Biochemical Recurrence of Prostate Cancer after Prostatectomy: a Cohort Study in Guadeloupe (French West Indies)," *International Journal of Cancer* 146, no. 3 (2020): 657-663

³⁸⁹ Lauren Bain, "Martinique: years later, the Fight against Chlordecone persists," *France 24, YouTube*, accessed May 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jgDpgM8PG8>.

³⁹⁰ Dabor Resiere et al., "Chlordecone (Kepone) Poisoning in the French Territories in the Americas," *The Lancet*, vol. 401, no. 10380.

marked by environmental domination and (chemical) violence. With the toxicant moving through all parts of Antillean life, the populations continue to be bodily connected to the plantations and the land of enslavement, with their fruits, vegetables and waters continuing to be poisoned for the next 700 years.³⁹¹ It is an example of how important it has been to contain and, in this case, contaminate nature to uphold the agricultural industry both on land and sea, an industry that from the beginning relied upon slave labour and later underpaid workers to generate profit.

I begin my analysis of Fulconis' drawings of the aquatic with the current ecological disaster seeping through the ecosystem of the French Antilles to place his intricate categorisation of the submarine life as not only a part of the colonial mastery over nature but also to underscore that his depictions of the plentiful water species have been endangered by this very mastery. In four pencil drawings (1882) [Fig. 51a, 51b, 51c, 51d] Fulconis renders fragmented scenes from a sailing journey which might have been the one he took between Bordeaux and Martinique in 1882. It is an unusual record of the in-between departure and arrival, when onboard and far away from what was known and moving towards something new. In the quick sketches, he draws different white men of empire who are on the same sailing ship; some of the sailors stir the helm, use a sextant to navigate, scrub the floor and one holds a gun, ready for any threats. Other lay people look around, one even lies down and reads a book, and four other men, more finely dressed in double-breasted jackets, pose on deck. This is an example of not only how the colonial role was an act of self-fashioning, which was communicated through clothing and occupation, but also shows how the sea was mastered by sea journeys and military. By depicting these scenes, Fulconis shows that he was part of this group of people, personifying the colonial system. As such, he shows that they are in

³⁹¹ Jean-Michel Hauteville, "Outrage in French Caribbean over expected dismissal of pesticide poisoning case," *Le Monde*, 28th November 2022, accessed 1st April 2024, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/politics/article/2022/11/28/in-the-chlordecone-case-as-no-trial-is-expected-indignation-grows-in-the-french-west-indies_6005843_5.html.

charge of the transport, navigation, and knowledge of the sea's surface, and as we will see next, he is also (striving to be) in control of the underwater life.

Fulconis turns to the subject of underwater life in a series of experiments. When I first saw the drawings, I was again taken aback by the sheer brightness of the colours and his attempts to express the pattern and shapes of the animals. His repeated focus on the aquatic, page after page, is significant and signals that it was a subject matter that he was fascinated by. One of the examples of Fulconis' fish drawings is *Poissons: patate, bourse, juif, vermeil, carangue, souris* (1883) [Fig. 52]. Fulconis uses the same visual language we have just seen in his drawings of plant life, characterised by a focus on the features of the object(s) and by it being drawn on the page with an empty background. In this drawing, he pictures eight fish in varying sizes and writes next to each their name. Fulconis captures the colourful skin and scales of the fish, using vibrant colour to illustrate how the skin has unique patterns. For instance, the *souris* on the bottom of the page is depicted in shades of red, orange and light pinks, with dabs of green-grey. In another, *Poissons: patate, chat, maryand souris* (1883) [Fig. 53], he represents the *patate* twice with their characteristic rainbow-like skin with a palette dominant of bright greens, blues and deep reds, which almost shimmers on the page. The two drawings are examples of the work that Fulconis completes of the aquatic species, where he identifies and depicts the fish, but he is not interested in proving his scientific accuracy, by including measurements or the dissection of the fish as, we will see, was common for ichthyologists. Rather, across the drawings, we see how they are moments of capturing the diverse range of fish and exploring shape and colour [Fig. 54a, 54b, 54c].

But, that is not to say that Fulconis was not interested in categorising what he saw as this was very much a part of his practice, as exemplified in his drawing of various shells [Fig. 55] that he

organised according to their types and depicts each of them from different sides, not following the line of eighteenth-century conchology but nonetheless sharing in the pursuit of ordering the natural world. This collection of drawings by Fulconis is more so part of what Molly Duggins describes as the ‘rebranding of the West Indies as a consumable natural wonderland after emancipation.’³⁹² I will go more in depth about the act of what scholars has referred to as ‘consuming the Caribbean’ in the next chapter, but for now, Duggins’ statement, while said in the context of Victorian Barbados, testifies to how Fulconis’ interest in the sea embodies a sense of ‘wonderland’, where the horrors of the Middle Passage have been forgotten: how in a very real way the underwater species, like the sharks followed and ate the bodies of enslaved Africans who jumped or were thrown overboard.³⁹³ As such, Fulconis’ careful drawing of the various shells is an example of how he combines scientific collection together in an aesthetic manner.

The most prominent nineteenth-century figure in the discipline of ichthyologists was the Frenchman George Cuvier, who together with his disciple Achille Valenciennes produced the 22-volume *Histoire naturelle des poissons* (1828-1849), which was an extensive overview of all the fish known at the time.³⁹⁴ Looking at the drawings in Cuvier and Valenciennes’ volume, as for example *Holacanthè à demi-cercles* [Fig. 56] and *Chaetodon à housse* [Fig. 57], we can see that Fulconis shared their formula of drawing the fish in profile and rendering the details of the fish, using colour to capture the nuances, patterns and shapes of their skin, prioritising the aesthetic beauty of fish, as we also see in Fulconis’ drawings of fish. However, in contrast to the drawings in the volume, Fulconis does not include the anatomical details of fish, like the ichthyologists.

³⁹² Molly Duggins, “Sailors’ Valentines: Shell Mosaics from Victorian Barbados,” *British Art Studies*, issue 25, <https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-25/mduggins>.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁴ George Cuvier, *Tableau historique des progrès de l’ichthyologie: Depuis son origine jusqu’à nos jours*. ed. Theodore Pietsch, trans. Fanja Andriamialisoa (Paris: Publications scientifiques du Muséum, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.mnhn.6224>.

Instead, he is more captured by using the features of the fish to make them look visually compelling on the page, which suggests that he is not depicting the fish for scientific credibility, but rather to merge a scientific curiosity with his artistic skills. For instance, in *Langouste, trompette, raves de mer* (1883) [Fig. 58], he records the *trompette* as it bends around the other fish, almost too long to fit in the pictorial space. The *trompette* open mouth is repeated in the unnamed fish underneath, characterised by its red-dotted skin. The play with the shape of the fish is further echoed by his depiction of the spiny lobster's very long feelers, which almost reach the trumpetfish. Another example of Fulconis' experimentation with the appearance and position of the fish is seen in *Hippolite, Zilerone, crabe* (1883) [Fig. 59], where the sea snake is curled together as it hisses. It is surrounded by two crabs of varying sizes and two fish on both sides. Each of the fish, the hippolite and the zilerone, are both depicted with almost comically long feelers. Fulconis uses the page to play with the forms of the fish. In *(vive) Labous - (coffre)-(poisson armé) Diodon maculatim* (1883) [Fig 60], he only renders the face of the *labous*, emerging from the left-side corner. On the same page, the *diodon maculatum* is also unusually seen slightly from the top in a way that shows off its spikes, which Fulconis correctly registers are poisonous. By registering that the fish is dangerous, we see how Fulconis felt a need to record the threats as well as the beauty of the natural world, similarly to his drawing of the snakes. He endeavours to record and master the fish, but he also records his bodily limitations of when non-human poses a danger to him and his safety on the island. As we saw in the first chapter with Lacour's semi-botanical drawing of the cashew fruit, there is a sense that within what is beautiful and bountiful in this tropical paradise, lurks the potential for unseen horror and peril below the surface, that one must be on guard for and knowledgeable about.

Again, in *Raie* (1883) [Fig. 61], he draws a ray (probably a Bentfin Devil Ray) as it emerges with its belly up from the bottom of the page. Unusual for Fulconis' drawings, he captures the ray in thick sketch-like brushstrokes of white and light pink. He depicts its head slightly from the side, so one eye and the scales on its belly are visible. Again, the drawing is an example of how Fulconis also diverted from depicting the profile of the fish to experiment with how the fish would look from another angle as it moves through the water. As such, Fulconis borrows from the formula of a scientific illustration, which concentrates on recording the features of the fish to the viewer in detail, both in his vegetal and aquatic drawings. Simultaneously, and uncharacteristically for such drawings, he (as we have seen) includes multiple different variants of fish in one drawing, omits the anatomy of the fish and uses expressive watercolour brushstrokes, momentarily depicting the fish from different angles. Fulconis' multiple drawings of fish, in their various shapes and sizes, reveal the album to be a source which typifies how the act of drawing was used by natural scientists or botanical explorers to capture the natural environment, but also adopted by artists like Fulconis, who relied on the network of the botanical garden to gain knowledge and access to nature through this vision. As an artist, it is clear that he found scientific imagery a useful one for gathering and synthesising knowledge, which would in turn improve his art-making. Not dissimilarly to Lacour's work assimilating cartographic approaches into his vistas to produce the topographical landscape, Fulconis employs another of the primary scientific disciplines upholding and fuelled by empire, to advance his art. It confirms the persistence of the visual language of the scientific illustration, which signifies a way of engaging with colonial nature that emphasises control, order and aesthetics, tamed on the page, just like the physical landscape of the botanical gardens. These links between science, art and colonial travel further underscores and illuminates the centrality of the visual image and art-making both in a professional and amateur or hobby sense, to the machine of empire.

Whereas with Fulconis' drawings of the vegetal, we could easily speculate how Fulconis had been able to step out of his cottage and observe the flora surrounding him, it is more confounding to understand how he would have been able to observe the wide range of fish so up close, as the drawings would suggest. In yet another commonality with Lacour, Fulconis' work assumes a line of vision that would have been impossible within the infrastructural and technological constraints of his day. Just as Lacour could not have hovered above and over the island in the air like a bird, Fulconis could not have dived into the depths of the sea to encounter this diversity of aquamarine life in all its rich colour, like a fish. Both inconceivable (and animal-like) vantage points or perspectives are self-fashionings, projections and expressions of themselves as in possession of such a comprehensive catalogue of knowledge that it verges on fantastical and implausible.³⁹⁵

In reality, we can imagine he may have gathered knowledge through private correspondences, conversations with botanists like Thierry, or through books. One photograph (1898) [Fig. 62] reveals that there was not only a river in the garden, but also a lake, which indeed indicates that he would have been able to see and catch fish close to his home in the cottage. But, importantly, Le Masurier's painting [Fig. 40a] also reminds us that the market would be a place where Fulconis could study fish and other aquatic species displayed by the sellers. In a black and white pencil drawing, *Femme du peuple ramassant un poisson* (1883) [Fig. 63], he studies an everyday scene of a woman sitting on the ground as she cleans a fish with her hands for it to be served at the table or sold at the market. The drawing reveals to us that there would have been opportunities for Fulconis to study the fish and the people preparing and eating them, opportunities that he clearly took advantage of. Fulconis' ability to depict the fish was then dependent on the fishing and preparation

³⁹⁵ Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics*, 162; Ann Elias, *Coral Empire: Underwater Oceans, Colonial Tropics, Visual Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 11-12.

of people of colour who sold them at the market. Like we see in the drawing, the woman carefully cleans the fish, so it is easy and safe to bring back for a customer, like Fulconis.

From the market to the table of Fulconis' studio, we can imagine that the colours of the freshly caught fish would have faded with time, but Fulconis depicts them as still vibrant and shimmering. Similarly, he occasionally renders the species in positions which suggest they have not been caught and are not dead. In her analysis of the on-paper depictions and museum and theatre displays of corals in the nineteenth-century Britain, Kathleen Davidson examines Charles Darwin's drawings and argues that 'The representation of colours observed in nature was a key concern of Darwin's and most other naturalists.'³⁹⁶ She adds that it was such a concern to capture the correct colour – 'the living tints' - of the underwater species before they faded that Darwin brought along a copy of Patrick Syme's *Werner's Nomenclature of Colours* (1821) on his Beagle expedition (1831-36), which aided him in identifying the right colours he saw.³⁹⁷ In Fulconis works, we see a similar concern with colouring the full underwater spectrum of colours in its full brightness and intricacies. In doing so, he visually denies the less tantalising notion that fish have been transported from the sea, through the hands of the seller and into the market stall, where they might have been viewed by Fulconis. Instead, his more commonly decontextualised drawings imply that he sees the species as they appear under water. For example, in his depiction of a starfish and a sea urchin [Fig. 63], he draws them as if they have not faded in colour after being taken out of the ocean with the starfish drawn in a yellow colour with deep red dots along its body and the sea urchin is a light pink colour, though we know that that would be an impossibility.

³⁹⁶ Kathleen Davidson, "Their 'Colours are Brilliant, but Fugitive': Coral Concerns from Imperial Expeditions and the British Museum to the Royal Academy and Drury Lane," in *Sea Currents in Nineteenth-Century Art, Science and Culture: Commodifying the Ocean World*, Kathleen Davidson and Molly Duggins, eds. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023), 179.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 179.

In one drawing (1883) [Fig. 64], similar to the one of the woman cleaning the fish, Fulconis renders a woman with her back slightly towards the viewer as she pushes a faintly outlined boat (probably into the sea), another example of how Fulconis observed how people gathered produce on the water. The two drawings demonstrate that although Fulconis' studies of fish suggest that they exist outside of a context and separate from the island ecosystem, they were part of foodways and patterns of consumption and had historically proven to be important for surviving the plantation system by providing essential protein that was lacking in the plantation owners' sparse dietary provisions.³⁹⁸ Yet, as Bertie Mandleblatt also reminds us, fishing was an activity which posed risks to the plantation owner and had to be carefully considered, because it involved that the enslaved spent time away from the plantation, potentially met a range of people and sold their catch to others.³⁹⁹ Based on her archaeological findings in the French Caribbean, Peggy Brunache argues that 'enslaved communities were not passive recipients of slave alimentation', and 'relied on a variety of marine and terrestrial sources of animal protein.'⁴⁰⁰ She finds that enslaved, and later free, communities harvested a diverse range of aquatic species, entailing over 30 fish families, including sea turtle, land crab, sea urchin, and numerous marine and mangrove shellfish.⁴⁰¹ Brunache's analysis further contextualises Fulconis' drawings by arguing that the preparation and consumption of aquatic animals were acts of agency and independence amongst enslaved population. Fulconis choice to depict the fish as isolated in space. In producing a wonderland cornucopia, he distances and denies the context of everyday acts and networks they were a part of. He attempts, but ultimately fails, to erase the close, complex and sophisticated

³⁹⁸ Peggy Brunache, "Mainstreaming African Diasporic Foodways: When Academia Is Not Enough," *Transform Anthropology*, no. 27, (2019), 149-163, 154.

³⁹⁹ Mandleblatt, "A Land where Hunger".

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 154.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid*, 154.

spiritual, resistive and economic relationships between the Afro-Caribbean population and the natural world.

Brunache is merely one example of recent work that emphasises the importance of taking seriously the produce and human interactions with the undersea world. While her work examines terrestrial findings, it is connected to Corey Ross' idea of 'Liquid Empire', which understands 'water was an essential part of the story, one that literally flowed through the entire project of modern imperialism', which reflects the thesis' larger attentiveness to the different parts of the environment (as outlined in the introduction).⁴⁰² To this section specifically, which focuses on how underwater species were captured by Fulconis, it adds to Blais' notion of the colonial 'mastery over nature' as not only terrestrial but also aquatic.⁴⁰³ Recalling the thesis' introduction, the sea was conceptualised as a space of connection, bridging the colony to mainland France and vice versa, transporting goods (tobacco, sugar, indigo, correspondence) and people back and forth, with the ports being important meeting points of exchange. The sea is not only important as the enabler of people and goods arriving and leaving the colony, the sea itself is also a resource that was used and experienced by travellers and inhabitants. Fulconis' drawings of underwater species and human life aboard ship and above water illustrate the importance of heeding and honouring Ross' emphasis on the imperial dominance of underwater species, and how these drawings were part of a network of colonial control, which required knowledge of navigation and fishery.⁴⁰⁴

Fulconis' drawings of plant and aquatic life sit alongside his other drawings in the album where he studies people of colour through a similar lens and language as we have just seen. In doing so,

⁴⁰² Ross, *Liquid Empire*, 6.

⁴⁰³ Blais, "Le commerce des plantes", 81.

⁴⁰⁴ Ross, *Liquid Empire* and Banks, *Chasing Empire across the Sea*.

Fulconis creates a strong visual and actual connection between the human and non-human, following the lead of Cuvier's practice. He worked as a professor at the newly established Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, which emerged out of the Jardin du Roi, again proving the interlinking of the study of nature and race ever more deeply; people of colour studied with the same scrutiny as non-human species.⁴⁰⁵ Geoffrey Galt Harpham argues that 'Cuvier's inclusion of humanity in the "animal kingdom" and his reliance on skull and other measurements testify to the increasing dominance of an empirical natural-historical approach to the study of humanity.'⁴⁰⁶ He continues: 'in Cuvier's work, we can see an emerging consensus that the primary and proper task of anthropology was the partition and classification of humanity into races.'⁴⁰⁷ Ultimately, the study of nature and people of colour went hand-in-hand, severing the links between people and nature on the one hand, and also creating an idea that people *were* linked to nature on the other hand. Both of these were dual and contradictory processes that fuelled ideas of the colonised people as closer to nature.

⁴⁰⁵Sadiah Qureshi, "Dying Americans: race, extinction, and conservation in the New World," *From Plunder to Preservation: Britain and The Heritage of Empire, c. 1800-1940*, eds. Astrid Swenson and Peter Mandler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 269. See also, Emmanuelle Saada, "Race and Empire in Nineteenth-Century France," in *The Cambridge History of French Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2019): 353-362.

⁴⁰⁶ Geoffrey Galt Harpham, "Georges Cuvier," in *Theories of Race 1684-1900*, accessed 5th August 2024, <https://www.theoriesofrace.com/24/>.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

Section II

A changing make-up:

Fulconis' studies of the Indo-Caribbean and the Laundress

In the piece *Femmes du peuple* (1884) [Fig. 65], Fulconis draws five different women on the page, each with a different coloured dress and different posture. He captures the women as they each are out in the town. The drawing is part of a series of works in the album in which Fulconis turns his focus to the population of Martinique. The drawings do not attempt to tell us anything about the subjects as individuals – they are not portraits – but rather seek to identify and characterise different groups of people, which he identifies by writing on the right side, like he did in his drawings of the vegetal and aquatic life on the island. Although the subject matter is different, I argue that Fulconis uses a similar formula for depicting the people on the island, a formula characterised by systematic observation and an obsession with studying, experimenting and developing his skill with colour, form and shape through the subject matter. Whereas I discussed Fulconis' drawings of the natural world in relation to botanical illustrations and ichthyology, I position his drawings of people in connection to the emerging discipline of anthropology. This does not mean that the two sections are separate; on the contrary, they are deeply entangled and part of the same discussion which attests to how Fulconis' album is a record of non-human and human species as a subject matter that prompted artistic experimentation and was indebted to a colonial need, going back to the Enlightenment, to order and systematise the surroundings, with Cuvier being the personification of such an endeavour and the botanical garden being a space in which race and ecology were played out. It is not new to show that the colonial project relied on visual systematisation, but Fulconis adds to this discussion by showing that it was a common visual language not only for scientists but also for artists.

Anthropology and empire: Paul Broca's colour palette

In the first scene of the chapter, I introduced Keith Piper's paintbox installation, which exhibited the pigments that an artist ought to use to depict different categories of people, like the supervisor (white) or the field labourer (dark brown). The work exemplifies the artist's palette as a racialised tool which registered skin colour as flat and understood skin colour as telling of which category the subject belonged. Piper's work speaks right into the conversation of this section, which thinks about Fulconis' drawings of people as indebted to the discipline of anthropology.⁴⁰⁸ To set the background for understanding why I understand Fulconis' drawings this way, I will in the following section briefly introduce the extant literature on anthropology as an imperial pursuit, and particularly focus on the colour work of the French anthropologist Paul Broca with his 'Tableau Chromatique' [Fig. 67], as an example of how skin colour was categorised and mapped. I am not the only one who sees Fulconis' work as being indebted to anthropology. In his speculative and personal tone, Daum writes that Fulconis became fascinated with anthropology as seen in his sketches of different human types.⁴⁰⁹ Whereas Daum does not push this argument further or contextualise Fulconis within the activities and aims of nineteenth-century anthropology, I will momentarily pause the visual analysis of specific drawings by Fulconis to instead think overall about his drawings as a whole, and their relationship to anthropology.

The scholarship on the relationship between anthropology and empire is a welcome addition to interventions into the role and use of academic disciplines, like geography and history, as makers

⁴⁰⁸ For an examination of a particular example of an ethnographic study of colour, see Arnaud Dubois, "Couleurs de l'arc-en-ciel et anthropologie : du laboratoire au terrain (Rivers et le détroit de Torres, 1898–1901)," in *Arcs-en-ciel & couleurs: Regards comparatifs*, eds., Arnaud Dubois, Jérémie Eczet, Anne Grand-Clément, and Charlotte Ribeyrol (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2018), 25–43, <https://doi.org/10.3917/cnrs.duboi.2018.01.0025>.

⁴⁰⁹ Daum, "Vie et oeuvre", 203.

and supporters of empire. Fenneke Sysling argues that anthropology ‘provided a mental framework’ to justify the project of empire in the discipline’s desire to describe and explain the differences between Europeans and non-Europeans, though always in favour of the Europeans.⁴¹⁰ It relied upon the Enlightenment’s need to categorise and hierarchise human groups and the natural world, combined with the growing opportunities to encounter people from outside Europe through the networks of empire, all fostering pseudo-knowledge and helping to justify the European colonial projects.⁴¹¹ Together, it created the background for anthropology as a discipline developing in the mid-nineteenth century. In his drawings, Fulconis clearly taps into this anthropological study of the people of colour on the island. He pictorially categorises people and nature in the same way he encountered them as a young boy in the Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle and later as an adult in the botanical gardens in Saint Pierre, observing and identifying their visual features and cataloguing them accordingly. Significantly, whereas Fulconis depicted with great care and intricacy the multiple colours of fish skin, he represents human skin in flat and one-dimensional colours, which indicates to us that he worked within a framework that relied on skin colour as being identifiable and legible, exemplifying clearly Cesaire’s reference to the coloniser’s use of ‘arbitrary colours’ to signal what was interesting and important, and what was not, as we analysed in the previous chapter.

The French anthropologist Paul Broca (1824-1880), who founded the first Société d’Anthropologie, was one of the proponents of clear racial classification, where skin colour could easily be compared, identified and conclusions drawn from. We do not know whether Fulconis

⁴¹⁰ Fenneke Sysling “Anthropology and Empire,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Science and Empire*, ed., Andrew Goss (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2023), 74.

⁴¹¹ Michael D. Harris, *Colored Pictures: Race and Visual Representation* (Chapel Hill, N.C.; University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 2

knew of Broca's work, but he is an example of the kind of anthropological conversations and practices that were widespread in the nineteenth century and onwards.

He was a devoted fan of the work of Cuvier and compliments his dissection of Saartje Baartman, mentioned in the introduction, as a good example of how a person of colour has been rigorously studied, praising the efforts to correctly preserve her brain and store it in the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle. Broca's praise of Cuvier's practice suggests his racist methodology and belief system fuelling his introduction book to anthropology, *Les Instructions Générales pour Les Recherches et Observations Anthropologiques (Anatomie et Physiologie)* of 1862.⁴¹² Here, Broca sets out to explain the field of anthropology by providing instructions and guidance on how traveller-anthropologists can methodically observe and measure what they see and eventually report their findings to the Society, urgently needed because according to Broca, most conclusions on race have emerged from memories or stories. In order to change this, Broca proposes that race, which he compares to a disease, is best understood by a series of in-person observations close to human.⁴¹³ To Broca, all traveller-anthropologists must use the same template, so it is easy to compare results, something that had been missing from the field.⁴¹⁴ As Claude Blankaert argues, Broca positions the reader or the user as a scientific collaborator with *Instructions* providing the steps to follow, whether it is dissecting a body or identifying a race, to complete the work correctly.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹² Paul Broca, *Les Instructions Générales pour Les Recherches et Observations Anthropologiques (Anatomie et Physiologie)* (Paris: Victor Masson et fils, 1865), accessed January 2024, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6281965n.r=%2C%20Les%20Instructions%20G%C3%A9n%C3%A9rales%20pour%20Les%20Recherches%20et%20Observations%20Anthropologiques?rk=21459;2>.

⁴¹³ Ibid, 20.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid, 3

⁴¹⁵ Claude Blankaert, *De la race à l'évolution: Paul Broca et l'anthropologie française (1850–1900)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009), 15.

To make it easier for traveller-anthropologists to identify skin colour and thus race, Broca introduces the ‘Tableau Chromatique.’ Positioned at the end of the book, the table is used by comparing the skin colour to the coloured rectangles. One of the reasons why such fixed colours are needed is because, according to Broca, everyone sees the world around them in their specific way, leading to contradictions between the description of travellers and where colour is identified in relation to objects like chocolate, fruits or mahogany.⁴¹⁶ Broca describes the instability of colour, making it hard to describe, difficult to memorise and highly subjective, which has made the study of human races unsubstantial and invalid. Broca’s chart therefore provides a system for standardising the colours that are encountered. He is aware that it might sometimes be difficult to determine the right colour match but advises to cut off a small piece of hair to assist with the identification.⁴¹⁷ This is a significant part of the chart: the anthropologist’s forceful haptic contact with the subject of study. It was not enough to observe from a distance but essential to be up close and measure, even cutting off hair if necessary. Michael Keevak writes that others tried to improve upon Broca’s chromatic table by experimenting with different colour ranges and different media such as glass tablets.⁴¹⁸ By the end of the nineteenth century, one popular alternative was a small wooden top, on which were placed several disks that blended when the top was spun.⁴¹⁹ The subjects to be measured laid their arm on a table next to the spinning top while the researcher adjusted the disks until they matched the colour of the skin.⁴²⁰ ‘Tableau Chromatique’ is then one of many sources that made and enacted race through active movement of measuring, analysing and noting the results, which ultimately positioned people of colour in the colonies as different. By drawing people of colour again and again in the album, Fulconis positions them as rarities, as sites

⁴¹⁶ Broca, *Les Instructions*, 4.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid*, 54.

⁴¹⁸ Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 5.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid*, 5.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid*, 5.

of difference that need to be studied and can easily be identified and understood based on their skin colour. This is accentuated by Fulconis' writing down the category of people, whether according to their profession or according to their heritage, like "Blanchisseuse" or "Indiens Coolies" as he also did with his botanical and animal illustrations, and as we see, these categories are inextricable from skin colour. Across the album, we see how Fulconis uses the album to freely experiment and survey: he can fill the blank pages with his vision of people and nature from a comfortable distance as an observer in control of the version of the island that he sees and imagines.

The Indo-Caribbean in Martinique

In the following section, I take the previous discussion of anthropology and colour mapping onto Fulconis' depiction of Indo-Caribbean people in Martinique. The section also adds our discussion of Fulconis' depiction of marine and plant life, as it illustrates how he uses the same technique for non-human and human depiction. I begin by unfolding the history of Indian indentured labourers in Martinique, despite it only being two drawings in the album, because it is an often-overlooked part of Martinican history and because the drawings open a moment to incorporate this important history into the thesis for the first and only time. Furthermore, it is an impactful part of the thesis' overall conversation on subjecthood and liberty, of the being and not being French, because it again reminds us that the abolition of slavery was not the end but merely one step in a continuous and ongoing process, and deepens our discussion of the multi-racial colour palette of the island.

Historical background

In 1852, the year that Lacour stopped drawing in his album, Napoleon III issued a decree that allowed the plantation owner to recruit indentured labourers to work on the plantations in the

French Antilles, leaving the promised ideals, *Liberté, Egalité* and *Fraternité*, of the 1848 revolution hollow.⁴²¹ Lasting from around the 1840s to 1920s, the system of indentured labour was not new by the time of Fulconis' drawings. The British were the first to explore the possibilities of using indentured labour with their so-called "Great Experiment", which started in 1835 on the island of Mauritius and sought to prove the profitability of transporting labourers from India to the island to work in their plantations after the abolition of slavery in 1834.⁴²² The remains of the immigration depot in Mauritius, Aapravasi Ghat, still stands as a reminder of the beginning of indentured labour in the nineteenth century.⁴²³ From the British beginnings in Mauritius, it became a much larger trans-European operation with Indians recruited to replace enslaved labour in La Reunion, Strait Settlement, Fiji, Natal, South Africa, British Guiana, Trinidad, Suriname, Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Jamaica, Belize, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Grenada, St. Kitts, St. Croix and Martinique.⁴²⁴

Initially following emancipation, the French did not start recruiting labourers from India. Instead, around 9,500 workers from Congo-Kinshasa, Sierra Leone, and Gabon were first brought to the colonial plantations as indentured workers in the French Antilles.⁴²⁵ However, this was met with widespread protests from the abolitionists in mainland France and in Martinique who saw it as a continuation of slavery, which they had fought so hard to abolish.⁴²⁶ As a solution, the French

⁴²¹ Mahadevi Ramakrishnan, "French, African, and Indian Cultural Narratives in Martinique: The Architecture of Shifting Social Hierarchies from 1848–1884," *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies* 7, no. 2 (2013), <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/french-african-indian-cultural-narratives/docview/2793203937/se-2>. 27.

⁴²² Satyendra Peerthum, and Kiran Chuttoo Jankee, "The Indian Ocean and the History of Indenture: The Making of 'new' Nationals and Nations," in *Cultural Heritage Management in Africa*, eds., George Abungu and Webber Ndoro (London: Routledge, 2023), 140.

⁴²³ Shanaaz Mohammed, "Reimagining the Aapravasi Ghat: Khal Torabully's poetry and the indentured diaspora," *The Journal of Indian Ocean World Studies* 4, no. 2 (2021): 118–143.

⁴²⁴ Lomarsh Roopnarine, *The Indian Caribbean* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2018), 12.

⁴²⁵ Ramakrishnan, "French, African", 27.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid*, 28.

were quickly able to imitate the British method of indenture because of their enclaves in India, which provided the base for their recruitment of labour to their Caribbean colonies. As a result, most of the indentured workers came from their southern Tamil-speaking area and a minority came from Chandernagore in Northeastern India. Martinique received Southern Tamil-speaking Dravidians while Guadeloupe received Indo-Aryans from Northern India.⁴²⁷ Aisha Khan sums up the significance of whether the indentured came from Northern and Southern India:

The darker and more “African-like” Madrassis were often unfavourably contrasted with Indians from Calcutta to the north who were, according to some, lighter in colour and more tractable. The simultaneous appellations of Aryan-although-not-necessarily-Caucasian, Caucasian-but-generally-not-white, and coolie-frequently-black, were variously used to characterise Indian and Indo-Caribbean peoples.⁴²⁸

With Martinique receiving mostly Tamilians, this sheds significant light on our understanding of the racialisation of the indentured Indian labourers who found themselves in Martinique. We do not know the ethnic origins of the figures painted by Fulconis, whether he painted their skin colour true to life, or darkened them to accentuate their proximity to African-ness. But the fact that he does include the Indo-Caribbean figure in an album otherwise filled with the Afro-Caribbean people is notable and telling of his differentiated gaze upon these two types of labourers, with the Afro-Caribbean figures, as we will see, characterised by their function as laundresses and the Indo-Caribbean figures as labourers still finding their way, some thriving and others struggling.

⁴²⁷ Brinda J. Mehta, “Indianités francophones: Kala Pani Narratives,” *L'Esprit Créateur* 50, no. 2 (2010): 2.

⁴²⁸ Aisha Khan, “Caucasian, Coolie, Black, or White?: Color and Race in the Indo-Caribbean Diaspora,” in *Shades of Difference*, ed., Evelyn Nakano Glenn (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2020) 101.

Mahadevi Ramakrishnan argues that most of the people who became indentured workers in the French Antilles were struggling to make ends meet in their rural communities in their homeland, pressured by European colonial powers.⁴²⁹ In search of a more prosperous life, they signed a contract (lasting between three to five years) in their homeland, agreeing that they would travel to the faraway island to work on the plantations for a wage.⁴³⁰ It is estimated that 76,000 Indians travelled to Guadeloupe and Martinique.⁴³¹ One of those ships was the former slave ship *Auralie*.⁴³² The reality was very different.⁴³³ Hugh Tinker, amongst others, argues that indenture and slavery were very similar.⁴³⁴ Véronique Bagard argues that the main difference between the two forms of servitude was time; for the enslaved it was a lifetime and for the indentured workers it was a pre-agreed period.⁴³⁵ With rising reports of maltreatment and poor conditions, the system of indenture ended in 1888 in the French Antilles.⁴³⁶ Although some of the workers went back to their homeland, often with difficulty, the immigration of Indians to the French Caribbean changed the demographic makeup of the islands. Today, the Indo-Martinican community remains in the communes of the north of the island, though often overlooked, forgotten or erased as a significant contributor to island history and contemporary society. In the following segment, we will see how Fulconis represents the Indo-Caribbean workers across class, labelling some as ‘rich’ and some as ‘poor’. He captures a somewhat nuanced take on the varied experiences of the indentured based

⁴²⁹ Mahadevi Ramakrishnan, “French, African, and Indian Cultural Narratives in Martinique: The Architecture of Shifting Social Hierarchies from 1848–1884,” 28. *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies* 7, no. 2 (2013): <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/french-african-indian-cultural-narratives/docview/2793203937/se-2>.

⁴³⁰ Khan, “Caucasian, Coolie, Black, or White?” 32.

⁴³¹ Kate Marsh, “Rights of the Individual’, Indentured Labour and Indian Workers: The French Antilles and the Rhetoric of Slavery Post 1848,” *Slavery & Abolition* 33, no. 2 (2012), 221.

⁴³² David Northrup, “Indentured Indians in the French Antilles. Les immigrants indiens engagés aux Antilles françaises,” *Outre-Mers. Revue d'histoire* 87 no. 326 (2000), 247.

⁴³³ Ramakrishnan, “French, African”, 32.

⁴³⁴ Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920* (London: Hansib, 1974).

⁴³⁵ Véronique Bagard *Transoceanic Dialogues: Coolitude in Caribbean and Indian Ocean Literatures* (Bristol: Peter Lang, 2008), 90.

⁴³⁶ Northrup, “Indentured Indians in the French Antilles”, 221.

upon skin colour and socio-economic situation, as opposed to a monolithic depiction of the group, though they continue to be represented within the anthropological trope of ethnographic “types”.

Fulconis’ drawings of the ‘coolie’

Towards the end of the system of indenture, yet still before its termination, Fulconis dedicates two sheets of paper [Fig. 68a and 68b] to the sole study of the Indo-Caribbean figures on the island.

These drawings are an extraordinary and rare source, documenting that the Indo-Caribbean was, indeed, *there* on the island. He captures the male and female Indo-Caribbean; their appearance, what clothes they wear and what work they do. As Fulconis closely studies and categorises them, he further solidifies them as a group, one that is fixed and characterised by their continued sub-status in the Caribbean. This is particularly emphasised by his use of “Coolie” to name his drawings, which is representative of how the term came to be used increasingly in the nineteenth century to describe South Asian and Chinese indentured workers who immigrated to the Caribbean and the Americas and the descents of these labourers, employed to work on plantations in European colonies after the abolition of slavery in an effort to make up for the labour shortage after the formerly enslaved left the plantations. Moon-Ho Jung explains that the term *Coolie* was first used in the sixteenth century by Portuguese sailors and merchants and later also adopted by other European traders.⁴³⁷ It was transformed in the nineteenth century and used, as Fulconis does, as a derogatory term for the indentured labourers and came to mean in the Caribbean, as Lomarsh Roopnarine explains, ‘stupid, backward, uncivilised and resistant to change.’⁴³⁸ Gaiutra Bahadur further reiterates that ‘the c-word stung’, signalling the lowest position in the hierarchy of the sugar estate.⁴³⁹ She further writes that it is more than a job description – it is not simply about

⁴³⁷ Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006) 13.

⁴³⁸ Lomarsh Roopnarine, *The Indian Caribbean* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2018), 33.

⁴³⁹ Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman*, xx.

being an indentured labourer, it is a marker of ethnicity.⁴⁴⁰ In Jung's definition of the term: 'Coolies were never a people or a legal category. Rather, Coolies were a conglomeration of racial imaginings that emerged worldwide in the era of slave emancipation, a product of the imaginers rather than the imagined.'⁴⁴¹ He continues to say that: 'evolving definitions and ultimate ambiguities – a slippery and disruptive creation between and beyond slavery and freedom, Black and white – rendered Coolies pivotal in the reconstruction of racial and national boundaries and hierarchies in the age of emancipation.'⁴⁴² Significantly, Jung argues further that the idea of Coolies confused the boundary between slavery and freedom and the racial divide between "coloured" and white.⁴⁴³ In Fulconis' drawings, we see this very confusion in how he grapples with the financial status of the indentured workers with a focus on depicting their poverty and wealth, being free and unfree, some still burdened by low pay and conditions of their indenture, some thriving in their Caribbean home.

Fulconis' drawing of the Indo-Caribbean male

In the first drawing, *Indiens Coolies* (1883) [Fig. 68a], Fulconis draws six different men. Zooming in on his different studies of the Indo-Caribbean allows us to see how Fulconis draws each of the men with an attentive eye for the detail of the type of male Coolie, using clothing, occupation, and skin colour as legible markers of identity. We are quickly reminded of Broca's anthropological method in Fulconis' intent observation and depiction of the individual's details in isolation from any context. His insistence on capturing the Coolie is further accentuated when looking even closer: we notice that Fulconis repeatedly sketched out the shapes of the men with pencil before

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid, xx

⁴⁴¹ Jung, "Coolies and Cane", 5.

⁴⁴² Ibid, 5.

⁴⁴³ Ibid, 5.

committing to the final version and then adding details and colours. In the upper plane of the drawing, Fulconis makes a visual comparison between affluent and less privileged classes within the Indo-Caribbean community. On the far left, Fulconis presents a figure depicting a man with a dark complexion, attired in a Western-style suit jacket, complemented by cummerbund and rolled-up trousers. Cradling a baby in one arm and gripping an umbrella in the other, the man looks directly at the observer. The refined, elegant attire hints at his prosperity, and the presence of an infant signifies the flourishing reproduction of a new generation of Indo-Caribbean inhabitants on the island. Next to him, Fulconis draws the opposite: a man sitting in a crouched position with a bowl in front of him, wearing only a red cloth around his lower half. Mixing brown, beige and white colours, Fulconis captures the light touching his skin. Remembering what Khan argued, the darker-skinned man here appears more prosperous whereas the less privileged man is lighter skinned, yet still positioned within a stereotype of the Afro-Caribbean, telling us that Fulconis is not sure how to depict the Indo-Caribbean man. Instead, he mixes and blends from what he already knows. Behind him, a man, similarly dressed in only a red cloth, carries a large knife in one hand and a long piece of bamboo in his other hand. The contrast between the man with the baby and these two men is striking: he records the class difference between the Coolie men, studying the varieties within the category of “Coolie” and the amount of success they have accomplished. Across the figures, we see how Fulconis uses colour to capture the nuances of the appearance of the Indo-Caribbean, with a particular interest in their clothing. From his writings, we know Fulconis had to import drawing materials for the school where he worked, so we can imagine that the colours he used to make these drawings were also from the continent, suggesting further to us how colour moved, alongside other goods like textiles, across the Atlantic and was then utilised to capture the subjects of the colonies.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴⁴ Daum, “Vie et oeuvre”, 194.

The close interweaving between colour, textile, and the Indo-Caribbean experience is one that is part of a long thread of connection between colonies that precedes the physical presence of Indian bodies in the Caribbean, materialised most explicitly through the madras cloth. One of the major commodities exported from India, it moved across large distances to Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the Caribbean, becoming a global product which initially took its design as an adaptation of the Scottish tartan.⁴⁴⁵ As its name suggests, madras is from its namesake city (today's Chennai) in India, one of the most successful ports of the British Empire due to its large export of goods. This colourful checked fabric made its way to the Antilles in the seventeenth century and became an integral part of island fashion.⁴⁴⁶ Post-enslavement, women began to wear the *douillette*, a five-piece dress reserved only for free women before abolition and used the colourful madras fabric for their headdress, rather than continuing with the white headdress required of the enslaved.⁴⁴⁷ Maria Thomas argues: 'the madras cloth is an icon that is dyed in the memories of racial injustice and woven with the shared stories and memories of distant colonised nations, meant to be a marker of subjugation, yet re-casted in the spirit of emancipation and pride.'⁴⁴⁸ Indian material and cultural heritage has been an important part of the patchwork of Caribbean culture for centuries, and continues to be so today.

In the lower half of the drawing, Fulconis renders a man who wears a light-yellow wrap cloth down to his knees, a white shirt and a red headscarf [Fig. 68b]. Looking straight at the viewer, like the finely dressed man above him, he carries a long knife and holds his free hand up to his eye. In contrast to the other men, whose eyes are blacked out, Fulconis draws the man's eyes with more

⁴⁴⁵ Hélène Zamor, "Indian heritage in the French Creole-speaking Caribbean: A reference to the Madras Material," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 4, no. 5 (2014), 155. Thomas, "Chequered Intermingling", 61.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 156. Maria Thomas, "Chequered Intermingling and Contrasts: Exploring the Madras Cloth as an Icon of Hybridity," *Vimala College (Autonomous)* (2023), 64.

⁴⁴⁸ Thomas, "Chequered Intermingling", 61.

detail, rendering the sclera and adding the hand to further lead the viewer's view up there. The figure is here clearly looking back at Fulconis and at the viewer, and the hand gesture suggests a deliberate attention to the eye and the act of looking back. Scholars of empire often speak of the potential ability to re-read or re-make the agency of the people depicted by colonial makers by redirecting the looking, with Sheller's coining of the term, 'an embodied encounter', which she describes, a space for contesting the gaze, deflecting the gaze, returning the gaze, appropriating the gaze, and destabilising the power of the gaze.⁴⁴⁹ We see this occurring in Fulconis' drawing here, for whilst he attempts to capture this man in one sketch, he simultaneously, and perhaps rather confusingly, points to the possible humanity of the subject, which reflects back on Fulconis as a maker.

Fulconis was not the only white imperial careerer to observe and record being looked back at by Indo-Caribbeans. One of these is Hearn, whose in-person direct experiences and observations are what furnish his accounts with authority and weight, reminding us of Broca's emphasis on the superior virtues of the embodied experience on the ground. In one particularly interesting section, Hearn writes of being stared at by individuals he terms 'the Hindoos: Coolies', describing an encounter he found particularly unsettling:

Men squatting, with hands clasped over their black knees, are watching us from under their white turbans-very steadily, with a slight scowl. All these Indian faces have the same set, stern expression, the same knitting of the brows; and the keen gaze is not altogether pleasant. It borders upon hostility; it is the look of measurement—measurement physical and moral. In the mighty swarming of India these have learned the full meaning and force

⁴⁴⁹ Mimi Sheller, *Citizenship from below Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 211-214.

of life's law as we Occidentals rarely learn it. Under the dark fixed frown the eye glitters like a serpent's.⁴⁵⁰

Immediately what jumps out about this assessment is how intimately connected the Indian and the animal are in Hearn's imagination, most obviously through the malicious connotations of the serpent. Like Fulconis recorded visually, the serpent is an unwelcome intrusion into the botanical garden, and here too in Hearn's experience of the colony, seeing it as a creature with the power and gall to look back with knowing eyes. Again, we see how intertwined the non-human and human of colour were in the European construction. The natural world was used as a device to make sense of the inhabitants of the colony. We will see this once in the next chapter, where Gauguin draws upon the mango to do similarly.

He further utilises the verb 'swarming' as a racial marker that asserts the Indo-Caribbean as insect-like and conjures, through one word, an implicit but easily recognisable set of images defining their character: a dense and overcrowded group that move not as individuals but as a unit in chaotic and perhaps even destructive fashion. Like locusts, ants, termites or wasps, they are an unhygienic and highly mobile, and thus a dangerous and invasive mass that corrupts and threatens the individual observer, and more broadly pollutes and destabilises the island's social landscape. As we will see in the next chapter with Gauguin, it was exactly the swarming of mosquitoes in the Panama Canal that led to the deaths of countless Europeans across their colonies, exemplifying the danger of insect invasion permeating the white body, and by extension then, here in this quote, the danger posed by the Indo-Caribbean body.

⁴⁵⁰ Hearn, *Two Years*, 76.

Whilst Hearn and Fulconis are usually the observers, possessing what Mary Louise Pratt names ‘imperial eyes’ that look and assume authority over land and people, the ‘serpent eyes’ of those usually gazed at, staring back, destabilises the certainty of their vision.⁴⁵¹ Both Fulconis and Hearn capture a moment in which their position as (almost) invisible knowledge-gatherers is threatened by the very existence of the figure of the Other, as one that is capable of looking and making assumptions. Here, the eyes see and know, piercing and threatening, destabilising the empire’s reliance upon the belief that the colonised will not look back. These makers notice and comment upon the eyes, drawing out their shades and character, as the site of an embodied resistance. Remembering that Fulconis makes a clear distinction between one man where the eyes are fully depicted, and the other men he draws whose eyes are illegible, unformed or obscured, we see that Fulconis, just like Hearn, identifies the ability to look or not look back at them as recorders, as a significant concern in trying to represent the “Coolie”. Hearn identifies that the potential threat of being looked back at and recognised by a “Coolie” stem from the unique knowledge they possess from another land brought to the Caribbean that gives them an ability to discern the nature of the power-knowledge nexus that the white observer assumes (and requires) the colonised body to be blind to.

Their lucid vision combined with their heterogeneity as a group challenges Broca’s easy anthropological categorisation, which Fulconis’ drawings and Hearn’s account on the surface seek to confirm, but ultimately fail. We saw at the beginning of the chapter how Broca was keen to measure and assess the unknown Other, for example by cutting a piece of hair off, which assumed no resistance from the person. Here, the act of measuring is turned around: it is Hearn who experiences their gaze as ‘measurement physical and moral’, in a manner that is ‘altogether not

⁴⁵¹ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*.

pleasant'.⁴⁵² Significantly, Hearn's presumption that being looked at must equate to being measured, assessed and appraised in a hostile manner highlights a broader claim that looking, measuring and making sense of were fused in the colonial mindset and mission. Indeed, we have seen that inherent penchant for measurement and categorisation in Fulconis' consistent fusing of the scientific, anthropological and artistic. The very rich and methodically collected and recorded details that Broca advocates for as good ethnographic practice are ironically here where we can find the limits of anthropology as a repository of objective information, and where we can read the ever-present resistance of the individual even within the colonial archive.

As such, it is in work of a drawing teacher like Fulconis that we see how the act of drawing was a battleground of meaning-making, where colonial eyes cross through and past one another, seeing and unseeing. The drawings are then not only about identifying different "Coolies" across classes and skin colours, whether that is by their bare feet or their 'stern expression', but also about the artist, capturing a moment of instability in his artistic encounter, where the drawing's anthropological sensibility becomes a vehicle in which we can find the competing gazes clashing in their attempt to speak through the drawing. Although colour might not have seemed to be at the forefront of this discussion, the invisibility of whiteness and the visibility of non-whiteness is a presumed structure that underpins and defines Fulconis' artistic work. In fact, when we interrogate his drawings, we see that the unintentional glimpses left behind of what fills the chasm between the white and non-white binary reveals colour – as a racial marker and as a tool of categorisation – to be insufficient to effectively capture the complex and relational racial structure of Martinican society.

⁴⁵² Hearn, *Two Years*, 76.

Taking in the drawings as a whole, it is apparent that Fulconis brings an overview of what the male Coolie looks like. We are not meant to understand or know about them as individuals. Rather, the knowledge gained from looking at the drawing enables the viewer to easily identify the different Coolies across classes and skin colours. The method of Broca identifying race by repeated in-person systematic observations of the subject is remarkably clear: Fulconis' studies of the Indo-Caribbean men are not portraits, but anthropological studies with an ethnographic gaze that seek to record different "Coolies" and how different their lives are decades after the beginning of indenture. Fulconis captures the different shades of human skin colour, but he does not have a similar emphasis on the texture and the make-up of skin as he did with his depictions of fish. Instead, the skin colour remains flat and one-dimensional, much like the ones in Broca's colour chart. Obviously, human skin is not rainbow-coloured or red-dotted like fish skin, but it is significant that Fulconis completely turns away from his artistic experiments with colour when depicting human skin colour and now primarily uses clothing as a carrier of meaning. While skin colour and social status would not necessarily speak to the person's position in Martinique, characterised by its multi-racial population, clothing, on the other hand, it was a way for Fulconis to firmly fix people into place. Overall, the brilliant, myriad colours employed to render every detail of the marine life, and the simple, single colours of the Indo-Caribbean skin imply far less time and thought spent on its portrayal, showing the consistent confusion regarding where people of colour ought to be placed between white people and animals and plants. But regardless, it is still the Indo-Caribbean figures that possess the agency and ability to gaze back, as opposed to the underwater creatures.

Fulconis' drawing of the Indo-Caribbean female

Fulconis uses the same visual language and method in the second drawing *Femmes Indiennes Coolies, Riches et Pauvre* (1883) [Fig. 69a], where he, as the title suggests, studies the Indo-Caribbean woman. He draws four different women, three in the upper half and one in the lower half of the pictorial space. On the left side of the top page, Fulconis draws a woman dressed in a red skirt and a white top with a matching red headscarf and decorated in gold jewellery. The sleeve of her white top extends below her shoulder, exposing one of her breasts to the viewer [Fig. 69c]. Of the Indo-Caribbean people depicted across the two drawings, she is the only one whose dress, particularly the jewellery, marks her out as clearly “Asiatic”. Adjacent to her, Fulconis draws a woman covered in a red cloth with a slit on the side. Her long Black hair falls in front of her eyes, as she looks at the viewer with a downhearted facial expression, unmistakably unhappy. He also draws the sadness of the Indo-Caribbean in the next woman, who is crouched down to her knees and covers her head in her hands in distress [Fig. 69b]. Fulconis exhibits the discontent and difficult realities of life as an Indian in Martinique, particularly through these two figures. Whereas the woman in Indian garb shows a continuation of her Indian heritage, the two other women exhibit no traces of their homeland. On the lower half of the page, Fulconis sketches a woman as she balances a barrel on her lowered head, covered by a straw hat. She wears a white top paired with a blue and white striped skirt, complemented by a red apron with blue chequered patterns. Of the women, she is the only one engaged in manual labour in the drawing, resembling more the figure of a *porteuse*.

Although Fulconis only dedicates two sheets of paper to the study of Indo-Caribbean subjects, the drawings demonstrate his way of drawing: he classifies the people as “Coolie”, not only in the explicit naming of the drawings but also in the manner in which he draws them: isolated individual

studies with no context, using their economic status as an additional criterion for classification. He makes the drawings with an anthropological sensibility that captures Broca's and his colleagues' repetitive recording and categorisation of people of colour. Whereas Broca understands colour as the primary categorising principle, Fulconis also categorises the "Coolies" through their clothing (for example their bangles and their sari) and divides the group into rich and poor, adding more to his visual representation than what appears with Broca.

With Fulconis' depiction of the "Coolie" woman, he speaks into a corpus of visual representation, particularly postcards, which display the Indo-Caribbean woman in their finest clothes and adorned with jewellery, posing in a photographic studio and charged with eroticism. Such images follow a visual strategy in which the object is seen outside of their larger context and placed in front of the camera to exemplify their "type" to an audience. Tobin has precisely pointed out how photographers borrowed botanical illustrations with their detailed rendering of individual plant specimens.⁴⁵³ Again, we identify the similarities between the representation of the natural world and people of colour, confirming that the people are of the land and closer to the natural – and as such, they are primitive, owned and controlled by the colonisers. Fulconis drawings and the widely circulated postcards are different in several ways, including medium, their audience, the process of their making and their aesthetics, yet I make the comparison here because they share a similar emphasis on the Indo-Caribbean woman, presenting her in stereotypical Indian clothing but decontextualising her as part of Caribbean society. This positions the work as Fulconis, not isolated in the archive, but part of a network of images, which he would very likely have encountered as part of his daily life. Furthermore, it implies that Fulconis' categorisation of both non-human and human was part of a larger tendency, as Tobin and Sheller argued, in which people

⁴⁵³ Beth Fowkes Tobin, "Caribbean Subjectivity and the Colonial Archive," *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 12, no. 1 (2008), 145–46, <https://doi.org/10.1215/-12>.

of colour and the natural world were recorded in a same visual way, which confirmed the naturalness of people of colour.

Examples of such postcards of the Indo-Caribbean female are *Type et costume de femme indienne* [Fig. 70 and 71]. Both postcards display a young girl posing in front of the camera in a studio, and on the top, it reads ‘Martinique’, specifying to the receiver that this postcard and its motif is from the island. Scholars have picked out the images’ emphasis on the jewellery of Indo-Caribbean women in postcards like these two, with Joy Mahabir arguing that this ‘aesthetic of excess’ was used to display the wealth of the Indo-Caribbean population and hence to confirm that the people did not work on plantations and lived in poverty, like the former enslaved, but rather thrived and took advantage of the opportunities available at a resource-rich colony.⁴⁵⁴ Jenny Sharpe terms this form of visual language in the context of Jamaica, the ‘coolie picturesque’, which connects back to our first chapter.⁴⁵⁵ Here, however, the plantation is not at the centre of the picturesque, rather the people are, but they are aesthetically treated through the same ‘filter’ of not displaying the horrible labour conditions of the Indo-Caribbean. However, whereas the plantation offers little space to interpret alternative readings, Sharpe understands these postcards as ‘snapshots of the experience of being photographed.’⁴⁵⁶ Mahabir follows similar lines in her further analysis in which she understands the jewellery of the women as an ‘alternative text’, because the jewellery, according to her, was a way for the indentured women to bank their earnings with them melting their silver shillings into pieces of jewellery and later selling their jewellery to pay for education or to

⁴⁵⁴ Joy Mahabir, “Alternative Texts: Indo-Caribbean Women’s Jewellery,” in *Caribbean Vistas: Critiques of Caribbean Arts and Cultures* (May 2009), 8, accessed 10th April 2024, <https://caribbeanvistas.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/mahabiralternativejewelry1.pdf>.

⁴⁵⁵ Jenny Sharpe, “Life, Labor, and a Coolie Picturesque in Jamaica,” *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 26, no. 2 (2022): 24-45.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 45.

purchase land.⁴⁵⁷ By positioning Fulconis' drawings in dialogue with postcards of the same subject matter, we can see how the drawings were part of a visual language which represented the Indo-Caribbean population through the figure of the woman, as one thriving on the island. Whereas the postcards discussed here, and more generally, focus on the material wealth of the women, Fulconis, as we have seen, studies the Indo-Caribbean male and both the wealthy and poor parts of the population, suggesting a more nuanced look at the people than what circulated with the postcards. In the drawings, Fulconis taps into a history of Indo-Caribbean presence in Martinique and the wider Caribbean. In his sketches, he reflects on how the Indo-Caribbean population is settling, successfully and unsuccessfully, as seen through the eyes of a white male. We have seen the visual similarities between the botanical illustrations we saw earlier, made by Fulconis, and the work he completes of the Martinican people, which brings us to make a larger claim about his drawings, which is intended to not only study but also to say something about the colonial subject, whether vegetal or human.

Writing Back: I am Lascar, Malabar

In this part of the chapter, I want to focus on the potential of rescuing or reimagining the subjecthood and agency of the Indo-Caribbean people, missing from the work of Fulconis and from this chapter. It is an act, like Mahabir's rereading of the jewellery displayed in the postcards or my analysis above with the man facing the viewer, which adds new narratives to restore lost knowledge, stories and experiences. Yet, rather than re-interpreting Fulconis' drawings, I will here look towards the movement of Coolitude, which has been an important contribution to the conversations about the Indo-Caribbean lives in the Caribbean, which emerged, after being missing in public and academic discourse, in the 1970s. Jean Benoist verbalises this absence, writing: 'Long stigmatised from the fact of having taken over the reins from slavery, and of having

⁴⁵⁷ Mahabir, "Alternative Texts", 8.

thus been complicit, albeit involuntarily, in the perpetuation of a colonial form of society after the abolition of slavery, the Indian immigrant has been at one and the same time a despised foreign and fundamentally excluded.⁴⁵⁸ Following Martinican researcher Gilbert Francis Ponaman's concept of Indianité, efforts began to recognise and understand the contributions of the Indo-Caribbean population in the French Antilles, moving beyond the Afro-centric focus of concepts such as Négritude and Antillanité.⁴⁵⁹ It was the Mauritian writer and poet Khal Torabully who coined the term 'Coolitude' in his 1992 poem *Cargo hold of Stars*, in which he writes of the migrant experiences of Indian indentured workers and diaspora.⁴⁶⁰ It is a project that seeks to reclaim the word Coolie by naming the positives associated with long-distance voyages and having Indian origin.⁴⁶¹ In the following poem, he powerfully confronts previous derogatory definitions of Coolie and takes ownership of them:

Define me please:

what's a Coolie?

One with a noose round his neck

denied the deck's cool lee side?

I am Lascar, *Malabar*,

Madras tamarind from bazaars,

Telugu with tell-tails for you.

Cruel Marathi mother or Chamar.

Whichever you like, I'm an Indian Black,

⁴⁵⁸ Jean Benoist, *Hindouismes Créoles. Mascareignes* (Antilles, Paris, 1998), 205. Cited in Khal Torabully and Marina Carter, *Coolitude: An Anthology of the Indian Labour Diaspora* (London: Anthem Press, 2002), 12-13.

⁴⁵⁹ Shanaaz Mohammed, "Disarticulating Indianité: Re-imagining the Motherland in Ernest Moutoussamy's Chacha et Sosso," *Romance notes* 57, no. 2 (2017): 227.

⁴⁶⁰ Khal Torabully, *Cargo Hold of Stars: Coolitude*, trans. Nancy Naomi Carlson (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2021).

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*

guinea pig, from Port Louis to Port-of-Spain
to replace mighty Zanzibar slaves.
For memory, my only *langouti*, a loincloth,
my language, purloined by the sea.
If you recognize me, please
call me proxy slave,
strawman or stand-in,
kapok from fields or ocean vertebrae.
But know that my sabre of blood
has uprooted me to the core⁴⁶²

The concept of Coolitude was fully theorised in Torabully's 2002 book *Coolitude: An Anthology of the Indian Labour Diaspora*, in which he, together with Marina Carter, further redefines and remodels Coolie. He uses Kala Pani ("black water") as a concept important for shaping Coolitude: the indentured labourers had to cross the Indian and Atlantic Oceans to work in the colonies in search of economic prosperity that was lacking in their current situation in European-occupied India.⁴⁶³ The extensive period on the sea, moving further and further away from the motherland, was more than just a physical journey, it was intimately tied to the myth of Kala Pani. Brinda J. Mehta explains most of the people travelling as contracted labourers were Hindu, and according to Hindu belief, the act of moving across large portions of water is associated with the loss of tradition, caste, and class and, thus, their Hinduism.⁴⁶⁴ We saw earlier that Fulconis recorded the sea, both in the sea journey of imperial men and the underwater species, but Coolitude's focus on Kala Pani recognises that the sea carried other meanings, including danger and regeneration,

⁴⁶² Ibid, 14.

⁴⁶³ Torabully and Carter, *Coolitude*, 17-44.

⁴⁶⁴ Brinda J. Mehta, "Indianités francophones: Kala Pani Narratives," *L'Esprit Créateur* 50, no. 2 (2010), 1.

ultimately underscoring to us that Fulconis' representation of the sea is one reliant upon his access and status as a French man.⁴⁶⁵ Despite Fulconis' attempts at capturing the multitude of "types", he ultimately fails to do what the later Coolitude movement achieves: seeing Indo-Caribbeans as both makers and in-making, as contributors to Caribbean society – not isolated, not static, as suggested in his pages. With Coolitude, I will end this section on two significant drawings in the corpus of the Indo-Caribbean presence in Martinique by returning to Mattai's mixed-media piece *Ocean Cradle*, which memorialises and celebrates the Asian diaspora in the Caribbean through the very materiality of the work: the saris, not used here as a staging prop to satisfy white exoticism like the postcards, but collected and bound together as an organic whole, which seems to absorb and carry the experiences of displacement.

Fulconis' drawings of the Laundress

In the next part of this chapter, I will examine a selection of drawings in the album, in which Fulconis focuses specifically on capturing the figure of the laundress. This set of drawings was completed while Fulconis lived in the botanical garden in Saint Pierre, which was located close to the river where laundresses worked, and it might have been an everyday occurrence for him to walk past the laundresses. Again, the botanical garden serves as a base from which Fulconis could freely explore human-nature interaction – the meaning of plants, the meaning of Black woman working in water and the meaning of their labour.

Fulconis' drawings on the laundress are part of a larger nineteenth-century collection of artworks which renders the laundress in the French metropole and the European colonies. Post-emancipation, the laundress would earn money by washing her customers' laundry and this was

⁴⁶⁵ Torabully and Carter, *Coolitude*, 17.

one of the most common ways for African Caribbean women to make a living.⁴⁶⁶ The laundress was a motif regularly chosen by artists to illuminate the sexual availability of women labourers, and metropolitan efforts to position cleanliness as a symbol of civilisation. Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley has identified that the term *blanchisseuse* stems from the verb *blanchir* (to whiten), meaning to whiten laundry, but it also carries the implication of whitening racialised bodies.⁴⁶⁷ Opposite to his drawings of the Indo-Caribbean people, who were only depicted in terms of their labour-non-labour, wealth-poverty, Fulconis expresses a possibility of “washing off” or “cleaning” their racially marked skin. Yet, ultimately, they will never become white enough to not work in and be seen as dirt, removed from the “clean” nation of France.

'Who cleans the world?'

The white laundry hangs on a long string fastened between a large tree and the facade of a white house, swaying back and forth under the bright blue sky [Fig. 72]. It is a peaceful scene that Fulconis draws here, with only two men, faintly painted, one sitting and one standing in the shadow of the tree in the square surrounded by houses with closed window shutters. The focus of the drawing is the laundry: it is a mundane occurrence to see the laundry hanging out to dry in the tropical air; it is part of the make-up of the neighbourhood. Before the laundry can hang to dry, the woman of the house or a laundress has gathered the dirty laundry, carried it to a water source, carefully scrubbed the dirt and smells off with their hands, folded it and carried it back, and one-by-one hung each piece to dry before it is neatly folded and used again. The actual labour of cleaning clothes is suggested here but not actually visible in this drawing; we are left to guess *who*

⁴⁶⁶ Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, “At the River of Washerwomen: Work, Water, and Sexual Fluidity in Mayotte Capécia’s ‘I Am a Martinican Woman,’” in *Thiefing Sugar*, 136–168 (Durham: Duke University Press 2010), 145.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 150. See also, Didier Terrier’s chapter, “Du “demi-blanc” au “dernier blanc”: Le blanchiment des toiles de lin dans la France septentrionale au XVIIIe siècle” in *Couleur, travail et société: Du Moyen Âge à nos jours*. Paris: Somogy éditions d'art, 2004), 34-42.

cleaned the white laundry. This question becomes particularly prominent when we take into consideration that Fulconis made this drawing during a trip to the Devil's Island, the penal colony of Cayenne used as an exile for French political prisoners. It exposes the close connections between politics and cleaning; freedom-captivation; labour-non-labour and visible-nonvisible, themes we will explore further in this chapter, as we examine Fulconis' drawings of the figure of the laundress in Martinique.

In her manifesto, *A Decolonial Feminism*, Françoise Vergès asks the poignant question 'Who cleans the world?'⁴⁶⁸ Prompted by the cleaners' strike against the French state-owned railway company Société Nationale des Chemins de fer Français (SNCF) at the Gare du Nord in Paris in 2018, Vergès uses the question as a starting point to understand how the cleaning industry depends on the intensive manual labour done by women of colour.⁴⁶⁹ It is their invisible work in the early hours of the day, sweeping floors, emptying garbage cans and scrubbing toilets, that makes the comfortable life of the middle class possible, according to the author.⁴⁷⁰ She argues that care work such as this rests on 'an economy of exhaustion' which effectively 'wears out racialized bodies.'⁴⁷¹ She traces this form of economy back to colonial slavery and the emergence of capitalism alongside it, which understood racialised bodies and the environment as disposable waste.⁴⁷² She sums up: 'Race became a code for designing people and landscapes that could be wasted.'⁴⁷³ As part of justifying humans as waste, by the nineteenth century Europeans had developed a clear divide between clean Europe and European bodies versus 'dirty Indigenous dwellings, bodies and

⁴⁶⁸ Françoise Vergès, *A Decolonial Feminism* (London: Pluto Press, 2021), vi.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid*, vi.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 2.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid*, 76.

⁴⁷² *Ibid*, 81.

⁴⁷³ Vergès, "Capitalocene, Waste, Race, and Gender," *e-flux journal* no. 100 (2019), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/100/269165/capitalocene-waste-race-and-gender/>.

sexuality' that supported the claim that people of colour were inherently inferior and required to be civilised.⁴⁷⁴ Vergès's focus on *who* cleans the world alerts us to an otherwise unnoticed form of manual labour that is racialised, gendered and exploitative, intimately tied to racial capitalism. Artists in the metropole and the colonies depicted the laundress, a figure which represented the Black women as cleaners of white dirt, as erotic labourers and as close to water and nature, entrapped in 'an economy of exhaustion.'⁴⁷⁵

Washing Clean

We have so far seen how Fulconis methodologically captures his surroundings, including non-human species and Indo-Caribbean people, replicating that of the nineteenth-century anthropological pseudo-scientist. I examine Fulconis' depictions of the laundress and how he, through his spectacle of the figure, captured the value of cleanliness and female domesticity, as well as the eroticism of the women's bodies at work. Whereas the cleaners of Gare du Nord are invisible and hidden away, the laundress was a touristic 'sight' in Martinique, something to be observed and made sense of. Building on the scholarship of Ross, we established earlier the importance of considering 'Liquid' as an element of the imperial project.⁴⁷⁶ In this segment, we continue to think about water but in a different form, focusing on how the laundress worked and socialised in water and was thought of in terms of their relation to water, as at once erotic-dirty, clean-unclean, dressed-undressed, wet-dry. From the 1831 writing of the enslaved Bermudian washerwoman Mary Prince, we also know how the water was dangerous, ravaging the flesh of the laundress. She writes: '[...] the sun flaming upon our heads like fire and raising salt blisters in those parts which were not completely covered. Our feet and legs, from standing in the salt water

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Vergès, *A Decolonial*, 76.

⁴⁷⁶ Ross, *Liquid Empire*.

for so many hours, soon became full of dreadful boils, which eat down in some cases to the very bone, afflicting the sufferers with great torment.⁴⁷⁷ The water was the washerwomen's greatest resource but also the source of pain and literal bodily decay.

I begin my analysis of Fulconis' washerwomen with the drawing *Rivière du Fort Saint Pierre. Blanchisseuse* (1884) [Fig. 73a] in which Fulconis studies nine women across the page and specifies at the bottom that the studies were done at Rivière du Fort Saint-Pierre. None of the women face the viewer: they are busy with their work, bending over to fold clothes or sitting with their backs against us. In the top left corner, Fulconis paints an orange-skinned woman; she lifts her blue-coloured dress and reveals her high-heeled black boots. She is not a laundress but probably a customer or a female passerby. In this drawing, she functions to be the female opposite of the laundress: a sophisticated woman who is fully clothed and wears shoes, not bare feet like the laundress. Her back faces a laundress, who wears a short red skirt, which exposes the woman's naked legs and her butt cheek, as she bends over and cleans a piece of cloth [Fig. 73b]. Across his drawings of the laundress, Fulconis repeatedly draws the women's clothes as missing a piece of garment, as being lifted or as fallen down, intentionally but seemingly unintentionally, revealing glimpses of the naked Black body. The work of the laundress, particularly in the heat of the tropics, invites imaginations of limited clothing and overstepping standard forms of dress for the cultivated women, as we also saw in the drawing of Lacour, where water similarly is a natural element, which leads to the blurring of established norms by displaying eroticism. In the drawing, the white laundry is in the hands of the laundresses and the finely dressed woman is waiting for it. It is an example of how the laundry is an object of connection between the worker and their

⁴⁷⁷ Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave*, ed., Sarah Salith ([1831], London: Peguin Books: 2004), 39.

customer, most likely from the upper class. It is the object that crosses and binds two distinct classes and moves from the private, individual space of the home to the public, shared space of the river and back again.

Anne McClintock points out that ‘Domestic labour creates social value, segregating dirt from hygiene, order from disorder, meaning from confusion. The middle class was preoccupied with the clear demarcation of limits and anxiety about boundary confusion.’⁴⁷⁸ Laundry operates precisely as such a boundary object in Fulconis’ drawings, where the edges between dirty and clean are unstable. It is in the process of making clean that the laundress learns of the personal details of the customer, scrubbing away their dirt (semen, faeces, hair, blood...).⁴⁷⁹ As the laundry is returned to the customer, it is crucial that the laundry is again a crisp white, with no remaining signs of dirt, or revealing that it has been handled by a person of colour. Focusing on the work of the laundress renders visible the contrast between who washed the clothes and who wore them and reveals the power relationship built into the labour of cleaning. Remembering Vergès’s question ‘Who cleans the world?’, we understand that the labour of cleaners, whether that is cleaning laundry or cleaning railway stations, is a persistent form of racialised and gendered work within ‘that economy of extraction, ruination and exhaustion and the repressive forms of hetero-patriarchy.’⁴⁸⁰

The difference between the laundress – the washer of the clothes – and the customer – the wearer of the clothes – is further suggested in Fulconis’ drawings through his repeated depiction of the laundry as strikingly white, as opposed to the skin colour and colourful clothing of the laundresses. This is also exemplified in the drawing *Blanchisseuse* (1883) [Fig. 74a], in which Fulconis renders

⁴⁷⁸ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 100. Cited in Tinsley, “At the River of Washerwomen”, 144.

⁴⁷⁹ Richards, *Airing the dirty linen*, 106.

⁴⁸⁰ Vergès, *A Decolonial Feminism*, viii.

four individual scenes of laundresses working and relaxing by a river. In the upper plane of the drawing, two dark-skinned women are in the middle of work. To the left, one woman folds a piece of white cloth on a large stone. In the contact point, between the dark hands of the laundress and the white laundry, we can see how closely the woman's body is connected to the laundry, implying how connected the laundresses are to the individual pieces of laundry that they clean [Fig. 74b]. Fulconis presents the woman looking away, as if not wanting to look down on the possibly still dirty cloth. In contrast to the whiteness of the garment, the woman's attire is a colourful skirt with a blue and orange-yellow pattern, complemented by a white shoulder-less top and a blue headscarf, with the stark blue of her skirt directly opposite the white [Fig. 74c]. Next to her, a woman wears a vibrant lilac dress, as she whips a piece of white cloth onto a stone. The white cloth is drawn with light grey outlines to avoid it not blending into the white background [Fig. 74d]. Fulconis' juxtaposition between the Afro-Caribbean colourful clothes and the white cloth is not an isolated incident but continues throughout the drawings.

Fulconis uses the clothes of washerwomen to convey information about them: his emphasis on the vivid colour of the clothes compared to the colourless background and laundry is significant.⁴⁸¹

We remember that Fulconis also illustrated the cotton plant, picking up that this was a major export of the island and its position as part of the island. It was imperial and vital to the economy, both as a crop and as used in textiles. On one page in the album, Fulconis has glued cut-out drawings on the sheet, with two of them being studies of women's skirts (without the body); how they fold and flow and their pattern, which further suggests Fulconis' fascination with textiles, the patterns and shapes of female clothing [Fig. 75] Danielle Skeeahan argues that clothing was also an

⁴⁸¹ Danielle Skeeahan, "Caribbean Women, Creole Fashioning, and the Fabric of Black Atlantic Writing," *The Eighteenth Century* 56, no. 1 (2015):113.

opportunity for self-making through literacies, which are not dependent on the written word.⁴⁸²

The freedom of choosing clothes and using clothing as a tool of individual expression was and still is powerful. During enslavement, slaveholders – by the law of *Code Noir* – had to clothe the enslaved, but even then, clothing became a site of resistance and influence with enslaved workers adding their colourful garments and jewellery together with the assigned work cloth.⁴⁸³ As such, the expression of colour was a sight of freedom, even during a time when freedom was non-existent. Anne Lafont has argued, in relation to *Marché à St Pierre de la Martinique* [Fig. 39a], that it is not only skin colour which was used to classify individuals; it was also done through a ‘chromatic variety of fabrics, a range of patterns and clothing types, which, taken together, allow the viewer to decode the social identity of each person in this slavery world.’⁴⁸⁴ As such, the clothes were a form of ‘books’, as Skeeahan terms it, which reveals positions of class and individuality, not only during enslavement as Lafont points to, but also afterwards, as exemplified by Fulconis’ continued attention to it, as also mentioned in the first section.⁴⁸⁵ His use of a variety of colours including stark yellow, muted lilac, light blue, and deep red gives a glimpse into the self-making of these women. Yet, it is not so straightforward to understand the colours as liberatory in Fulconis’ drawings. Instead, the contrast between the whiteness of the laundry and the clothes of the laundress positions cleanliness as a way to whiten and purify not only the clothes but also the laundress who is depicted as the opposite of white.

The labour of the laundress – the folding and whipping – as we see in both drawings of *Blanchisseuse* [Fig. 74a and 76a] held erotic and racist connotations to the nineteenth-century viewer. According to Hearn, the laundress is easily distinguishable from other women casually

⁴⁸² Ibid, 120.

⁴⁸³ Ibid, 104.

⁴⁸⁴ Lafont, “Fabric, Skin, Color”, 140.

⁴⁸⁵ Skeeahan, *The Fabric of Empire*, 2.

washing their clothes in the river by their ‘rapid and methodical manner of work’ and ‘their way of whipping it against the rocks.’⁴⁸⁶ He describes in detail the acts of *fessé* and *frotté*, as skills that are essential to learn for the laundress apprentice but also as a characteristic of their work that the observers can hear from a distance.⁴⁸⁷ A keen observer like Fulconis, Hearn writes in detail of their work: ‘After a piece has been well rubbed and rinsed, it is folded up into a peculiar sheaf-shape, and seized by the closely gathered end for the fessé.’⁴⁸⁸ The detailed description indicates how Hearn has carefully studied their work and identified the order of cleaning. Paulette Anneita Richards argues that Hearn uses laundry as a metaphor for sex, with his repeated use of *fessé* and *frotté*.⁴⁸⁹ To the contemporary gentleman reader, those words would evoke sexual connotations, according to Richards, and would bring to mind the sexual practices of Marquis de Sade. In his sketch, Hearn identifies this form of eroticised labour as only suitable for Black-skinned women and writes that: ‘No feeble or light-skinned person can attempt to do a single day’s work of this kind without danger.’⁴⁹⁰ Instead, Hearn writes that: ‘the majority are black or of that dark copper-red race which is perhaps superior to the black creole in strength and bulk; for it requires a skin insensible to sun as well as the toughest of constitutions to be a *Blanchisseuse*.’⁴⁹¹ The quote underlines that the work of a laundress is the work of the Black woman, drawing plainly on racist stereotypes of their supposed physiological strength and biologically determined resistance to the tropical environment, as we have seen already in the thesis with regard to the immersion of Black figures in rain, flood and river waters, and their lack of protection in contrast to white figures who carry umbrellas. Hearn’s use of ‘insensible’ speaks into wider rampant debate over the ability of darker skin colours to possess feeling and sensation, such as pain, or the ability to change colour in

⁴⁸⁶ Hearn, *Two Years*, 244.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 245.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 244.

⁴⁸⁹ Richards, “Airing the dirty linen”, 69.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 243.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid*, 243.

response to emotion, such as blushing.⁴⁹² This resistance, rather than seen as a strength in a positive sense, is one more constructed as an animalistic brute, and perhaps even supernatural, and thus entirely non-human, strength.⁴⁹³

Hearn's work pinpoints how the work of the laundress was entangled with discourses of race and eroticism and contributes to our discussion of Fulconis, who uses the medium of drawing to record the women in detail – how they get the water, how they wash the clothes, how they dry it, how they carry it, and how they bathe in the river. He transforms their back-breaking, hard labour into a similar site of voyeuristic pleasure by depicting them through an erotic lens. Across the pages, the variety of laundresses are seen in similar positions, which as Eunice Lipton valuably articulates, suggests the bodily repetitions in their work, for example, the repeated position of bending over – scrubbing – folding the laundry mirrors the laundress' ritualistic work that is seen as an erotic sight, closely connected to the natural elements. In *Blanchisseuse* (1883) [Fig. 76a], Fulconis shows the different tasks of the laundress – one woman picks up water from a fountain, one washes stones in a tray and two women fold their white laundry while naked from the chest up. Their nudity is contrasted to the white woman above them, who is fully and respectably clothed, wearing a white dress with a patterned skirt wrapped on top, which matches the headscarf, and the cloth she holds her hands are depicted in a light blue colour, rather than white. This speaks to Hearn's point that it was easy to distinguish between the laundress and women casually cleaning their clothing because of their skill, but it was indebted to the labourer's skin colour. It is what Vergès earlier called the 'clear divide' between the clean white and the dirty coloured body established in the nineteenth century.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹² Allewaert, *Ariel's Ecology*, 25.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.* 25.

⁴⁹⁴ Vergès, "Capitalocene, Waste, Race, and Gender".

The tension of the erotic, unclean Black body versus the white pristine body is further exemplified in the drawing titled *Rivière du Fort Saint-Pierre. Femmes au bain* (1883) [Fig. 77a], in which Fulconis again focuses on the act of washing bodies. The central part of the drawing is the dark-skinned and pale-skinned women who sit on two separate but closely positioned rocks in the river. The white woman sits with her back against us, whereas the dark-skinned woman sits slightly to the side. Both women only wear a headscarf and white cloth to cover their lower body. The white woman holds onto the arm of the other woman, suggesting that she helps her wash her upper body [77b]. Drawing on Thompson's argument that scenes of washing were associated with the European civilising mission and served as a strategy to prove how the colonial project had successfully installed, previously missing, values of cleanliness and social discipline, the drawing pointedly indicates how the white woman instructs the person of colour how to clean her body.⁴⁹⁵ The Black body is literally in the hands of the white woman and the white hand on the brown arm interrupts the dark colour of her body. The Black laundress' ability to clean laundry but still learning to clean their own body is one that suggests that the laundress is still behind on the civilising mission, in which, as particularly McClintock has proposed, cleanliness was central.⁴⁹⁶ As a drawing teacher with an artist's education, Fulconis would most likely have seen some of Jean-Léon Gerôme's bathing scenes, like *Moorish Bath* (1870) [Fig. 78], which takes place in the very different context of the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire and shows the dark-skinned woman bathing the white woman. However, Fulconis draws on a similar 'sensuous play on race, rank, and servitude' in his depiction in which the water and the act of cleaning brings the two women together, but here he subverts the power play to speak into the prevailing sense of dirtiness

⁴⁹⁵ Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics*, 71.

⁴⁹⁶ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*.

and vulgarity ascribed to Black women.⁴⁹⁷ Fulconis' connection to a broader art history of women of different skin colours bathing together suggests that he positions himself within a tradition of the play between white and Black (female) bodies.

Hearn also sees the laundress as an example of the belatedness of the Martinican society as a whole. He writes that watching the laundress 'makes one think of the earliest civilizations', as one from a lost time and one that has not developed since.⁴⁹⁸ He sees the continuation of the laundress as one that points to the island's unwillingness to develop and progress: 'There is a local prejudice against new methods, new inventions, new ideas; - several efforts at introducing a less savage style of washing proved unsuccessful [...].'⁴⁹⁹ Rather than progress to new modes of cleaning, the laundress would continue with their 'ancient way' of 'working out in the blue air and the wind of the hills, with their feet in the mountain water and their heads in the awful sun.'⁵⁰⁰ The act of cleaning bodies and clothing then becomes a sign of the progress still expected. The drawing also again suggests the erotic nature of the cleaning. The two women are joined together through touch but separated by skin colours painted as starkly opposing one another. Instead of showing the exhausting and repetitive labour of these women after emancipation, like many artists in the Caribbean, Fulconis sanitises and turns Black women's labour into romantic scenes of fantasy that erase their role as economic agents in a modernising system.⁵⁰¹ It is a quiet moment, in which a potential sexual encounter or embrace is shared between the two women, collapsing the barriers between cleaning and intimacy. The scene becomes one of sexual tension, of nakedness in the

⁴⁹⁷ Adrienne L. Childs, "Exceeding blackness: African women in the art of Jean-Léon Gérôme" *Blacks and Blackness in European Art of the Long Nineteenth Century*, eds. Adrienne L. Childs and Susan H. Libby (London: Routledge, 2016).126.

⁴⁹⁸ Hearn *Two Years*, 241.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 241.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 241.

⁵⁰¹ Nelson, *Slavery, Geography and Empire*, 231-233, 359.

water, cleaning and made clean, between touching laundry and touching bodies; the coupling of white and Black, clean and dirty.

Fulconis further explores the intimacy between the women and water in *Rivière du Fort Saint-Pierre. Blanchisseuse* (1883) [Fig. 79a], in which Fulconis does something unusual and draws a monochrome pencil landscape scene with the laundresses working and relaxing by a river, nestled in vegetation. This scene of the Martinican pastoral suggests that he was playing with the idea of creating a larger composition. Some of the women wash clothes on the stones, some dry the clothes and others carry them to and from the river and a couple of women bathe in the river. As viewers, we are positioned on the same level as the women, directly facing the scene. The landscape is a feminised space, where the women and nature merge. Fulconis' use of faint pencil strokes that blend when the human form starts and the natural form ends, thus the boundaries between the women and the surrounding environment are whisked out. In doing so, Fulconis further illustrates how women are closely connected to nature, positioning them as closer than the male artist who observes and draws and does not use it as a resource. The women are seen as a natural part of the scene, as for example shown in the right foreground, where two women sit naked in the river [Fig. 79b]. One of the women faces us with her naked bosom and torso exposed, which is further played up by how she carefully touches her long hair in a seductive, erotic manner, clearly engaging with the viewer. However, Fulconis faintly draws her legs and the end with her lower legs and feet blending into the river, indistinguishable. Fulconis has drawn it similarly on the other naked woman next to her whose legs are under the water with only her one foot sticking up and parts of her upper body blend into the river stones. Fulconis' drawings of the laundress are studies that represent the female labourer as bodily and, ultimately, morally and sexually unclean.

Writing Back: Am I a Martinican Woman?

The previous section on Fulconis' drawings of the Indo-Caribbean figures ended by looking towards the movement of Coolitude, to offer a contemporary narrative that expands and accentuates the complications of Fulconis' anthropological perspective. In this segment on the laundress, I will again draw on a literary contribution, but this time, one which adds and responds to our discussion of the late nineteenth-century representation of the laundress by Fulconis and Hearn. I look at the work of Lucette Céranus (under the pseudonym Mayotte Capécia), who responds to Hearn's sketch of the *Blanchisseuse* with her 1948 semi-autobiography *Je Suis Martiniquaise*. The coming-of-age novel follows a girl similarly named Mayotte in a first-person narrative as she grows up in the town of Carbet, moves out to Fort-de-France and gets a job as a laundress (which she dislikes), falls in love with a white soldier named André who eventually abandons Mayotte and their baby and she has to move back in with her ageing father.

Capécia explores the laundress figure through Mayotte and her close friend, Loulouze's work as laundresses, as well through everyday scenes along the river. In contrast to Hearn's sketch, Capécia speaks from the perspective of the laundress, from the working-class woman of colour in Martinique, rather than from the perspective of an outside white male spectator. It is an unique source that provides the reader with the voice of a woman of colour retelling the story of her own life through fiction. Mayotte describes how she and her then-boyfriend (not André) would climb along the Cambeille River, 'passing by the spot where the washerwoman had long been at

work.’⁵⁰² Mayotte says with a matter-of-factness that ‘doing laundry in Martinique is not the same as in France.’⁵⁰³ She continues to explain:

Here no need to boil the linen, the sun takes care of everything. To whiten and scent it, women sprinkle it with warm water mixed with wood ashes and orange peelings. After work, the youngest would bathe themselves unceremoniously in the river which naturally attracted the men who prowled about. When we passed by, they would call out jokingly to us and sometimes take a moment to chat.⁵⁰⁴

Capécia recounts the laundresses’ methods and knows the small details of their working life and habits, including their food, writing: ‘At last, we had our picnic. Our menu was much simpler than washerwomen’s that consisted of manioc flour, red or green avocados with pulp the colour of butter but mainly “féroce” which is roasted codfish, sprinkled with oil and vinegar and eaten with peppers, a dish that the women ate with their hands.’⁵⁰⁵ The quote connects back to our discussion of Fulconis’ drawings of the aquatic, showing the position of fish as an important food resource. It again reiterates Brunache’s claim that food was a source of agency and community. We will see in the next chapter how the act of eating with hands, and not utensils, was seen as a sign of the primitive nature of the people and their connection with nature.

In one particular scene, the river moves from being a social and working space for the laundresses to being a space of individual sorrow and loneliness. Mayotte finds Loulouze sitting alone in the river. She tells Mayotte that she is pregnant with the child of her white lover and her father has thrown her out of the house after being told. Loulouze distressingly says: ‘I got nobody in this

⁵⁰² Mayoette Capécia, *I am a Martinican Woman/the White Negress* (Passeggiata Press, 1997), 31.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid*, 32.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 32.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 33.

world. I just ought to throw myself in the river right now.’⁵⁰⁶ She continues: ‘Life is hard for a woman, you’ll see, Mayotte, above all for a coloured woman.’⁵⁰⁷ The river here is a space that has bound the woman to her class and to her race and it can take the life of the woman: it is a source of financial opportunity and betterment, but also a source of sexualisation and potential death.

Ironically, today the novel is mostly famous for being included in Franz Fanon’s seminal book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). Fanon severely critiques Capécia’s novel in the chapter ‘The Woman of Colour and the White Man’, where he examines how women of colour enter relationships with white men to whiten their lives.⁵⁰⁸ He writes that ‘it is commonplace in Martinique to dream of whitening oneself magically as a way of salvation.’⁵⁰⁹ It is quickly made clear in the chapter that Fanon holds a deep disdain for Capécia and her book. He starts by writing it is a ‘third-rate book, advocating unhealthy behaviour.’⁵¹⁰ It is Mayotte’s desire to become whiter through her occupation and personal relationships – that troubles Fanon. He writes: ‘She asks for nothing, demands nothing, except for a little whiteness in her life’ and proposes that one of the ways that Mayotte attempts to whiten herself is by working as a laundress.⁵¹¹ He writes: ‘Then there are Loulouze and her mother, who told her how difficult life is for a woman of colour. So, unable to blacken or negrify the world, she endeavours to whiten it in her body and mind. First of all, she becomes a laundress.’⁵¹² To Fanon, the only reason to be a laundress is to whiten her race, completely ignoring how the work can result in economic gain and independence.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid, 37.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid, 37.

⁵⁰⁸ Fanon, *Black Skin*, 41-63.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid, 25.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid, 25.

⁵¹¹ Ibid, 26.

⁵¹² Ibid, 28.

As it quickly becomes clear there are multiple issues with Fanon's analysis of Capécia's book. The first obvious mistake is that Fanon collapses Capécia (the author's pseudonym) and Mayotte (the character in the book), equalising the author's experience with that of the character and immediately understands the novel, not as fiction, but as the personal story of Capécia. Such a mistake makes it impossible for Fanon to understand Capécia's novel as functioning on a different level than the straightforward story written on the page. According to Richards, Fanon fails to see how Capécia speaks to and from the mixed-raced relationship with intimacy but also with a critical distance that talks back at the metropole and its colonial occupation, particularly through Mayotte's failed relationship with André.⁵¹³ Richards writes: 'Mayotte's relationship with André is fundamentally a metaphor which figures the entire colonial project as the exploration, conquest, and naming of feminized landscapes.'⁵¹⁴ Fanon falls short in his analysis that Capécia is not only interested in exploring the relationship with a white man. Rather, she explores at length female relationships in their various constellations. Most obviously her friendship with Loulouze but also her relationship with her mother, her father's new girlfriend Rênélise and her white grandmother as well as the background characters of the laundresses in the river and later in the workroom are all significant female connections. By isolating André as the only figure of importance in Capécia's book, Fanon suggests that a woman of colour can only be about the man and only be an object of their sexual desires. Instead, Capécia attempts to show the opposite of this: she positions the woman as a subject with experiences, inner worlds and relationships, as seen from the perspective of a woman.

⁵¹³ Richards, *Airing the dirty linen*, 72.

⁵¹⁴Ibid, 72.

I introduce the novel of Capécia in-depth here, because it, like the discussion of Coolitude, serves as a counterpoint to Fulconis' drawings by representing women's inner lives and their female community, and by illustrating that the colonial subject is not stuck, but keeps remaking and redefining itself through art production. In contrast, Fulconis' work relies on an anthropological sensibility entrenched by looking at the labour of the laundress as sexually precarious and potentially unclean. In doing so, Fulconis establishes his difference from the racialised labourer and nature, and instead fashions himself as a man able to gather, capture and make sense of the colony as a foreigner and as an artist. Yet, does this mean that we might read or look at Fulconis differently, finding visual clues of missing agency within his work? In this particular case, I want to add another look at Fulconis' work, one in which I lean on Sheller's notion of 'an embodied encounter' in which there is a space for 'contesting the gaze, deflecting the gaze, returning the gaze, appropriating the gaze, and destabilising the power of the gaze,' like we saw in Fulconis' drawing of the Indo-Caribbean man.⁵¹⁵ She identifies the body and sexuality as important sites where embodied freedom is played out. It is her way of moving beyond the usual ways that freedom in the Caribbean has depended on elite sources, ignoring the realities of the struggles for freedom by those outside of power, without agency.⁵¹⁶

In some of the drawings, Fulconis draws women with their backs against him, as a viewer and as a maker of representation. For example, in *Blanchisseuse* [Fig. 76a], Fulconis draws a dark-skinned woman with her back slightly turned towards us, confronting and rejecting the viewer's gaze simultaneously [Fig. 76b]. She wears an almost see-through off-white dress with a patterned scarf wrapped around her lower half. The back of the dress is low-cut, exposing her naked skin. She

⁵¹⁵ Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*, 212.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid*, 19.

looks over her shoulder to meet our eyes but crunches a bit forward as if she is caught in a moment of shyness and as if she is aware of the spectator. It would be too one-dimensional to think that the laundress's rejection of the spectator is merely Fulconis's way of demonstrating the drawings as a snapshot, and not staged images. Instead, we can understand the women's rejection of the gaze as a mode of 'embodied encounter.'⁵¹⁷ Fulconis's drawings of the sexualized female labourer also insist on the agency of the woman and their eroticism as not simply for the male gaze, but as something that contains enormous power, like in the fictive character of Mayotte.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid, 214.

Chapter Conclusion

I want to end where we began this chapter: in the centre of London, right by the too busy junction of traffic and tourists, that is Piccadilly Circus. Behind the thick walls of the Royal Academy, Piper's paintbox installation has long been taken down together with the rest of the *Entangled Pasts* exhibition. Back in storage, Piper's piece is not only literally miles away from me as a researcher, but even further away from Fulconis in distance and in time. Like in the first chapter, Piper's work (along with Mattai's) offers a temporal and spatial intervention into our discussion on a drawing teacher, working in Martinique in the late nineteenth century. The open paintbox with pigments so glossy, so smooth, ready to be used by an artist, shows how colour held and enacted power in making the imperial experience. It was very literally a substance that was used – casual, repeated movements of dipping the brush into the paint again and again and onto paper – but it was more than that too: it was a tool that used to shape racial classification, most prominently exemplified in the colour plate of Broca, and that moulded the colonial ecology. Both forms of authority we have seen in Fulconis' album.

Opening the album, we see page after page of a maker who was deeply interested in depicting and cataloguing the tropical environment and the inhabitations, and who in the process fashioned himself as having access and ability to do so in the colony. But, we also see moments in which Fulconis captures a tension, whether that being the struggle to capture fish skin or the Indo-Caribbean man. The white pigments take up the top row in Piper's piece, a colour which Fulconis scarcely used (with the exception of his depiction of laundry), but which seeps through the whole album. As with Lacour, Fulconis' collection of drawings is an example of the fabrication of whiteness through its very invisibility in the album. Carrying his paint box across the Caribbean

Sea and across spaces in Martinique, Fulconis strove to make sense of the island. We have too, in this chapter, tried to make sense of him as an artist, as one who has not been studied in-depth before. Having arrived from Paris to take up the new position as drawing teacher, Fulconis was a figure who travelled along the imperial paths laid down for him and continued to do so afterwards. After spending the required three-year period as a civil servant, Fulconis, now with his wife and children in hand, had to return to France, only to come back to Martinique in 1890 to start a business in Saint Pierre. His fortune was not safe from the island's unstable fluxes, and it very nearly was destroyed by a cyclone. The business ultimately ended in bankruptcy only three years later.⁵¹⁸ Fulconis and his family left Martinique for the last time and eventually settled in Algiers. And so here, the second chapter ends. With Fulconis moving away the island of Martinique, deigning to packing the album of drawings that he made in the beginning of his stay, which is still there on the island. In the next chapter, we continue our conversations on colour pigments and depictions of the human and non-human in our next set of works, this time not from Archives Territoriales de Martinique, but created by Gauguin.

⁵¹⁸ Daum, "Vie et oeuvre", 225.

Chapter Three

'I will take my paints': Gauguin's works of Martinique

Scene I: Walcott's Gauguin

until the light of redemption came with Gauguin,
our creole painter of *anses, mornes, and savannes*,
of olive hills, immortelles. He made us seek
what we knew and loved: the burnished skins
of pawpaws and women, a hill in Martinique.

Our martyr. Unique. He died for our sins.
He, Saint Paul, saw the colour of his Muse
as a glowing ingot, her breasts were bronze
under the palm of a breadfruit's fleur-de-lys,
his red road to Damascus through our mountains.

Saint Paul, Saint Vincent, in the hallowed toil
of crowning a wave, as green as our savannes

shining with wind; pouring linseed oil
and turpentine in cruses with scared hands.

Precious, expensive in its metal cruse,
and poured like secular, sacramental wine,

I still smell linseed oil in the wild views
of villages and the tang of turpentine.

This was the edge of manhood, this a boy's
precocious vow, sworn over the capped tubes
like a braced regiment, as his hand deploys
them to assault a barrack's arching cubes.
Where did we get the money from to paint?
Out in the roaring sun, each road was news,
and the cheap muscatel, bought by the pint?
Salt wind encouraged us, and the surf's white noise.⁵¹⁹

The Saint Lucian poet and playwright Derek Walcott's long poem *Tiepolo's Hound* (2000) is a semi-fictional biography of the artist Camille Pissarro's (1830-1903) early life on the island of Saint Thomas in the Danish West Indies (now US Virgin Islands), and Walcott's own pursuits as an artist as he travels through Europe searching for a white hound he saw in a Venetian painting. In the section of the poem quoted above, he writes of another 19th century artist in the Western canon, Paul Gauguin. Unlike Pissarro who left the Caribbean for Europe, Gauguin travelled to Martinique in 1887 to escape the bustle of Paris. With an ironic, humorous tone, Walcott positions Gauguin as a 'creole painter', who recognised the beauty of the dark-skinned women he used as his muses and 'burnished' their skin to make them shine like metal.⁵²⁰ He rendered the island landscape 'in the light of redemption.'⁵²¹

As a painter himself, Walcott is attentive to the making of art as an act of colonialism. The work of capturing the island's waves, savannas and 'wild views of villages' is a 'hallowed toil.'⁵²² Again,

⁵¹⁹ Derek Walcott, *Tiepolo's Hound* (London: Faber, 2000), 17.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid*, 17.

⁵²¹ *Ibid*, 17.

⁵²² *Ibid*, 17.

Walcott satirically mocks Gauguin's artistic endeavour by conflating it with a Biblical act of service – the precious, expensive linseed oil, turpentine and capped tubes are poured from metal 'cruses with sacred hands', like 'sacramental wine.'⁵²³ In focusing on the act of making art and the materials needed to do so, he attunes our attention to the physicality of the paint, as having a divine-like character. Yet, he simultaneously shows the emptiness of such a pursuit; likening his art to a violent military campaign, his paints the armed regiment braced to attack. A 'precocious vow' sworn by an immature boy claiming the manhood of an army commander, Gauguin deploys his paint tubes to 'assault' the island, an unprepared, unsuspecting 'barracks.'⁵²⁴ Though a futile pursuit whose results are incomplete, Walcott nonetheless acknowledges the long-lasting impacts of colonial art upon the region. He can still 'smell linseed oil' both in Martinique and the artistic and literary representations of it. Like a conservator, he peels back the material layers of Gauguin's work, from the linseed oil to the turpentine. In doing so, Walcott deconstructs the very methods and processes of the European vision of the region and he recognises this as a totalising vision as flawed and incomplete for the materials and fragments that made it remain undisguised when one looks closely enough. In what follows, I will, similarly to Walcott, look closely at Gauguin's use of pigments, drawing on them to understand Gauguin as a maker. He sees the making of the Caribbean through the European gaze as lingering like a bad smell, one that has and continues to imaginatively and ecologically shape the islands. Walcott's inclusion of Gauguin, despite limited scholarship on his artistic foray in the region, illustrates its continued presence in Martinique today.

⁵²³ Ibid, 17.

⁵²⁴ Ibid, 17.

Scene II: Gumbs' Gauguin

In the darkness of a Caribbean evening, not far from Anse Turin, where Gauguin often went to paint, the facade of Le Centre d'interprétation Paul-Gauguin lights up.⁵²⁵ In bright colours, only achieved through computational generation, vegetal shapes metamorphose into abstract forms, moving in and out to the rhythmic beat of the electronic backing track. Set in a golden gilded frame, a black-and-white photograph of Paul Gauguin in profile emerges on the building [Fig. 80a]. In collage-like manner, the portrait is layered with digitised palm leaves in green and flowers in red. The framed photograph is replaced by another one [Fig. 80b] where Gauguin looks straight at the viewer as he stands with his paintbrush and palette. The facade momentarily turns black before abstract and plant forms again take over, moving across the building, one replacing the other to the beat of the drums and ambient techno. From these shifting shapes emerges a photograph of Maïotte Dauphite, the founder of the museum [Fig. 80c]. The immersive digital installation was shown at the reopening of the Le Centre d'interprétation Paul-Gauguin in Carbet in 2022 and was made by the Martinique-based multimedia artist David Gumbs.

At the end of the sequence, two of Gauguin's paintings from Martinique, *Coming and Going* (1887) [Fig. 81] and *Women Carrying Fruit on the Beach of Anse Turin* (1887) [Fig. 82], are projected onto the building. Juxtaposed on top, a video of a dark-skinned woman in a red dress walking in front of the two paintings, carrying two milk churns [Fig. 80d]. Here, Gumbs layers Gauguin's 19th-century portrayal of the Martinican woman with a contemporary one. This is a moment in which Gumbs directly responds and speaks back to the representation of women in showing the contemporary woman's movement away from the paintings and out of the frame. He disrupts Gauguin's static image to assert that the Martinican woman both past and present is much

⁵²⁵ David Gumbs, "Inauguration CIP Gauguin," *Vimeo*, accessed 7th October 2024, <https://vimeo.com/719358532>.

more than what Gauguin was able to see and memorialise. Gumbs' intervention is a significant contribution to our understanding of how Gauguin's legacy in Martinique continues to be revised and metamorphosed in new ways, urging us as scholars to do the same.

In another recent work by Gumbs, he takes over the main hall of the public library Bibliothèque Schoelcher with his large-scale interactive sound and light installation, titled *Waves* (2022).⁵²⁶ Located on Rue de la Liberté, opposite the La Savane park, in the centre of Fort-de-France, the public library is named after the famous abolitionist and was originally built to house his extensive book collection. As visitors walk up its stairs and through the tall doors of the library, they are met with a conch shell, lifted on a pole to human height, which was part of a larger-than-human abstract metal formation, surrounded by poles that light up in various colours [Fig. 83a]. When a visitor touches the golden conch shell, the sound and lights in the room change in real time, creating a direct dialogue between the visitor and the artwork [Fig. 83b and 8c]. Here, the conch shell fulfils its potential as a wind instrument, as it creates layered sounds and rhythms. At once historical and futuristic, the haunting sound and lights are both natural, of the sea and howling hurricane winds, and contemporary, artificial electronic noise like those at Le Centre d'Interprétation Paul-Gauguin, filling the darkened room with a disturbing and unsettling atmosphere.

Gumbs explains that he chose the conch shell for the piece's central anchor because he sees it as a symbol of Caribbean identity.⁵²⁷ The conch shell is found in shallow waters and sheltered bays and produces a large amount of meat, which was particularly enjoyed by Amerindians and enslaved

⁵²⁶ David Gumbs, "Waves," *Vimeo*, accessed 7th October 2024, <https://vimeo.com/697534797>.

⁵²⁷ David Gumbs and Frist Art Museum, "Artist's Perspective: David Gumbs," *YouTube*, 27th April 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hJNVqIAhYqI>.

communities. It continues to be a part of the cuisine and an important export.⁵²⁸ Its significance to Afro-Caribbean culture and freedom is also exemplified in the bronze public statue *The Unknown Maroon* [Fig. 84] in Haiti, which shows a male maroon as he lifts a conch shell to his lips, calling together his community with its sound. In the last section of the chapter, we will look closer at maroonage and their paths of escape that are echoed in Gauguin's works. Gumbs' work shows not only the continued presence of Gauguin's stay in Martinique in 1887 [Fig. 85] as part of the island heritage, but it also reflects the importance of the environment to Caribbean art making. His visual language is fused with ecological sensibility. From the digital flowers to the sounds of conch shells, his practice is an example of thinking and producing with and alongside ecology. The contemporary, multimedia starting point of Gumbs sets the stage for understanding the environment as an inescapable agent in Martinique and far beyond its edges.

In his work, Gumbs is inspired by Édouard Glissant, particularly his use of the mangrove plant as a way to understand Caribbean identity, as one with entangled roots in Africa, Europe, Asia, not hidden, but visible like the mangrove's aerial roots, moving in different directions but connected to one plant.⁵²⁹ In Gumbs' layering of references – from Gauguin's self-portraits to the sounds of the hurricane season – in his installations he articulates the multiplicities of being from the Caribbean.⁵³⁰ Thinking about the interrelationship between the mangrove and the Caribbean comes with new urgency with the current climate crisis and its destruction of the mangrove plant across

⁵²⁸ Peggy Lucienne Brunache, *Enslaved Women, Food ways, and Identity Formation: The Archaeology of Habitation La Mahaudière, Guadeloupe, circa Late-18th Century to Mid-19th Century* (PhD thesis, The University of Texas Austin, 2011), 238.

⁵²⁹ David Gumbs and Frist Art Museum, "Artist's Perspective: David Gumbs," *YouTube*, accessed 5th August 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hJNVqIAhYqI>.

⁵³⁰ For examination of hurricanes and visual culture, please see Joseph R. Hartman, "Temporal Visions: Hurricanes as Chronotopes in Caribbean Art History," *Miradas: Zeitschrift für Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte der Amerikas und der iberischen Halbinsel* 7 (2023): 122–147, <https://doi.org/10.11588/mira.2023.1.96492>.

the region, which has only been accelerated with the chlordecone scandal.⁵³¹ Nestled in the space between sea and land, the mangrove plant is important for protecting coastal communities, increasingly at danger: they provide a natural defence against hurricanes and rising sea levels, and form habitats for fish supporting surrounding communities.⁵³² The demise of the mangroves is just one example of how the former colonies disproportionately feel the impact of climate change triggered by their former colonisers, replaying continually the consequences of the plantation regime upon the land, from which resources have always been extracted to enrich and fuel Europe's wealth.

Following Gumbs' experimentation with multimedia patchwork, this chapter began with two collaged snapshots of art of two different artists, meditating upon the presence of Gauguin in the Caribbean today, thinking about the enduring legacies of his short stay on the island. Gumbs' *Waves* introduces a recurring theme throughout this chapter: paying attention to the environment as an important player and mode of analysis and interaction. Gauguin's stay in Martinique [Fig. 85] has yet to be considered within conversations of colonialism's legacies in modern Martinique. Yet, the study of Gauguin in Tahiti is an over-saturated field, leading Heather Waldroup to ask: 'What more can there possibly be to say about a dead, white, French painter? And was he not kind of an awful person? The answers to these questions are: (1) quite a bit and (2) yes, very likely.'⁵³³ In this chapter, I will show that there is 'quite a bit' still unsaid about his four-month stay in Martinique in 1887 and of his representations of its nature, both of which have been only

⁵³¹ See Charlotte R. Dromard, et al., "Temporal Variations in the Level of Chlordecone in Seawater and Marine Organisms in Martinique Island (Lesser Antilles)," *Environmental science and pollution research international* 29, no. 54 (2022), 81546–81556. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11356-022-21528-9>.

⁵³² Maricé Leal, Mark D. Spalding et al., "The State of the World's Mangroves, 2022", *Global Mangrove Alliance*, accessed 1st May 2024.

⁵³³ Heather Waldroup, "Re-Possessing Gauguin: Material Histories and the Contemporary Pacific," in *Gauguin's Challenge: New Perspectives After Postmodernism*, eds., Norma Broude (New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2018), 251–275.

sporadically discussed by scholars.⁵³⁴ With an ‘ecological sensibility’, I examine his experiments and his visualisations of the island’s natural environment and its connection to the labourers working the land.⁵³⁵ The chapter shows that Gauguin experimented with the natural world surrounding him to make sense of his experience in the colony. By bringing his work into conversation with pigment analysis, the chapter shows how Gauguin used ecological elements in his work, such as in his depictions of the mangoes and the rivers, to grapple with his time in the colony, one that was characterised at once by a desire to belong and a fearfulness of the place. As we will see, Gauguin's vision of the colony and its inhabitants was not fixed or one-dimensional but rather it was a site in which he captured both his authority and confusion as a maker. The chapter reads Gauguin's works of Martinique through lenses that draw upon a composite array of sources, from Caribbean consumption to maronage, thinking anew about how we can layer Gauguin's works with histories and stories.

After detailing Gauguin’s stay in Martinique and briefly outlining the scholarly and public discussions of his notorious character and work in the first section of the chapter, I move on to focus on Gauguin’s depiction of race and its manifestation through the motif of the mango. The chapter begins with Gauguin and Laval’s journey and continues through to analyse Gauguin’s mangoes, paying attention to the consumption of the mango as an erotic act, as exemplified in the writing of Hearn.⁵³⁶ The second section experiments with how we can look closely at an object like the mango and find meaning. Building upon the explorations of fruit, ripeness and colour

⁵³⁴ Ibid, 271.

⁵³⁵ I draw here on Maura Couglin’s notion of ‘ecological sensibility’ discussed in Maura Couglin, “Gleaning the Tideline: Elodie La Villette’s Ecocritical Painting,” *Dix-Neuf: Journal of the Society of Dix-Neuviémistes*, 23 (2019), 239.

⁵³⁶ Gauguin and Laval’s partnership is an example of the wider network of active artists in Martinique, a circle that also included Lacour and Fulconis. However, the following chapter concentrates on Gauguin’s work, and I am looking forward to incorporating Laval into further research.

change throughout the previous two chapters, here we see how Gauguin used the mango - known for its colour change as it ripens - as a device to interpret and navigate the population of colour. The last section focuses on Gauguin's depiction of paths, rivers and the ocean as a way to think anew about his work, examining how they echo histories of enslavement and resistance, and revealing his struggles to make sense of the tropics in his depiction of the ocean, which becomes a boundary of both the island and his knowledge. I show how Gauguin deeply engages with the island as a site of racial ambiguity and confusion, and employs nature as a key site in which to make sense of the island and its people.

Existing literature on Gauguin has repeatedly noted his creation of an 'Earthly Paradise' where his imaginations of an Arcadian, pre-industrial world of savagery are played out.⁵³⁷ The lush, abundant nature confirms the natural state of the colonies, existing outside the world of the European continent. This vision deliberately rejects and fails to see Martinique and French Polynesia as the spaces of modernity they were, and instead is indebted to the colonial narrative and pursuit to establish colonies as "out of time" compared to the European continent. Yet what I want to show in this chapter is that Gauguin also picks up and engages with Martinique as a space of a multi-racial population and where the landscape is layered in histories of enslavement and maroonage, a place in which he paints the confusion he experiences. Building on the two previous chapters, rather than seeing nature in Gauguin's pieces as a backdrop, it is entangled in questions of environment, material matter and subjecthood, showing a new way to think through the colonial legacies in his work. Like Nicholas Mirzoeff, it understands that 'the very idea of nature was and is inextricably entangled with race.'⁵³⁸

⁵³⁷ See Gloria Groom and Genevieve Westerby, eds. *Earthly Paradise* (Chicago, Illinois: Art Institute of Chicago, 2016).

⁵³⁸ Nicholas Mirzoeff, "The Whiteness of Birds," *Liquid Blackness* 6, no. 1 (2022), 122. <https://doi.org/10.1215/26923874-9546592>

Section I

A (dis)enchanted life: Gauguin's Martinican foray

A 'decisive' experience

Two years after his first voyage to Tahiti, Gauguin looked back on his 1887 trip to Martinique and wrote to the critic Charles Morice on its significance: 'The experience I had in Martinique ... is decisive. Only there did I really feel myself, and it is in what I brought back from there that you must look for me, if you want to know who I am.'⁵³⁹ Despite his short stay on the Caribbean Island, it was here, on a faraway island, that Gauguin mythologises to have found himself and made works, reflecting him as an artist and person. Despite Gauguin's high regard for the trip, it has not received much attention from scholars. The first extensive analysis of this period was Kristen Pope's unpublished PhD thesis in 1981, dedicated solely to understanding Gauguin's six months in the Caribbean and its lasting influence on his artistic practice, with the most significant impact being his development of large-figure paintings.⁵⁴⁰ Tamar Garb produced an important analysis of Gauguin's Martinican period in the catalogue 2011 exhibition *Gauguin: Maker of Myth*, in which she writes that it was his first attempt at making his 'complex self-construction as both "savage" and European', one that he would keep developing, drawing upon his upbringing in Peru.⁵⁴¹ The most significant contribution to scholarly and public knowledge was the 2018 exhibition *Gauguin and Laval in Martinique* at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, the first proper push to fully understand the duo's period in Martinique with its display of a large number

⁵³⁹ Charles Morice, *Paul Gauguin* (Paris: H. Floury 1920), 81.

⁵⁴⁰ Kristen Pope, "Gauguin and Martinique" (PhD thesis, The University of Texas, 1981). See also, Roger Cucchi, *Gauguin à la Martinique* (Paris: Calivran Anstalt, 1979) for an introduction to Gauguin's time in Martinique.

⁵⁴¹ Tamar Garb, "Gauguin and the Opacity of the Other: The case of Martinique," in *Gauguin: Maker of Myth*, eds. Belinda Thomson, Tamar Garb and Philippe Dagen. (London: Tate, 2010), 24.

of the artists' works of the colony.⁵⁴² The accompanying catalogue was a general introduction to the period and the artworks were beautifully reproduced, yet the scholarship lacked in-depth analysis. The conference proceedings, part of the exhibition, is due to be published in 2025.

Hoping to contribute to the extensive scholarship Gauguin, this chapter seeks to think in new ways about Gauguin's work by moving beyond the repeated tropes of him as a mythmaker, which he (no doubt) was, but instead examine his use of plant life and waters as crucial spaces in which he negotiated his first time in the tropics. In the natural environment, he experimented with colours and shapes; he explored the ambiguities of skin colour; and he dwelled on his position as a wanderer in the landscape. In the next part of the chapter, I provide an overview of how Gauguin's journey came to be, journeying from Brittany to Panama and, lastly, to Martinique.

*'And so the dream fades'*⁵⁴³

In 1886, looking forward to being free from family responsibilities and the costly expenses of Parisian life, Gauguin sent his son back to his estranged wife in Copenhagen and travelled to the artist village of Pont-Aven in Brittany, where the regional traditions and folkloric attire had been long-term favourite subjects amongst artists. During his stay, he met the young French artist Charles Laval and the two formed a friendship, which would eventually take them across the Atlantic Ocean. After three months in Pont-Aven, Gauguin returned to the metropole but grew increasingly desperate to leave, in his own words, the 'tedious and enervating life' in Paris, which was 'a desert for the poor.'⁵⁴⁴ His need to move to Martinique was fuelled by an unfortunate

⁵⁴² Maite van Dijk and Joost van der Hoeven, eds. *Gauguin and Laval in Martinique*, trans. Diane Webb and Ted Alkins (Bussum: Thoth Publishers, 2018).

⁵⁴³ Paul Gauguin, *Paul Gauguin: Letters to His Wife and Friends*, Maurice Malingue ed., trans. Henry J. Stenning (London: Saturn Press, 1948), 83.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 74. René Boitelle, Renate Poggendorf and Lesley Stevenson, "'A Decisive Experience': A Technical Examination of Martinique Paintings by Paul Gauguin and Charles Laval". Cited in Joost van der Hoeven, "Paul

combination of high urban expenses and lack of commercial success as an artist: it was an opportunity for Gauguin to live cheaply upon arrival (the boat ticket was nonetheless expensive) and distinguish himself as an original artist of interest, bringing colonial subject matters to the French art market. As such, it was in the interest of Gauguin as a poor, struggling artist, needing success, to go out to the colonies. His opportunity to flee came through his sister, who wrote that her Chilean husband, Juan Uribe could use Gauguin's previous experience in banking in Panama.⁵⁴⁵ Accompanied by Laval, they left St. Nazaire on the steamer *Canada* on 10th April 1888, with the final stop being Panama. The aim of the trip was crystal clear: 'I am going to Panama where I live like a native (...).' ⁵⁴⁶ Yet, he also sought to capture and preserve what he would see and experience there, fashion it into something beautiful on paper. In his luggage, he brought his own paint, brushes and canvas from Paris.⁵⁴⁷ From painter Henri Delvallée, we know that in the year before he travelled to Martinique. Gauguin used paints from Maison Édouard, which had their retail shop in rue Pigalle but was sold in other shops as well.⁵⁴⁸ It is most likely that Gauguin bought his paints from the colour merchant Julien Tanguy, who had worked for the paints company before starting his own shop.⁵⁴⁹

After a brief stopover in Martinique, the duo arrived in Panama, which was a crowded, urban city undergoing transformation with the construction of the Panama Canal. To make things worse, Uribe's job offer fell through. Gauguin writes of his grave dismay to Mette, his wife he left in Europe, 'Here I am settled on the wrong island!' and he dreams instead of returning to the

Gauguin, *The Mango Trees, Martinique, 1887*, in Catalogue Entry in *Contemporaries of Van Gogh 1: Works Collected by Theo and Vincent*, ed., Joost van der Hoeven (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, 2023).

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid, 73.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid, 75.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid, 75.

⁵⁴⁸ Vojtěch Jirat-Wasiutyński, *Technique and Meaning in the Paintings of Paul Gauguin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Appendix A, 205.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid, Appendix A, 205.

destination they had encountered during a brief stopover on their voyage: ‘Martinique is a fine country where life is cheap and easy. We ought to have stayed there.’⁵⁵⁰ He continues to write of a long-term future with his family: ‘To go back to Martinique – this would be an enchanting life. If I could only sell in France about 8,000 francs of pictures we, that is, all the family could live as happily as possible and I believe it would be possible even to give lessons.’⁵⁵¹ As the quote exemplifies, Gauguin’s fantasies of the possibilities of island life were already in full bloom: it would not only connect him and his family, it would give him the opportunity to earn money as a teacher in the schools, as our previous artist, Victor Fulconis had done.

Gauguin was quickly laid off from his job as a manual labourer and the two artists took the opportunity to travel back to Martinique, where they settled in the area of Carbet.⁵⁵² On 20th June 1887, Gauguin wrote the first letter to Mette from Martinique. He describes it as a ‘paradise alongside Isthmus’ and writes that they live in, what he describes with enthusiasm, a ‘negro hut.’⁵⁵³ He details the plentiful nature surrounding them: ‘Below us is the sea fringed with coco trees, above are all sorts of fruit trees’.⁵⁵⁴ Gauguin found inspiration for his works in his immediate surroundings, for example in *Near the Huts* (1887) [Fig. 86]. Here, in a small, quotidian neighbourhood square, a boy leans against a tree, as he looks over at two women squatting on the grass to collect fruits from the tree above them. It is a peaceful, everyday scene of content Black labourers, as imagined by Gauguin, a fantasy which shows no signs of the poverty and low living standards experienced by labourers still working on plantations after emancipation and still living in homes previously occupied by enslaved people.

⁵⁵⁰ *Paul Gauguin: Letters*, 79.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid*, 81.

⁵⁵² van Dijk and van der Hoeven, eds. *Gauguin*, 81.

⁵⁵³ *Paul Gauguin: Letters*, 20.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 81.

Their initial optimism was quickly replaced with distress and illness. ‘And so the dream fades,’ Gauguin wrote with sadness to Mette. Both artists suffered from illness within the first few weeks of their stay on the island, Gauguin succumbing to the dysentery and malaria he had contracted in Panama.⁵⁵⁵ As McNeill notes, illness and death were common experiences amongst those working on the Panama Canal in the 1880s, with an estimate death toll ranging from 5000 to 23,000 people, and the annual death rate of the French company being at 24 percent. He writes, the ‘consequences of sending thousands of men (and not a few women and children) within range of vector mosquitoes were predictably dismal.’⁵⁵⁶ He situates ecological factors as central to Gauguin’s negative experience in Panama and Gauguin’s immediate desire to flee its repetitive manual labour, with its stifling heat and bodily discomfort.⁵⁵⁷ Allewaert describes how diseases moved between human and non-human through insect carriers, thriving in the humidity, bearing disease through their bites and stings, or passing it on to animals or plants that humans ate, threatening the integrity of the human being.⁵⁵⁸ Gauguin and Laval’s bad health exemplifies how although the white French body took ownership over the land, the land also pushed back, ultimately exposing the fragility of the human body.

Accepting defeat and now eager to leave, he writes to patron and friend Émile Schuffenecker: ‘I am ill and will never be well in this climate.’⁵⁵⁹ Gauguin had clearly had no intention of enacting what Philip D. Curtin termed ‘death by migration’, a phrase referring to the high mortality rate of

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid, 83

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid, 309.

⁵⁵⁷ McNeil *Mosquito Empires*, 310

⁵⁵⁸ Allewaert, *Ariel's Ecology*, 6.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid, 85.

Europeans relocating to tropical regions in the 19th century.⁵⁶⁰ His terror was entirely typical of the experience of countless European travellers to the tropics who were rapidly struck down by illness. As McNeill sums up, ‘atop the social pyramid, the white population stood at the bottom in terms of health and life expectancy.’⁵⁶¹ White settlement in the tropics, as Gauguin dreams of, thus continued to be a thwarted fantasy, and the climate’s inhospitability and conduciveness to disease served as a major source of disappointment to Europeans who arrived with expectations of a lush, verdant and fertile landscape of abundance and opportunity.⁵⁶²

After four months, Gauguin left Martinique, ill but with, as he described, ‘a dozen canvases, four of them with figures far superior to my Pont-Aven period’ packed in his luggage.⁵⁶³ Gauguin’s period in Martinique did not go to plan: from planning to permanently settle with his family on the island to leaving after a short period, never to return.⁵⁶⁴ In the works that Gauguin produced during his stay, he reuses and rearranges motives – from the boy, dressed in a white shirt and light brown shorts to the slim mango trees, Gauguin uses his sketches again and again, creating a sense of seriality across the works. Though a dream was crushed, Gauguin did not give up his desire for deeper immersion in the land. A concept with multiple meanings depending on who is employing it, indigeneity as an identification has the potential to both enact, and resist oppression.⁵⁶⁵ Yet, for those in a position of colonial privilege like Gauguin, the concept has continued to encapsulate the simple, uncomplicated idea, and indeed criteria, of a cultural and temporal “authenticity” that denotes an innocence and freedom from the corruption and pollution of a contaminated modern

⁵⁶⁰ Philip D. Curtin, *Death by Migration: Europe’s Encounter with the Tropical World in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁵⁶¹ McNeil *Mosquito Empires*, 239.

⁵⁶² *Ibid*, Arnold, “Illusory Riches”.

⁵⁶³ *Paul Gauguin: Letters*, 85.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 85

⁵⁶⁵ Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity*, 4-6, 10, 15, 29.

Western society.⁵⁶⁶ In these works, we see how Gauguin embeds the Martinican figure of the *porteuse* in the land, stuck in place and unable to break free from the land, whilst the elite, like Gauguin remain free to dabble or move downwards into and out of it.⁵⁶⁷ This idea of a protectible, tangible authenticity, in and of itself, continues to perpetuate harm against Indigenous people.⁵⁶⁸ Hence, indigeneity remains a ‘a key site of struggle’ that haunts colonised environments.⁵⁶⁹ The question of Gauguin’s troubled attempt of positioning himself as authentic has been at the heart of ongoing debate about his works. It is these debates that I will now briefly outline in the following.

Postcolonial Gauguin

In contrast to Lacour and Fulconis, Gauguin is a veritable household name. He is a canonical artist, a museum favourite and a popular subject for scholars to dissect. Born in the revolutionary year of 1848, Gauguin, a stockbroker-turned-artist, was a controversial person during his time and the controversy has followed in his wake ever since, with his legacy still very much ‘on trial’ – having been labelled most things between ‘the great inventor of colour’ and ‘rapist’.⁵⁷⁰ Gauguin is most known for his on-off stays in Tahiti and Hiva Ova between 1891 and 1903, which have been heavily debated in discussions of Primitivism, the erotic and exotic, the savage and the saviour.⁵⁷¹ Pissarro made a now-famous remark about Gauguin and his time in the South Seas, which has

⁵⁶⁶ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 6-9, 117.

⁵⁶⁷ Sandy Grande, *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 4, 7, 11.

⁵⁶⁸ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 13; Lana Tatour, “The culturalisation of indigeneity: The Palestinian-Bedouin of the Naqab and Indigenous Rights,” *The International Journal of Human Rights* 23, vol. 10, 1570-1585; Dian Milan, *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights* (Tuscan: University of Arizona Press, 2013).

⁵⁶⁹ Melanie J. Newton, “Returns to a Native Land: Indigeneity and decolonization in the Anglophone Caribbean,” *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 17, no. 2 (2013): 121.

⁵⁷⁰ Didier Maleuvre, “The Trial of Paul Gauguin” *Mosaic* 51, no. 1 (2018): 197–213; Elizabeth C. Childs, *Vanishing Paradise: Art and Exoticism in Colonial Tahiti* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2013)

⁵⁷¹ Including Figura Starr, ed. *Gauguin: Metamorphoses* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2014); Belinda Thompson, Tamar Garb and Philippe, eds. *Gauguin: Maker of Myth* (London: Tate, 2010); Cornelia Homburg and Christopher Riopelle, eds. *Gauguin: Portraits* (Ottawa, Canada: Musée des beaux-arts du Canada, 2019); Alastair Wright, and Calvin Brown, *Gauguin’s Paradise Remembered: The Noa Noa Prints* (Princeton: Princeton University Art Museum, 2010).

more resonance than ever. He wrote that Gauguin ‘is always poaching on someone’s ground; now he is pillaging the savages in Oceania.’⁵⁷² To complicate matters further, Gauguin was an undeniably contradictory character who also critiqued the presence of the colonial administration in French Polynesia in his writings. Goddard argues, however, that ‘the artist’s empathy with the “primitive” services primarily to highlight the advocate’s bourgeois origins, regardless of the force with which they critique them’, reiterating the distance he perceived himself to hold from French military, colonial and artistic networks, establishing himself as a sympathetic spokesperson for the “savage”’.⁵⁷³ As the thesis is interested in indigeneity and the process of indigenisation of the Black figure, it is important to note here that Gauguin *posed* as non-white, as connected to the land by, for example claiming to want to ‘live like a native’ in a ‘negro hut’, moving away from European capitalism and modernisation, but this very sentiment was depended on his whiteness and his participation in such structures.⁵⁷⁴

Efforts have been made to find new ways to revise Gauguin and his work through a post-colonial framework, which is thesis builds upon. Elizabeth C. Childs looks towards Hungarian Indian artist Amrita Sher-Gel’s *Self-Portrait as a Tahitian* (1934) and both Caroline Vercoe and Kate Keohane have recently explored how contemporary artists in the Pacific respond to and resist the visions of Gauguin.⁵⁷⁵ Such an attempt was made by Carlsberg Glyptoteket and Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin with their collaborative exhibition *Gauguin - Why Are You Angry?* of 2022,

⁵⁷² Camille Pissarro, *Camille Pissarro: Letters to His Son Lucien*, ed. John Rewald (New York: Pantheon Books, 1943), 221.

⁵⁷³ Linda Goddard, *Savage Tales: The Writings of Paul Gauguin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 85.

⁵⁷⁴ Gauguin, *Paul Gauguin: Letters*, 75.

⁵⁷⁵ Elizabeth C. Childs, “Taking Back Teha’amana: Feminist Interventions in Gauguin’s Legacy,” and Heather Wadrop, “Re-Possessing Gauguin: Material Histories and the Contemporary Pacific,” in *Gauguin’s Challenge: New Perspectives After Postmodernism*, ed., Norma Broude (New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2018), accessed April 7th, 2024, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781501325182.ch-010>. Caroline Vercoe, “I Am My Other, I Am My Self: Encounters with Gauguin in Polynesia,” *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* 13, no. 1 (2013): 104–125. Kate Keohane, “Ambivalence, Estrangement, and Opacity: Four Engagements with Landscape, Oceania, and the Legacy of Paul Gauguin,” *Afterimage* 49, no. 4 (2022): 26–52.

which again set Gauguin's works in conversation with contemporary works from the Pacific. The co-curator Ralph Gleis says in an interview of museum-goers' newly found attention to colonialism: 'Now we not only question his relationship with these young girls but also see how deeply integrated he was in the colonialists' erotic dreams of Tahiti, which involved visualising these tropical islands using naked women basking in nature, signalling their openness and availability.'⁵⁷⁶ Not limited to the work of Gauguin, curators and scholars of colonial visual worlds continue to ask questions of unequal power dynamics, agency and abuse and the extraction of people, knowledge and nature and have long shown that the production and dissemination of material culture was an integral part of making colonialism and continues to hold influence on the public perception of the places represented. The thesis situates itself as part of ongoing and long-standing scholarship, which engages critically with the artworks of Gauguin and takes him seriously as a maker of empire.⁵⁷⁷

Gauguin's Palette

It *makes sense* to look at the material properties of Gauguin's work as he was an artist who experimented with different methods and media across his career (often dependent on his financial leeway) and who was attentive to the materials as part of his visual language, as conservation scientists and art historians have long established.⁵⁷⁸ Throughout his practice as an artist, Gauguin was repeatedly preoccupied with the properties and importance of colour. Colour was a way for him to try to distinguish himself from the impressionists and later neo-impressionists, expressing

⁵⁷⁶ Duncan Ballantyne-Way, "Paul Gauguin: The savage at the Alte Nationalgalerie," *The Berliner*, 7th April 2022, <https://www.the-berliner.com/art/paul-gauguin-savage-alte-nationalgalerie-why-are-you-angry/>.

⁵⁷⁷ Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Going native: Paul Gauguin and the invention of primitivist modernism," *The Expanding Discourse* (London: Routledge, 2018), 312-329; Nancy Mowll Mathewes, "Gauguin, Buffalo Bill, and the Cowboy Hat," *Transatlantica. Revue d'études américaines. American Studies Journal* 2 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.4000/transatlantica.10968>.

⁵⁷⁸ Vojtěch Jirat-Wasiutyński, *Technique and Meaning in the Paintings of Paul Gauguin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

himself as both a ‘primitive artist’ and a theorist. Gauguin ‘embraced foreign colour’, as Maika Pollack would say.⁵⁷⁹ Yet, he was afraid of using so-called ‘foreign pigments’: Gauguin brought his own paints with him to Martinique, and used thin layers of paint, probably to preserve his limited supply and ensure that the painting dried effectively in the humid weather.⁵⁸⁰ As such, even the act of image-making was subject to the dangers of the unfamiliar, unpredictable natural environment and required the artist’s ability to adapt accordingly. As we will see throughout this chapter, it takes seriously Gauguin’s use of colours, understanding his choice and layering of pigments as meaning-makers in his process of making and making sense of his first time in the tropics.

In French Polynesia, shortly before his death, Gauguin wrote the manuscript *Avant et Après* (1903). In one section, he assumes the voice of his alter ego, professor and ‘giver of percepts’ Vehbi-Zunbul-Zadi, on the topic of colour. Vehbi-Zunbul-Zadi advises the reader to: ‘always use colours of the same origin. Indigo makes the best base: it turns yellow when it is treated with spirit of nitre and red in vinegar. Druggists always have it. Keep to these three colours. With patience, you will then know how to compose all the shades.’⁵⁸¹ To Vehbi-Zunbul-Zadi, the ancient colour of indigo’s ability to make new colours was a huge benefit, creating different shades from the same starting point. As we explored in the introduction to this thesis, indigo as a product was intimately tied to Martinique, where it was produced in large quantities in the eighteenth century. Vehbi-Zunbul-Zadi continues to say: ‘Linen and flesh can only be painted by one who knows the secret of art. Who tells you that flesh is light vermilion, and that linen has grey shadows? Place a

⁵⁷⁹ Maika Pollack, “Paul Gauguin, and Primitivist Color,” *The Art Bulletin* 102, no. 3 (2020).

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid, 77; Jirat-Wasiutyński. *Technique and Meaning*, 80.

⁵⁸¹ Paul Gauguin, *Avant et Après* accessed 1st April, 2024, <https://courtauld.ac.uk/gallery/the-collection/prints-and-drawings/discover-avant-et-apres/turn-the-pages-of-avant-et-apres-by-paul-gauguin/>, 35.

white cloth by the side of a cabbage or a bunch of roses and see if it will be tinged with grey.’⁵⁸²

He positions himself as a knower of flesh and its complexity, asserting that flesh cannot be depicted through just one layer of paint, but constitutes many colours in conversation.

In this text, he again returns to his colour dispute with artist Paul Signac, stemming from the 1886 Impressionist exhibition, and positions his time in the tropics as bestowing him with authority on such matters. He writes: ‘Before me the coconut palms and banana trees. To please Signac, I will tell you that there are little points of red (the complementary color of green) scattered throughout the green. Despite that, and this would displease Signac, I swear that in all this green one perceives great swaths of blue.’⁵⁸³ He felt he found in the tropics proof of the inaccuracy of Signac’s theories: the tropics provided him with a new lens through which to see the world’s diverse colours, which the untraveled metropolitan artist was unable to access. In positioning himself as attuned to richer colours hidden to the sedentary artist, the nomadic Gauguin aligns himself as unspoiled by modernity, casting himself as a vector of superior knowledge on colour matters.

Extending the reaches of his self-fashioned cosmopolitanism further, Goddard explains that Gauguin was most likely inspired by the revolutionary prophet and painter in third-century Persia, Mani, and the eighteenth-century Ottoman poet, Venhi Sünbülzade, in crafting a name for his alter-ego. According to Goddard, using a pseudonym for himself ‘enabled him to lend his words the authority of an ancient, oriental perspective, one that added weight in a playful manner to the recurrent association that he made between colour and the primitive.’⁵⁸⁴ During his trip to Martinique, he developed his thoughts on the close associations between the importance of colour

⁵⁸² Ibid, 35.

⁵⁸³ Ibid, 4.

⁵⁸⁴ Linda Goddard, *Savage tales: the writings of Paul Gauguin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 125.

to the painter in capturing both the primitive, racialised body, and the landscape it inhabits, as different from the Old World, through colour. His Martinican sojourn is important to the study of Gauguin's politics of colour, as his first testing ground for his early Synthesism, which he continuously developed throughout his future travels. As we shall see in this chapter, Gauguin further developed his use of colour as intrinsically linked to him making sense of his surroundings.

During his trip to Martinique, he developed his thoughts on the close associations between the importance of colour to the painter in capturing both the primitive, racialised body, and the landscape it inhabits, as different from the Old World, through colour. His Martinican sojourn is important to the study of Gauguin's politics of colour, as his first testing ground for his early Synthesism, which he continuously developed throughout his future travels. As we shall see in this chapter, Gauguin further developed his use of colour as intrinsically linked to him making sense of his surroundings.

Section II:

Painting the Mango: Pigments, Race and Labour

In the following section, I will explore Gauguin's depictions of mangoes in Martinique. They are examples of Gauguin's acute attention to the landscape surrounding him and the racial ambiguities played out there. In layering his paintings with varied histories of the fruit, freedom, colour theory and pigments, this section contributes to extant scholarship on his works by positioning him as a user and maker of the Caribbean environment. By looking at the mango in conversation with Gauguin's use of pigments to depict racialised bodies, I argue that the artist was attuned to skin colour not as one-dimensional and static but rather as unfixed, and that his work aligns human bodies with the variegated hues of the mango, which changes colour as it ripens. In the first part of this section, I will introduce Gauguin's works of Martinique by building on our previous discussion on colour and using it as a lens to understand them. I pause to examine a selection of work which shows that sketching skin colour and racial difference was at the forefront of Gauguin's practice. This will lay the groundwork for enabling, in the next part, even closer scrutiny of Gauguin as a maker concerned with making sense of the multi-racial population of Martinique.

Sketching difference

In the voice of Vehbi-Zunbul-Zadi, Gauguin writes of the multi-dimensionality of the colour black. He instructs: 'Discard black and that mixture of white and black they call grey. Nothing is black and nothing is grey. What seems grey is a composite of pale tints which an experienced eye perceives.'⁵⁸⁵ The quote shows an attention to the instability and constructedness of black at a

⁵⁸⁵ Paul Gauguin, *Avant et Après*, 35.

moment where the colour was a signifier of racial difference.⁵⁸⁶ Vehbi-Zunbul-Zadi understands that nothing and no-one is uniformly or completely black but instead made up of a mixture of shades.

Seemingly in opposition, this was not always honoured in the practice of Gauguin when faced with quickly sketching such darker colours. In the *Study* [Fig. 87], Gauguin again paints the outlines of one figure; two of her facial outlines and one with her body partly faced towards the viewer. She wears a red headscarf. He colours the woman's skin colour with a deep brown, without any layering of other colours. The brown is so deep that it washes out most of her facial features. Instead, it is just the totalising colour of brown. Yet, Gauguin has not completely finished colouring the woman's skin, revealing the white paper underneath and hinting to skin's racial designation as actively coloured and made up. In rapidly capturing this woman to remember and use in a more detailed way later, Gauguin categorises and marks her racial type, class and character through the quick and easily recognisable signifier of the dark brown.

The sketch is an example of how Gauguin uses his sketchbook to repeatedly draw the people surrounding him. Whereas his paintings predominantly render women of colour, with the exception of the young boy, his sketches show a greater variety of subject matters which never made it to the canvas. He draws the face of Laval, male figures walking, sitting and playing music, as well as domesticated animals that arrived in Martinique as part of the Columbian Exchange centuries before.⁵⁸⁷ The sketches show the wider natural world and social and communal lives of the island that he continuously drew upon. As with Fulconis' work, with black chalk, charcoal, pencil and sometimes watercolour, the sketches became a part of the longer material and

⁵⁸⁶ See Fend, *Fleshing out surfaces*.

⁵⁸⁷ Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange*.

intellectual process of making sense of the island and its inhabitants that we do not see in the final paintings.

A collection of sketches on paper [Fig. 88a, 88b, 89a and 89b] again exemplifies his interest in the racial varieties on the island, depicting different tones of skin colour and a variety of clothing and body movements of both men and women.⁵⁸⁸ Most of the sketches never made it to a canvas, but they speak of an artistic process which was anchored in trying to map and categorise the islands' varied "types". In *Sketch of Several Figures, Flowers and Animal* [Fig. 90] we see a combination of heads and figures alongside a plant, flower and a chicken. Some of them are coloured, whilst some are rendered only as outlines. In the left foreground, he paints a woman with her back towards the viewer, wearing a headscarf and a foulard: her skin tone is a combination of brown and grey. Next to her sits a dark-skinned figure with a large *bakoua* hat, and in the right-side corner another woman with her back towards the viewer is depicted, with a deep brown, almost black skin tone. In the upper part of the drawing, Gauguin outlines two faces in profile: one woman with a headscarf and the other a man, probably Laval. He produces similar silhouettes in *Study of a Martinican Woman* (1887) [Fig. 91] and *Head of a Man* (1887) [Fig. 92] in which we again only see the simplified outlines of the figures. In sketching various side profiles of Black figures, he shows not their facial features as an individual, but the lines, contours and overall shape of the Black head and sometimes body. In contrast, in a sketch of a white man [Fig. 93] he shows him head-on with a fully rendered face with a beard, glasses and facial expression. This clearly shows Gauguin's interest in exploring the differences in both character and bone structure between Black and white and how he finds that a different, simpler line is appropriate to capture the Black

⁵⁸⁸ I am grateful to Alastair Wright for sharing his forthcoming chapter "Between the Lycée and the Plantation: Gauguin, Martinique's Modernity, and the Negotiation of Race" (*forthcoming*, 2025). I am leaning here on his discussion of this collection of sketches as physiognomic exercises.

body. Gauguin would reflect on his process in a letter to Schuffenecker, writing that he makes one sketch after the other to ‘absorb their character and then I will make them pose.’⁵⁸⁹ These brash, uncontested anthropological snapshots build up an image bank of references to easily draw upon in his studio work, where he incorporates the nuances of skin colour that take his renderings from superior and authoritative to ones more ambiguous and uncertain, showing the difficulties of capturing the island’s history, people, culture and landscapes. This collection of sketches shows that Gauguin was interested in pinpointing the racial make-up of the population in Martinique.

The Mango

Earlier in the thesis, I explored the cashew as representing layered histories of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, bleaching and maroonage and in this section I look again towards fruit; this time even more closely – down to the pigments of its production -, as it is a telling aspect of how Gauguin’s work made sense of the environment and skin colour in the colony. Gauguin anticipates the Martinican adventure that he and Laval will go on in *Still Life with Profile of Laval* (1886) [Fig. 94] a piece reminiscent of Cezanne’s still lifes. It is an up-close still life of a table, partly covered in a wrinkled white cotton cloth with fruits and a Pre-Columbian inspired ceramic sculpture, made by Gauguin, positioned on top. A cropped profile of Laval peeks out from the right side of the picture plan. Whilst the objects on the table are displayed towards the viewer, Laval looks down at the objects, as if taking notice of Gauguin’s display. The painting represents the two artists’ close relationship before their trip to Martinique and Gauguin’s fascination with the exotic fruit of the mango, lying in the middle of the painting in front of the ceramic sculpture. The fresh fruit on the table refers to exotic worlds beyond the village of Pont-Aven, with the mango being imported across far distances. During his stay in Martinique, he returns to the still life display of a fruit

⁵⁸⁹ Gauguin to Schuffenecker, early July 1887. Quoted in van Dijk and van der Hoeven, eds. *Gauguin and Laval*, 58.

platter in the small vertical painting *Still Life with Mangoes and Hibiscus Flower* (1887) [Fig. 95]. This time the table is replaced with a wooden floor, where two mangoes, one green (unripe) and one orange (ripe), lie in the middle of the scene, next to the red hibiscus flower. Gone is the tablecloth and fine wooden table; instead the focus is on the colours and shapes displayed in a tightly compressed pictorial space. In both still lifes, the mango has been brought indoors, arranged, and used as an object for his artistic experimentation with colour and shapes. In *Still Life with Mangoes and Hibiscus Flower*, his possession and reproduction of the fruit and the flower serve as proof that Gauguin had indeed made it to the Caribbean and had taken advantage of its fertile vegetation. As Gauguin indicates in his still lifes, the mango changes colour from green to red, as it grows ripe and sweet, making it easy to see when the fruit is ready to eat.

According to Brunache, it is unclear when the mango reached the Caribbean shores, but K. C. Jayaram points to the year 1760 as beginning the establishment of French botanical networks with the transfer of cultivators from Ile-de-France (Mauritius) to the Jardin du Roi in Paris, to the Lorient Garden and to other colonies.⁵⁹⁰ We know that 1772, Abbé Gallois, on order from the government, shipped mangoes and other plants to Guadeloupe, Martinique and Saint Domingue.⁵⁹¹ Brunache argues that the mango species quickly became part of the Martiniquan vegetation, as it requires little maintenance, spreads quickly and has a long harvest season, making it a popular and desired fruit, also today.⁵⁹² As such the mango, whether on a plate in Brittany or hanging in a tree in Martinique, was and continues to be a part of a global network of goods, which connected geographically distant places on the map into an entangled space of commerce. The popular print *Fruits de la Martinique* [Fig. 96] shows this with its display of a variety of fruits from the island. It

⁵⁹⁰ Kiran C. Jayaram, "Fruits of colonialism: The production of mangoes as commodities in northern Haiti," *Critique of Anthropology* 38, no. 4, 461-482.

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*, 226.

expresses the abundance of fresh fruit found on the island, harvested, brought inside and now overflowing the table, ready to be consumed. The print represents how the fruits, originated from somewhere else, made it to the tables and cuisines of Martinique via the Columbian Exchange. It is nothing new to think about the connection between fruit and eroticism in Gauguin's work. Linda Nochlin's article on Gauguin's painting *Two Tahitian Women* [Fig. 97] was the first to detangle this relationship between mangoes and erotic femininity.⁵⁹³ The painting presents two women, naked from the waist up, as one of them holds a dish of ripe mangoes just below both breasts. In a humorous move, Nochlin juxtaposes Gauguin's work with a photograph taken by the author, entitled 'Buy My Bananas', of a nude male posing with a platter of bananas beneath his genitals.⁵⁹⁴ As we saw earlier in the chapter of Lacour, the banana is an erotic object. It illustrates that fruits, whether mangoes or bananas, both highly desired non-native produce of the Caribbean, are intricately linked with both exoticism and eroticism.⁵⁹⁵ In the following, we will see how the consumption of the mango was associated with sexual acts enacted by women whose intentions are unclear to the white European men who experience them.

Consuming the mango

Hearn, who stayed on the island at the same time as Gauguin, repeatedly used food references in his writings from Martinique.⁵⁹⁶ One of the fruits that he returns to is also the mango. According to Valérie Loichot, Hearn's attention to mango, and fresh fruit in general, is a way to discover flesh',

⁵⁹³ Linda Nochlin, "Eroticism and Female Imagery in Nineteenth-Century Art," in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 1988), 136–144.

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁶ Again, I want to acknowledge again Pope's use of Hearn in her PhD thesis 'Gauguin and Martinique'.

which ‘opens up an indefinite list of possibilities that defies strict racial categories.’⁵⁹⁷ Similar to Gauguin, Hearn uses fruit to understand skin colour, writing:

And as you observe the bare backs, bare shoulders, bare legs and arms and feet, you will find that the colours of flesh are even more varied and surprising than the colours of fruit....But among the brighter half-breeds, the colours, I think, are much more fruit-like; there are banana-tints, lemon-tones, orange- hues, with sometimes such a mingling of ruddiness as the pink ripening of a mango.⁵⁹⁸

As such, the fruit of the island was an effective way for Hearn to make sense of the racialised skin and communicate the diversity of skin colours to the American readers of *Harper’s Bazaar*. Here, Hearn reads race as entangled with instability (the ‘tints’, ‘tones’, ‘hues’, ‘mingling’) and thus an all-encompassing understanding of the people is impossible. He writes: ‘This flesh does not look like flesh, but like fruit-pulp.’⁵⁹⁹ In writing that it does not look like flesh, but rather like an edible ‘fruit-pulp’, the Caribbean encounter becomes one of consumption: human difference is one that encourages devouring. The human flesh is one that can be eaten, and thus can be owned. While it is desired to consume the ‘pulp’, it is also an act that is potentially dangerous and sexually precarious,

It is rather slobbery work eating a common mango, in which every particle of pulp is threaded fast to the kernel: one prefers to gnaw it when alone. But there are cultivated mangoes with finer and thicker flesh which can be sliced off, so that the greater part of the

⁵⁹⁷ Valérie Loichot, “Cooking Creoleness: Lafcadio Hearn in New Orleans and Martinique,” *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy*, 20, no. 1 (2012): 9. <https://doi.org/10.5195/jffp.2012.537>.

⁵⁹⁸Hearn, *Two Years*, 56.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 49.

fruit may be eaten without smearing and sucking. Among grafted varieties the *mangue* is quite as delicious as the orange.⁶⁰⁰

Hearn writes of an experience of having been given ‘a monster mango’, from a woman he describes callously as a ‘symbolic statue of Africa’ after she had ‘begged’ for a cigar like the one Hearn was smoking, but instead he gave her money.⁶⁰¹ After giving him the mango, ‘she wanted to see me eat it, and sat down on the ground to look on’, perhaps smirking mockingly or smugly.⁶⁰² Loichot reads the scene as Hearn being embarrassed to eat the mango in the ‘Caribbean way’ with hands and teeth, because it ‘involves sucking, smearing and glistening.’⁶⁰³ Hearn does not describe the encounter with the woman further, but the interaction here between Hearn and the woman is explicitly one of eroticism: both the cigar and the mango are, in shape, colour and textural properties, sexually charged objects to be consumed between them, between their mouths. The mango is then associated with the act of eating it, which is an embodied experience that leaves the eater outside of their comfort.

By making a distinction between the ‘common mango’ and the ‘cultivated mangoes’, he not only iterates the importance of having plantations that grow the mangoes, but he also classifies the mango in a similar way that he did with the woman who gave him the mango, whom he describes as a ‘finer type.’⁶⁰⁴ Both the mangoes and the people, associated with the mangoes, can be categorised according to Hearn’s taste: he wants to both consume the mango and the woman.

Sheller writes that ‘the indulgence of the sense of tasting was crucial for Europeans who entered

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid, 438.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid, 157.

⁶⁰² Ibid, 157.

⁶⁰³ Loichot, “Cooking Creolenes”, 13.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid, 157.

this “New World” of wonderous fruit and surprising sweetness’, but which relied upon a morbid relation’ to other humans ‘whose laboring bodies produced the comestible commodities of the world trade.’⁶⁰⁵ Like Loichot also suggests, this consumption was also surrounded by fear, with Hearn being apprehensive of being observed at a moment in which he was eating but also *being eaten by* the tropics. In consuming this tropical, unfamiliar product, in an apparently uncivilised way, Hearn is potentially contaminating and compromising his constitution by allowing its entry into the internal world of his body. It is possible that in this moment, he might become forever changed, taken hold of by the tropics, beginning upon a path towards decline, degradation and disgrace. It is fear that Hearn expresses again when he writes of him being overfed by his housemaid Cryilla, as she, according to Hearn, is fearful that he is not eating is enough in the tropical climate: ‘I cannot eat enough to quiet Cyrillia's fears.’⁶⁰⁶ There is once more a sense of the dubiousness of the aims of women, the motives behind their being plied with food as potentially being to weaken the white male. Nor did they end with abolition, for, as Sheller explains, ‘Not only did Northern consumers continue to “eat” them from a distance, but they increasingly came to consume them up close as tourists.’⁶⁰⁷

As such, the mango, standing-in for and epitomising the tropical exotic in the Old-World fantasy, holds imaginary and metaphoric power for making sense of the island. It is a fruit that symbolises colour change and the consumption of nature, eroticism and people. As we move on to examine Gauguin’s depictions of the mango, of people harvesting and eating mangoes, we see the similarities to Hearn. The mango was an object that was part of a language of eroticism and was a way of categorising skin colour and it was part of the consumption of the Caribbean, a

⁶⁰⁵ Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, 79 and 74.

⁶⁰⁶ Hearn, *Two Years*, 363.

⁶⁰⁷ Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, 147.

consumption which placed the people and land as things to be eaten. With Gauguin's depiction of the mango and his emplacement of the female in the landscape, we see once more the construction of the intimacies of humans and nature that we have been visible throughout the thesis, both becoming simultaneously racialised, and linked by being cast as material and economic resources.

The Mango Trees, Martinique: labour and pigments

The pastel drawing *Study of a woman from Martinique* (1887) [Fig. 98] is another instance of Gauguin's attention to the mango and its close association to questions of gender, eroticism and race. He renders a Black woman, a *porteuse*, with her face turned in profile and her upper body slightly turned towards the viewer, all drawn in a spontaneous manner. She carries an unripe mango with her raised left hand. She wears a blue-coloured headscarf and a white cotton dress (a *douillette*) with strokes of blue as well as dots of red and black, all placed against an indistinctive yellow background. Although Gauguin depicts the woman's skin colour as primarily dark brown, he again includes short expressive strokes of orange, yellow and blue on the front of the woman's face. Here, he plays with the tones of skin colour as the light touches the dark skin, rather than conforming to a flat and essentialising Blackness. By raising the fruit prominently up to the woman's face, Gauguin creates a close pictorial relationship between the woman and the produce she daily transports from the plantation to the capital. He depicts the mango as primarily green-coloured with strokes of orange: it is in the process of ripening - a complex process that involves slow changes to the colours and tones of its skin (as well as its texture and taste) - the object transforms and shifts through various states, neither fixed, static nor essentialised in its colour.

The sketch was used as an inspiration for the largest painting he made during his stay, *The Mango Trees, Martinique* (1887) [Fig. 99a], depicts a group of four dark-skinned figures picking,

transporting and eating mangoes from the trees growing around them. The figures are tightly enclosed between the foreground and the deep blue sea in the background, with the mango trees directing our view through the space. In the immediate foreground, Gauguin positions a woman with her back against the viewer. She holds the edge of the blue dress in her right hand, and the other hand steadies the basket she carries on top of her orange-patterned headscarf. She is about to join the two working figures in the background to secure the daily produce from the mango trees.

As viewers, we overlook the fruit pickers and the land in front of us. In a letter to Mette, Gauguin dreams of the straightforward and content life possible as an owner of such land:

With a little money there is every possibility of being very happy, but a certain amount is necessary. For instance, with thirty thousand francs, one can acquire at this moment a property which brings in 8 to 10,000 francs a year and live on the fat of the land. The only work is to supervise a few negroes for gathering fruit and vegetables which grow without any cultivation.⁶⁰⁸

Being a plantation owner was attainable and desirable to Gauguin: it could be a new life for him and the family, living off the plentiful land with the “only” job of overseeing the Black labourers and, as we remember from the letter mentioned in the introduction, Gauguin expressed the potential of being ‘very happy’ there.⁶⁰⁹ This statement speaks to the privilege and power of owning land on the island, even after emancipation, which the small white population continued to do. Land ownership was the key to an easier life, benefitting and profiting from the hard manual labour and low wages of the formerly enslaved workers, as astutely observed by Gauguin.

⁶⁰⁸ Gauguin, *Paul Gauguin: Letters*, 82.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 82.

Gauguin made scenes of modern labour and contemplated the meanings of leisure at a time in which colonial emancipation and metropolitan industrialisation worked hand-in-hand to fundamentally transform the meaning and look of both concepts. Following the work of Thomas Holt (outlined in the introduction), Michael Joseph writes:

Freedom was a problem for the formerly enslaved, in that the form in which it emerged worked to reduce them to a landless proletariat dependent on the wages offered by their former plantation masters. The process was never absolute. A peasantry established itself to varying degrees in each island as the formerly enslaved strove to define freedom for themselves.⁶¹⁰

Agricultural labour – for instance, picking fruit – was an important aspect of the formerly enslaved’s post-emancipation labour given the island’s need to continue both being fed and having profitable exports. Reiterating Mary Kuhns once more, Gauguin’s work shows how the Black body continued to be entangled with the botanical world long after the end of slavery, in defining their economic usefulness.⁶¹¹ As we saw in the first chapter with Lacour’s depiction of the population of colour as belonging to the land, but not the landscape, connected to France, we also see in the work of Gauguin how he fixes the figures to the ground: their bodies are used to extract the produce from the nature. The freed population was now part of the labouring class, entering the waged proletariat. And yet, at the same time, they continued to be fixed to the land through their

⁶¹⁰ Michael Joseph, *Beyond the nation: Anticolonialism in the British and French Caribbean after the First World War (1913-1939)* (PhD thesis, University of Oxford: 2019), 20.

⁶¹¹ Kuhn, *The Garden Politic*, 19.

relationship to labour, with increasing debate over their efficiency and suitability as workers when their labour now required compensation.⁶¹²

Anyaa Amin-Addo concurs that white elite anxieties following abolition gave rise to key questions across the post-emancipation Caribbean over the potential laziness of the formerly enslaved worker.⁶¹³ They doubted whether the formerly enslaved would, and possessed the ability to, continue to work hard and constitute a useful workforce that would efficiently support the island's plantation economy and its profitability for the metropole.⁶¹⁴ Indeed, in Gauguin's work, we do not know if the figures are wage-labourers picking fruit on the same plantations upon which they were once enslaved, or are working on their own newly acquired smallholdings. Yet, it is in this ambivalence, pictorially manifested with the enclosed space, that Gauguin mediates upon the unknown status of the workers. Rather than taking an expansive view of the landscape as in other paintings that provide us with a sense of the plantation as part of a wider social and ecological landscape, he here shows a tightly constructed and limited view of this open landscape in which the figures are placed in close proximity both to one another, and the trees, which are truncated by the edges of the canvas. In this tight space, the figures are restricted in their movements and in their position in the wider landscape, which is denied from our view. This mirrors the workers' inability to establish full physical and social mobility in the continued plantation dynamic of the colony, showing that slavery's shackles were only loosened, not broken.

Gauguin homes in upon the ambivalence of this simultaneous freedom and unfreedom in the movement of the figures – bending, eating, walking, carrying, picking – whilst they remain

⁶¹² Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity*, 4.

⁶¹³ Anyaa Amin-Addo, "'A Wretched and slave-like mode of labor': Slavery, emancipation, and the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company's Coaling Stations," *Historical Geography*, 39, 65–84.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid*, 68.

bounded and static in his capturing of them with his brushes and palette and enclosing them within the space. Always captured, and captive, perpetually watched over by the scrupulous foreign gaze of the viewer – mimicking that of an overseer like the fictional one implied by Keith Piper’s artwork that introduced the previous chapter – they continue to be visually cast as labourer, and nothing more.

However, the seated figure in the foreground destabilises this reading of the painting. The woman, dressed in a *douillette*, is captured in the middle of taking a big bite of a juicy mango probably from the full bucket next to her on which Gauguin also signed his name [Fig. 99b and 99c]. The mango could have been sold on the market or served on a platter to the landowner (or perhaps used in a still life). Instead, she takes a break whilst the others continue to toil. In not working, the woman is a reminder of the free will and freedom of the labourers, whether or not they are collecting fruit on public or private land. One might say that Gauguin here repeats the stereotype of the lazy Black labourer, but I argue that the seated figure is actually an agent and carrier of knowledge and know-how of the land and the produce she harvests with the rest of the group. In doing so, Gauguin’s idea of the easy and carefree life as a plantation owner is disrupted by a need to contend with the subjecthood and freedom of the labourers, post-emancipation. This is particularly highlighted when we consider Christine Chivallon’s work in which she posits that while the plantation owners continued to keep the land in the aftermath of the abolition, in the years after 1860, the formerly enslaved began to move from the plantations and buy up their own small plots of land. This leads Chivallon to contend that a new peasantry developed with a self-sufficient economy between themselves, building on Sidney Mintz’ investigation of Caribbean peasantries and peasantisation.⁶¹⁵ She provides the example of the Caplet district, close to Carbet where Gauguin

⁶¹⁵ Chivallon, *Espace et identité*. Sidney Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations* (London: Routledge, 2017).

and Laval stayed, which was in the 1870s and 1880s becoming the home to formerly enslaved peoples securing their own land, standing in contrast to only a few decades all the homes in the district had been owned by *béké*.⁶¹⁶ As such, Gauguin dreams of buying land and overseeing ‘a few negroes’ at a moment in which more Black inhabitants were in fact able buy their own land and manage their own small holdings. The seated woman might then be read for her burgeoning independence over the land. As mentioned above, and as Jackson’s research shows, the proclaimed indigeneity of Afro- and Asian-Caribbean Creoles has been predicated on their relationship to the land through extractive labour, working *with* and *in* plant-life – and as we also see in this painting, consuming the vegetal produce – and Creoles have embraced and claimed, on their own terms, this mode of belonging.⁶¹⁷ As such, moving to the hillside and occupying plots of land, cut up from bankrupt plantations, the newly freed used the land, the very soil where they had been enslaved, to secure their independence, thus affirming an indigenous connection to the land as their own.⁶¹⁸

The Mango Trees, Martinique was exhibited as part of the 2018 exhibition and was one of three paintings to undergo pigment analysis, executed by the museum’s conservation studio.⁶¹⁹

Interestingly, Luc Megens and his team found that Gauguin created the seated woman’s skin colour by a mixture of cobalt blue, vermilion, lead white, ochre, organic red on a tin substrate, Emerald Green, zinc yellow or chrome yellow with zinc white, all pigments easily available and commonly used by European artists in the nineteenth century.⁶²⁰ It is, of course, not surprising that Gauguin, like most others, made brown by mixing complementary colours together. However, Gauguin added touches of cobalt blue on top of the brown on her nose, around her eyes, on her

⁶¹⁶ Ibid.

⁶¹⁷ Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity*, 1-40.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid, 1-40.

⁶¹⁹ Luc Megens, “Pigment analysis of P. Gauguin”, *The Mango Trees, Martinique, 1887* (Van Gogh Museum, 2016, unpublished).

⁶²⁰ Ibid, 6.

knuckles and right toes. In doing so, Gauguin points to the instability of the colour brown, as one that is created by a multiplicity of colours, rather than being flat and one-dimensional. Garb argues in her chapter that Hearn's work from Martinique shows that the writer was more attentive to the multi-racial population on the island, depicting both white and dark-skinned figures, whereas Gauguin only shows Black labourers. Yet, the pigment analysis complicates that conversation by underlining that Gauguin was interested in the make-up of skin colour, navigating the illegibility and ambiguities of the skin colour, which was made of many other colours than seen on the surface. Thus, in adding the touches of blue, Gauguin refers to his own process of making the colour brown, and his process of making sense of skin colour.

Gauguin's interest in the appearance and interpretability of skin colour is reflected in his depiction of the mango—a fruit that naturally blends multiple colours. In the painting, he shows mangos at different stages of ripeness, from the deep green ones still on the tree above the woman's basket, to the rich orange ones in the bucket, ready to eat. Going beyond a mere exploration of colour contrast; Gauguin uses the mango as a metaphor for skin. Just as a ripe red mango is easily read as ready to eat, skin appears legible on the surface. Yet, like the mango, it contains a complex mix of colours, which Gauguin emphasises with touches of blue. In doing so, Gauguin does not deconstruct his stereotype of the "primitive", yet attention to his colour experiments complicates a straightforward reading of race by adding a dimension of multiplicity. This suggests that he might not have been the great denier of modernity on the island as claimed, but that he incorporated elements recognising the métissage of the multi-racial population on the island.

The Mango Trees, Martinique was the most commercially successful work Gauguin made in Martinique. Yet, the complex ambiguities of skin colour, labour and modernity explored through

Gauguin's visual language and skilful manipulation of colour were not fully appreciated or received after its sale. He sold it to the art collector Theo van Gogh for 400 francs, making it one of the most expensive canvases that van Gogh ever bought for his own collection.⁶²¹ The painting was favoured by the collector's brother and artist Vincent van Gogh. In a letter to his sister, he compared it to Pierre Loti's semi-biographical novel *Le Mariage de Loti* (1880), a popular example of French exoticism.⁶²² The book is based on Loti's trip as a naval apprentice and follows his romantic, roller-coaster relationship with the Tahitian girl Rarahu. Fayaud points to Loti's text as a powerful catalyst for *Tahitmania*, read by Gauguin himself, and which likely inspired him to buy his first ticket to the island.⁶²³ The commonalities between Gauguin and Loti, which van Gogh noticed, despite the geographical difference, are likely to have been both artists' attention to the exotic; of the first-hand account of French colonies, which are flattened or made similar in the metropolitan mind as one and the same kind of exotic tropicality. The nuances and specificities of a post-slavery society that Gauguin's work sought to navigate are missed in such a broad and binding categorisation.

Tropical Conversation: mysterious fruit

Like *The Mango Trees, Martinique*, the painting *Tropical Conversation* (1887) [Fig. 100] is one of Gauguin's experiments with large-scale figures that he made in Martinique. As with his other paintings from Martinique, Gauguin structures the paint by vertically hatching the brushstrokes one after the other, which creates colour fields, only disrupted by the chromatic blocks of the figures. It is a tranquil scene, where a woman in blue is in the middle of washing her clothes in the river in the background and a young boy looks after a goat as he picks leaves in the pictorial

⁶²¹ van der Hoeven, "Paul Gauguin".

⁶²² *Ibid.*

⁶²³ Viviane Fayaud, *The paradis autour de Gauguin* (Paris: CNRS Editions).

foreground. Taking up most of the left pictorial space in the painting is the two women chatting, one with her back slightly towards us as she gestures towards the other woman who looks at us as viewers, almost as if we are sharing an unspoken, intimate moment, catching one another's eyes across the canvas. This is the only time in his Martinican works that Gauguin complicates the one-way inspection: we look at women, but here the woman in white notices the viewer, counters our eyes, leaving us now pointedly aware of our gawking. While looking at us, the woman effortlessly balances the basket of fruit on her headscarf and wears a white, probably cotton, shirt that reveals her bare shoulders and arms. Here, we see how the contrasting hues between the women's skin colour and their clothing are defining features of the painting: a way for Gauguin to further emphasise the darkness of their skin tone. When we look at the painting, it is as if we are sharing a space with the figures: not only is the woman in white inviting us in with her gaze, but we also feel captured in the space with Gauguin's removal of the horizon.

On the one hand, the woman's look persuades the viewer to share a space of mutual observation. On the other hand, the viewer is left at a distance, positioned on the other side of the foliage in the foreground, disrupting the viewer's full immersion into the scene. To further emphasise the distance, the other figures do not notice the viewer's presence, as their turned-away body language signifies. As such, Gauguin allows the viewer to imagine being in the scene, but, at the same time, he pictorially materialises the physical and felt distance between the viewer and the coloured rural workers. It is the sight of the attraction that draws the viewer in but is only met with its hopeless inaccessibility. Gauguin points here to the conflicting nature of the encounter with the tropics: he had the privilege to escape to a foreign colony and to freely position himself as close to "the Other" solely because he is not: he does not share their skin colour; he is not a labourer and is not from the island, leaving him dependent on his fantasy of their shared authenticity and intimacy.

Gauguin writes about a similar shared moment in a letter to his wife in which a sixteen-year-old girl gave him a bewitched fruit that would leave him at her disposal, suggesting the temptation and danger that Gauguin was experiencing as a foreigner: 'I promise you that here a white man has a hard time keeping his robe on because wives of Putiphar are not lacking. Almost all are coloured from ebony to the matt white of the black race, and they go so far as to place charms on the fruits that they give you in order to entangle you.'⁶²⁴ Whereas Hearn repeatedly comments on the variety of skin colours, this is the only letter in which Gauguin comments on the different ranges of skin colour that he sees on the island. Again, the piece of fruit becomes an object, part of a story through which Gauguin tries to make sense of the range of skin colours of the population on the island, suggesting a close connection between the mango and the illegibility of skin colour. Again, like Hearn, Gauguin writes of the women's openly sexualised nature that seduces but also frightens the man, who is left bewildered and enchanted. Fruit is mysterious, associated with the women's otherworldly abilities they use to capture the white man. Gauguin strategically compares the Martinican women to Putiphar's wife (known for falsely accusing Joseph of rape after he rejected her sexual advancements) in the letter, to further underline the sexual and dishonest nature of the female, which will eventually lead to the man's unjust imprisonment. Gauguin continues to tell a story about a specific incident, where he was only just saved from eating a bewitched guava which would have made him the property of the woman, who gave him the fruit. He writes:

...a young sixteen-year old Negress, very pretty indeed, came to offer me a guava split in half and squeezed at one end. I was going to it as soon as the girl had left when a native lawyer who happened to be there took the fruit from my hands and threw it away: "You are

⁶²⁴ *Paul Gauguin: Letters*, 82.

a European, sir, and don't know the country," he said to me, "one must not eat a piece of fruit unless he knows where it comes from. For example, this fruit has a history: the Negress has squashed it on her breast and surely you would be in her power afterwards."⁶²⁵

The fresh fruit, just picked, is here a fruit of mystery and risk for the naive European man, deeply connected to the body and desires of the woman. The mango at the heart of this story, and of this section, proves to be a key vehicle for Gauguin to explore questions of racial ambiguity, the illegibility and legibility of skin colour and the dangers of the tropical environment. In the next section, we will move on to examine how Gauguin depicts sea- and land-scapes in his work, thinking about paths and roads, ocean and rivers, as pictorial elements that reveals larger histories about Gauguin and Laval's negotiations of the colonial experience as one both belonging and uncertainty.

⁶²⁵ Ibid, 82.

Section III

Trodden Paths, Finding the Seabow:

In a study of 1887 [Fig. 101], Gauguin experiments with the experience and shapes of the natural world through guache, watercolour and black chalk. With varying length brushstrokes in colours ranging from light green to deep purple, he captures the texture of what he sees in front of him. With chalk, he has made a few lines, but other than that, the study has no fixtures. The green-yellow patches of colour at the top of the drawing reminiscent green foliage and the earthy tones of blues and deep orange correspond to the ground, but there is no clear indication of what is what. Instead, the study is a record of being so immersed in the landscape that its distinctive features disappear, and one only sees the colours of the natural world merging together. The details of the landscape are washed out and no longer making sense, and he is left with the overwhelming experience of its colours. In contrast to the depictions of pathways that we will examine in what follows, in this image there is no path and there is no way-finder, denying all sense of specificity or locatedness in the terrain. This drawing is an abnormality in the corpus of Gauguin's works from Martinique and I start with this work as a counterpoint to the landscape paintings that we will discuss in the following, which are carefully curated and depicted in detail. This first study is punctuated by the sensory experience of the tropics; the embodied, disorientating impact of its colours, topography and climate being at the forefront of the colonial experience.

In his later works, he takes such sketches and works them into paintings that reveal the specifics of paths, roads and identifiable plant-life. Through the sketch, we are reminded to keep in mind how confusion, overwhelm and "making sense of" was part of the experiencing the natural environment. Both kinds of works centre different but connected forms of knowledge of the island,

one deeply felt in the body, and one meticulously and carefully evidenced on paper. In the first chapter, we examined how Lacour takes a bird's eye view and oversees the land in a claim to authoritative knowledge, whilst in the second chapter we saw how Fulconis investigated the landscape and made similar professions of understanding by studying its individual features up-close. In what follows, we will see how Gauguin does have a similar desire to prove his knowledge of the tropics, but on different grounds; those of a kind of self-professed “native” belonging, connection and rootedness in the land, a trope that the other artists almost exclusively reserve for the Black population. Gauguin strives to occupy and be a part of the land. Whereas Lacour and Fulconis position themselves above or as distanced observers of the land, Gauguin emplaces himself within and looking out from it. The first part of this section therefore pays attention to how Gauguin and Lacour curate the island landscape and, through their depiction of walking paths, assert their knowledge and belonging to the island. The discussion unfolds to examine the modern roads, denied in their paintings, and draws on Peter Hulme’s analysis of Jean Rhys unpublished text ‘The Imperial Road.’⁶²⁶ It then moves on to examine how walking paths can be read as echoing the stories of enslaved peoples’ walking and running towards freedom. In the second part of the chapter, I shift to focus on how the artists depict rivers and oceans, analysing how both are entangled in Gauguin and Laval’s works as makers that use waters to capture their boundaries of knowledge and their unease. As we follow the two artists through the island landscape, we see how they made sense of the land and themselves as connected to the land, but also plays out ambiguities and doubts about this colonial land and what lies beyond its limits.

⁶²⁶ Peter Hulme, “Islands and Roads: Hesketh Bell, Jean Rhys, and Dominica's Imperial Road,” *The Jean Rhys Review* 11, no. 2 (2000): 23-51.

'Moving is knowing': paths in the landscape

Recalling Walcott's line 'under the palm of a breadfruit's fleur-de-lys / his red road to Damascus through our mountains', we begin our journey through the landscape with *Martinique Landscape* [Fig. 102], in which we will indeed pay attention to the paths and momentarily the breadfruit, as elements of the landscape.⁶²⁷ The painting shows a view over the abounding land from the hill, Morne Lacroix. A stereotypical scene of the Caribbean landscape, Gauguin depicts the vegetation in vertical parallel brushstrokes of shades of greens, oranges and blues, presenting the land as lush, abundant and unspoiled. Pope identifies the three plants in the middle ground to be a breadfruit tree, papaya tree and a laurel bush, under which a rooster hides.⁶²⁸ While the rooster suggests that a smallholding is nearby, any other sign of the city of Saint Pierre has been erased instead of the abundant vegetation. Specifically, Pope identifies that Gauguin would have been able to see the statue of Notre-Dame-du-Bon-Port Cathedral from his position of painting, but again he has erased this sign of a cityscape nearby.⁶²⁹ As such, this is clearly a curated image of Martinique, in which Gauguin has formulated the landscape to show it as flourishing and available to the viewer. In-between the greenery, running from the foreground down through the painting, almost invisible, there is a rugged path. It is at first sight an indistinctive part of the landscape scene and it might merely be seen as serving a pictorial function of moving the viewer's eyes through painting. However, when we look closer, we find that paths such as these carry meaning. Most obviously, the path is a sign of Gauguin being in the land, walking the same paths as the many human and non-human movements that collectively have worn down the vegetation to carve the path's very existence into the land. He shares the path with the labourer of the *porteuse* who walks with her goods across the island as he also shows in his work *Coming and Going, Martinique* (1887) [Fig.

⁶²⁷ Walcott, *Tiepolo's Hound*, 17.

⁶²⁸ Pope, 'Gauguin and Martinique', 124.

⁶²⁹ *Ibid*, 124.

80] which was included in Gumbs' video installation and where we see green-red mangoes hanging in the tree, a nod to our earlier discussion of the changeability of its colour. Here, as well as in *Path under the Palms* (1887) [Fig. 103] Gauguin shows groups of women as they walk and rest along a path made in between the green vegetation. In *Path under Palms*, the path has almost been swallowed by the surrounding nature, suggesting the vulnerability of such human-made paths against the wilderness. In both of the paintings, Gauguin captures how the path is used by the women transporting goods and positions the women and the path as entangled: the women use the path for easy transport and the path is kept up by the continuous walking of women, whose footfall ensures its continued life. As such the path is one that demonstrates Gauguin's presence and mobility on the land, with his feet planted in the ground, he confirms his closeness to the land and to the people inhabiting the land.

That this path was to be walked on, and was safe to walk is underscored with the cloudy sky of the scene. Mentioned in the two previous chapters with both Lacour and Fulconis' inclusion of the umbrella, the island's unpredictable weather, fluctuating rapidly from searing heat to sudden showers of rain, had to be protected against. By depicting the sunshine as covered by the thickness of the white clouds, Gauguin confirms that it is safe for the white body to walk on the shaded path in the moment he captures, rendering it more familiar and palatable within the unknown jungle. Laval makes a similar painting to Gauguin's with his own *Martinique Landscape* [Fig. 104], where we too look down an empty path onto the sea and the coastal line, with our view only disrupted by a tree leaning across the canvas. In the works, the viewer's position is one in transit, an in-between stage of looking down a path, but not having started walking down it yet. These two paintings are alike in the wildness of the landscape and the slimness of the line that passes through, in contrast to the vaster expanse of the vegetation, which could easily erase any remnant of it. In

including a path, Laval maps the landscape as one of familiarity and intimacy: he, like Gauguin, knows the routes and can find his way in the terrain and gain access to this view.

Whilst Gauguin and Laval in their paintings both prioritise human movement along paths and denies any other sign of modernisation, they would have used transport roads in Martinique to get to their destination and move around the island during their stay, roads which were well-known in the region for perseverance against the insistent and persistent elements.⁶³⁰ As a 'pre-eminent sign of modernity', the artists were not interested in showing the roads that they travelled along or any other vestiges of modern life. In contrast to Gauguin and Laval, who visually denies the existence of modern roads, Hearn lauded the French establishment of 303 miles of 'excellent national roads—limestone highways, solid, broad, faultlessly graded—that wind from town to town, from hamlet to hamlet, over mountains, over ravines; ascending by zigzags to heights of twenty-five hundred feet; traversing the primeval forests of the interior; now skirting the dizziest precipices, now descending into the lowest valleys.'⁶³¹

Such roads became particularly necessary after Emancipation, where the plantation houses no longer functioned as the numerous decentralised centres of surveillance and authority across portions of land and territory, as they once had.⁶³² In attempt to better surveil the island, more roads were constructed, extending the colonial sphere of influence further across the territory, into the higher, rugged and formerly inaccessible mountainous regions, with their cooler, temperate conditions, in contrast to the tropical lower lands.⁶³³ This encouraged greater European settlement,

⁶³⁰ Hulme, "Islands and Roads", 27.

⁶³¹ Hearn, *Two Years*, 106. Cited in Hulme, "Islands and Roads: Hesketh Bell, Jean Rhys, and Dominica's Imperial Road," *The Jean Rhys Review* 11, no.2 (2000), 27.

⁶³² *Ibid*, 27.

⁶³³ *Ibid*,

but also provided opportunities to take up new tracts of land and cultivate new commodities such as coffee, rubber, oranges and nutmeg.⁶³⁴ Yet more ecological challenges arose here by way of pests and hurricanes.⁶³⁵ Planters were disturbed by the encroachment of roads along or across the borders of their land, fearing external influences upon their workers and labour disruptions.⁶³⁶ Here we see one form of imperial advancement clashing with another, as plantation owners came into conflict with the ‘priorities of the colonial state’, which threatened their (unattainable) fantasy of a closed and protected spatial environment.⁶³⁷

An urge to walk island roads and paths on foot by outsiders has been discussed by Peter Hulme as connected to a strong desire to belong and be a part of the island landscape, to shed the inescapable markers of whiteness and blend in, become native, become one with the island.⁶³⁸ Hulme draws on the work of the Dominican-British writer Jean Rhys (1890-1979) to position colonial roads as existing at the blurred juncture between the white desire to belong within the primitive vision of the island as a native, and the somewhat conflicting desire to see the imperial project succeed in bringing modernisation and improvement to a wild land. In the text ‘The Imperial Road’, Rhys records her experience of wanting to walk along The Imperial Road, which runs through Dominica and which had been built by English engineers, on a return visit to the island of her birth after many years residing in England.⁶³⁹ Yet, when she arrives, neither herself nor her Martinican guide can find the road. Convinced of the superiority of her own memories and knowledge of the island and the road, she assumes and asserts that the guide must have taken them to the wrong place,

⁶³⁴ Ibid, 29.

⁶³⁵ Ibid, 30.

⁶³⁶ Ibid, 30.

⁶³⁷ Camilla Cowling, “Teresa Mina’s Journeys: ‘Slave-Moving’, Mobility, and Gender in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Cuba,” *Atlantic Studies* 18, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/14788810.2020.1783191>, 17.

⁶³⁸ Ibid, 44.

⁶³⁹ Ibid, 44. Peter Hulme writes that *The Imperial Road* was planned to be included in her last collection in 1976 but was pulled out by her publishers. See Peter Hulme, *Remnants of Conquest: The Island Caribs and Their Visitors, 1877-1998* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 223.

reiterating his Martinican origins to situate herself as more native to Dominica than him. Rhys is incredulous that she cannot gain access to the road, re-examining her memories all night long, writing ‘I couldn’t have imagined it and the Imperial Road couldn’t have disappeared without a trace, it just wasn’t possible. No Imperial Road or a trace of it. Just darkness, cut trees, creepers and it just wasn’t possible.’⁶⁴⁰ As Hulme explains in his discussion, ‘To attempt to walk across the island was a desperate assertion of belonging, of being native, of doing something that only Dominicans could do, or would want to do, or would need to do.’⁶⁴¹ Rhys is humiliated by being lost in the landscape, unmoored and without reference points. Being afraid of the natural landscape and its darkness is further humiliating, but also quickly used to express disgust and separation from it. Whereas Rhys finds that she cannot and is in fact blocked from accessing the land, Gauguin and Laval enthusiastically flaunt their free and easy access. Even still, the sense of disappointment felt by Rhys mirrors that of Gauguin’s reluctant departure from Martinique, forced to accept that much as he wished to belong, his body might not be cut out to withstand the island with its cacophony of sensory and climactic intensities. As Arnold has established, the symbolism of the tropics was deeply ambivalent and paradoxical, a landscape of apparent abundance and fertility that was also one of rampant poverty, disease and uncertainty. It was at once too much, and not enough, rich but poor, in a ‘duality that made the tropics appear as much pestilential as paradisiacal.’⁶⁴²

The two paintings of Laval and Gauguin establish their ability to move around in the land, and hence their knowledge of the land, as Tim Ingold asserts, ‘moving is knowing.’⁶⁴³ Unlike Rhys,

⁶⁴⁰ Jean Rhys, *The Imperial Road*, 17-18. Cited in Hulme, “Imperial Roads”, 44.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid*, 44.

⁶⁴² Arnold, “Illusory Riches”, 8.

⁶⁴³ Tim Ingold, “Footprints through the Weather-World: Walking, Breathing, Knowing,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16, no. 1 (2010), 134, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2010.01613.x>.

they seek to prove that they are not lost, that they have achieved what she was later unable to do. In painting the paths, they traversed them, demonstrating their knowledge, yet also inadvertently alerting the viewer to the fact that they will not stay there, that they are able to walk away and leave at will. These acts of movement, recorded physically in the path, are echoed all over the island in reminders of the importance of movement, in all its forms, to the history of Martinique; not least in immobility and potential mobility of the island's enslaved population.

Maroon geographies

Though we do not know the historical significance of the precise paths that the artist duo walked and memorialised in their art, their paths echo the movement of others walking and of the countless similar paths that crisscross the island, forming networks of resistance, contestation, and forced and free removal. Whilst Gauguin and Laval sought to capture Martinique as a paradise away from the metropolitan civilisation by emphasising the free-growing untamed nature, we can draw upon Willie Jamaal Wright's notion of imaging the 'unruly' landscape of marronage to point us towards the untamed landscape not as a constructed paradise, but as a space of layered histories of maroon resistance that used and relied upon the uncultivated and unmapped mountainous regions.⁶⁴⁴ Here, the remoteness and inaccessibility of the landscape to Europeans made it a fertile ground for achieving safe haven by slipping through the loopholes and limits of European reach over colonised places. As Ferdinand explains the maroons had and were able to 'inhabit the inhabitable', 'hillside-hideouts and 'hostile spaces' became inhabited lands.⁶⁴⁵ He continues to write that 'the Maroons roam her paths, discovering useful things there, such as sources of water

⁶⁴⁴ Willie Jamaal Wright, "The Morphology of Marronage," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 110, no. 4 (2020), 1134–49, doi:10.1080/24694452.2019.1664890. Quoted in Justin P. Dunnivant, "Have Confidence in the Sea: Maritime Maroons and Fugitive Geographies," *Antipode* 53, no. 3 (2021): 884–905, <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12695>.

⁶⁴⁵ Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology*, 149.

that quench thirst and plants that heal or poison. Mother-Earth provides nourishment.’⁶⁴⁶ Thinking back to the 1667 map of Martinique [Fig. 28] mentioned in the first chapter, we remember that one part of the map was inscribed with ‘Deumeure des Sauvages’, a part of the island that is mapped on paper but remains outside of the French control.⁶⁴⁷ It visualises the importance of knowledge about spaces to the colonial exercise but also how this knowledge can be limited and areas can exist outside of the cartographer’s mastery.⁶⁴⁸ As part of her work on ‘Black geographies’, King sees paths and transportation routes as deeply connected to indigenous histories and the erasure of their traditional pathways on the ground and on paper through cartography as co-occurring with their genocide, as the white European encroaches upon and invades spaces of Indigenous and Black inhabitation, who make up ‘the outer edge of humanity in proximity to death and decay’, the decay and over-ripeness of nature and people being an oft-returned to theme throughout this thesis.⁶⁴⁹ These pathways were sophisticated ones of trade and travel, and of resistance and escape, leading colonised bodies into the yet-uncolonised dense and rural interiors in an act of de-colonial self-emancipation. King builds on Katherine McKittrick’s notion of a ‘different sense of place’ of ‘subaltern subjectivities, stories and lands’ being interlaced with ‘white masculine European mappings, explorations, conquests’, and we have seen throughout the thesis how the white masculine European creator has been juxtaposed against other histories to destabilise the ‘just-ness’ of space.⁶⁵⁰ Once more, the land is an actor in this story, that, along with the maroons escapes and evades the imperial grasp until the eventual laying down of roads. We saw in the last section that these remote regions of lush but unruly vegetation were also where the newly freed

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid, 151.

⁶⁴⁷ Sutton and Yingling, “Projections of Desire and Design”, 805.

⁶⁴⁸ Hélène Balis, Florence Deprest, and Pierre Singaravélou, “Introduction: Pour une histoire spatiale du fait colonial,” in *Territoires impériaux* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.pSORbonne.42311>

⁶⁴⁹ King, *Black Shoals*, 80.

⁶⁵⁰ Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minnapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 11v and xv.

population bought land and secured their self-sufficiency from the plantation estates, and in what follows I will continue to understand the space as one also of potential freedom by looking at it through the lens of maroonage.

Maroonage was an act defined by spatial separation and physical movement.⁶⁵¹ The act of walking was one that was part of the colonial experience for both the enslaved and the marooned. Camillia Cowling reinforces this, in her analysis of nineteenth-century Cuba that the most utilised way of moving slaves around was through enforced walking.⁶⁵² She emphasises that it was a regular visual sight to see convoys of shackled enslaved Africans, who had recently survived the Middle Passage, walking along the roads to make it to their designated plantations.⁶⁵³ This movement of the enslaved was highly policed within and outside the grounds of the plantation, with maroonage being an example of the ultimate self-directed movement towards freedom that was most feared and guarded against.⁶⁵⁴ The continuation of slavery rested upon the ability to control the enslaved's mobility; when, where and how they could and could not move. Jeppe Mulich writes that 'The very act of escape was an assault against the social order of slave societies because it undermined their most fundamental power dynamic - the relationship between master and slave. By taking freedom, rather than having it bestowed on them or purchasing it through sanctioned transactions, maroons challenged the very underpinnings of the colonial world.'⁶⁵⁵ Thus, space and spatiality are also important considerations, for through controlled and coerced mobility, freedom

⁶⁵¹ Nelson, *Slavery, Geography and Empire*, 321; Cowling, "Teresa Mina's Journeys", 17.

⁶⁵² Cowling, "Teresa Mina's Journeys".

⁶⁵³ *Ibid*, 8, 9 and 17.

⁶⁵⁴ See Alvin O. Thompson, *Flight to Freedom: African Runaways and Maroons in the Americas* (Jamaica: UWI Press, 2006).

⁶⁵⁵ Jeppe Mulich, "Maritime Marronage in Colonial Borderlands," in *A World at Sea: Maritime Practices and Global History*, ed. Lauren Benton and Nathan Perl-Rosenthal (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 135.

and captivity were spatially contingent and could be achieved through seizing the right to move into an alternative space.

The British abolitionist and consul David Turnbull writes of the flux of people from Martinique escaping their enslavement in 1840, ‘Several thousands of the slaves of Martinique had previously been driven by the severity of their treatment, or incited by their innate love of liberty, to embark in canoes, or on rafts formed for the purpose, in the hope of reaching St. Lucia or Dominica, where they had been informed that their natural rights as men would be respected.’⁶⁵⁶ Turnbull here records the inter-island escapes taking place from Martinique, where knowledge of how to move in the land and on the sea was vital for survival. While we do not know how the paths that Gauguin records were made, they carry broader histories of walking across the land and down to the ocean, perhaps to escape via dugout, canoe or other small vessels or swimming to the neighbouring free British islands of Dominica and St Lucia, where emancipation was gained fifteen years earlier than in France.⁶⁵⁷ Similarly to Mulich, Rifkin contends that Maroon communities arise through fugitivity and refusal of the plantation system and its racial capitalism and incarceration.⁶⁵⁸ He explains ‘Marronage, then, provides a framework through which to think Black emplacement and self-determination in the Americas.’⁶⁵⁹ The paths of Gauguin and Laval then can be read as ephemeral but impactful imprints or footprints of bygone histories that have worn down and

⁶⁵⁶ David Turnbull, *Travels in the West Indies. Cuba; with Notices of Porto Rico, and the Slave Trade* (London: Longman, 1840), 562–63. Quoted in Kevin Dawson, “A Sea of Caribbean Islands: Maritime Maroons in the Greater Caribbean,” *Slavery & Abolition* 42, no. 3 (2021), 429.

⁶⁵⁷ Gunvor Simonsen and Rasmus Christensen, “Together in a Small Boat Slavery’s Fugitives in the Lesser Antilles,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (2023), 646, <https://doi.org/10.1353/wmq.2023.a910393>; Tayzhaun Glover, “Freedom on the Horizon: Transmarine Marronage and the Abolition of Slavery in Dominica, Martinique, and St. Lucia, 1824-1848” (PhD thesis, Duke University, 2024).

⁶⁵⁸ Rifkin, *Fictions of land and Flesh*, 13.

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 13.

reshaped the surfaces of the places indigenous people inhabit, remaining as clues, traces and echoes that we can read and followed.

Yarimar Bonilla describes the practice of *fe memwa maché* (“make your memory walk” or “take your memory on a walk” in Creole) in Guadeloupe in which local labour activists walk together through the landscape as part of their practice of deepening their connection with the land and its history.⁶⁶⁰ She details one encounter with a participant, Adeline, who said that these events had changed her relationship to the breadfruit after a historian explained they revealed the presence of the maroon communities, ‘Look at the breadfruit here...look at the breadfruit there ...look at the breadfruit over there...You see, breadfruit doesn’t just grow in the middle of the forest like that. If there is a breadfruit tree it’s because someone planted it a long time ago. It is a trace.’⁶⁶¹ This trace reverberates in both Gauguin and Laval’s *Martinique Landscape*, in which, as mentioned, Gauguin specifically depicts a breadfruit tree in the middle of the vegetation, albeit not in the deep forest where settlement would have been, but it is a trace of people harvesting and eating both the breadfruit and papaya as they move through the land. The story is an example of how the import of goods were not only part of the make-up European colonisation but how they became important lifelines for the enslaved and maroon communities and continues to be a memory of their stories and impact on the land. Indeed, the breadfruit, brought by Europeans to the Caribbean from its native Tahiti and was experimented upon in botanical gardens as a potential cheap food to keep the enslaved fed.⁶⁶² Hulme too has found that breadfruit the tree and the botanical gardens were deeply linked to pseudo-scientific study and the construction of the very idea of tropical islands with

⁶⁶⁰ Yarimar Bonilla, “The Past is made by walking: Labor Activism and Historical Production in Postcolonial Guadeloupe, *Cultural Anthropology*, 26, no. 3, 313–339.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶² Jennifer Newell, *Trading Nature: Tahitians, Europeans, and Ecological Exchange* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010), 141-171.

similar climactic and ecological features, including their indigenous peoples, in the late eighteenth century.⁶⁶³ He gives the example of Alexander Andersen, the manager of the botanical gardens in Dominica, who would receive the first breadfruits from Tahiti. Andersen dug up a skull from a Carib burial site and sent it to Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, who wished to use it for the third edition of his *De Generis Humani Varietate Nativa* (1795) for Blumenbach's phrenological investigations into racial difference and its origins, and the potential links between the indigenous peoples of the Atlantic and the Pacific.⁶⁶⁴ The fruit then, imported and grown, were part of a larger project of using the ground – both a burial site that irreverent memorialised indigenous genocide and the seeds of the breadfruit as a resource, to justify and continue enslavement and colonial domination around the world.⁶⁶⁵

'Like the hues of a changeable silk': Gauguin's rivers

We now travel downstream and commence to follow the waters that connect the mountains with the sea on long, meandering, descending journeys: the river. We shift to local scenes of a particular place, only connected to the surrounding area through the continuation of the river beyond the picture plane. It is another path of mobility and knowledge flow that geographically connects the mountains with the sea; the interior with the coast. Rivers are aquatic spaces of human and non-human activity, which divide and connect the land, as the water flows towards the ocean.

Anthropologist Anne M. Galvin writes that the significance of rivers to the plantation system has been dimmed by the predominant focus on the land and argues that rivers hold 'synchronous histories of lifemaking': they were important for the survival of the enslaved and maroon communities, with artisanal fishing being an essential part of the everyday experience of

⁶⁶³ Hulme, "Dominica and Tahiti: Tropical Islands Compared," in *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire*, eds. Felix Driver and Luciana Martins (Chicago University Press, 2005), 7

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

enslavement, allowing them to secure their own food outside of the regulations of the plantation owner.⁶⁶⁶ They were used to determine where plantations were located, because they were beneficial in carrying goods to harbours and provided easy access to water for drinking, washing laundry and bodies and guaranteed fertile soil. The rivers were and continue to be sites of tourism too, with hiking, swimming and resting being popular activities today.

On two occasions, Gauguin depicts a river [Fig. 105 and Fig. 106]. It was an opportunity for him to experiment with the colours of the moving water juxtaposed against the greenery surrounding it. Yet, the river is more than a colour experiment, the river is a site of histories of Black girlhood and violent transgression. In *Avant et Après*, Gauguin writes of a disturbing episode by a river:

On a little island of which I have forgotten the name and the latitude, a bishop exercises his profession of Christian moralisation. He is a randy devil, they say. In spite of the austerity of his heart and his senses, he loved a schoolgirl, paternally, purely. Unfortunately, the Devil sometimes meddles with things that do not concern him, and one fine day our bishop, walking in the woods, caught sight of his beloved child who, naked in the river, was washing her shirt: 'Little Theresa on the river banks / Was washing her shirt in the running water / which was spotted by an accident / that happens to little girls twelve times a year. Hey, he said to himself! but she is nicely ripe. Obviously, she was nicely ripe: just ask the fifteen vigorous young men who that very evening had the first crack at her. On the sixteenth, she baled.'⁶⁶⁷

⁶⁶⁶ Anne M. Galvin, "Jamaican River Waters: Collapsing Time and the Politics of Rural Life-Making," *Water Alternatives* 14, no. 1 (2021), 36; Diane Wallman, and Sandrine Grouard, "Enslaved Laborer and Sharecropper Fishing Practices in 18th-19th Century Martinique: A Zooarchaeological and Ethnozoohistorical Study," *Journal of ethnobiology* 37, no. 3 (2017): 398–420.

⁶⁶⁷ Gauguin, *Avant et Après*, 7.

The girl's ripeness suggests her new fertility and places her at the perfect readiness for sex as she has not yet matured or rotten, but still retains her youthfulness or childlikeness. This brings us into conversation once more with the mango, reinforcing Gauguin's fascination and obsession with the emerging fecundity of the Black woman and his watchfulness over their optimal moment for his consumption. We remember that Hearn described a skin colour as 'the pink ripening of a mango': here the act of spotting and identifying that the girl is ripe is then connected to eating the mango at the right time. The river is then a place that the girl thought was private but is invaded by the 'randy devil' who watches her.⁶⁶⁸ Although this might be a story of the artist's imagination, it is still one that tells us of the significance of the river, as a space in which girls and women come to wash and be washed, as we saw in Chapter Two, but which is invaded by men. It is a sexualised space, of undress and undress, of lurking and doing, and Gauguin is the omnipresent storyteller who knows the events of the girl and men. The river now to us is no longer a peaceful space but one that is sinister, menacing and violently destructive. It is both very immediately dangerous to the young Black girl but also potentially dangerous to the white man with regard the unknown diseases and parasites that live within or around it, which might corrupt the bodies of the foreigner. In his work from Tahiti, such as *The Bathers* (1897) [Fig. 107] and *The Bathers in Tahiti* (1897) [Fig. 108] we see how the river waters lead to female undress and explicit eroticism, a transgression of boundaries and a blurring of female and nature.

In *Martinique Landscape* [Fig. 105] the river takes up almost half of the pictorial space with its water depicted with a palette of pinkish and light blue tones, applied in parallel, short lines, which is set against the green vertical lines of the surroundings. On the left side, the water takes up the

entire foreground, as it runs beyond the edges of the picture. Here, a goat cools in the water and two *porteuse* walk in the far distance behind the animal. As before, Gauguin uses two trees in the foreground, as a compositional device to break up the flattened space and disrupt the otherwise uninterrupted view of the river, creating a sense of movement that is echoed in the flowing water. The top of a house is visible through the green foliage. The river divides up the landscape and we are left with a choice of whether to cross the river (and get wet, like the goat) or to stay put and simply look at the water and the opposite side. The water is so close to us that we could easily bend down and feel it. Gauguin materialises this feeling through his fragmented colours, reflecting the sun reflecting on the water, but also the very materiality of this sensation, of being right there in the landscape. He does not immerse himself in the water, but he renders the materiality of doing so with his spotted brushstrokes and his use of colours, and in doing so, he creates the experience of seeing the river in the landscape. The painting allows the viewer to fully grasp the river and have full access to the land: we can imagine standing there on the riverbank and taking in the river.

Gauguin's depiction of the deep coloured water with patches of colour is illuminated by the Allewaert in her analysis waters, colours and bodies in Edgar Allan Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838), a tale in which we follow the narrator Pym's journeys into the land of Tsalal, where the population, the Tsalalians are something of a composite of the myths of the Arawak, who Columbus encountered in the West Indies, and the African slave.⁶⁶⁹ Here, the indigenous and the Black body have merged to become one monstrous figure that conflates the 'out of time'-ness of the imagined native, with the violence and brutality of the imagined Black. They are simultaneously disappearing natives, and rebellious slaves and maroons. Significantly to our analysis, Pym notes the strange colours of tropical island waters, writing that 'it was not

⁶⁶⁹ Allewaert, *Ariel's Ecology*, 173.

colourless, nor was it of any one uniform colour - presenting to the eye, as it flowed, every possible shade of purple; like the hues of a changeable silk... Upon collecting a basinful... we perceived that the whole mass of liquid was made up of a number of distinct veins, each of a distinct hue; that these veins did not commingle.⁶⁷⁰ Like with Gauguin, the colour here is changeable and shimmering back and forth and becoming different hues in alternative lights. It is both fluid, and a mass, moving and glittering like a shiny piece of 'silk', bringing us back once more to the connectedness of colour and textile as material and embodied manifestations of the colonial experience. The body of water is as moving and heterogenous and slippery as the colonised body appears to the foreigner, and colour becomes a trope to understand and convey that confusion.⁶⁷¹ As such, Gauguin's depiction of the pink river with its changing colour visualises an experience of the natural world as even more pronounced and saturated in the tropics, accentuating the feeling that there is something uneasy, and unreal about the place; the colours of his palette used to capture this feeling

In *On the banks of the River at Martinique* [Fig. 106] Gauguin depicts a scene by the river again. He creates a spatially compressed space in which a dark-skinned woman sits in profile on a riverbank, facing a boy (the same as in the other works) placed on the left side and with a cow behind him. The river is depicted in deep purple and blue colours along horizontal strokes. The woman wears a Madras headscarf and a matching blue dress. Whereas the movement and make-up of the river was the focus of *Martinique Landscape*, here it is the river as a social space of community. It might be easy to understand this work, only in terms of Gauguin's attempt to depict a paradisaical natural setting with docile subjects, yet this would be a one-dimensional reading that

⁶⁷⁰ Edgar Allan Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, ed. Frederick Frank and Diane Long Hoeveler (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2010), 217. Quoted in Allewaert, *Ariel's Ecology*, 179.

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid*, 179.

reads ‘with’ Gauguin, rather than ‘against the grain.’⁶⁷² To complicate and purposefully entangle Gauguin once again, I draw on Kevin Dawson, who argues that waterways in the Caribbean were significant for identity formation and belonging for African-descended peoples because they were ‘exercising muscle memories that provided New World waters with echoes of home.’⁶⁷³ In recreating activities and traditions of their homeland and passing them on, Dawson argues that colonialists did not ‘culturally conquer water.’⁶⁷⁴ Gauguin’s painting can be read as a sign of this freedom felt along the river which, despite being connected to the plantation regime, was transformed to a place of personhood and past histories of which attempts had been made to erase. Dawson shows that enslaved Africans from the coastal regions carried their knowledge of swimming, diving and canoeing with them to the colonies, where they taught their descendants, making them far superior to Europeans who saw the waters as an ‘unnatural space for humans.’⁶⁷⁵ In this work, the viewer is placed close to the river but still at a comfortable distance, whereas the depicted woman sits on the edge of the riverbank and the boy stands by the water. In the different positioning, Gauguin visualises two different perceptions of the river, with the pictorial distance accentuating the foreign and unfamiliarity of dark-coloured water, whereas the figures’ proximity underlines their ease, with the woman wearing the same colour as the water.

In the painting, Gauguin uses a similar palette to *The Mango Trees, Martinique*, a combination of synthetic and natural colours, including lead white, cobalt or ultramarine blue, vermilion, ochre, a tin complex of cochineal, Emerald or Scheele’s Green, as well as zinc yellow mixed or prepared with barium sulphate or chrome yellow mixed with zinc white and barium sulfate and probably

⁶⁷² Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 11.

⁶⁷³ Kevin Dawson, *Undercurrents of Power: Aquatic Culture in the African Diaspora* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 3.

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 4.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 143.

some viridian.⁶⁷⁶ Whereas ochre, lead white and vermilion have been used since antiquity, the other pigments are productions of the chromo-revolution. With their vibrant colours created in the laboratory, rather than drawn from nature, Gauguin depicted his vision of the primitive, using the technological innovations of industry that he supposedly despised and rejected. Megens and his team took a sample of the bright orange dot that Gauguin painted on the right side of the river and found that it was made of a mixture of Vermillion, zinc yellow, lead white, barium sulphate, Emerald Green and a little cobalt blue.⁶⁷⁷ Building on the invention of ‘Scheele’s Green’ in 1775, Emerald Green was an even brighter green and became instantly popular, but it was arsenic and extremely poisonous. By the time of Gauguin’s paintings, using Emerald Green was well-known as being arsenic, with multiple reports on the skin diseases, ulcers and death published. Whether or not Gauguin knew of this is secondary, as his use of Emerald Green suggests the dangers of replicating nature’s colours, and in a sense adds to our conversation of Gauguin’s depiction of the river as one that is unfamiliar and dangerous for him. Whilst Gauguin could not have foreseen the Chlordecone pollution of an entire ecosystem one century later, he picks up on that the waters entail risk, ambiguity and potential lack of knowledge. Thinking back to Chamoiseau’s novel *Texaco* in the first chapter, we remember that Christ was hit by a stone as he entered the neighbourhood, leaving its inhabitants unsure about what to do. Before carrying him to Marie-Sophie, the group took to him to a place in Texaco called Doum, where the ‘black medicine man’ lived.⁶⁷⁸ Of the place, the narrator says, ‘No one ever went there. We’d never stray past these rocks by the river where the laundry was done. Today the river isn’t the same, it’s muddy and is no

⁶⁷⁶ Luc Megens, “Pigment analysis of P. Gauguin, *On the Banks at the River, Martinique, 1887*” (Van Gogh Museum, 2016, unpublished).

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁸ Chamoiseau, *Texaco*, 24.

longer used by anyone for anything.’⁶⁷⁹ The river was a place where people went but had become a place of ‘dead life’, contaminated like the oil company that used to be there.⁶⁸⁰

Looking towards the seabow

From following the rivers through the densely vegetated island interior, we now arrive at the watery expanse that surrounds and encloses the island. We have seen visions of the sea across the thesis, as for example in Lacour’s drawings of fortifications and in Fulconis’ categorisation of submarine life. In this section, I wish to consider Gauguin rendering of the sea as not merely *there* in the background, but a point of ambivalence, one he repeatedly encounters as he moves through the landscape. Luc Vacher has remarked upon that the sea in Gauguin’s painting of Tahiti and the Marquesas as most ‘often consigned to the background.’⁶⁸¹ That is, on the face of it, similar to his Martinican paintings. Where the river and path run through the land and the painting, the sea is always in the background, never taking centre stage in the scene and always at a distance, like we also see in *The Mango Trees, Martinique*. Rather than understanding that as a sign of Gauguin being uninterested in the sea, I will, in what follows, suggest that the sea symbolises the boundary of not only the island but of his knowledge. Before moving further, I want to introduce the significance of the sea in Gauguin’s biography.

As a young boy, Gauguin and his family moved across seas to relocate to Lima in Peru, where his mother’s Spanish family resided. At the age of seventeen, Gauguin continued to explore the world via the sea and began to work as a sea merchant, which took him across South America, the

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid, 24.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid, 24.

⁶⁸¹ Luc Vacher, “The marvel of tropical waters: The invention of an imaginary at the pace of technological advances,” in *Tourism Imaginaries at the Disciplinary Crossroads*, eds. Nelson Graburn and Maria Gravari-Barbas (London: Routledge, 2016), 200.

Pacific and the Mediterranean over five years.⁶⁸² Throughout his life, Gauguin depended on the imperial sea networks to take him around the globe. From Peru to France, from France to Martinique and from France to Polynesia, the shipping routes made it possible for him to move as he pleased and could afford. When he returned to the continent after Martinique, he wrote to Mette of his journey as a healing one: ‘I reached France somehow on a sailing boat and the sea air has strengthened me a little.’⁶⁸³ He writes this at a moment in which the sea is increasingly being thought of as a space of rejuvenation and healthfulness.⁶⁸⁴ Despite having spent many months of his life on a ship, he never depicted the actual journey, neither the people on the boat with him nor the ship, like we saw that Fulconis did.

Nonetheless, Gauguin’s repeated ship journeys still became a part of his artistic personality and the interpretation of his art. Pissarro, sceptical of Gauguin’s talents, saw his time as a sailor as a criticisable trait which was visible in his artworks: ‘[Félix] Bracquemond said that some of his things were good, others not. All in all, he seemed to imply that it was the art of a sailor, a little taken from everything...I made up my mind about him a long time ago, and while I won’t say that he may not change for the better, at the bottom his character is anti-artistic, he is a maker of odds and ends.’⁶⁸⁵ Rather than being anti-artistic, Gauguin understood his act of travelling across seas as central to his opposition against the established artistic tradition, which he saw Pissarro as a part of. Whereas Gauguin enjoyed and utilised his travels to establish himself as an artist, he was discontented when his wife revealed that their son, Emil, was going to be a part of the Navy,

⁶⁸² Childs, *Vanishing Paradise*, 57.

⁶⁸³ Gauguin, *Paul Gauguin: Letters*, 88.

⁶⁸⁴ See Mark Carey, “Inventing Caribbean climates: How Science, Medicine, and Tourism Changed Tropical Weather from Deadly to Healthy,” *Osiris* 26, no. 1 (2011): 129-141; Eric T. Jennings, *Curing the colonizers: Hydrotherapy, climatology, and French colonial spas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Douglas P. Mackaman, *Leisure settings: Bourgeois culture, medicine, and the spa in modern France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁶⁸⁵ Pissarro, *Camille Pissarro: Letters*, 97.

responding to her letter, saying: ‘This notion of making Emil a naval officer has knocked me flat.’⁶⁸⁶ The act of sailing as part of military service, like Lacour’s, was clearly not the same as Gauguin’s sense of his own mode of sailing, which was a means for experimentation and exploration to further his artistic language, whereas Emil’s potential job in the Navy was in service of the French state’s militarism and warfare on sea. Whilst Gauguin had worked as sailor and was well-acquainted with the sea, we see in the next work that the Caribbean Sea, lying beyond the shoreline was one that ultimately remained unknowable, out of his reach.

‘The Burning Beach’

In *Coastal Landscape from Martinique (The Bay of St. Pierre, Martinique)* [Fig. 109] Gauguin paints a view across a beach from a slightly raised perspective. As seen in his other works, he includes a curved, bending tree in the middle of the canvas to disrupt the ‘easy’ undisturbed view. We are closed off from the white sand of the beach and from the women close to the shore. The beach is used for different purposes by different people, from introspective reading to working on a boat. In between the trees, closer to the shore, is a group of women, some carrying trays on their heads, one seated for a break. Whilst Gauguin’s beach appears tranquil and peaceful, it is not the not the paradisiacal beach that would be beginning to be promoted across the in the late nineteenth century and twentieth century of the Caribbean as a new, pleasurable, healthy and luxurious tourist destination.

In order to attract the new wave of European tourists, Thompson explains that a process of clearing out and cleaning up the landscape was necessary to recreate the Caribbean as a touristic site, and which depended on the production of an empty, cultureless, pristine landscape devoid of its past

⁶⁸⁶ Gauguin, *Paul Gauguin: Letters*, 89.

functionality as used by and holding significance to the locals.⁶⁸⁷ To become attractive for its health benefits, the Sea had to be sanitised of its less pleasant historical entanglements with the Middle Passage and black spirituality.⁶⁸⁸ Rather than the Caribbean Sea being connected to Africa, it was now connected to Europe through the pleasurable and optimistic passage of the tourist.

However, what we see in Gauguin's beach scene is not this newly pristine beach cleared from the local inhabitants. Rather he seems to emphasise the beach as a space that was functionally used by its working inhabitants, even whilst constructing an atmosphere of peaceful tranquility to the ebbs and flows of island life. The bay of Saint Pierre, which was the inspiration for the painting, before the eruption of Mount Pelée was a busy hub of commercial activity, as we also see in two postcards (circa 1901) [Fig.110 and 111] that record cargo being imported and exported via the port. Whilst Gauguin denies the industrial parts of Saint Pierre, his painting does suggest that the beach is being used for different forms of labour. Looking very closely at one sketch by Laval, he depicts the ships anchored row by row in the bay in the distance of a scene that shows women labourers carrying fruit across the beach.

In both these landscape scenes, a group of women gather close to the shoreline, whereas Gauguin, and ourselves as viewers, are standing at a distance: we are not part of the beach scene. As we saw earlier, whilst the river cut through the landscape and the pictorial space and leave the reader with a choice of whether to venture into it the water to walk to the other side, the ocean always lies beyond and out of reach, placed in the background of the painting. We also see this in Gauguin's painting *Women Carrying Fruit on the Beach of Anse Turin* (1887) [Fig. 82], where a cluster of women again are positioned down by the ocean, while the foreground is busy with, in this case,

⁶⁸⁷ Thompson, *Eye for the Tropics*, 6, 10, 23, 71-71, 87.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

two women resting with their trays of fruit by their side. In both paintings, the ocean is an inaccessible blue mass in the distance, which the viewer does not have access to. Vacher draws upon Michel Pastoureau, who has argued that it was the pigment of Prussian blue, which became widely available in the eighteenth century, which made it possible for artists to depict ‘aquatic transparencies’, and as such, it was not impossible to paint the ocean differently, it was a choice, a choice which tells us that Gauguin wanted the sea to be a distinctive, one blue colour, impossible to visually access for the viewer.⁶⁸⁹ We remember from the previous chapter the presence of the African and African Atlantic water spirits in the Caribbean consciousness, just one of the many intricate elements of the island’s cultural life that remains elusive and unknown to Gauguin: the ocean carries something unable to be coloured – perhaps the knowledge and the traces of maroonage. With the pictorial beyond-ness of the ocean in both Gauguin’s paintings, we see the literal boundaries of his knowledge: he assumes authority over the land and its vegetation – where they make their way through paths and roads – but fails to access what lies beyond and outside the land mass.

The beach remains a confusing and ambivalent space in the Caribbean imagination even in the tourist age today. ‘The sand sparkled’, Glissant rhetorically writes in the final chapter of his book *Poetics of a Relation* (1997) of ‘The Burning Beach’.¹²⁷ He describes the ‘strolling tourists’ who have made it to an ‘out-of-the-way spot’ in Martinique.⁶⁹⁰ He writes ‘I catch the quivering of this beach by surprise, this beach where visitors exclaim how beautiful! how typical! and I see that it is burning.’¹²⁸ The *mornes* rising behind the beach, ‘the life-preserving land in which the Maroons took refuge’ are connected to the mangrove in the bay of the Lamentin that is being destroyed by

⁶⁸⁹ Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 205-209.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 205.

the construction of ‘major centres of consumption’ and continues to be today with the Choldoorcone poisoning running through the ecosystem.⁶⁹¹ Both Glissant and Gauguin as art-makers have responded creatively to the Caribbean by connecting the land with the sea through their shared questions of movement and captivity, knowledge and confusion, foreign-ness and belonging. As we recall from our analysis of the artist Gumbs’ work in this chapter’s introduction, Gumbs is too inspired by Glissant’s use of the Rhizome, the plant stem which the mangrove plant has, to articulate the multiple interconnected roots and the rootedness of Creole identity and as such, it is not only the beach burning, but also the roots of Creoleness. Like the maroons once did, Glissant wants to escape via the sea,

‘This tie between beach and island, which allows us to take off like *marrons*, *far from* the permanent tourist spots, is thus tied into the dis-appearance-a dis-appearing-in which the depths of the volcano circulate. I have always imagined that these depths navigate a path beneath the sea in the west and the ocean in the east and that, though we are separated, each in our own Plantation, the now green balls and chains have rolled beneath from one island to the next, weaving shared rivers that we shall open up when it is our time and where we shall take our boats. From where I stand I see Saint Lucia on the horizon. Thus, step by step, calling up the expanse, I am able to realize this seabow.’⁶⁹²

Looking over the sea towards Saint Lucia, Glissant is prepared to sail away from Martinique, using the submarine connections and paths between the islands to navigate his way, away from the island flocked by tourists with burning beaches. He, like the maroons, can flee the island and

⁶⁹¹ Ibid, 205.

⁶⁹² Ibid, 206.

refuse, a maroon refusal which Ferdinand describes as ‘borne by the deep conviction that another world is possible.’⁶⁹³ As Glissant stares across the sea, he realises his ability to catch its colours.

Water has steadily but surely moved in ebbs and flows throughout the thesis, and we end here in the last chapter, where we started with Creuzet, at the border between land and sea, between what is known and unknown. We end alongside both Gauguin and Glissant overlooking the sea. ‘Can you hear the sea?’, Creuzet asked us.⁶⁹⁴ A rhetorical question, because the sea is always present, always listening and vibrating as we move through the land, like the sounds of the *Waves* that Gumbs recreated in his installation. As we stand on the beach of Gauguin and look towards the sea, the boundaries of the solid, secure ground under our feet gives way to the ruptures of the Caribbean Sea. And, we notice the seabow, a rainbow of colours striking the waves out there in the open.

⁶⁹³ Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology*, 158.

⁶⁹⁴ Thomas, “Julien Creuzet”

Chapter Conclusion

After four months, Gauguin left Martinique behind and made his way back to continental France, marking the end of the first and last time he would step foot in the Caribbean. Scholars have recognised the importance of Gauguin's Martinican journey and the art works he produced there in how they impacted his ensuing career, with Pope arguing that it prompted him to complete more large figure paintings.⁶⁹⁵ Alastair Wright too understands Gauguin's Martinican period as leading the artist to put a new emphasis on his childhood in Lima, as representative of what Gauguin describe as his 'dual nature, the Indian and the sensitive man.'⁶⁹⁶ Garb agrees, arguing that the trip 'fuelled his sense of himself as an outsider.'⁶⁹⁷ She continues to say that his Martinican experience became a souvenir that he kept replaying and drawing upon until 1889. We see this, for example, in two of the works that Gauguin exhibited at the 1889 show 'Peintures du Groupe Impressioniste et Synthétiste', today referred to as the Volpini exhibition, at the Café des Arts, which ran alongside the Exposition Universelle. Included in a folio of ten, the two of the zincographs he exhibited memorialise his period in Martinique. Produced on yellow paper, the works borrow and repeat through the lens of the two years that had passed. In one of them, *La cigale et fourmi* with the telling subtitle *Souvenir de la Martinique* [Fig. 112], Gauguin remembers the ocean and mangoes from his Martinican period, bringing them together into one scene. In making the print, Gauguin was inspired by Jean de la Fontaine's 1668 fable of the same name, which tells the famous story of a grasshopper who spends the whole summer singing and fails to prepare for the winter ahead. When the colder months arrive, the grasshopper starves and is left with no other option than to ask its neighbouring ant for help, who has been foresighted and planned ahead for

⁶⁹⁵ Pope, *Gauguin and Martinique*, x.

⁶⁹⁶ Wright, "Between the Lycée and the Plantation", 22.

⁶⁹⁷ Garb, "Gauguin and the Opacity of the Other: The Case of Martinique."

the colder months. Gauguin transforms the story of the lazy grasshopper and the hard-working ant into a scene of a group of women on the beach. Here, three women walk with baskets full of produce (the ant), whereas another four women relax (the grasshopper), in no rush to pick the mangoes off the trees in the background. Wayne Andersen argues that it is no coincidence that Gauguin chose one of La Fontaine's tales; they were often used to educate and instruct the enslaved in the French Antilles. Drawing on the natural world, the story's morale of the importance of labour and the dire consequences of being lazy explains and excuses the hard labour regime of the plantation to the enslaved.⁶⁹⁸ Here in the middle of Paris, Gauguin returns to the harvest of mangoes and the beach, postcard scenes from his Martinican journey which will confirm the tropics as an Edenic paradise of available women and fruit, both of which need to be taken care of: the lazy women require the protection of the French state and the mangoes are must harvested from the plantations by human hands so as not to rot and decay, becoming worthless to sell on the market, which needs the overseer of the plantation.

The piece is an example that Gauguin's Martinican journey indeed did have an impact on his career and self-perception. This chapter has not found it necessary to continue to reiterate the long-term importance that the Martinican stay had on his more famous period in Tahiti. Instead, the chapter has hoped to think imaginatively for the first time in a sustained manner about how to understand Gauguin's works of Martinique through close looking, in dialogue with an array of sources. Paying attention to how Gauguin uses nature to make sense of the environment itself, race and his own position in the colony, the chapter has reread his works as showing a maker who is in the process of figuring out: he experimented with colours and shapes, exploring the varieties and

⁶⁹⁸ Wayne Andersen, *Gauguin's Paradise Lost* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1972), 47.

ambiguities of skin colour and the landscape. His writings, an outpouring of his frustrations with his own his bodily decay on the island, and with the decaying the people and places of his works, we see a white maker who is grappling with his first time in the Caribbean, like we saw in his representation of the enigmatic ocean and his use of the mangoes to visualise the racial illegibilities of people on the island. This thesis is the first to place Gauguin in conversation with two other artists who also worked in Martinique in the late nineteenth century and show how he participated in a visual language that emphasised the natural as a source of contemplating the ambiguities of the island.

In Gumbs' video installation displayed on the Centre d'Interprétation Paul Gauguin, he also includes Gauguin's depiction of his own eye in *Self-Portrait Dedicated to Carriere* (1888 or 1889) [Fig.113]. Here, Gauguin paints himself up-close from the shoulders-up, back in Brittany after his trip to Martinique. Behind him, we see through a window a landscape very similar to those that he represented in his Martinican paintings. Green vegetation with a tall slim tree and the contours of a mountain top are hidden behind the glass window, inaccessible, and we are in turn protected from its dangers. With the eyes of his self-portrait projected onto the walls of the museum, Gumbs shows the looming look of Gauguin as persistent and as carrying on in museums, but also as a look that can be deconstructed through collage, in a fashion not dissimilar to this chapter's.

Epilogue

Snapshot 1: *Caravelle*

The former plantation and now tourist destination Habitation Clément lies outside the town of La Francois in Martinique. Accompanying the plantation is the art space Foundation Clément, which like the former plantation is owned by the conglomerate GBH, the distributor for a number of major companies on island, including Carrefour, Renault, Kia and Decathlon. They distribute the food you eat, the car you drive and the equipment you need, just to name a few of necessities they cover, with very little competition from others.⁶⁹⁹ The company is owned by the béké Bernard Hayot, whose wealth and status encapsulates how, despite being a minority (less than 1% of the population) on the island, the *békés* are still the keepers of the largest wealth, and they, as a group, manage to keep their assets close.⁷⁰⁰ Following the 2008 financial crash, the power of the *békés* was unprecedentedly shaken by a 38-day general workers' strike in 2009, which took place across Martinique and Guadeloupe under the slogan "Martinique is ours, not theirs!"⁷⁰¹ Céline Theodose writes that the strike was not only about the high living costs but also a cry from the population to recognise the persistent impact of the island's colonial past in an attempt to take back some of the control.⁷⁰² Yet, the majority of Martinicans continue to be in favour of their nation remaining a legal part of France as a Département d'Outre Mer and also of the European Union as one of its Outmost Regions. Raphaël Confiant, one of the authors behind the Créolité movements with the publication *Éloge de la Créolité* (1989), speaks in an interview of his frustration with Martinique's

⁶⁹⁹ *GMH*, accessed 4th September 2024, <https://www.gbh.fr/fr>. Guy Numa, "Colonial Heritages and Continuities in Guadeloupe and Martinique: An Economic Perspective," In *Euro-Caribbean Societies in the 21st Century* (London: Routledge, 2018), 102, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351248877-8>

⁷⁰⁰ "Nos débuts", *GMH*, accessed 4th September 2024, <https://www.gbh.fr/fr/notre-histoire>; Numa, "Colonial Heritages" 102; Maeve McCusker, "All Creoles Now? Béké Identity and Éloge de La Créolité," *Small Axe: A Journal of Criticism*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2017, 221, <https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-3843974>.

⁷⁰¹ Céline Théodose, "Martinique is ours, not theirs!: Framing Conflicting Identities During the 2009 Protests," *Postcolonial Studies* 22, no. 2, 168–187. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2019.1608797>.

⁷⁰² *Ibid*, 169.

reliance on France. He says: ‘After the decay of the plantation system, banana replaced sugarcane, but it doesn’t provide for a high standard of living. It’s a totally artificial economy [...] France will never leave Martinique and Guadeloupe. France never leaves its colonies unless you wage a war against them.’⁷⁰³

The histories of French colonisation of Martinique and the entangled issues it continues to raise are not immediately apparent in the Foundation Clément, where the organisation’s vast repository of money flattens and polishes these sharp edges. Perhaps, as a gesture of good heart, or as an efficient promotion tool, GBH invests in the art and culture of Martinique through their Clément projects.⁷⁰⁴ The latest artist to exhibit in the spaces of Foundation Clément is the artist Victor Anicet with his solo show, entitled *Opacité & Transparence*.⁷⁰⁵ Two of the works on display are his ceramic sculptures of boats, both entitled *Caravelle* (2010 and 2012) [Fig. 114 and 115]. One of the boats is glazed white to symbolise the deity of Quetzalcoatl [Fig. 114], who reigned over the Toltecs and is said to have returned in a white boat after being exiled. The other boat [Fig. 115] is coloured black with gold details and is a small replica of a much larger one (600 x 300 cm), which stands at the Habitation Saint-Etienne Le Gros Morne in Martinique and is named *La Vision du vaincu* [Fig. 116]. These two boats are thought to resemble the 1492 arrival of Columbus in the Caribbean and stand as memorials of the moment and the histories of extreme violence, displacement and destruction of humans and non-humans it brought about. Yet, the works sit within a complex setting when displayed at the former plantation, which again ultimately returns to its position as a vehicle of profit-making for the owner, as the works attract tourists and serve as

⁷⁰³ Raphaël Confiant and Nigel H. Thomas, “Decolonizing Futures,” *Small Axe Project*, accessed 4th September 2024, <https://smallaxe.net/sxsalon/discussions/decolonizing-futures>.

⁷⁰⁴ *Foundation Clément*, accessed 10th September 2024, <https://www.fondation-clement.org/la-fondation/>.

⁷⁰⁵ *Foundation Clément*, “Victor Anicet: Opacité & Transparence”, accessed 10th September, <https://www.fondation-clement.org/expositions/victor-anicet-signes-et-strates/>.

instruments in conveying the apparent goodwill of the owners in the reparatory power of public art and history, and an understanding of the sensitive histories of the island.

With Anciet's work, we again return to matters of the sea. The thesis began with Creuzet's question 'Do you hear the sea?', and the aquatic in its various forms has bubbled in the background of my thesis, flowing backwards and forwards with Lacour's forts, Fulconis' fish and Gauguin's rivers, the figure of the laundress and the passage of Kala Pani. Sitting in a circle together with the international art press in front of *Cap 110 - Mémorial de l'Anse Cafard*, on the edge of a cliff surrounded by the dangerous waves of the Diamant beach in Martinique, the question seems rhetorical. The sea is always here as you move around the island: it is omnipresent. It is what brings the island closer and connects it to the wider Caribbean, but it is also what brings it apart. As Brathwaite, who I also quoted in the introduction, writes as part of his attention to the fragmentary: 'the unity is submarine / breathing air, our problem is how to study the fragments/whole.'⁷⁰⁶

Snapshot 2: *Jaw bone man (man looking back at the cane fields)*

The contemporary Jamaican artist Leasho Joohnson has in his recent body of work moved away from figuration and towards the abstracted Black body layered with explosive patches of colour. One example of such a piece is his *Jaw bone man (man looking back at the cane fields)* (2019) [Fig. 117], which alludes to the shapes of a Black body with vibrant colours of pinks, orange, yellow and blues emerging from where the head is supposed to be, only slightly making out the teeth of the man, who more closely resembles a monster, made up of painterly material, than a human being. The painting was part of another American exhibition 'Fragments of Epic Memory',

⁷⁰⁶ Brathwaite, "Caribbean Man in Space and Time", 90.

with its title referencing Derek Walcott's book of the same name.⁷⁰⁷ As we have seen throughout the thesis, North American museums consistently gravitate towards the Caribbean. The exhibitions embrace the fragmentary by exhibiting the work of contemporary Caribbean and Caribbean diasporic artists together with nineteenth-century photographs from Art Gallery of Ontario's Montgomery Collection of Caribbean Photographs, using a similar method of juxtaposition sources as this thesis has done.

In an interview, Leasho describes his initial hesitation in making paintings, because it is built on 'a bias for measuring Black excellence in terms of the physical labour of the Black body reproducing images of the Black body on canvas.'⁷⁰⁸ Yet, significantly, he describes how his perspective shifted after he read Michael Taussig's *What Color Is the Sacred?* (2009), a book which, as discussed in the introduction, this thesis is also indebted to.⁷⁰⁹ After reading Taussig's work, Leasho describes that he 'began to see how everything – including the production of colour – has come from the physical labour of those in the global south.'⁷¹⁰ Here, Leasho articulates what this thesis has tried to show and what I exemplified with indigo: how colour is contingent upon the histories of colonialism, and as such, one cannot think of colour without thinking about the labour, enslavement and ecological extraction that has been part of its production. Colour is then a matter and an expression deeply entangled in questions of race, representation, environment, tying artmaking intimately to empire – to the cane field as the artwork suggests.

⁷⁰⁷ "Fragments of Epic Memory," *AGO*, accessed 10th September 2024, <https://ago.ca/exhibitions/fragments-epic-memory>. Derek Walcott, "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory," *The Nobel Prize*, accessed 10th September 2024, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1992/walcott/lecture/>.

⁷⁰⁸ Leasho Johnson, "Leasho Johnson Has His Own Colour Theory", interview by Rianna Jade Parker, *Frieze*, 20th January 2023, <https://www.frieze.com/article/leasho-johnson-interview-2023>.

⁷⁰⁹ Taussig, *What Colour is Sacred?*

⁷¹⁰ Johnson, "Leasho Johnson Has His Own Colour Theory"

We have seen in the work of Lacour, Fulconis and Gauguin how they have each represented the person of colour, as form of management and categorisation, but we also found moments in which the body slips out of control. The artists have been captivated by form, whether that be the contours of the female form or of nature, and this thesis has therefore prioritised forms and figuration. Leasho's abstraction of the figure is an intervention into how the Caribbean has been represented by outsiders and how it has attempted to be defined and fixed on paper, as has also been the case in this thesis. Leasho's work allows for heterogeneity, which places the multiplicity of colour at the centre.

Moving between artists, mediums, time periods and approaches, this thesis has created a patchwork of moments of visibility in Martinique and its diaspora from 1847 to the present day. At the heart of the thesis has been the work of three male artists, Lacour, Fulconis and Gauguin, who individually and jointly represent a visual vocabulary which was pre-occupied with the female body and the natural world and which relied on colour, as a racial marker, as a pigment and as an artistic tool. While their work depicts anything but whiteness, the thesis has shown that the pieces discussed exemplify how whiteness was created and confirmed through these acts of representing the colony and its inhabitants. Their work is a product of their own whiteness, as makers with the bodily privilege of uninhibited mobility and the right to take up any space or perspective they choose, whether that be a fort, a botanical garden or the hut of the formerly enslaved. They fixed race with pen, paint and paper, but as we have seen throughout the thesis, the artists also captured moments of uncertainty and doubt when looking closer. It has demonstrated that the work of amateurs, with and without a prolific artist alongside them, provides a unique insight into the colonial experience had by the ordinary, everyday male imperial career, as small cogs in the wider

machine, who kept it turning and contributed in small, manifold but essential ways. The colony was a space to be grappled with, where observing and depicting it went hand-in-hand with learning and practising artistic skills, experimentation with learning, expertise and control at the heart of both practices. With the three overall approaches of colour making, ecological thinking and listening to silences, the thesis shows the entanglements of non-human and human: of materiality, plantation production, plants, skin colour and race. My study has stayed centred on Martinique throughout, but as shown, this does not mean it is a study that sits in isolation. On the contrary, a focus on Martinique has displayed how the island was and continues to be a crucible for local and global connections of the French Empire. On a broader scale, it illustrates that by looking closely at individual makers, part of the structure of European colonialism, we see how the overall threads of its pursuits were also made up of individual encounters and their many moments of confusion and ambiguity.

Chapter One was an examination of Lacour's album of drawings, a unique insight into how the island of Martinique was experienced by a French Lieutenant. We saw how he captured the uneasy and unstable position of the plantation one year before the 1848 abolition of slavery and the moment of abolition. When depicting figures, he is interested in moments of blur, for example when an enslaved person walks outside of the plantation, or the crowd of bamboula dancers watching the viewer. We also saw how he took on the position of the fort and the bird's eye view, mapping his surroundings on paper, showing the towns with plenty of land to expand into as well as the plantation complex and baptism as a natural part of the landscape, confirming the land as undoubtedly French territory, fashioning himself as a knower of the island. An attention to colour is weaved subtly throughout, through Lacour's use of colour to depict the darkly lush and decaying landscape, and the varied hues of Martinicans' skin colour he sought to make sense of.

In Chapter Two, I looked at another album held in the Archives Territoriales de Martinique, this one created by the drawing teacher Victor Pierre Fulconis while he stayed in the botanical garden in Saint Pierre, a hub of imperial knowledge gathering and production. His album is one that is characterised by his sustained attention to capturing the people and elements of the natural environment on the island. I particularly paid attention to his drawings of fish and positioned them in relation to his drawings of people, because he uses the same visual formula for both, which relies upon an anthropological sensibility of methodological and in-person observation, likely informed by the discipline of anthropology spearheaded by Broca.

In the third and final chapter, I analysed the works that Gauguin, and occasionally his travel-partner Charles Laval, made in and of Martinique. I looked closely at his 'imperial palette', particularly in his representation of the mango motif, which he used as a vehicle to negotiate the multi-racial population and the anxieties it carries. The section was followed by a discussion of Gauguin's rendering of waters and waterways. In paying attention for the first time to two features not previously discussed in scholarship on Gauguin, I show how Gauguin deeply engages with the island as a site of racial ambiguity and confusion and employs nature as a key site in which to make sense of the island and its people.

The three chapters have together shown how colonial image-making was a form of white self-fashioning, where the performance of access and knowledge of the colony over people and nature are visualised, but repeatedly unstable. They demonstrate that the works of the artists are significant contributions to the histories of nineteenth-century artmaking in Martinique and more broadly in the Caribbean in terms of how they visualise authority and knowledge of environment

and people. Looking closely at the work of these three artists, comprising the first sustained studies of two of them, reveals the opportunities that arise when doing a localised study, opening up for multiplicity, heterogeneity and juxtapositions, particularly when using colour as a prism through to which analyse and interpret the works and their attention to materiality, racial codification, pigments and expression.

In the introduction I promised to sketch out in the conclusion why it is necessary for art history to embrace the Caribbean as a subject and as a mode of thinking. The thesis builds upon the work of a long a line of scholars who have understood the region as the nexus of the modern world. It was a site of experimentation in the forcible transportation of enslaved labourers across oceans and the laboratory for forcibly moving enslaved labourers across the Atlantic to work on the world's first forms of industrial factories. This transformed the Caribbean and the European continent by generating new wealth. It was a destination for Columbus, and as a result, it became a home to people from elsewhere, who continue to live with the real-life effects of neo-colonialism. There is no doubt that the Caribbean is interesting to art history as a discipline: it in many ways facilitated and catalysed the enormous wealth of the modern global cities like of Paris and London; the region offers an opportunity to indulge the current disciplinary obsession with 'globalising' and 'decentring' its Eurocentric beginnings; and it encourages the discipline to disentangle the environmental and human impacts of colonialism. Art historians and curators of contemporary art have paid particular attention to the work produced by Caribbean and Caribbean diasporic artists, like this thesis has also done, yet there has been far less attention to the work produced by historical artists.

The Caribbean, defined by its heterogeneity and multiplicity, connected by one sea, can also contribute to how we make and do art history. Conceptualising the Caribbean like Antonio Benitez-Rojo, whose definition I referred to in the introduction, as ‘a transformative plasma that spins calmly in our globe's firmament’, asks us as art historians to consider moments of transit, moments of before and after making, and darkness and lights.⁷¹¹ By rejecting a linear chronology and valuing the meeting between artists of various time and artistic levels and mediums we can adopt a calming spinning that moves and transcends.

Krista Thompson has asked the questions: ‘How would contrapuntal interpretations of colonial archives result in a decolonizing art history? What are the larger stakes of these ways of reading Caribbean visual cultures, and what might they leave unseen?’⁷¹² Invoking the contrapuntal, Thompson emphasises that art historians should play almost musically with layering and contrasting varied melodies on top of one another in a collage-like manner, defined by difference, clash and counterpoint, but synthesised together to produce a cohesive and meaningful harmony. As such, a decolonial art history is then one that relocates, reveals and recovers through the juxtaposition of sources and representations. We are able to reveal the workings of empire through an engagement with and decentring of the archive, in which the making of the white man can still be found. We can recover the narratives and experiences erased in such artmaking by contrapuntally engaging sources that speak with and against each other. As many historians have long since noted, it is a hard task, in many ways almost impossible, to think outside of the metropolitan and see from within the peripheral. As a discipline that has struggled with its Eurocentric origins, it is paramount to keep doing this work, because as we see in the work of

⁷¹¹ Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 4.

⁷¹² Thompson, “‘Call the Police. Call the Army. Call God. And Let’s Have One Helluva Big Story’: On Writing Caribbean Art Histories After Postcoloniality,” *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 12, no. 1 (2008), 169, <https://doi.org/10.1215/-12-1-169>.

Leasho, his use of bright, contrasting colours against Blackness is what makes that Blackness visible and allows us to move beyond whiteness. If we can attempt to move beyond that sticky, resilient whiteness even in a study that is so centred and dependent upon the work of three white men, we can start to see colour as our foundation and as a vocabulary that can productively be used to see what has previously been unseen. Colour in the works examined is doing work; it codifies as well as reveals the insufficiency of those codifications and boundaries. It is the artists' tool and giveaway all at once, for it can accidentally expose the limits in their representation of a world perhaps too vibrant and complex to be captured on paper.

The thesis has shown that attending to the colonial archive pushes the art historian to sit with their own uncertainty and make connections across fields and disciplines to interpret the works. Working with art produced by makers in Martinique shows how the island and the broader region was positioned against the woman of colour and environment and how the colonial was experienced through materiality, and in turn, the artist not only encountered the tropics, but also encountered their own limitations as artists.

Like other longer pieces of written work, this thesis has been an experiment and an attempt to make sense of the material in question. This thesis has shown the fruitful and productive nature of examining works of the archive in dialogue with a range of sources, including contemporary art and writings, enabling cross-pollination between makers. As the first extensive scholarship on Lacour and Fulconis, the thesis also leaves an openness that awaits future contributions from scholars to extend and complicate my analysis and the conclusions made. I have attempted to write a history that looks out for different ways of making connections across media, archives and time periods. Grounding the work in the archival material and extending beyond it, I have tried to move

with and beyond what the artworks tell us and show how the histories discussed, and the ideas cemented in the works of the artists have had far-reaching consequences and echoes that still impact people today.

List of Illustrations



Fig. 1a. Laurent Valère, *Mémorial Cap 110 -Mémorial de l'Anse Cafard*, 1998. Author photograph.



Fig. 1b. Laurent Valère, *Mémorial Cap 110-Mémorial de l'Anse Cafard*, 1998. Author photograph.



Fig. 2a. Julien Creuzet, *Attila cataracte ta source aux pieds des pitons verts finira dans la grande mer gouffre bleu nous nous noyâmes dans les larmes marées de la lune*, April 20 - November 24, 2024, French Pavilion, 60th Venice Biennale, Italy. Courtesy of Julien Creuzet.

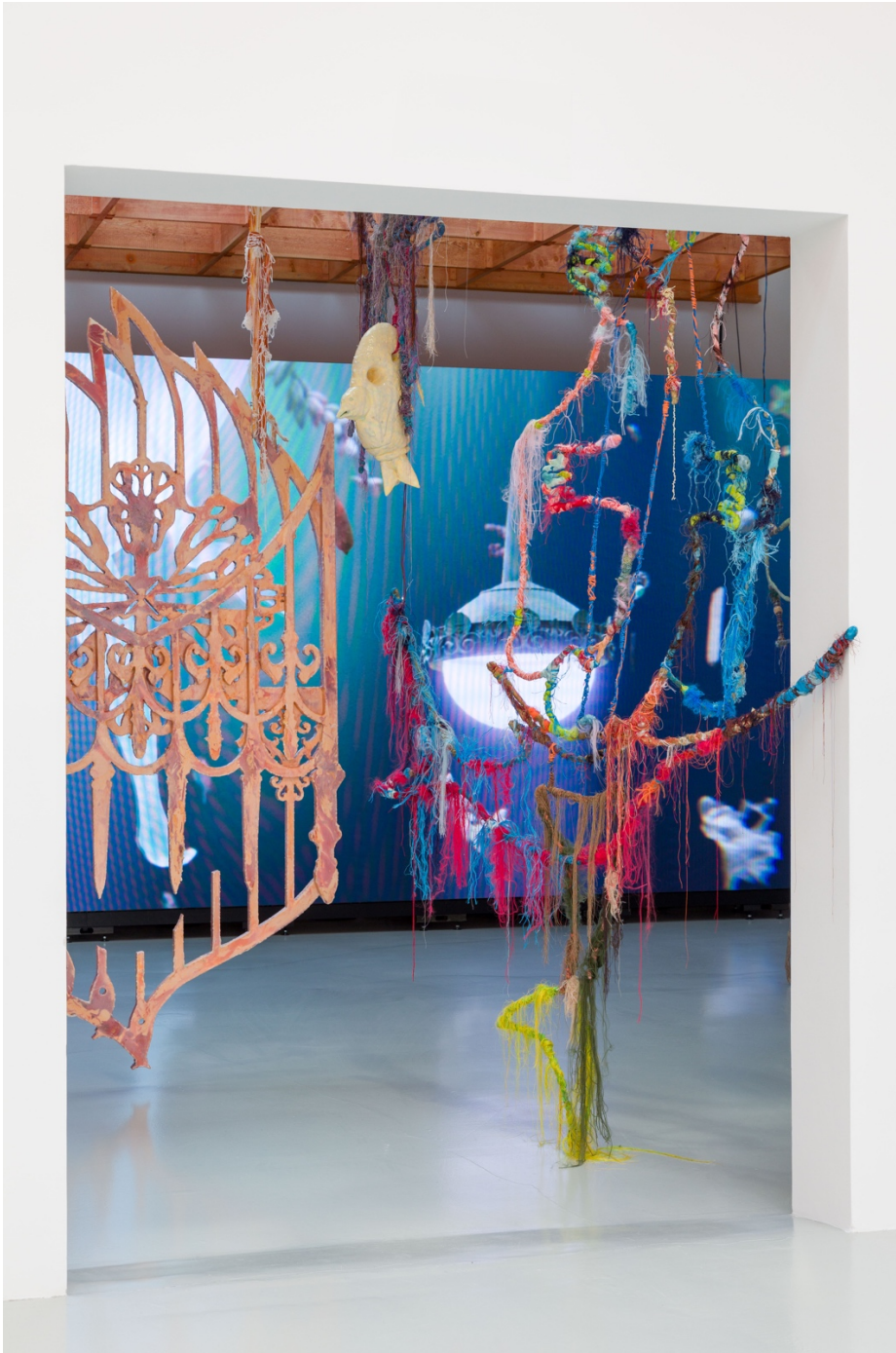


Fig. 2b. Julien Creuzet, *Attila cataracte ta source aux pieds des pitons verts finira dans la grande mer gouffre bleu nous nous noyâmes dans les larmes marées de la lune*, April 20 - November 24, 2024, French Pavilion, 60th Venice Biennale, Italy. Courtesy of Julien Creuzet.



Fig. 2c. Julien Creuzet, *Attila cataracte ta source aux pieds des pitons verts finira dans la grande mer gouffre bleu nous nous noyâmes dans les larmes marées de la lune*, April 20 - November 24, 2024, French Pavilion, 60th Venice Biennale, Italy. Courtesy of Julien Creuzet.

Caribbean Tourism Organization



Fig. 3. Logo of Caribbean Tourism Organization. Source: <https://www.onecaribbean.org>.

Accessed June 2025.

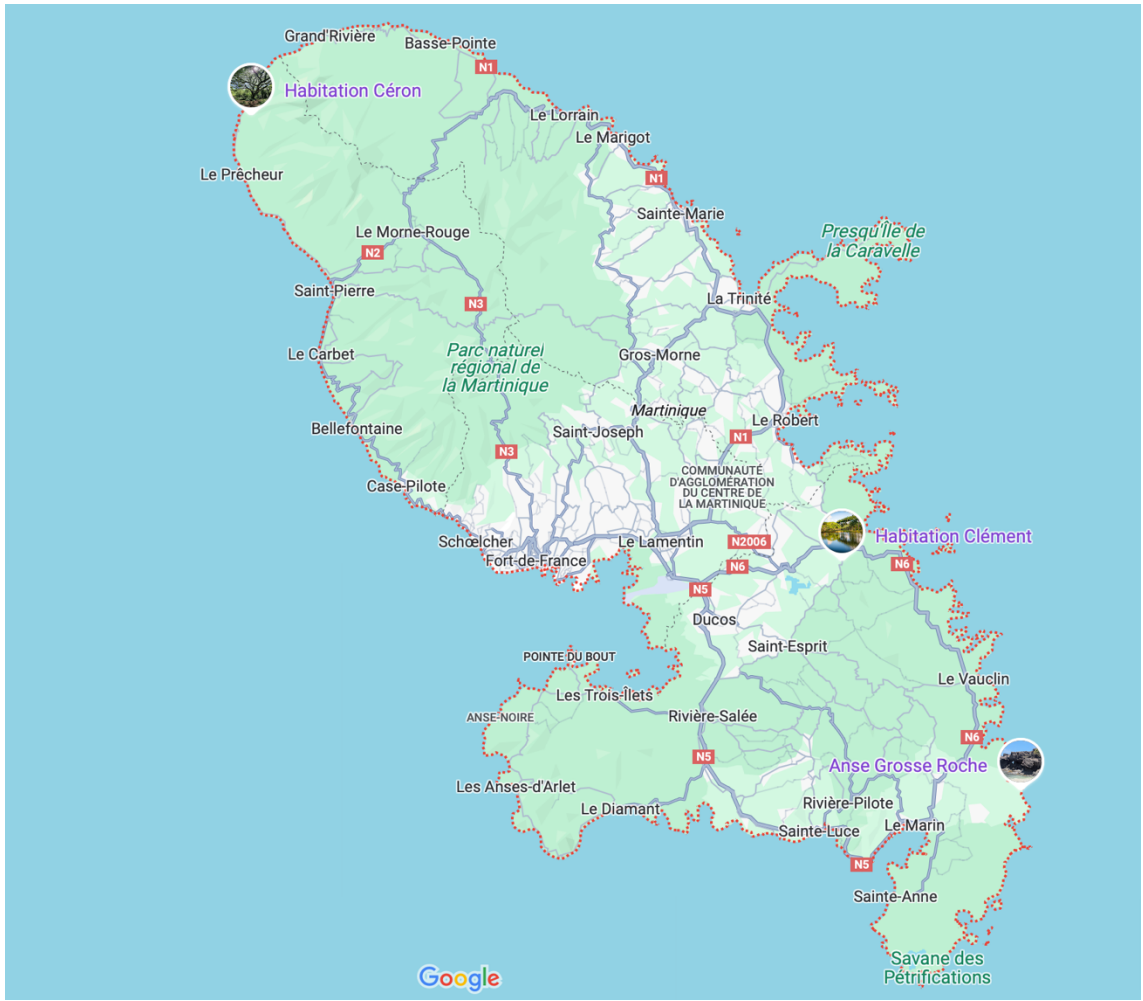


Fig. 4a. Map of Martinique. Generated by Google Maps. Accessed June 2025.

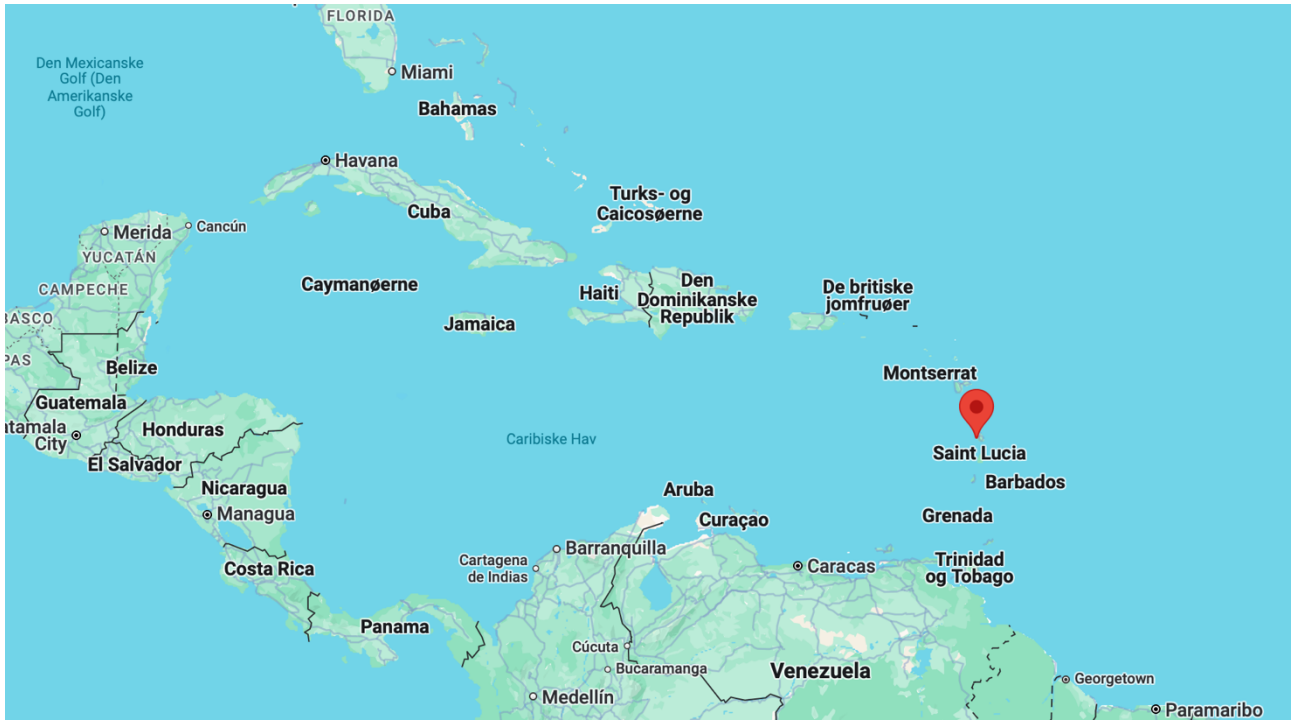


Fig. 4b. Map of the Caribbean. Generated by Google Maps. Accessed June 2025.

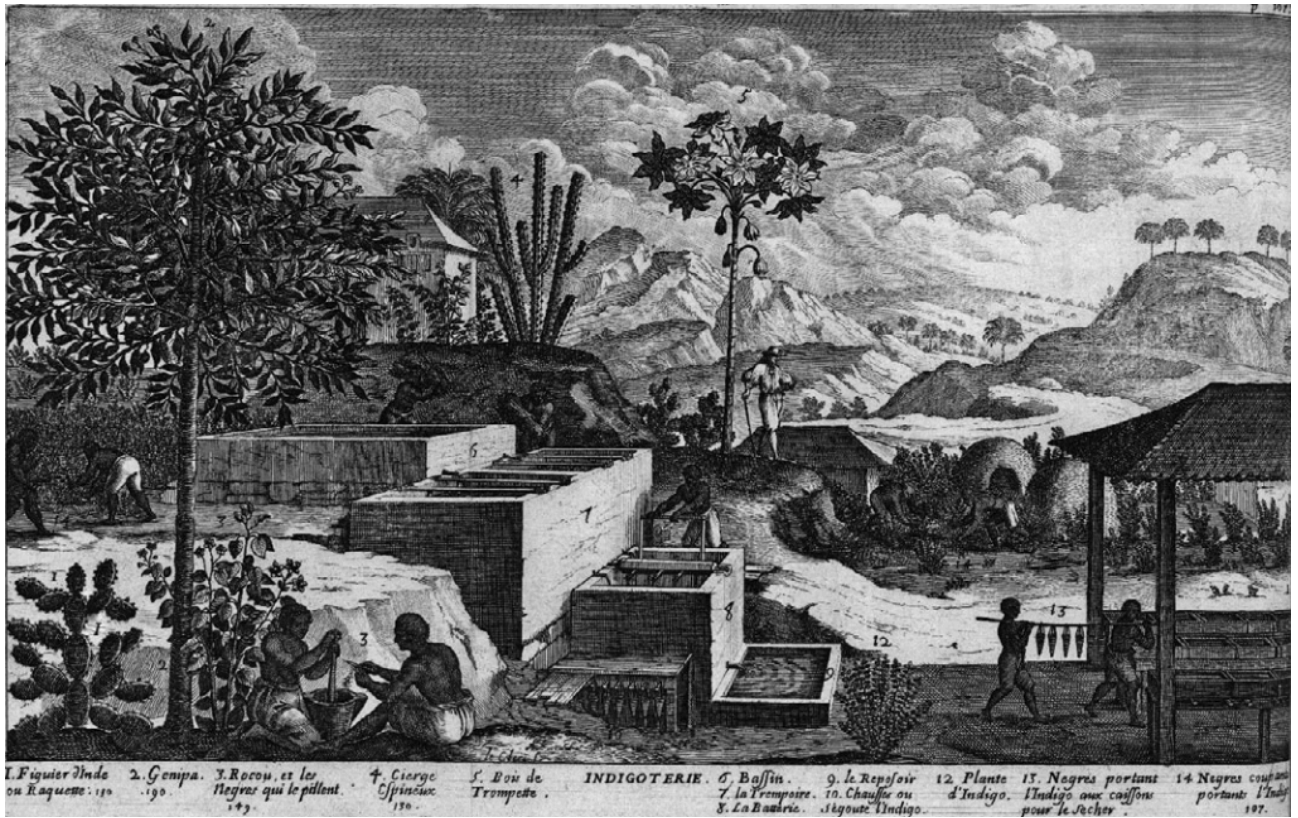


Fig. 5. Jean-Baptiste Labat, *Nouveau Voyages aux isles de l'Amérique: Antilles, 1693-1700* (A la Haye: Chex P. Husson, T. Johnson, P. Gosse, J. van Duren, R. Alberts, and C. Levier, 1724).



Fig 6a. Raphaël Barontini, *We Could Be Heroes*, 19th October - 11th February 2024, Panthéon.

Author photograph.



Fig 6b. Raphaël Barontini, *We Could Be Heroes*, 19th October - 11th February 2024, Panthéon.

Author photograph.



Fig. 6c. Raphaël Barontini, *We Could Be Heroes*, 19th October - 11th February 2024, Panthéon.

Author photograph.



Fig. 7a (right). Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Négresse de Gorée*, 1847, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/13.

Fig. 7b (left). Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Pomme d'Acajou*, 1847, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/13.



Fig. 7c. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Négresse de Gorée*, 1847, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/13.



Fig. 7d. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Pomme d'Acajou*, 1847, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/13.

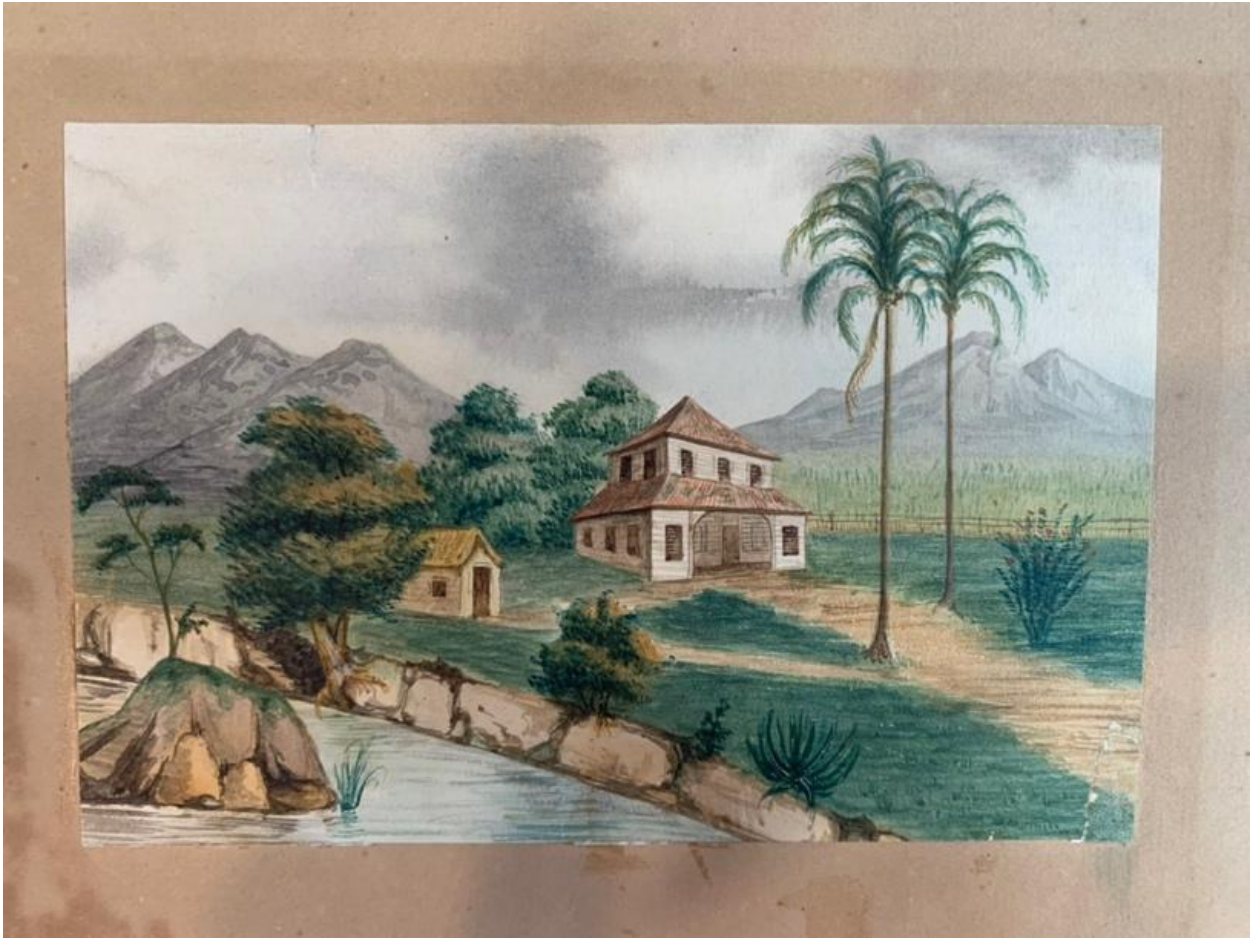


Fig. 8. Jean François Lacour, *Martinique. Habitation coloniale*, 1847, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/4.



Fig. 9. Jenny Prinssay, *View of Martinique*, undated, Oil on panel, 28 x 40 cm,

Musée du Nouveau Monde de La Rochelle.



Fig. 10. Jules Vernet, *Portrait de Mr Lagrange planteur en Martinique*, 1835

Oil on canvas.



Fig. 11. William Clark, 'Slaves cutting the sugar cane' from *Ten Views in the Island of Antigua*, 1823.



Fig. 12. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Lavandière. Nègre d'Habitation*, 1847, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/6.



Fig. 13. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Martinique*. [Deux femmes en costume dont l'une porte un plateau sur la tête], 1847, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/2.



Fig. 14. Fig. 14. Jean François Lacour, *Fort de France (Martinique) Le matin*. Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/17.



Fig. 15. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, Martinique [Femme en tenue républicaine et portant un Drapeau] 1848, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/10.



Fig. 16. Auguste Biard, *L'abolition de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises* (27 avril 1848)

Oil on canvas, 260 x 392 cm. Château de Versailles.



Fig. 17. Eugène Delacroix, *La Liberté guidant le peuple*, 1830, Oil on canvas, 260 cm x 325 cm, Louvre.



Fig 18. Still shot, Axelle Saint-Cirel, 2024 Olympic Games, Paris.



Fig. 19a. .Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Fort-de-France. Ilet Marolles près Fort de France*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/23.



Fig. 19b. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Fort-de-France. Ilet Marolles près Fort de France*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/23.



Fig. 19c. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Fort-de-France. Ilet Marolles près Fort de France*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/23.

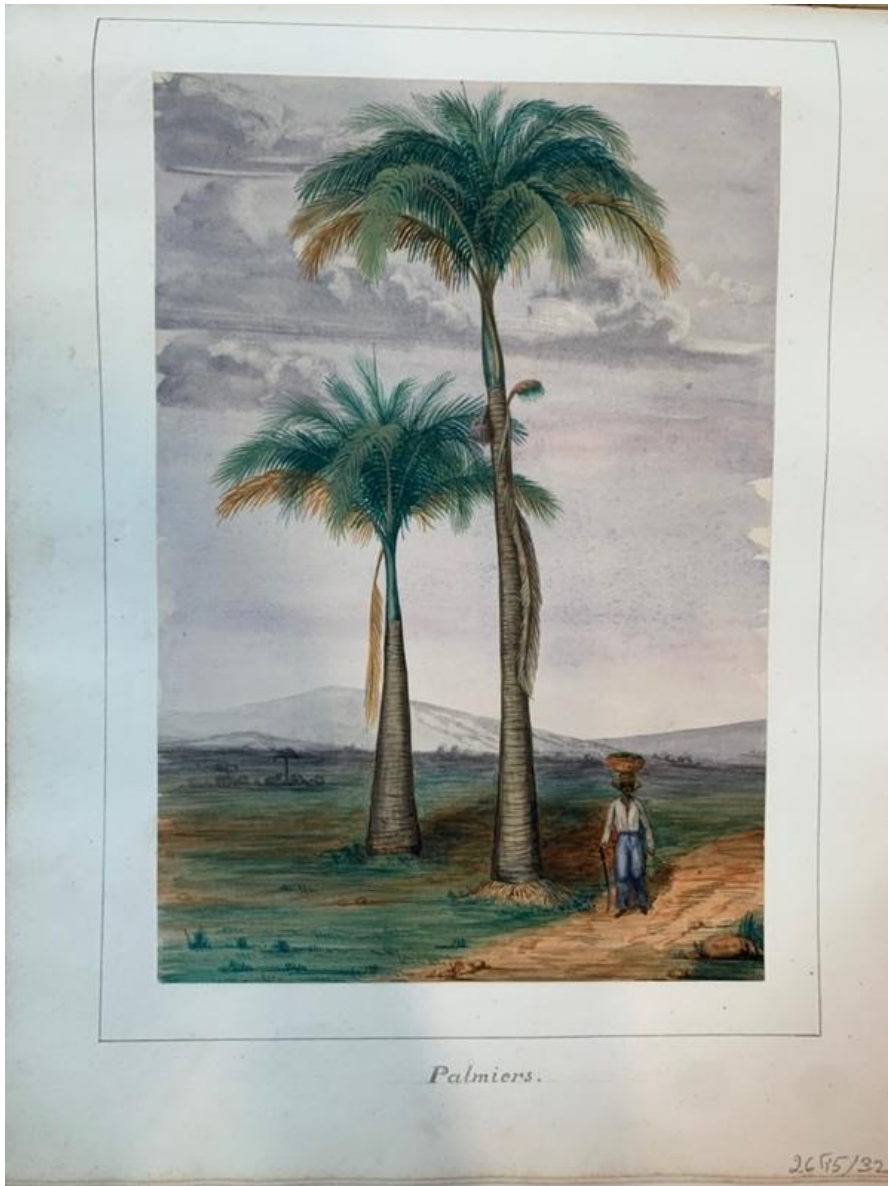


Fig. 20a. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *[Martinique] Palmiers*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/32.



Fig. 20b. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *[Martinique] Palmiers*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/32.



Fig. 20c. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *[Martinique] Palmiers*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/32.

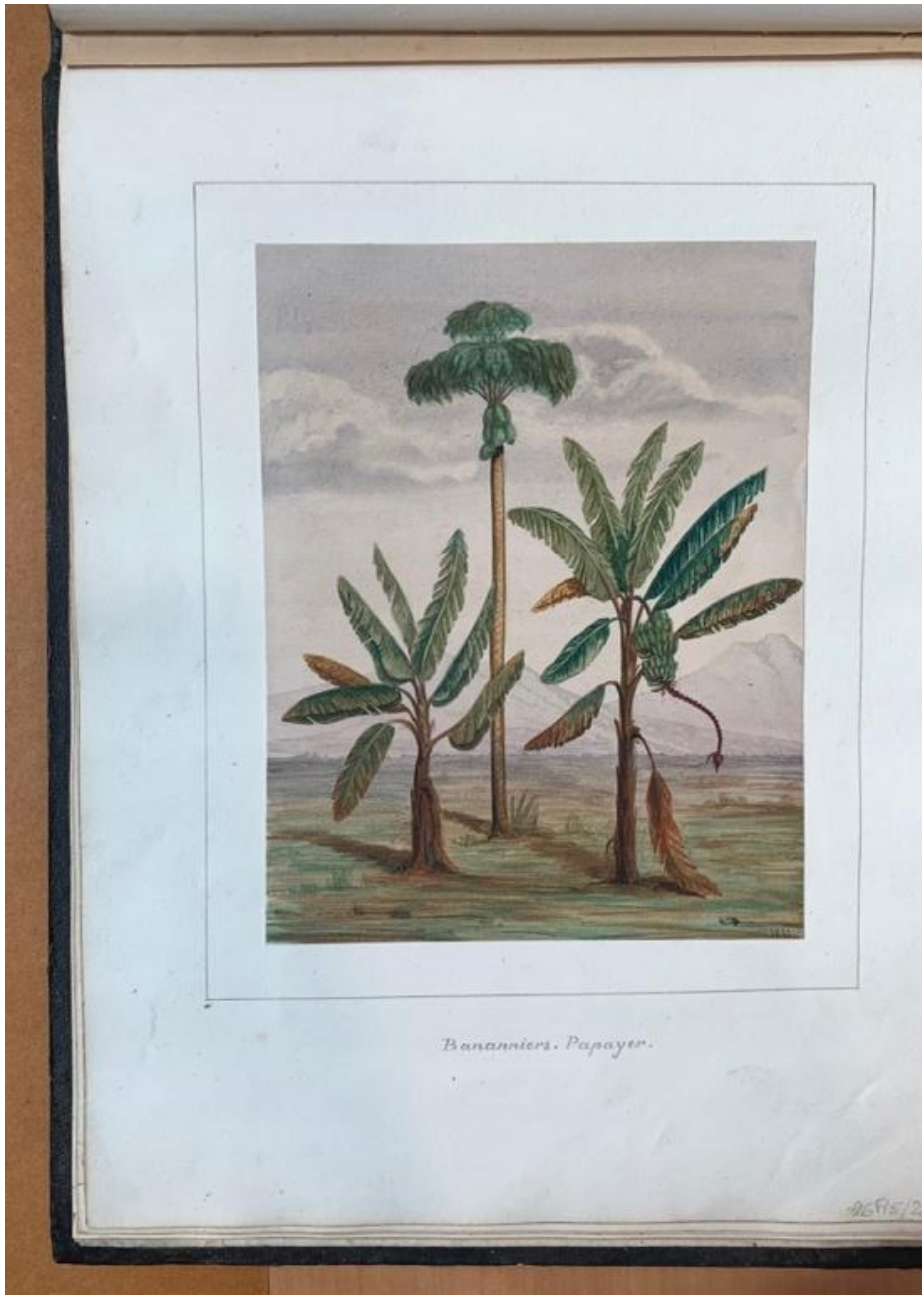


Fig. 21a. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *[Martinique] Bananniers. Papayer*, 1851, Coll.

Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/29.



Fig. 21b. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *[Martinique] Bananniers. Papayer*, 1851, Coll.

Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/29.



Fig. 21c. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, [*Martinique*] *Bananniers. Papayer* ,1851, Coll.

Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/29.



Fig. 22. Jean François Lacour, *Martinique. Fort-de-France. Une Averse en ville*, undated, Coll.

Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/18.



Fig. 23a. Jean Francois Lacour, unsigned, *Canot-paquebot de Fort de France à Saint-Pierre*
1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/25.



Fig. 23b. Detail, Jean Francois Lacour, unsigned, *Canot-paquebot de Fort de France à Saint-Pierre*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/25.



Fig. 24a. Jean François Lacour, *Bamboula* [Scène de danse], 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/16.



Fig. 24b. Detail, Jean François Lacour, *Bamboula* [Scène de danse], 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/16.



Fig. 24c. Detail, Jean François Lacour, *Bamboula* [Scène de danse], 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/16.



Fig. 25. Richard Bridgens, Day & Haghe lithographer, *Negro Dance* [between 1838 and 1845], Library of Congress.

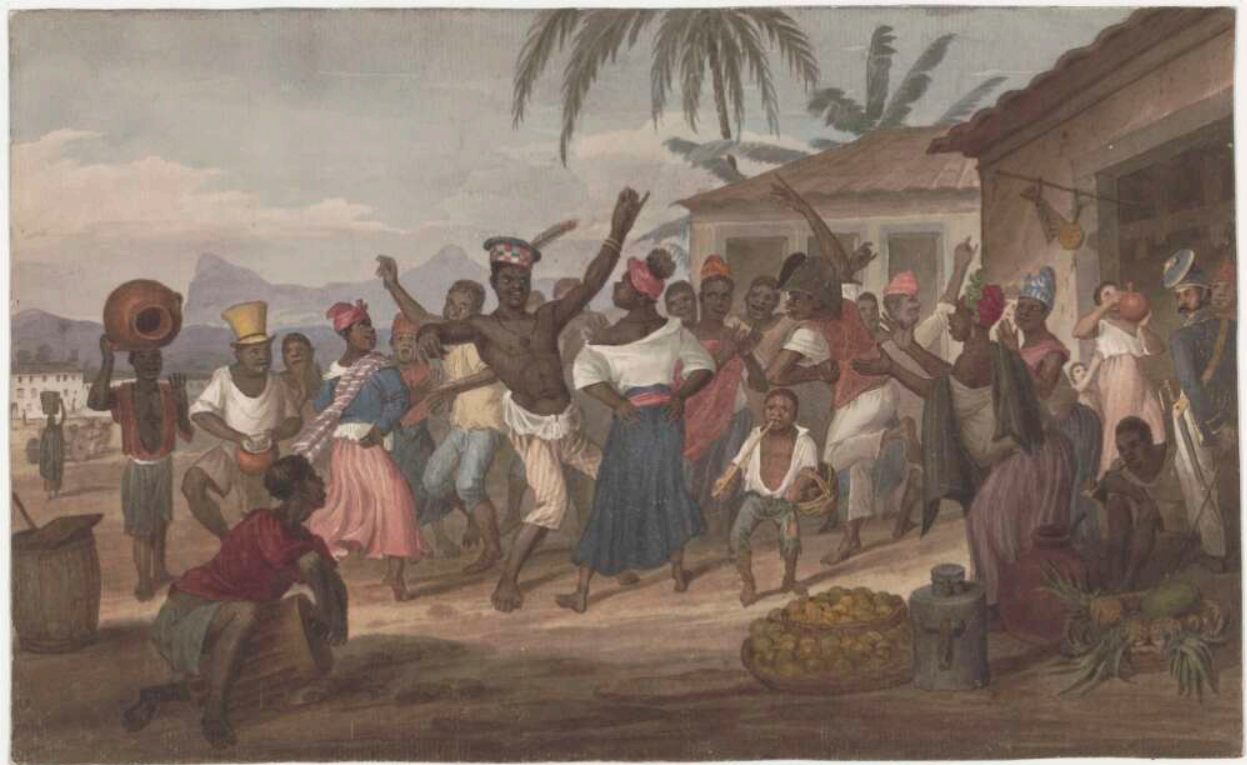


Fig. 26. Auguste Earle, *Negro Fandango at Campo de St. Ann, Rio de Janiero.*

1822, Watercolour, 21 x 34 cm. National Library of Australia.



Fig. 27a. Left, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Martinique. Saint Pierre. Cascade du Jardin des Plantes*, 1847, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/5.

Fig. 27b. Right, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Martinique. Saint Pierre. Cascade du Jardin des Plantes*, 1847, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/5.



Fig. 28. *L'isle de la Martinique* , 1667, 21.6 cm x 30.2 cm. From Du Tertre, Jean Baptiste, *Histoire generale des Antilles habitées par les François ... Tome II*. Published by Thomas Jolly John Brown Carter Library. Image from Angela Sutton and Charlton W. Yingling. "Projections of Desire and Design in Early Modern Caribbean Maps." *The Historical Journal* 63, no 4 (2020): 780. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X19000499>.

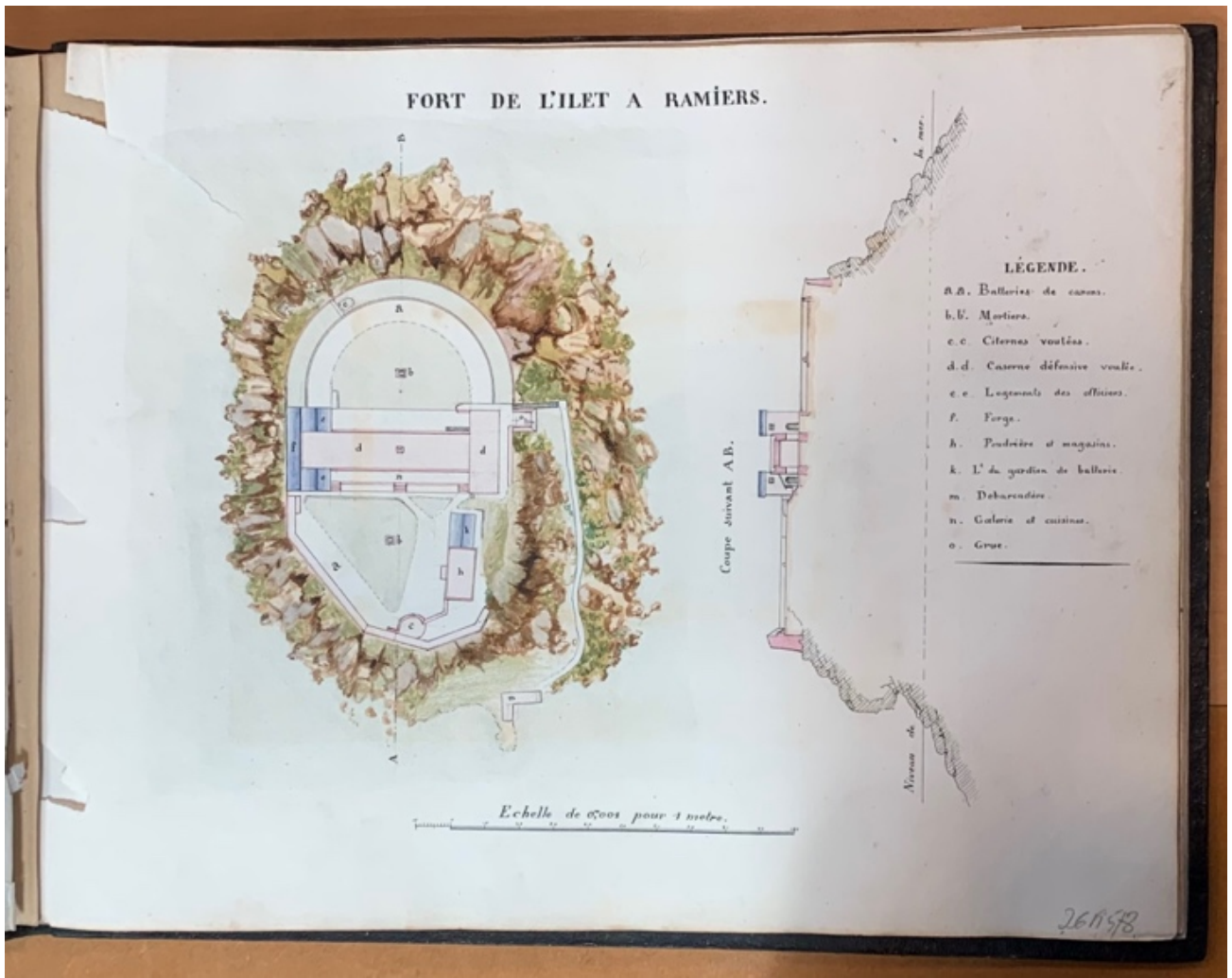


Fig. 29a. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Fort de L'Îlet à Ramiers* [Plan], undated, Coll.

Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/8.

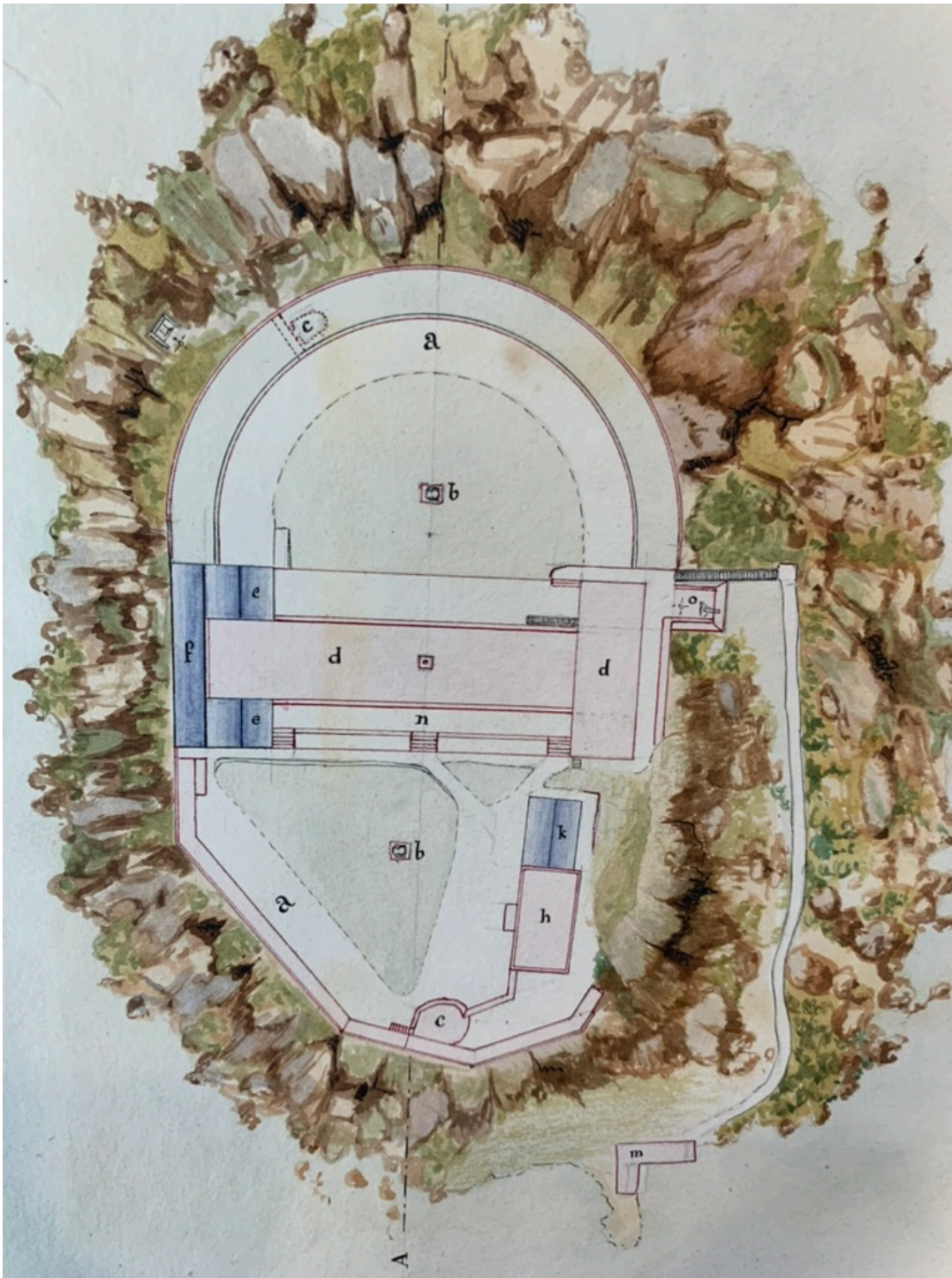


Fig. 29b. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Fort de L'Îlet à Ramiers* [Plan], undated, Coll.

Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/8.

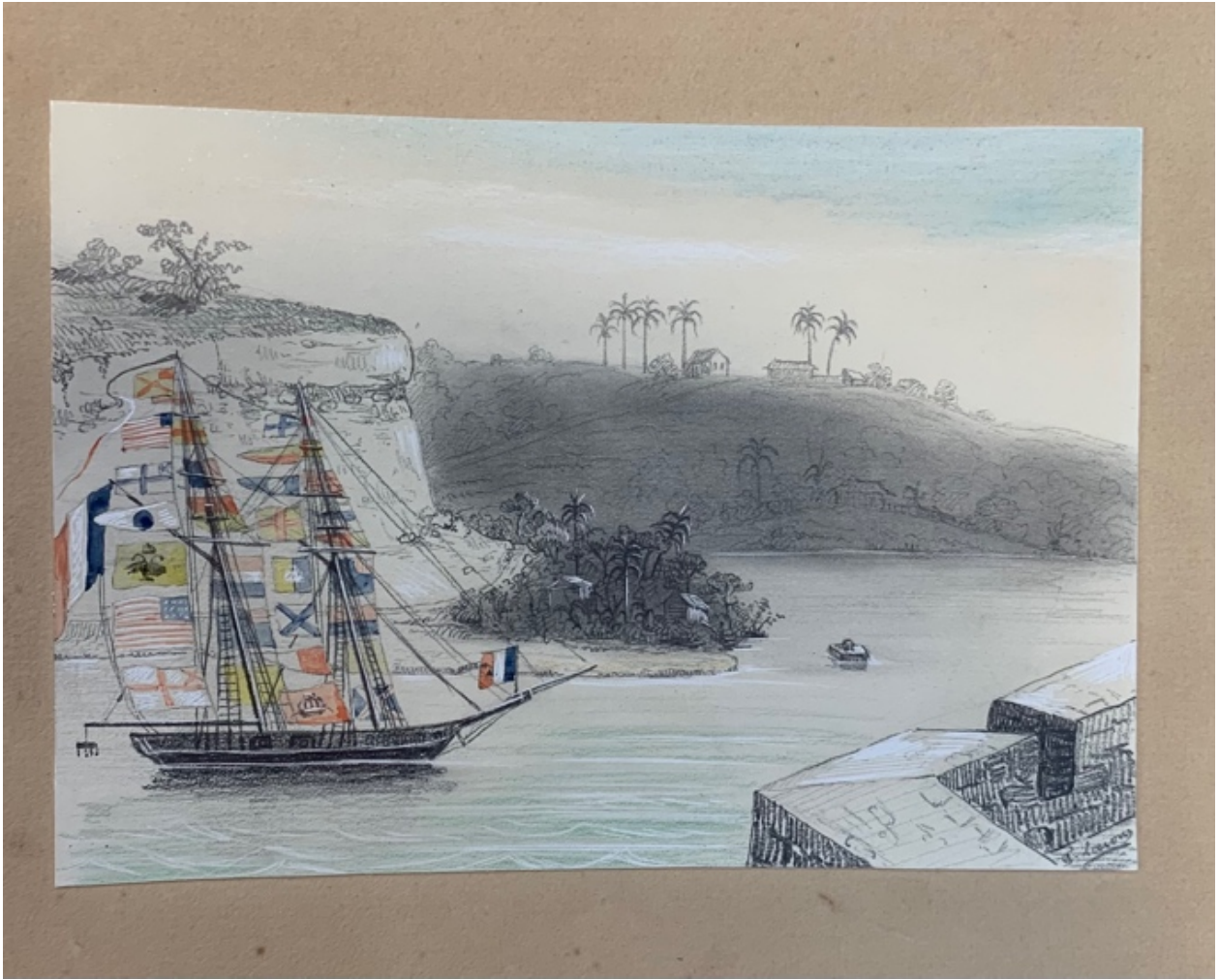


Fig. 30. Jean François Lacour, [Martinique. Paysage et voilier], undated, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/31.

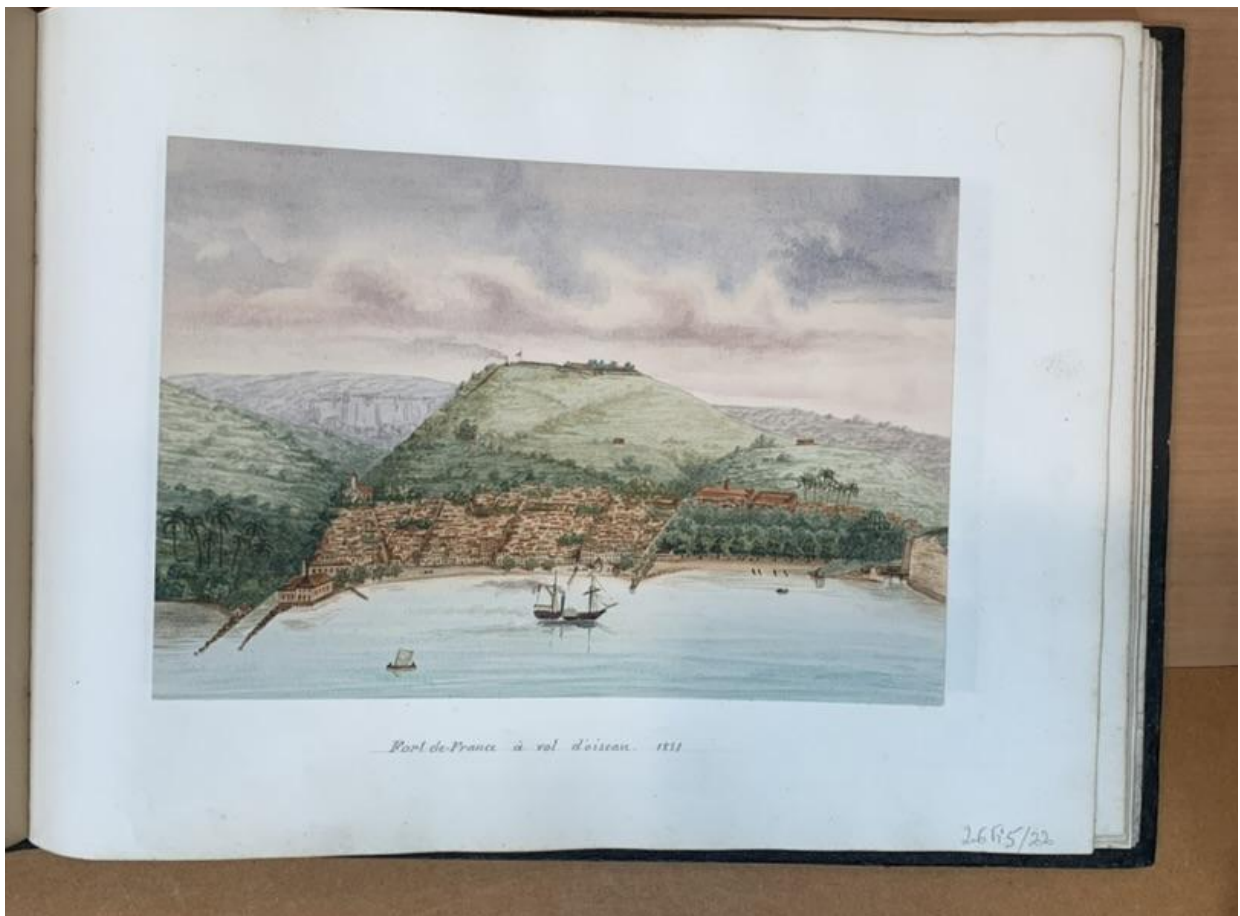


Fig. 31a. Fig. 31a. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Martinique. Fort-de France à vol d'oiseau*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/22.



Fig. 31b. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Martinique. Fort-de France à vol d'oiseau*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/22.



Fig. 31c. Detail, Fig. 31a. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Martinique. Fort-de France à vol d'oiseau*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/22.



Fig. 32a. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Martinique. Baie de Case-Navire*, 1851, Coll.

Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/24.



Fig. 32b. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Martinique. Baie de Case-Navire*, 1851, Coll.

Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/24.



Fig. 33a. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Martinique. Anse Cocotiers. Bellevue*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/26.



Fig. 33b. Detail, Jean François Lacour, unsigned, *Martinique. Anse Cocotiers. Bellevue*, 1851, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/26.



Fig. 34. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, [*Martinique*] *Branche de Cotonnier*, undated, Coll.

Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/27.



Fig. 35. Jean François Lacour, unsigned, [*Martinique*] *Tamarin*, undated, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F15/28.



Fig. 36. George Baxter after James Bartholomew Kidd, *The Ordinance of Baptism, as administered by missionaries connected with the Baptist Missionary Society to 135 persons near Brown's Town, in Jamaica, 1843*, Coloured wood engraving, Victoria and Albert Museum.



Fig. 37. Keith Piper, *The Coloureds' Codex, An Overseers' Guide to Comparative Complexion* 2007, National Museums Liverpool. Author photograph.



Fig. 38. Suchitra Mattai, *An Ocean Cradle*, 2022, Vintage saris, ghungroo bells, and fabric, 304.8 cm x 457.2 cm.



Fig. 39. Victor Fulconis, *Macon et femme indiennes manœuvres*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/2.



Fig. 40a. Le Masurier, *Marché à St Pierre de la Martinique*, 1750, Oil on canvas, 162 cm x 227.5 cm, Cavlet Museum.



Fig. 40b. Detail, Le Masurier, *Marché à St Pierre de la Martinique*, 1750, Oil on canvas, 162 cm x 227.5 cm Cavlet Museum.



Fig. 40c. Detail, *Le Masurier, Marché à St Pierre de la Martinique*, 1750, Oil on canvas, 162 cm x 227.5 cm, Cavlet Museum.



Fig. 41. Victor Fulconis, *Poissons*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/57.



Fig. 42. *Martinique. Jardin botanique de Saint Pierre* [1901], Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 2F113.



Fig. 43. Victor Fulconis, *Serpents tués dans la maison du directeur du jardin des plantes*, 1884 Archives Territoriales de Martinique.



Fig. 44. Victor Fulconis, *Fleurs du Coton*, 1884, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 2F11/23.



Fig. 45. Victor Fulconis, *Corossol*, 1884, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/24.



Fig. 46a. *Martinique. Saint-Pierre. Jardin Botanique*, 1898, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 9FI296.



Fig. 46b. Detail, *Martinique. Saint-Pierre. Jardin Botanique*, 1898, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 9FI296.



Fig. 47. Victor Fulconis, *Mabolo*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/25.



Fig. 48. Victor Fulconis, *Tabernaemontana citrifolia*, *Gingembre* and *Duranta plumieri* (vanillier), 1883,

Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/26.



Fig. 49. Victor Fulconis, *Tulipes et autres variétés*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/47.



Fig. 50. Victor Fulconis, *Roses et autres variétés*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/48.



Fig. 51a. Victor Fulconis, *Equipage d'un navire*, 1882, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/94.



Fig. 51b. Victor Fulconis, *Equipage d'un navire*, 1882, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/95.



Fig. 51c. Victor Fulconis, *Equipage d'un navire*, 1882, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/96.



Fig. 51d. Victor Fulconis, *Equipage d'un navire*, 1882, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/97.



Fig. 52. Victor Fulconis, *Poissons: patate, bourse, juif, vermeil, carangan, souris*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/54.



Fig. 53. Victor Fulconis, *Poissons: patate, chat, maryland*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/58.



Fig. 54a. Victor Fulconis, *Orfi, Patate*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/92.



Fig. 54b. Victor Fulconis, *Poissons: watalibi*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/61.



Fig. 54c. Victor Fulconis, *Torpedo marmorata*, (raie torpille), 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/67.



Fig. 55. Victor Fulconis, *Coquillages*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/56.

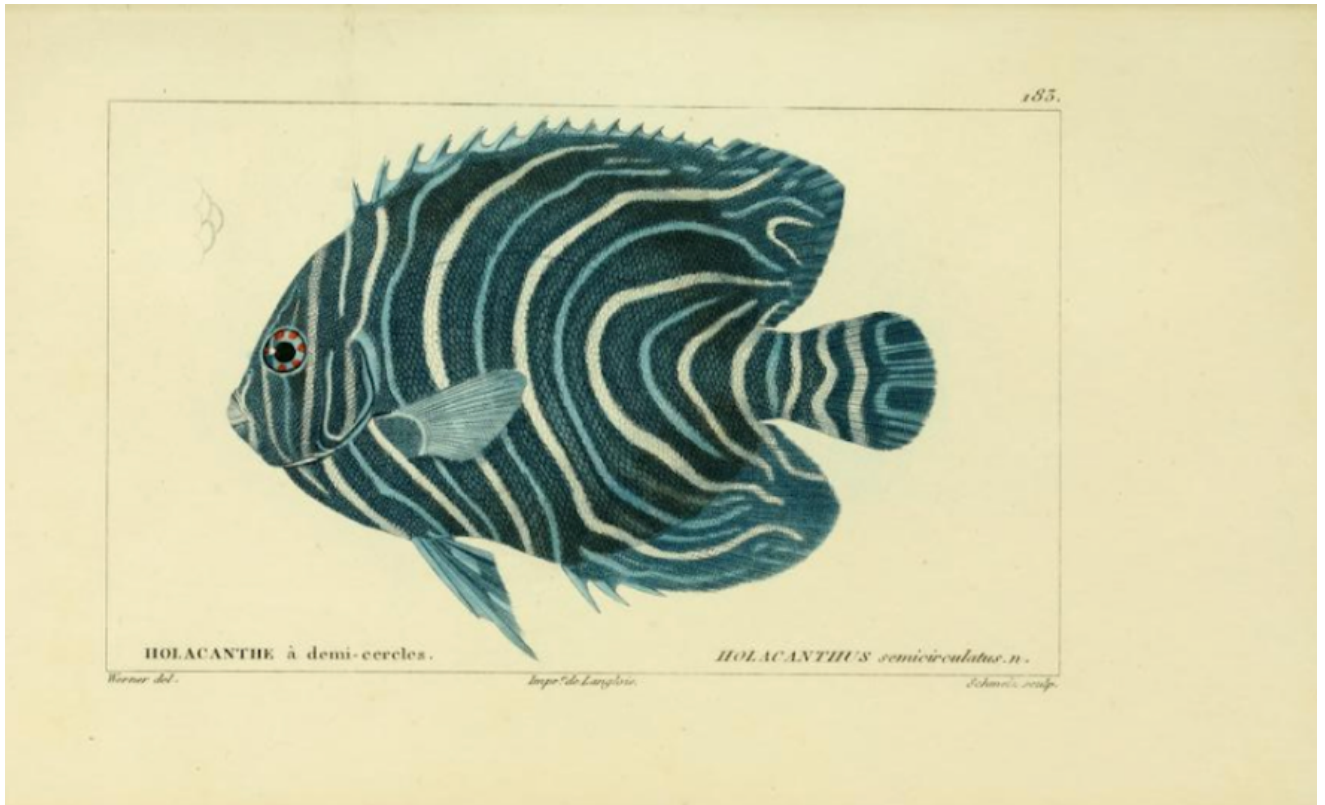


Fig. 56. *Holacanthus à demi-cercles*. In George Cuvier and Achille Valenciennes, *Histoire naturelle des poissons* (Paris: Chez F.G. Levrault, 1828), plate 183.



Fig. 57. *Chaetodon à housse*. In George Cuvier and Achille Valenciennes, *Histoire naturelle des poissons* (Paris: Chez F.G. Levrault, 1828), plate 174.



Fig. 58. Victor Fulconis, *Langouste, trompette, ravet de mer*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/66.



Fig. 59. Victor Fulconis, *Hippolite*, *Zilerone*, *crabe*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/68.



Fig. 60. Victor Fulconis, *(vive) Labrus* - *(coffre) Tetradon*- *(poisson armé) Diodon maculatum*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/81.



Fig. 61. Victor Fulconis, *Raie*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/33.



Fig. 62. *Martinique. Saint Pierre. Lac du Jardin botanique, 1898, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 9FI297.*



Fig. 63. Victor Fulconis, *Femme du peuple ramassant un poisson*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/17.



Fig. 64. Victor Fulconis, *Etoile de mer, oursin (chadron)*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/65.



Fig. 65. Victor Fulconis, *Femme du peuple*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/31.



Fig. 66. Victor Fulconis, *Femmes du peuple*, 1884, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/13.



Fig. 67. Paul Broca, 'Tableau Chromatique'. In *Les Instructions Générales pour Les Recherches et Observations Anthropologiques (Anatomie et Physiologie, 1865, Gallica.*



Fig. 68a. Victor Fulconis, *Indiens Coolies*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/6.



Fig. 68b. Detail, Victor Fulconis, *Indiens Coolies*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/6.



Fig. 69a. Victor Fulconis, *Femmes Indiennes Coolies, Riches et Pauvre*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/8.



Fig. 69b. Detail, Victor Fulconis, *Femmes Indiennes Coolies, Riches et Pauvre*, 1883, Coll.

Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/8.



Fig. 69c. Detail, Victor Fulconis, *Femmes Indiennes Coolies, Riches et Pauvre*, 1883, Coll.

Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/8.



Fig. 70. unknown photographer, *Type et costume de femme indienne*, 1904, 9x14 cm, Musée de l'Homme (Photothèque).



Fig. 71. unknown photographer, *Type et costume de femme indienne*, 1904, 9x14 cm, Musée de l'Homme (Photothèque).



Fig. 72. Victor Fulconis, *Cayenne. Cour intérieure du bague des Îles du Salut*, 1882, Coll.

Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/52.



Fig. 73a. Victor Fulconis, *Rivière du Fort Saint Pierre. Blanchisseuse*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/14.



Fig. 73b. Detail, Victor Fulconis, *Rivière du Fort Saint Pierre. Blanchisseuse*, 1883, Coll.

Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/14.



Fig. 74a. Victor Fulconis, *Blanchisseuse*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/4.



Fig. 74b. Detail, Victor Fulconis, *Blanchisseuse*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/4.



Fig. 74c. Detail, Victor Fulconis, *Blanchisseuse*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/4.



Fig. 74d. Detail, Victor Fulconis, *Blanchisseuse*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/4.



Fig. 75. Victor Fulconis, Femmes du peuple, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/15.



Fig. 76a. Victor Fulconis, *Blanchisseuse*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/11.



Fig. 76b. Detail, Victor Fulconis, *Blanchisseuse*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/11.



Fig. 77a. Victor Fulconis, *Rivière du Fort Saint-Pierre. Femmes au bain*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/9.



Fig. 77b. Detail, Victor Fulconis, *Rivière du Fort Saint-Pierre. Femmes au bain*, 1883, Coll.

Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/9.



Fig. 78. Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Moorish Bath*, 1870, Oil on canvas, 50.8 x 40.6 cm, Museum of Fine Arts Boston.



Fig. 79a. Victor Fulconis, *Rivière du Fort Saint-Pierre. Blanchisseuse*, 1883, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/22.



Fig. 79b. Victor Fulconis, *Rivière du Fort Saint-Pierre. Blanchisseuse*, 1883,

Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 26F11/22.



Fig. 80a. David Gumbs, *CIP Gauguin*, Vimeo, 2022. Video, 02:00 [00:28].

<https://vimeo.com/davidgumbs>.



Fig. 80b. David Gumbs, *CIP Gauguin*, Vimeo, 2022. Video, 02:00 [00:30].

<https://vimeo.com/davidgumbs>.



Fig. 80c. David Gumbs, *CIP Gauguin*, Vimeo, 2022. Video, 02:00 [01:36].

<https://vimeo.com/davidgumbs>



Fig. 80d. David Gumbs, *CIP Gauguin*, Vimeo, 2022. Video, 02:00 [01:36].

<https://vimeo.com/davidgumbs>



Fig. 81. Paul Gauguin, *Coming and Going, Martinique*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 72.5 x 92 cm, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza.



Fig. 82. Paul Gauguin, *Women Carrying Fruit on the Beach of Anse Turin*, 1887, oil on canvas, 46 x 61 cm, Private collection.

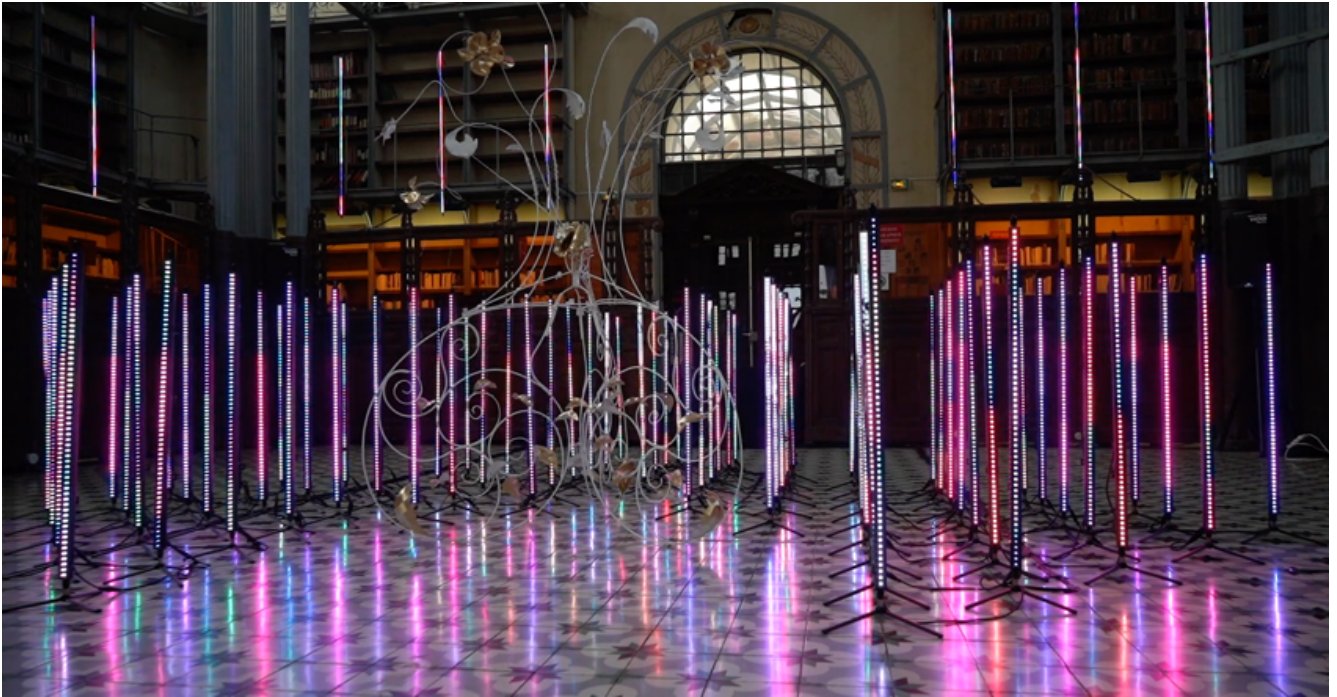


Fig. 83a. David Gumbs, *Waves*, Vimeo, 2021, Video, 02:38 [00:09].

<https://vimeo.com/davidgumbs>



Fig. 83b. David Gumbs, *Waves*, Vimeo, 2021, Video, 02:38 [00:39].

<https://vimeo.com/davidgumbs>

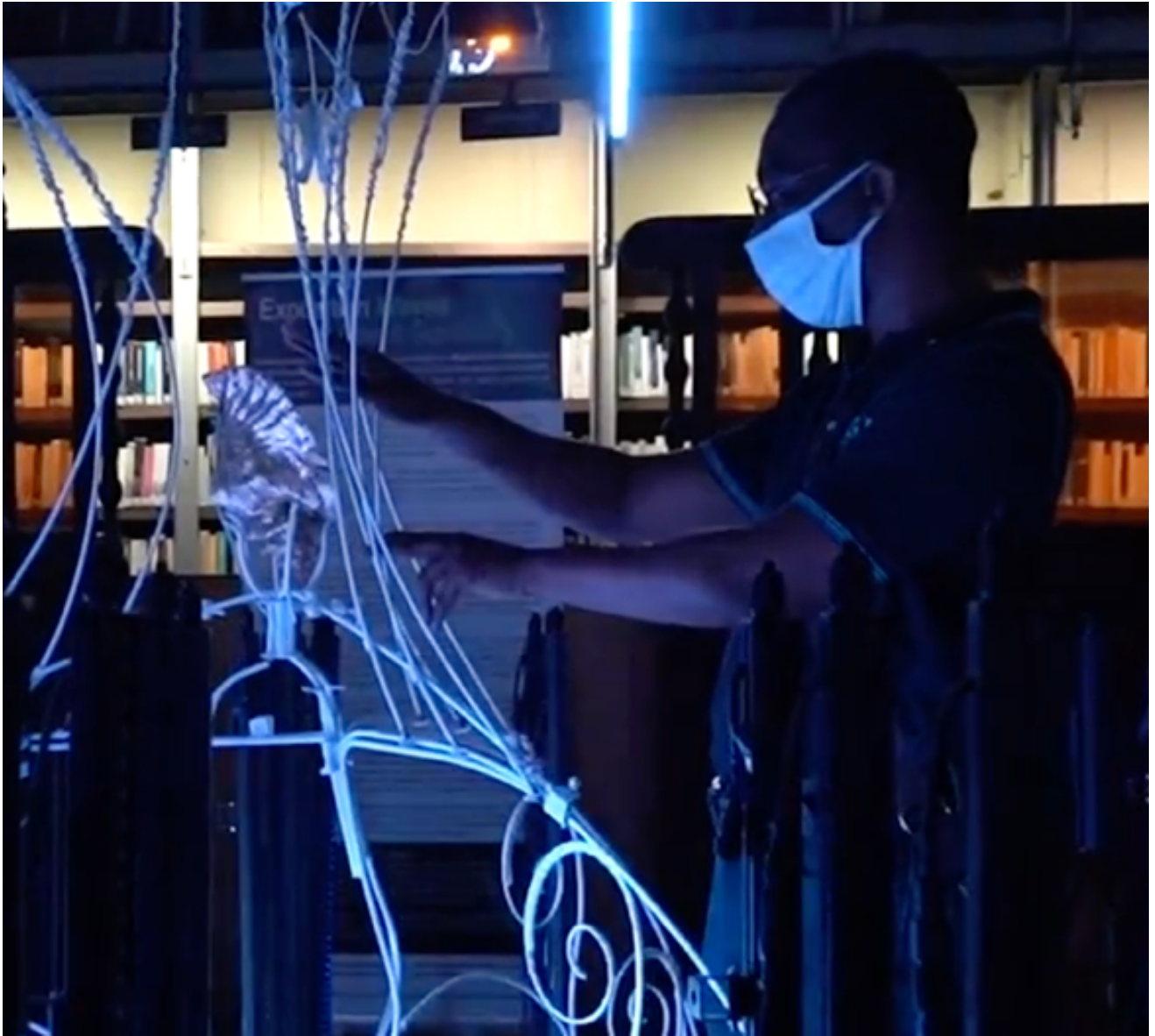


Fig. 83c David Gumbs, *Waves*, Vimeo, 2021, Video, 02:38 [02:13].

<https://vimeo.com/davidgumbs>



Fig. 84. Map of Gauguin's whereabouts in Martinique with corresponding artworks. From Dijk, Maite van and Joost van der Hoeven, eds. *Gauguin and Laval in Martinique* (Bussum: Thoth Publishers, 2018), 81.



Fig. 85. *The Unknown Maroon*, 1967, Albert Mangonès, 3.60 m x 2.40 m, Bronze, Rue Pavee, Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

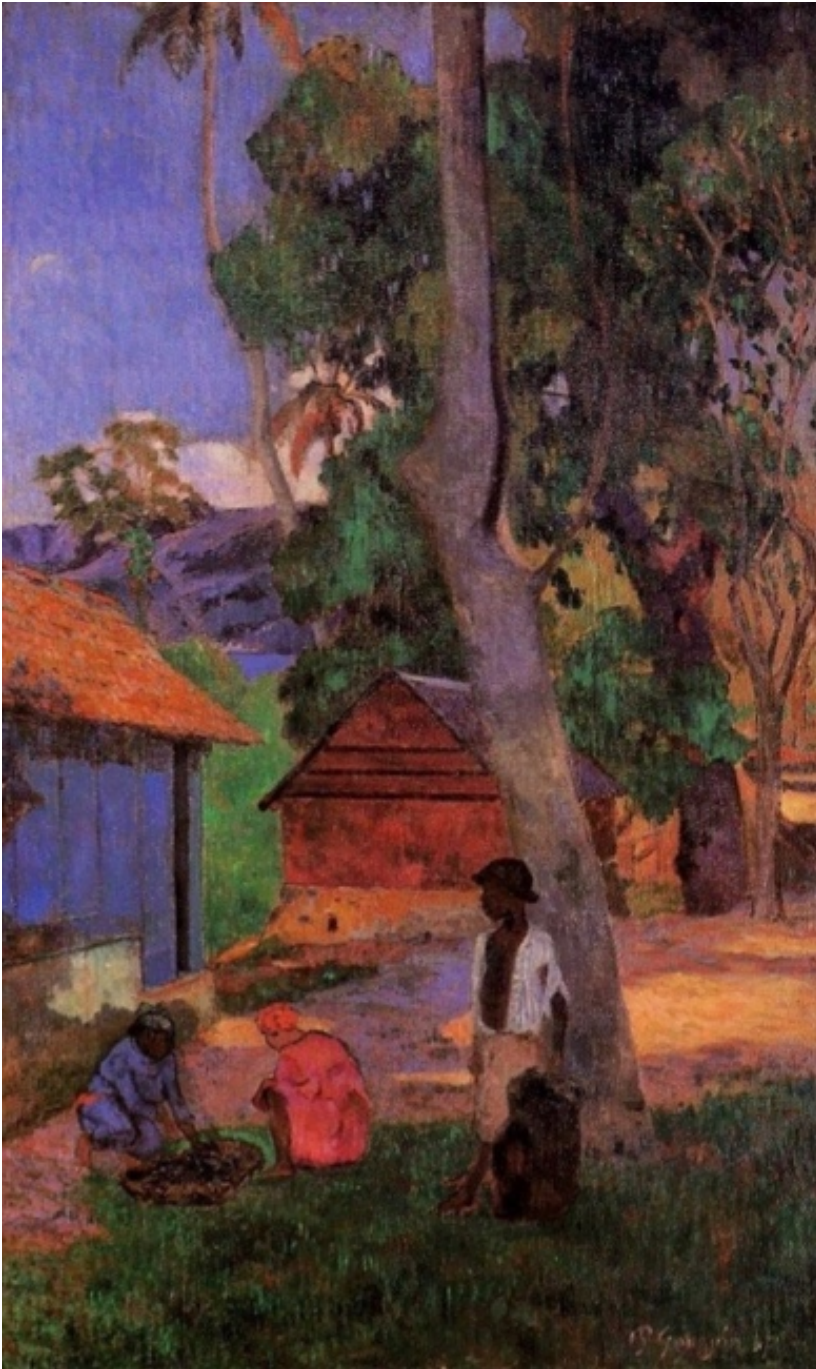


Fig. 86. Paul Gauguin, *Near the Huts*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 90 x 55 cm,
Private Collection.



Fig. 87. Paul Gauguin, *Study*, 1888, Watercolour and charcoal on paper, 11.9 19.5 cm, Private Collection.



Fig. 88a and 88b. Paul Gauguin, *Sitting Martinican Woman in a Green Dress, Viewed from the Back and a Bust of a Martinican in a Red Blouse* (recto). *Sketch of Several Figures, Flowers and Animal* (verso), 1887, Black chalk and watercolour on paper (recto), black chalk, pencil, pen and ink and watercolour on paper (verso), 20.4 x 27 cm, Private Collection.



Fig. 89a and 89b. Paul Gauguin, *Study of Figures (recto), Study of a Woman, Hen and Chicken (verso)*, 1887, Black chalk and watercolour on paper (recto), black chalk on paper (verso), c. 20 x 26 cm, Private Collection.



Fig. 90. Paul Gauguin, *Sketch of Several Figures, Flowers and Animal (recto)*, 1887, Black chalk and watercolour on paper, 20.4 x 26.5 cm, Private Collection.



Fig. 91. Paul Gauguin, *Study of a Martinican Woman*, 1887, Charcoal on paper, 15.6 x 10.8 cm, Musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac.



Fig. 92. Paul Gauguin, *Head of a Man*, 1887, Charcoal on paper, 12 x 13.6 cm,
Musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac.



Fig. 93. Paul Gauguin, *Portrait Studies (verso)*, 1887, Black chalk on paper, c. 16 x 11 cm, Private Collection.

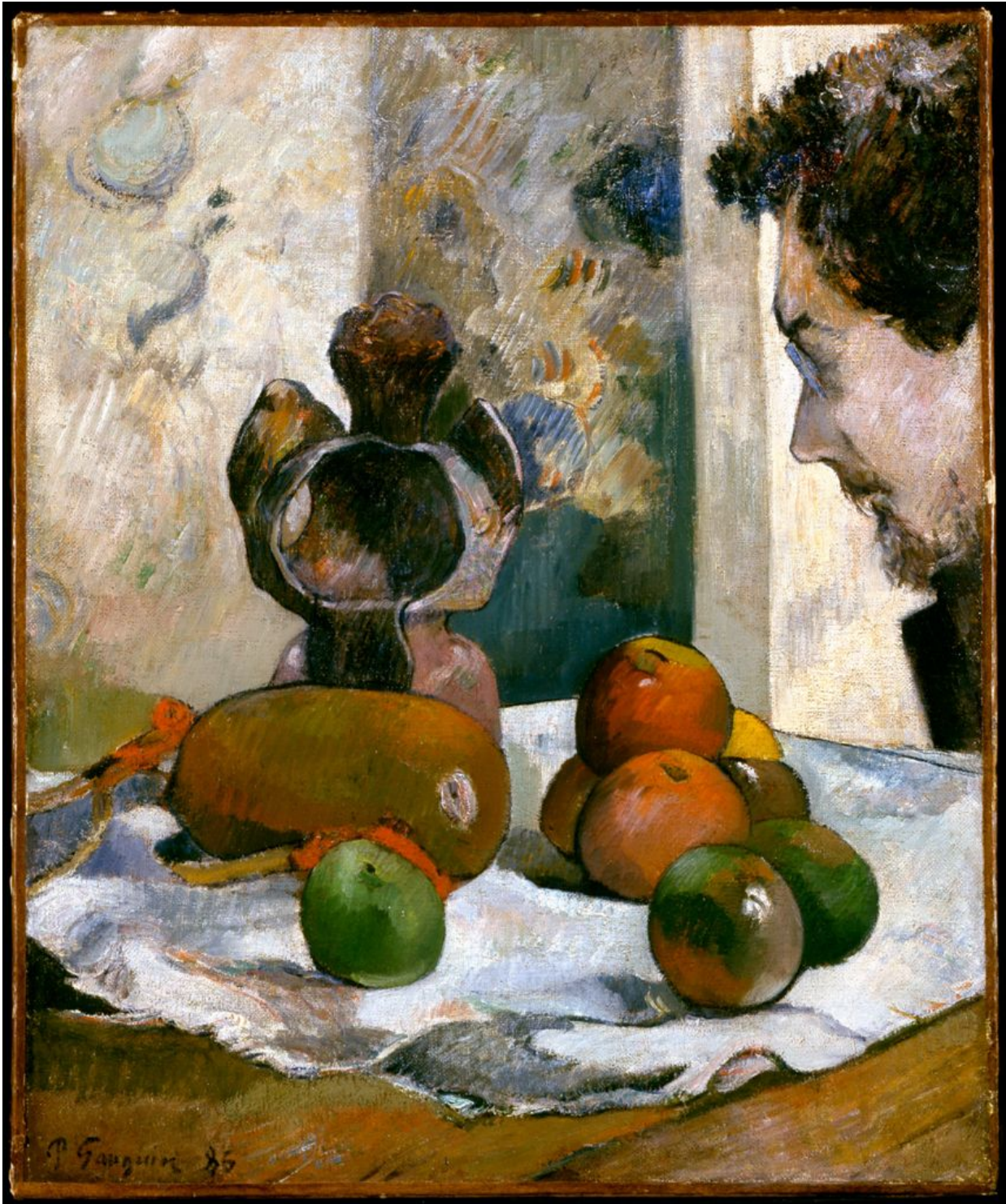


Fig. 94. Paul Gauguin, *Still Life with Profile of Laval*, 1886, Oil on canvas, 46 x 38.1 cm, Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields.



Fig. 95. Paul Gauguin, *Still Life with Mangoes and Hibiscus Flower*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 32.4 x 47 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.



Fig. 96. *Fruits de la Martinique*, c. 1890, Print, Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 15FI8.



Fig. 97. Paul Gauguin, *Two Tahitian Women*, 1889, Oil on canvas, 94 x 72.4 cm,

The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Fig. 98. Paul Gauguin, *Study of a woman from Martinique*, 1887, Coloured chalk on paper, 36 x 27 cm. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.



Fig. 99a. Paul Gauguin, *The Mango Trees, Martinique*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 86 x 116 cm, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.



Fig. 99b. Detail, Paul Gauguin, *The Mango Trees, Martinique*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 86 x 116 cm, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.



Fig. 99c. Detail, Paul Gauguin, *The Mango Trees, Martinique*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 86 x 116 cm, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

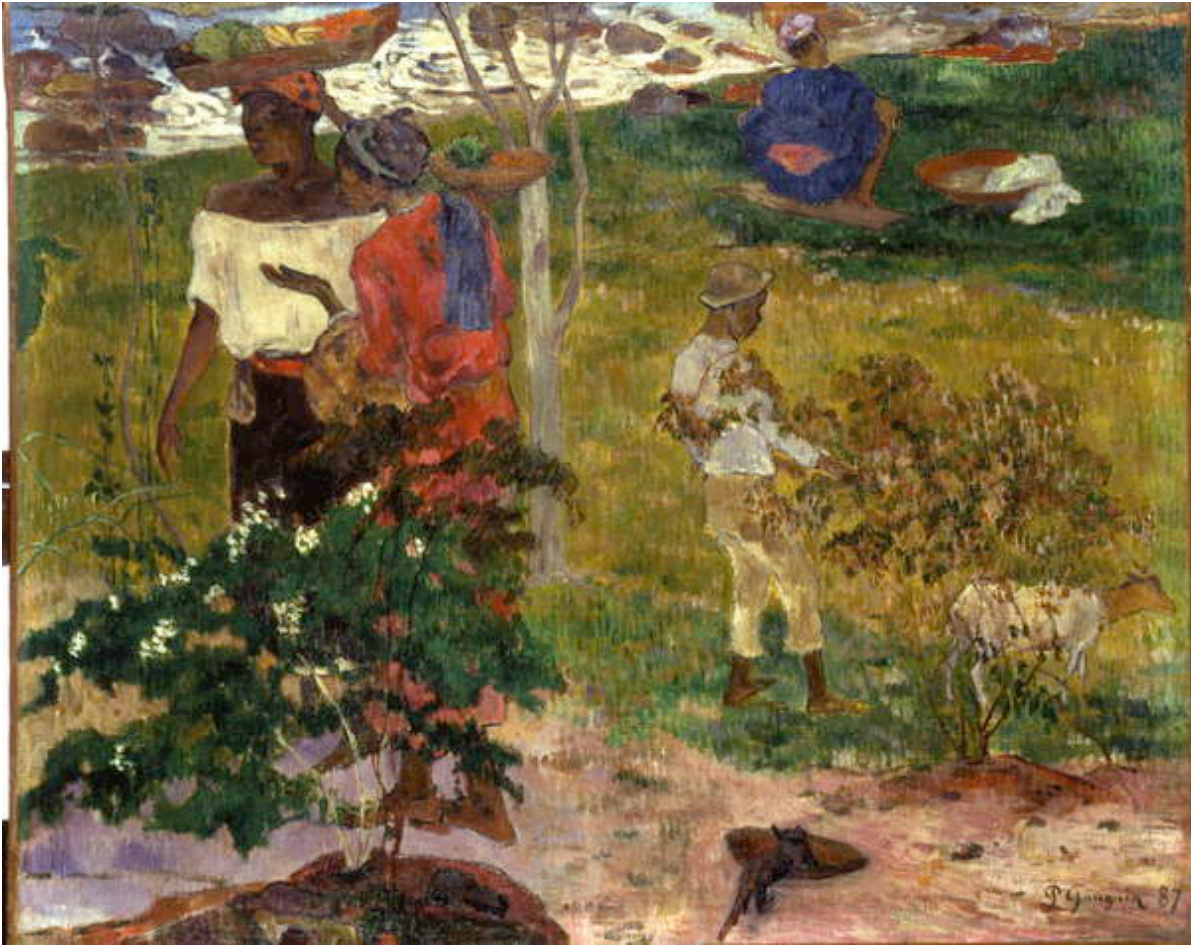


Fig. 100. Paul Gauguin, *Tropical Conversation*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 61 x 67 cm, Private Collection.



Fig. 101. Paul Gauguin, Sketch in the Blue-Grey Sketchbook, Black chalk, gouache and watercolour on paper, 20.3 x 26.7 cm, Private Collection.

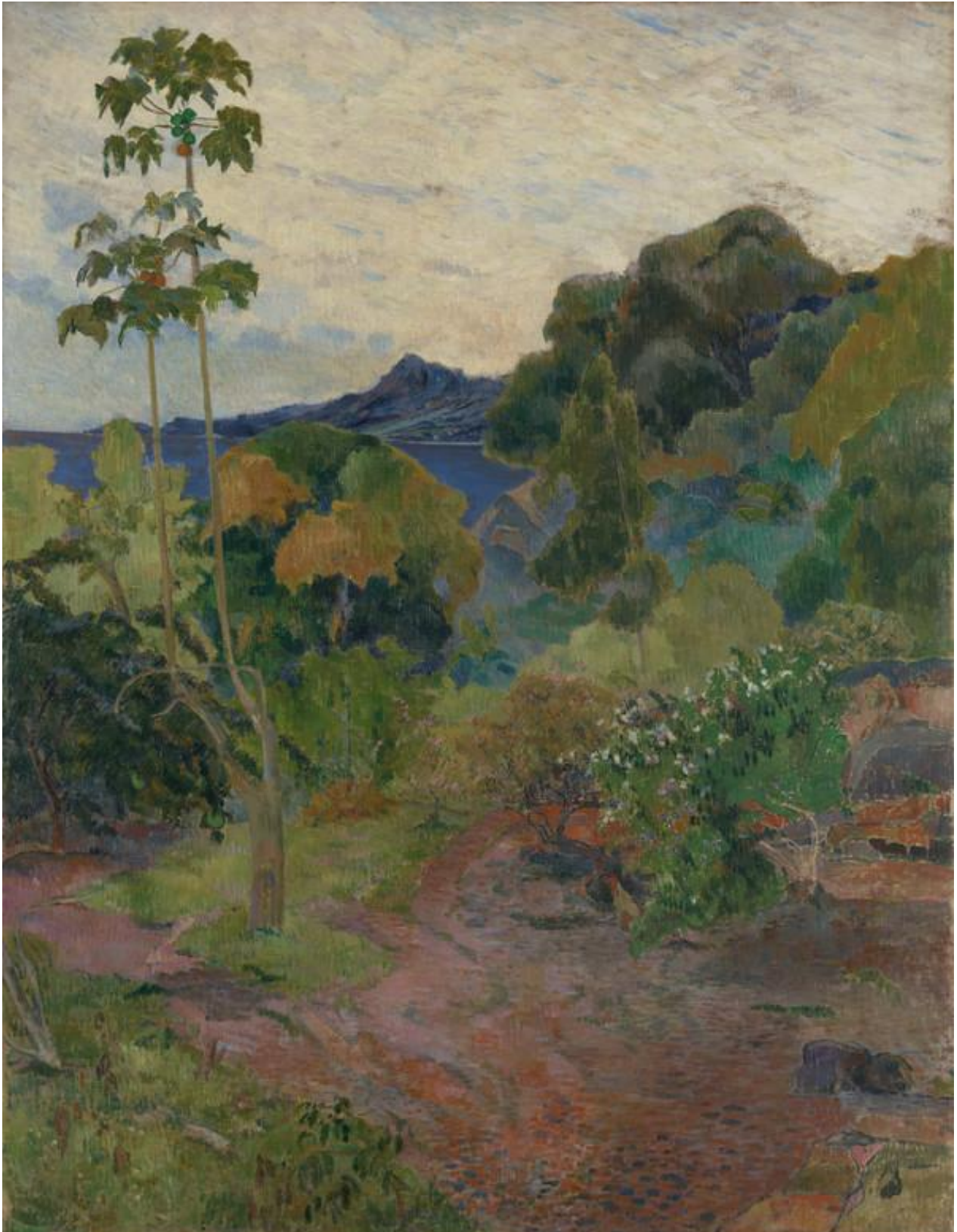


Fig. 102. Paul Gauguin, *Martinique Landscape*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 117.00 x 89.80 cm, National Galleries of Scotland.

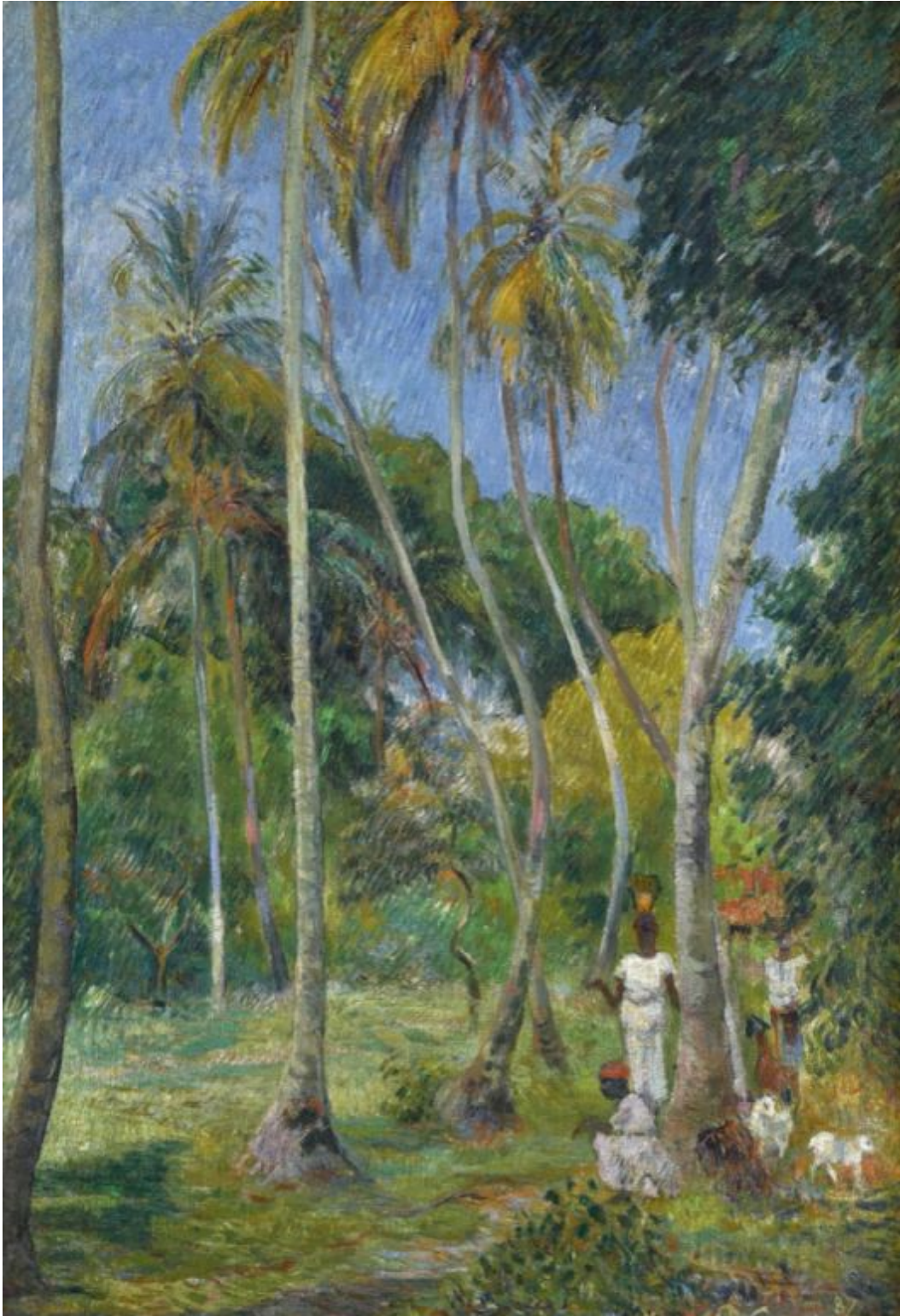


Fig. 103. Paul Gauguin, *Path under the Palms*, 1887, oil on canvas, 90 x 60 cm. Private Collection.



Fig. 104. Charles Laval, *Martinique Landscape*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 91.1 x 71.1 cm

Private collection.



Fig. 105. Paul Gauguin, *Martinique Landscape*, 1887, Oil on canvas, 90 x 115 cm,

Staatsgalerie Moderner Kunst, Munich, Germany.



Fig. 106. Paul Gauguin, *On the banks of the River at Martinique*, Oil on canvas, 54.5 x 65.5 cm, Van Gogh Museum.



Fig. 107. Paul Gauguin, *The Bathers*, 1897, Oil on canvas, 60.4 x 93.4 cm, National Gallery of Art.



Fig. 108. Paul Gauguin, *Bathers in Tahiti*, 1897, Oil on sacking, 73.3 x 91.8 cm, The Barber Institute of Fine Arts.



Fig. 109. Paul Gauguin, *Coastal Landscape from Martinique (The Bay of St. Pierre, Martinique)*

Oil on canvas, 50 x 90 cm, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek.

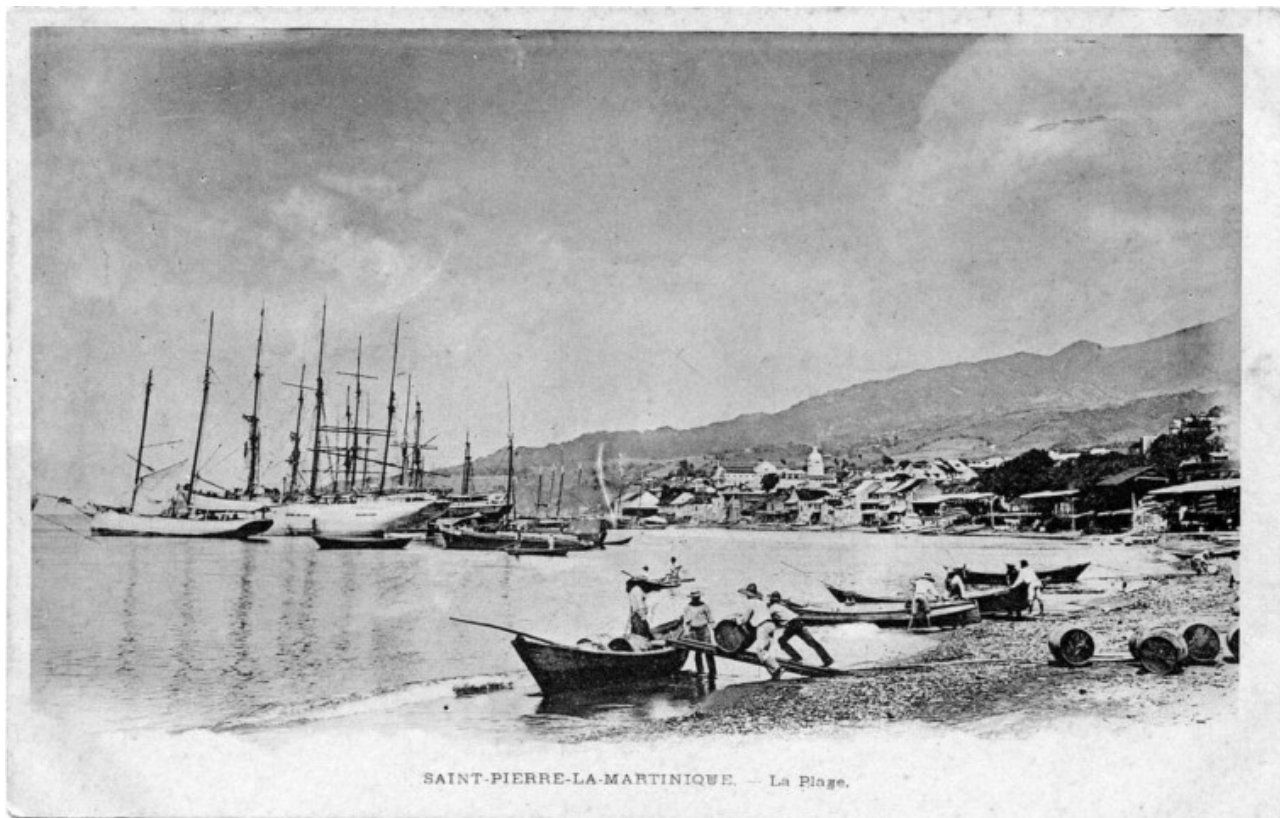


Fig. 110. Fig. 110. *Saint-Pierre. La Martinique. La plage.* Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 2F131.



Fig. 111. Fig. 111. *Plage et warfs de débarquement* [1901]. Coll. Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique – Archives – 2FI332



Fig. 112. Paul Gauguin, *Les Cigales et les Fourmis*. *Souvenir de la Martinique*, 1889, Zincograph on yellow paper, image (borderline); 19.8 x 26.1 cm., Sheet: 50 x 65 cm, Museum of Fine Arts Boston.

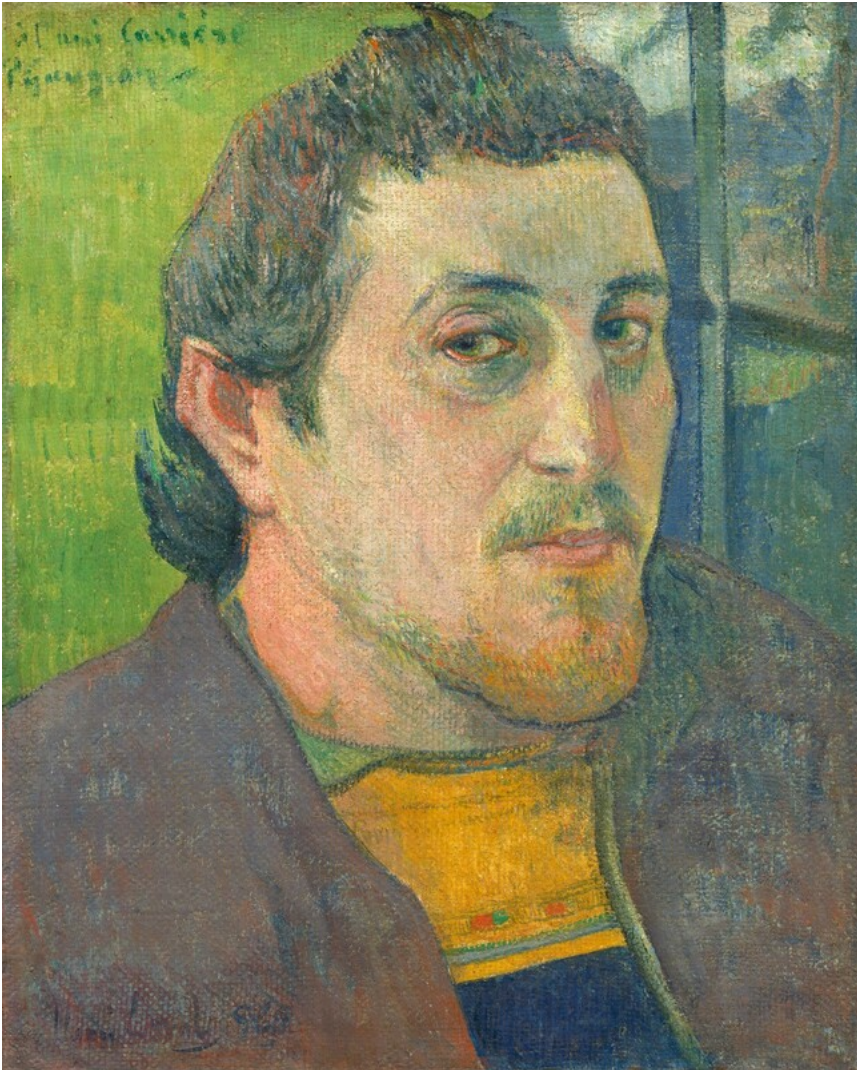


Fig. 113. Paul Gauguin, *Self-Portrait Dedicated to Carrière*, 1888 or 1889, oil on canvas, 46.5 x 38.6 cm (18 5/16 x 15 3/16 in.), framed: 66 x 58.7 x 8.2 cm, National Gallery of Art.



Fig. 114. Victor Anicet, *Caravelle*, 2010, 31 x 48 x 22 cm.



Fig. 115. Victor Anicet, *Caravelle*, 2012, 31 x 44 x 24 cm, Fondation Clément



Fig. 116. Victor Anicet, *La Vision du vaincu*, 2014, Habitation Saint-Etienne Le Gros-Morne, Martinique.



Fig. 117. Leasho Johnson, *Jaw bone (man looking back at the cane fields)*, 2019, 61 x 76.2cm
Charcoal, watercolor, distemper, acrylic, oil stick, oil paint on canvas, Art Gallery of Ontario

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Cuvier, Georges and Achille Valenciennes. *Histoire naturelle des poisons*. Paris: Chez F.G. Levrault, 1828.

Cuvier, Georges. *Historical Portrait of the Progress of Ichthyology / Tableau historique des progrès de l'ichtyologie: From Its Origins to Our Own Time / Depuis son origine jusqu'à nos jours*. Edited by Theodore Pietsch. Translated by Fanja Andriamialisoa. Paris: Publications scientifiques du Muséum, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.mnhn.6224>.

Gauguin, Paul. *Paul Gauguin: Letters to His Wife and Friends*. Translated by Henry J. Stenning. London: Saturn Press, 1948.

Gauguin, Paul. *Avant et Après*. Accessed 1st April, 2024. <https://courtauld.ac.uk/gallery/the-collection/prints-and-drawings/discover-avant-et-apres/turn-the-pages-of-avant-et-apres-by-paul-gauguin/>.

Prince, Mary. *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave*. Edited by Sarah Salih. London: Penguin Books, 2004

Lavollée, Paul. *Notes sur les cultures et la production de la Martinique et de la Guadeloupe*. Paris: Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies, 1839.

Dessalles, Pierre. *Sugar and Slavery, Family and Race: The Letters of Pierre Dessalles, Planter in Martinique, 1808–1856*. Edited and translated by Robert Forster and Elborg Forster. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

Broca, Paul. *Les instructions générales pour les recherches et observations anthropologiques (anatomie et physiologie)*. Paris: Victor Masson et fils, 1865.

Pissarro, Camille. *Camille Pissarro: Letters to His Son Lucien*. Edited by John Rewald. New York: Pantheon Books, 1943.

Morice, Charles. *Paul Gauguin*. Paris: H. Floury, 1920.

Secondary Sources

Ahmed, Sarah. “A Phenomenology of Whiteness.” *Feminist Theory* 8, no 2 (2007): 149-168.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700107078139>>

Allewaert, Monique. *Ariel's Ecology: Plantations, Personhood, and Colonialism in the American Tropics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

Amin-Addo, Anyaa. “A Wretched and slave-like mode of labor’: Slavery, emancipation, and the royal mail steam packet company’s coaling stations.” *Historical Geography* 39 (2011) 65–84.

Andersen, Wayne. *Gauguin's Paradise Lost*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1972.

Arabindan-Kesson, Anna. *Black Bodies, White Gold: Art, Cotton, and Commerce in the Atlantic World*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021.

Armiero, Marco and Richard P. Tucker. *Environmental History of Modern Migrations*. London; New York: Routledge, 2017.

Arnold, David. "Illusory Riches": Representations of The Tropical World, 1840–1950." *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 21 no.1 (2000): 6-18. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9493.00060>.

Auerbach, Jeffrey. "The Picturesque and the Homogenisation of Empire." *British Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (2004).

Baena, Christian and Marny Garcia Mommertz. "A Journey into the Mind and Work of Julien Creuzet." *C& América Latina*, 20th April 2024. <https://amlatina.contemporaryand.com/editorial/a-journey-into-the-mind-and-work-of-julien-creuzet/>.

Bagard, Véronique. *Transoceanic Dialogues: Coolitude in Caribbean and Indian Ocean Literatures*. Brussels: Peter Lang, 2008.

Bagneris, Mia. *Colouring the Caribbean: Race and the Art of Agostino Brunias*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018.

Bahadur, Gaiutra. *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture*. London: Hurst & Company, 2016.

Bailey, Peter. "Deforestation and Decolonization: Lafcadio Hearn's French Antillean Writing." *Volupté* 6.1 (2023): 1-19.

Bailkin, Jordanna. "Indian Yellow: Making and Breaking the Imperial Palette". *Journal of Material Culture*, 10, no. 2 (2005):197–214. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359183505053075>.

Bain, Lauren. *Martinique: years later, the fight against Chlordecone persists*, France 24, 9th January 2023. <https://www.france24.com/en/tv-shows/focus/20230109-martinique-years-later-the-fight-against-chlordecone-persists>.

Balis, Hélène, Florence Deprest, and Pierre Singaravélou, "Introduction: Pour une histoire spatiale du fait colonial." In *Territoires Impériaux*. Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.psorbonne.42311>.

Ball, Philip. *Bright Earth: Art and the Invention of Color*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

Ballantyne-Way, Duncan. "Paul Gauguin: The Savage at the Alte Nationalgalerie." *The Berliner*. Accessed 7th April 2022. <https://www.the-berliner.com/art/paul-gauguin-savage-alte-nationalgalerie-why-are-you-angry/>.

Ballantyne, Tony and Antoinette Burton. "Introduction." In *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History*, edited by Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton. Durham:

Duke University Press, 2005.

Ballantyne, Tony. *Webs of Empire Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014.

Banks, Kenneth J. *Chasing Empire across the Sea: Communications and the State in the French Atlantic, 1713-1763*. Montreal; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002.

Barringer, Tim, Gillian Forrester, and Barbaro Martinez-Ruiz, eds. *Art and Emancipation in Jamaica: Isaac Mendes Belisario and His Worlds*. New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, in association with Yale University Press, 2007.

Barringer, Tim, and Wayne Modest, eds. *Victorian Jamaica*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.

Barringer, Tim. *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Barontini, Raphaël. *We Could be Heroes*. Paris: Éditions du patrimoine, Centre des Monuments Nationaux, 2023.

Batchelor, David. *Chromophobia*. London: Reaktion, 2000.

Belpomme, Dominique. et al. "Prostate cancer as an Environmental Disease: An Ecological Study in the French Caribbean Islands, Martinique and Guadeloupe". *International Journal of Oncology* 34, no. 4 (2009):1037-1044. https://doi.org/10.3892/ijo_0000022.

Benitez-Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island: the Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996.

Bérard, Benoît, ed. *Martinique, terre amérindienne: une approche pluridisciplinaire*. Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2013.

Berrian, Brenda F. *Awakening Spaces: French Caribbean Popular Songs, Music, and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Blais, Hélène. "Introduction: Le commerce des plantes: empires, réseaux marchands et consommation (XVIe -XXe siècle); Pépinières coloniales: de la valeur des plantes des jardins botaniques au XIXe siècle". *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine*, no. 3 (2019).

Blanckaert, Claude. *De la race à l'évolution: Paul Broca et l'anthropologie française (1850-1900)*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009.

Blaszczyk, Regina Lee. *The Color Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012.

Bonilla, Yarimar. “The Past is Made by Walking: Labor Activism and Historical Production in Postcolonial Guadeloupe.” *Cultural Anthropology* 26, no. 3 (2011): 313–339.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1360.2011.01101>.

Bradley, Isabel. Mapping Manioc: Grounded Relations in the Caribbean, PhD thesis, Duke University, 2023.

Brathwaite, Edward Kamau. “Caribbean Man in Space and Time.” *Small Axe: A Journal of Criticism*, 25, no. 3 (2021): 90–104. <https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-9583432>.

Brickman, William W. 1981. “The Ferry Law of 1881: The Fundamental Law of French Primary Education.” *Western European Education* 13 (3): 3–5. doi:10.2753/EUE1056-493413033.

Brown, Laurence. “Creole Bonapartism and Post-Emancipation Society: Martinique’s Monument to the Empress Joséphine.” *Outre Mers* 93, no. 350 (2006): 39-49.

Brown, Laurence. “The Three Faces of Post-Emancipation Migration in Martinique, 1848-1865.” *The Journal of Caribbean History*, 36, no. 2 (2002), 310-IX. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/three-faces-post-emancipation-migration/docview/211144756/se-2>.

Brunache, Peggy Lucienne. *Enslaved Women, Food ways, and Identity Formation: The Archaeology of Habitation La Mahaudière, Guadeloupe, circa Late-18th Century to Mid-19th*

Century. PhD thesis, The University of Texas Austin, 2011.

Brunache, Peggy Lucienne. "Mainstreaming African Diasporic Foodways: When Academia Is Not Enough." *Transform Anthropology*, 27 (2019-10): 149-163.

Brureau, Laurent et al. "Endocrine Disrupting-Chemicals and Biochemical Recurrence of Prostate Cancer after Prostatectomy: A Cohort Study in Guadeloupe (French West Indies)." *International Journal of Cancer* 146, no. 3 (2020): 657-663.

Butel, Paul. *Histoire des Antilles françaises*. Paris: Perrin, 2002.

Burton, Richard D. E. *La famille coloniale: La Martinique et la mère patrie, 1789–1992*. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1994.

Capécia, Mayotte. *I Am a Martinican Woman / The White Negress*. Translated by Beatrice Stith Clark. Passeggiata Press, 1997.

Carey, Mark. "Inventing Caribbean Climates: How Science, Medicine, and Tourism Changed Tropical Weather from Deadly to Healthy." *Osiris* 26.1 (2011): 129-141.

Carney, Judith Ann. "Seeds of Memory: Botanical Legacies of the African Diaspora." In *African Ethnobotany in the Americas*, edited by Robert Voeks and John Rashford. New York: Springer,

2013. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-0836-9_2.

Cellier, Marine Amina Damerdji, Sylvain Lloret. “Introduction: Entre racialisation et tabou: l’état de l’assignation” in Marine Cellier, Amina Damerdji and Sylvain Lloret, eds. *La Fabrique de la race dans la Caraïbe de l’époque moderne à nos jours*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2021.

Césaire, Aimé. *Return to My Native Land*. London: Random House, 2011.

Césaire, Aimé. *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*. Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2001.

Chamoiseau, Patrick, *Texaco*. Translated by Rose-Myriam Rejouis and Val Vinokurow. London: Granta, 1997.

Childs, Elizabeth C. *Vanishing Paradise: Art and Exoticism in Colonial Tahiti*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2013.

Childs, Adrienne L. “Exceeding Blackness: African Women in the Art of Jean-Léon Gérôme.” In *Blacks and Blackness in European Art of the Long Nineteenth Century* (2016): 125-144.

Chivallon, Christine and David Howard. “Aux origines du « colour blindness » républicain et du « racial thinking » multiculturel. Approche comparée de deux révoltes anticoloniales en Jamaïque (Morant Bay, 1865) et en Martinique (Insurrection du sud, 1870) *Outre-Mers*, no. 402-403 (2019):

151-177. <https://doi.org/10.3917/om.191.0151>.

Chivallon, Christine. *Espace et identité à la Martinique : Paysannerie des mornes et reconquête collective 1840-1960*. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2022.

<https://doi.org/10.4000/books.editions-cnrs.56277>.

Church, Christopher. *Paradise Destroyed: Catastrophe and Citizenship in the French Caribbean*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017.

Coen, Deborah R. *Climate in Motion: Science, Empire, and the Problem of Scale*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2019.

Coleman, Deirdre. "Janet Schaw and the Complexions of Empire." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36 no. 2 (2003): 169-193.

Confiant, Raphaël and Nigel H. Thomas. "Decolonizing Futures." *Small Axe Project*. Accessed 4th September 2024, <https://smallaxe.net/sxsalon/discussions/decolonizing-futures>.

Conrad, Sebastian. *What is Global History?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016.

Cooper, Frederick and Ann Laura Stoler. *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*. Berkeley, California: California University Press, 1997.

Cottias, Myriam. “Esclavage, assimilation et dépendance: Essai sur une relation coloniale.” *Cahiers du Centre de recherches historiques*, no. 40 (2007): 143–61.
<https://doi.org/10.4000/ccrh.3394>.

Cottias, Myriam. “La seconde abolition de l’esclavage dans les colonies françaises (1848).” In *Histoire globale de la France coloniale*, edited by Nicolas Bancel et al., 97–102. Paris: Philippe Rey, 2022.

Couglin, Mary. “Biotopes and Ecotones: Slippery Images on the Edge of the French Atlantic.” *Landscapes: The Journal of the International Centre for Landscape and Language* 7, no. 1 (2016): 1-23.

Couglin, Maura. “Gleaning the Tideline: Elodie La Villette’s Ecocritical Painting.” *Dix-Neuf: Journal of the Society of Dix-Neuviémistes* 23, no. 3-4 (2019).
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14787318.2019.1683966>.

Cowling, Camilla. “Teresa Mina’s Journeys: ‘Slave-Moving’, Mobility, and Gender in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Cuba.” *Atlantic Studies* 18, no. 1 (2021): 7–30.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14788810.2020.1783191>.

Cox, Natalie. “‘Easy chair geography’: The fabrication of an immobile culture of nineteenth-century exploration.” In *Empire and mobility in the long nineteenth century*, (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 2020) accessed Oct 11, 2024.

Crosby, Alfred. *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*. London: Bloomsbury, 2003.

Curtin, Philip D. *Death by Migration: Europe's Encounter with the Tropical World in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Cucchi, Roger. *Gauguin à la Martinique*. Paris: Calivran Anstalt, 1979.

Daughton, James Patrick. *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French colonialism 1880-1914*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Danielsson, Bengt. *Gauguin in the South Seas*. Translated by Reginald Spink. London: Allen and Unwin, 1965.

Davidson, Kathleen. "Their 'Colours are Brilliant, but Fugitive': Coral Concerns from Imperial Expeditions and the British Museum to the Royal Academy and Drury Lane." *Sea Currents in Nineteenth-Century Art, Science and Culture: Commodifying the Ocean World* (2023):

Dawson, Kevin. "A Sea of Caribbean Islands: Maritime Maroons in the Greater Caribbean." *Slavery & Abolition* 42, no. 3 (2021): 428-448. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144039X.2021.1927509>.

Dawson, Kevin. *Undercurrents of Power: Aquatic Culture in the African Diaspora*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018.

Deckard, Sharae. "The Political Ecology of Storms in Caribbean Literature." In *The Caribbean: Aesthetics, World-Ecology, Politics*, edited by Chris Campbell and Michael Niblett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Dial, Andrew. "Antoine Lavalette, Slave Murderer: A Forgotten Scandal of the French West Indies." *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 8, no. 1 (2021): 37--55.

Dijk, Maite van and Joost van der Hoeven, eds. *Gauguin and Laval in Martinique*. Bussum: Thoth Publishers, 2018.

Dillon, Elizabeth Maddock. *New World Drama: The Performative Commons in the Atlantic World, 1649-1849*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.

Dobie, Madeleine. *Trading Places: Colonization and Slavery in Eighteenth-Century French Culture*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2010.

Dootson, Kirsty Sinclair. *The Rainbow's Gravity: Colour, Materiality and British Modernity*. London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2023.

Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London; New York: Routledge, 2003. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315015811>.

Dubois, Arnaud. “Couleurs de l’arc-en-ciel et anthropologie : du laboratoire au terrain (Rivers et le détroit de Torres, 1898–1901).” In *Arcs-en-ciel & couleurs: Regards comparatifs*, edited by A. Dubois, J. Eczet, A. Grand-Clément, and C. Ribeyrol, 25–43. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.3917/cnrs.duboi.2018.01.0025>.

Duggins, Molly. “Sailors’ Valentines: Shell Mosaics from Victorian Barbados.” *British Art Studies* 25 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-25/mduggins>.

Duncan, Taylor. “Botanical Gardens and Their Role in the Political Economy of Empire: Jamaica (1846–86).” *Rural History* 28, no. 1 (2017): 47–68, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0956793316000169>.

Dunnavant, Justin P. “Have Confidence in the Sea: Maritime Maroons and Fugitive Geographies.” *Antipode* 53, no. 3 (2021): 884-905. <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12695>.

Dyer, Richard. *White: Essays on Race and Culture*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Easterby-Smith, Sarah. “Recalcitrant Seeds: Material Culture and the Global History of Science.” *Past & Present*, 242, no 14 (2019): 215-242. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtz045>.

Eaton, Natasha. *Colour, Art and Empire: Visual Culture and the Nomadism of Representation*. London: Tauris, 2019.

Elias, Ann. *Coral Empire: Underwater Oceans, Colonial Tropics, Visual Modernity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019.

Eisenman, Stephen. *Gauguin's Skirt*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1997.

Eiland, Gracen. "Erasing Race: The Role of Republicanism and Racism in French Constitutional Jurisprudence." *Temp. Int'l & Comp. LJ* 35 (2021).

Emery, Mary Lou. *Modernism, the Visual, and Caribbean Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Ezor, Danielle. *Whiteness at the Dressing Table: Race, Gender, and Materiality in Eighteenth-Century France and the French Caribbean*. PhD thesis., Southern Methodist University, 2023.

Haraway, Donna. *The Haraway Reader*. London; New York: Routledge, 2004.

Heath, Elizabeth. "Sugarcoated Slavery: Colonial Commodities and the Education of the Senses in Early Modern France." *Critical Historical Studies* 5, no. 2 (2018): 169-207.

Jennings, Eric T. *Curing the Colonizers: Hydrotherapy, Climatology, and French Colonial Spas*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto, 2008.

Fayaud, Viviane. *Le Paradis autour de Paul Gauguin*. Paris: CNRS Editions, 2011.

Feeser, Andrea, Maureen Daly Goggin, and Beth Fowkes Tobin, eds. *The Materiality of Color: The Production, Circulation, and Application of Dyes and Pigments, 1400-1800*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012.

Fend, Mechthild. *Fleshing Out Surfaces Skin in French Art and Medicine, 1650–1850*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526104663>.

Ferdinand, Malcolm. *Decolonial Ecology: Thinking from the Caribbean World*, translated by Anthony Paul Smith. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019.

Ferwerda, Susanne. "Blue Humanities and the Color of Colonialism." *Environmental Humanities* 16, no. 1 (2024): 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-10943081>.

Gage, John. *Colour and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1993.

Galvin, Anne M. “Jamaican River Waters: Collapsing Time and the Politics of Rural Life-Making.” *Water Alternatives* 14, no. 1 (2021): 36-46.

Garb, Tamar. “Gauguin and the Opacity of the Other: The Case of Martinique.” In *Gauguin: Maker of Myth*, edited by Belinda Thomson, Tamar Garb and Philippe Dagen. London: Tate Publishing, 2010.

Gates, Henry Louis and Andrew S. Curran, eds. *Who’s Black and Why?: A Hidden Chapter from the Eighteenth-Century Invention of Race*. Translated by Karen C. C. Dalton and Susan Emanuel. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press, 2023.

Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. “Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference: Notes on Racism and Geography.” *The Professional Geographer* 54, no. 1 (2002): 15-24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0033-0124.00310>.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Giovannetti, Jorge L. “Grounds of Race: Slavery, Racism and the Plantation in the Caribbean.” *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, 1, no. 1 (2006): 5–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17486830600594276>.

Glissant, Édouard. *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999.

Glover, Tayzhaun. "Freedom on the Horizon: Transmarine Marronage and the Abolition of Slavery in Dominica, Martinique, and St. Lucia, 1824-1848". PhD thesis, Duke University, 2024.

Goddard, Linda. *Savage Tales: The Writings of Paul Gauguin*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019.

Solomon-Godeau, Abigai. "Going native: Paul Gauguin and the Invention of Primitivist Modernism." *The Expanding Discourse* (London: Routledge, 2018). 312-329.

Grigsby, Darcy Grimaldo. *Creole: Portraits of France's Foreign Relations During the Long Nineteenth Century*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2022.

Groom, Gloria, ed. *Gauguin: Artist as Alchemist*. Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2017.

Hall, Catherine. "Going a-Trolloping: Imperial man Travels the Empire". *Gender and imperialism*, edited by Clare Midgley, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998, pp. 180-199.

<https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526119681.00018>

Hall, Edith. "Introduction: A Valuable lesson." In *Ancient Slavery and Abolition: From Hobbes to Hollywood*, edited by Edith Hall, R. Alston and J. McConnell. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hall, Stuart. "Negotiating Caribbean Identities." *New Left Review* 209 (1995): 3–14.

Haraway, Donna. "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin." *Environmental Humanities* 6, no. 1 (2015): 159–65. <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3615934>.

Haraway, Donna et al. "Anthropologists Are Talking - About the Anthropocene." *Ethnos* 81, no. 3, (2016). <https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2015.1105838>.

Harpham, Geoffrey Galt. "Georges Cuvier." In *Theories of Race 1684-1900*. Accessed 5th August 2024. <https://www.theoriesofrace.com/24/>.

Harris, Michael D. *Colored Pictures: Race and Visual Representation*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

Hartman, Joseph R. "Temporal Visions: Hurricanes as Chronotopes in Caribbean Art History." *Miradas-Zeitschrift für Kunst-und Kulturgeschichte der Américas und der iberischen Halbinsel* 7 (2023): 122-147.

Hartman, Saidiya. "Venus in Two Acts." *Small Axe: A Journal of Criticism* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1215/-12-2-1>.

Hartman, Saidiya. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth-century America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Hauser, Mark. *Mapping Water in Dominica: Enslavement and Environment under Colonialism*. Washington: University of Washington Press, 2021.

Hauteville, Jean-Michel and Nathalie Guibert. "Outrage in French Caribbean over expected dismissal of pesticide poisoning case." *Le Monde*, 28th November 2022.
https://www.lemonde.fr/en/politics/article/2022/11/28/in-the-chlordecone-case-as-no-trial-is-expected-indignation-grows-in-the-french-west-indies_6005843_5.html.

Hill, Edwin C. Jr. *Black Soundscapes White Stages: The Meaning of Francophone Sound in the Black Atlantic* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013.

Hill, Elyan Jeanine. "Submerged Narratives: Memorializing Enslavement in Eve Sandler's Mami Wata Crossing." *Art journal* 81, no. 4 (2022): 24-43.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.2022.2133299>

Holt, Thomas. *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.

Homburg, Cornelia and Christopher Riopelle, eds. *Gauguin: Portraits*. Ottawa, Canada: Musée des Beaux-Arts du Canada, 2019.

Honor, Hugh. *The Image of the Black in Western Art from the American Revolution to World War I*, Vol. 4, Part 1: *Slaves and Liberators*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990.

hooks, bell. "Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination." In *Black Look: Race and Representation*. New York; Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315743226>.

Hoven, Joost van der. "Paul Gauguin, *The Mango Trees, Martinique, 1887*." In *Contemporaries of Van Gogh 1: Works Collected by Theo and Vincent*, edited by Joost van der Hoeven. Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, 2023. doi.org/10.58802/LIRH9345.

Hulme, Peter. "Dominica and Tahiti: Tropical Islands Compared." In *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire*, edited by Felix Driver and Luciana Martins. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005.

Hulme, Peter. "Islands and Roads: Hesketh Bell, Jean Rhys, and Dominica's Imperial Road." *The Jean Rhys Review* 11, no. 2 (2000): 23-51.

Hulme, Peter. *Remnants of Conquest: The Island Caribs and Their Visitors, 1877-1998*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Ingold, Tim. "Footprints through the Weather-World: Walking, Breathing, Knowing." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16 (2010): 121-139. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2010.01613.x>.

Ingold, Tim. *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling & Skill*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Institut Français. "Présentation du projet de Julien Creuzet pour la Biennale de Venise 2024." Accessed 20th May 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8d-ftS7SiA8>.

Ives, Colta Feller, Susan Alyson Stein, Majorie Shelley et al. *The Lure of the Exotic: Gauguin in New York Collections*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002.

Jackson, Shona N. *Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.
<https://doi.org/10.5749/minnesota/9780816677757.001.0001>.

James, Erica Moiah. "Speaking in Tongues: Metapictures and the Discourse of Violence in Caribbean Art." *Small Axe* 16, no. 1 (2012): 119-143.

Jayaram, Kiran C. "Fruits of Colonialism: The Production of Mangoes as Commodities in Northern Haiti." *Critique of Anthropology* 38, no. 4 (2018): 461-482.

Jirat-Wasiutyński, Vojtěch. *Technique and Meaning in the Paintings of Paul Gauguin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Johnson, Leasho. “Leasho Johnson Has His Own Colour Theory.” Interview by Rianna Jade Parker. *Frieze*, January 20, 2023. <https://www.frieze.com/article/leasho-johnson-interview-2023>.

Joseph, Michael. *Beyond the Nation: Anticolonialism in the British and French Caribbean after the First World War (1913-1939)*. PhD thesis, University of Oxford: 2019.

Jung, Moon-Ho. *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.

Kalba, Laura Anne. *Color in the Age of Impressionism: Commerce, Technology, and Art*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017.

Kelly, Kenneth G. “Sugar Plantations in the French West Indies: Archaeological Perspectives from Guadeloupe and Martinique.” In *Archaeological Perspectives on the French in the New World*, edited by Elizabeth M. Scott. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2017.

Kempadoo, Roshini. *Creole in the Archive: Imagery, Presence and the Location of the Caribbean Figure*. London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016.

Keohane, Kate. "Ambivalence, Estrangement, and Opacity: Four Engagements with Landscape, Oceania, and the Legacy of Paul Gauguin." *Afterimage* 49, no. 4 (2022): 26–52.

<https://doi.org/10.1525/aft.2022.49.4.26>.

Khan, Aisha. "Caucasian, Coolie, Black, or White?: Color and Race in the Indo-Caribbean Diaspora." In *Shades of Difference*, edited by Evelyn Nakano Glenn. Redwood City, Stanford University Press, 2009.

King, Tiffany Lethabo. *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019.

Kriz, Kay Dian. *Slavery, Sugar, and the Culture of Refinement: Picturing the British West Indies, 1700-1840*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008.

Kumar, Prakash. *Indigo Plantations and Science in Colonial India*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Kusserow, Karl and Alan C. Braddock, eds. *Nature's Nation: American Art and Environment*. Princeton: Princeton Art Museum, 2018.

Kusserow, Karl and Alan C. Braddock, eds. *Picture Ecology: Art and Ecocriticism in Planetary Perspective*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021.

Kusters, Walter, and Marc Depaepe. "The French Third Republic: Popular Education, Conceptions of Citizenship and the Flemish Immigrants." *Historical Studies in Education* 23, no. 1 (2011): 22-40. <https://doi.org/10.32316/hse/rhe.v23i1.2375>.

Lafont, Anne. "Fabric, Skin, Color: Picturing Antilles' Markets as an Inventory of Human Diversity." *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de La Cultura* 43, no. 2 (2016): 121–154.

Lafont, Anne. "How Skin Color Became a Racial Marker: Art Historical Perspectives on Race," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 51, no. 1 (2017): 95.

Lafont, Anne. *L'Art et la Race: L'Africain (tout) contre l'œil des Lumières*. Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2019.

Lambert, David, and Alan Lester, eds. *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Lambert, David. "Taken captive by the mystery of the Great River': Towards an Historical Geography of British Geography and Atlantic Slavery." *Journal of Historical Geography* 35, no. 1 (2009): 44-65.

Larcher, Silyane. "L'égalité divisée. La race au cœur de la ségrégation juridique entre citoyens de la métropole et citoyens des « vieilles colonies » après 1848." *Mouvement social* 252, no. 3 (2015): 137–58. <https://doi.org/10.3917/lms.252.0137>.

Larcher, Silyane. *L'autre citoyen: l'idéal républicain et les Antilles après l'esclavage*. Paris: Armand Colin, 2014.

Last, Angela. "Fruit of the Cyclone: Undoing Geopolitics through Geopoetics." *Geoforum* 64 (2015): 56-64.

Leal, Maricé, Mark D. Spalding et al. "The State of the Word's Mangroves." *Global Mangrove Alliance*. Accessed 1st May 2024. <https://www.mangrovealliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/SOWM-2024-HR-1.pdf>.

Linds, Justin Abraham. "Fermentation, Rot, and Power in the Early Modern Atlantic." *Edge Effects*, 11th August. <https://edgeeffects.net/fermentation-rot-and-power/>.

Loichot, Valérie. "Cooking Creoleness: Lafcadio Hearn in New Orleans and Martinique." *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* 20, no. 1 (2012): 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.5195/jffp.2012.537>.

Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

Lozère, Christelle. "Artists from the Antilles in Interwar Paris." In *The Harlem Renaissance and Transatlantic Modernism*, edited by Denise Murrell. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2024.

Lozère, Christelle. "Order and Disorder: The Iconography of Morality and Colonial Enslavement." *Journal18*, 13 (2022). <https://www.journal18.org/6322>.

Mackaman, Douglas P. *Leisure Settings: Bourgeois Culture, Medicine, and the Spa in Modern France*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Mahabir, Joy. "Alternative Texts: Indo-Caribbean Women's Jewellery." In *Caribbean Vistas: Critiques of Caribbean Arts and Cultures 1* (2009). <https://caribbeanvistas.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/mahabiralternativejewelry1.pdf>.

Maleuvre, Didier. "The Trial of Paul Gauguin." *Mosaic* 51, no. 1 (2018): 197–213: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/90021833>.

Mandelblatt, Bertie. "A Land where Hunger is in Gold and Famine is in Opulence': Plantation Slavery, Island Ecology, and the Fear of Famine in the French Caribbean." In *Fear and the Shaping of Early American Societies*, edited by Lauric Hennenon and Louis Roper. London: Brill, 2016. 10.1163/9789004314740_013.

Marsh, Kate. "Rights of the Individual': Indentured Labour and Indian Workers: The French Antilles and the Rhetoric of Slavery Post 1848." *Slavery & Abolition* 33, no. 2 (2012): 221-231. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144039X.2012.669900>

Maslin, Mark and Simon Lewis. "Defining the Anthropocene." *Nature* 519, no. 542 (2015):171-80: <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature14258>.

Mawani, Renisa. "Specters of Indigeneity in British-Indian Migration, 1914." *Law & Society Review* 46, no. 2 (2012): 369-403.

McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York: Routledge, 1995. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203699546>.

McCusker, Maeve. *Fictions of Whiteness: Imagining the Planter Caste in French Caribbean Novel*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2021.

McCusker, Maeve. "All Creoles Now? Béké Identity and Éloge de La Créolité", *Small Axe: A Journal of Criticism* 21, no. 1 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-3843974>.

McKee, C. C. *Cultivating Visible Order: Representations of Race and Ecology in the French Atlantic*, PhD Thesis, Northwestern University, 2019.

McKee, Yates. "Art History, Ecocriticism, and the Ends of Man." *Oxford Art Journal* 34, no. 1 (2011): 15-129. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxartj/kcr010>.

McKittrick, Katherine. "Science Quarrels Sculpture: The Politics of Reading Sarah Baartman." *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, 43, no. 2 (2010): 113–30.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/44030627>.

McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

McNeil, John R. *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Megens, Luc. "Pigment analysis of P. Gauguin, On the Banks of the River at Martinique, 1887." Unpublished, Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, October 2017.

Megens, Luc. "Pigment analysis of P. Gauguin, The Mango Trees, Martinique, 1887." Unpublished. Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, October, 2017.

Mehta, Brinda J. "Indianités Francophones: Kala Pani Narratives." *L'Esprit Créateur* 50, no. 2 (2010): 1-11. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/esp.0.0229>.

Mentz, Steve. *An Introduction to Blue Humanities*. New York; London: Routledge, 2024.

Newton, Melanie. "The Children of Africa in the Colonies." PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 2001.

Miller, Kei. *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion*. Manchester: Carcanet, 2014.

Mintz, Sidney. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. London: Penguin Books, 1986.

Mirzoeff, Nicholas. "The Whiteness of Birds." *Liquid Blackness* 6, no. 1 (2022).

<https://doi.org/10.1215/26923874-9546592>

Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *White Sight: Visual Politics and Practices of Whiteness*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2023.

Milan, Dian. *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013.

Mitchell, Robin. *Vénus Noire: Black Women and Colonial Fantasies in Nineteenth-Century France*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2020.

Mjelde, Elizabeth. "Colonial Violence and the Picturesque." In *Violence, Colonialism and Empire in the Modern World*, edited by Philip Dwyer and Amanda Nettelbeck. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-62923-0_3.

Mohammed, Shanaaz. "Disarticulating Indianité: Re-Imagining the Motherland in Ernest Moutoussamy's Chacha et Sosso." *Romance notes* 57, no. 2 (2017): 221-231. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/90012904>.

Morton, Fred. *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Morton, Patricia A. "Decolonising ACHAC Collection." In *Visualizing Empire: Africa, Europe, and the Politics of Representation*, edited by Rebecca Peabody, Steven Nelson, and Dominic Thomas. Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2021.

Morton, Timothy. *The Ecological Thought*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Mustakeem, Sowande. *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016.

Mulich, Jeppe. “Maritime Marronage in Colonial Borderlands.” In *A World at Sea: Maritime Practices and Global History*, edited by Lauren Benton and Nathan Perl-Rosenthal. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020.

Multigner, Luc et al. “Chlordecone Exposure and Risk of Prostate Cancer.” *Journal of clinical oncology* 28, vol. 21 (2010): 3457–3462.

Munro, Martin. *Different Drummers: Rhythm and Race in the Americas*. Berkeley, California; London: University of California Press, 2010.

Murphy, Tessa. *The Creole Archipelago: Race and Borders in the Colonial Caribbean*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021.

Ndiaye, Pap. *La Condition Noire: Essai sur une minorité française*. Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2008.

Nash, R.C. “South Carolina Indigo, European Textiles, and the British Atlantic Economy in the Eighteenth Century.” *The Economic History Review* 63, no. 2 (2010): 362–92.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0289.2009.00487.x>.

Nelson, Charmaine. *Slavery, Geography and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica*. London; New York: Routledge, 2016.

Nerlekar, Anjali, and Francesca Orsini. "Introduction: Postcolonial Archives." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 45, vol. 2 (2022): 211-219.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2022.2040803>.

Newton, Melanie J. "Returns to a Native Land: Indigeneity and Decolonization in the Anglophone Caribbean." *Small Axe* 17, no. 2 (2013): 108–122. <https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-2323346>.

Nochlin, Linda. *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays*. London: Routledge, 1988.

Northrup, David. "Indentured Indians in the French Antilles. Les immigrants indiens engagés aux Antilles françaises." *Outre-Mers. Revue d'histoire*, 87 no. 326 (2000): 245-271.

Numa, Guy. "Colonial Heritages and Continuities in Guadeloupe and Martinique: An Economic Perspective." In *Euro-Caribbean Societies in the 21st Century*, edited by Sébastien Chauvin, Peter Clegg and Bruno Cousin. London: Routledge, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351248877-8>

Oppermann, Serpil. *Blue Humanities: Storied Waterscapes in the Anthropocene*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009393300>.

Osborne, Patrick L. *Tropical Ecosystems and Ecological Concepts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Pastoreau, Michel. "Pour une histoire sociale des couleurs." In *Couleur, travail et société: Du Moyen Âge à nos jours*. Paris: Somogy éditions d'art, 2004.

Palmiste, Clara. "The Secularization of Teaching Staff in Guadeloupe (1880-1914): Gender and Race Issues in a Colonial Context." *Clio. Women, Gender, History* 50, vol. 2 (2019): 37-61.

Peabody, Sue, and Tyler Stovall, eds. *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Peabody, Sue. "Missionaries and Racial Discourse in Seventeenth-Century French Antilles." *Journal of Social History* 38, no. 1 (2004): 113-126.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/jsh.2004.0099>.

Pearce, Marsha. "Reimagining History as Narrative in Contemporary art." In Julie Crooks, et al. *Fragments of Epic Memory*. DAP/Distributed Art Publishers, 2022.

Peerthum, Satyendra and Kiran Chuttoo Jankee. "The Indian Ocean and the History of Indenture: The Making of 'new' Nationals and Nations." In *Cultural Heritage Management in Africa*, edited by George Abungu and Webber Ngoro. London: Routledge, 2023.

Périna, Mickâella. *Citoyenneté et sujétion aux Antilles francophones: Post-esclavage et aspiration démocratique*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997.

Pissarro, Camille. *Camille Pissarro: Letters to His Son Lucien*, edited by John Rewald. New York: Pantheon Books, 1943.

Phillips, Richard. *Mapping Men and Empire: Geographies of Adventure*. London: Routledge, 2013.

Pollack, Maika. "Paul Gauguin, and Primitivist Color." *The Art Bulletin* 102, no. 3 (2020): 77-103.

Poindexter, Remi. *Exotic and Familiar: Constructing Martinique, 1763–1902*. PhD thesis, The Graduate Center, City University of New York, 2025.

Poindexter, Remi. "Gauguin and Laval in Martinique." Smarthistory, September 28, 2020. Accessed June 14, 2025. <https://smarthistory.org/gauguin-laval-martinique/>.

Pollock, Griselda. *Avant-Garde Gambits 1888-1893: Gender and the Colour of Art History*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1992.

Pope, Kristen. "Gauguin and Martinique". PhD thesis, The University of Texas, 1981.

Poskett, James. "Racial science." In *The Routledge Handbook of Science and Empire*. London: Routledge, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429273360-4>.

Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London; New York: Routledge, 2008.

Puwar, Nirmal. *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies out of Place*. Oxford: Berg, 2004.

Quilley, Geoff and Kay Dian Kriz. *An Economy of Colour: Visual Culture and the Atlantic World, 1660-1830*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003.

Quilley, Geoff, T.J. Barringer and Douglas Fordham. *Art and the British Empire*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007.

Quilley, Geoff. *British Art and the East India Company*. Boydell Press: Woodbridge, 2020.

Qureshi, Sadiah. "Dying Americans: Race, Extinction, and Conservation in the New World." In *From plunder to preservation: Britain and the heritage of empire, c. 1800-1940*, edited by Astrid Swenson and Peter Mandler. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Ramakrishnan, Mahadevi. "French, African, and Indian Cultural Narratives in Martinique: The Architecture of Shifting Social Hierarchies from 1848–1884." *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies* 7, no. 2 (2013): 27-36. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/french-african-indian-cultural-narratives/docview/2793203937/se-2>.

Rediker, Marcus. *The Slave Ship: A Human History*. London; Penguin, 2017.

Ribeyrol, Charlotte, Matthew Winterbottom and Madeline Hewitson, eds. *Colour Revolution: Victorian Art, Fashion & Design*. Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 2023.

Richards, Paulette Anneita. *Airing the dirty linen: A Critical Introduction to Mayotte Capecia's Strategies of Reading Colonial History in 'Je suis martiniquaise.'* PhD thesis, University of Virginia, 1996.

Riello, Giorgio. "The 'Material Turn' in World and Global History." *Journal of World History*, 33, no. 2 (2022): 193–232. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jwh.2022.0019>.

Rifkin, Mark. *Fictions of Land and Flesh: Blackness, Indigeneity, Speculation*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478005285>.

Roopnarine, Lomarsh. *The Indian Caribbean*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2018.

Ross, Corey. *Liquid Empire: Water and Power in the Colonial World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2024.

Royal Caribbean Cruises. "Say 'Oui' to Adventure." Accessed 3rd September 2024. <https://www.royalcaribbean.com/cruise-to/fort-de-france-martinique>.

Saada, Emmanuelle. "Race and Empire in Nineteenth-Century France." In *The Cambridge History of French Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2019.

Sago, Kylie. "Beyond the Headless Empress: Gabriel Vital Dubray's Statues of Josephine, Edouard Glissant's *Tout-monde*, and Contested Monuments of French Empire." *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 41, no. 51 (2019): 501-509. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08905495.2019.1674579>.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

Savage, John. "Unwanted Slaves: The Punishment of Transportation and the Making of Legal Subjects in Early Nineteenth-Century Martinique." *Citizenship studies* 10.1 (2006): 35--53.

Schiebinger, Londa L. *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Schloss, Rebecca Hartkopf. *Sweet Liberty: The Final Days of Slavery in Martinique*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.

Schmieder, Ulrike. "Controversial Monuments for Enslavers, Enslaved Rebels and Abolitionists in Martinique and Cuba." *Comparativ: C: Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung*, 31 (2021).
<https://doi.org/10.26014/j.comp.2021.03-04.05>,

Semley, Lorelle. *To Be Free and French: Citizenship in France's Atlantic Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Sharpe, Jenny. "Life, Labor, and a Coolie Picturesque in Jamaica." *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 26, no. 2 (2022): 24-45.

Shelford, April Shelford. *Caribbean Enlightenment: Intellectual Life in the British and French Colonial Worlds, 1750-1792*. Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2023.

Sheller, Mimi. *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.

Sheller, Mimi. *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies*. London: Routledge, 2003.

Simonsen, Gunvor and Rasmus Christensen. "Together in a Small Boat Slavery's Fugitives in the Lesser Antilles." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (2023): 611-646.

<https://doi.org/10.1353/wmq.2023.a910393>.

Skeehan, Danielle. *The Fabric of Empire: Material and Literary Cultures of the Global Atlantic, 1650-1850*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020.

Skeehan, Danielle. "Caribbean Women, Creole Fashioning, and the Fabric of Black Atlantic Writing." *The Eighteenth Century* 56, no.1 (2015):105-123.

Sloat, Susanna. *Making Caribbean Dance: Continuity and Creativity in Island Cultures*. Florida: University Press of Florida, 2010.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021.

Smith, Sean P. "Aestheticising Empire: The Colonial Picturesque as a Modality of Travel." *Studies in Travel Writing* 23, no. 3 (2019): 280-97.

Snyder, Terri L. *The Power to Die: Slavery and Suicide in British North America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Solomon-Godeau, Abigail. "Going Native: Paul Gauguin and the Invention of Primitivist Modernism." In *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, 2018.

Steinberg, Philip and Kimberley Peters. "Wet Ontologies, Fluid Spaces: Giving Depth to Volume through Oceanic Thinking." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 33, no. 2 (2015): 247-264. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d14148p>.

Stevenson, Robert L. “Jumping overboard: Examining suicide, resistance, and west African Cosmologies during the Middle Passage.” PhD thesis, Michigan State University, 2018.

Stepan, Nancy. *Picturing Tropical Nature. Picturing History*. London: Reaktion, 2001.

Smalls, James. “Slavery Is a Woman: Race, Gender, and Visuality in Marie Benoist's Portrait D'une Nègresse (1800).” *Nineteenth-century Art Worldwide* 3, no. 1 (2004). <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring04/slavery-is-a-woman-race-gender-and-visibility-in-marie-benoists-portrait-dune-negresse-1800>.

Stoler, Ann L. “Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th-Century Colonial Cultures.” *American Ethnologist* vol. 16, 4 (1989): 634–60. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/645114>.

Stoler, Ann Laura. *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400835478>.

Stroud, Elle. “Does Nature Always Matter? Following Dirt through History.” *History and Theory* 42, no. 4 (2003): 80–81. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3590680>.

Sullivan, Edward J. *From San Juan to Paris and Back: Francisco Oller and Caribbean Art in the Era of Impressionism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

Suman, Seth. *Difference and Disease: Medicine, Race, and the Eighteenth-Century British Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Sutton, Angela and Charlton W. Yingling. "Projections of Desire and Design in Early Modern Caribbean Maps." *The Historical Journal* 63, no 4 (2020): 789-819.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X19000499>.

Sysling, Fenneke. "Anthropology and Empire." In *The Routledge Handbook of Science and Empire*, edited by Andrew Goss. London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2023.

Tabili, Laura. "Race Is a Relationship, and Not a Thing." *Journal of Social History*, 37, 1 (2003): 125-130. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3790317>.

Taussig, Michael T. "Redeeming Indigo." *Theory, Culture & Society* 25, no. 3 (2008): 1–15.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276408090655>.

Taussig, Michael. *What Color Is the Sacred?* Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Tatour, Lana. "The Culturalisation of Indigeneity: The Palestinian-Bedouin of the Naqab and Indigenous Rights." *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 23, vol. 10, 1570-1585.

Taylor, Leslie. *Cashew*. Rain Tree Publishers. Accessed 8th October 2024. <https://www.rain-tree.com/cajueiro.htm>.

Théodose, Céline. “Martinique Is Ours, Not Theirs!”: Framing Conflicting Identities during the 2009 Protests.” *Postcolonial Studies* 22, no. 2 (2019): 168–187.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2019.1608797>.

Thomas, Maria. “Chequered Intermingling and Contrasts: Exploring the Madras Cloth as an Icon of Hybridity.” *Vimala College (Autonomous)* (2023): 58-70.

Thomas, Sarah. “On the Spot: Travelling Artists and Abolitionism, 1770-1830.” *Atlantic Studies* 8, no. 2 (2011): 213-232.

Thomas, Skye Arundhati. “Julien Creuzet: Beyond the Shore.” *Art Review*, 12th April 2024.

<https://artreview.com/julien-creuzet-beyond-the-shore-venice-biennale-french-pavilion/>.

Thompson, Andrew, ed. *Writing Imperial Histories*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526112552>.

Thompson, Alvin O. *Flight to Freedom: African Runaways and Maroons in the Americas*.

Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2006.

Thompson, Krista. *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.

Thompson, Krista. “‘Call the Police. Call the Army. Call God. And Let’s Have One Helluva Big Story’: On Writing Caribbean Art Histories After Postcoloniality.” *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2008,169, <https://doi.org/10.1215/-12-1-169>.

Tinker, Hugh. *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920*. London: Hansib, 1993.

Tinsley, Omise’eke Natasha. *Thieving Sugar: Reading Eroticism Between Women in Caribbean Literature*. Durham: Duke University press, 2010.

Tobin, Beth Fowkes. “Caribbean Subjectivity and the Colonial Archive.” *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 12, no. 1 (2008): 145-156. <https://doi.org/10.1215/-12>.

Tobin, Beth. “Imperial Designs: Botanical Illustration and the British Botanic Empire.” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 25, no. 1(1996): 265-292. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sec.2010.0188>

Tomich, Dale. “Rethinking the Plantation: Concepts and Histories.” *Review-Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economics, Historical Systems, and Civilizations*, 34, no 1 / 2 (2011-01):

Torabully, Khal and Marina Carter. *Coolitude: An Anthology of the Indian Labour Diaspora*. London: Anthem Press, 2002.

Torabully, Khal. *Cargo Hold of Stars: Coolitude*, translated by Nancy Naomi Carlson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022.

Travis, Anthony S. *The Rainbow Makers: The Origins of the Synthetic Dyestuffs Industry in Western Europe*. Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1993.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2015.

Vacher, Luc. "The Marvel of Tropical Waters: The Invention of an Imaginary at the Pace of Technological Advances." In *Tourism Imaginaries at The Disciplinary Crossroads*, edited by Nelson Graburn and Maria Gravari-Barbas. London: Routledge, 2016. 197-207.

Valo, Martime. "Guadeloupe and Martinique Threatened as Pesticide Contaminates Food Chain." *The Guardian*, 6th May 2023.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/may/07/guadeloupe-economy-threatened-pesticides-pollution>.

Vergès, Françoise. "Capitalocene, Waste, Race, and Gender". *e-flux journal* 100, May 2019.
<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/100/269165/capitalocene-waste-race-and-gender/>.

Vergès, Françoise. *A Decolonial Feminism*. London: Pluto Press, 2021.

Veroce, Caroline. "I Am My Other, I Am My Self: Encounters with Gauguin in Polynesia." *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* 13, no. 1 (2013): 104–125. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14434318.2013.11432645>.

Vidal, Cécile. "Introduction : Le(s) monde(s) atlantique(s), l'Atlantique français, l'empire atlantique français." *Outre-Mers. Revue d'histoire* 96, no. 362 (2009): 7–37.

Walcott, Derek. *Tiepolo's Hound*. London: Faber, 2000.

Walcott, Derek. "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory". *The Nobel Prize*. Accessed 10th September 2024. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1992/walcott/lecture/>.

Waldrup, Heather. "Re-Possessing Gauguin: Material Histories and the Contemporary Pacific." In *Gauguin's Challenge: New Perspectives After Postmodernism*, edited by Norma Broude. New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.

Wallman, Diane and Sandrine Grouard. "Enslaved Laborer and Sharecropper Fishing Practices in 18th-19th Century Martinique: A Zooarchaeological and Ethnozoohistorical Study." *Journal of ethnobiology* 37, no. 3 (2017): 398–420.

Waters, Erika J. and Carrol B. Fleming. "Replacing the Language of the Center": Botanical Symbols and Metaphors in Caribbean Literature." *Caribbean Studies*, 27, no. 3 / 4 (1994).

Wekker, Gloria. *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Welsh, Sarah Lawson. *Food, Text and Culture in the Anglophone Caribbean*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019.

Wiegman, Robyn. "Whiteness Studies and the Paradox of Particularity." *Boundary 2* 26, no. 3 (1999): 115–50

Wilson, Kathleen. *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.

Wynter, Sylvia. "Jonkonnu in Jamaica: Towards an Interpretation of Folk Dance as a Cultural Process," *Jamaica Journal* 4, no. 2 (1970): 34–48.

Wright, Alastair and Calvin Brown. *Gauguin's Paradise Remembered: The Noa Noa Prints*. Princeton: Princeton University Art Museum, 2010.

Wright, Alastair. "Between the Lycée and the Plantation: Gauguin, Martinique's Modernity, and the Negotiation of Race." *Forthcoming*.

Wright, Willie Jamaal. “The Morphology of Marronage.” *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 110, no. 4 (2020): 1134–49. doi:10.1080/24694452.2019.1664890.

Yvon, Tristan. *La production d'indigo en Guadeloupe et Martinique (XVIIe-XIXe siècles). Histoire et archéologie*. Paris: Karthala, 2015.

Zaheer, Baber. “The Plants of Empire: Botanic Gardens, Colonial Power and Botanical Knowledge.” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 46, no 4: 659–679.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2016.1185796>.

Zamor, Hélène. “Indian Heritage in the French Creole-speaking Caribbean: A Reference to the Madras Material.” *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 4, no. 5 (2014): 155-161.

<https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=0f3ccadb97d460c226459c2f2c369096578d71d3>

Websites

AGO. “Fragments of Epic Memory”. Accessed 10th September 2024,

<https://ago.ca/exhibitions/fragments-epic-memory>.

Celebrity Cruises. “Cruises to Fort de France Martinique”. Accessed 3rd September

2024. <https://www.celebritycruises.com/gb/ports/martinique>.

CHANEL. “Julien Creuzet and Chanel at the Venice Biennale 2024 - CHANEL Culture Fund.” Accessed 20th May 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGxKwJQ5cF0>.

Fondation Pour la Mémoire de l’esclavage. “Musée de la Pagerie”. Accessed 1st June 2024. <https://memoire-esclavage.org/domaine-et-musee-de-la-pagerie>.

Foundation Clément, *Victor Anicet: Opacité & Transparencee*. Accessed 10th September. <https://www.fondation-clement.org/expositions/victor-anicet-signes-et-strates/>.

GMH. “Nos débuts”. Accessed 4th September 2024. <https://www.gbh.fr/fr/notre-histoire;>

La Biennale di Venezia. “France”. Accessed 25th May 2024. <https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2024/france>.

La Biennale di Venezia. “Stranieri Ovunque - Foreigners Everywhere.” Accessed 25th May 2024. <https://www.labiennale.org/en/news/biennale-arte-2024-stranieri-ovunque-foreigners-everywhere>.

Le « Panthéon imaginaire » de Raphaël Barontini”, Panthéon Paris, accessed 10th September 2024, <https://www.paris-pantheon.fr/le-pantheon-imaginaire-de-raphael-barontini>.

Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. “Forecast Form: Art in the Caribbean Diaspora, 1990s–Today.” Accessed 15th July 2024, <https://visit.mcachicago.org/exhibitions/art-in-the-caribbean-diaspora-1990s-today/>.

MSC Cruises. “Fort de France Cruise.” Accessed 3rd September 2024.

<https://www.msccruises.com/int/our-cruises/destinations/caribbean-and-antilles/martinique/fort-de-france>.

Piper, Keith. “Keith Piper ‘Lost Vitrines’”. Accessed 10th August, 2024.

<https://www.keithpiper.info/lostvitrines.html>.

Slave Voyages. “Explore the Origins and Forced Relocations of Enslaved Africans Across the Atlantic World.” Accessed 31st May 2024. <https://www.slavevoyages.org>.

“Scandale du chlordécone: plusieurs milliers de manifestants en Martinique contre “l’impunité”

Le Monde, 27th February 2021. [https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2021/02/27/scandale-du-](https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2021/02/27/scandale-du-chlordecone-plusieurs-milliers-de-manifestants-en-martinique-contre-l-impunite_6071431_3244.html)

[chlordecone-plusieurs-milliers-de-manifestants-en-martinique-contre-l-](https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2021/02/27/scandale-du-chlordecone-plusieurs-milliers-de-manifestants-en-martinique-contre-l-impunite_6071431_3244.html)

[impunite_6071431_3244.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2021/02/27/scandale-du-chlordecone-plusieurs-milliers-de-manifestants-en-martinique-contre-l-impunite_6071431_3244.html).

Youtube. “Artist’s Perspective: David Gumbs”. Accessed 20th July 2024.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hJNVqIAhYqI>.

Youtube. “Chenzira Davis Kahina, An Introduction to Bamboula.” Accessed 2nd October 2023.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1SbQh9qKkk>

Youtube. “Rendez-vous numériques en histoire de l'art des Antilles 1 Victor Fulconis.” Accessed 15th July, 2024.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkCPRc7oo2c&list=PLsl8NWzVv6T2nsvxr8KtOI_INcqXzGa8W&index=5

Youtube. “Suchitra Mattai, Visiting Artist Lecture Series Spring 2021.” Accessed 4th September 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMMVHrxgDGA>.