

MARIA CRISTINA FUMAGALLI

LANDSCAPING HISPANIOLA
MOREAU DE SAINT-MÉRY'S BORDER POLITICS

A few days after the Haitian earthquake of January 12, 2010, Sonia Marmolejos, a young Dominican woman who was in the Dario Contreras Hospital of Santo Domingo with her newborn daughter, decided to breastfeed three Haitian children who had been admitted there after the disaster. They were wounded, hungry, and dehydrated, so Sonia Marmolejos acted on impulse and she did not expect to receive any special recognition for her generous gesture. The government of the Dominican Republic capitalized on this story, defined Sonia Marmolejos as a heroine, and used her actions as a metaphor to illustrate the charitable response of the country toward neighboring Haiti.

Haiti and the Dominican Republic share the island of Hispaniola and a history of colonialism which, however, has conjugated itself in very different ways. Officially under Spanish rule since 1493, the island was mostly left unpopulated for three-quarters of a century. In 1625 the French started to occupy parts of it (mainly in the north) and until the official recognition of the French colony of Saint-Domingue in 1777, they constantly pushed forward their unofficial borders, while the Spanish carried out punitive raids to eradicate the French presence. On the Spanish side, the economy was mainly livestock-based but the French developed an impressive network of plantations which relied on the constant import of enslaved labor from Africa. Saint-Domingue soon became the richest and most profitable colony of the Antilles until 1791, when a formidable slave revolt shook its foundations and had momentous repercussions throughout the island. Hispaniola became a war zone: the French, Spanish, English, and rebel armies forged and broke alliances and alternatively secured and lost portions of territory. In 1804, the formerly enslaved insurgents declared their independence from France and the colony of Saint-Domingue became the Republic of Haiti. The Black Jacobins and their successors repeatedly tried to export the values of their revolution to the Spanish part of the island and in 1822 the Haitian president Jean-Pierre Boyer annexed the former Spanish colony of Santo Domingo. The Haitian occupation of Santo Domingo lasted twenty years, until 1844. The Haitian

government, however, did not officially recognize the independence of the formerly Spanish part until 1855 and its dream of unification ended in 1856, when the Haitians were defeated by the Hispanic army. Dominican nationalistic discourses insist, however, that the Haitian threat was (is) far from over and that since 1856 the Haitians simply “adopted a new plan; peaceful penetration [whereby] a constant flux of immigrants crosses the frontier every day” trying to escape poverty (Sanchez Ventura 2006 in Piantini 2001:16). For complex reasons which include the “reparation” that, in 1825, Haiti was required to pay to France in order to be recognized as a sovereign nation by the international community,¹ the former affluent French colony of Saint-Domingue, the Pearl of the Antilles, has become an extremely impoverished nation, and it is now the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. The number of Haitian immigrants present in the Dominican Republic is difficult to establish but negative attitudes toward them have always been widespread and prove difficult to eradicate. After the 2010 Haitian earthquake, prejudice and discrimination have not really disappeared even though the Dominican Republic has managed to change its international reputation: formerly considered a country where Haitian immigrant workers were denied their human rights, it is now seen as Haiti’s “Good Samaritan” (Wooding 2010:5-7). Yet, the spontaneous behavior of Sonia Marmolejos, who has publicly declared that she does not differentiate between Haitians and Dominicans, is in sharp contrast with the official reaction by her government which awarded her the Grado de Caballero in the Mérito de Duarte, Sánchez y Mella for helping *Haitian* children (Rodriguez 2011:83-87).² In other words, while Marmolejos’s gesture implicitly erases the geopolitical border and the mental barriers which have divided the island of Hispaniola since colonial times, the Dominican government’s response subtly, but forcefully, reinstates them.

This sketchy chronology of historical relations and the anecdote of Sonia Marmolejos foreground the continuities and discontinuities, ruptures and synergies that characterize and have characterized the relations between the two nations present on this island. Deep tensions, contradictory dynamics, and interactions engendered by the presence of an international border in Hispaniola are also highlighted in the work of Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry which concerns itself with pre-revolutionary French Saint-Domingue and Spanish Santo Domingo. A prominent member of the white Creole elite born in Martinique in 1750, Saint-Méry is the author of a monumental work which set out to describe Hispaniola in its

1. The last instalment was paid in 1922.

2. Ironically, in 1844 Pablo Duarte, Francisco del Rosario Sánchez, and Matías Ramón Mella, the so-called *Padres de la Patria*, were the leaders of the movement which led to the Dominican Republic’s independence from Haitian rule, and the Dominicans still celebrate February 27, 1844 as their Independence Day.

entirety but within the framework of its geopolitical colonial division. The *Description topographique et politique de la partie espagnole de l'Isle Saint-Domingue* published in Philadelphia in 1796 was followed, a year later, by the *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'Isle Saint-Domingue*.³ With its neat twofold division, Saint-Méry's work is organized in a way that invites readers to take for granted the partition of the island between Spain and France and betrays Saint-Méry's determination to contribute to the consolidation of what Richard Muir would call a "vertical interface." "International boundaries," Muir contends, "[are] located at the interfaces between adjacent ... territories [and] sovereignties [which] intersect the surface of the earth"; according to Muir, "as vertical interfaces, such boundaries have no horizontal extent" (Muir 1975:119). Saint-Méry's *Description of the partie française* has received more attention from historians and scholars, particularly because it contains his well-known detailed racial taxonomies and offers precious information on pre-revolutionary Saint-Domingue. What matters here, however, is that back in the eighteenth century, Saint-Méry had realized that, in order to be fully understood, the island of Hispaniola had to be approached in its entirety. Moreover, both Saint-Méry's *Descriptions*, whilst being ultimately committed to the (re)inscription of the colonial frontier, intriguingly oscillate between its erasure and its reinforcement. In other words, as determined as he might have been to contribute to the consolidation of the colonial border which, at the time of writing had only very recently been officially sanc-

3. In April 2010, I consulted the manuscript of the two volumes of the *Description de la partie espagnole* in the Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer in Aix-en-Provence (ms F³ 102-3). The pages of the manuscript are divided in two columns, one of which contains additions or amendments presumably included during revisions. With regards to content, the manuscript is not dramatically different from the version which was printed in Philadelphia so, in this paper, I will be referring to the printed version pointing out significant discrepancies from the manuscript when necessary. In the Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer I also found the manuscript of the English translation of the *Description de la partie espagnole* (2 vols – ms F³ 104-5) which was published immediately after the French edition and which had not yet been catalogued (the *Description de la partie espagnole* erroneously appeared to be in 4 volumes and catalogued as ms F³ 102-5). The *Description de la partie espagnole* was translated by William Cobbett but Saint-Méry played an active role in the translation as testified by the many letters the two exchanged and which are included in the first volume of the manuscript. Here I will be referring to this translation unless otherwise specified. The translation presents no division into columns but its pages are not always consistently numbered – Volume I is especially erratic. In my references I will be giving the page number or letter on the manuscript accompanied by the page number of the 1796 printed French edition. The manuscript of the English translation will be referred to as ms, vol. I or vol. II while the *Description de la partie espagnole* will be referred to as PE, vol. I or vol. II. Quotations from and references to the *Description de la partie française* will be referred to as PF, vol. I or vol. II and in this case all translations into English are mine.

tioned, Saint-Méry also reveals the existence of horizontal dimensions and dynamics which transcend and traverse this vertical interface.

In order to appreciate the nature and purpose of Saint-Méry's intervention it is vital to remember that the relationship between the two sides of Hispaniola had not only been characterized by antagonism but also by other kinds of interactions, mutual influences, and collaborative linkages. Contraband and illicit trade between the two parts of the island were an open secret; for a long time, the two colonies were prevented from trading with one another by their respective mother countries but did it all the same, out of necessity and mutual advantage. Santo Domingo's livestock economy depended in great part on the contraband trade with Saint-Domingue and, as we will see, gave rise to a different relationship between masters and slaves. Like leather and beef, slaves were bought and sold across the border both legally and illegally and the French did sometimes "borrow" them from the Spanish when they needed more workers (Matibag 2003:50, 58). Saint-Domingue's slaves also crossed the border of their own volition and with the active assistance and complicity of the Maroon communities (Fouchard 1981:276-78). They were constantly drawn to the Spanish side of the island by the enticing promises of the colonists and authorities who generally granted them freedom because for a long time they could not participate in the slave trade and did not have the financial resources to buy labor and develop a plantation economy (Silié 2007:141, 143). The relative proximity of the Spanish border has in fact been identified as one of the main causes of *marronage*, a major problem for French plantation owners (Matibag 2003:54; Fouchard 1981:274). These across-the-border trajectories and connections gave rise to alternative networks and created borderlands characterized by a horizontality which cut through and exploded the official vertical frontier. In the *Description de la partie française*, Saint-Méry identifies the troublesome Sierra de Bahoruco as a region unto itself, a borderland which did not really belong to either of the colonial powers. He refers in detail to the Bahoruco maroons' protracted defiance to colonial authority and to the intensification of their incursions from the Spanish side into the Saint-Domingue border region of Cul-de-Sac, Anses à Pitre, Fond Parisien, Croix-de-Bouquet, and Mirebalais throughout the eighteenth century. Saint-Méry also retraces the history of the Bahoruco region and explains how its topography and toponomastic had been deeply affected by anticolonial rebellions from a very early age. The Étang-Salé, he adds, was renamed Henriquille or Petit-Henry because it was the place where the sixteenth-century Indian rebel leader Enriquillo or cacique Henry met François de Barrio Nuovo who was on a peace-seeking mission on behalf of the Emperor Charles V.⁴ Moreover, as Saint-Méry continues,

the canton of Anses à Pitre still contains evidence of the precautions that the cacique took to avoid falling into the power of his enemy. At Anse-à-

4. PF, vol. II, p. 496.

Boeuf one can find a semicircular retrenchment about four and a half feet deep, attached to a mountain at each side ... All around there are caves full of human bones. Anse-à-Boeuf is connected with the Etang-Salé by a gorge which widens slightly at a point called Fond-Trélinguet and which runs to the Saint-Jean de la Croix-des-Bouquets district to connect the plain of Cul-de-Sac to Fond-Parisien. This connection is described by several hunters and was verified no longer than twenty-five years ago.⁵

For more than eighty-five years, Saint-Méry writes, the region in question was occupied by the maroons who regarded it as their own domain⁶ and who continued to adapt indigenous caves to their strategic needs well into the nineteenth century.

Saint-Méry's admirably detailed volumes on Hispaniola were the product of eighteen years of work⁷ during which he benefited from direct experience in the two colonies, access to both local archives (private and public), and documents relevant to the colonial administration to be found in Europe. An advocate for more economic and political autonomy for the colony, Saint-Méry actively participated in the French Revolution and for a short period he was even in charge of the Bastille after July 14. However, he held moderate pro-slavery and pro-monarchic views which obliged him to abandon the ranks of the Reformers and flee France in 1793. Saint-Méry then moved to Philadelphia where he opened a publishing house and a bookshop and where he published both his *Descriptions*. The two volumes devoted to the Spanish side were the first to be printed not as Saint-Méry's choice but as the result of the cession of Spanish Santo Domingo to France in 1795. This geopolitical fact, Saint-Méry explains, made him think that "the publication of the description of the Spanish part of that Isle, would be interesting to the public."⁸ Saint-Méry further discusses the possible reasons behind this interest: knowing more about Santo Domingo, the first American colony, is helpful to better understand what he calls "the European genius."⁹ More poignantly, since the cession had dismantled the colonial administrative system he so carefully and minutely describes, his work is precious in that it gives his readers a precise sense of what had been destroyed.¹⁰ This declaration of purpose sustains both his *Descriptions* which he prefaces by informing his readers that he deliberately omitted to report any changes related to or derived from 1789.¹¹ In the very title of the volume devoted to the French side, he

5. PF, vol. II, pp. 496-97.

6. PF, vol. II, p. 497.

7. Ms, vol. I, p. B; PE, vol. I, p. 2.

8. Ms, vol. I, p. D; PE, vol. I, p. 4.

9. Ms, vol. I, p. E; PE, vol. I, p. 5.

10. Ms, vol. I, p. EF; PE, vol. I, pp. 5-6.

11. Of course this is not entirely true. For example, the 2004 reproduction of the manuscript of *Description de la partie française* includes all the passages that Saint-Méry

indicates that his analysis covers the status quo up to October 18, 1789, significantly, only thirteen days after Louis XVI assented to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and four days before the National Assembly accepted the petition of rights of “free citizens of color” from Saint-Domingue. In other words, the text is suspended *before* the moment in which Enlightenment emancipationism had what Saint-Méry considered lethal consequences for the colonial social and racial structure.

In the “Discours Préliminaire” of the first volume on the French side, Saint-Méry famously compares Saint-Domingue to the past civilizations of Greece and Rome¹² but, by and large, his nostalgia for the past is accompanied by a strong desire to shape the future, to “make” history, not just to report it:

But, & I cannot give up my hopes ... France might need some information to assist her in choosing what to do in order to turn Saint-Domingue once again into a profitable colony.¹³

As we will see, Saint-Méry’s projected future of further development and exploitation also had a spatial, not only a temporal, dimension which was nevertheless rife with anxieties and contradictions.

The *Description de la partie espagnole* begins with an *Abrégé historique*, or *Historical Summary*, which records, at length, the vicissitudes of the colonial border from 1630, date of the arrival of the French Buccaneers on the island of Tortue, to 1777, when the Treaty of Aranjuez between France and Spain (provisionally) finalized the frontier between the two colonies.¹⁴ From the Spanish perspective, the treaty of Aranjuez legitimized the occupation of their territory by French buccaneers and other outlaws – Saint-Méry calls them “Adventurers”¹⁵ – but in his unsurprisingly biased *Historical Summary*, Saint-Méry chronicles the progress of the French settlement on the island omitting the fact that they had actually occupied the Spanish colony illegally. According to the treaty, which the conscientious and cunning Saint-Méry appends to the *Historical Summary*,¹⁶ the border begins with the River

decided to eliminate in 1797. One can for example find an argument in support of a more “humane” form of slavery written in 1788 or 1789 which Saint-Méry later decided to suppress – (tome I, p. 46). Most of Saint-Méry’s amendments, however, are not as significant as this particular one.

12. PF, vol. I, p. viii.

13. PF, vol. I, pp. v-vi.

14. In the manuscript, the historical summary is to be found in the first volume and is numbered rather chaotically: i-xxiii; A-Z; Aa-Ss; xli-xlix; PE, vol. I, pp. i-xxij.

15. Ms, vol. I, p. i; PE, vol. I, p. i.

16. In the manuscript, the treatise is chaotically numbered and is to be found at K-xlvi; PE, vol. I, pp. xxij-xlvi.

d'Ajabon or Massacre in the north of the island and ends with the River Anses-à-Pitre or Pedernales in the south.¹⁷ The treaty also determines where the line of demarcation must be signposted on the territory by 221 pairs of stone pyramids bearing the inscription "France: Espana."¹⁸ In other words, before he begins to describe the two sides of the island, Saint-Méry wants to make sure that his readers appreciate the difference between a disordered *lived in place* (the product of the territorial conflicts between the two colonies and of across-the-border activities) and the order inherent in a *conceived* place (the two colonies as defined by the vertical interface). Yet, the fact that the treaty specifies that anyone caught destroying or tampering with the stone pyramids will be condemned to death and that both colonies should do everything in their power to discourage contraband is symptomatic of a widespread lack of trust in the effectiveness of a legally sanctioned vertical boundary.¹⁹ Saint-Méry includes the treaty and detailed information regarding the borderline only in the *Description de la partie espagnole* despite the fact that, arguably, they were relevant to both sides of the border. Its omission from the *Description de la partie française* was instrumental to the "naturalization" of the French presence on Hispaniola implicit in Saint-Méry's decision to mirror the newly officialized geopolitical division of the island (*partie française* and *partie espagnole*) in the textual organization of his work.

Saint-Méry's *Description de la partie espagnole* provides a picture of the political and religious structure of the Spanish side (i.e. mayors, archbishops), incorporates ethnographic material (i.e. "Character and manners of the Spanish Creoles") and tidily organizes his survey by administrative areas (i.e. "Bahoruco and its vicinity") and geographical features (i.e. "Mountains," "Plains," and "Rivers"). Similarly, his *Description de la partie française* contains topographic, ethnographic, and administrative information on the three different parts of the French colony (Partie du Nord, Partie de l'Ouest, and Partie du Sud) and it is also minutely organized parish by parish. Unsurprisingly, however, the "neutral" word *Description* is not the most appropriate to define Saint-Méry's encyclopedic work.

Saint-Méry's survey of the territory of the French colony incessantly celebrates the fact that it is punctuated by sugar plantations and other manufactures. For example, in the small border district of Maribarou (which belongs partly to the Parish of Fort Dauphine and partly to the Parish of Ouanaminthe

17. Owing its name to "ancient murderous acts reciprocally committed by the Buccaneers and the Spaniards in their disputes over the territory" (PF, vol. I, p. 108) the River Massacre still marks the Northern internal border of the island. In both *Descriptions* the River Massacre is also called Dajabon, d'Ajabon, Dahabon, or Daxabon (the spelling is unstable) after the small border town alongside which it runs.

18. PE, vol. I, p. xxvii; ms, vol. I, p. U.

19. PE, vol. I, p. xlv, xlvi.

in the *Partie du Nord*) Saint-Méry proudly counts twenty-seven sugar plantations – that is, five more than the ones active in the whole of Santo Domingo. In his meticulous depiction of the Spanish side of the border from Daxabon in the north to the *étangs* or ponds in the south,²⁰ Saint-Méry predominantly highlights the different conditions of the two colonies. In his description of the Baye de Mancenille on the northern coast of Hispaniola, for example, he observes that

the most striking circumstance and that perhaps which is the most proper to mark the character of the two nations is to see on the west side of the River Massacre, settlements where everything bespoke an active industry, and a degree of wealth that extends even to objects of luxury, while on the other side, all appears barren.²¹

Also further away from the border, the beauty of Santo Domingo is hardly ever contemplated for its own sake; more often than not, Saint-Méry's landscaping turns into a criticism of the Spanish colonists' way of life:

The delighted eye sweeps around over the Cape Raphael, the Pointe-de-l'Épée, all the settlement of the immense plains de Seybo and Higuey, Santo Domingo and its environs, and finds no end of its variegated pleasures till it arrives at the east of the group of Cibao. In this extensive view there are a thousand spots which, for a time, charm the sight and withhold it from the general picture by a display of more picturesque and striking beauties. All is regular confusion and majestic simplicity ...

What sorrow must the beholder of all these riches feel when he considers, that nature has lavished them in vain. That they have served only to awaken the drowsy Spaniard a moment from his torpidity in order to sink the unhappy Indians to the grave in laboring to satisfy his guilty avarice, his thirst for gold, to him superior to all but in indolence.²²

This waste of resources is widespread. In the French side one can find 793 *sucreries*, 3,150 *indigoterics*, 789 *cotonneries*, and 3,117 *cafeteries*,²³ but Spanish Santo Domingo, despite being much larger than its French counter-

20. Ms, vol. I, pp. 243-83; PE, vol. I, pp. 252-82.

21. Ms, vol. I, pp. 10-11; PE, vol. I, pp. 206-7.

22. Ms, vol. I, pp. 242-43; PE, vol. I, pp. 154-55. There is a mistake in the translation because the French original refers to the west and not to the east of the group of Cibao. In the manuscript of the French version, the second part of this quotation where Spanish indolence, torpidity, guilty avarice, and thirst for gold are emphasized, appears in the column for revisions and additions (vol. I, 125 Verso).

23. PF, vol. I, p. 100.

part, only counts 22 sugar manufactures of any consequence; coffee, cotton, and cocoa are grown just to meet the need of the locals, and indigo, which used to be cultivated, only grows spontaneously.²⁴ Many of the pastures of Santo Domingo are infested by “lineonal,” “mirtle,” “wild basilick,” and other plants not suitable for the subsistence of livestock²⁵ and the mines of the Spanish side are rich but have not been exploited.²⁶ Overall, Saint-Méry concludes, the Spanish colony is able to survive only because of its licit and illicit trade with the French side.²⁷

Spanish indolence, however, is not just a waste of resources but also a dangerous habit: as we have seen, Saint-Méry is deeply concerned about the fertile border area of the Bahoruco which, sadly neglected by the Spanish, has in fact become the “place of refuge of the fugitive Spanish and French negroes.”²⁸ Once again, the author remarks how one could instead advantageously mine gold there²⁹ and cultivate different crops including indigo, cotton, tobacco, coffee, and, obviously, sugar.³⁰ More precisely, he claims, one could establish more than two hundred and fifty sugar manufactures in the area.³¹ All in all, Saint-Méry infers that the French (but he prudently uses passive sentences or the pronoun *on* all along) would make better use of the Spanish colony’s resources. For instance, he claims that Azua’s “territory might certainly have four hundred sugar plantations and furnish employment for 80,000 negroes,” and hypothesizes that “it would be an easy matter to establish in the plain, between Santo Domingo and Pointe-de-l’Épée, many hundreds of sugar plantations.”³²

The island is therefore re-imagined transformed and homogenized into an extended version of Saint-Domingue with one sugar plantations after the other. In order to do so, Saint-Méry’s gaze substitutes the concrete and unruly reality of “place” with an abstract homogenous “space” in which those dissimilarities which ironically presuppose the existence of a vertical border between

24. Ms, vol. I, p. 60; PE, vol. I, pp. 63-64.

25. Ms, vol. I, p. 275; PE, vol. I, p. 275.

26. See, for example, ms, vol. I, p. 150; PE, vol. I, pp. 109; ms, vol. I, pp. 240-41; PE, vol. I, pp. 153-54.

27. See, for example, ms, vol. I, p. 220 and pp. 272, 273, 274 ; PE, vol. I, p. 142 and pp. 272, 273, 274 and ms, vol. II, p. 99; PE, vol. II, p. 99.

28. Ms, vol. I, p. 88; PE, vol. I, p. 80.

29. Ms, vol. I, p. 88; PE, vol. I, p. 80.

30. Ms, vol. I, p. 95; PE, vol. I, p. 83.

31. Ms, vol. I, pp. 94-95; PE, vol. I, p. 83.

32. Ms, vol. I, p. 124; PE, vol. I, p. 97, and ms, vol. I, p. 264; PE, vol. I, p. 167. In the “Table générale des matières contenues dans cet ouvrage,” under “Sucreries,” Saint-Méry also lists: “Those which already are in the plain of Santo Domingo and the ones one could add to them” and “Those one could put in the plain of La Vega”), PE, vol. II, p. 305. The “Table générale des matières” is not in the manuscript of the English translation so the above translations are mine.

the two sides of the island and which, as we will see, he explores in detail in his oeuvre, are conveniently neutralized. The symbolic nature of the borderland is especially altered by Saint-Méry's projections: under the reader's eyes, the Bahoruco, a place qualified by underground and clandestine indigenous and black resistance, is transmuted into an ordered network of plantations, a dominated site of management and containment where everything is "on the surface" and under surveillance. Moreover, Saint-Méry's re-imaginings simultaneously explode the verticality of the international/colonial border and the horizontal dimension that characterizes the borderland of the Maroons' Sierra de Bahoruco and substitute them with a different form of horizontality engendered by assimilation and by the total obliteration of differences and dissent. Saint-Méry's landscaping, therefore, betrays an underlying urge to conjure up a safe perspective from which to approach border politics and frame both borderland and the people living on it and which transcends scientific, objective "description." This urge becomes particularly poignant if one considers that while he was revising his work in 1793,³³ the Spanish colony was offering sanctuary to fugitive rebels from Saint-Domingue and lending them arms to support their struggle. Furthermore, in 1795, the Peace of Basle had sanctioned the cession of Santo Domingo to the French *République* and in 1796, date of publication of the *Description de la partie espagnole*, Toussaint's collaboration with the Republican government (that is, Saint-Méry's own enemies) was becoming stricter.

In his landscaping of the island, Saint-Méry constantly emphasizes the importance of human intervention to turn sterility into fertility. A plantation estate, Saint-Méry explains in the volumes devoted to Saint-Domingue, is a "grand and fine machine"³⁴ which also requires the work of engineers to function properly. Sugar and indigo production heavily depended on the presence of mills and other machines and on adequate irrigation. Time and time again, Saint-Méry proudly points out how the nature of vast areas of the French colony destined to sterility because of annual droughts had been dramatically altered with *ad hoc* hydraulic works. A case in point is the area on the French side of the River Massacre which could have been as dry and sterile as the Spanish one if the colonists and the colonial administration had not intervened. Since 1730 the inhabitants of the region had tried to find ways in which the water of the River Massacre could be used to irrigate the soil and move plantation mills. Their efforts were perfected in 1786, when it was decided that the five *habitations* in the area would benefit from a new water pipe from the river and their rights to the water and order of access to it were established by law.³⁵ Saint-Méry's triumphal tone seems to imply that

33. Ms, vol. I, p. A; PE, vol. I, p. 1.

34. Ms, vol. II, p. 229; PE, vol. II, p. 229.

35. PF, vol. I, pp. 127-28. Also when he describes Cul-de-Sac, an area close to the border in the Partie de L'Ouest, Saint-Méry highly praises French hydraulic engineering and its benefits (see PF, vol. II, p. 282).

the industriousness of the French practically “entitles” them to ownership of the Spanish part. This was not a new argument: for example, in 1730 it had been put forward rather forcefully by the Jesuit Pierre François-Xavier de Charlevoix in *Histoire de l’isle espagnole ou de Saint-Domingue*, one of Saint-Méry’s own sources.³⁶ The typical colonialist recasting of someone else’s land as an “empty space” which should be inhabited and put to good use is applied here to a territory occupied by another colonial power rather than to one belonging to an indigenous population. The border between the two colonies is re-imagined in a way which anticipates, albeit in a different context and historical juncture, Jackson Turner’s (1920) conceptualization of the westward-receding (North) American frontier which is inhabited but, paradoxically, unsettled, and therefore, implicitly, free land.

Enthusiasm for technological advancement notwithstanding, Saint-Méry is always careful to depict Saint-Domingue’s sugar plantations as almost “second nature” to the land:

But what a delicious view is offered to the voyageur when, at the extremity of these savannahs, he discovers the rich plain of the Maribarous district!

His eye glides over sugarcane fields ... he loves the effect that is produced on these waves of green, and then some trees of a deeper green put here and there as if to vary the scene. The buildings of a great number of manufactures add some interest to the scene and the woods on the shores of the Massacre River, crown and mark the horizon.³⁷

Once again Saint-Méry does not simply describe what he sees. He purposefully produces “delicious” views which are offered to the reader as evidence of the “progress that civilization had brought to the colony” of Saint-Domingue.³⁸ Significantly, in the above “vista,” the River Massacre is equated with the horizon which is “marked” by the river trees: the messy Spanish side on the other side of the border has literally and conveniently fallen off the edge of the horizon. The “scene” that the reader is invited to share with the *voyageur* is both framed (the vegetation “crowns” the horizon) and staged: Saint-Méry openly talks about “view” (*vue* in the original), candidly admits that he knows a thing or two about landscaping (“as if to vary the scene”) and depicts the sugarcane plantations and the interesting buildings next to them as empty of human figures. As Raymond Williams (1973:120) has famously noted, “a working country is hardly ever a landscape”; the lack of human figures in Saint-Méry’s “description” leads us to

36. Saint-Méry refers to Charlevoix’s work repeatedly in the *Description de la partie française* (see vol. I, pp. 118, 218, 265, 538).

37. PF, vol. I, p. 126.

38. PF, vol. I, p. xii.

conclude that he must have been embarrassingly aware that a country where slaves were worked to death, was even less so.

By 1789, that is at the time of Saint-Méry's "snapshot" of the colony, two-thirds of the roughly half a million slaves were African-born because the slave population of Saint-Domingue never really reproduced itself. The average working life of a plantation slave born in the colony was little more than fifteen years and no longer than that of creolized Africans who had survived the initial years. Slave mortality was due to overwork, undernourishment, and cruelty (Fick 1990:25-27). In Saint-Domingue, the field-slave quarters were small, with internal partitions and no windows, and, crucially, at some distance from the master's *grande case* or "great house" (Fick 1990:30-31). Slaves were organized into *ateliers* (work groups) according to their strength and health and all under the direct orders of a *commandeur*, frequently a Creole slave who would be given better clothing than the others to mark his higher status (Fick 1990:27, 30). Saint-Méry was very well aware of the different roles slaves had to play in sugar plantations: amongst the two hundred slaves he thought were necessary to run a sugar plantation of a hundred *carreaux* of land he also lists thirty artisans and domestics.³⁹ These domestic slaves, or *nègres à talent*, were also distinguishable from other slaves because of finer clothing, better food, and an overall better treatment. Generally, Saint-Méry writes, in the French colony, slaves were subjected to an "exact discipline."⁴⁰

The *Description de la partie espagnole* informs us that, on the Spanish side, things were a far cry from the hierarchically organized plantations of Saint-Domingue. In Santo Domingo, Saint-Méry contends, "slaves are treated with a mildness unknown of other nations"⁴¹ and, to their masters, they are "rather companion than slaves."⁴² This "mildness" had pragmatic reasons rather than moral ones: Spanish slaveowners were keen to extend the lives of their slaves for as long as possible because for a long time they had no access to the slave trade and suffered from a shortage of capital (Silie 2007:141). However, while in the city, slaves enjoyed a greater freedom than their companions who worked in plantations, in Santo Domingo's sugar mills the whip was widely used and slavery operated exactly as in other colonies (Deive 2007:96-97, 99, 108). In his account, however, Saint-Méry focuses on the fact that the Spanish Creoles were more likely to raising cattle than to cultivate the land⁴³ and emphasizes the resulting lack of social distinction between humans and, ultimately, between even humans and animals.

39. Ms, vol. II, pp. 225-29 ; PE, vol. II, pp. 225-29.

40. Ms, vol. I, p. 53; PE, vol. I, p. 60.

41. Ms, vol. I, p. 51; PE, vol. I, p. 59.

42. Ms, vol. I, p. 53; PE, vol. I, p. 60.

43. In his description of the Spanish side of the border area Saint-Méry counts numerous *hattes* but no *sucrieries* (ms, vol. I, pp. 243-87; PE, vol. I, pp. 243-87).

Animals, he explains, are raised in *hattes* usually run by members of the same family, occasionally with the help of black slaves. According to him, this lifestyle would not be suitable for the French, “a lively, enterprising people, soon disgusted with whatever has the air of monotony.”⁴⁴ The *hatters* live in what are disparagingly described as

miserable huts, the sides of which are of piles or planks badly joined and the roof of straw. There is commonly a room from about 12 to 18 feet square, in which is a table, 2 to 3 stools and a *hamac*. The bed chamber is another room, not so large as the former containing several truckle-beds ... If it rains, the gutters formed by the openings, make the water fall on the inside, and the floor which is not paved and which differs from the neighboring meadows only in that the continual trodding has worn off the grass, is in a moment ankle-deep in mud.⁴⁵

The porosity of the hut, the inside of which is almost indistinguishable from the outside, mirrors Saint-Méry’s suggestion that it was not easy to separate the social status of the workers who lived there and, implicitly, the conditions of humans from the conditions of livestock. Conversely, in the eyes of some planters of French Saint-Domingue, their slaves *only* were not entirely distinguishable from cattle. The 1685 Black Code established that slaves were entitled to two changes of clothes per year but it was not unusual to see them move around in tatters or completely naked. When questioned by a visitor about the nakedness of his slaves, a Saint-Domingue colonist is reported to have matter-of-factly replied: “why not also ask us to put clothes on our cows, mules and dogs?” (Malenfant 1814 in Fouchard 1981:41).

In his *Description de la partie espagnole*, Saint-Méry informs us that the population of the Spanish colony was composed of three classes: “the Whites, the Freed-People and the Slaves. The Freed-People are few in number if compared to the Whites but their number is considerable if compared with that of the slaves.”⁴⁶ The process of “affranchissement” or “freeing” for slaves, he continues, is extremely easy in Santo Domingo as discriminatory laws exist but are “absolutely disregarded.” Moreover, not only does the political constitution of the colony admit “no distinction between the civil rights of a white inhabitant and those of a free-person”⁴⁷ but “that prejudice with respect to colour, so powerful with other nations among whom it fixes a bar between the Whites and the Freed People and their descendants, is almost

44. Ms, vol. II, p. 209; PE, vol. II, p. 209.

45. Ms, vol. I, pp. 70-71; PE, vol. I, pp. 70-71.

46. Ms, vol. I, pp. 47-48; PE, vol. I, p. 57.

47. Ms, vol. I, p. 51; PE, vol. I, pp. 58-59.

unknown in the Spanish part of Santo Domingo.”⁴⁸ For his *Description* of the Spanish part as a prejudice-free colony, Saint-Méry relied on the work of Antonio Sánchez Valverde Ocaña, a lawyer, theologian, and author of *Idea del Valor de la Isla Espanola, y utilidades, que de ella puede sacar su monarquía* which was published in Madrid in 1785 and contains an accurate geographical and topographical description of Santo Domingo as well as commentaries on its history and on its sociopolitical and racial fabric.⁴⁹ Sanchez Valverde was a member of the white slave-holding class with a very clear political and racial agenda: he vehemently condemned the ease with which slaves were emancipated in the Spanish colony and resorted to the discourse of morality to support his position. More often than not, he explained, manumissions were sinful acts because they were the consequence of too close a “familiarity” between masters and female slaves (Sanchez Valverde 1988:254). Sanchez Valverde pragmatically praised the French system which required that the masters who wanted to free one of their slaves had to pay one hundred and fifty pesos to the king because he considered it an effective way of discouraging widespread manumissions and, indirectly, of upholding social and racial discrimination (Sanchez Valverde 1988:225). However, despite this “tax,” in 1789 Saint-Domingue, the number of *affranchis* had reached a near-equal balance with the white population. They owned one-third of the plantation property, one-quarter of the slaves, and one-quarter of the real estate property but they were kept in a constant state of resentment and degradation by vehemently enforced discriminatory laws aimed at maintaining white supremacy. The *affranchis* were legally defined as a distinct and subordinate social “caste” as it was understood that they forever retained the “imprint” of slavery no matter how far removed they were from their black origin (Fick 1990:19-21). As Saint-Méry writes, the allegedly indelible imprint of slavery was crucial to arguments aimed at reinforcing white privilege:

To support the opinion which does not admit the possibility of a total disappearance of the trace of intermixing and therefore wants that a prolonged ad infinitum will always separate white descendants from the rest it is understood that the hue which becomes weaker in two or three generations surfaces again and reveals the African mixture; and [it is also under-

48. Ms, vol. I, p. 49-50; PE, vol. I, pp. 58-59. In the English translation, the adjective “salutary” was added to “prejudice” but later deleted.

49. In particular, Saint-Méry praises Sanchez Valverde’s work and declares that he has followed its structure in his *Description* (PE, vol. I, pp. 37-38); he then refers to his views on the irrigation of the Artibonite plain (PE, vol. I, p. 265) and to his discussion of the potential benefits of the development of agriculture and the exploitation of the mines in the Spanish part of the island (PE, vol. II, pp. 155-56).

stood] that colour is not the best marker but the whole of the traits such as a flat nose, thick lips are very indicative of the origin.⁵⁰

This “opinion,” Saint-Méry insists, was the product of the “eye of prejudice”⁵¹ but, ironically, and despite his affected distancing from prejudice, Saint-Méry himself does not seem exempt from it. It is worth remembering here that the title page of the volumes devoted to the French colony indicates that Saint-Méry chose to “freeze” the colony *before* the (to him, disgraceful) moment in which the National Assembly accepted the petition of rights of “free citizens of color” from Saint-Domingue. Moreover, in his *Description de la partie française*, Saint-Méry famously includes his well-known and extremely elaborated racial classification scheme in which he claims that the presence of black parts in different quantities is responsible for various distinctive traits in an individual. Amongst them he identifies, or rather, “constructs,” distinct hues of whiteness (i.e. “The Quarteron has white skin but shaded to a very pale yellow”) or physical weakness and incapacity to reproduce (i.e. “The Métif is even weaker than the White ... and more overpowered by the climate. He hardly reproduces himself”).⁵²

If read together, the two *Descriptions* give the border an important role to play in the racial politics of Hispaniola because, Saint-Méry maintains, color and blood did not seem to be given the same significance in the social hierarchy of the French and Spanish colonies. Furthermore, Saint-Méry claims that “it is true, and even strictly so, that the major part of the Spanish colonists are a mixed-race: this one African feature, and sometimes more than one, often betrays.”⁵³ Saint-Méry, however quickly adds that many white Creoles of Santo Domingo – and he mentions Sanchez Valverde as his primary example – would reject with indignation this suggestion.⁵⁴ In *Idea del valor de la isla Espanola*, Sanchez Valverde sounds totally outraged by the allegations made by those metropolitan historians – he refers to the French Weuves (1780) in particular – who suggested that the mixed blood of the colonists was the reason for their laziness and, ultimately, behind Santo Domingo’s poverty (Sanchez Valverde 1988:245). According to Weuves, the indolent Spanish colonists could hardly be called “Spanish” because they were almost invariably mixed with Caribs and blacks. Moreover, he also claimed that Spain itself did not contain a single drop of pure blood because of the presence of blacks in its colonies and, earlier on, of the Moors on its territory (Sanchez

50. PF, vol. I, p. 86.

51. PF, vol. I, p. 87.

52. PF, vol. I, p. 76, 78.

53. Ms, vol. I, p. 49; PE, vol. I, p. 59. In the French manuscript this remark is to be found in the column for revisions and addition (54 Verso).

54. PE, vol. I, p. 59.

Valverde 1988:245). Sanchez Valverde replied to these assertions by saying that Spanish blood was as pure as the blood one could find on any other European nation (an interestingly ambiguous answer) and, more specifically, by insisting that the Spanish colonists of Hispaniola had better preserved their purity than their aristocratic French counterparts who frequently married rich *mulatas* (Sanchez Valverde 1988:245-46). For these early historiographers of the island, therefore, the vertical frontier seems also to have functioned as an imagined demarcation between “proper” and “improper” racial relations since they lamented that, on the other side, purity of blood was not upheld as it should have been. It was an “imagined” demarcation because, despite its topographical and political instability, this border was clearly inscribed on their mental map of the island. Most importantly, it was “imagined” because miscegenation was an incontrovertible, and, simultaneously, paradoxically and painstakingly denied fact, on both sides of the border.⁵⁵

Saint-Méry’s urge to construct the rigid racial taxonomy that he is (in) famous for is therefore better understood in the context of the “imagined” partitioned island as a whole. His racial divisions and subdivisions pertaining to the population of Saint-Domingue are concomitant to his positing of the colonial frontier as a flimsy boundary beyond which, he claims, social and racial relations were not properly policed. It has been suggested that some of the terms Saint-Méry uses to designate mixed-race individuals – such as *Marabou* and *Griffon* or *Griffe* – are borrowed from beasts and mythical monsters (Dayan 1998:232-33).⁵⁶ These onomastic practices collapse distinction between the animal world and the human beings in question and resonate with Saint-Méry’s comments on the almost animalesque life and customs of the *hattiers* of the Spanish part. Things, however, were more complicated than this and Saint-Méry found himself in a tricky position vis-à-vis the exploration of the reasons underpinning Santo Domingo’s pitiable state of affairs. On the one hand, he seems to inscribe himself in the French “tradition” of blaming the bad temperament and laziness of the Spaniards for Santo Domingo’s problems and has no qualms about subscribing to French mixophobic discourses when he asserts that the Spanish colonists were, for the most part, a mixed race. On the other hand, Saint-Méry had carefully read Sanchez Valverde’s attack on French historians for what the Spanish Creole called “insolence” (Sanchez Valverde 1988:244-45) and was aware that he could not afford to ignore the broader implications of his own xenophobic and racist remarks. Saint-Méry was a

55. Saint-Méry might have had a *quarteronne* (three-quarters white) daughter called Ameinade with his housekeeper, a free woman of color who had worked for him for several years (John Garrigus quoted in Dubois 2004:68).

56. According to Dayan, “*Marabou* is the name of a bird” and “*Griffon* has numerous meanings: a coarse-haired dog, a fabulous animal with the head and wings of an eagle and hindquarters of a lion.”

French Creole very proud of his tropical origin – in the *Description de la partie française*, whenever possible, he catalogues and celebrates notable people born in the colony.⁵⁷ He also goes as far as saying that at birth, the white Creoles are endowed with a number of “gifts” that people born elsewhere do not receive and which are partly the result of Saint-Domingue’s climate. Unfortunately, he adds, they lose their advantage over others because they are spoiled as children by over-indulgent parents (especially Creole mothers who tend to be excessively sensitive and delicate), by the presence of slaves who are at their beck and call, and by a regrettable lack of proper education.⁵⁸ Sadly, he contends, these important factors are never taken into consideration when those born in the Americas are branded as inept or indolent⁵⁹ and in a short aside in the *Description de la partie espagnole*, Saint-Méry feels the need to clarify that he blames Spain rather than the Creole colonists whom, he reveals, are abandoned to their own devices by their central government.⁶⁰ In so doing, he simultaneously circumvents raciologic and anti-American/anti-Creole discourses and also aligns himself with his fellow Creole Sanchez Valverde in his firm rebuttal of the assertion that the people born in the New World were degenerate because under the unhealthy influence of the place they inhabited.⁶¹ The border between the two colonies is at this point provisionally erased by Saint-Méry in favor of the establishment of a white Creole transcolonial and transnational horizontal brotherhood which rejects tropical degeneration.⁶²

The differences in racial and social structuring between the two sides of the island presented by Saint-Méry are clearly at odds with his imaginary and appropriative landscaping of the Spanish colony: it just does not seem likely that the (allegedly) egalitarian society of Santo Domingo⁶³ could be as unproblematically assimilated to Saint-Domingue’s segregationist way of

57. For example, for the parish of Fort Dauphin he mentions Monsieur Croiseuil, translator of Ovid (PF, vol. I, p. 139) and for the Parish of Limonade he mentions Monsieur de Chabanon de l’Académie Française and of the Académie de Belles-Lettres and his brother, Monsieur Chabanon de Maugris, translator of Horace and author of *mémoires* published by the Académie de Sciences (PF, vol. I, p. 217).

58. PF, vol. I, pp. 12-14, 18.

59. PF, vol. I, p. 15.

60. PE, vol. I, pp. 300-1.

61. PE, vol. I, p. 301.

62. Saint-Méry also depicts black Creoles as superior to African blacks both physically and morally but that this is mainly due to their proximity to the whites from whom they learn how to behave (PF, vol. I, pp. 39-40).

63. The fugitive slaves from Saint Domingue were usually taken to a settlement on the eastern side of the Ozama River which was called San Lorenzo de los Minas. They were then forced to work in the *hatos* described above, in the capital’s construction sites for public buildings or to join the border militia. They were free, but racial and social prejudices condemned them to live as second-class citizens. It goes without saying, however,

life as his territorial projections seem to suggest and, indeed, advocate. Saint-Méry's fantasy of expansionism, in fact, had a very complicated relationship with reality. At the end of the second volume on Santo Domingo, he informs us that the question of a possible French acquisition of the Spanish side had actually been considered by the French since 1698.⁶⁴ Saint-Méry then proceeds to develop what seems a convincing argument which highlights six different reasons why France could benefit from the annexation of the Spanish part of Hispaniola.⁶⁵ Among other things, Saint-Méry points out that the elimination of the internal border of Hispaniola presupposed the elimination or at least the reduction of *marronage*,⁶⁶ a definite bonus for Saint-Domingue's planters. This argument is however followed by the articulation of a more detailed and even more persuasive line of reasoning that shows instead that this would be a disastrous option for France and by Saint-Méry voicing his unequivocal and vehement hostility to the notion of unification. His objections are all of a practical nature: most of all, Saint-Méry insists that it is impossible to build, man, and render profitable the same *sucreries* that his gaze so easily conjured up in the plains of Santo Domingo. What might appear bewildering at first, has instead a perfectly rational explanation.

Saint-Méry's opposition to an *actual* appropriation of Santo Domingo is incongruous with his imaginary landscaping of the colony only if one does not consider his utopian fantasy of an extended network of sugar plantations as another perfected imperial perspective which magically removes all that is discordant with it. Undoubtedly, the difficulties that the Saint-Domingue elite would have encountered in dealing with the population of Santo Domingo as described by Saint-Méry himself – that is with a majority of *sang-mêlé* colonizers, with *affranchis* used to having the same civil status as whites and slaves who could easily purchase their freedom and were treated with "mildness" – must not have escaped his meticulous reasoning on the feasibility of unification. Nevertheless, none of these considerations seem to underpin his decision to pronounce French expansion into Santo Domingo a mere "*chimère*."⁶⁷ Chimeras and reality, Saint-Méry insists, are poles apart but reality was most uncomfortably catching up with him. I have already

that as difficult as this predicament might have been, it was certainly preferable to slavery (Moya Pons 2009:86-97).

64. Ms, vol. II, p. 189; PE, vol. II, p. 189.

65. The six reasons that Saint-Méry enumerates and discusses are: "1) a more defensible position; 2) a greater security for navigation in war time; 3) a greater certainty of subsistence; 4) an augmentation of population; 5) a more extensive cultivation; 6) an augmentation of commerce" (ms, vol. II, pp. 190-240); (PE, vol. II, pp. 190-240).

66. Ms, vol. II, pp. 198-99; PE, vol. II, pp. 198-99. Interestingly, a few pages later, when he argues *against* the unification of the island, Saint-Méry decides to ignore this particular point.

67. Ms, vol. II, p. 234; PE, vol. II, p. 234.

pointed out that Saint-Méry was provided with the opportunity to publish his *Description* of the Spanish side by the 1795 Treaty of Basle which officially sanctioned the cession of Spanish Santo Domingo to France and marked the end of an era in the history of Hispaniola. In his “Advertisement” to the volume, Saint-Méry proudly declares that the new geopolitical scenario of the island has not altered his views on the acquisition of Spanish Santo Domingo and categorically denies having curbed his “thoughts to occasional events.”⁶⁸ Uncannily, his disquisition on the matter begins with the declaration that since Spain will never give up her colony, a discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of the unification of the island under French administration was just a mere abstraction, or, indeed, as he puts it, a *chimère*. Of course, the very fact that in 1795 Spain had in fact relinquished Spanish Santo Domingo to the French disallowed and disallows Saint-Méry’s readers to interpret his views on the matter as simple conjecture. Yet again, the *Description* is not what it claims to be: rather than a mere portrayal of the past, Saint-Méry’s work is inspired by the author’s ambition to intervene in and hopefully influence current border affairs. The erasure of the frontier brought about by the Peace of Basle between Spain and Republican France did not favor the interests of the white Creole elite to which Saint-Méry belonged (Matibag 2003:71-72) so it is not surprising that the subscribers who made the publication of the *Description de la partie espagnole* possible, and whose names are listed at the beginning of the first volume, were mainly Saint-Domingue’s colonists living in the United States.⁶⁹

Saint-Méry’s and his supporters’ belief in the political potential of his work was not mere wishful thinking. They might have genuinely felt that there was still some space for manoeuvre because, at the time of publication, the French acquisition of the Spanish part was sanctioned *de jure* but was not “taking place” *de facto*. The treaty of Basle did not specify an exact date of the transfer of power as it was agreed that such date depended on Spain providing the means for evacuation to the population of the Spanish colony, a long and laborious process complicated, among other things, by the question of the slaves living and working in what was formerly Santo Domingo. The French Republicans insisted that they were allowed to stay on the island as freemen and women while the Spanish considered them as their property and maintained that, as such, they had to follow them in their exile from the island (Laveaux to García: November 1795 in Demorizi 1958:17-20). Besides, lack of French military personnel to substitute the Spanish garrison also delayed the transition, as the French realized that a strong Spanish military presence in Santo Domingo was

68. Ms, vol. I, p. F; PE, vol. I, p. 6.

69. One finds twenty-nine Saint-Domingue colonists living in Philadelphia, Albany (New York), Wilmington (Delaware), Baltimore, and Elizabeth Town (Jersey). Saint-Méry also mentions four shopkeepers from Cap-Français living in the United States.

key to the security of the entire island (Schaeffer 1949:53). English successes in the southern part of Saint-Domingue further contributed to leaving things as they were and the actual unification of the island under the French administration would finally be achieved only in 1801 by Toussaint.

Saint-Méry, however, does not just oppose unification resolutely; he insists that, rather than acquiring Santo Domingo, France should try to recuperate Louisiana given to Spain in 1762.⁷⁰ The desire of France to recover its former North American possession had been the subject of numerous political discussions since the day of its loss in 1763 but it is worth mentioning that this suggestion was topical indeed when the *Description* was published. In December 1795, Spain did propose a treaty according to which Santo Domingo would be returned to Spain in exchange for Louisiana but the French Directory firmly rejected it in June 1796 (Schaeffer 1949:52). If, in colonial terms and within the remit of the rhetoric of the Enlightenment, Saint-Méry's imaginary expansion into the Spanish side of Hispaniola could be regarded as a daring move forward in time along the line of "progress" (that is, further development and exploitation), his insistence on the desirability to reacquire Louisiana suggests that he was instead folding back onto the past. This is in line with the trajectory of his politics: from being an active participant of the French Revolution, he ended up becoming a staunch supporter of Napoleonic reaction.

Saint-Méry's commitment to the reconstitution of the *Ancien Régime's* status quo that both his *Descriptions* minutely depict also compelled him to include a visual reinscription of the recently erased border of Hispaniola. His oeuvre is illustrated by a map of the island which, on the title page of the two *Descriptions*, is referred to as "new" and which is positioned at the beginning of both books so that it precedes rather than follows Saint-Méry's words. A hand-written draft for a leaflet aimed at publicizing the first volume of the *Description de la partie espagnole* describes the book as "A New Useful and Amusing Work" and the map it contains as "new, elegant and correct." Evidently, "new" and "correct" are highly misleading adjectives to use when describing a map that, in 1796 and 1797, was so blatantly out-of-date, and Saint-Méry was of course very well aware of this. However, such deliber-

70. Saint-Méry's wife, he informs his reader, was actually from Louisiana and her father and uncle were amongst the French *proscrits* who rebelled against Louisiana's cessation to Spain. In the English manuscripts the word *proscrits* is substituted by the more emphatic "sufferers." Moreover, Saint-Méry refers to such *proscrits* or "sufferers" as patriots whose sacrifice will forever demonstrate that Frenchmen are not "to be sold like cattle" or, in French, "*trafiqu[és] ... comme des troupeaux*" (ms, vol. II, p. 236; PE, vol. II, p. 236). The fact that there was a connection in his mind between Louisiana and the unstable border between Santo Domingo and Saint-Domingue is evidenced by Saint-Méry's choice of terminology: as we have seen, cattle and slaves were bought, sold, and, more often than not, smuggled across the border between Saint-Domingue and Santo Domingo and the French verb *trafiquer* does gesture toward illicit activities.

ately misguiding appellatives, combined with the fact that, before reading the *Descriptions*, the reader is given access to a visual source where the two sides of the island are neatly separated by a very heavily marked border, have the function of naturalizing what was no longer officially there and constitute a powerful addition to Saint-Méry's reactionary project to turn the past into the future.

REFERENCES

CHARLEVOIX, PIERRE-FRANÇOIS-XAVIER DE, 1733. *Histoire de l'Isle Espagnole ou de Saint-Domingue*. Amsterdam: F. L'Honoré.

DAYAN, JOAN, 1998. *Haiti, History, and the Gods*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

DEIVE, CARLOS ESTEBAN, 2007. The African Inheritance in Dominican Culture. In Bernardo Vega (ed.), *Dominican Cultures: The Making of a Caribbean Society*. Princeton NJ: Marcus Wiener, pp. 87-130.

DEMORIZI, EMILIO RODRÍGUEZ, 1958. *Cesion de Santo Domingo a Francia: Correspondencia de Godoy, García, Roume, Hedouville, Louverture, Rigaud y otros, 1795-1802*. Ciudad Trujillo: Impresora Dominicana.

DUBOIS, LAURENT, 2004. *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

FICK, CAROLYN E., 1990. *The Making of Haiti: The Saint-Domingue Revolution from Below*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.

FOUCHARD, JEAN, 1981. *The Haitian Maroons: Liberty or Death*. New York: Edward W. Blyden Press.

MALENFANT, CHARLES, 1814. *Des colonies et particulièrement de celle de Saint Domingue*. Paris: n.p.

MATIBAG, EUGENIO, 2003. *Haitian-Dominican Counterpoint: Nation, Race, and State on Hispaniola*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

MOREAU DE SAINT-MÉRY, MÉDÉRIC LOUIS ÉLIE, 1796. *Description topographique et politique de la partie espagnole de l'Isle Saint-Domingue. Avec des observations générales sur le climat, la population, les productions, le caractère & les mœurs des habitants de cette colonie et un tableau raisonné des différents parties de son administration; Accompagnée d'une nouvelle carte de la totalité de l'Isle*. Vol. 1. Philadelphia: chez l'auteur.

—, 1797-98. *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'Isle Saint-Domingue. Avec des observations générales sur la population, sur le caractère & les mœurs de ses divers habitants; sur son climat, sa culture, ses productions, son administration &c, &c. Accompagnées des détails les plus propres à faire connaître l'état de cette colonie à l'époque du 18 octobre 1789; Et d'une nouvelle carte de la totalité de l'Isle*. Vol. 2. Philadelphia: chez l'auteur.

- , 2004. *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'Isle Saint-Domingue*. Saint-Denis, France: La Société Française d'histoire d'outre-mer. [Orig. 1797.]
- MOYA PONS, FRANK, 2009. *La otra historia dominicana*. Santo Domingo: Librería La Trinitaria.
- MUIR, RICHARD, 1975. *Modern Political Geography*. New York: Macmillan.
- RODRIGUEZ, MANUEL, 2011. *Las nuevas relaciones dominico-haitianas*. Santo Domingo: Centro de Información Gubernamental.
- SÁNCHEZ VALVERDE OCAÑA, ANTONIO, 1988. *Idea del Valor de la Isla Española, y utilidades, que de ella puede sacar su monarquía: Ensayos*. Santo Domingo: Ediciones de la Fundación Corripio. [Orig. 1785.]
- SÁNCHEZ VENTURA, LUIS, 2006. Prólogo. In William Páez Piantini, *Relaciones Dominico-Haitianas: 300 Años de historia*. Santo Domingo: Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores. [Orig. 2001.]
- SCHAEFFER, WENDELL G., 1949. The Delayed Cession of Spanish Santo Domingo to France, 1795-1801. *Hispanic American Historical Review* 29:46-68.
- SILIÉ, RUBÉN, 2007. The *Hato* and the *Conuco*: The Emergence of Creole Culture. In Bernardo Vega (ed.), *Dominican Cultures: The Making of a Caribbean Society*. Princeton NJ: Marcus Wiener Publishers, pp. 131-60.
- TURNER, FREDERICK JACKSON, 1920. *The Frontier in American History*. New York: Henry Holt & Company.
- WEUVES, M., LE JEUNE, 1780. *Réflexions historiques et politiques sur le commerce de la France avec ses colonies de l'Amérique*. Paris: L. Cellot.
- WILLIAMS, RAYMOND, 1973. *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- WOODING, BRIDGET, 2010. Human Rights Across an Island: New Twists Following the Haitian Earthquake. *Múltiples: An Informative Bulletin by the Just Governance Group*, 10:5-7.

MARIA CRISTINA FUMAGALLI
Department of Literature, Film, and Theatre Studies
University of Essex
Wivenhoe Park
Colchester, UK C04 3SQ
<mcfuma@essex.ac.uk>