POSTCOLONIAL PALIMPSESTS:
FRAGMENTED SUBJECTIVITIES, SEXUAL VIOLENCE, AND COLONIAL INHERITANCE IN TIerno MONÉNEMBO, MARIE VIEUX-CHAUVET,
AND WILLIAM FAULKNER

A dissertation presented
by

Jenna Grace Sciuto

to
The Department of English

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the field of
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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Abstract

My project explores a diverse group of novels from different cultures and countries to reach beyond the earlier model of Postcolonial Literature structured around Edward Said’s seminal *Orientalism* with Great Britain as the center. I consider the histories and literature of nations farther afield than those that make up the canon of Commonwealth Literature to address the role of U.S. imperialism, as well as other forms of European colonialism, that are not taken into account by the orientation of global literature around Said’s paradigm. This opening up of the field will make room for the complex reverberations of colonialism in the post-/neo-colonial era, such as the United States military occupation of Haiti in the early twentieth century and the role of the French in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. I acknowledge the range of different global colonialisms and explore their impact upon the post-/neo-colonial present, while still leaving space for the differences between forms of colonialism. In order to do this, I consider texts from a range of countries, cultures, and temporal periods, including works by William Faulkner, Marie Vieux-Chauvet, and Tierno Monénembo, to emphasize the multiplicity of experiences of colonialism, while also underscoring the commonalities—structural racism, sexism, classism, and violence as a tool of control—between them.
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Introduction

“Slavery does not, nor can it, just go away. It remains embedded as a function of law and other social institutions and, therefore, as a feature of U.S. culture” (8).

—Jessica Adams, The Wounds of Returning

“It’s a colonial legacy to which we cling, just as we cling to the French” (8).

—Marie Vieux-Chauvet, Love, Anger, Madness

“The pain of others is bearable” (3).

—Rwandan Proverb, Tierno Monénembo, The Oldest Orphan

Although now in the post-/neo-colonial era,¹ I argue that the structures in place during the colonial period, such as hierarchies of race, class, and gender and the use of violence and sexual violence as tools for control, have not disappeared but rather persist in numerous ways. While this claim may seem uncontroversial, accounts of American modernism and American history often erase this story which, for example, occurs through the absence of slave quarters on the grounds of many historic preserved plantation homes and the resulting disappearance of slavery from discussions of the Old South. In reference to plantation tours, Jessica Adams notes that “Furniture has replaced people as objects” (60). However, when we connect American modernist novels to the literature of formerly colonized nations, global issues, such as the resonances of colonialism in the twentieth century, are brought to the forefront, revealing more about American literature through comparison. Indeed, the trajectory of the works I consider can be seen as the reverse of the Middle Passage and the colonial movement of raw materials, as I start with the “First World’s Third World,” the American South, pass through the “little lost

¹ I refer to the era following the colonial period as “post-/neo-colonial” to imply through the juxtaposition of “post” and “neo” that the postcolonial period becomes neocolonial as a result of the lingering effects of the colonial system.
island” described by Faulkner as “the halfway point between what we call the jungle and what we call civilization,” and end up in Africa, the proverbial “heart of darkness” from the perspective of the West (Matthews 5, *Absalom, Absalom!* 202). This reversal is essential and allows me to trace the connections from the U.S. South to the Global South, focusing on the ways in which the novels of William Faulkner, Marie Vieux-Chauvet, and Tierno Monénembo tell the story of colonialism from the neocolonial present. Further, I chose to focus on the novel form in this project because the novel is an effective genre for addressing discontinuous histories, the histories left out of History, and the history that appears and disappears at the moment of action through the traditional associations of the form with networks of power and imperialism and its focus on the psychological.

In this way, my work advances the spatial and socio-economic paradigm of the Global North vs. Global South, in addition to Postcolonial or Global Anglophone literary frameworks, which leaves room for more complications and ambiguities. For instance, the U.S. South is technically part of the Global North as a region of a First World nation, but through its relationship to Northern industry and imperialism, particularly after the Civil War, it has more in common with the regions of the Global South, including the experience of occupation and a warm climate. Global South theory maps the former colonized countries in the Middle East, regardless of its dual position as colonized/colonizer, the South has still undergone an experience that it shares with no other region of North America (but most areas of Europe and Asia): that of military defeat, occupation, reconstruction (Woodward 190). Indeed, viewing the South as a colony of Northern imperialism highlights the commonalities between the U.S. South and other hemispheric souths. However, some scholars, such as Hosam Aboul-Ela, have critiqued the recent scholarship reading William Faulkner’s work in relation to hemispheric literature for not fully acknowledging Faulkner as a Southern writer in the global sense (131). By including other Global Souths in the discussion beyond the Americas, the U.S. South is compared to global regions where the questions of colonial economy and spatial/regional inequalities that were so important to Faulkner’s vision come into play (Aboul-Ela 131). While in this dissertation I examine the residual effects of colonialism in the form of racism, social stratification, and sexual violence as opposed to political economy, I will follow Aboul-Ela’s lead in reading the U.S. South as a post-/neo-colonial space alongside the other Global South regions with a comparative focus on Haiti and Rwanda. I argue for an examination of these spaces as neocolonial regions that are affected by
Asia, Africa, Latin and South America, and the Caribbean, in addition to the U.S. South, hemispherically as opposed to nationally, placing emphasis on space and proximity. The liminal space of the U.S. South is recognized by Global South theory and through it, many scholars, such as Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn, believe the First World/Third World binarism is called into question (*Look Away!* 10). My work seeks to move beyond the “relatively binaristic, fixed and stable mapping of power relations between ‘colonizer/colonized’ and ‘center/periphery’” that many scholars associate with postcolonial theory through focusing on the in-between spaces, such as the U.S. South, as well as more complex, unofficial colonialisms called by other names like globalization or military intervention (Shohat 108, Smith and Cohn *Look Away!* 10).³

Thus, my project explores a diverse group of novels from different cultures and countries to reach beyond the earlier model of Postcolonial Literature structured around Edward Said’s seminal *Orientalism* with Great Britain as the center. I consider the histories and literature of nations farther afield than those that make up the canon of Commonwealth Literature to address the role of U.S. imperialism, as well as other forms of European colonialism, that are not taken into account by the orientation of global literature around Said’s paradigm. This opening up of the field will make room for the complex reverberations of colonialism in the post-/neo-colonial era, such as the United States military occupation of Haiti in the early twentieth century and the role of the French in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. I acknowledge the range of different global

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³ Through working in this paradigm, my project leaves room to explore the complexity and multiplicity of the world’s colonial histories and their expression through literature. For instance, many of the marines sent to occupy Haiti during the 1915-1934 U.S. occupation were purposely white Southern men, as it was thought that they would have experience effectively controlling a black population: thus, the U.S. South, which arguably can be seen as colonized by the U.S. North, played a large role in the colonization of a region further South (Danticat X).
colonialisms and explore their impact upon the post-/neo-colonial present, while still leaving space for the differences between forms of colonialism. In order to do this, I considered texts from a range of countries, cultures, and temporal periods to emphasize the multiplicity of experiences of colonialism, while also underscoring the commonalities—structural racism, sexism, classism, and violence as a tool of control—between them.

My dissertation seeks to participate in the project of decolonization—or the liberation of people and spaces from the exploitative structures of colonialism—through recognizing the continuities of the colonial in the neo-colonial period revealed in literature in order to diminish their detrimental effects. Through my exploration of diverse texts, I reconfigure American modernism in a global context to make evident the palimpsest of colonial ideologies, which remains firmly in place in the bedrock beneath the post-/neo-colonial period. My work looks beyond connections between American literature, England, and continental Europe to bring into focus the United States’ relation to the crucial legacies of formerly colonized nations in order to emphasize the past and identify the reconfigurations of colonialism present in our globalized world.  

Since the American Revolution and the founding of the nation, the United States has been associated with freedom, liberty, and justice for all, and in the twentieth century came to be seen as the world’s watch dog for its intervention in conflicts and issues beyond its borders, from World War I and II to the Vietnam and Korean Wars. Previous to this period, the U.S. was seen as a “hemispheric patrolman of Caribbean and Latin American affairs due to internal political and economic instability and European aggression in the region,” (Polyné 55) which may be characterized as the U.S. wanting what is best for the region or looking out for its own interests. Although freedom is important to the United States’ conception of itself as a nation, as Marie Vieux-Chauvet’s novella recognizes, the notion does not prevent the U.S. from perpetuating unfreedom in areas of the world, such as through its backing of dictators who restrict the rights of their citizens yet are friendly to U.S. interests, such as François “Papa Doc” Duvalier in Haiti, Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, or more recently, Hosni Mubarak in Egypt (Elliott salon.com). As Frederick Cooper states “the United States stands out for its unwillingness to name what it was doing” (197); if its protectorates are not referred to as colonies and it is not labeled an empire in the traditional sense, perhaps no one will recognize the imperialist currents in U.S foreign policy. Amy Kaplan points to “an enduring assumption that the American struggle for independence from British colonialism makes U.S. culture inherently anti-imperialist,” (12) which is a postulation that has proved inaccurate again and again in the history of the U.S., from the occupation of Mexico in 1846 and the occupation of Haiti in 1915 to the occupation of Iraq in
My first chapter positions the American South after the loss of the Civil War (1861-1865) and Reconstruction (1865-1877) as the colonizer compared with the population of slaves and former slaves but as the colonized in relation to Northern industry and imperialism. I examine the residual effects of these intertwined colonialisms on the post-Reconstruction South through a reading of Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936)—particularly through an analysis of the biracial, sexually fluid figure of Charles Bon and the conflicted representations of his subjectivity presented by the narrators. My second chapter focuses not only on *Absalom, Absalom!* but also on a number of Faulkner’s later novels, such as *Go Down, Moses* (1942) and *Requiem for a Nun* (1951); this exploration reveals that the circular patterns of abuse and intimacy common to slavery, such as coerced sex across the color line, incest, and the resulting disruption of family bonds, did not end with Emancipation but continued into the neo-colonial period. I argue that the power of patterns of subjection and the sexual policing of individuals by the community are both tools used to re-inscribe colonial relations in the U.S. South, as depicted in Faulkner’s novels.

2003. Following Marie Vieux-Chauvet’s lead, I argue that in spite of the rhetoric of freedom that has long been associated with the domestic and foreign policies of the U.S. in the popular imagination, the imperialism perpetuated by the United States (particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) positions it as the successor to European colonizing countries.

5 As a winner of the Nobel Prize for literature, author of Hollywood screenplays, and a goodwill ambassador sent by the State Department to Japan, the Philippines, and Latin America among other regions, Faulkner, on one hand, would seem to be situated solidly in the center as the literary darling of a First World superpower. However, in his struggles to support himself and his family financially through his literature and his identity as a Southerner born in the decades following the South’s loss of the Civil War, Reconstruction, and Northern imperialism, Faulkner also knew what it was like to be on the outside looking in.
In keeping with a global understanding of modernism, my project next considers the lingering effects of colonialism in post-independence Haitian society, as portrayed in Marie Vieux-Chauvet’s *Love, Anger, Madness* (1968).\(^6\) Set in 1939 in post-American occupation Haiti while also evoking the dictatorship of François Duvalier, *Love* depicts the experiences of the elite mulâtres-aristocrates (a light-skinned upper-class group), as well as their trials at the hands of the ruling black class which usurped the power the mulâtres-aristocrates historically held since the Haitian Revolution. Shades of colonialism are visible in *Love* through the portrayal of the narrator’s fragmented subjectivity and racism towards the black race, as well as in the depiction of physical violence, sexual violence, and surveillance—all of which collapse the distance separating the colonial and neo-colonial eras in Haitian history. My fourth chapter crosses the Atlantic Ocean to take into account Tierno Monénembo’s depiction of post-genocide Rwanda in *The Oldest Orphan* (2000).\(^7\) I argue that the racism of contemporary Rwandan society and the hatred between the Hutus and the Tutsis were inherited from the policies of the Belgian colonial administration that included dividing people into racial groups according to their heights or the lengths of their noses. This chapter analyzes the effects of colonialism on sexuality and gender relations in *The Oldest Orphan*, examining the use of sexuality as a weapon during the genocide, as well as the supposed acceptance of sexual abuse against women and young girls on the streets of the city.

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6 Marie Vieux-Chauvet was a part of the “occupation generation”—born one year after the United States’ invasion of Haiti—and simultaneously a member of the elite mulatto class as the daughter of a Haitian senator, mirroring the ambiguity of Faulkner’s position as an insider on the outside (Danticat x). After a valiant battle to publish *Love, Anger, Madness* in France, Vieux-Chauvet was forced into exile in the United States in 1968 out of fear of persecution by the Duvalier regime (Danticat xi). Although the critique is veiled by the 1939 setting, the Duvalier regime’s tyrannical policies are evoked and condemned in the novel (Danticat xi).

7 Monénembo’s engagement with politics positions him alongside Faulkner and Vieux-Chauvet as a novelist employing the poetics of peripheralization towards particular ends, in his case, portraying the painful history of postindependence Africa (King x). Monénembo is originally from Guinea, but after the establishment of Sékou Touré’s cruel tyranny, he escaped his country by walking one hundred miles through the bush, situating him with Vieux-Chauvet as a writer in exile (King x). He studied medicine for a year in Senegal, then studied biochemistry in the Côte d’Ivoire, before earning his doctorate in biochemistry in France (King ix). Monénembo’s first novel *Les crapauds-brousse* appeared in 1979, the same year he graduated from the doctoral program (King ix).
of Kigali, as described by the narrator Faustin. I argue that colonial ideologies and policies are in large part responsible for the racist, sexist, and violent culture inherited by post-independence Rwanda, and as a result the genocide itself, as portrayed in Monénembo’s *The Oldest Orphan*.

Therefore, although they focus on different events from the twentieth century in a range of countries and cultures, Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Go Down, Moses*, Vieux-Chauvet’s *Love*, and Monénembo’s *The Oldest Orphan* portray the horrible effects of colonialism in similar ways. Though the types of tragic events differ greatly—from the white Southerners’ loss of the Civil War and their way of life, the effects of internal colonialism, and the degradation of humans through slavery to neocolonialist occupation by the U.S., the crimes of a dictator against his own people, and genocide—each can be traced directly back to the processes of colonialism and their lasting effects on the mindsets, relationships, understandings of one’s self and relation to others in formerly colonized societies. As described above, the selected novels focus on overt large-scale tragic events but also on personal trauma and its effects on the psyches of individuals, as is shown through the portrayal of the narrator in each work, as well as their representations of others. Indeed, I argue that the mental states of the fragmented, wounded, and haunted narrators themselves also function as a critique of the effects of colonialism on the level of the individual, which should not be lost in the discussion of large-scale atrocities such as slavery, genocide, and the regimes of dictators.

A focus on the psychological effects of colonialism, as depicted through the authors’ portrayals of each novel’s narrator, reveals one way in which Faulkner, Vieux-Chauvet, and Monénembo show the reader the effects of colonialism instead of *telling* them—a concept that will be explored in full by this dissertation. Each novelist employs experimental formal techniques in order to represent the traumatic effects of colonialism on the narrator’s subjectivity.
and as a result our understanding of the story. For example, in Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* Quentin is haunted by his class’s treatment of blacks, the racism and violence of the South as depicted in his story, and his identity as a Southerner. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 1, I argue that Quentin’s bivalent colonial commitments—as a Southerner critical of the lingering influence of colonial ideologies in the South—mirror Faulkner’s own as “the South’s most critical loving son” (Matthews “Recalling the West Indies” 239). Faulkner uses Quentin’s bivalent attachments (the dual positioning he has inherited as colonizer of the black South and colonized in relation to the North) to communicate Quentin’s conflicted subjectivity. We know that shortly after the events that occur in the novel’s present, Quentin takes his own life. Thus, we can see Quentin’s inability to reconstruct the past (as *Absalom, Absalom!*’s first failed narrator) and his own mental turmoil as resulting from this internal conflict, or in other words, from his personal stake in the history recollected and the traumatic weight it holds for him. As a result, I argue that the story of the Sutpens in *Absalom Absalom!* is reconstructed by a series of ineffective narrators like Quentin, who are unable to accurately portray the past, yet attempt to nevertheless—their repeated efforts taking the style of traumatic repetition.

Similarly, the reliability of Claire Clamont, narrator of Vieux-Chauvet’s *Love* and dark-skinned member of the characteristically light-skinned mulâtres-aristocrates, is called into question as a result of her own fragmented subjectivity, depicted through her skewed relationship to others, her sexuality, and her community.⁸ Since the narrative is written in the form of Claire’s diary and her viewpoint is the sole lens through which the events of the story are narrated, can the reader trust that the events occurred as she portrays them (as much as any

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⁸ I am interested in the ways in which scholarship on *Love*, and perhaps the novella itself, position Claire as a “madwoman.” Of the three fractured subjectivities I explore here, only Claire, the sole woman, is considered crazy. In Chapter 3, I connect Claire’s “madness” to her sexuality, as well as her gender.
narrator can ever be trusted)? Claire’s narrative flashes between the events of the past and the present and include her own personal thoughts, musings, and fantasies, such as the desire to murder her sister Félicia and take her place as wife to Jean Luze and mother to Jean-Claude. Thus, the reader is always conscious of the filtered quality of the story, which is inseparable from Claire’s subjectivity: the fragmented nature of the story does not so much cast doubt on the veracity of her narration as transform it into Claire’s personal story and subjective experience of the events. The particular and internalized nature of this narration may cause us to wonder if accounts of history can ever be anything other than the personal.

Monénembo’s novel, *The Oldest Orphan*, is narrated by young Faustin Nsenghimana, whose subjectivity fragmented on the day the extremist Hutus arrived in his village to carry out acts of genocide. Not only does Faustin’s narrative follow Quentin’s and Claire’s through its nonlinearity, flashing between the events of the past and present without warning, but Faustin also defers a key piece of the story until the novel’s final page: his own direct experience of the massacre at the Church at Nyamata in which both of his parents were killed before his eyes. I argue that as is the case with Quentin’s and Claire’s narratives, Faustin’s repression of the genocide, fragmented re-telling, innocence/ignorance signaled by his age, and his misuse of language are representative of his mental state. Given that Faustin misleads the reader as to his experience of the genocide and the whereabouts of his parents until the final pages, like Claire’s narrative, Faustin’s account is unreliable. Nevertheless, Faustin’s narration is a valuable depiction of a subjectivity overcoming its own repression, writing through trauma, and finding a voice with which to acknowledge both the tragic events and his own survival.

Quentin, Claire, and Faustin narrate their stories in the postcolonial eras of their respective societies, revealing the resonances of colonialism in the twentieth century. Although
long stretches of time have passed between the official end of slavery in the U.S. and colonialism in Haiti and Rwanda—Quentin reconstructs the Sutpens’ story forty-three years after the Civil War, Claire narrates her story one hundred and thirty-five years after the close of the Haitian Revolution, and Faustin constructs his account about thirty-three years after Rwanda’s independence—the effects of colonialism are still felt. The racism, sexism, and violence central to the colonial system remained a reality in each locality, and as Matthews notes, the aftermath of colonialism always brings with it moral confusion, contradiction, and devastation, which Quentin, Claire, and Faustin can be seen as both narrating and personally embodying. Faustin’s desensitized narration, Claire’s passionate involvement in her story, and Quentin’s conflicted ambivalence towards his all represent the aftermath of colonialism and the range of detrimental effects on the individuals who have unwittingly inherited this legacy. Thus, through their use of deferral, multiple, shifting retellings of the past, and unreliable narrators, Faulkner, Vieux-Chauvet, and Monénembo work to represent the cataclysmic weight of these histories. The three authors struggle to articulate the tragic and even unspeakable pasts of their characters, and through the focus on the traumatic effects of the events at the level of the individual, ultimately succeed in their attempts at representation.

Through their use of modernist or experimental formal techniques to represent the fractured subjectivities left in the wake of colonialism, Faulkner, Monénembo, and Vieux-Chauvet demonstrate the connection between postcolonial poetics and politics—the exploration of which will be central to this project. For instance, each novel questions the authority of official history as an account told by the colonizer, as well as the linear progressive structure of narratives central to the Western canon through the circular or repetitive style and the fragmentation of the accounts. Therefore, while this writing may look similar to modernism, I
follow Hosam Aboul-Ela’s assertion that there is more going on in this literature, which he designates the “poetics of peripheralization”: “While both ideologies of form produce certain comparable narrative characteristics, they diverge in their attitude towards historiography,” referencing the modernists’ disregard for materialism, localism, and politics (137). While modernism can broadly refer to the entire historical period of the early twentieth century, designating whatever was written between 1910 and 1945, in this project I will use the term to describe the “highly particular set of aesthetic practices characteristic of only a small number of literary works,” such as abstraction, discontinuity, shock, irony, experimentation, radical aesthetics, inquiry into the uncertainty of reality, skepticism, self-conscious reflexiveness, anti-bourgeois tendencies, and focus on the émigré/exile (Kaplan 41). Therefore, although similar to modernism in form, the works of Faulkner, Monénembo, and Vieux-Chauvet are more effectively engaged with political history and economy—particularly the power structure governing the relationship between the center and margin. As a result of these differences, I believe scholars of literature need to examine these novels for the unique work that they do and to carve out space for a poetics of peripheralization literary canon that should develop in response to the privileging of Western literary themes and forms in the academy. The formation of this alternative literary canon will grant long overdue recognition to the important connections between politics and experimental poetics central to this literature, as well as its anti-colonial potential.
Chapter 1: Entwined Colonialisms and the Cyclical Nature of Colonial Crimes in William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*

**The Cyclical Nature of Colonial Crimes**

*Absalom, Absalom!*’s (1936) infamous Haitian episode and the date discrepancy that accompanies it exemplify the recurring nature of the crimes of colonialism. In William Faulkner’s novel, Thomas Sutpen seemingly quells a slave uprising on a Haitian plantation in 1827; however Haiti had overthrown French rule in 1804 and as John Matthews states, “[n]o white French sugar planters remained on Haiti in 1827, and all the slaves had been freed” (“Recalling the West Indies” 250). Whereas some readers believe that Faulkner simply misremembered his Haitian history, others, such as Richard Godden, read the anachronism as an act of literary counterrevolution (49). Godden argues that Faulkner purposely rewrote an important event in order to portray Haiti as the country of eternal slave revolution, foregrounding “the continuous potential for revolution within the institution of slavery” (49, 53). Others, such as Matthews, believe that Faulkner could have had his dates right; Sutpen and Quentin Compson refer to the black sugarcane workers not as “slaves” but as “niggers” and may have been describing an insurrection staged by free black laborers in the decades following the Haitian Revolution (“Recalling the West Indies” 252).9

Building on Godden’s argument, I argue that Faulkner did not mistake his dates: rather, he took advantage of the symbolic potential of Haiti’s revolutionary past to portray a neocolonial uprising of free black laborers in a manner that would be indistinguishable from a scene

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9 Given that there were no white French planters left on the island at that time, Eulalia Bon and her father were probably members of the elite mulâtres-aristocrates, otherwise known as the “*jaunes*, the ‘yellow aristocracy,’ [that] succeeded the white French aristocracy,” making their black ancestry obvious to everyone besides Sutpen, who admits to knowing little more about Haiti than that it is the place “to which poor men went in ships and became rich” (Matthews “Recalling the West Indies” 253, Faulkner *Absalom, Absalom!* 195).
depicting a revolt of slaves during the Haitian Revolution. In this episode, the colonial and neo-colonial periods in Haiti are collapsed, which consequently foregrounds the similarities between them. Thus, as in Marie Vieux-Chauvet’s *Love* (1968), written three decades later, in Faulkner’s novel Haiti did not get as far from its history as a French colony as it would have liked to through the Haitian Revolution. In this way, the Haitian Revolution in *Absalom, Absalom!* functions as a trope that connects the colonial and neo-colonial periods and emphasizes the continuities between the two, including the structures of physical violence, sexual violence, and social stratification embedded within not only colonial and post-independence Haiti but also within the antebellum and postbellum U.S. South.¹⁰

Although colonialism is a global phenomenon, it is essential to keep in mind that its effects are highly localized and differ significantly from region to region. This chapter is devoted to an exploration of the impact that colonial continuities have specifically on the U.S. South—the primary setting of *Absalom, Absalom!*. The Haiti present in the novel is only a shadow of itself or in Michael Kreyling’s words the “outline of the presence of Haiti as phantom memory,” as a result of the projective purposes to which it was put to use by Southerners like Faulkner (119). Faulkner projects the colonialism and neocolonialism of the U.S. South onto Haiti, a place he’d never been, ultimately to elucidate the continuity of colonial crimes in the South by way of his symbolic use of Haiti. However, Haiti will not remain a pretext or symbol

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¹⁰ Although I will focus on the consequences of colonialism in Haiti in Chapter 3, I will just note at the outset that many of the forms of neocolonialism I discuss in relation to the U.S. South were also present in post-revolutionary Haiti. This includes but is not limited to labor laws, such as President Jean-Pierre Boyer’s 1826 Rural Code, which “was the restoration of slavery, minus the whip,” to social stratification, such as the reclaiming of land by the “mulatto offspring of former white landowners,” supplanting the white master class with an elite, light-skinned mulatto class (Williams 334, Matthews “Recalling the West Indies” 253). The use of neocolonial policies and ideologies became more widespread during the U.S. Occupation, for example the corvée system which re instituted Boyer’s Rural Code, financial dispossession, excessive violence, and the pervasive use of rape by marines against Haitian women and young girls.
in this project; its history and the lingering effects of colonialism in that space as portrayed through literature are the central focus of my third chapter on Vieux-Chauvet’s *Love.*

**Faulkner’s Post-/Neo-colonial South**

The chronology of *Absalom, Absalom!* runs from 1807, during which time the institution of slavery was at full strength in the South, to 1910, the post-Reconstruction era during which the Jim Crow laws and “spectacle lynchings” were rampant.\(^{11}\) Within the novel, Faulkner represents the antebellum South as a colonized society; further, he depicts the postbellum South as part of this history as well—as a neocolonial society in which colonialism is not erased but re-embedded. In recent scholarship, the Southern United States has been viewed as a colony of the North or essentially “the first colony of U.S. imperial expansion” (Handley *Postslavery Literatures* 20).\(^ {12}\) However, to characterize the South merely as the periphery to the core of the North would be simplistic, given that the South technically exists within the boundaries of a First World nation, and is simultaneously center and margin, colonizer and colonized, global North and global South (Smith 105).\(^ {13}\) In particular, white Southerners after Reconstruction are considered by some scholars, such as Matthews, as both perpetrators and victims of colonization because they created an internal colony through the slave system and were later subject to federal military reconstruction and Northern capitalism (“Many Mansions” 5). In other words, compared with the population of slaves and former slaves in the South, white Southerners are

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\(^{11}\) Grace Elizabeth Hale coins the term “spectacle lynchings” to describe the public nature of mass lynchings, which “became a southern way of enabling the spread of consumption as a white privilege” (205).  
\(^{12}\) I do not mean to imply that the South was in actuality an official colony of the Northern U.S. but that it operates figuratively as such.  
\(^{13}\) In my use of the terms “core” and “periphery,” I follow Immanuel Wallenstein’s understanding of the core-peripheral relationship as unequal trade in which some economically stronger countries (the core) are able to trade on terms that allow surplus value to flow from the weaker countries (the periphery) to the core (11). Wallerstein emphasizes that these terms refer to the relational processes, not the states themselves (28).
seen as the colonizers, but in relation to Northern capitalists after Reconstruction, they join black Southerners in the position of the colonized. Indeed, the U.S. South in the postbellum era is a bivalent space in relation to postcolonial theory, challenging clean designations, such as core and periphery, colonial and neo-colonial, colonizer and colonized. While the terms colonizer and colonized can be used to describe the different colonial relations occurring in the antebellum and postbellum South, the colonial power structures are deeply entwined, making clean temporal designations such as colonial and neo-colonial nearly impossible. Ann McClintock argues that such designations are inadequate insofar as they reduce notions of time and causality in different countries and cultures to “a western schema of linear time” (86). In a similar way, through his insistence on colonial continuities, Faulkner challenges a linear model of progressive history. By depicting the crimes of the colonial past, such as racism and violence, as inescapable in every period, Faulkner proposes a non-linear, repetitive temporality in which colonialism and post-colonialism inhabit and repeat one another.

What are the different forms of colonialism visible in Faulkner’s novel? First, in the antebellum or colonial U.S. South, the black population is internally colonized by the white South through the institution of slavery. Second, in the postbellum or neo-colonial period after

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14 This conceptualization of the U.S. South has received significant attention in recent critical conversations in both Faulkner and Global South studies, for example in the anthologies Look Away!: The U.S. South in New World Studies edited by Jon Smith and Deborah N. Cohn and Global Faulkner: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 2006 edited by Annette Trefzer and Ann J. Abadie.

15 McClintock states that if postcolonial “theory promises a decentering of history in hybridity, syncreticism, multidimensional time, and so forth, the singularity of the term effects a re-centering of global history around the single rubric of European time” (86). Any singular term designating a temporal period and colonial relation does not adequately reflect the multifaceted nature of these relationships. Therefore, the attempts to clearly designate set periods are perhaps not only impossible in the U.S. South but more generally across the globe and throughout history.

16 The colonial situations specific to various communities within the South are highly individualized and in actuality differ from locality to locality (in the same way that the remnants of colonialisms in Haiti should not be conflated with the lingering effects on the U.S. South); however, I argue that it is still useful to consider the patterns of colonial relations in Faulkner’s novels, for example between white and black, male and female, or Northern and Southern individuals.
the Civil War, the black South remains colonized by the white South through forms of neocolonialism, such as sharecropping and the convict lease system, and additionally the white South is colonized by the North through Northern industry and imperialism. The height of the slave system in the U.S. South is the colonial period during which the outright pillaging and domination of one population by another was standard and slaves were held in a colonial relation, and thus the postbellum period may be seen as neo-colonial. Neocolonialism occurs when a region appears independent on the surface while its economic and political systems are controlled from the outside; this power structure is evident in the way the black population remains constrained and exploited by the former plantocracy after Emancipation. Further, if the South existed in a colonial relation to the North during Reconstruction, this relationship may be seen as neocolonial in the post-Reconstruction era after the exodus of Northern troops. This view results from the spreading of modernity and consumerism to the South at that time, the South’s economic dependence on the North, and role of white Southern capitalists, such as Faulkner’s Flem Snopes, as the native elite, facilitating the transition to a modern capitalist system. Lastly, I argue that in Absalom, Absalom! there is also a temporal period beyond the immediate postbellum era, from Quentin Compson’s turn-of-the-century period to the 1930s when Faulkner was writing, during which the neocolonial ties—the colonization of the black

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17 As noted above, terms such as colonial, post-colonial, and neo-colonial are not only inadequate as a result of their inability to cleanly differentiate temporal periods, but also for their failure to account for the multiplicity of relations (McClintock 86).

18 A tension is observable here between the neocolonial direction from the North in the spread of modernity and capitalism to the South, which some historians, such as Barbara Jeanne Fields and Harold D. Woodman, argue began to take hold after Reconstruction, and the fact that the South’s plantation economy continued to survive “through the second half of the nineteenth century and about a third of the twentieth century,” as a result of the limited opportunities available to the black labor force (Mandle 66, 21). Although modernity—in the form of free market ideology and labor mobility—may have been introduced in the South following the Civil War, it did not effectively supplant the plantation economy until the World War I period, which marked the beginning of the end of the plantation system (Mandle 68-9).

19 In The Hamlet (1940), Flem Snopes succeeds at the expense of others in the neocolonial South’s modern capitalist system, for example, lending money at a high interest rate in Varner’s store.
population and the white South by a capitalist North—remain. This period may be seen as a continuation of the neocolonialism of the postbellum period, demonstrating the staying power of colonial hierarchies and ideologies, which have effects that are ingrained in society, including racism, the violence of lynch law, and sexual violence. Thus, the structures of power seen in the antebellum, postbellum, and twentieth-century South are deeply intertwined, and while I use the terms colonial and neo-colonial in order to differentiate between them, these terms do not cleanly map on to distinct temporal moments.

It may be useful to conceptualize the various colonialisms in Faulkner’s South and their fluid relationship to time and space as a chronotope or, in Mikhail Bakhtin’s words, as “a unit of analysis for studying texts according to the ratio and nature of the temporal and spatial categories represented,” in which both are dependent on each other and neither is privileged (425). For example, in The Black Atlantic, Paul Gilroy uses slave ships as a chronotope, as they “were the living means by which the points within that Atlantic world were joined. They were mobile elements that stood for the shifting spaces in between the fixed places that they connected” (16). I situate the South’s entwined colonialisms as a chronotope in a similar way. The different colonialisms in the South, such as the colonial relation holding the black South as a labor force or the white South as colonized by Northern industry, connect various eras together as a result of similar conditions. When the South’s colonialisms are considered as a chronotope, the distinctions between the different eras and forms of colonialism come into focus at the same time that each colonialism (and thus era) is connected. As Faulkner’s novel demonstrates, the colonialism of the antebellum period—the treatment of the black population as a labor force—

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20 I credit Nicole Aljoe with the suggestion that adding the concept of the chronotope to my analysis may clarify my theorization of the complicated imbrication of colonial epochs.
continues into the neo-colonial postbellum period and beyond, while a second colonial relation between the white South and the North originates in the postbellum era and also remains in effect for generations to come. This emphasizes the different temporal waves of the layered colonialisms at the same time that they are to an extent indistinguishable.

Through the inclusion of these layered colonialisms, Faulkner’s work confounds the question of whether or not it is tinged with the racism endemic to his place and time. By lamenting the colonized position of the white South, Faulkner would seem to romanticize plantation culture; however, through depicting the colonized state of the black South as horrific as well, he complicates rather than resolves the question of his colonial allegiances. For example, he eulogizes the downfall of the Sutpen family in Absalom, Absalom!, yet is also critical of Sutpen’s methods and actions: Sutpen’s racism in refusing to accept Eulalia and Charles Bon into his family is what ultimately destroys his design. Faulkner’s complicated relationship to racism and colonial ideologies has led Faulkner scholars to locate him simultaneously in contradictory positions on this issue. His views on race have been attacked as both too liberal and too conservative: “He has been seen as a radical reactionary and a sentimental traditionalist … he has been called a bigot and a ‘nigger lover’” (Peavy 13). I argue that this range results from his inability to neatly resolve the question of the relation between his work and the South’s colonial past. Through his layering of colonialisms and his portrayal of the colonization of both the white and black Souths as tragic, Faulkner tries to have it both ways at once, rather than simply supporting or critiquing the slave-holding South.

21 John Matthews describes Faulkner as “the South’s most critical loving son,” aptly characterizing Faulkner’s sentiment as a mélange of both love and criticism (“Recalling the West Indies” 239).
22 According to Charles Peavy, many critics, including Melvin Seiden and Irving Howe, have misinterpreted Faulkner’s opinions about race and race relations, for example, his depiction of biracial characters (Charles Bon,
Indeed, in Faulkner’s novel, it is difficult to differentiate between where one colonial epoch ends and another begins: revealing the chronotopic and enmeshed nature of these colonialisms. *Absalom, Absalom!* achieves this effect not only through its cyclical structure, in which the present continually repeats the past, but also through its focus on individuals who suffer from violence and sexual abuse, as well as alienation and exile, due to ingrained colonial ideologies in every period. In order to show how the U.S. South in the antebellum, postbellum, and twentieth-century eras remains impacted by colonial ideologies, Faulkner collapses these periods into each other in the novel, confounding the narrative of history as progressive. In this chapter, I will map these muddled colonialisms, starting with the white South as colonized by Northern industry in the postbellum period and the trauma of this history for that group as revealed by Faulkner, before describing the ways in which the white South is the colonizer of the black population in both the antebellum and postbellum periods. Finally, the various layered colonialisms interacting in *Absalom, Absalom!* emerge with particular clarity in relation to the

Charles Etienne de Saint Valery Bon, and Jim Bond to name a few) in his novels (Peavy 32-33). As opposed to solely viewing them as “living agents of the ‘threat’ of miscegenation,” as argued by Howe, Peavy states that there is support in Faulkner’s work for a theory reminiscent of Shreve’s final speech in *Absalom, Absalom!* that the amalgamation of the races could be the final solution to racial tensions (33). In addition to the hints that racial conflict could be solved by assimilation in *Absalom, Absalom!* and also the short story “Delta Autumn,” Faulkner has given a range of perspectives on this point in his public lectures and interviews (Peavy 33). Both in an infamous interview with Russell Howe in 1956 and in a speech at the Tokyo American Cultural Center in 1955, Faulkner supported Shreve’s statement, arguing both that “the Negro race will vanish in three hundred years by intermarriage” and “the Negro … will be assimilated into the white race simply because there are more white people” (*Essays, Speeches, & Public Letters* 258, 182-3). However, it is important to note that the mixture of races, as described by Shreve and cited by Faulkner in his speeches, encompasses both the threat of biracial individuals passing undetected and the “bleaching out” of the black race. In other words, if we all will have sprung from the loins of African kings, and yet will bleach out like birds and rabbits, then the black race will vanish at the same time that we all will become biracial individuals passing for white. This is another instance of Faulkner attempting to have it both ways through confounding the question of his relationship to racism and colonial ideologies. Therefore, perhaps Peavy’s reading of the solution found in racial amalgamation should not be accepted to the exclusion of Howe’s reading of the biracial man as the embodied threat of miscegenation, as I would argue that each is a different side of the same example. By focusing on the former, the “vanishing negro,” Faulkner, as a white Southerner, can present this so-called solution in a positive manner to those of his ilk, as opposed to focusing on the threat to the purity of the white race embedded within amalgamation as he may have intended at the end of *Absalom, Absalom!* with Shreve as his sardonic mouthpiece.
biracial, sexually fluid figure of Charles Bon and his contradictory depiction by competing narrators of his tale: he is portrayed as living multiple stories of colonialism simultaneously in the novel. My analysis of Bon also reveals the relationship between the South’s entwined colonialisms and sexuality and intimate relations, which I explore in more depth in Chapter 2.

Through calling attention to Faulkner’s layering of entwined colonialisms, this project reveals the challenge present in his novels to the notion that history equals progress towards freedom and enlightenment. While he is often labeled a modernist, as a result of his experimental techniques, to the extent that modernism may be seen as “visions and ideas that aim to make men and women the subjects as well as the objects of modernization, to give them the power to change the world that is changing them,” Faulkner casts doubt on the modernist notion of linear progress (Berman 16). Thus, a tension exists between Faulkner’s modernist aesthetics and his questioning of the narrative of history as a progression away from the problems of the past, such as racism and colonial hierarchies. As a result of this tension, I agree with Hosam Aboul-Ela, who contends that Faulkner has more in common with postcolonial writers than with high modernists. Aboul-Ela makes a distinction between the poetics of modernism and the “poetics of peripheralization,” due to the modernists’ disdain for politics, materialism, localism, and regionalism (136). While the two poetics may manifest similarly at the level of the narrative, with fragmentation, the jumbling of time with multiple flash-forwards, flashbacks, and jump cuts, as well as a focus on split subjects and interiorities through stream-of-consciousness, Aboul-Ela states that the latter’s focus on political history and economy differentiates it from modernism (136). A novel’s cyclical structure, such as Aboul-Ela’s example of One Hundred Years of Solitude, can be seen as a rejection of linear Eurocentric historical accounts, subverting the assertion “history equals progress” (108). As exemplified by texts such as the similarly
cyclical *Absalom, Absalom!*; Faulkner’s “poetics of peripheralization” and his engagement with political history position him as a postcolonial writer. Situating Faulkner’s work in a postcolonial framework allows us to focus more closely on his complex engagements with the layered colonialisms of the U.S. South.

In addition to its correlation with postcolonial poetics, Faulkner’s work more specifically characterizes the South as a victim of Northern imperialism—a tradition also discernible in the novels of other Southern writers, such as Thomas Dixon Jr. and Thomas Nelson Page. The novels of Faulkner’s Snopes Trilogy (*The Hamlet* (1940), *The Town* (1957), and *The Mansion* (1959)) depict and critique the post-Reconstruction period during which the South effectively became a colony of Northern industry (Aboul-Ela *Other South*, Matthews “Many Mansions”). The Snopes Trilogy traces the process of modernization in the county of Yoknapatawpha mostly through focusing on the rise of Flem Snopes. Through its portrayal of the character of Flem Snopes, *The Hamlet* (1940) in particular explores the concept of the South as a postcolonial space or colony of Northern imperialism and modernization. Flem pulls himself up by his bootstraps by any means necessary, even if it means swindling the members of his community. If Yoknapatawpha were a nation, Flem would be “the national bourgeois who makes a separate peace with the core at the expense of nationalism in the periphery” (Aboul-Ela 84). This is illustrated by the episode of the wild spotted horses that Flem brings back to Yoknapatawpha from his honeymoon. With the help of an outsider from Texas, Flem sells the untamed horses, claiming they are good gentle horses, to poor whites in his community (who are referred to as “the peasants” in the title of book four). The peasants do not have money to spare and, with the exception of one man, are subsequently never able to lay a hand on their feral property. This example also gestures towards the class-based interest in owning the means of proper
whiteness. While the peasants fall short of possessing this whiteness through the property they almost acquire (but not quite), Flem may be seen as taking advantage of this desire in selling them the horses in the first place. The peasants’ relation to whiteness here echoes Homi Bhabha’s notion of colonial mimicry, which he defines as “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite” and later almost the same, but not white (86). In Yoknapatawpha county, as in other colonies, upper-class whites have a stranglehold on whiteness; outsiders like the Texan and the native elite Flem exploit the peasants’ desire for whiteness. In addition to Flem’s actions, the postcolonial imagery used by Faulkner to describe Flem and his boss Will Varner exemplifies this association: “Varner and Snopes resembled the white trader and his native parrot-taught headman in an African outpost. That headman was acquiring the virtues of civilization fast” (67). In this passage, Snopes is both the “native parrot-taught headman” or member of the native elite and the local inhabitant acquiring civilization or the virtues of modernity at a fast rate. Through this linkage of the Southern economy to colonialism, the economy and modernity are figured as oppressive powers. It is the adaptability of forward-looking characters, such as Flem Snopes, that allows them to succeed at the expense of others in modern capitalist society.

In contrast to those who thrive in the post-/neo-colonial period, such as the native elite, Faulkner describes the decline of Southern aristocratic families, for example the Compsons who are unable to make the shift to modernity in The Sound and the Fury (1929). Although Flem

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23 I credit Kimberly Juanita Brown with this observation.
24 Faulkner seems to anticipate Bhabha’s phrasing here in Go Down, Moses in which he states that the arms of Tomey’s Turl (a biracial slave of whom Old Carothers McCaslin is both the father and grandfather) were “supposed to be black but were not quite white,” similar to Turl’s Sunday shirt that was “supposed to be white but wasn’t quite either” (28).
25 According to Hosam Aboul-Ela, Faulkner paints Flem as a representative of the “perverse distortions of the Southern post-Reconstruction colonial economy” or the modernization which began to take hold after the defeat and occupation of the South (84).
succeeds by exploiting others, in the same way that the plantocracy took advantage of black labor during the colonial era, the difference is that Flem is able to adjust to a modern capitalist system in the South (from his work in Varner’s store lending money at a high interest rate to his role as president of the Sartoris bank), while the Compsons hold onto the plantation economy and refuse to adapt.26 This highlights the tension that exists between the spread of the modern capitalist system in the South after Reconstruction and the endurance of the plantation economy until after the First World War, when free market ideology and labor mobility finally replaced it (Mandle 68-9). While the colonial relation between the black and white Souths continued in the neo-colonial period, the neoimperialism and modern capitalist system of the North were also in play, preventing the South from returning to the opulence it experienced through the slave system. Quentin Compson, who returns as a narrator in Absalom, Absalom!, exemplifies the failure of his class to adapt through his obsession with the waning values of Southern society, such as chastity for women, honor for men, and a paternalistic control by whites over African Americans. Quentin’s position as colonized Southerner after the defeat of his region at the hands of the North is highlighted when juxtaposed against native elite Flem Snopes. A foil to Flem Snopes, Quentin is unable to move on and survive in the modern era; he kills himself in 1910 when he is twenty years old. Faulkner’s Absalom, Absalom! traces the effects of tragic events of the past—from the defeat and occupation of the South after the Civil War to more personal traumas—on the generations that have inherited their remains. Written from the perspective of the post-Reconstruction American South reflecting back on the experience of a single family—

26 Jason Compson IV in The Sound and the Fury probably comes the closest of the members of his family to adapting to the modern capitalist system through his career working at Earl’s hardware store. However, Jason fails at his attempts to get ahead through cotton speculation in the stock market. He also is made ill by the gasoline fumes of the car he drives; as John Matthews observes, the vehicle that is supposed to take him into the future only makes him sick.
the Sutpens—throughout the antebellum, Civil War, and Reconstruction periods, *Absalom, Absalom!* is a fictional representation of the struggles of the white Southern plantocracy during what amounts to a regime change in the post-/neo-colonial American South after the loss of the war. While other works of postcolonial scholarship on *Absalom, Absalom!* have focused on the connection between Faulkner’s South and the Global South, I read the novel as Faulkner’s meditation on the entwinement of different forms of colonialism and neocolonialism and their direct impact on the U.S South—bestowing upon it a violent legacy. My understanding of Faulkner’s layered colonialisms reveals his complicated relation to racism and colonial ideologies, as well as his critique of “history as progress,” through his portrayal of both the black and white Souths as colonized.

Before advancing my theory of Faulkner’s South as a post-/neo-colonial space and his use of colonialisms as a chronotope, I’d like to note one vital difference between the South’s colonial reality and the traditional model of European colonialism: the level of corporeal intimacy between slaves and masters, portrayed, for example, in Faulkner’s novel through Sutpen’s interactions with his slaves. In addition to sleeping with his female slaves, such as Clytie’s mother, Sutpen regularly fights his slaves one-on-one in an intimate manner, mingling his sweat and blood with theirs: “both naked to the waist and gouging at one another’s eyes as if their skins should not only have been the same color but should have been covered with fur too.”

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27 A number of scholars have shed light on Faulkner’s connection to postcolonial issues, such as Édouard Glissant, Charles Baker, Taylor Hagood, Sara Gerend, Martiza Stanchich, and George Handley to name a few. For an insightful take on “Faulkner’s representation of the US South’s Caribbean horizon” in *Absalom, Absalom!, Mosquitoes*, and a number of his short stories, see John Matthews’s article “Recalling the West Indies: From Yoknapatawpha to Haiti and Back” (239). For a discussion of the centrality of colonial economy and spatial/regional inequalities to Faulkner’s work, in addition to that of different postcolonial writers, see Hosam Aboul-Ela’s *Other South: Faulkner, Coloniality and the Mariategui Tradition*.

28 I credit Kimberly Juanita Brown with this observation about the different degrees of proximity and intimacy.
As seen in the example of Sutpen and his slaves, in most cases in the South, slaves lived closely together with their colonizers on the same plantation, whereas in the more established European model, the colonial authorities and owners of the industry for the most part inhabited a distant nation. This degree of proximity changes the nature of colonialism in these localities in interesting ways, as everything becomes more immediate, intimate, and familiar with less space involved, as is exemplified through *Absalom, Absalom!*. I will expand on the issue of intimacy in my second chapter in relation to the glaring absence of black branches to white family trees in Faulkner’s novels; however, it is important to note that the intimacy/immediacy of the plantation had particular effects on the South that continue in the post-/neo-colonial period, such as social stratification and racial violence. Christina Sharpe notes that this “particular kind of interracial intimacy/proximity—arising out of plantation slavery” did not end with Emancipation but remained through segregation and after in the ways blacks and whites related (16). In this way in *Absalom, Absalom!*, “interracial intimacy/proximity” must be seen alongside racism, violence, and the entwined colonialisms as part of the South’s inheritance from its plantation past.

29 In addition to interracial proximity, homoerotic relations are also evoked by this scene in which the sweat and blood of black and white men are merged together. I will return to the connection between homoeroticism and plantation hierarchies in my discussion of Bon in the final section of this chapter. Additionally, Godden has read in this scene Sutpen’s suppression of the laboring black bodies; if Sutpen blackens himself through laboring alongside his slaves to get his plantation built, then he reestablishes his mastery over them through entering the ring with them.

30 Ann Laura Stoler is interested in the “domain of the intimate” in her essay included in the anthology *Haunted by Empire*. She argues that “the character of U.S. race relations tracked other colonial models” and that “circuits of knowledge production and racialized forms of governance spanned a global field,” solidifying the link between the plantation culture in the U.S. South and traditional models of European colonialism (42). Although I argue that the proximity of plantation South made that system more intimate and immediate than the European model, Stoler rightly asserts that “the incommensurabilities between North American empire and European colonial history diminish when the intimacies of empire are at center stage,” as sexual violence and the colonization of individuals’ hearts and minds were central to both (58). While I agree that the same intimacies are present in both paradigms, I highlight the concentrated proximity of the plantation as a closed system that could exist in relative isolation from the broader community.

31 As W.E.B. Du Bois notes, slaves and masters “lived in the same home, shared in the family life, often attended the same church, and talked and conversed with each other,” creating an intimacy as a result of proximity (*The Souls of Black Folk* 128).
The White South as Colonized: Transmitted Traumas and the Reverberations of the Colonial Past in Absalom, Absalom!

Faulkner’s Absalom, Absalom! centers around the story of Thomas Sutpen, who one day arrives in Yoknapatawpha County with no known past and a number of foreign (presumably Haitian) slaves. He constructs a plantation, Sutpen’s Hundred, marries Ellen Coldfield, and fathers three children, Henry, Judith, and Clytie—the latter with one of his slaves. Unbeknownst to this family, Sutpen had previously been married to Eulalia Bon, the daughter of a Haitian sugar planter, whom he repudiated along with his first son, Charles Bon, after discovering her “spot” of black blood, according to the final retelling of the story. Charles Bon befriends Henry (who renounces his family and inheritance when his father disapproves of the friendship) at university and woos Judith through Henry. After the two serve together in the Civil War, Henry and Charles return to Sutpen’s Hundred, and Henry shoots and kills Charles, seemingly after learning about his half brother’s African ancestry. Four years later, Sutpen has a daughter with Wash Jones’s granddaughter (and possibly Sutpen’s own daughter), after which Wash (a poor white squatter) kills Sutpen with a scythe. The story is reconstructed primarily by four narrators: Miss Rosa Coldfield (Ellen Coldfield’s sister), Jason Compson III (who is interestingly left out of the genealogy section at the back of the book), his son Quentin Compson, and Shreve McCannon (Quentin’s roommate at Harvard). A few months previous to the novel’s present and forty-four years after Bon was killed, Quentin and Miss Rosa discover Henry living in the Sutpen house and Clytie sets fire to the mansion, killing herself and Henry.

While other scholars have labeled Faulkner’s postbellum Southern characters as both colonizers and colonized, as discussed above, my argument intervenes in Faulkner criticism through recognizing Faulkner’s portrayal of the colonialisms endemic to Southern history as a
chronotope, which literally means time-space (Bakhtin 425). In other words, the colonialisms central to the various periods—the antebellum, postbellum, and twentieth-century eras—are both distinct and indistinguishable due to the continuities between them, such as hierarchies of race, class, color, and gender and the use of violence and sexual violence as tools for control. By insisting on the continuities of the South’s entwined colonialisms, Faulkner undoes the linear model of progress, revealing history to be cyclical in nature. Through this cyclical repetition, Faulkner posits a different relationship to the South’s colonial past, which takes the form of traumatic repetition—a self continually revisiting a scene of trauma. If the present is the repetition of past colonial crimes, then Faulkner underscores that both the white and black Souths have a traumatic relationship to history. Thus, the past for Faulkner is inescapable, “never dead,” and “not even past” (Faulkner, Requiem for a Nun 73).

In addition to depicting history as cyclical in nature, Faulkner confounds the question of his colonial allegiances, as stated above, by having it both ways at once—depicting both the colonial relation in which the black population is held and the colonization of the white South by the North as traumatic. From the postbellum years immediately following the defeat of the Confederacy into the twentieth century, the white South existed in a colonial relation with the North to varying degrees. In Absalom, Absalom!, Faulkner works through the unspeakable tragedy of the history of the South for white Southerners—the outcome of the Civil War (otherwise known as the War of Secession, the War of Southern Independence, or the War of Northern Aggression among Southerners) and the occupation and Reconstruction that followed—both through the content of the novel and formal components such as the circular

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32 Social scientists, Robyn Fivush and Beth Seeling, write that: “Human beings seek meaning, and when experienced events cannot be understood, the human mind returns again and again to the event to try to make sense of it in a repetitive and compulsive way” (Interdisciplinary Response to Trauma 5, as qtd. in Foster 104).
narrative and use of deferred revelation. Édouard Glissant describes Faulkner as speaking “the impossible [the unacceptable defeat] of the South without having to say it, to create a literature that patiently confronts everything inexpressible in this impossible,” claiming that he was “profoundly aware of what he must say about the event that, like primordial truth (actually a looming embodiment of it), precedes his investigations of the real and obsesses him: the War of Secession” (Faulkner, MS 151, 44). In other words, Faulkner is invested in portraying the South as the site of a traumatic colonization following the Civil War and in voicing the inexpressible accompanying that defeat. The war is not directly described at length, but is always looming in the background of the novel, particularly through the serious effects it has on the characters—such as the destruction of the plantation system during which Sutpen’s Hundred becomes Sutpen’s One. The Civil War and the revised colonial situation that followed wreaked chaos on the families, land, and way of life of the white Southerners and in this way can be recognized as tragic from their perspectives. Nevertheless, this outcome was a direct consequence of their participation in the devastating practice of slavery and their role as colonizers of the black population—they are not innocent. In this section I will focus on the trauma resulting from the positioning of the white South as colonized in relation to the North after the Civil War and Reconstruction, and the way that latter generations of Southerners, such as Quentin Compson in the turn-of-the-century period, inherit this trauma through the region’s preoccupation with the defeat and its colonized status. Faulkner portrays historical events themselves as traumatic by nature, “reverberating beyond their initial occurrence to affect those who were neither

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33 Innocence, however, does not necessary absolve an individual of blame. For instance, Sutpen’s innocence of race and class relations ends up leading to his guilt in Absalom, Absalom! Sutpen’s innocence causes him to experience shame at the door of the plantation owner for whom his father works, which spurs him to pursue his design and replicate the South’s colonial hierarchies with himself positioned as white master.
geographically nor temporally present,” as in the effects of the loss of the Civil War on Quentin forty-three years after it was lost, which replace his self with a barracks for “backlooking ghosts,” and in part lead to his suicide (Forter 119, Faulkner 7). As a result of the associated traumas, Faulkner’s chronotope of colonialisms impacts those in a range of times and places to various extents, and no one is left untouched.

While everyone in Faulkner’s South is affected by colonial ideologies to varying extents, his characters differ in their reactions; they either work to resist, passively accept, or, in Sutpen’s case, actively perpetuate the colonial inheritance of the South. As a young boy innocent of class, race, and societal prejudices, Thomas Sutpen was turned away from the front door of the plantation home of the white man his father worked for in Tidewater, Virginia and told by the man’s slave to go to the back door. Jason Compson emphasizes the fact that Sutpen’s “trouble was innocence”; Sutpen’s innocence (or ignorance) of race and class relations as a child causes him to knock on the front door of the plantation home instead of going around to the back door, as his class position would have dictated (178). The colonial hierarchies of race and class had a violent effect on Sutpen’s psyche causing the embarrassment and shame he experienced in this moment; however, he later perpetuates this violence by working to achieve the status of a white

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34 According to Greg Forter, Faulkner portrays historical events themselves as traumatic (119). However, it is important not to leap to the assertion that history or culture in general is traumatic. Dominick LaCapra convincingly states that “the indiscriminate generalization of the category of survivor and the overall conflation of history or culture with trauma, as well as the near fixation on enacting or acting out post-traumatic symptoms, have the effect of obscuring crucial historical distinctions; they may, as well, block processes that counteract trauma and its symptomatic after effects but which do not obliterate their force and insistence…” (xi).

35 Sutpen in his infamous innocence “still didn’t know exactly just what his father did, what work (or maybe supposed to do) the old man had in relation to the plantation” (Faulkner 185).

36 References to Sutpen’s innocence occur throughout Jason’s discussion of Sutpen’s early life, to list a few: “Because he had not only not lost the innocence yet, he had not yet discovered that he had possessed it,” “Because he was still innocent,” “He couldn’t even realize yet that his trouble, his impediment, was innocence because he would not be able to realise that until he got it straight,” “because of that innocence which he had never lost because after it finally told him what to do that night he forgot about it and didn’t know that he still had it,” “he apparently did not know, comprehend, what he must have been seeing every day because of that innocence” (185, 186, 188, 194, 203).
planter himself within the same hierarchical system. Thus, Sutpen’s innocence causes his guilt. All things considered, Sutpen “is himself both poor white and aristocratic patriarch and colonizer,” in addition to being both innocent and guilty (Hagood 18); the hybridity or bivalence of his position mirrors the South’s as both colonized and colonizer. Sutpen repeats the classism that was committed against him, in addition to racism and sexism, in his relations with his slaves, his first wife Eulalia Bon, his son Charles Bon, Rosa Coldfield, Wash Jones, and Wash’s female family members, among others. Sutpen’s perpetuation of the physical, social, and sexual violence of plantation hierarchies culminates in his murder. Faulkner was aware of the reciprocal or cyclical nature of this violence, describing the plot of the novel that would become *Absalom, Absalom!* to his publisher Hal Smith as: “the theme is a man who outraged the land, and the land then turned and destroys the man’s family” and later “the story is of a man who wanted a son through pride, and got too many of them and they destroyed him” (Blotner 327, 334).

In the same way that Sutpen is responsible for the destruction of his design due to his colonial commitments (the rejection of his first family in Haiti literally causes his downfall through the events set in motion by the return of Charles Bon), on some level Faulkner recognizes that the tragedy of the white Southern plantocracy is warranted given that the South’s prosperity was built on the backs of slaves. Nevertheless, while he may view it as justified, at the same time, Faulkner depicts this tragic past in *Absalom, Absalom!* as so momentous and

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37 I credit Elizabeth Maddock Dillon with the notion that Sutpen’s innocence ends up being his guilt.
38 Sutpen’s violent death exemplifies the fact that “far from breeding life, or strengthening community, violence wreaks havoc on our physical and conceptual worlds” (Nudelman 3).
39 The cyclical nature of this violence and the retellings of Sutpen’s rise and downfall underscore that the origin of these traumas is in colonial hierarchies and ideologies, collapsing the temporal divide and emphasizing Faulkner’s use of the colonialisms as a chronotope. The cyclical form helps to reify the structure of colonial hierarchies, which remain in place throughout the generations. The repetitions also underscore the efforts of those in the present to work through and witness the past traumas that they have inherited as a result of intransient colonial hierarchies.
haunting that it is unrepresentable (yet warrants multiple retellings in the effort to convey it). In an attempt to denote the weighty significance of this defeat and what follows in the period of Reconstruction and Northern occupation, Faulkner refrains from using direct descriptions of the war, which amplifies the importance of the event through its notable absence. Additionally, the narrative framework of the novel, in which characters in the present not only repeat but also reconstruct the past, allows Faulkner to defer the ultimate telling of the past through the telling of multiple versions. The narrative structure of trauma can take different forms, such as traumatic repetition or the compulsive replaying of an event over and over until it seems to make sense or can be rendered less important. In this way, the repeated telling of the Sutpen family history may be seen as an attempt to represent a psyche working through a traumatizing situation.

Another literary representation of trauma is deferred revelation or the repression of the most accurate version of a memory until it later resurfaces “on its own in [one’s] tattered memory, in spurts, like muddy water pouring out of a clogged pump” (Monénembo 96). Glissant describes Faulkner’s use of deferred revelation as “an accumulating mystery and a whirling vertigo—gathering momentum rather than being resolved, through deferral and disclosure—and centered in a place to which he felt a need to give meaning” (Faulkner, MS 9). The decline of the Sutpen family, which critics such as Eric Sundquist have read as an allegory for the deterioration of the Southern plantation system, is the “centered place” to which Faulkner felt the need to give meaning through his use of deferred revelation. Faulkner uses both of these techniques, the

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40 I will return to this depiction of memory as a clogged pump in more depth in my discussion of Tierno Monénembo’s *The Oldest Orphan*, the novel from which this line was taken.

41 In his book *Faulkner: A House Divided*, Sundquist makes an analogy between Sutpen and President Lincoln, each of whom he claims “labors heroically to build or preserve a magnificent ‘house’ symbolic of his national and personal dream, and both of whom, at about the same time, face a crisis in the house and try desperately to postpone it” (105). The Civil War is the “crisis” which causes the downfall of Sutpen’s design for his plantation and Lincoln’s design for the unity of the nation, as well as the deterioration of Sutpen’s plantation itself and the South.
compulsion of traumatic repetition through the continual retellings of the Sutpen story with revised information and the repression of the most complete version until the novel’s conclusion, to convey the power and weight of this loss for the white South.

William Faulkner is haunted by the defeat and occupation of his homeland, among other things, and his literary reaction involves a concurrent glorification of the past and recognition of its sins. I argue that Faulkner both eulogizes the Old South and condemns it for its crimes, such as violence and racism, simultaneously in Absalom, Absalom!: further evidence of his bivalent colonial commitments. On one hand, Faulkner recognizes how difficult it is to extricate ourselves from the colonial narratives and hierarchies that are imbedded in our present, yet through depicting the effects of our adherence to them as tragic, he condemns them. As Greg Forter argues, Faulkner mourns the demise of colonial ideologies (or what Forter refers to as white “planter masculinity”), while he also acknowledges the destructive aspects of these hierarchical structures and mindsets (97). Forter claims that by naturalizing the traumas inflicted by the ideologies of plantation culture or depicting them as an accepted and organic feature of life, Faulkner, in his “ambivalent attachment to patriarchy and white supremacy,” effectively disavows “his indictment of those institutions, rewriting the traumas inflicted by them as the ineradicable truth of human being” (108). Although I agree that Faulkner naturalizes colonial traumas through portraying them as the inheritance from the past, I argue that Faulkner does not depict this past as unmoored from history but as the direct result of the South’s colonial

42 Thadious Davis argues that Faulkner “wrote into Absalom, Absalom! much of his otherwise inexpressible grief and guilt after the death of his brother Dean in 1935,” articulated through the narrative of fratricide “with its symbolic antecedent of brother killing brother being closely located within Western consciousness in the biblical story to which his title alluded” (Games of Property 5).
43 Planter masculinity can be seen as a form of elite white manhood endemic to the antebellum South and the power and control over others that it granted. Further, in Faulkner’s work, “planter masculinity with its toxic violations becomes then impossible to mourn or let go…[but] merely reprises an originary violence that will not let loose its grip upon us,” which we see throughout the repetition and reconfigurations of Absalom, Absalom! (Forter 98).
crimes—the system of slavery. Consequently, his critique of plantation culture is not undone or disavowed by this; it is just tempered. The two—Faulkner’s critique of and “ambivalent attachment” to patriarchy and white supremacy—exist at the same time, revealing his conflicted relationship to the colonial ideologies of the South. I read Faulkner’s critique of these ideologies through his portrayal of the negative consequences that result, such as Bon’s death and Henry’s exile, as tragedy. Faulkner represents the lingering impact of the colonial hierarchies of race, color, gender, and class on characters in the neo-colonial present, such as Quentin, and through his depiction of the tragedy that results, indicts them.

Faulkner portrays the ideologies of colonialism, both in terms of the colonization of the white South by the North and the black population by the plantocracy, as enduring into the neo-colonial turn-of-the-century period at the level of the individual through their effect on the novel’s narrator, Quentin Compson. Through reconstructing the history of the Sutpen family, the narrators simultaneously speculate and come to realizations about their own identities and their relationships with the past. Quentin’s subjectivity is conflicted; like Faulkner he has bivalent colonial commitments. He is haunted by his class’s treatment of blacks, the racism and violence of the South as depicted in the story of the Sutpens, and his identity as a Southerner. For example, Quentin’s body is depicted as “an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names; he was not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth. He was a barracks filled with stubborn backlooking ghosts still recovering, even forty-three years afterward, from the fever which cured the disease...” (Faulkner 7). Quentin’s corporeal reality is so overrun with names of vanquished soldiers that he is no longer a person but a commonwealth or a barracks whose central purpose is

44 Additionally, a number of scholars, such as Lennart Björk, Ilse Dusoir Lind, Cleanth Brooks, and Richard Sewall, have discussed *Absalom, Absalom!* in relation to classical ideas of tragedy and have noted the references to ancient mythology present in the novel.
to house the defeated—those still unable to get over their loss of the war (the fever) that ended slavery (the disease).\textsuperscript{45} The colonial past of the South, including both the crimes of the white South and its defeat by the North, is so visceral for Quentin that it occupies his identity, leading to his conflicted subjectivity. This may explain why shortly after his final reconstruction of the Sutpen story, representative of the story of the South, Quentin kills himself. Through his suicide, Quentin to some extent resists the inheritance of his region’s colonial crimes (in opposition to Sutpen’s active perpetration of them) and refuses to passively accept his Southern birthright.

Quentin recognizes the violence in his Southern inheritance and, like Faulkner, acknowledges the horror of his dual positioning: as colonized in relation to the North and colonizer in relation to the black South, a positioning that exists simultaneously in his post-/neo-colonial moment. Therefore, Quentin, like the novel’s other narrators, is unable to accurately reconstruct the past, perhaps in part due to his personal stake in this history and the traumatic effect it has on him. This inability is shown through the continual retellings of the story of the Sutpen family in the structure of traumatic repetition. In this way, trauma in \textit{Absalom, Absalom!} is a textual effect involving “the lag between experience and representation” (Matthews “Absalom Chapter”). As a result of the disconnect between the Sutpens’ experience of trauma and the narrators’ re-experience, each account of the past created by the characters from the present differs from the others: the past is ultimately unknowable. In other words, the tellers were not present at the events and cannot fully know what occurred nor the interiorities of the characters involved, as is shown by the repeated retellings of the story with rearranged information. Further, through this repetition with a difference, the narrators are in dialogue with

\textsuperscript{45} Even through the terms used by Faulkner in this passage—the fever and the disease—slavery is painted as the more serious or more comprehensive problem of the which the war is only an effect or a symptom, depending on how one understands the relationship between a fever and disease.
the figure of the Signifying Monkey, a “trope for repetition and revision” in African American literature, which has its roots in African sources (Gates 988). Although differing significantly in tone from traumatic repetition, the Signifying Monkey uses repetition and reversal as a form of parody to signify upon or critique the master’s tropes (Gates 988). In this way, the multivocality of the novel, in which the narrators do not fully know what occurred and signify upon each others’ accounts, stands in for a univocal master text in which Sutpen would tell his own chronological story. This linkage between the white narrators and an African American literary tradition underscores the connections between the white and black Southerners in the Sutpen’s story, which is read as symbolic of the story of the entire South.

Nevertheless, as the past is to an extent unrepresentable, even with multiple narrators reconstructing the story, it is the effort at recollection, the telling itself, that matters, as Judith observes in conversation with Quentin’s grandmother:

And so maybe if you go to someone, the stranger the better, and give them something—a scrap of paper—something, anything, it not to mean anything in itself and them not even to read it or keep it, not even bother to throw it away or destroy it, at least it would be something just because it would have happened, be remembered even if only from passing from one hand to another, on mind to another... (100)

As Judith describes above, the process of telling, or acting as a witness to an aspect of the past’s existence, affects both the speaker and the hearer, regardless of how much the hearer understands or even pays attention. This passing from one hand to another of the pieces of a traumatic story

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46 I thank Nicole Aljoe for the suggestion to incorporate the Signifying Monkey into my discussion of repetition with a difference.
47 For an extended discussion of the tales of the Signifying Monkey and their history, including their origins in slavery and connection to Yoruba mythology, see Henry Louis Gates’s The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism.
occurs in cases other than Judith’s bequeathal of Bon’s letter to General Compson’s wife, such as the interactions between the narrators and their listeners: Miss Rosa or Mr. Compson speaking to Quentin, and later Quentin speaking to Shreve, as well as Shreve speaking back to Quentin in the “happy marriage of speaking and hearing” that exists between the two (Faulkner 253).

The passage between hands can take many forms, ranging from the bestowal of a letter upon a near stranger, as in Judith’s case, to the inheritance of a family trauma. The concept of the transgenerational phantom, as discussed by Nicolas Abraham, Maria Torok, and later Nicholas Rand, may be of use here in consideration of the particular type of the passage between hands that recurs throughout the novel: the transmission of trauma from parent to child. According to the concept of the transgenerational phantom, some people “unwittingly inherit the secret psychic substance of their ancestors’ lives,” where the dead do not actually return but “their lives’ unfinished business is unconsciously handed down to their descendents” (Abraham and Torok 166-7). Abraham asserts that unfinished business is transferred to later generations in the form of the phantom through the survival of the traces of memory (168). The transmission of the phantom or traumatic traces occurs repeatedly throughout Absalom, Absalom!, for example Judith passing on Bon’s letter to Mrs. Compson who then passes it to Jason who passes it to Quentin. However, there are also cases in the novel in which the older generation is alive and participates actively in the transmission of memory traces, such as the passage of the transgenerational phantom between the forsaken Eulalia Bon and her son Charles and arguably also between Thomas Sutpen and Henry, as well as Jason Compson and Quentin. Nevertheless,

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48 Forter conceptualizes the transgenerational phantom in different terms and argues that each of us inherits family trauma “from some mythically primal ‘fatherhead’ [a term Forter takes from Bon’s musing that “all boy flesh that walked and breathed stemming from that one ambiguous eluded dark fatherhead and so brothered perennial and ubiquitous everywhere under the sun”].” which, according to Greg Forter, shows not only how one comes to “‘naturalize’ the social injuries of the world one inhabits but how one might come to see human history as a ceaseless repetition of a traumatization that resides at the origin of time” (Forter 129, Faulkner 240).
in both cases, the traumas we inherit from our parents are experienced in a different way by us in the present (another instance of repetition with a difference, recalling the Signifying Monkey and his critique of master narratives and the traumas that accompany them). Inherited traumas are experienced in a different way in part because traumatic experiences are not preserved whole cloth and passed down to posterity. The transgenerational phantom is made up only of the traces of traumatic memories and may progressively fade after transmission to succeeding generations until it disappears completely (Abraham and Torok 176). Bon experiences his mother’s injury as an inherited trauma, and while his reaction is different from hers, the injury still has a powerful effect on him, influencing his decisions and behavior in the present and illustrating the staying power of the transgenerational phantom or inherited family traumas.\footnote{In an editor’s note, Nicholas Rand asserts that the concept of the transgenerational phantom can account for the “periodic return of political ideologies rendered shameful with the military defeat of their proponents” (169). He uses the neo-Nazi movements of the 1980s and 1990s in Germany as an example, since the youths involved did not have direct contact with the reality of Nazi Germany but seem to follow a hidden force that “blindly drives some youths into movements modeled on the once openly glorified violence of their grandparents” (169). To this example, I’d add the resurgence of racial violence in the U.S. South during the Radical Era (1889-1915). Many young Southerners at this time did not have a direct connection to the system of slavery or the Civil War, but worked to maintain the colonial ideologies held sacred during that period.} However, while Eulalia’s repudiation by Sutpen has a serious effect on Bon and may be seen as spawning the sequences of events that lead to his death, it is less immediate and experienced differently by the generations of their family, including Charles Etienne de Saint Valery Bon, who seems to be more affected by his biracial identity, and Jim Bond. Sutpen’s rejection at the white planter’s door in Virginia, which later manifests in his replication of the traumas of slavery and patriarchy, more directly impacts Henry (who then kills Bon) and Quentin (who then kills himself) than latter hearers of the story like Shreve McCannon.\footnote{Proximity to the event is obviously not the only factor in determining the extent to which the past affects later generations, as the story of the Sutpen family arguably has a stronger effect on Quentin than it does on his father (although, like Quentin’s suicide, a case could be made for connecting Jason’s alcoholism, which eventually causes}
the South highlights the capacity of Faulkner’s colonial chronotope to impact those in a variety of places and times (though I argue to differing extents)—from the Canadian Shreve to the Haitian Charles Bon.

In addition to inheriting traumas, or the transgenerational phantom, from their ancestors and experiencing them in a different way, individuals may also be affected by multiple inherited traumas simultaneously, which Faulkner acknowledges through his depiction of colonialisms in the U.S. South as layered. For example, Quentin experiences guilt over his class’s treatment of black family members, such as Sutpen’s denial of Bon, at the same time he mourns the defeated position of the white South. As a result, it is important to leave room for varying strengths and experiences of trauma, so as not to dismiss indirect experiences of trauma, eradicate the differences between them, or recognize some layers while ignoring others. In a similar way, the experience of colonialisms in the antebellum period cannot be directly mapped in its entirety onto the neo-colonial era. In recognizing the continuities between the different periods, it is important also to note that the periods are not the same, in order to avoid reducing the multifaceted colonialisms in play at any given moment to a single layer. Similar mindsets and behaviors resulting from ingrained colonial ideologies are identifiable in each era, yet recognizing the historical specificities of the distinct periods is essential, in order not to conflate them. While I argue that to an extent Faulkner collapses different historical eras—the antebellum, postbellum, and twentieth-century periods—into each other in the novel to elucidate their commonalities, I do not mean that he erases the important differences between them, which would result in non-identifiable temporal settings. For example, slaves are technically free in the

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his death, to his inheritance of Sutpen’s story through his father). One’s sensitivity and capacity for coping are also significant, among other factors.
neo-colonial postbellum South and the Northern troops have left, illustrating the ways in which
the periods are distinct yet simultaneously enmeshed due to similar colonial power structures,
which, for example, grant white men power over nonwhite and female subjectivities.

Although not experienced in the same manner and perhaps not with the same level of
force, those in the present are impacted by both the tragedies and colonial ideologies of the past:
“The traumas we appear to suffer have always already happened to others, in ‘that Porto Rico or
Haiti or wherever it was we all came from but none of us ever lived in’” (Forter 130 quoting
Shreve, Faulkner 139). Shreve, Quentin’s Canadian roommate at Harvard, removed from the
plantation culture of the South and those other souths that are south of the South, collapses the
country from which each of “us” originates into Haiti and then Haiti into Puerto Rico (Glissant
Faulkner, MS 30). The latter move is one that a Southerner like Quentin would never make, as
Richard Godden notes that in “the South, ‘Haiti’ is synonymous with ‘revolution’” (Fictions of
Labor 50). An amorphous Caribbean entity, reminiscent of both Haiti and Puerto Rico, becomes
the repudiated Edenic land of origins not only for Haitian figures like Eulalia and Charles Bon,
but for all of us—if not in the world then at least in North America to encompass Shreve’s use of
“us,” which includes his Canadian self. Forter conceptualizes the traumas of the present as
having already occurred, although perhaps in a slightly different form (and I’d argue with a
different strength), previously to someone else in a colonized space. This conceptualization
illuminates my argument that Absalom, Absalom! critiques (and simultaneously eulogizes)
colonial hierarchies and ideologies which are refracted through the lens of the neo-colonial
present, revealing the reverberations of the traumatic past and the cyclical nature of colonial

51 As Glissant observes, one “emphatically says ‘the South,’ with a capital ‘S,’ as though it represents an absolute, as
though we other people south of the south, to the south of this capitalized South, never existed” (Faulkner, MS 30).
crimes. In this case, one of the traumas of the neo-colonial present of the novel (1910) is the tragic defeat and occupation of the South, which ripples out to impact the lives of latter-day Southerners like Quentin Compson in their own historically distinct time. This, however, should be seen as resulting from the reverberation of the true sin of the South, the horrific dehumanizing policies of the institution of slavery—arguably an internal form of colonialism—which in turn leads to the war and the South’s defeat, i.e. the fever (the Civil War) was caused by or is a symptom of the disease (slavery).\textsuperscript{52} In the next section, I will focus on the white South’s role as colonizer of the black population, before examining the ways in which these layered colonialism play out in the novel, as depicted through the narration of Charles Bon’s story.

The Black South as Colonized: The Theory of Internal Colonialism as Applied to African Americans in the South

In \textit{Absalom, Absalom!}, while never foregrounded, the experiences of Sutpen’s “wild negroes” and their implied Haitian origins connect the U.S. South to the Caribbean plantation setting of Sutpen’s voyage to Haiti, linking the South’s plantation culture to that of the West Indies (27). Through the inclusion of Sutpen’s Haitian slaves and his experience subduing revolution on the “little lost island,” described by Faulkner as “the halfway point between what we call the jungle and what we call civilization,” Faulkner intentionally calls to mind the similarities shared by his South and other New World souths (202). John Matthews states that readers of \textit{Absalom, Absalom!} “have always had before their eyes Faulkner’s evidence that the plantation South derives its design from new-world models, owes a founding debt to West Indian

\textsuperscript{52} I refer to slavery here as the “true sin of the South,” not as a tragedy unmoored from history and its actors. I agree with François Vergès that speaking “of slavery as a ‘tragedy’ transforms this event into something that went beyond human intention, an event in which all participants were victims” (15).
slave-based agriculture, extracted labor and profit from African-Caribbean slave trade, and practiced forms of racial and sexual control common to other hemispheric colonial regimes” (“Recalling the West Indies” 239). This knowledge hides in the open in Faulkner’s novel, like Edgar Allan Poe’s purloined letter (“Recalling the West Indies” 239). I use this connection as the jumping off point for this next section in which I explore the link between the treatment of the black population in the U.S. South and more traditional models of European colonialism, as well as the enduring effects of Faulkner’s colonial chronotope on African Americans in the post-/neo-colonial South.

Paul Gilroy argues in *Postcolonial Melancholia* that race thinking played a pivotal role in “rendering the bodies of natives, slaves, and other infrahumans worthless or expendable” through what he calls the “racialization of governmental practice” and its impact on the exercises of colonial power (45). Power in the colonial system is intimately entangled with racial hierarchies and depends on the institutionalization of racism to “absorb the cries of those who suffer by making them sound less than human” (Gilroy 57). Colonialism is founded on the abuse of nonwhite bodies and subjectivities and was considered acceptable by those practicing it (or those in whose name it was practiced) as a result of the fact that nonwhite bodies were thought to be less than human and therefore to not suffer in the same way as white bodies.\(^53\) I will explore the remnants of colonialism’s racist mentality that linger in post-/neo-colonial societies through the consideration of African Americans in the United States as an internally colonized group.\(^54\)

\(^{53}\) Racism in postplantation/neo-colonial societies, such as the United States, is not just found in “isolated instances of conscious bigoted decisionmaking or prejudiced practice, but [is] larger, systemic, structural, and cultural, as deeply psychological and socially ingrained” (Lawrence, Matsuda, Delgado, Crenshaw 5).

\(^{54}\) Jessica Adams emphasizes this mentality through connecting the footage of hurricane Katrina, as well as the images of the floods in Haiti following thunderstorm Jeanne, to “wounds of returning...[that] insist on the common history of the plantation—the implications of which have been, despite everything, easy to ignore” (19). Similar to her argument that black poverty became a picturesque sight for Northern tourists by the end of the nineteenth
Although the colonized position of white Southerners is portrayed as tragic from their perspective in *Absalom, Absalom!*, I argue that another trauma of Southern history according to Faulkner is slavery and the colonized position of the black South (evidence of Faulkner attempting to have it both ways at once), illustrating the different tiers of damage in a range of temporal registers caused by the U.S. South’s chronotope of colonialisms.

While the conception of African Americans as internally colonized was not solidified as such until after the publication of *Absalom, Absalom!* in 1936, I believe that the novel links slavery with colonialism in interesting ways, which I will explore by way of the theory of internal colonialism. In 1944 W.E.B. Du Bois gave a speech entitled “Colonialism, Democracy, and Peace after the War” in Haiti in which he was concerned with the fate of colonized people after the end of World War II. In this speech, he stated that in addition to colonies in the strict sense there are “other groups, like the Negroes of the United States, who do not form a separate nation and yet who resemble in their economic and political condition a distinctly colonial status” (88). Although not technically a separate nation, Du Bois argued that African Americans exist as a distinct population within the United States that he designated as semicolonial (“Colonialism, Democracy, and Peace” 88). He asserted that “the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight” who suffers from double-consciousness—“this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others” (2). This veil or double-
consciousness necessarily separates black Americans from white Americans and positions blacks not only as a distinct group but also, through the importance placed on the “eyes of others” or representation as defined by whites, as colonized by the white population. This positioning underscores the connection between African Americans and other colonized groups around the globe.

The theory of internal colonialism, considering blacks in the U.S. alongside other colonized populations, was taken up again by scholars in the 1960s and 1970s, such as Robert Blauner, Mario Barrera, and Robert L. Allen, and is currently being reevaluated by others like Charles Pinderhughes and Roderick Bush. Pinderhughes, a sociology professor and veteran social activist, argues that we need to move the discussion beyond “narrow, European-bound descriptions of colonialism and re-assert an analysis of colonialism that takes proper note of the conditions of the colonized as the starting point for analysis” (“Towards a New Theory” 236).

Thus, given the conditions of blacks in the United States from the era of slavery up until today, Pinderhughes argues that African Americans should be considered colonized subjects. He defines internal colonialism as “a geographically-based pattern of subordination of a

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57 Vincente Rafael refers to this “white gaze” as “a gaze that surveys and catalogs other races while remaining unmarked and unseen itself” (Kaplan and Pease 200).

58 In W.E.B. Du Bois’s words, the colonial people make up “a mass, poverty-stricken, with the lowest standards of living; they are for the most part illiterate and unacquainted with the systemized knowledge of modern science; and they have little or no voice in their own government, with a consequent lack of freedom of development” which, in the view of Pinderhughes, if not Du Bois himself, is a predicament that can be extended to African Americans (“Colonialism, Democracy, and Peace” 89).

59 While I focus on the theory of internal colonialism as it applies to African Americans in this chapter and center my discussion of the paradigm on Pinderhughes’s article since it is the most recent discussion to date, I also want to draw the reader’s attention to Bush’s article “The Internal Colony Hybrid: Reformulating Structure, Culture, and Agency.” This piece expands on the paradigm’s application to other ethnic groups, as well as its connection to external colonialism and the coloniality of power.

60 Roderick Bush writes that in addition to African Americans, “Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Native Americans are also commonly considered internally colonized populations within the United States” (Bush 130). Similarly, Pinderhughes notes that the theory has also been applied to “the Inuit (Canada), the Miskitu (Nicaragua), and the Palestinians (Israel), and other neo-colonial settings, including Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Estonia, Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka” (“Towards a New Theory” 248).
differentiated population, located within the dominant power or country…[which] has the outcome of systemic group inequality expressed in the policies and practices of a variety of social institutions” (“Towards a New Theory” 236). Pinderhughes not only believes that slavery was an instance of internal colonialism but also that this colonial system has persisted in the centuries since then in different forms, which he delineates using an adaptation of Manning Marable’s four racial domains: Slavery Racial Domain (1619-1865), Jim Crow Racial Domain (1865-1970), Colonial Ghetto Racial Domain (1910-1970), and Neo-colonial Ghetto Racial Domain (1970-present) (“How Black Awakening in Capitalist America” 75). Pinderhughes’s distinctions between racial domains support the theory that in the United States, the effects of internal colonialism persist into the post-/neo-colonial present.

Pinderhughes’ work usefully illuminates the connection between the conditions of colonized and formerly colonized people around the world and African Americans in the U.S. as similarly dispossessed at the economic, social, and cultural level. At the same time, I find the paradigm’s positioning of middle and upper class African Americans as the native or comprador elite troubling. According to Robert Allen, since the Civil War, the major class within the African American community has been the working class, in addition to a very weakened black bourgeoisie that includes the black petty bourgeoisie and a few mostly subordinated black capitalists (Pinderhughes “How Black Awakening in Capitalist America” 72). Allen argues that the black bourgeoisie was pressed to collaborate with the occupying power and to attempt to exert control over the majority of the African American population (Pinderhughes “How Black

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61 In addition to the temporal designations, Pinderhughes defines internal colonialism in geographic terms and does not believe that African Americans make up one large internal colony but form multiple colonies that exist within their own contiguous territories (“Towards a New Theory” 251).
"Awakening in Capitalist America” 72). This reading positions the black bourgeoisie as siding with the culture of the colonizer over that of the colonized, or in other words, as traitors to their own people. I find this problematic both in its demonization of the black bourgeoisie, which encompasses a diverse range of individuals who surely would not all fit the description of race traitors, and in its assumption that success in the capitalist world-system is limited to (or is a characteristic of) those of the white race. Quite the opposite is the case, according to Toni Morrison, who stated in an interview with Paul Gilroy that as a result of abduction, mutilation, and slavery and the resulting conditions of existential homelessness, dislocation, alienation, African subjects were the first moderns (Eshun 288). Others, such as Kodwo Eshun, argue that “the collective trauma of slavery [is] the founding moment of modernity” (288). Further, Walter Mignolo’s understanding of Anibal Quijano’s coloniality of power acknowledges that coloniality (or the “spatial articulation of power, since the sixteenth century and the emergence of the Atlantic commercial circuit”) is constitutive of modernity and not just derivative of modernity (Mignolo 60, 81). As a result of these examples, to paint modernity and the capitalist world-system that resulted as exclusively white establishments perpetuates “the fiction of the belatedness of nonwestern cultures in the march toward modernity” and would seem to me not only limiting but also historically inaccurate (Burton 3).63

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62 Similarly, writing generations after Allen, Roderick Bush states that many of the “black professional-managerial strata serve as a comprador elite within the black community that participates in the subjugation or helps to justify the subjugation of the lower strata of the community” (158).
63 In addition, I am concerned with the paradigm’s potential for reinscribing African Americans as “Others” firstly and as Americans secondly. Later in his career, Robert Blauner grew more skeptical of the theory of internal colonialism, which he himself had helped develop. Blauner argued there “was a practical solution to overseas colonialism; the colonizers could be sent back to Europe. And for the most part they were. But I could find no parallel solution for America’s domestic colonialism. Such a disconnect between theory and practice suggested to me an inherent flaw in the conceptual scheme itself” (Blauner 189 as qtd. in Pinderhughes “Towards a New Theory” 247). I agree with Pinderhughes’s point that the fact that Native Americans were not able to expel the settlers does not mean the U.S. is no longer a settler colony or that the characterization of African Americans as colonized ceased
While there are some issues with the internal colonialism paradigm as it has been recently articulated that need to be addressed more directly, I nonetheless find it a beneficial way to foreground the connections between colonialism and slavery in the United States. These connections include the economic and cultural exploitation both entail, for example through the forced labor of European colonialism and the institution of slavery in the South (and later the sharecropping and convict lease systems), as well as the racism and violence both leave in their wake. The racism and sexism inherited from the colonial hierarchies of race, gender, class, and color have lasting effects in both the U.S. South and former European colonies that manifest generations later, for instance, in skewed relationships to gender and sexuality and also sexual violence, both of which I will explore in more detail in the final section of this chapter. In addition to the use of rape by white supremacist groups in the postbellum U.S. South to keep the black population subjugated in a colonial relation, gendered violence is common to a number of

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64 The physical and sexual abuse of black bodies under slavery was transitioned from the antebellum to post-/neo-colonial South through the violence of lynch law and the abuses of white supremacist groups like the Klu Klux Klan, which I will explore more in the next chapter.
contemporary Caribbean societies, which Marie-Chantal Kalisa argues results from the situations created by slavery and colonialism that made black women vulnerable to abuse by black men (4). Therefore, the theory of internal colonialism emphasizes the shared colonial legacies of racial and sexual violence inherited by the U.S. South and other post-/neo-colonial regions.

Moreover, the paradigm is particularly useful in an exploration of the Haitian episode in *Absalom, Absalom!* and the way it leads readers to the trace colonial connections from the Caribbean to the U.S. South. Although Faulkner’s novel predates the theory of internal colonialism, I argue that *Absalom, Absalom!* lays the foundation for similar parallels to be drawn between the conditions of slaves in the U.S. South and the colonized across the globe. For example, the laborers on the post-revolutionary Haitian plantation, who are subdued by Sutpen, function in both roles: first as nominally free laborers in Haiti and later as slaves on Sutpen’s plantation in the South, which would seem to conflate the two positions. Through breaking down the experiences of African Americans into four racial domains, Pinderhughes, like Marable, is careful to demarcate the different phases in African American history and to recognize the changes that occurred in the lives of African Americans after Emancipation, while also depicting internal colonialism as a constant. Although Faulkner is less careful about the differentiation between historical phases, he also portrays the persistence of colonialisms through positioning them as a chronotope; Faulkner collapses the pre- and post-revolutionary periods in the novel’s Haitian episode which I argue elucidates the continuities between them. If we, as readers, extrapolate from Faulkner’s portrayal of Haiti to his depiction of the U.S. South, the

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65 Sexual violence is a constant in each novel central to this dissertation, from *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Go Down, Moses* to *Love, Anger, Madness* and *The Oldest Orphan*, illustrating the widespread nature of this type of abuse in post-/neo-colonial societies.

66 However, it is important to keep in mind that while Faulkner symbolically collapses the colonial and neo-colonial eras through the Haitian episode to make a point about the continuities between the two, this does not undo the historical specificities differentiating the periods from each other, as discussed in the previous section.
resulting view is that the conditions of slavery remain in place long after Emancipation, for example, rippling out to Quentin Compson’s Radical era through the violence of lynch law and the sexual abuse of black women. While slavery was abolished in the U.S. in 1865, the conditions of many African Americans’ lives continued in a different form as a result of various factors, as discussed above, from racism and limited job mobility to the violence of lynch culture. By referring to this subordinated status as internal colonialism, the experiences of African Americans, from economic and cultural exploitation to physical and sexual abuse, connect them to colonial situations all over the globe, illustrating the virality of colonial ideologies and their far-reaching effects. In order to illustrate the ways in which the different entwined colonialisms outlined in the previous sections interact in Absalom, Absalom!, I will next offer an analysis of the figure of Charles Bon that explores the effects of the various colonialisms on his story.

Undisclosed Origins: A Retelling of the Story of Charles Bon

As a result of the multiple types of colonialism existing simultaneously in Faulkner’s portrayal of the U.S. South (for example the black South as colonized by the white plantocracy and the white South as colonized by the North), as well as the remnants of colonialism in the postbellum and twentieth-century South, the colonial and neo-colonial periods are entwined and do not exist as temporally distinct moments. Absalom, Absalom! reveals this through its portrayal of colonialisms as a chronotope, connecting all periods of Southern history, as well as the cyclical nature of the novel itself. In the final section of this chapter, I will investigate the

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67 Richard Godden describes the Radical era (1889-1915) in the South as a time when “a fearful conjunction of race and sex disturbed the southern white imagination” and whites were obsessed with the potential breakdown of plantation hierarchies (23).
contradictory roles that Charles Bon concurrently plays in different stories of colonialism and what these roles reveal about the relationship between the South’s entwined colonialisms and sexuality and intimate violence. For instance, Bon is described as a white cosmopolitan dandy, a “wealthy young New Orlean[sian]”, down to his participation in the plaçage system, from Jason Compson’s viewpoint in the colonial era, and yet is depicted as a thwarted black rapist and denied black brother from Quentin’s neocolonial perspective: two stories with different racial and sexual stakes (80). While the depictions of Bon differ according to temporal periods, his multiple portrayals expose the narrators’ colonial commitments—commitments that underlie and connect the two seemingly distinct eras. In other words, although Bon is constructed at the crossroads of different colonialisms and competing narrative engagements in these colonial regimes, his various permutations reveal deep underlying colonialisms that challenge conventional designations between the colonial and neo-colonial periods. Nevertheless, with an awareness of the narrators’ divergent colonial mindsets and the layered colonialisms that connect them, we can begin to see the ways in which Faulkner uses Bon’s métissage, or blending of cultural, racial, and sexual categories, to confront the resilient colonial mentalities that persist in the twentieth-century American South through imagining an alternative: the acceptance of this fluidity.

Who is Charles Bon—that “impenetrable and shadowy character”—and what can he tell us about colonialism in Faulkner’s postbellum South (Faulkner 82)? The narrators of Absalom, Absalom! (1936) present vastly dissimilar portraits of Bon and disagree as to basic facts of his identity, including his origins, race, and sexuality. Miss Rosa describes him as an “unseen male caller” or “a gallant ‘dream,’” perhaps because of her own status as spinster and wronged fiancée (Gerend 24). Jason Compson envisions Bon as a “cynical or fatalistic European charged with the
seduction of the South” (Ladd 148). In the final telling of Bon’s origins in the novel, Quentin and Shreve identify him as the son Thomas Sutpen had on a sugar plantation in Haiti with his first wife, Eulalia, whom he abandoned after the discovery of her black blood. Through this association, Quentin and Shreve connect the novel to a story of Caribbean plantation life and the sexual subordination of slaves, and they thus position Bon as a black creole. Accordingly, some scholars situate Bon as a member of the *jaunes*, the biracial class that succeeded the white French aristocracy in Haiti after the revolution (Matthews “Recalling the West Indies” 253). Such an understanding reveals that Faulkner’s multiplicitous portrayal of Bon is central to the way various forms of colonialism operate in *Absalom, Absalom!* and to what ends. The conflicted representation of Bon’s subjectivity and métissage exemplifies Faulkner’s portrayal of the entwined colonialisms embedded in Southern society and gestures towards an alternative to the preservation of colonial ideologies in the twentieth century (Loichot 117).

In addition to the multiple forms of colonialism found in the American South at the turn-of-the-century, Haiti, the site of Bon’s conception and birth, was held in a colonial relation to the U.S. during the military occupation from 1915 to 1934. At this time the paternalistic discourse which had been employed to justify slavery in the South was used again as propaganda to rouse the American public’s support for the occupation (Gerend 19). This discourse, which positioned Haiti as a wayward child in need of American paternalistic rule, became prevalent in 1910 when Haiti fell under the control of the U.S. and continued through the years of the occupation

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68 John Matthews argues that Quentin knows more about Haiti and colonial history than he reveals. For example, Quentin recognizes that there were no white French planters left on Haiti when Sutpen arrived in 1827, and thus Eulalia’s family were *jaunes* (“Recalling the West Indies” 250). While Sutpen in his ignorance overlooks his wife’s racial ancestry, Quentin’s is an intentional unawareness; Quentin purposely “overlooks the evidence that the colonial slave trade sustained the South’s domestic partnership” (“Recalling the West Indies” 252).

69 According to Valérie Loichot, métissage, “unlike miscegenation, not only defines race, but can also describe cultural, social, and gender blurring” (117).
As such, Bon’s Haitian blood carries with it certain implications for the narrators speaking in 1910, and, as Sara Gerend argues, Quentin and Shreve’s “narrative that reconstructs Charles Bon as the abandoned Haitian son must be recognized as a vital part of the emerging paternalistic discourse that came to justify and maintain American imperialism in Haiti” (Gerend 18). Further, the centrality of this paternalism connects the colonialism of the Haitian occupation to that of slavery, highlighting the fact that both periods affect Quentin’s mindset in the neocolonial South. Faulkner began writing *Absalom, Absalom!* in 1933, thus, both Quentin and Shreve’s telling in 1910 and Faulkner’s writing might well have been influenced by the discourse of the white American soldiers/father figures guiding the young black nation. Accordingly, I would suggest that Quentin and Shreve’s version of Bon’s story reveals as much about the popular discourse and political climate of their time and the period during which Faulkner was writing as about Charles Bon in the antebellum South (as well as the relation between these different temporal moments).

Exposing their own colonial mentalities and investment in white paternalism, of the sort that structured both the slave system and the U.S. occupation of Haiti, Quentin and Shreve elevate Bon’s desire for his father’s approval to the sole motivation behind his decisions and actions. They construct Bon as a neglected Haitian son pursuing the acknowledgement of his white American father, or in Gerend’s words, “a sort of foundling raised by an absent white father and a vengeful Creole mother” (25). However, as white middle to upper class men, Quentin and Shreve impose their own understanding of family structures onto their conception of Charles Bon. According to some scholars, such as Hortense Spillers, slave societies were
matrilineal as a result of absent white fathers or banished black fathers. If the role of the father is different in antebellum black families than it is in early twentieth-century white families and cultural differences exist between the U.S. and Haiti (where Bon spent an undefined portion of childhood), then Quentin and Shreve’s elevation of the drive for his father’s acknowledgment to Bon’s sole motivation reveals more about their own understanding of family relations than about Bon’s actions. In short, Quentin and Shreve’s depiction of Bon as an abandoned Haitian son seeking recognition from his white father exposes their colonial commitments and the relation of these commitments to the turn-of-the-century period from which they are reconstructing Bon’s story.

In opposition to Quentin and Shreve’s emphasis on their own white middle to upper class understanding of Haiti or black family structures, we might instead analyze Bon from the standpoint of his multiplicitous sexual identity and Caribbean plantation origins. Exploring the representation of Bon’s story with an eye to the ingrained colonial ideologies and stereotypes invoked by the novel’s narrators, sheds light on the conflicted depiction of his subjectivity that results. Bon is a biracial man from Haiti who, according to Quentin and Shreve, inherited both black and Spanish blood from his mother. While he himself is the product of a sanctioned marriage, Bon’s lineage likely results from the rape of slaves or black laborers, given that slavery

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70 This understanding of the structures of slave families has been recently challenged by Frances Smith Foster in ‘Til Death or Distance Do Us Part: Love and Marriage in African America. According to Foster: “The pages of black newspapers and magazines illustrate that contrary to popular belief, African American marriage, even during antebellum times, was frequent, and that family ties were strong, and that love was both an adolescent fantasy and a fulfilling adult reality” (xv). Foster constructs a counter-argument to the accepted narratives of African American familial dysfunction rooted in slavery, using writings published in the early African American press, family histories, folk stories, memoirs, and other historical documents to present a fuller picture of early African American marriage and family life.

71 As identity has been proven to be fluid (even for literary characters), I do not mean to imply that I will present the authentic or true version of Bon. I propose another way of seeing his character that tries to be conscious of Quentin and Shreve as narrators and the baggage they bring to their task of storytelling.
authorized and even institutionalized sexual violence (or at the very least sexualized, unequal relations between a planter and a slave in pre-revolutionary Haiti). Bon is genetically connected to both planters and slaves. Moreover, as Aliyyah Abdur-Rahman argues, modern theories of sexual identity might be seen to be formed in part as a result of the violence and the “sexual deviance” of the slave plantation (224). Abdur-Rahman claims that the “routine rape of black women increased the wealth of slave owners and solidified an enduring association of forbidden sexuality, sexual violence, and blackness” (226-7). While Abdur-Rahman’s essay addresses representation specifically in the context of the U.S. slave plantation, I believe her arguments extend to Bon’s experience on the Haitian sugar plantation. Through his lineage, Bon is connected to the violence of plantation life—“not simply the product of sexual criminality but its very incarnation”—and thus exposes and embodies the violent sexual perversity of white slave-owners (Abdur-Rahman 228, 225). Although Bon is the offspring of both masters and slaves as a member of the jaunes, insofar as he is a member of the propertied class in Haiti, he is positioned on a level analogous to that of Henry and Judith in the U.S. However, after his arrival in the U.S., Bon is aligned with slaves and their violent inheritance, according to Southern racial hierarchies (which he seems to avoid by passing as white). The conflicting positions he inhabits illustrate the multiplicity not only of his lineage but also his experience, caused by different cultural conceptions of race in Haiti and the U.S. Nevertheless, if the exploitative relations of the plantation affect not only slaves but also the elite class—corrupting “both its victims and its

72 Describing the rampant interracial sex that occurred in the antebellum South, Joel Williamson notes that: “Overwhelming evidence indicates that these liaisons began with rape—not with love or even, in one sense or another, money” (385). As the system of slavery was prominent in both the antebellum South and pre-revolutionary Haiti, we can assume that this was probably the case in the latter as well.
benefactors”—then how is Bon in his bivalent colonial position implicated in the cycle of violation and “sexual deviance” out of which he was produced (Abdur-Rahman 232)?

When Bon was born in 1831, Haiti enjoyed internal stability with low levels of violence and serious crime; however, the nation was nonetheless negatively affected by the color prejudice of President Jean-Pierre Boyer (1818-1843) and the ruling class (Nicholls 69). For example, Boyer’s Rural Code of 1826 restricted the rights of the peasantry and revived “the colour distinctions by which the mulatto regarded himself to be the superior of the black man” (Williams 334). Emphasis on racial or color distinctions was central to the political atmosphere of Haiti during Bon’s life: “Haiti of the thirties, then, presents the picture of a predominately agricultural country ruled by a small group of military officers and politicians, almost all of whom were light-skinned” (Nicholls 71). Given Bon and Eulalia’s light skin (both were able to pass as white) and financial success (as the heir and owner of a sugar plantation), they would not have been subjected to the Rural Code. As opposed to the one-drop rule, which arose in the U.S. South in the 1830s when Bon was born, it was possible “for gradations of white and black to exist between the absolute poles of the racial chromograph” in Haiti, due to its

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73 France’s recognition of Haiti’s independence in 1825 fortified the relative calm of this period and ended the nation’s political isolation (Nicholls 67, Dubois 99). However, as a result of the indemnity that accompanied France’s recognition of Haiti, President Boyer in actuality brought Haiti a defeat that was disguised as a triumph (Dubois 99). The indemnity caused Haiti to become a debtor nation and was responsible for much of the nation’s economic woes (Dubois 99).

74 While the Rural Code attempted to exploit rural residents for their labor, many of these residents, with their own plots of land, “perfected techniques of evading government officials, living as much as possible beyond the gaze of the state” (Dubois 106). Their resistance prevented Boyer from ultimately reviving sugar production and lead to a push for mass land ownership (Dubois 106-7). The lakou system, or “a set of social and cultural practices intended to secure this land ownership over time and to guarantee every rural resident a measure of autonomy,” developed out of this push as well (Dubois 107). Thus, the large sugar plantation upon which Bon was born in 1830 was not the only or even the most common agricultural production system in Haiti at that time.

75 According to Eric Williams, “This code forbade the peasant, under penalty of imprisonment, and in the case of recidivism, hard labour, to travel into the interior without a permit of the landowner or overseer on whose land he was employed; prescribed the number of hours of work; suppressed the laborer’s right to leave the fields and migrate to the towns; prohibited workers’ associations for the purchase of plantations; required the labourer to be submissive and respectful to the planter or his overseer, under pain of imprisonment” (333-334).
connection to the Mediterranean cultures of France and Spain (Ladd 28, Saldivar 104). As a result of the greater authority assigned to hybrid status and the “legitimation of the mixed-blood mulatto through the legalisms of marriage and property rights” allowed in Haitian society, Bon and his mother did not follow her mother into bondage, as they would have done in the U.S. South (Saldivar 105). Not only were they considered to be citizens rather than property, but given their color, race, and class, the Bons undoubtedly would have held a position of power and prestige in Haiti in the 1830s as part of Boyer’s favored mulatto elite. However, after emigrating to the U.S., they would have lost their elite position (had they not decided to pass), as in Louisiana, “persons of mixed ancestry were ‘redefined’ as part of the black or ‘slave’ race during the 1830s” when the policy of segregation displaced that of assimilation following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 (Ladd xv, xiv).

Just as Creoles76 like Bon might hide a trace of African ancestry, in the nineteenth century it was thought, as Barbara Ladd argues, that white Southerners might conceal a European tinge—threatening national unity through their ties to Europe and the shared policies of colonialism (xv-xvi). Ladd argues that in American Southern literature, “the creole metaphor also marks the southerner as a dangerous border figure, someone who might look like an American,” yet “carries within him- or herself traces of the displaced and who might at some point act traitorously to undermine the progressive nation” (xv-xvi). Bon is located in this literary history, not only through his suppressed slave plantation lineage, but also through his portrayal as a decadent European.77 Jason Compson describes Bon “crossing the campus on foot

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76 According to white Southerners in the nineteenth century, Creoles with a capitalized “C” are white, whereas creoles with lowercase “c” are biracial (Ladd xv).
77 In his portrayal of Bon as an extravagant European, Jason Compson may be aware of the phrase’s potential as a euphemism for biracial, as a result of the racial flexibility connected with the French and Spanish colonies, or he
in the slightly Frenchified cloak and hat” or “reclining in a flowered, almost feminized gown, in a sunny window in his chamber” with “some tangible effluvium of knowledge, surfeit: of actions done and satiations plumbed and pleasures exhausted and even forgotten” (76). His fluid nationality, in addition to his shifting racial and sexual identities, illustrates the threat that Bon poses both as a Creole and a Southerner with connections to Europe. In addition to Bon’s French and feminine appearance, he is also presented as so experienced and worldly as to be able to seduce both Judith and Henry, his naïve siblings from the country, through his mannerisms and appearance.

Along with his unstable national identity, feminized style, and worldly ways, Bon is depicted as having spent his youth in pursuit of pleasure and indulgence, spending a large portion of his mother’s money “on his whores and his champagne” and having “already acquired a name for prowess among women” (241, 78). If Bon is serious in his intention to marry Judith, as it appears to the reader, then the existence of his octroon wife and son, Charles Etienne Bon, connects him to the illegal sexual practice of bigamy. Bon was conceived on a plantation where queerness, or a lack of commitment to patrilineal, patriarchal, and monogamous forms of reproduction, was the norm. Bon’s conception in this space manifests itself in his propensity for unconstrained sexual behavior and may be seen as an alternative explanation for this aspect of his character. Bon’s unconventional sexuality, which reveals him to be both a profligate philanderer and potential bigamist, is an expression of his plantation origins, as opposed to a

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78 As Bon was believed to be white and his wife black, this marriage would not have been legal in nineteenth-century Louisiana. According to Quentin and Shreve, there was a ceremony, which is the part that Henry could not ignore: “it would be the ceremony, a ceremony entered into, to be sure, with a negro, yet still a ceremony” (87).

79 Masters reproducing with their slaves was not monogamous or patrilineal, since the status of the child followed that of the mother from the early eighteenth century (Ladd 21). I thank Elizabeth Maddock Dillon for this observation.
simulated identity created for the purpose of seducing Sutpen’s children and demolishing his
dynasty out of desire for revenge or because even negative attention from his father is better than
nothing. By emphasizing Bon’s non-normative sexuality, such a reading illuminates the
centrality of both Bon’s ostensible European identity and Haitian plantation origins to the
story—as opposed to his desire for a white father figure. Further, the combination of his
European and Caribbean associations, in addition to his multiplicitous sexuality, speaks to Bon’s
métissage or social, racial, and sexual fluidity, which I will discuss in full shortly.

As a result of his origins on a slave plantation where non-patrilineral sexuality is standard,
Bon is associated with queer sexuality during the late nineteenth century—a time when
alternative sexual identities, such as auto-mono sexualists, pedophiles, and homosexuals, were
constructed and recognized by society (Abdur-Rahman 225). According to Michael Bibler, “the
rape of a black woman by her white owner or overseer could be construed as queer because it
violates the model of the racially and sexually ‘pure’ Victorian family that domestic slavery and
its postbellum counterpart were supposed to imitate” (5). Thus, Bon’s plantation heritage is
marked as non-normative or queer. Furthermore, Bon’s bigamy and the philandering can be
considered queer in the sense that these acts are not oriented towards patrilineal reproduction,
and his connection to Henry links him more specifically to the emergent figure of the
homosexual. To consider Bon’s friendship with Henry on Eve Sedgwick’s “continuum of male
‘homosocial desire,’” connects it to “a cultural system in which male-male desire became widely
intelligible primarily by being routed through nonexistent desire involving a woman” (*Between
Men* 1, *Epistemology of the Closet* 15). Judith can be seen as an empty vessel linking the men
and providing a socially acceptable outlet for their feelings for each other. Jason Compson
supports this view of the homosocial desire between Henry and Bon, stating: “Bon not only
loved Judith after his fashion but he loved Henry too and I believe in a deeper sense than merely after his fashion...seeing perhaps in the sister merely the shadow, the woman vessel with which to consummate the love whose actual object was the youth” (85-6). As far as the narrators of *Absalom, Absalom!*, and consequently the readers, are aware, the relationship between Henry and Bon is never physically consummated. Nevertheless, the relationship between the two men has the potential for creativity and resistance in its alternativeness. In the mutuality found in his relationship with Henry, Bon pursues what Bibler calls a “horizontal model of egalitarian social relations” and disrupts the colonial hierarchies of race, class, and gender central to the plantation South (6). While relations between white men and black women were accepted in the South (and Bibler argues even relations between white men of the planter class), egalitarian relationships between black and white men were not, as they threatened core racial plantation hierarchies. This threat of racial egalitarianism proves to be too much for Henry. He shoots Bon shortly after discovering his race.

In addition to the emergent figure of the homosexual, Bon’s love for Henry connects him to the taboo practices of incest and miscegenation. According to Claude Levi-Strauss, the traffic in women (exemplified by Henry “seducing” Judith for Bon or betrothing Judith to Bon) is used to create relations between men. Interestingly, Bon violates both of the restrictions placed on the traffic in women: endogamy or marrying too far into the tribe (incest) and exogamy or marrying too far outside of the tribe (miscegenation). Incest may be seen as a mode of racial narcissism or familial self-love, which are forms of preservation from within, and is more acceptable than miscegenation in the South, as a result of the overvaluation of blood, purity, and lineage.80 However, incest between Judith and Charles Bon constitutes fornication with a nonwhite body,

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80 I credit John Matthews with this observation.
which would preserve familial but not racial purity. Given the South’s preoccupation with both familial and racial purity, it is understandable that in Quentin and Shreve’s retelling, Henry ultimately accepts the fact that the marriage would be incestuous, yet kills Bon to prevent miscegenation. Marriage between a white woman and a man with even a trace of African ancestry would have been considered a threat to the colonial hierarchies at the heart of the South’s plantation culture.

Moreover, in Quentin and Shreve’s multivalent portrayal of Bon and his fluid national, racial, and sexual identity, he seems to encompass what Valérie Loichot, borrowing from Édouard Glissant’s Antillean discourse, refers to as métissage (Loichot 117). Bon’s uncertain racial heritage, coupled with his sexual fluidity, makes him a fitting example of a métis. Indeed, Bon clears room for new social, racial, sexual forms in the segregated South with his Caribbean-infused fluidity (Loichot 130). As a social métis, Bon lives like an elite white Creole in New Orleans, yet is technically black—a mutability which identifies him also as a racial métis. If Quentin and Shreve’s version of events is to be believed (an account which Faulkner tells the reader is “probably true enough” and Barbara Ladd states “probably comes as close to fact as any other detail concerning Bon, which is to say not very close at all”), then Bon

81 The lack of an English equivalent of the French métissage and the Spanish mestizaje is “explained by the extreme binary classification of people of the imagined ‘black’ and ‘white’ races in the United States while the French and Spanish legal systems included articles on various intermediate categories” (Loichot 124).
82 Loichot notes that Joe Christmas of Light in August embodies métissage and is the most threatening of Faulkner’s mixed race characters because his blackness is speculative (125). However, as far as each of the narrators before Quentin’s final retelling of the story is concerned, Eulalia Bon is a white Creole, making Bon’s racial origins as uncertain as Christmas’s. I agree with Loichot that Christmas is a social métis who embodies the neither-nor stretch in between social categories, yet while Bon lives as a refined upper class white Creole in New Orleans, even down to his participation in the plaçage system, in reality he too is a social métis as a rich black man who offers an example “of difference becoming sameness” (127).
83 The Caribbean has been stereotypically associated with fluidity, license, and licentiousness from the interracial sex rampant during the colonial period, which brought into being an elaborate and precise color scale for determining social rank, to the modern-day portrayal of the Caribbean as America’s tourist playground (Mohammed 25). As Benítez-Rojo states: “The Caribbean is the natural and indispensable realm of marine currents, of waves, of folds and double folds, of fluidity and sinuosity” (11).
has black ancestry on his mother’s side and for all intents and purposes is passing (Faulkner 268, Ladd 141). Through living as a white man regardless of his black blood, Bon disrupts the black/white binary accepted as law in the colonial South. Moreover, Bon is a sexual métis. In his attraction to and love for both Henry and Judith, Bon is bisexual by nature, an additional form of non-normative sexual practice that we might add to those discussed above, including miscegenation, cross-dressing, attempted incest and bigamy, homosocial desire, and philandering.

In addition to his non-heteronormative sexual inclinations, Bon’s fatalism is another consequence of his origin on the Haitian sugar plantation that can be seen as an explanation for his decisions and behavior. Jason Compson describes Bon repeatedly as a fatalist with his “sardonic and indolent detachment” and the “impenetrable imperturbability with which he watched them [Henry and Judith]” (Faulkner 74-5). Bon’s belief that his fate had been determined by forces outside of his control manifests itself in his and Henry’s theory that through serving in the Confederate army, the violence of the war may make their decisions for them. Bon’s deterministic conviction that his fate is predestined may also be seen as both a

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84 And perhaps even on his father’s side as scholars, such as James Snead, have understood Sutpen to be “the source of a certain censored blackness in the narrative” who merges with the wild slaves he meets in the ring and his biracial son through “the characteristic ‘not smiling’” (132-133). Similarly, Richard Godden argues that Sutpen’s “mastery (white), embodied in Sutpen’s Hundred (‘Be Light’ [p. 4]), derives from the labor of the slave and is experienced as doing so by a master who almost made himself black to get his Hundred built” (54). In laboring with his slaves, Sutpen blackens himself; however, he reaffirms his mastery through fighting his slaves in the ring, as slavery “rests on a continuous repression of revolution” (6).

85 His status as a law student at the university, his plaçage relationship with his black “wife,” and his engagement to the white planter’s daughter Judith are experiences that would have been closed off to Bon in the antebellum South due to his race and lineage.

86 Given the association of race with economics and class in the antebellum South (and also in Haiti during Bon’s time except with light skin supplanting white), Bon may also be seen as a type of economic métis. Through his lineage, Bon is literally an amalgamation of the black laboring body and the body of the white master at leisure. The linkage of race with economics remained central in the South through Faulkner’s time, given that the “regime of accumulation” which depended on the abuse of black labor resisted transformation until the 1930s (Godden “Faulkner at West Point”), underscoring Bon’s economic status as métis in both Quentin and Shreve’s turn-of-the-century period and the time of Faulkner’s writing.
rationale for his part in the doomed love triangle he shares with his siblings and a consequence of the brutality of life on a slave plantation, such as the one upon which he was conceived. Just as slaves have no agency over the violence to which they are subjected, Bon believes that he has no control over what happens to him, emphasizing his connection to the violence of slavery.

My reading of Bon, which emphasizes his fluid sexuality and Haitian plantation origins, challenges Quentin and Shreve’s portrayal and the reductive colonial stereotypes on which they rely. For instance, as a result of his fatalism and non-normative sexuality, Charles Bon subverts the figure of the “mulatto revenger” to which scholars, such as Melvin Seiden, link him, as well as the stereotype of the black rapist with which Quentin and Shreve associate him. Biracial blood relatives were barred from white Southern family trees, and “mulattos” were not only seen as the off-spring of “unnatural” relationships who did not have the right to live, but also “the rapists and criminals of the present time” (Fredrickson 277). The black rapist of the neo-colonial period was “‘nearly always a mulatto,’ with ‘enough white blood in him to replace native humility and cowardice with Caucasian audacity’” (Fredrickson 277). Thus, in the U.S. South, white racists associated biracial men with violent sexual tendencies due to the mixture of blood and the combined characteristics of both white and black men, emphasizing the connection between the layered colonialisms and racial and sexual hierarchies. In Quentin and Shreve’s version, Henry shoots Bon to prevent him from being “the nigger that’s going to sleep with [his] sister,” placing the novel in dialogue with the figure of the black rapist (286). As no rape occurs, however, and Bon is the victim and not the propagator of the violence that claims his life, the novel subverts Bon’s alignment with the figure of the black rapist in the same way that it destabilizes his association with the mulatto revenger. Nevertheless, through his death at Henry’s hands for the protection of his white sister’s sexual honor in the final telling of his story,
Bon becomes both lynched rapist and abandoned black lover/brother for the white collective, which includes not only the Sutpens and Aunt Rosa, but also Quentin and Shreve, due to reverberations of the trauma which ripple out through the generations.

Bon’s portrayal as rapist and forsaken brother is indicative of Quentin and Shreve’s adherence to colonial ideologies, such as the myth of the black rapist and the denial of black branches to white family trees, which remain central to white authority in the neo-colonial period. As noted above, Bon plays different roles in relation to diverse colonialisms’ understanding of him (such as white European philanderer, incestuous bisexual lover, forbidden brother, abandoned Haitian son, and lynched black rapist), resulting in conflicting representations of his subjectivity. The multiple colonialisms at play in Faulkner’s South produce incongruous conceptions of Bon, yet at the same time, each colonialism reveals that intimate violence is written into the structure of power. Intimate violence is the constant in each story of colonialism in which Bon participates, from the violence and sexual abuse of the plantation to the violence of lynch culture. This violence culminates in Bon’s death at the hands of his brother.

As referenced earlier in this chapter, I believe that Faulkner’s novel portrays a neocolonial uprising of black workers against the mulâtres-aristocrates in a way that is indistinguishable from a revolt of slaves against the white sugar planters, thus revealing the violence inherent in colonialism and the palimpsestic nature of colonial crimes. In a similar way, Faulkner encourages readers to transpose the story of Henry and Bon in the colonial era onto that of Quentin and Shreve in neo-colonial period. Faulkner collapses the four characters into two: “not two of them there and then either but four of them riding two horses through the iron darkness” (237). Even at the level of meta-narrative, then, Faulkner’s conflates the experiences
of characters in the colonial and neo-colonial eras and traces an interconnected web of different colonialisms throughout the novel. In related terms, scholars such as Michael Bibler, Richard Godden, Noel Polk, and Erin Pearson, have pointed to the submerged love story between Quentin and Shreve as one that mirrors that of Henry and Bon. Faulkner merges Quentin and Shreve together as one, as their voices become indistinguishable: “the two who breathed not individuals now yet something more and less than twins, the heart and blood of youth” (236).

Bibler writes that the two “share a homoerotic bond that has to be read as egalitarian homo-ness because it challenges the heterosexist conventions that define male homosexuality in terms of gender inversion and masculine difference” and that “they turn to the story of Henry and Bon to find an identical model of queer relations that would explain and validate their own queerness in the present” (64). While the incestuous aspect of the love triangle between Henry, Judith, and Bon may speak to Quentin’s feelings for his sister Caddy, as has been argued by John Irwin, Henry and Bon’s homoerotic relationship addresses Quentin and Shreve’s feelings for each other. However, given that Bon is ultimately killed by Henry, the message of Bon’s story for Quentin is that his love stories with Shreve or Caddy are not permissible in his neo-colonial period in the same way that incest and homosexuality were forbidden for Bon in the plantation.

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87 For example, Bibler points to the fact that Quentin and Shreve are shivering in their dorm room together in various stages of undress, “each one’s body becoming an erotic spectacle for the other,” but remain chaste by “channeling their sexual energy into the act of storytelling,” which culminates in a type of orgasm with Quentin “violently and uncontrollably” jerking all over (68, Faulkner 288). Godden agrees that their “‘marriage’ of voices (p. 253) is framed as erotic” and claims that “Quentin plays virginal girl to Shreve’s virginal youth,” but also reads a labor trauma as lying beneath their relationship, as a result of their entwinement with Henry and Bon (175). Polk discusses Quentin and Shreve’s relationship as portrayed in The Sound and the Fury in an aptly titled chapter of his book, “How Shreve Gets in to Quentin’s Pants,” in which he references not only Shreve wearing Quentin’s pants, but also Spoade naming Shreve to be Quentin’s “husband” (23). Pearson discusses Shreve and Quentin’s dorm room as a closet space, using the theory of Eve Sedgwick (343).

88 According to Bibler, “homo-ness’ refers to the effect produced when sexual sameness supersedes all other factors of identity to establish, however provisionally, an egalitarian social bond between individuals” (7).
South, underscoring the impact of the deep-rooted colonialisms on sexuality and intimate relations.

If we are to take the final retelling of the Sutpen family saga as the most telling, then Bon represents not only the threat of incest and homosexuality, but also, and most importantly, that of miscegenation. Accordingly, the love stories between Quentin/Henry and Shreve/Bon exist at the same time that Bon is portrayed by Quentin and Shreve as the mythical black rapist of the Southern Radical mentality popular between 1889 and 1915 (Godden 23). Given the layered nature of the narrative and the constant reiterations of the Sutpen story with revised evidence, an understanding of Bon as lover and as black rapist—another example of Bon’s hybridity and conflicted representation—operate simultaneously in the text, in the same way that Bon can be both incestuous heterosexual and homoerotic lover. The multiple roles assigned to Bon are confirmation not only of his bivalent status, but also of different colonialisms’ contradictory conceptions of him: for example, he is both sophisticated white brother/lover in Jason’s colonial-era version and banished black brother/rapist in Quentin and Shreve’s neocolonial reconfiguration.

Nevertheless, it is significant that Bon becomes both disavowed black lover/brother and thwarted black rapist in the final retelling of the story from Quentin and Shreve’s turn-of-the-century moment, due to the colonial ideologies that remain central to their neo-colonial era. Just as Quentin and Shreve’s portrayal of Bon as abandoned Haitian son reveals more about the

89 Faulkner, as well as Quentin and his siblings, was born during the Radical era, and Godden notes that “[n]either Faulkner nor the Compson children would have escaped apprenticeship to its pathologies” (24). 90 Barbara Ladd supports the argument that Bon’s multivalent depiction in the final version of his story is directly connected to the narrators’ neocolonial preoccupations: “As African, as ‘black beast,’ as ‘the nigger that’s going to sleep with your sister,’ and yet as brother nonetheless, Charles Bon represents all that the post-1890 white southerner most feared: the gradual usurpation of political, familial, and economic purity—legitimacy, recognition by the national body or by the father—by a mulatto brother or brother-in-law” (150-151).
discourse of paternalism prevalent in their time, this fantasy of Bon as black rapist and mulatto brother exposes more about their fears in the neo-colonial period than Bon’s experience in the antebellum period. Faulkner thus collapses the distinction between the colonial and neo-colonial eras in order to show not only the interrelation between the two but also their entwinement in the novel. In a similar way, Shreve’s speech at the end of the novel, in which he postulates that “in time the Jim Bonds are going to conquer the western hemisphere...they will bleach out again like the rabbits and the birds do, so they won’t show up so sharp against the snow. But it will still be Jim Bond; and so in a few thousand years, I who regard you will also have sprung from the loins of African kings,” could be understood as more indicative of the fears of the time period Quentin and Shreve represent than a realistic prediction by the author (302). The threat posed by Bon as a mixed race man who could pass as European jeopardizes the purity that is so valued in the South. This threat is central to Quentin and Shreve’s characterization of Bon as rejected black lover/brother and their telling of the Sutpen story in the Radical era and is indicative of the racial and sexual politics of that time.

While Bon’s contradictory roles as both abandoned black lover/brother and lynched rapist in different colonialisms’ versions of his story result in his death, his multivalent nature also has the positive consequence of challenging rigid plantation hierarchies, particularly as presented in Quentin and Shreve’s neo-colonial moment. Glissant claims that “creolization is the very thing that offends Faulkner: métissage and miscegenation plus their unforeseeable consequences” (83). Bon’s fluidity of race and sexuality may have made Faulkner—a white Southerner born near the turn-of-the-century—uneasy in the way that it disrupts the plantation hierarchies and ideologies his generation frequently lamented. However, I argue that at the same

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91 Creolization is defined by Loichot as an object whose intrinsic differences can cohabitate.
time, Faulkner may recognize the potential for something more in this mixing. Greg Forter states that as a result of the intertwining of slavery, patriarchy, and capitalism in his works, “Faulkner’s fictions grasp the destructiveness of the manhood they seek to mourn with a degree of historical acuity,” or in order words, Faulkner recognizes the devastating effects of the antebellum South’s colonial ideologies as a white male descendant of the planter class, at the same time that he mourns their loss (97). Through the narration of Bon’s story, Faulkner gestures towards an acceptance of métissage as an alternative to the replication of destructive colonial relations.

Exclusive of the patriarch Thomas, the Sutpen family embraces Bon—the social, racial, and sexual métis—until the father’s will is reasserted through Sutpen’s influence over Henry. If Bon’s secrets (or at least his race) had stayed buried (or had been accepted) or Henry had not acted on Sutpen’s will, perhaps the family could have avoided its tragic outcome, i.e. if Henry had not murdered Bon and fled, then Sutpen would have retained his legitimate, as well as illegitimate, male heir and not have offended Miss Rosa or fathered a daughter with young Milly Jones and been slaughtered by Wash Jones as a result. While I recognize the unrealistic nature of this claim, as in the South at that time Bon would never have been accepted for the differences for which he was ultimately killed, I would nonetheless suggest that Faulkner sets up the recovery of Bon and the métissage and difference he embodies as a gesture to an alternative path, if not possible in Sutpen’s time, then perchance in Quentin and Shreve’s period which overlays the former, or in Faulkner’s own time which is superimposed onto both.92 Perhaps Faulkner means to insinuate that through embracing métissage, symbolized by the figure of Bon and recuperating him as black brother/lover as opposed to lynched rapist, the South might have

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92 This narrative structure highlights the palimpsestic nature of colonial crimes.
another option in addition to its inheritance of enmeshed colonialisms, plantation hierarchies of race, gender, and class, and reiterations of trauma—a way to break out of the cyclical repetitions of hatred and violence in neo-colonial period. In Glissant’s model of generalized métissage, “the category of métis disappears altogether,” becoming the norm as opposed to the exception (Loichot 156). Indeed, perhaps this generalized métissage in which racial hierarchies lose their significance isn’t far from what Faulkner envisioned at the end of Absalom, Absalom!, both through Shreve’s fantasy of racial amalgamation and Quentin and Shreve’s acceptance of Bon (whether intentional or not) through merging with him and Henry. At the same time that Quentin and Shreve fear Bon and the racial and sexual fluidity he represents, they become one with him, leaving room for the possibility of his acceptance and recuperation by latter generations, such as Faulkner’s own, and an alternative to the reiterations of the tragedies that result from continued adherence to outmoded colonial ideologies.

Therefore, I argue that Absalom, Absalom!’s notorious Haitian episode (in which the colonial and neo-colonial periods in Haiti are collapsed as a result of the date discrepancy) and the representation of Bon’s subjectivity at a crossroads of layered colonialisms are central to an understanding of how Faulkner intends for us to view the circulation of the various chronotopic

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93 Faulkner was a supporter of school integration (although he did not believe it should be forced on the South from the outside). In a letter published in the Memphis Commercial Appeal in March, 1955, Faulkner positions himself against the segregation of public schools. He argues that instead of allocating funds to improve the schools, which at the moment are “not of high enough quality to assuage the thirst of even our white young men and women”—let alone the “thirstier” black students—Mississippi would just end up with “two identical school systems neither of which are good enough for anybody” (Essays, Speeches & Public Letters 216). However, in “Letter to a Northern Editor” published in Life in March, 1956, Faulkner speaks out against compulsory integration, in his words, both as a result of principle and because he doesn’t think it would work. In this letter, Faulkner warns the NAACP and other pro-integration organizations to “Stop now for a moment. You have shown the Southerner what you can do and what you will do if necessary; give him a space in which to get his breath and assimilate that knowledge” (Essays, Speeches & Public Letters 87, 91). While this change in view may seem extreme, I agree with Charles Peavy that Faulkner may not have actually altered his opinion in so much as he senses the danger in the Supreme Court’s enforcement of its ruling in favor of integration (65). He is still on the side of integration but emphasizes caution in its implementation and is against the compulsory aspect of this solution.
colonialisms in the novel. The layered colonialisms are resilient in the novel—even in the face of societal change. The intimate violence that causes Bon’s death at the hands of his brother and positions him as lynched rapist, as opposed to acknowledged black brother/lover, is evidence of the enduring nature of the South’s colonial hierarchies and ideologies. Recognizing the continuities of the colonial in the neo-colonial period as portrayed in literature, such as the colonial inheritance of the U.S. South depicted in *Absalom, Absalom!*, is the first step towards mitigating the damaging effects. If one cannot effectively move into the present without considering the deep resonances that the past still has over us, then an eye to history and the literature of the past can help us to move away from the traumas resulting from the residual effects of the U.S. South’s enmeshed colonialisms and the attempts to submerge them beneath the weight of history.
Chapter 2: “[I]t clears the whole ledger”: Sexual Violence, Plantation Intimacy, and Sexual Policing in William Faulkner’s Neo-Colonial U.S. South

“His own daughter His own daughter. No No Not even him”: Enmeshed Families in the

Plantation South

(Figure 1: Genealogy of Absalom, Absalom!)
The McCaslin Family Genealogy

Showing miscegenation and incest

Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin
1772-June 27, 1837

Sophonsiba Beauchamp
Theophilus "Uncle Buck" 1799-1870?
Amodeus "Uncle Buddy" 1799-1870?

Isaac "Ike" — Wife McCaslin 1867-1947?

Alice

Sarah

Lucius Quintus Priest I

Alison Lessep — Maury Priest

Carothers McCaslin "Cass" Edmonds b. 1850

Louisa d. March 1898

Lucius Priest II

Lessep

Maury Alexander

Son

Edmonds b. March 1898

Lucius Priest III

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William Faulkner on the Web

(Figure 2: Genealogy of Go Down, Moses)
The entwined colonialisms described in the first chapter—for example, the subjugation of the black population as a labor force and later the colonization of the South at the hands of Northern industry—reflect the enmeshed families commonly found in the plantation South. For instance, the Sutpen family tree in *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) has both white branches—occupied by Ellen Sutpen and her children, Henry and Judith—as well as black branches, such as Eulalia and Charles Bon’s branch and also that of Clytie and her unnamed mother, presumably one of Sutpen’s Haitian slaves (see Figure 1). Miss Rosa emphasizes the enmeshed web of family relations towards the beginning of the novel, when she states: “I was not there to see the two Sutpen faces this time—one on Judith and once on the negro girl beside her—looking down through the square entrance to the loft” (*Absalom, Absalom!* 22). To the example of the Sutpens, I would add the McCaslin family, central to Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses* (1940), as an emblematic enmeshed family. *Go Down, Moses* is a novel made up of seven interrelated stories detailing the relations between a number of interconnected multiracial families—the McCaslins, the Edmonds, and the Beauchamps—in the antebellum, postbellum, and twentieth-century U.S. South. The patriarch of the McCaslin family, Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin, had sexual relations with multiple slaves on his plantation, including the unnamed slave who is the grandmother of Ned McCaslin and Eunice with whom he fathers Tomasina (see Figure 2). Old Carothers McCaslin simultaneously violates the bans placed on miscegenation and incest in his plantation society through fathering Terrel with his own daughter, Tomasina.94 Old Carothers’s secret is discerned from the ledgers generations later by his grandson, Isaac McCaslin, and is the

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94 These rules were invented to prevent sex across the color line (and also inbreeding), in order to uphold colonial hierarchies and ideologies. However, plantation culture granted white men complete authority over African Americans, women, and children. As I will return to below, interracial sex, and in particular, the rape of black women by white men, was institutionalized by slavery. Michael Bibler notes that relations between black and white men were banned too, since they threatened to upset the plantation hierarchy of race (6).
catalyst behind Isaac’s renunciation of his plantation inheritance. Old Carothers’s singular act of miscegenation and incest is repeated generations later by his great-great-great-grandson, Carothers Roth Edmonds (see Figure 2), who fathers a son with an unnamed female descendant of Tomey’s Turl (although according to the woman, Edmonds is unaware of their familial connection) and refuses parental acknowledgement of the child. This pattern of behavior—white members of the plantocracy and its descendants knowingly (or unknowingly in Roth’s case) committing incest and having interracial sex (whether coerced as presumably in the case of Tomasina, whose mother commits suicide as a result of the coupling, or not as in Edmond’s case)—can be seen as making the transition into the neo-colonial South of the twentieth century.

The ban against miscegenation in particular is essential to the politics of colonialism, which draw their power from the hierarchies of race, class, and gender. In other words, colonial ideologies retain their power by segregating the races into separate groups and subordinating those with dark skin to those with light. However, as white men were granted complete power over the black population and women, the ban against miscegenation in the plantation South was more in word (or for white women who were assigned the role of maintaining the purity of family lines) than in action for white men, as the two family trees suggest. The fact that this

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95 Both incest (or endogamy, marrying too far into a tribe) and miscegenation (exogamy, marrying too far outside of a tribe) are deviations from accepted kinship systems, which in Gayle Rubin’s words, are systems in pre-state societies that organize “economic, political, and ceremonial, as well as sexual activity” (169). Although the plantation South would not qualify as a pre-state society, the impact of incest and miscegenation on kinship systems may help to explain the original taboos. The incest taboo can be understood as “a biological law which prevents inbreeding, as a psychological law which creates the family, as a social law which creates kinship, or as the sum of all these” (Herman 62).
96 Following in the footsteps of Absalom, Absalom!’s Henry Sutpen, Isaac McCaslin ultimately cannot accept the miscegenation, as opposed to the incest, in “Delta Autumn.” Isaac’s thoughts confirm this: “Maybe in a thousand or two thousand years in America...But not now! Not now!” (344). Faulkner places great emphasis on the modernization that has happened in the South over Isaac’s lifetime, particularly in “Delta Autumn,” which has displaced nature: “The paths made by deer and bear became roads and then highways” and “the land across which there came now no scream of panther but instead the long hooting of locomotives” (324-5).
pattern of relations, coerced interracial sex, remains in the neo-/post-colonial South is further evidence of the cyclical nature of colonial crimes, the repetition of violence, sexual abuse, and racism, as well as Faulkner’s portrayal of history as circular as opposed to linear and progressive—central arguments of Chapter 1. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how the sexual abuse of black women, racial and sexual stereotypes, and the lynch culture prevalent in the neo-colonial period reveal the engrained nature of the racism central to the slave system. I will explore the circular patterns of abuse and intimacy common to slavery, such as coerced sex across the color line, incest, and the resulting disruption of family bonds, which did not end with Emancipation but continued into the neo-colonial period. Incest and miscegenation on a slave plantation complicate the role of the father and necessitate alternative kinship systems. Thus, there is no one relation, no singular form taken by sexual abuse and the resulting family formations, but different entanglements across generations, which should complicate our understanding of what sexual violation looks like and how it affects all those involved—not only white men and black women, but also black men and white women. I argue that the power of patterns of subjection and the sexual policing of individuals by the community are both tools used to re-inscribe colonial relations in the U.S. South, as depicted in Faulkner’s novels. Consequently, sexual violence and the disruption of intimate and familial relations may be seen as part of the inheritance from the entwined colonialisms of an earlier era.

Through his novels’ investment in issues of sexuality and gender relations, as well as intimacy and family dynamics, Faulkner explores the far-reaching effects of the slave system and the colonial hierarchies and mentalities that accompany it. Therefore, I contend, I argued in Chapter 1, that as a result of Faulkner’s engagement with his region’s relationship to history, as well as his experimental poetics, his writing should be considered in the “poetics of
peripheralization,” a category created by Hosam Aboul-Ela, or as postcolonial literature as opposed to high modernist literature. My argument in this chapter builds on this positioning: through examining the persistence of patterns of subjection and also the sexual policing of the color line, Faulkner’s work exposes the full impact of the colonial inheritance of the South on communities and interpersonal relationships. Moreover, furthering my argument in the first chapter, I assert that by including portrayals of resistance to colonial ideologies, for example through Bon’s fluid identity or Dilsey’s resistance to the destruction of black family structures perpetuated by slavery, Faulkner’s literary representations of Southern society have the potential to challenge, as opposed to passively re-inscribe, colonial mentalities. Through writing in a literary mode, Faulkner is able to present narratives of violence that are not readily available in other forms of cultural production, such as more clear-cut newspaper accounts. The literary mode gives Faulkner the space to both identify and challenge the relations underpinning the stories and their connection to the colonial system through his dramatization of abuse. In this way Faulkner gives voice to untold stories and calls attention to colonial crimes through unveiling the ignored layers of the palimpsest that is history, such as consensual interracial couplings or the lives of the black family members missing from white family trees.97

The Inheritance from Slavery: Sexuality as an Expression of the Neocolonial Relationship

This chapter will focus on the ways in which the postbellum South in a number of Faulkner’s novels (including *Absalom, Absalom*; *Go Down, Moses; Light in August*; *Sanctuary*;  

97 Sally Wolff-King discovered that Faulkner used a ledger written by Francis Terry Leak in the mid-1800s as source material for a number of his novels, including *Go Down, Moses* and *Absalom, Absalom*!. This supports my point that Faulkner’s fictions give voice to forgotten stories in the South’s history. For more information about Leak’s ledger and its connection to Faulkner’s work, see Wolff-King’s *Ledgers of History: William Faulkner, an Almost Forgotten Friendship, and an Antebellum Plantation Diary.*
and *Requiem for a Nun*) is a neo-colonial space, emphasizing the continuity of layered colonialisms that are not erased but become more deeply entrenched. A region is neo-colonial when colonial mentalities and relationships have not disappeared but remain in place beneath the guise of freedom. This is seen both in the effect of Northern industry and capitalism on the South from Reconstruction (1865-1877) to the World War I period (1914-1919), when free market ideology and labor mobility finally supplanted the plantation economy, and the continued exploitation of the black population after Emancipation (Mandle 68-9). While slaves were technically freed from their subjugated status after the Civil War, policies, such as sharecropping, the convict lease system, the Black Codes, and the Jim Crow laws.

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98 The sharecropping system replaced slavery, and while the former slaves were nominally free and compensated for their labor with a share of the crop, the system did not allow them to escape the grip of poverty or white control (Mandle 13). Since laborers had to remain on a plantation until the end of the crop year to receive any payment for their work, the sharecropping system allowed limited mobility, as well as inadequate opportunity for advancement and landownership (Mandle 22). Debt peonage, violence, and corruption embedded within this system restricted the rights of the former slaves in the neo-colonial period, further collapsing the distance between the pre- and post-Emancipation eras (Mandle 23).

99 Shades of slavery are also seen in the convict lease system in place after the Civil War. Convicts were leased out by Southern states to work on railroads, in mines, or on large plantations, and employers did not have much capital invested in convict laborers or incentive to treat them well, as opposed to during the time of slavery (Wells “The Convict Lease System” para. 1, “Convict Leasing” PBS.org/ptp/slavery-by-another-name). According to Douglas Blackmon, under the convict lease system, “the questions of who controlled the fates of black prisoners, which few black men and women among armies of defendants had committed true crimes, and who was receiving the financial benefits of their re-enslavement would almost always never be answered” (54).

100 The Black Code of 1865 in Mississippi was another attempt by white Southerners to restrict the liberties of freed black Americans, deny them justice, and restrain the social effects of the Emancipation Proclamation as much as possible (T. Davis *Games of Property* 31). For example, according to the codes, “any black without a job or home by 1 January 1866 was fined as a vagrant, but the fine could be paid by hiring out, again with the former master receiving preference” (T. Davis *Games of Property* 33). Even though Mississippi ratified the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution in 1870, the oppressive conditions which the Black Code (most of which was repealed in 1870 after the damage was done) helped to keep in place continued and primed the country for the Jim Crow laws that followed the Mississippi Constitution of 1890 (T. Davis *Games of Property* 33). From the 1890s through the early twentieth century, “blacks in the state were legally controlled by a caste position rather than by slavery and despite the Fourteenth or Fifteenth Amendment, they existed in racial degradation and economic deprivation” (T. Davis *Games of Property* 34). Franny Nudelman argues that this degradation continued in the twenty-first century, as “the legalized criminalization of African American men and women, accelerated by the ‘Black Laws’ of the Reconstruction years, continues unabated today” (148). The stereotypical association of African Americans with criminality is still present in today’s society and can be traced back to the ideological power of the Black Code.
replicated the racist structures of slavery during the neo-colonial era. Significant change was not seen until the post-World War II period (Mandle 84). As *Absalom, Absalom!* and a number of Faulkner’s other works reveal, these policies were not the only ways in which the conditions of slavery were reproduced after the loss of the Civil War in the South. Sexuality in particular can be seen as an expression of the neocolonial relationship in the postbellum South. The sexual abuse of black women, damaging stereotypes such as the myth of the black rapist, and the resulting lynch culture preserved colonial hierarchies and ideologies in the South after Reconstruction, particularly in the Radical era between 1889 and 1915. As depicted in Faulkner’s novels, these three factors worked together to maintain colonial relations in the neo-colonial era.

The rape of female slaves was institutionalized by white slave-owners as a means of keeping their female slaves in line and emasculating their male slaves, through the latter’s inability to prevent this violation. This abuse also gratified the planters’ lusts and made such desires economically beneficial by producing more slaves, more property (A. Davis 183). *Absalom, Absalom!* illustrates the accepted and encouraged nature of the sexual abuse of black women in Southern society. While Thomas Sutpen’s sexual relationships with his slaves are never directly discussed, the existence of Judith’s half sister Clytie gestures towards the untold story of the exploitation and impregnation of female slaves (see Figure 1). Ann McClintock

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101 The Jim Crow laws were a segregationist strategy that produced racial stratification and “had been enacted on the state and local levels by the official sanctions of Woodrow Wilson’s administration” (T. Davis Faulkner’s “Negro” 23).

102 While the destruction of the plantation economy freed the former slaves to an extent from the neocolonial patterns that remained from slavery, if the spread of capitalism and modernity can be seen as the neocolonial rule of the South by the North, then the demise of plantation culture would seem to imply not a lessening of the neocolonial impact of the North on the Southern plantocracy but an escalation.

103 In addition to rape, the keeping of light-skinned biracial mistresses, for example the system of placage in New Orleans, was another version of the sexual abuse of the slave system, as fair mixed-race girls were raised to be the
views this purposeful impregnation of women as a “brutally enforced hybridity,” a phrase that might be used to describe the rape of slaves by their white masters and the mixed race children that resulted (*Imperial Leather* 67). Due to the proximity between masters and slaves in the South, there was nowhere to hide the generations resulting, which often created conflict between plantation mistresses and the slave concubines or their visibly hybrid children. Although the hybridity of the children exposed the sex across the color line committed by the white masters, plantation culture granted white men license over black and female bodies, and thus these violations were deemphasized. Similarly, the hybridity of the children (in addition to paternal obligation) was downplayed by the plantocracy as a result of the one-drop rule, which stressed the blackness of the biracial children, as well as their status as slaves. At the same time that this positioning of biracial children as slaves is supported by Clytie’s situation as a domestic or house slave on the Sutpen plantation, her treatment as a slave is complicated during the period Sutpen is away fighting in the Civil War and the women (Judith, Clytie, and Rosa) survive together without men or upholding colonial hierarchies. Miss Rosa, who at other times will not allow Clytie to touch her, describes the three women as “one being, interchangeable and indiscriminate,” living together and working “with no distinction among the three of us of age or color but just as to who could build this fire or stir this pot…” (125). Once the men (or upper-class men, as poor white swatter Wash Jones remained behind) left to fight, the colonial rule on Sutpen’s Hundred fell apart, revealing the group at the top—white men of the planter class—to

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104 McClintock describes the way in which Muslim women were deliberately impregnated by rape in Bosnia Herzegovina as a brutally enforced hybridity to show that the “lyrical glamour cast by some postcolonial theorists over ambivalence and hybridity is not always historically warranted” (*Imperial Leather* 67-68).
be the most invested in the maintenance of colonial hierarchies, since they had everything to lose. Through the fellowship between Judith, Clytie, and Rosa, necessary for survival, and temporary acceptance of differences, Faulkner gestures towards an alternative to the blind adherence to colonial ideologies.

Just as the colonial hierarchies are reinstated after Sutpen’s return after the war, the exploitation of black women remained part of plantation culture throughout the postbellum period and into the twentieth century. With Emancipation came “the loss of miscegenation’s economic rationalization under slavery” (Wiegman 84). This, however, did not stop the sexual abuse of black women, which continued after slavery by terrorist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (a group whose popularity peaked in the 1920s) to scare the black population into staying in a subordinate position in society (Hale 144). The rape of black women by white men continued in the post-slavery period as a tool for maintaining plantation hierarchies and enforcing hybridity through sexual violence.\(^\text{105}\) The dehumanizing, racist policies of slavery continued by other names into the neo-colonial twentieth century and beyond, masking the cyclical nature of history and proving that colonialism by any other word still smells as rank.

In addition to the sexual abuse of black women, the myth of the black rapist is seen by some scholars, such as Angela Davis, as the “historical knot binding Black women—systematically abused and violated by white men—to Black men—maimed and murdered because of the racist manipulation of the rape charge” (173).\(^\text{106}\) The myth was not only a way

\(^{105}\) Mary Frances Berry writes that: “[r]ape enhances our understanding that patriarchy is the subtext underlying race, class, gender. We may think the story is race, but when we look at race dead-on we are looking at a socially constructed distinction used to maintain hierarchical relationships in society” (242). In Berry’s opinion, racial categories act essentially as a tool constructed by the patriarchy to structure society around the colonial hierarchies which position themselves at the top.

\(^{106}\) Frederick Douglass in his essay “Why is the Negro Lynched?” observes that the rape charge was never brought upon black people during the time of slavery but only after the breakdown of this system (493). He argues that if
“to compensate for this economic loss [of Emancipation], transferring the focus from the white man’s quasi-sanctioned (because economically productive) sexual activities to the bodies, quite literally, of black men,” but also to keep the black population subjugated in a colonial relation (Wiegman 84). In reference to European colonies, Jenny Sharpe notes that the “fear of interracial rape does not exist so long as there is a belief that colonial structures of power are firmly in place,” yet as this belief breaks down, as in India after the 1857 revolt, fears of interracial rape spread (3). The extension of Sharpe’s theory to the U.S. South after Emancipation, during which time the colonial power structures began to deteriorate (although they did not disappear completely), could explain the widespread use of the stereotype of the black rapist in neo-colonial South.

The figure of the black rapist, pervasive in the postbellum South, also made its way into a number of Faulkner’s novels. Unlike earlier Southern writers like Robert Lee Durham and Thomas Dixon, Faulkner seems to reference the stereotype for the purpose of subversion. For example, Popeye in *Sanctuary* (1931) is a rapist (though impotent, he notoriously rapes Temple Drake with a corncob); however, Popeye is racially white (in spite of the fact that he is referred to as “that black man” a few times in the novel, perhaps revealing the entwinement of the hierarchies of race and class) and in this way, Faulkner inverts the stereotype of the black rapist (42, 49). Moreover, *Light in August’s* (1932) Joe Christmas is portrayed as a black rapist by his
Southern white community, although his racial background is unknown and he had a consensual on-going sexual relationship with the white woman, Joanna Burden, he is accused of raping. In a similar way, Charles Bon of *Absalom, Absalom!*, also of unknown race, is put in dialogue with the black rapist stereotype through Quentin and Shreve’s reconstruction of his story in which Bon refers to himself in conversation with Henry as “the nigger that’s going to sleep with your sister” (286). Bon’s words as imagined by the white narrators connect him to the myth of the black rapist, yet all other aspects of his life and identity subvert this pairing. Bon’s portrayal as a cosmopolitan dandy—“lounging before them in the outlandish and almost feminine garments”—differs from the hypersexual beast rapist stereotype, who cannot control his sexual urges (76). Similarly, Bon does not have a solid corporeal dimension and is described as a shadowy specter by Miss Rosa—“For all I was allowed to know, we had no corpse… [only] the abstraction which we nailed into a box”—which contrasts directly with the brutal, bodily virility of the black rapist stereotype (123). In each of the above examples, Faulkner puts characters of uncertain racial backgrounds who do not commit rape or white men who do commit rape in dialogue with figure of the black rapist, in order to destabilize the stereotypic association of black men with rape and to question the violent consequences of this myth. Through his subversion of this stereotype, Faulkner exposes the attempts made by the white plantocracy to reify colonial hierarchies and ideologies in the post-/neo-colonial era for what they are, illustrating the potential of literary representations to unmask colonial crimes.

Not only was the myth of the black rapist used as a political weapon to keep African Americans disenfranchised, but it was also employed by white racists as justification for the

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108 The last words of Percy Grim to Christmas after he has killed and castrated him—“Now you’ll let white women alone, even in Hell”—serve to connect Christmas more solidly to the myth of the black rapist than anything in his life (464).
practice of lynching. During the period after the Civil War, the lynching of black men by white men was no longer the destruction of their own property but a type of compensation or catharsis through which they channeled the rage that accompanied the economic loss they endured through Emancipation (Wiegman 84). After Reconstruction, lynching became an increasingly customary practice in the postbellum South and reached epidemic proportions in the 1890s; Stewart E. Tolnay and E. M. Beck have calculated that 2,462 blacks were lynched between 1882 and 1930 (Adams 87). Therefore, alongside the rape of black women and the creation of the myth of the black rapist, lynching was an important tool used by Southern whites to maintain plantation hierarchies in the neo-colonial period and particularly in the Radical era.

The myth of the black rapist also had the consequence of dissuading white people from supporting the cause of black equality. Angela Davis writes: “Not only was opposition to individual lynchings stifled—for who would dare to defend a rapist?—white support for the cause of Black equality in general began to wane...[and] former white proponents of Black equality became increasingly afraid to associate themselves with Black people’s struggle for liberation” (187-188). Further, the depiction of black men as rapists “reinforces racism’s open invitation to white men to avail themselves sexually of Black women’s bodies” (A. Davis 182).

While it is often portrayed as the backward diversion of poor whites, the torture and murder of blacks was widespread as a tool for maintaining colonial relationships in the neo-colonial South. Lynching was committed by aristocrats as well as farmers (Adams 87). The lynching of black people did not occur extensively during the antebellum period because it was not economically viable to annihilate one’s own property (A. Davis 183). During this period, white people, specifically white abolitionists with “no cash value on the market,” were the victims of lynchings; over three hundred white people were lynched in the two decades following 1836 (A. Davis 183). Although lynching decreased after the 1890s, the cultural impact became more powerful, as more people read about, participated in, saw pictures of, and collected souvenirs from what Hale terms “spectacle lynchings” (Hale 201). Spectacle lynchings were publicized in local newspapers, like other forms of community recreation, and at times special trains were used to transport whole families in for the event (Adams 87-88). Souvenirs of lynched black bodies and photographs of “[w]hite people in modern dress smil[ing] at the camera within a few feet of dangling bodies” cause Adams to connect spectacle lynchings to consumption and sightseeing (88, emphasis mine). As noted above, a tension existed in the neo-colonial South between the preservation of the plantation economy and the modernizing effects of a free capitalist market, such as labor mobility. Although the South’s extreme racism, exhibited to the nation through spectacle lynching, conflicted with Southern modernizing efforts, at the same time, white people’s practice of such ritualized violence was central to white understanding of the Southern economy (Hale 202). While consumer culture had begun to take hold in the South, “spectacle lynchings broadcast the message that the right to consume, to participate in the sensuality of consumer culture, was for whites only” (Adams 89). This allowed aspects of the conflicting systems of the plantation economy and a more modern capitalist system to exist simultaneously in the neo-colonial South. Therefore, lynchings, whether private or spectacle, were enmeshed with the modernization of the South and the rise of consumer culture. Adams notes that the “black body keeps returning as a literal object of consumption,” and Richard Godden observes that the ideological specters arising from the lynched body were “extensions of a laboring body that threatened to remove itself” following Emancipation (Adams 89, Godden “Faulkner at West Point”). Adams elaborates on this point: “In lynching souvenirs, a system of labor and culture is compressed into the body as fetish, but unlike Marx’s commodity fetish

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whippings and beatings used during slavery to assert dominance over the black population in the South were replaced by lynching following Emancipation. The racial violence central to the slave system did not decrease in the neo-colonial era but took a different form.

Further, like the sexual abuse of black women and the myth of the black rapist, the violence of lynch culture is also a central focus of a number of Faulkner’s novels, for example *Light in August* in which Joe Christmas is castrated and lynched, and *Intruder in the Dust* (1948) in which a black farmer, Lucas Beauchamp, is wrongly accused of murder and nearly lynched by a white mob. *Sanctuary* also involves a scene of lynching in which Goodwin, a white bootlegger, is lynched for a murder committed by Popeye.\(^{111}\) While both men are white, certain aspects of the text, including the thoughts of other characters (such as Horace Benbow who upon meeting Popeye thinks that he “smells black”) work to call their whiteness into question, perhaps as a result of their lower class status, gesturing towards the ways in which class can stand in for race in other similarly hierarchical colonial relations (7).\(^{112}\) Moreover, I argue that lynching is also central to *Absalom, Absalom!*, although on a more personal as opposed to communal scale, in Charles Bon’s murder at the hands of his half-brother Henry to prevent him from marrying their white sister, Judith.\(^{113}\)

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\(^{111}\) *Sanctuary* implies that Goodwin was sexually violated by the lynch mob before his death, along the same lines as Christmas’s castration. One of the lynchers states in reference to Benbow: “Do to the lawyer what we did to him. What he did to her. Only we never used a cob. We made him wish we had used a cob” (296).

\(^{112}\) Sutpen’s race has been similarly seen as suspect by scholarship on *Absalom, Absalom!*, as described in Chapter 1.

\(^{113}\) Faulkner also wrote against lynching in a number of his public letters. For example, in “Press Dispatch Written in Rome, Italy, for the United Press, on the Emmett Till Case” published in the *New York Herald Tribune* on September 9, 1955, Faulkner states that “if we in America have reached that point in our desperate culture when we must murder children, no matter for what reason or what color, we don’t deserve to survive, and probably won’t” (*Essays, Speeches & Public Letters* 223).
As illustrated by the above example in which Bon is shot to prevent miscegenation with the white plantation mistress, lynch culture is directly connected to gender and sexuality, underscoring the point that sexuality is a particular expression of the neocolonial relationship in the South. As noted earlier, the alleged sexual assault of white women by black men (the myth of the black rapist) was commonly used as a pretext for lynching and also as a means of shifting attention from the very real white male rapists who continued to prey upon black women after Emancipation. Lynching can be seen as a form of sexualized violence given the nature of the assault, which frequently included castration and dismemberment (as in the cases of Christmas and Goodwin), along with other forms of torture, and may be seen as an inheritance from the institution of slavery that granted white males complete control over black male and female bodies. Additionally, the destruction of family units, which I will return to below, directly results from the murder and specifically the castration of black males, as these acts can literally be seen as attempts to thwart black male lineage in the post-slavery period. There is a connection between the overthrow of slavery, the deteriorating mastery of white men, and consequently the racial and sexual order (Hale 232). Grace Elizabeth Hale and Jacquelyn Hall note that it was not a coincidence that the myth of the black rapist, and the resulting lynching of black men, occurred concurrently with the Southern women’s rights movement, since the myth exaggerates women’s dependence on men at a time when women were fighting for increased independence (Hale 23). In other words, the myth of the black rapist created a scenario in which white women, for example Judith Sutpen and Joanna Burden in the eyes of their

114 As Joel Williamson notes: “Some planters of the Old South were notoriously promiscuous, sexually extravagant men who took advantage of vulnerable beings, black or white, women or girls, men or boys, and yea even the beasts of the fields...Slaveholding planters saw themselves as the lords of their little earths and all the bodies that dwelt thereon. Slavery required the absolute mastery of masters” (New People 54).
115 I credit Elizabeth Hopwood with this observation.
116 I thank Lana Cook for the latter observation.
communities, were reliant on white men for protection (or retaliation). Lynching was a practice that attempted to maintain the plantation hierarchies not only of race but also gender in the neo-colonial era through its use of women’s susceptibility to sexual violation as a pretext. Ironically, the reality of black women’s vulnerability to rape by white men was ignored, yet the invented threat of the black rapist for white women was emphasized to the point that it was the rationale for the torture and death of black men. In addition to distracting from the real rapes of black women by white men and creating an excuse for violence against black men, lynching served to reinforce the subordinate position of white women to white men through using the sexual vulnerability of white women as an unfounded excuse for racial violence.

However, white women in the South during the antebellum and turn-of-the-century periods were not simply the victims of white male patriarchy, but oscillated “between a dominant position of race and a subordinate one of gender,” which is elucidated by Ann McClintock’s depiction of colonial women (J. Sharpe 12). McClintock argues that colonial women were put in positions of power (perhaps borrowed) over colonized men (Imperial Leather 6). Women were “not the hapless onlookers of empire but were ambiguously complicit both as colonizers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting,” which can be easily extended to white women in the antebellum South, particularly plantation mistresses (McClintock Imperial Leather 6). In this way, I argue that like Absalom Absalom!’s Thomas Sutpen, white Southerners more generally, and the U.S. South itself (as discussed in Chapter 1), Southern white women existed in a bivalent state both as the complicit colonizers of the black population and as colonized by white men. This bivalent position of white women can be seen as extending from the colonial into the neo-colonial South, as white women were slow to join black women in anti-lynching movements and those that supported the cause did not mobilize as a group until the
formation of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching in 1930 (A. Davis 193-4).\textsuperscript{117}

To return to the antebellum era, however, the Cult of Southern Womanhood attempted to keep white women submissive to white men and to place them above the interracial sex that was rampant between slave women and masters (Godden 23). According to the Cult of Southern Womanhood, white women were the repositories of white civilization that Southern white men would place on pedestals before running off to gratify their lascivious passions elsewhere (Jordan 148). As a result, there existed a conceptual split between black and white gender roles in the colonial period. White women were stereotyped as domesticated and desexualized, and black women were seen as savage and hypersexual (a purposeful stereotype that had the effect of assuaging white men’s guilt over sexual abuse, i.e. it isn’t rape if they wanted it) (Abrams 230). Aliyyah Abdur-Rahman argues that slavery itself and the sexual violence accompanying it “established whiteness as the requisite racial category for heteronormative qualification” (225). She avers that white womanhood gained meaning only in relation to the experiences of slave women (225). White women were charged with the responsibility of producing heirs to the plantation and future masters, while the routine rape of slave women necessitated the matrilineal descent of slavery (Abdur-Rahman 225). In other words, since the white masters were socially sanctioned to impregnate both their female slaves and white wives, the status of the mother determined the position of the child. Consequently, whiteness not only resulted from the aberrant sexual practices of slavery but was determined and shaped by them. While the

\textsuperscript{117} This group was formed to expose the falsehood of the claim that lynching was needed to protect Southern women. It also discussed the role of white women in lynching (who in some cases were active members of lynch mobs and allowed their children to witness lynchings, indoctrinating them into the racism of Southern society) and recruited white women in the campaign against lynching (A. Davis 194).
interacial sex common on slave plantations would seem to threaten to blur the lines between the white and black races through the biracial offspring produced, the one-drop rule negated this threat by positioning every individual with even a drop of “black blood” as black and thus as a slave—as property as opposed to people.  

In addition to the violence of lynch culture, damaging racial and sexual stereotypes, and sexual violence, slavery and its inheritance are also responsible for what is depicted in Absalom, Absalom! as one of the white South’s greatest transgressions: its treatment of black family members and the erasure of black branches of white family trees. As described by Édouard Glissant in Faulkner, Mississippi: “Both on the Plantation and in the world developed around it, something’s rotten in the act of appropriation and colonization, as long as one persists in slavery and its unpardonable derivative, miscegenation (founded on rape)” (132). By expunging black family members from the records, the plantocracy attempted to cover up the institutionalization of rape under slavery and made an effort to erase the dehumanizing policies and ideologies of slavery from the public imagination, which had the effects of feigning both the appearance of history as progressive and colonial crimes as safely buried in the past. This endeavor continued through the twentieth century with the “moonlight and magnolias” romanticization of plantation culture epitomized by the popularity of books and films like Margaret Mitchell’s Gone with the Wind (published in 1936, the same year as Absalom, Absalom!) and remains in effect today through the absence of slave quarters on the grounds of many historic preserved plantation

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118 The white fear of miscegenation can be traced back to a fear of the contaminating qualities of black blood that originated in the colonial era. Although all blood is red, white racists believed in biological differences between the races, which may explain the fixation on differences in blood.  
119 Donald Kartiganer stated in a conversation at the 38th Annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference in Oxford, Mississippi that in his opinion Faulkner considered the treatment of black family members the downfall of the South, as depicted in Absalom, Absalom!.
homes and the disappearance of slavery from the discussion.\textsuperscript{120} However, by underscoring the effects of slavery on sexuality and intimate relations, the crimes of colonialism and their continuation into the post-/neo-colonial era are brought to the forefront.

\textbf{The Crimes of the South: The Erasure of Kinship Ties and the Patterns of Subjection}

Sexuality as a particular expression of the neocolonial relationship is also made visible by an exploration of the familial relations and intimate violence of the plantation South. The disruption of intimate relations made the transition from the time of slavery into the neo-colonial South, for example, through the treatment of black family members, the continuation of patterns of subjection in interracial interactions, and the policing of sexuality, as is revealed through a number of Faulkner’s major works. I will explore the effects of colonial structures and mentalities on intimacy and familial bonds in the neo-colonial South, before ending with an example of sexual policing in which class stands in for race. I argue that this substitution does not show that class replaces race as a factor in the neo-colonial period, but that colonial relations spiral out through other hierarchal relationships, illustrating both the virality and enduring power of colonial ideologies into the twentieth century.

Aside from violence, sexual abuse, and racism—central to the antebellum and postbellum plantation societies—paternalism and patriarchy were also essential to this culture and the family relations it espoused. As Faulkner portrays in \textit{Absalom, Absalom!} and \textit{Go Down, Moses}, black and white families of the plantation South, such as the Sutpens and the McCaslins, were often

\textsuperscript{120} Jessica Adams discusses plantation tours in her book, \textit{Wounds of Returning: Race, Memory, and Property on the Postslavery Plantation}, and notes that “Furniture has replaced people as objects” (60). She uses statistics from Eichstedt and Small’s analysis of plantation tours in Virginia to support this statement, as furniture was mentioned thirty-one times more than slavery or the enslaved; tours in Louisiana and Georgia produce similar numbers (60).
entangled. These ties typically remained unacknowledged, however, and alternative domestic relations were purported. For instance, Clytie works as a house slave in Absalom, Absalom!, and Sutpen cannot say “my son” to Charles Bon (see Figure 1). Moreover, in Go Down, Moses Tomey’s Terrel and his offspring are given a legacy of one-thousand dollars for an unexplained reason, but Terrel remains the property of his half-brothers, Uncle Buddy and Uncle Buck, who inherit their father’s plantation (see Figure 2). As opposed to accepting their own biracial offspring, planters, responding to abolitionist pressures, “gradually constructed a larger classificatory system that reified the hierarchies of class and status even more intensely by redefining the household as one large family and by wedding race to gender” (Bibler 33). The white patriarch played the role of the father and provided food, shelter, clothing, and civilizing influences like religion to his children (a group composed of both his white children and slaves), as well as his dependent wife, and in return he looked for obedience and, in the case of the slaves, efficient labor (Bibler 33). Obviously the reality of slavery was far from this alternative version of the Victorian family unit, yet this fantasy persisted into the neo-colonial period, for example through images of happy-go-lucky slaves cheerfully singing while at work popular during the Lost Cause era. Regardless of the prevalence and endurance of these fallacious images, the reality was the “production of a fundamental familiar violence, of multiple subjections, the tolerance for and necessity of them within the spaces and the forms of intimacy” that can only be described as monstrous (C. Sharpe 2).

The family metaphor emphasizes the proximity and resulting intimacy and immediacy of plantation relations and also attempts to naturalize the “everyday intimate brutalities” of life as a slave by reference to the organic familial relationship (C. Sharpe 26). I argue that the family metaphor underscores the monstrous betrayal of the daily abuse of the black “ surrogate
children,” who were treated with the opposite of the love and respect characteristic of familial bonds.\footnote{While not all plantation masters had interracial sex, abused their slaves, or refused to acknowledge biracial family members, these behaviors were widespread in the antebellum South. I argue that it is useful to examine patterns of subjection common to both the antebellum and neo-colonial South in order to have a better sense of the frequent effects slavery had on intimate and familial relations in the South in a later period. Although the exploration of patterns of behavior relies in part on generalizations, I do not mean to imply that there were no exceptions to these rules. On the plantation, as elsewhere, the decisions and actions of people are highly individualized.} Through raping his own daughter, Old Carothers not only abuses his position as “surrogate father” to his slaves, but also the very real familial bonds tying parents to their children, biological connections going beyond topical considerations like skin color. Nevertheless, the family metaphor was very effective in naturalizing this intimate violence and coloring the abuses of the master/slave relationship as fatherly discipline; this made the metaphor essential in colonial contexts beyond the U.S. South as well.\footnote{For a discussion of the use of the family metaphor in colonial contexts, see Ann McClintock’s Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest.} Similar to its purpose on the plantation, the family metaphor allows “the colonial power to justify its political and economic occupation of a land by turning it into a seemingly natural and intimate family relationship” and situating the colonized “as perennial children” (Loichot 17, Vergès 5).\footnote{This parallel underscores the similarities between the ideologies of slavery and colonialism and can be seen as evidence in favor of the application of the internal colonialism paradigm to African Americans, as discussed in Chapter 1.}

At the same time that planters (and colonial authorities) created a fantasy in which slaves played the role of their black children, the institution of slavery itself worked to unravel kinship ties between black families: “[w]omen’s bodies became vessels for the master’s sexual pleasure, reproductive wombs, and children were turned into capital units, plantation hands” (Loichot 2). In the words of Valérie Loichot, slavery not only worked to orphan children from their parents but also to separate slave parents from their parental function (2). Orlando Patterson has labeled this phenomenon “natal alienation” which refers to “the loss of ties of birth in both ascending
and descending generations,” as well as the “loss of native status, of deracination” (7). Natal alienation or the destruction of black kinship ties was a horrible effect of slavery that has remained “throughout the twentieth century with the separation of families and the denial of familial bonds” (T. Davis 234). Thadious Davis notes that the black family continues to be “victimized by the relational havoc wrought by the pernicious laws beginning in slavery and effective thereafter in Jim Crow segregation, its legal codes and social customs” (233). Like Davis, Hortense Spillers observes the lingering effects of natal alienation in the neo-colonial twentieth century, as well as the consequences of slave societies’ matrilineal lines of descent as a result of absent white fathers and banished black fathers (228). Although she complicates the reader’s understanding of the Moynihan report, Spillers states that according to the report, “the ‘Negro Family’ has no father to speak of—his name, his law, his symbolic function mark the impressive missing agencies in the essential life of the black community” (204). Unlike majority culture, some scholars like Spillers suggest that the role of the father in black families does not carry the same significance that it does for white families, particularly during slavery and in the decades after Emancipation.

Thus, antebellum black families may have taken different forms from those typical of white families, as a result of the alternative kinship systems necessitated by slavery. In other words, the incest and miscegenation common to the plantation South resulted in unconventional family structures, such as multiple generations fathered by a white planter or a planter’s refusal to acknowledge black branches of the family tree. However, this does not mean that cohesive

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124 The Moynihan Report or The Negro Family: The Case for National Action was a seventy-eight page report written by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, which in the words of James T. Patterson, “painted a dismal portrait of lower-class black family life in the inner cities” (xii).

125 For an exploration of the diverse roles black fathers play in families in the United States, see The Myth of the Missing Black Father edited by Roberta Coles and Charles Green.
family units and strong bonds were absent from the lives of African Americans. While the challenges faced by early African American families are not in dispute, some scholars choose instead to focus on the resilience of black families, many of whom attempted to stay together and look after each other in spite of the impossible circumstances created by slavery. For example, Frances Smith Foster argues that to “know that slaves were forbidden by law to marry is to know a fact. That such proscriptions did not stop enslaved people from marrying is another fact, one that is essential to interpreting the former fact accurately” (128). One example provided by Foster of the lengths slaves would go to in order to keep their families together is the story of Henry Bibb, author of the slave narrative *The Life and Adventure of Henry Bibb, An American Slave*, who escaped from slavery six times and returned to rescue his wife and daughter five times (14). The reason Bibb did not return that final time was because his wife, Malinda, “gave up ‘hope,’ when she consented to a marriage-like relationship with another person” (Foster 15). To this example I would add the Gibson family, portrayed in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) as stable and resilient, in opposition to the white Compson family. Faulkner emphasizes this reading of the Gibson family in the appendix to the novel, written in the fall of 1945 for Malcolm Cowley’s *The Portable Faulkner*, by describing Dilsey’s future with the simple phrase “DILSEY. They endured” (Faulkner *The Sound and the Fury* 215). The slippage between the singular person of Dilsey and her family, through Faulkner’s use of the pronoun “they,” may depict Faulkner’s racism in conflating all of the Gibsons together, but also underscores the way in which Dilsey is portrayed as the glue holding her family together in the novel, even during the

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126 While I find Foster’s characterization of Malinda’s new relationship in this way a bit problematic, as her new position was as a white man’s concubine (she was sold to a man “at a high price, and she was better used than ordinary slaves”), what matters here is that Bibb saw this as adultery and as a reason to not return for his wife (Foster 14, Bibb 190).
transition from slavery into the post-Emancipation era. In both Foster’s example of Henry Bibb and Faulkner’s of Dilsey Gibson, it is clear that even in the face of incredible odds, African Americans strived for the preservation of the family unit and the bonds of kinship, which I will return to in the final section of this chapter.

While I agree with Foster that it is important to recognize the strength and resistance of black families, a central aim of the slave system was the destruction of family units, which nevertheless affected black kinship systems. For instance, black or biracial children were not seen as the parents’ kin but the master’s property. Hortense Spillers describes the “metaphorical implications of naming” as a key source of bitterness among African Americans, as slaves had no right to name their children, a privilege claimed by the master (216). Richard Godden connects Thomas Sutpen’s decision to name his son (who may or may not be biracial, depending on which narrator’s story one takes as the most accurate) Charles Bon or Charles Good in Absalom, Absalom! to the way naming functioned in slave families. According to Godden, Sutpen acts the role of a white planter naming his slaves as he wishes, resulting in their natal alienation by which planters declared “their title or property within a slave by naming that slave and in doing so they deadened the slave’s right to birth by human connection” (69). Furthermore, Sutpen gives his son the surname of Bon, which is French for good, a short remove from goods, emphasizing his son’s status as property and declaring “Bon dead and himself as an owner not a father” (Godden 69). While the term goods in French translates to bien, bon is the adjective that is generally used to describe food, highlighting Bon’s status as a consumable

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127 Through his portrayal of Dilsey and her role as a mother holding her family together and raising generations, Faulkner seems to play into the stereotype of matriarchal black families, described above by Spillers. However, Dilsey’s husband Roskus is also present in the novel, which simultaneously challenges the stereotype.
Although not a slave himself, according to Quentin and his roommate Shreve McCannon’s telling, Bon has African ancestry and a lineage that connects him to Haitian slaves on a sugar plantation. In another sense, “by virtue of Sutpen’s ‘occupation’ of a Haitian plantation, [Bon] has been violently ingested but not wholly included in the larger U.S. American family,” in the same way that slaves were incorporated into the fantasy of the plantation “family” but excluded from white family trees (Steeby 153). His son is not actually a slave (unless Faulkner had his Haitian history wrong); however, through the process of naming itself as well as his choice of a name, Sutpen accentuates Bon’s “black blood” over his hybridity, and as a result of the one drop rule and its less official precursors, his status as three-fifths of a human being in the United States, according to article one, section two of the Constitution. In this way, Sutpen emphasizes his son’s status as property as opposed to as family in order to validate both his denial of Bon and his adherence to colonial values.129

The above example illustrates that, along with the attempted destruction of black family units and kinship ties, slavery is responsible for what is depicted in Absalom, Absalom!, and arguably also in Go Down, Moses, as the white South’s greatest transgression: its behavior towards black family members and the expunging of black branches of the family tree. In addition to the intimate violence of plantation relations and the patterns of subjection that occur in that space, white Southern families would deny their familial and biological connection to black or biracial family members. Through refusing to allow Charles and Eulalia Bon to take his

128 For a discussion of the ways in which black bodies were seen as edible and the combined fear of/desire for blackness that was literally devoured by whites in the nineteenth century, see Kyla Wazana Tompkins Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century.

129 Joel Williamson argues that this was not the only option for Sutpen in Mississippi at that time: “Local people usually knew of the trace, and it did count, but in the ordinary processes of life, wealth and culture seemed to override a slight taint of African ancestry. In real life, almost surely, Thomas Sutpen could have publicly recognized Charles Bon as his son and had the essence of his Grand Design too. In the real world, Bon could have married white and eventually graced Sutpen’s Hundred as its master” (384).
name, Sutpen excises them from his family, leaving room for the second family he forms in Mississippi (see Figure 1). Valérie Loichot notes that while white planters kept family trees, they excluded black members (despite the obvious sexual relationships and the hybrid children that resulted), who were “relegated to the economic document of the ledger” (15). Loichot describes the ledger as the dominant and sometimes the only written document on the plantation which “silenced all other texts, such as written testimonies, poems, tales: a world dominated by the ledger was a world in which all human qualities reduced to numbers, exchangeable commensurable units stripped of personhood, violently denied the basic right of expressing their subjectivity” (165). This is illustrated explicitly in Faulkner’s Go Down, Moses, particularly in the story “The Bear,” in which Isaac McCaslin learns about his grandfather’s rape of Eunice and later of the child resulting from that union, Tomasina, through reading his predecessors’ plantation ledgers (see Figure 2). In the ledgers, Isaac’s grandfather, Old Carothers, made “no effort either to explain or obfuscate the thousand-dollar legacy to the son of an unmarried slave girl, to be paid only at the child’s coming-of-age, bearing the consequences of the act of which there was still no definite incontrovertible proof that he acknowledged” (257-8). Isaac thinks: “So I reckon that was cheaper than saying My son to a nigger” (258). The rape of one’s own daughter has a monetary value of one-thousand dollars in the McCaslin family ledgers, translating the unspeakable act of incest into a definable dollar amount, reducing all acts to quantifiable numbers on a ledger page.

Further, if the ledger was seen as the authoritative document regarding life on the plantation and relegated black bodies to property, then there was no place on the white family tree for biracial family members. The ledger can be seen as a form of narrative that legitimizes certain relationships, while underneath multiple other layers to the story exist; the ledger has a
palimpsestic relationship to the reality of what occurred. In this way, the ledger can be seen as
a metaphor for history more generally: only the tip of the iceberg is documented or seen as
legitimate, whereas the layers below the surface are never given the space to be articulated.
Although the ledger tried to reduce human beings to numbers on a paper, it could not erase the
reality of interracial contact occurring on the plantation and the resulting mixed race family
members and sometimes entire shadow families, such as those produced by Faulkner’s great-
grandfather, Colonel William C. Falkner, or Faulkner’s fictional patriarchs: Old Carothers, who
fathers Tomasina and her son Terrel, and Thomas Sutpen, both in his relations with his unnamed
Haitian slave who gives birth to Clytie and Eulalia Bon who has Charles Bon (T. Davis 101).
As noted above, the forming of unacknowledged and illegitimate biracial families continued in
the neo-colonial South, as is exemplified through the son fathered in 1940 by Carothers Roth
Edmonds with his unnamed distant relative.

In the examples of Old Carothers’s or Thomas Sutpen’s shadow families, the white
master is in the position of power. This is also the case in the example of Roth Edmonds’
relationship, since the woman appears to care deeply for Roth and would like to stay with him,
but due to his refusal, they part ways. While we can never know if Clytie, Tomasina, and
Terrel were the products of rape or not, the power dynamics of the master/slave relationship
make it such that the relations were certainly coerced. Depictions of coerced sexual relations

\[130\] I thank Elizabeth Hopwood for this observation.
\[131\] For a discussion of the shadow family William C. Falkner potentially formed in his own backyard, see Joel
Williamson’s William Faulkner and Southern History.
\[132\] In addition to the fact that she followed him to the Delta in November, Roth’s nameless lover reveals her feelings
for him when Isaac McCaslin implies that it may be revenge that she is after: “‘Old man,’ she said, ‘have you lived
so long and forgotten so much that you don’t remember anything you ever knew or felt or even heard about love!’”
(346).
\[133\] In other words, even if the black women did not overtly refuse these sexual acts, the relationships are still forced
due to the power differentials at play between black women and white men in the plantation South. While power
between white men and black women are present in a number of Faulkner’s other novels, discussed in more detail below, and insinuate that many white Southern boys have their first sexual encounters with black females. This speaks to the ingrained nature of the sexual abuse of black women in Southern society, where to come of age as a white male often involved the violation of a black woman or girl. A historic example of this association comes out of late nineteenth-century New Orleans, where a white boy turning sixteen would expect “a unique initiation—he will become a man tonight when he has no ordinary sex, but sex with a goat” (Adams 39). The goat, short for scapegoat, was an octoroon or light-skinned biracial woman, typically a prostitute, and was considered “a receptacle for the past transgressions of the larger community: the historic transgressions against slave women’s bodies that created something called octoroons in the first place, as well as the transgression against black bodies that was slavery itself” (Adams 40). That the prostitute was given such as significant label—“scapegoat”—shows that plantocracy in this community was aware of the violations characteristic of the slave system through the symbolic enactment of them at the individual level.

Depictions of similar sexual initiations are present in Faulkner’s novels. For instance, in *The Mansion* (1959), Mink Snopes’s first sexual experiences are described as “furious unplanned episodes as violent as vomiting, with no more preparation than the ripping of buttons before stooping downward into the dusty roadside weeds or cotton middle where the almost invisible unwashed Negro girl lay waiting” (589, emphasis mine). Not only are episodes, such as the one Mink initiates, portrayed as “furious” and “violent,” but the black girl’s agency (and even more her presence) is erased in this sentence through her description as “almost invisible.” In *Light in
August, five white boys around the ages of fourteen and fifteen each have sex with a black girl in a shed (aside from Joe Christmas who physically attacks the girl instead), as had been arranged by one of the older boys.\textsuperscript{134} The girl in this scene disappears into the background as well: “they had watched the negro girl enter and look back once and then vanish…Leaning, [Christmas] seemed to look down into a black well and at the bottom saw two glints like the reflections of dead stars” (156). In each of these textual examples, the girl’s presence, both bodily and mentally, is erased, and her level of the consent is unknown.\textsuperscript{135} However, the power difference between white men and black women (or girls) in the South would call into question whether the sex is consensual—even if both parties appear more willing than not. Although both scenes would seem to describe the sexual abuse of black women in the antebellum South, the chronology of the novels places these events in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, illustrating the resilience of certain power differentials and patterns of behavior. In each of the above instances, the white bodies are the sexual abusers, while the black bodies are both sexually violated and powerless to resist.

The example of the victimization of black women is the most frequent configuration of intimate violence in the plantation South found in Faulkner’s novels; this pattern of subjection begs the question where are the black men and white women? What are their roles? To answer this question in terms of the violations black bodies experienced under slavery before extrapolating to the postbellum South, I will consider a few examples from an iconic American slave narrative that focuses on intimate relations between slaves and those of the master class.

\textsuperscript{134} Faulkner mentions that perhaps the boys did not think of it as a sin “since to fourteen the paramount sin would be to be publicly convicted of virginity” (156). Similarly, Quentin notes in \textit{The Sound and the Fury}: “In the South you are ashamed of being a virgin. Boys. Men. They lie about it” (50).

\textsuperscript{135} Faulkner’s use of the term “girl” is ambiguous in both of these cases. It is not clear whether he is subscribing to the demeaning white Southern tendency to refer to African American men and women as “boys” and “girls,” in order to infantilize them, or is using the term in a straightforward manner to refer to a female child.
and is invested in the preservation of black families, Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Before turning to Faulkner’s novels, it is important to examine the patterns of subjection common to slavery as portrayed by an author who directly witnessed and experienced them. Jacobs inhabits an oppositional social position to Faulkner, as a black woman who was born a slave as opposed to a male descendant of the plantocracy, and writes a narrative based on her own life in the antebellum South, rather than a fictional reconstruction from the early twentieth-century South. In her account, Jacobs describes a second configuration of plantation sexual abuse wherein a black man is in the position more commonly occupied by black women, the receiver of sexual advances and in some cases violent abuse, as is illustrated by a male slave named Luke. Luke is sexually exploited by his white master in Harriet Jacobs’s narrative. As a result of “the strangest freaks of despotism” of his young master, Luke is only allowed to wear a shirt, “in order to be in readiness to be flogged” and is “chained to the bedside of this cruel and disgusting wretch [his master, who appears to be suffering from a degenerative sexually transmitted disease]” (149). This example repeats the same pattern of subjection as the first yet is less known, less publicized, and presumably less frequent.\(^{136}\) In Luke’s case we see that black men can shadow or echo the position of the sexually abused more often occupied by black women.

\(^{136}\) While there is a silence surrounding the prevalence of homosexual relationships in U.S. history, Frances Smith Foster notes that there are hints that, like other segments of the antebellum U.S. population, “African American communities recognized enduring, personal relationships that were not heterosexual” (38). Foster states that there are indications of both consensual interracial or homosexual relationships in early American court cases and laws, such as a statute from 1662, detailing that if a Christian fornicates with a black man or woman, he will have to pay double fines (40). Orlando Patterson acknowledges the scant references made to homosexual assault in Southern society and suggests that male slaves were not exempt from sexual abuse (Foster 39). Further, biographers writing about the antebellum South also hint at same-sex violation: “William S. McFeely implies that Frederick Douglass was sexually abused by his master, and Nell Painter Irwin suggests that Sojourner Truth was sexually abused by her mistress” (Foster 39).
Another vignette from Jacobs’s narrative shows that, like black men in relation to black women, there were instances of white women repeating or in this case mimicking the role of white men: “The white daughters early hear their parents quarrelling about some female slave. Their curiosity is excited, and they soon learn the cause...They know that the women slaves are subject to their father’s authority in all things; and in some cases they exercise the same authority over the men slaves” (44-45). Jacobs describes white daughters of the planter class who choose the meanest plantation slaves to father their children, selecting “the most brutalized, over whom [their] authority could be exercised with less fear of exposure” (45). In a similar way, Jacobs portrays her mistress’s interest in her as perhaps sexual as well: “Sometimes I woke up, and found her bending over me. At other times she whispered in my ear, as though it was her husband who was speaking to me, and listened to hear what I would answer” (31). However, in this example it is uncertain whether Jacobs’s mistress’s sexual interest in her results from her jealousy at her husband’s sexual obsession or her own attraction. As in the instances of black men who are in the situation of black women, white women can occupy the position granted to the men of their race, wielding total authority over the bodies of their slaves; the instances of this are less publicized and less frequent.138

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137 Whereas the white women can be seen as mimicking white men, calling to mind Homi Bhabha’s notion of colonial mimicry (“the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite [and later almost the same, but not white]”), I do not argue that the black men mimic the position of black women (86). Unlike white women, black men have no agency or choice in the roles they fill.

138 Joel Williamson supports this claim, stating: “White women on the plantations did have sex with male slaves” (385). That maternity is more obvious than paternity, in addition to the fact that white women were subordinate to white men in plantation culture, explains why this type of interracial coupling happened less frequently (Williamson 385). Due to the risks, white women who had sex across the color line more often did so for love, as Victorian education emphasized the high passion (Williamson 385). For instance, Williamson describes a case that occurred in South Carolina towards the end of slavery, in which a teenage daughter of a planter fell in love with a young slave and became pregnant by him; the baby survived and became a large landowner in the decades following Reconstruction (385).
An example of this pattern of relations is present in *Light in August*. This novel, however, takes place in the 1930s as opposed to in the antebellum South and thus illustrates how the patterns of subjection initiated under the slave system continued into the neo-colonial twentieth century. Indeed, the power dynamics of the relationship between Joanna Burden, a white woman from a Northern family who lives in the South, and Joe Christmas, a racially ambiguous man described as “parchment colored” (which causes Valérie Loichot to refer to him as “blank,” allowing any character to write on him and making Christmas’s body a type of palimpsest), follows that of a white woman and her slave (Faulkner *Light in August* 34, Loichot138). Joanna is portrayed as in control of the sexual relationship between the two; she leaves notes for Joe, appoints rendezvous, and seems to be aroused by the racialized aspect of their coupling. Joanna sometimes forces Joe to come to her through a window and other times to seek her throughout the house:

> until he found her, hidden, in closets, in empty rooms, waiting, panting, her eyes in the dark glowing like the eyes of cats. Now and then she appointed trysts beneath certain shrubs about the grounds, where he would find her naked, or with her clothing half torn to ribbons upon her, in the wild throws of nymphomania…and wild hands and her breathing: “Negro! Negro! Negro!.” (259-60)

Not only is Joanna responsible for initiating their liaisons, but she also seems to play off of Joe’s unknown racial background, making their relations racially charged. Joanna locates herself in the position of the plantation mistress, leaving food for the black laborer (in her mind: “*Set out for the nigger. For the nigger*”) played by Joe, and forcing him to enter through the kitchen or

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139 While the power dynamics of Joanna and Joe’s relationship are similar to that between a mistress and slave, Joe is not a slave and is electing to participate in their sexual encounters.
even a window (238). In another example from Faulkner’s neo-colonial South, Temple Drake of *Sanctuary* replicates and perpetuates the subjection that was inflicted on her when she was abducted and raped with a corn cob by the white gangster Popeye. Temple wrongly accuses another man, bootlegger Lee Goodwin, of both her rape and Tommy’s murder (which was also committed by Popeye), leading to Lee’s death at the hands of a lynch mob. Although Lee Goodwin is a poor white man, he is described throughout *Sanctuary* as black: “Goodwin said, jerking up his black head, his gaunt, brown, faintly harried face” and later “Goodwin’s black head and gaunt brown face” (Faulkner *Sanctuary* 115, 281). As a result of the ambiguous depiction of Goodwin’s race (or if class may be seen as standing in for race as another example of hierarchical plantation relations), this situation correlates with the pattern of abuse described above: white women inflicting the pain bestowed on them by the colonial hierarchies of plantation culture, such as their subordinance to white men, onto the bodies of black men.

However, to be positioned as shadows of black women or white men is not the only, nor arguably the most frequent, role occupied by black men and white women in the consideration of the sexual exploitation of slavery. For instance, since the first configuration of abuse—white

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140 Aside from Joanna, however, the female characters in Faulkner’s major works tended to refrain from sex across the color line, which Joel Williamson states was “one of several things that did exist in Southern culture that he simply ruled out of his fiction,” whether consciously or not (William Faulkner and Southern History 385). In *Light in August*, Joe Brown/Lucas Burch has an unknown racial background, and, although he represents himself as white, he is often paired with the likewise racially ambiguous Joe Christmas. Nevertheless, as a poor white orphan, Lena Grove’s sexuality was policed less rigorously than plantation daughters like Judith Sutpen. Francis Smith Foster supports the fact that these relationships occurred in the antebellum period, stating that “we ought not ignore the fact that despite law and custom, even during the slave era, interracial love and marriage was a fact” (123).

141 In addition to gesturing towards the entwining of the colonial hierarchies of race and class, through his ambiguous descriptions of Popeye and Goodwin’s race in *Sanctuary* and also the racial categorization of Joe Christmas and Charles Bon, Faulkner perhaps intends to insinuate that race is a social construct in American society. Quentin Compson muses on similar issues in *The Sound and the Fury*: “I learned that the best way to take all people, black or white, is to take them for what they think they are, then leave them alone. That was when I realised that a nigger is not a person so much as a form of behavior; a sort of obverse reflection of the white people he lives among” (55). Here, Quentin reflects on the relationship between race and identity and concludes that race has more to do with how people see you and expect you to behave than any innate characteristics.
men victimizing black women—is the most recurrent in both antebellum slave narratives and Faulkner’s novels, it might be useful to extend our consideration of this example by locating the position of black men and white women in this pattern.\footnote{This pattern of subjection is central to Jacobs’s narrative; an important conflict in her story involves her attempts to resist the sexual attention/abuses of her master. Further, the abuse of black women by white men is also key in another iconic American slave narrative, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, in which Douglass describes the beating of his aunt Hester as “the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery through which I was about to pass” (15).}

Under the slave system, black men are powerless to protect their women, and while some give their lives in attempt, others, as Jacobs mentions, are “poor creatures [that] have been so brutalized by the lash that they will sneak out of the way to give their masters free access to their wives and daughters” (38). Through this choice between death and submissive acceptance, black men are emasculated. Beyond emasculation, I argue that this is an instance of the ungendering described by Hortense Spillers and Aliyyah Abdur-Rahman as an effect of slavery. The ungendering (a term coined by Spillers) of slaves occurred as a result of the Middle Passage, the dissolution of enslaved families, and the fact that gender roles were not upheld for slaves, which “demarcates a sexuality that is neuterbound” (Spillers 222). In other words, as a result of the policies of slavery, male (and alternatively female) slaves were not only emasculated but also emptied of any gendered associations (Spillers 230).\footnote{Concerning the ungendering of female slaves, Spillers states that while “the gendered female exists for the male, we might suggest that the ungendered female—in an amazing stroke of pansexual potential—might be invaded/raided by another woman or man” (222).}

The ungendering of black men could result from powerlessness of their situations or their inability to keep their families together under slavery, in many cases, and protect black women from sexual abuse.

This inability is illustrated by the example of Thucydus Roskus in Faulkner’s Go Down, Moses, whose wife, Eunice, is raped by the master, Old Carothers, in 1810; Carothers then rapes his own daughter, Tomasina, presumably in 1832 (see Figure 2). The ledgers read that Thucydus
“Refused 10 acre peace fathers Will 28 Jun 1837” and also “Refused Cash offer $200” (254-5).

After reading this entry, Isaac claims to be able to “see the black man, the slave whom his white owner had forever manumitted by the very act from which the black man could never be free so long as memory lasted, entering the commissary, asking permission perhaps of the white man’s son to see the ledger-page which he could not even read…how much longer before he could go away and never return…” (255). This scene is only Isaac’s mental recreation of Thucydus’s reaction to his wife’s rape (a white man of the planter class reimagining the reaction of a black man to violation of his wife and daughter) based on the narrative provided by the ledgers, which we know to be only partial. Nevertheless, given his circumstances on Old Carothers’ plantation, Thucydus was powerless to prevent the rape of his wife and his daughter (in actuality step-daughter), and his only option is to leave the plantation as far behind as possible—“even if only as far as Jefferson” where he is set up as a blacksmith in 1841 (255). Thucydus outlives both his wife, who killed herself Christmas day 1832 (presumably after Old Carothers rapes Tomasina), and step-daughter, who dies in childbirth in 1833; he survives in Jefferson until 1854. Thucydus’s experience on Old Carothers’ plantation shows the limited extent to which black men could impact the situations of themselves and their families under the institution of slavery and the ungendering that resulted.

This pattern of subjection is repeated with a difference generations later in the 1890s by Lucas Beauchamp, his wife Molly, and the white man whose land he works (also a distant relative of his), Zack Edmonds. When Zack’s wife dies in childbirth, he takes Molly into his home to breastfeed his child, and she is forced to leave her newborn son and husband behind. Lucas suspects Zack of installing Molly not only as his child’s surrogate mother but also as his replacement wife. However, perhaps as a result of his free status (and it is implied also his
McCaslin blood, shown in Figure 2), Lucas does not passively accept this situation and takes action against Zack. Lucas both demands his wife back and pulls a razor on Zack in his sleep. Although his wife is returned to him, presumably unmolested, Lucas wonders “How to God…can a black man ask a white man to please not lay down with his black wife? And even if he could ask it, how to God can the white man promise he won’t?” emphasizing the powerlessness of black men in his position, and also gesturing towards the powerlessness of white men to act in a way other than what is dictated by the plantation culture of the South (58). While Faulkner perpetuates the image of the ungendered black man who does not have the option for action, he also challenges it through his depiction of Lucas in the neo-colonial South, who refuses the role (and luckily does not lose his life as a result).

In addition to black men, white women are also affected by white men’s exploitation of black female bodies in the plantation South. As Aliyyah Abdur-Rahman describes, white women are assigned the role of producing male heirs; they are seen as chaste and are associated with reproductive sexuality. However, when their husbands desire fetishized sex for the purpose of pleasure, the white women are cast aside in deference to the slave women, over whom the men can exercise unrestricted control. In many cases, white women were constantly reminded of the infidelities of their husbands—and perhaps even their sexual preference for black women—by the existence of their husbands’ biracial children. The presence of these children often unleashed from the white wives a ferocious cruelty. For example, in Jacobs’s narrative,

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144 Similar incidents were illustrated in the early African American press, for example, “Patrick Brown’s First Love” published in the April 1859 issue of Anglo-African Magazine (Foster 32). In this story, “Patrick Brown did not watch and meekly hang his head when his beloved was endangered. He took action by killing her assailant” (Foster 33).

145 Joel Williamson describes how Southern women remained “pedestalized” after Emancipation (386). While he claims that interracial sex diminished, he writes: “Prostitution was another way in which white men might spare their wives the ‘indignity’ of a lusty sex life” (386).
she tells the story of a slave girl, who is dying after the birth of her light-skinned child, and her mistress, who “stood by, and mocked at her like an incarnate fiend” (16). The rape of black women by white men had the effect of perverting all involved parties. Old Carothers’s nameless wife is notably absent from *Go Down, Moses*. She and her thoughts or actions in response to her husband’s infidelities are never described in the novel. As a woman, she would likely not have written entries into the plantation ledgers, the documents that endure for perusal by the progeny, such as Isaac McCaslin, which may account for this silence.\(^\text{146}\)

While Mrs. McCaslin’s reaction to her husband’s sex across the color line and incest can never be ascertained, the reader is privy to Sophonsiba Beauchamp’s (Isaac’s mother) strange response to Hubert Beauchamp’s (her brother) taking on of a black cook (and implied lover, whose “nameless illicit hybrid female flesh” excites and disturbs young Isaac) after Sophonsiba’s marriage to Theophilus “Uncle Buck” McCaslin (289). Isaac remembers “his mother’s tearful lamentations,” his uncle’s assertion that “They’re free now! They’re folks too just like we are!,” and his mother’s dramatic ejection of the cook from the family’s home (289). Although Sophonsiba is agitated by the actions of her brother, not her husband, her hysterical reaction is comparable to the sexual jealousy experienced by many plantation mistresses. For instance, Sophonsiba balks at the feeling that she has been replaced in her brother’s home, and on a less personal level, she seems invested in the preservation of the family line and the upholding of colonial hierarchies in the immediate postbellum period. As the coupling between Hubert and his black cook appears consensual, it is important to consider what the stakes are for consensual interracial relationships in the antebellum and postbellum South and what is threatened by this

\(^{146}\) Her voice is notably absent from the excerpted passages written in her husband’s hand described on pages 254 and 255. Indeed, as Jay Watson observes, *Go Down, Moses* contains no evidence that Mrs. McCaslin received a genealogical entry in the ledgers.
sexual activity. I argue that these relationships constitute an even greater threat to the colonial relations in the South and the racial segregation upon which they rest, through the egalitarian nature of consensual interactions. If both members of an interracial relationship have a say in their liaison, it diminishes the power and significance of racial differences. Racial differences were central to the hierarchical plantation system, as well as to colonialism more generally, as they helped the plantocracy justify the abuse of the black bodies they judged to be less than human, less vulnerable to suffering than white bodies. The threat held by consensual interracial relationships in the de-emphasis of racial differences was also a threat to the colonial system in its entirety. This may in part explain the fixation on the color line in the U.S. South, as we see in Sophonsiba’s reaction, particularly during periods in which colonial structures began to break down, such as following the Civil War. Therefore, another pattern of intimate relations, the sexual policing of the color line, was essential to the functioning of plantation society and made the transition—along with sexual violence and the disruption of familial bonds—from the colonial into the neo-colonial U.S. South, which I will explore in the next section of this chapter.

“[F]rom the loins of African kings”: Sexual Policing and the Color Line

The United States and its expanding national boundaries had never been particularly open to amalgamation, as the slave system rests on the belief that African Americans are less than human and not subject to the same rights (Ladd 23). The central difference between racial policies in France and the former French colonies, such as Haiti and the deep U.S. South, and the U.S. hinged on the fact that the French government pursued a policy of assimilation in its colonies, whereas segregation was key in the formerly English territories of the upper South (where the status of the child followed that of the mother from the early eighteenth century)
After acquiring the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803, the U.S. attempted to replace the “assimilationist colonial policy with respect to racial relationships [in the former French colony] by a segregationist and nationalist policy which demanded that one prove title as white in order to be assimilated to any degree whatsoever into the redemptive New World nation” (Ladd xiv). This policy of segregation between the races explains the attention to the color line in many novels by white Southerners from the antebellum and postbellum periods, such as George Washington Cable, Mark Twain, and Kate Chopin, and later William Faulkner. Indeed, the debate over assimilation versus segregation was exacerbated from the 1880s onward, as after the Civil War, it once more became important to the white South to determine who counted as American: the “implicit racism of the United States national mission made it once again necessary that the color line be reaffirmed” (Ladd 29). Barbara Ladd argues that the white Southerner’s enthusiasm for affirming the color line resulted from his desire to disassociate himself from the slave population (25), and what better way to do that than by making racial distinctions central through segregationist policies. Anglo-Americans had a tendency to link white Southerners to black Southerners through the proximity generated by the system of slavery, regardless of whether the white Southerners were actually believed to be “tainted” with black blood or not (Ladd 13, 25). Additionally, I argue that, as the group who benefited most from the racist internal colonialism of slavery, white Southern men would have been particularly invested in reaffirming the color line in order to maintain the colonial hierarchies that granted them full license over the slave population and white women. The beneficiaries of colonialism,

147 Further, according to Thadious Davis, the Louisiana Code Noir remained active in that region of the nation until the Civil War, regulating the interactions between people of different racial groups. The gens de couleur libres in Louisiana functioned as a separate racial group in that space (in a similar way to the mulâtres-aristocrates in Haiti, a focus of Chapter 3), putting the racial categorization in Louisiana at odds with the binary understanding of race that resulted from the one drop rule in other areas of the U.S. South. Davis argues that Louisiana had the potential to develop an alternative to the nation’s system of racial segregation and hierarchical relations (Southscapes 8).
in this case white men of the planter class, would have the most to lose if colonial relations were not preserved.

One method of upholding the color line was to control the interactions between individuals from different racial groups. Although white men seem to have positioned themselves above the color line in the South (through their widespread sexual violation of black women), they were heavily invested in prohibiting sexual contact between white women and black or biracial men, since white women were assigned the role of maintaining the purity of family lines. According to Joel Williamson, interracial sex between white women and black men occurred during slavery less frequently than was the case with white men, in part because maternity was more visible than paternity and, as a result of plantation hierarchies, “women were generally dependent, and the sanctions that could be brought against them very severe” (385). The sexual policing, or the regulation of who sleeps with whom and who marries whom in relation to race, gender, and class, was integral to the both the antebellum and postbellum American South, as portrayed in Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Go Down, Moses.* The regulation of sexuality depicted in the novels (and also in Vieux-Chauvet’s *Love* as described in the next chapter) allowed the beneficiaries of colonialism, the plantocracy in the U.S. South (and the mulâtres-aristocrates in Haiti), to control the intersection of race and sexuality and to maintain colonial hierarchies and mentalities in post-/neo-colonial societies, as adherence to them began to wane. The periods of turmoil in the U.S. South, such as following the loss of the Civil War, were also times in which the maintenance of the color line became more important in an attempt to preserve colonial ideologies and the status quo: hierarchical relations among white

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148 Anne McClintock describes how the idea of racial purity depends on the rigorous policing of women’s sexuality: “as an historical notion, then, racial ‘purity’ is inextricably implicated in the dynamics of gender and cannot be understood without a theory of gender power” (61).
men, women, and the former slaves. I argue that the policing of sexuality and interracial sex seen in a number of Faulkner’s late novels was instated to work towards similar ends: controlling the sexuality of others and thus preserving colonial society.

This regulation of sexuality, particularly of what the community would deem non-normative sexuality, is seen in the example of *Absalom, Absalom!*’s Charles Bon whose relations were heavily policed due to their interracial component (and also intragender if we include his connection to his half-brother, Henry Sutpen). For example, Bon’s sexual proclivities were not under scrutiny when he was believed to be a white man, such as his participation in the plaçage system and his general philandering. However, in Quentin and Shreve’s version of the story, Bon is revealed to be biracial and is shot in order to prevent his marriage to the white plantation daughter, Judith Sutpen. The racial identity of Charles Bon—whom the Sutpen family viewed as a wealthy New Orleansian but actually hailed from the “little lost island” of Haiti—would have been of the utmost importance in the Radical era that followed Reconstruction (1889-1915), from which Quentin and Shreve construct Bon’s story (Faulkner 202). Perhaps as a result of their fixation on the color line during that period, Quentin and Shreve make Bon’s race the principal mystery of the story and speculate that he is not a flamboyant white Creole, but in fact had inherited a trace of African ancestry on his Haitian mother’s side (202). Bon’s sexual proclivities are accepted in Mississippi when he is thought to be white; however, when he is considered black, his actions are policed by the community, both reaffirming colonial relations and resulting in his death. In Quentin and Shreve’s version, Henry accepts that bigamy and

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149 Charles Bon’s shifting racial categorization, as a member of the mulâtres-aristocrates in Haiti and the black race in Mississippi (described in more detail in Chapter 1), is complicated further when one considers the fact that he is a member of the gens de couleur libres in New Orleans (or may even pass for white there as he does at the University of Mississippi before his African ancestry is revealed by Sutpen in Quentin and Shreve’s telling of the story).

150 Perhaps also on his father’s side, as discussed in Chapter 1.
incest may occur between his sister and half-brother but cannot consent to the miscegenation, due to the centrality of the color line and colonial hierarchies to the South’s plantation culture.

Similarly, in *Go Down, Moses*, Isaac McCaslin is clearly more distressed by his discovery that the mistress of his cousin, Roth Edmonds, is biracial than he is by the fact that the two produced a child out of wedlock together (or even the fact that the relationship was incestuous). Isaac discerns the unnamed woman’s racial heritage after she mentions that her aunt took in washing to help support her large family: “‘Took in what?’ he said. ‘Took in washing?’ He sprang, still seated even, flinging himself backward onto one arm, awry-haired, glaring. Now he understood what it was she had brought into the tent with her…He cried, not loud, in a voice of amazement, pity, and outrage: ‘You’re a nigger!’” (344). Although he positions himself as progressive—through distancing himself from the sexual crimes of his grandfather, Old Carothers McCaslin, and disavowing his plantation inheritance—Isaac is unable to accept interracial relationships in the 1940s. He tells the woman: “We will have to wait” (346). Both the example of Roth’s coupling and Bon’s potential pairing depict consensual interracial relationships, which as described above, constituted an even greater threat to the colonial relations in the South and the racial segregation upon which they rest. For all of his seemingly progressive views on race and inheritance, Isaac McCaslin unwittingly becomes an agent of the sexual policing of the color line, perhaps in order to assuage this threat. Isaac gives the girl a “thick sheaf of banknotes” on behalf of Roth in place of the acknowledgement of their interracial child and their two-fold familial connection (339). In a way, Isaac’s action echoes Old

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151 I find Isaac’s choice of pronouns in this statement interesting. His use of “we” places himself and the girl in the same position in relation to interracial sex, although the issue is much more real and immediate for the girl than it ever was for Isaac. This would seem to reduce or demean the immediacy of the girl’s predicament, as well as the possibility that her situation could be resolved were Roth Edmonds to form a family unit with her and her son.
Carothers’s attempt to bequeath to his slave Thucydus ten acres of plantation land (or, later, the land’s cash equivalent of $200) as compensation for violating and impregnating, first, Eunice, Thucydus’s wife, and then Tomasina, the daughter whom McCaslin sires with Eunice. The substitution of money or property for affection or a rightful place in the family tree thus continues in the twentieth century, evidence of how slavery’s disruption of intimate relations and familial connections lingered in the neocolonial U.S. South, due to the persistence of colonial ideologies.

The Sexual Policing of Class Lines and the Preservation of the Family Unit in *Requiem for a Nun*’s Neo-Colonial South

To conclude this chapter on the effects inherited by the neo-colonial South from the slave system on sexuality, intimacy, and familial relations, I turn to an example from one of Faulkner’s late novels, *Requiem for a Nun* (1951). This novel explores the damaged nature of intimate relationships and family units and provides as inverse example of sexual policing in which a black woman functions as the agent of regulation. *Requiem for a Nun* is a sequel to the sensational novel *Sanctuary*, in which a young co-ed at the University of Mississippi, Temple Drake, is abducted, raped by the impotent Popeye (whose given name we learn in *Requiem for a Nun* is Vitelli) with a corn-cob, and held in a Memphis brothel until she is needed to testify that her rape and the murder of Tommy (both committed by Popeye) were in actuality performed by a bootlegger named Lee Goodwin (*Requiem for a Nun* 114). *Requiem for a Nun* catches up with Temple Drake eight years after these events; she is the wife of Gowan Stevens (whose reckless driving under the influence of alcohol left her susceptible to the abduction in the first place) and has two children: a son named Bucky and a six-month-old girl. *Requiem* is a hybrid of a play
and a novel. It follows the early history of Jefferson, particularly surrounding the old jail building, in segments written in prose that alternate with three acts centering on the story of Temple Drake (or Mrs. Gowan Stevens) and her family. The events of this plot line open with the conviction of Nancy Mannigoe, a former prostitute employed by Temple and Gowan as a nurse for their children, for the murder of the youngest Stevens child. *Requiem* registers the long-term effects of Temple’s own sexual abuse and abduction in the earlier *Sanctuary* plotline, implicitly linking these traumatic events with Temple’s seeming inability to perform the role of a wife and mother.\(^\text{152}\) *Requiem* makes visceral for the reader the relationship between the events of the past and the present. Gavin Stevens, Gowan’s uncle and Nancy’s attorney, implores Temple to come forward with the truth of her past, stating: “Mrs Gowan Stevens is not even fighting in this class. This is Temple Drake’s” (73). Temple replies: “Temple Drake is dead,” to which Gavin responds with one of Faulkner’s most quoted lines “The past is never dead. It’s not even past” (73).\(^\text{153}\) Just as the neo-colonial U.S. South cannot escape the effects of slavery on sexuality and interpersonal relationships, Temple Drake cannot shake free from her traumatic past depicted in *Sanctuary*.\(^\text{154}\) The bodily trauma common to both sexual abuse and slavery

\(^{152}\) Doreen Fowler argues that Nancy’s act of infanticide (as well as Sethe’s in Morrison’s *Beloved*) needs “to be read in the context of a patriarchal culture that seeks to make women abject. Pressed by this culture, Nancy and Sethe are driven to a last desperate alternative. Both women choose death for the child over life in a life-destructive patriarchal culture” (143). I agree with this argument, but also note that it is important not to collapse the actions of Nancy and Sethe, given the temporal difference between the two (Sethe acts during the antebellum period and Nancy in the 1930s). Moreover, as Fowler notes, the threat that the schoolteacher in *Beloved* poses to Sethe and her children is much more concrete than the danger Pete represents in *Requiem* (143-4).

\(^{153}\) This line was used in the 2011 Woody Allen film *Midnight in Paris*. A version of it was also quoted by President Barack Obama in his 2008 campaign speech “A More Perfect Union”: “As William Faulkner once wrote, ‘The past isn't dead and buried. In fact, it isn't even past’” (https://my.barackobama.com/page/content/hisownwords/).

\(^{154}\) To continue the investigation of the psychological effects of colonialism as depicted in the authors’ portrayals of each novel’s narrator (begun in the introduction to this project), I call the reader’s attention to Temple’s fragmented subjectivity, which can be seen to result from her experience of trauma. In multiple instances in *Requiem*, Temple refers to her split identity. For example, she states: “So already you’ve got two different people begging for the same clemency; if everybody concerned keeps on splitting up into two people, you wont even know who to pardon, will you?” and in reference to asking the judge to save Nancy: “whether you want to save her or not, will consider
helps to perpetuate colonial mentalities through keeping the hierarchies of race, gender, and class in place.\footnote{Nancy’s physical and sexual abuse at the hands of a white man exposes the bodily trauma essential to the colonial system, which granted white men license over female and black bodies. Temple recounts how the white man “knocked [Nancy] across the pavement into the gutter and then ran after her, stomping and kicking at her face or anyway her voice which was still saying ‘Where’s my two dollars, white man?’” (96).}

Through a flashback in Act II, the reader learns that Temple was being blackmailed by Pete, the brother of Red (a young thug who raped Temple in the Memphis brothel while Popeye watched in \textit{Sanctuary}) with incriminating letters Temple had written to Red.\footnote{In Temple’s words: “I met the man, how doesn’t matter, and I fell what I called in love with him and what it was or what I called it doesn’t matter either because all that matters is that I wrote the letters” (116). Red was hired by Popeye to rape Temple for Popeye’s viewing pleasure, and Temple became attached to Red. It is unclear to the reader whether or not we are meant to read this as an instance of Stockholm syndrome or something like it.} No longer about the letters, the situation turns when Temple plans to forsake her children and husband and run away with Pete.\footnote{I argue that Temple’s level of consent here is ambiguous. If she was attached to Red as a result of something like Stockholm syndrome, then her desire to leave with Pete could be attributed to a similar reaction.} Nancy desperately works to keep the family together and prevent Temple’s flight. She first steals the couple’s getaway money and jewels and, when that fails to work, appeals to Temple’s feelings for her children. Nancy reminds her that Gowan has questioned his paternity of Bucky and will likely not prove a supportive father to Bucky, in the same way that unsavory Pete will probably throw both Temple and the baby out: “To leave one with a man that’s willing to believe the child aint got no father, willing to take the other one to a man that dont even want no children— ” (150). Temple makes it clear that she plans to leave “Money or no money” and “Children or no children” (150). As a result, after Nancy claims to have “tried everything [she] knowed,” she smothers the infant with a blanket, seemingly to prevent it from saving her or not; which if either of us, Temple Drake or Mrs Gowan Stevens either, had any sense, would have demanded first of you” (123, 101). Gavin also makes a distinction between Temple Drake and the experiences to which she was subjected in \textit{Sanctuary} and Mrs. Gowan Stevens when he notes that this is Temple’s fight and that Mrs. Gowan Stevens is not even in this class (73).}
coming to any harm, as well as to reaffirm the ties keeping Temple both in Jefferson and with Bucky and Gowan (151).

Doreen Fowler notes that infanticide “is the central crisis which the novel ceaselessly investigates, casting forward and back for answers, seeking to see and know” (140). I argue that Nancy committed this murder in an attempt not only to spare the children from abandonment (and perhaps worse at the hands of the criminal, Pete, whom Faulkner describes as having “a definite ‘untamed’ air to him” and “a hard, ruthless quality, not immoral but unmoral”) but also to attempt to hold together Temple’s family unit (137). While Nancy’s infanticide is obviously destructive to the family unit—killing a member of the group—there is also a way in which the act can be seen as an effort to preserve kinship systems in the impossible circumstances caused by the colonial system in the South, for example, Temple’s abuse and inability to function as a mother. In this sense, Nancy’s action and the motivation behind it connects her to the historic attempts made by slaves to preserve their families in the face of the horrors of slavery, including the break-up of family units and natal alienation, as discussed above. As revealed in the example of Charles Bon in the last chapter and his connection to the “queerness” of the slave plantation (or its lack of commitment to patrilineal, patriarchal, and monogamous forms of reproduction), slavery (and colonialism more generally) alters a society’s relationship to sexuality and familial relations (Abdur-Rahman 224). Requiem insists that Temple’s decision to abandon her husband and children and run away with a criminal does not occur in a vacuum but is directly connected to her own sexual abuse as a white female in a

158 While, as Doreen Fowler notes, the threat to the baby is questionable, Gavin Stevens at least appears to believe the child would have been at risk, stating “that the adults, the fathers, the old in and capable of sin, must be ready and willing—nay, eager—to suffer at any time, that the little children shall come unto Him unanguished, unterrified, undefiled” (129). I read this statement by Gavin as implying that the suffering of Nancy and Temple through the child’s murder is warranted to prevent the children from anguish, terror, and defilement, which they may have received at the hands of Pete or Gowan.
neocolonial culture which grants white men authority over female and black bodies. Acting along the same lines as *Beloved’s* Sethe, who murders her baby rather than see her subjected to the abuses of slavery, Nancy can only see murder, and more specifically infanticide, as a solution to the problem of damaged interpersonal relationships and the break-up of the family unit that result from the ingrained colonial ideologies and hierarchical relationships remaining in the post-/neo-colonial U.S. South.\(^{159}\)

In addition to the connection between Nancy’s infanticide and resistance to the separation of the family unit, I argue that Nancy’s action also functions as a form of sexual policing. Like Henry Sutpen before her (in his murder of Bon to prevent him from marrying their white sister) and Isaac McCaslin after her (who cannot bear the thought of Roth Edmonds and his biracial lover and child living together as a family unit), Nancy’s infanticide prevents Temple from leaving her husband for white, lower-class gangster Pete. As the other examples of sexual policing described in Faulkner’s works involve a white man policing the color-line to prevent black or biracial men (like Bon) from sleeping with white women and black or biracial women from forming families with white plantation heirs (like Roth), Nancy’s act is a reverse example wherein a lower-class black woman polices the sexuality of an upper-class white woman—preventing her from leaving her family for a sexual union with a lower-class white man (48). Unlike the other examples I’ve discussed, the sexual policing at work in *Requiem* occurs from the bottom of society upwards as opposed to from the top down. Nancy is a poor black woman in the South, repeatedly characterized by Gowan and Temple as a “dope-fiend nigger whore” (55). She is not a beneficiary of colonial society; rather, her policing of sexuality seems to result

\(^{159}\) Doreen Fowler connects Faulkner’s *Requiem for a Nun* and Morrison’s *Beloved* through the authors’ refusal to “recoil from infanticide” and the shared plot device wherein “a mother or mother-surrogate kills an infant, not out of hate, but out of love” (139-40).
from her desire to protect the child and preserve Temple’s family unit, not from an investment in colonial hierarchies. Further, although Nancy claims her deed is for the children more so than Temple and Gowan, her action still results in the policing of Temple’s sexuality, re-inscribing the family ties that hold her and her subordinance to her husband. This example, and its variation on the traditional patterns of the sexual policing of the color line common to the U.S. South, shows both how class can be seen as standing in for race and the plurality of hierarchical colonial structures. Although the central focus of this chapter concerns the ways in which patterns of subjection in gender and race relations transitioned from the antebellum to neo-colonial South, this example shows how colonial mindsets also reify hierarchies of class, illustrating the resilience of a wide range of colonial ideologies.

Along the same lines, as argued above, the pattern of subjection present in the relations between Old Carothers, Eunice, and Tomasina is reproduced in the neo-colonial period through the relationship between Roth, his unnamed distant relative/lover, and his child—both of whom he forsakes. This dynamic is also repeated in the relations between Thomas Sutpen, Milly Jones, and her female newborn in *Absalom, Absalom!* (see Figure 1). Sutpen’s original design is destroyed when Henry Sutpen shoots his half-brother Charles Bon and must go into exile as a result, leaving Sutpen without a white male heir to inherit his Hundred. After he insults Miss Rosa, to whom he became engaged after his return from the Civil War (with some version of the offer that if they attempted to have a male child and were successful then he would marry her),

160 However, there is also a sense in which Nancy’s actions recall the trope, common in earlier U.S. Southern and Caribbean literature, of the good slave who sacrifices herself—often for her white family. One of the first instances of this trope is found in “Friendly Advice to the Gentlemen-Planters of the East and West Indies” (1684) (Thomas W. Krise, ed., *Caribbeana: An Anthology of English Literature of the West Indies, 1657-1777*). The trope of the good slave recurs in abolitionist literature throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and is perhaps most overt in Maria Edgeworth’s “Grateful Negro” published in 1804. I thank Nicole Aljoe for suggesting this connection.
Sutpen uses candy and ribbons to seduce fifteen-year-old Milly Sutpen, who is forty-six years his junior. When Milly’s child is a girl and not a boy, Sutpen discards her with the words: “Well, Milly; too bad you’re not a mare too. Then I could give you a decent stall in the stable,” which causes Wash Jones, Milly’s grandfather who raised her, to kill Sutpen with a scythe (Absalom, Absalom! 229). Some critics, such as Édouard Glissant have speculated that perhaps Faulkner “who hides as much as he dares to reveal, had hidden the fact—as Sutpen would have been able to hide it from the whole country, from everyone including Wash Jones—that Sutpen was Milly’s father, who, in his madness, decided to trust only his own bloodline to get the male heir he longed for…” (Faulkner, Mississippi 135). In this example, the pattern of subjection common to Old Carothers’s sexual relationship with his daughter Tomasina is reproduced but with class standing in for race. Here the body of a poor white girl stands in for a black girl or woman, and plantation hierarchies work to dehumanize a poor white girl in the same way that African Americans as a group were dehumanized through the system of slavery. Through the example of Milly Jones’s exploitation at the hands of Sutpen, as well as what can be read in Requiem for a Nun as Nancy’s policing of the class line, Faulkner underscores the multiplicity of neo-colonial configurations. In the postbellum and twentieth-century South, during which these two examples occur, the hierarchical mindsets which lay the foundation for colonial relations spiral out to affect every aspect of society: through race, gender, class, and color relations. By ending with these examples of poor whites standing in for black characters in the common patterns of subjection discussed above, I emphasize both the reach and negative consequences of

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161 As the opposite of miscegenation (exogamy), incest (endogamy) ensures that a genealogy will not suffer from the “taint” of racial difference. Glissant notes that this incest would not be uncharacteristic for Sutpen (see Figure 1), as he notes that for some time General Compson had believed that Bon’s child, brought to the plantation by the child’s biracial mother, was actually the son of Clytie (Sutpen’s daughter with one of his slaves) and Sutpen—a situation that would directly mirror that of Old Carothers, Eunice, and Tomasina (Faulkner, Mississippi 136).
colonial ideologies in the post-/neo-colonial era, during which no group in Faulkner’s South—as designated by race, gender, class, nationality, and sexual preference—is left unaffected.

Nevertheless, I argue that Faulkner’s novels illustrating the virality of colonial crimes—*Absalom, Absalom!; Go Down, Moses; Requiem for a Nun*—do more than just expose the negative impacts of colonialism on all aspects of society. Throughout the novels, Faulkner hints at other options in addition to the replication of destructive colonial relations, for example Bon’s fluid relationship to race and sexuality (described in Chapter 1), the fellowship created by Judith, Clytie, and Rosa when the men are away fighting in the Civil War, Dilsey’s preservation of the Gibson family in the face of societal upheaval, and although more controversial, Nancy’s act of infanticide. Moreover, Faulkner’s portrayals of consensual interracial relationships, such as those existing between Hubert Beauchamp and his nameless biracial cook, Carothers Roth Edmonds and his unnamed biracial relative, and also Charles Bon, Judith, and Henry Sutpen, have the potential to defy colonial hierarchies. Faulkner’s novels confront, rather than passively re-inscribe, colonial relations and mentalities in the post-/neo-colonial South through the inclusion of these depictions of resistance. Moreover, Faulkner is able to represent alternative ways of interacting and, as a result, to challenge the patterns of subjection and abuse ubiquitous in earlier eras.
Chapter 3: “It’s a colonial legacy to which we cling”: The Lingering Effects of Colonialism in Post-Independence Haitian Society as Depicted in Marie Vieux-Chauvet’s Love

Marie Vieux-Chauvet’s novella, Love, the first story of the triptych Love, Anger, Madness (1968), reveals that Haiti has been continually impacted by colonial hierarchies and ideologies in the post-/neo-colonial period. Indeed, Vieux-Chauvet portrays U.S. interventions in Haiti in the twentieth century, such as the military occupation of 1915-1934 and the financial interest in Haiti’s natural resources that continued after the occupation into François Duvalier’s regime (1957-1971), as neocolonial.¹⁶² Although much criticism on the novella has centered on Vieux-Chauvet’s purposeful collapse of the post-occupation (1934-1957) and Duvalier periods due to the neocolonial relationships central to both, I will focus on the way that the two eras recall the colonial period and the resulting effects on race and gender relations, sexuality, and individual subjectivities. In this way, Marie Vieux-Chauvet may be read as a Caribbean—and more specifically a Haitian—example of a writer who conflates epochs in order to highlight the colonial continuities between them. Consequently, Vieux-Chauvet’s work can be understood as extending the work of William Faulkner’s colonial critiques.

Twentieth-Century Haiti’s Neocolonial Inheritance in Marie-Vieux Chauvet’s Love

Since Christopher Columbus claimed the land that would become Haiti for Spain in the late fifteenth century, the island has had a tortuous colonial history (“The History that Created Haiti” 28). Originally a Spanish colony, the land was ceded to France in 1697 and became the

¹⁶² The term “neocolonial” can refer both to an era and a relationship; however, in this chapter it will be used to describe the relationship between Haiti and the United States in the twentieth century. The term “post-/neo-colonial” used in previous chapters will characterize the era.
French colony of Saint-Domingue (Dubois 18). In the late 1700s, Saint-Domingue was one of the most profitable pieces of land in the world (thanks to thriving sugar plantations), but also the most deadly: over the course of the colony’s history, as many as one million slaves were brought to the island to replenish those lost “at a murderous rate,” due to the harsh conditions (Dubois 4). These conditions led to the slave revolts that began in 1791 and to the abolition of slavery in 1794 (Dubois 5). Between 1794 and 1801, Saint-Domingue was nominally a French colony led by Touissant Louverture, until the country’s declaration of independence in 1804 (Dubois 5). As a result of this history, Haiti has been seen as “the symbolic heart of the colonized, pan-African world,” as well as “a symbol of anticolonial revolt,” and “the ‘first black republic’ in the New World” (Munro “Can’t Stand up for Falling down” 3). Although Haiti earns its place as a symbol of hope, freedom, and anticolonial rebellion, as elsewhere, Haiti did not fully shake off the bondage of colonial rule through the revolution. Colonialism continues to structure Haitian society, which as I will argue in this chapter, Marie Vieux-Chauvet’s Love exemplifies.

In the centuries since the revolution, Haiti continued to be affected by colonial hierarchies and relations. Almost immediately after Haiti abolished slavery and made white land ownership illegal, “mulatto offspring of former white landowners began to reclaim their land,” which along with the Code Rural,\(^{163}\) supplanted the white master class with an elite, light-skinned mulatto class (Matthews 253).\(^{164}\) Moreover, Haiti remained impacted by relationships with her former colonizers, such as France’s refusal to recognize her independence (and the indemnity imposed on Haiti) and the political isolation that resulted from England and the United

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\(^{163}\) According to Eric Williams, in addition to reinstituting slavery, the Code Rural “revived and stimulated the colour distinctions by which the mulatto regarded himself as the superior of the black man” (334, qtd. in Matthews 253).

\(^{164}\) While I typically prefer to employ the term “biracial” in such contexts, in this chapter, I will follow the scholars that I reference in referring to the third racial group in Haiti as the “mulatto class” or “mulâtres-aristocrates,” so as not to confuse the reader by switching back and forth.
States following suit (Dubois 5). In addition to France’s continued political, social, and economic influence on Haiti, British, German, and American gunships were known to “brazenly intervene in Haitian affairs” (Dubois 166). Haiti’s often unstable political situation—only four Haitian heads of state have served a full term without an internal coup, suicide, assassination, or execution—was justification for one of the most overt forms of neocolonialism in Haiti since the revolution: the United States military occupation of the island from 1915-1934 (“Haiti: The List,” http://www.northeastern.edu/haitinet/haiti-facts/). As a result, at the same time that Haiti is the first black republic, the island also “acts as a warning to Africa [and other colonized regions] of the dangers of perpetuating colonially-inherited race and class divisions in the postcolonial period,” as well as an example of the detrimental effects of neocolonial ties (Munro “Can’t Stand up for Falling down” 12).

Marie Vieux-Chauvet’s Love condemns “Haiti’s political, class, and social instabilities and contradictions in relation to patriarchy and racial elitism originating in French colonialism and worsened by intervention from the United States” (Lee-Keller 1294). In addition to Haitians’ adherence to the outmoded hierarchies and color distinctions remaining from the colonial era, Vieux-Chauvet recognizes that outside intervention, such as the United States’ interference in Haiti’s political and economic structures, is also responsible for Haiti’s inability to fully escape the effects of colonialism. According to David Nicholls, the importance placed on color distinctions has its “origin in the colonial era” (247) and thus should be traced to the

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165 In 1825 President Boyer accepted an indemnity to compensate France for loss of property suffered by the French planters through the Haitian Revolution in exchange for a recognition of independence (Dubois 99). As Laurent Dubois states, “[w]ith the indemnity, Haiti suddenly became a debtor nation, an unlucky pioneer of the woes of postcolonial economic dependence” (102).
166 As Eural Grant Jackson, a U.S. African American and New York public schools employee, observed a few months after Duvalier’s election, Haiti’s political and economic problems after 1934 were not necessarily the result of Haitian incompetence, but it was likely that the U.S. “failed to perform our supposed mission adequately while we were there” (as qtd. in Polyné 199).
colonizing nations of France and Spain and not seen as an inherently Haitian predicament. For instance, France instituted the Code Noir in 1685—a set of laws regulating the interactions between the different racial and class groups in part through surveillance—in Haiti and other French colonies, which was in large part responsible for the emphasis on color distinctions and racial hierarchies. In a similar way, the weight placed on race and class distinctions in the post-/neo-colonial setting of Vieux-Chauvet’s novel is imposed on Haiti by outsiders, exemplified in the representations of the U.S.’s direct meddling in Haitian politics and of colonial mentalities in the novella. Thus, Love depicts the United States’ intervention in Haiti in the twentieth century on different historical registers, exposing the colonial policies and mindsets that were maintained in the post-/neo-colonial era. Love not only critiques the adherence to the colonial hierarchies of race and class, but also recognizes the skewed relationship to gender and sexuality that colonialism often facilitates. This is represented in the novella in the policing of sexuality inherited from the Code Noir, sexual violence towards mulâtres-aristocrates, and the use of stereotypes to manage women and colonial subjects.

Scholars, such as Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw, assert that Love, Anger, Madness “paved the way for the modern novel in Haiti” and was “unquestionably revolutionary and courageous in its use of a first-person narrative that dared to say what others stifled” (40). Indeed, Vieux-Chauvet’s modern prose comes across in her focus on the interiorities of her characters, the breakdown of binaries, and the rejection of easy categorizations. Other critics, such as Ronnie Scharfman, have focused on Vieux-Chauvet’s “poetics of terror” and the ways in which her discourse “does violence to our reading habits by transgressing the pleasures of the text” (213). I

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167 Nicholls argues that much of Haiti’s political history “is to be seen as a struggle between a mulatto, city-based, commercial elite, and a black, rural and military elite” (8).
locate the novella within the modernist tradition but more specifically, along with Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Go Down, Moses*, within what Hosam Aboul-Ela refers to as the “poetics of peripheralization.” While both modernist techniques and the “poetics of peripheralization” produce “certain comparable narrative characteristics, they diverge in their attitude towards historiography,” as the latter’s focus on political history and economy differentiate it from modernism (Aboul-Ela 137). I argue that Vieux-Chauvet employs experimental techniques, such as fragmentation, the collapse of binaries, and a focus on split subjects and interiorities through stream-of-consciousness, for the purpose of questioning the colonial power structures that have remained in place from an earlier period and continue to affect the post-/neo-colonial present in a Haitian context. The residue of colonialism is visible in *Love* through the physical violence, sexual violence, and surveillance depicted, as well as the portrayal of the narrator’s racism towards the black race and fragmented subjectivity, all of which collapse the distance separating the colonial and post-/neo-colonial eras in Haitian history.

*Love* is set in 1939, four years after the almost twenty-year American occupation of Haiti, during the reign of Sténio Vincent. Vincent instituted vengeful policies against the mulâtres-aristocrates—a group that never fully accept him as their rightful leader (Munro “Avenging History” 34). The novella was written, however, in 1967 during the Duvalier regime, and many critics assert that it also evokes Haiti under François “Papa Doc” Duvalier, denouncing his

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168 As mentioned in the introduction, on one hand, the term “modernism” can broadly refer to the entire historical period of the early twentieth century, designating whatever was written between 1910 and 1945 (or 1890 and 1940 according to Raymond Williams) (Kaplan 41). More typically, however, modernism describes a highly specific collection of aesthetic practices and themes which are characteristic of only a small number of literary works, such as abstraction, discontinuity, shock, irony, experimentation, radical aesthetics, inquiry into the uncertainty of reality, skepticism, self-conscious reflexiveness, anti-bourgeois tendencies, and focus on the émigré/exile (Kaplan 41).

169 I am interested in Vieux-Chauvet’s depiction of this colonial inheritance but will approach it from the perspective of its manifestation in the racism and violence depicted in the novella itself, as opposed to through Vieux-Chauvet’s style and form.
regime in addition to Vincent’s (Lee-Keller 1293, Bell par. 1). The story is told through undated journal entries written by Claire Clamont, a dark-skinned member of the elite mulâtres-aristocrates who has raised her sisters, Annette and Félicia, and attempts to retain her family’s position in the years after the American Occupation (Vieux-Chauvet 110). Eventually an uprising is led by Jean Luze (Félicia’s white, French husband), a group of persecuted poets, and a few peasants against the dictator figure, Commandant Calêdu, and his cronies. Claire, in an uncharacteristic moment of action, stabs Calêdu in the novel’s closing scene. Vieux-Chauvet uses Claire to critique Haitian society through Claire’s treatment as a dark-skinned member of the mulatto class, her own racism towards members of the black race, and her distorted relationship to sexuality.

In Vieux-Chauvet’s novella, twentieth-century Haiti is portrayed as a neocolonial space that is controlled by outside forces, both in a direct way during the 1915-1934 U.S. occupation and less explicitly through the financial and military interference of the United States in the post-occupation period and François Duvalier’s rise to power, which began in the 1950s. Through its depiction of classism, sexism, and racism, Love reveals that both the post-occupation and Duvalier eras rely on the same colonial hierarchies of class, race, color, and gender and racist ideologies couched in paternalism that were foundational to the colonial period when Haiti was

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170 To a certain extent, Love can be seen as telling the story of the Haitian plantation heiress from her perspective, giving a voice to the figure of Eulalia Bon in Absalom, Absalom! through Claire’s narration, but with coffee standing in for sugar.

171 In Chapter 1, I argue that the U.S. South is a bivalent postcolonial space, as depicted in Faulkner’s Absalom, Absalom!. Additionally, U.S. Southerners played the role of the colonizer of the Haitian population during the U.S. occupation (Danticat x). The occupation has been described as President Woodrow Wilson (himself a Southerner) “carrying on a reign of terror, brow-beating, and cruelty, at the hands of Southern white naval officers and marines” (Danticat x). Some historians, such as Laurent Dubois, argue that there was a purposeful policy of dispatching marines from the U.S. South to Haiti “with the assumption that they would be particularly effective at controlling a black population” (Dubois 226). Thus, not only the U.S. more generally, but also the U.S. South (itself a colonized region) played a role in the colonization of Haiti at this time.
under French control—such as the regulation of social and sexual interactions under the Code Noir. In the first place, and most overtly, the United States military occupation of Haiti was colonialism by another name: “as soon as the marines landed in Haiti, Wilson’s administration shut down the press, took charge of Haiti’s banks and customs, and instituted a system of compulsory labor for poor Haitians,” and by the end of the occupation, more than 15,000 Haitians loss their lives (Danticat x). The occupation was an instance of neocolonialism due

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172 The paternalism that was used as justification for the system of slavery by the plantocracy in the U.S. South was utilized in a similar way to rouse support for the U.S. occupation of Haiti. This paternalism links the treatment of African Americans in the antebellum South to the treatment of Haitians during the occupation and underscores the continuities between the colonial and post-/neo-colonial periods. As Mary Renda states: “Paternalism, we might say, was the cultural flagship of the United States in Haiti,” since during the occupation, paternalist discourse was used to construct Haiti as “a nation orphaned by parental neglect,” sometimes positioning France as the neglectful father and Africa as a single mother (15-16). If this metaphor were to be extended into the post-/neo-colonial twentieth century, the U.S. would be the white surrogate father figure instructing the nascent black nation. I argue that the use of paternalism to portray Haitians as inept and unable to run their own country not only connects to the colonial U.S. South but also echoes attempts by European nations and the United States to depict Haiti in this way around the time of the Haitian Revolution. During this period, for example, the U.S., under Thomas Jefferson, refused to trade with Haiti, and France attempted to regain control and reinstitute slavery (Renda 29). Economic dependency on France was reestablished during the presidency of Jean-Pierre Boyer. Mary Renda observes that “[a]ttempts [by the U.S.] to influence Haiti may even be dated back to the revolutionary period” when merchants from the U.S. supplied arms to the rebels while the nation technically remained neutral towards Toussaint L’Ouverture’s government (29). Like racism and social stratification, American interference, the mindset of Haitians as incompetent, and paternalism remain from the colonial period.

173 The abuses of the corvée and the overall violent, exploitative atmosphere exacerbated the conflict between the U.S. Marines and Haitian citizens and resulted in the revolt of the Cacos under Charlemagne Péraulte, who had himself escaped from forced labor in Le Cap (Dubois 248). In addition to revolt, the U.S. occupation had the unintended consequence of causing racial unity to take precedence over color division, which David Nicholls argues had not happened in Haiti since the struggle against the French in 1802-1803 (254). Nicholls claims that it was “not until the period of the United States occupation that race [as opposed to color] became a divisive factor in Haiti itself,” but also that the 1920s saw increasing solidarity among Haitians in response to the occupation (82, 142). According to Nicholls, “the clumsy actions of the Americans, who insisted on treating all Haitians of whatever colour as ‘niggers’, contributed to this growing solidarity,” as the Americans inadvertently succeeded where Dessalines had failed—uniting Haitians of different hues under the label “black” for a short period (142). Thus, the colonialism packaged as friendly and necessary although paternalistic intervention bestowed by U.S. marines upon Haiti at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century spurred the same effect as European colonialism in Haiti in the eighteenth century: revolt and revolution. While Péraulte and the Cacos ultimately did not succeed in sending the troops home (in part due to the U.S. military’s employment of new technology, such as aerial bombardment), the revolutionary spirit continued after their defeat in the form of mass student uprisings launched from the Damien school and strikes around the country (Dubois 258, 265). In 1929, a marine detachment fired machines guns into the crowd when fifteen hundred rural residents marched on Les Cayes (Dubois 266). The Cayes massacre proved that Haitians were uniting across class, color, and region in opposition to U.S. forces and led to international censure of the occupation (Renda 34). This event marked the beginning of the end of the occupation, and it forced President Hoover to appoint a commission to review the general situation in Haiti, which recommended withdrawal (Renda 34).
to the economic dispossession, brutally enforced labor system, violence, and sexual violence employed as tools of control, all of which are central to Vieux-Chauvet’s portrayal of

U.S. troops left Haiti in 1934, leading Haiti’s “political leaders [to proclaim] that 1934 was their country’s ‘Second Independence’” (Dubois 266).

If colonialism traditionally is considered to be the pillaging of the periphery and the removal of resources, from raw materials and minerals to literary texts, to the core, then the arrival of U.S. marines and their removal of $500,000 worth of gold (the equivalent of $11 million dollars today) belonging to the Haitian government to New York (which Laurent Dubois goes as far as to call “international armed robbery”) positions the American occupation similarly from day one (Dubois 204). The United States took control of Haiti’s national bank through this raid and the processes leading up to it, such as the purchase of a majority share from the French by two U.S. banks in 1909 (Dubois 205). Moreover, a number of U.S. companies gained government contracts for agricultural and infrastructure projects in Haiti, such as banana plantations and railroads (Dubois 207). This threatened the autonomy of rural residents by supplanting their local way of life—growing coffee, harvesting wood for export, and cultivating livestock—with “monoculture plantation production for export” (Dubois 208). The financial dispossession wreaked by the U.S. occupation not only occurred on the grand scale of the national bank, but also affected the everyday lives of the Haitian peasants, the latter of which is detailed in Vieux-Chauvet’s Love. While the plight of the mulâtres-aristocrates in the post-occupation era is the central focus of the novel, the struggles of the peasants are present in the background. An American business man, with the support of the town’s commandant and prefect behind him, forces the peasants to sell the trees in their forests to an American company at a negligible price. The harvesting of this lumber will result in the erosion of their land. Although the peasants are aware of the reality of their predicament, hunger forces them to sell: “[The peasants] are weak with the white men and the bourgeois. Here comes the rain again and our land is finished. The American is getting rich and the others with him. They are all against us” (46). Their dire situation is taken advantage of by their own government representatives, as well as the American company, which plans to doctor the books to show that it paid the peasants three times more for the wood than it had (74).

The revival of the corvée system by the U.S. marines reinstated an exploitative labor system reminiscent of the slave system of the colonial period. The Code Rural instituted by President Jean-Pierre Boyer in 1826, which Eric Williams states “was the restoration of slavery, minus the whip” and “made of Haiti two nations,” had remained on the books but had not been enforced since Boyer’s presidency (334). Article 54 of the 1864 Code Rural gave the government the power to conscript men to labor on public work projects, which the U.S. marines took advantage of, forcing rural residents to work as road-building crews as early as 1916 at the start of the occupation (Dubois 239). Although the corvée was described as humane on paper, in reality workers were forced to work under armed guard, tightly roped together, not given enough to eat, and “frequently shot” (Dubois 239-43). Parallels may be seen here not only to slavery itself, but also the neocolonial convict lease system instituted in the Southern United States after Emancipation. While the corvée system itself is not directly portrayed in Love, the forced labor of the peasants on coffee plantations, such as the Clamont’s Lion Mountain, is depicted in a similar manner. The price paid for coffee is so low that the peasants do not make enough money to feed their children. The peasants have the illusion of mobility and the freedom to leave for different coffee plantation but the wages are fixed by the management throughout the region, preventing the peasants from improving their lot (93).

Violence has always been central to the systems of colonialism and slavery and played a particularly large role in the U.S. occupation of Haiti. Mary Renda notes that violence in Haiti had been “couched as discipline,” but also that the fiction “of paternalism unraveled in the ‘excesses’ of violence that attended the corvée” (55, 139). The use of violence and the indiscriminate killings by the marines in Haiti were framed by some, such as Captain John Houston Craige, as unique instances of specific officers losing their “emotional and mental balance” (Renda 132). Others, like Lieutenant Colonel Harold Utley, pointed to the “institutional and systemic side of military violence” as a marine corps tactic (Renda 133). While both of these characterizations may have been accurate on different occasions depending on the players involved, it is clear that violence towards Haitians was an accepted if not encouraged aspect of the military occupation. Private Faustin Wirkus, whose story was loosely the basis for William Seabrook’s The Magic Island and Wirkus’s own account The White King of La Gonave, described orders he
Haiti. For instance, Vieux-Chauvet depicts rape and sexual abuse as tactics of terror reminiscent of the colonial period. During the occupation, the sexual abuse of Haitian women by U.S. marines was the norm and created “an atmosphere in which rape would go unrecognized, unnamed, and, of course, unpunished” (Renda 163). The lingering effects of this atmosphere are adeptly described in the novella, where the representatives of the Haitian government, who succeeded the U.S. marines, avenge their own past color discrimination through the torture-rape of women of the mulâtres-aristocrates, such as Dora Soubiran, to be explored in more detail below. As was the case with the use of unnecessary violence, the paternalism cited as a reason for the occupation falls apart when the rampant instances of sexual violence towards Haitian

received that any dark skinned person, who could be a Caco sympathizer (the Cacos were insurgents who “maintained an armed resistance in the countryside” against the American occupation for several years) outside after nine at night should be “shot on sight by the patrol” if he doesn’t surrender (Renda 4, 10, Dubois 226). Both Renda and Dubois rightly point out the tension between simultaneously shooting someone on sight and giving him a chance to surrender, as well as the fact that rural farmers were indistinguishable from the Cacos or Caco supporters, making this a more treacherous order than it may sound. Another example of excessive violence is seen in the marines’ policy of burning down entire villages—including houses, chapels, crops—if even a single shot was fired in their direction, as occurred in the villages of Bertol and Dupity (Dubois 227). This type of unwarranted violence was sanctioned by the military and should be seen as the rule, not the exception during the American occupation. Both the violence of the occupation and the violence authorized by the Haitian government in the subsequent decades are central to the Claire’s portrayal of her anonymous town of X in Love, creating the backdrop of a community shrouded in terror. The screams from the jail linger in the background of daily interactions, and citizens are murdered in cold blood for acting out or challenging those in power. This occurs, for example, at the Feast of the Virgin Procession where Jacques Marti is shot at point-blank range by Calédu in front of the whole town for calling the commandant “a demon” and “Satan” (what is seen by the community as the rantings of a “madman”) (41). The military occupation of Haiti is “one of several important arenas in which the United States was remade through overseas imperial ventures in the first third of the twentieth century,” as neocolonial intervention also occurred in Puerto Rico, Cuba, Nicaragua, China, and the Philippines among other places (Renda 12).

In alignment with racialized understandings of sexual abuse in the U.S., marines, such as Captain Craig, were of the belief that Haitian women were “of easy virtue” and incapable of denying a sexual advance, echoing the detrimental stereotype of black women as hypersexual used to alleviate white guilt for the systematic rape of black women in plantation society (Dubois 235, Renda 163). Women were not the only victims; young girls were not spared from the rapacious appetites of the marines. According to Reverend S. E. Churchstone-Lord, the American pastor of an African Methodist Episcopal Church in Port-au-Prince, in one night alone in Bisquet region of the city, nine young girls between eight and twelve years old died as a result of the raping of American marines (Renda 163). The pastor reported that the white officers of the Gendarmerie were also involved in the sexual abuse of Haitian women, persuading native gendarmes to bring women to them who would serve as concubines (Renda 163).
women at the hands of the American military and later Haitian government officials are considered, revealing the more accurately neocolonial motivations.\textsuperscript{179}

Marie Vieux-Chauvet’s portrayal of twentieth-century Haiti as neocolonial can be most explicitly seen in the portrayal of Commandant Calédu’s armed beggars as representative of Duvalier’s regime. Although they are not directly referred to as Tonton Macoutes\textsuperscript{180} in the novella, the brutality of Calédu’s gang of beggars is echoed in the violence of the former.\textsuperscript{181} Further, while Calédu himself (whose name in Creole means one who hits or beats hard) is not a direct depiction of Duvalier, critics have recognized him as symbolic of Papa Doc: both are cruel, megalomaniacal dictators with color and class issues (Dayan 234, Scharfman 231, Walcott-Hackshaw 49).\textsuperscript{182} For instance, Joan Dayan argues that what “begins as the most personal of memoirs ends up a chronicle of Haiti as Duvalier consolidates his totalitarian state” and that Calédu “is obviously a figure for the dread tonton-macoutes, Duvalier’s personal

\textsuperscript{179} Further, although not as clear-cut an example of intervention as the occupation, U.S. involvement in Haitian affairs revived in the form of money and military training during Duvalier’s rise to power. Duvalier, whose reign was referred to by Millery Polyné as “one of the most notorious authoritarian governments in the hemisphere,” was not above seeking paternalistic aid from the U.S. (179). After his victory in the 1956 presidential election, Duvalier publicized his hope for Haiti to “become the ‘spoiled child of the United States, with the help of American capital’” (Dubois 334). As if in answer to his prayers, direct financial aid began to flow from the United States, and by 1961, $13.5 million was given to Haiti, making up about half of the Haitian budget (Dubois 335). Additionally, the U.S. provided military aid and training to Duvalier’s regime (Dubois 335).

\textsuperscript{180} The name Tonton Macoutes or Makouts comes from a character in Haitian folktales known to carry naughty children away in his makout or bag (Dubois 312). As Laurent Dubois notes, the name expressed the way the Tonton Macoutes “lurked somewhere between reality and nightmarish imagination” (312). Like Calédu’s army of beggars, the Tonton Macoutes were primarily recruited from the urban poor (Dayan 234).

\textsuperscript{181} The firepower and skill of both the Haitian army and the Tonton Macoutes were turned against Haitian citizens. Duvalier’s “paramilitary force, the \textit{tonton makouts}, did not discriminate or brutalize Haitians based on color or class”—everyone was a potential victim (Polyné 203). Papa Doc’s cruelty was legendary and his violence has been described as limitless (Polyné 203), as is seen in Vieux-Chauvet’s novel, where everyone from beggars to the former aristocracy is vulnerable.

\textsuperscript{182} This correlation may be seen as part of the reason that Vieux-Chauvet’s friends were adamant that her text not be published in Haiti. Her husband bought up the rights to the book, and divorce followed (Dayan 228).
henchmen” (234). Thus, although Vieux-Chauvet veils the critique through the 1939 postoccupation setting, U.S. intervention and the Duvalier regime’s oppressive policies are evoked and condemned in the novel, as well as the sexism, racism, and social stratification that had been a fixture of Haitian society since the colonial era (Danticat xi). The entwined settings of Marie Vieux-Chauvet’s Love elucidate the similarities—such as racism, physical violence, sexual violence, and surveillance—both the U.S. occupation and Duvalier’s dictatorship share with the colonial period, conflating historical eras in order to symbolically underscore continuities of colonialism.

Surveillance and Sexuality: The Lingering Effects of the Code Noir on Vieux-Chauvet’s Twentieth-Century Haiti

As described in Chapter 2, sexuality can be seen as a particular articulation of the neocolonial relationship. Therefore, the rampant sexual abuse common to the U.S. Occupation and Duvalier periods and the drive to control women and sexuality during both periods can be said to not only express neocolonial relations but also highlight the connections between the colonial and post-/neo-colonial eras.  

Sander Gilman connects the racial control over natives established during the colonial period to the drive to control women and sexuality, which can be seen both in the use of sexual stereotypes and the dismissal of female subjectivities as “mad,” as will be explored in detail

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183 Scharfman notes that Calédu represents Duvalier’s regime as “one that imprisons mulatto women from the bourgeoisie in order to torture them, whipping their genitalia, while screaming furiously…” (231). Walcott-Hackshaw states: “Calédu is the gorilla of Amour, Chauvet’s representative of the Duvalier regime” (49).

184 As Lee-Keller observes: “If the unending political strife in Haiti is understood as the continual and unfinished process of decolonization, the conflicting and excruciating racial, political, and social conditions endured by Haitian women cannot be understood as a political anomaly, but as the logical consequences of colonialism” (1297). In other words, the conditions of Haitian women result directly from colonial policies and mindsets.
More specifically, sexual control of the natives in the French American colonies can be traced back to the Code Noir, the set of comprehensive laws that established the standing and status of slaves (Arlyck 37). While the Code Noir was not always upheld, it was an attempt to regulate the social conditions of slavery, specifically detailing the status of slaves, the interactions between slaves and masters, and the punishments applied if either party should not act according to the code. For example, the Code Noir states that if a free man has children with a slave concubine, he is to be fined two thousand pounds of sugar and if the woman is his own slave, she and her child are to be sent to work at the local hospital, remaining perpetual slaves (Riddell 323). If the offending father marries the slave within the rites of the Church, however, she and her offspring are freed and the children become legitimate (Riddell 323). As Gilman notes, the laws place “great emphasis on the control of the slave as a sexual object, both in terms of permitted and forbidden contact, as well as by requiring documentation as to the legal status of the offspring of slaves,” thereby making control of that sexuality an official or national project (231). I turn to the Code Noir in this section as an example of a colonial policy that relied on surveillance and the policing of sexuality in order to instate colonial hierarchies of race, gender, and class by regulating the interactions of individuals. Indeed, I argue that the policing of

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185 From the perspective of the patriarchy, those who need control include “the ‘unmanageable,’ the Other: white women, slaves of both sexes, and the colonies” (Renk 8). Renk notes that dual management discourses developed simultaneously out of the family myth of the nineteenth century: “the discourses of paternal surveillance of the madwoman and the moral guidance of the colonies following slave emancipation” (90). This supports my argument that the pathologization of women was a tactic of control related to those used by the colonies to contain the formerly enslaved population.

186 I credit Nicole Aljoe with this observation.
sexuality and interracial sex seen in Marie Vieux-Chauvet’s novella originates with the Code Noir, which was instated to work towards similar ends: controlling the sexuality of others.\textsuperscript{187}

Ideologies of race, gender, and class within the French empire were not constructed once and frozen in time but have been constructed and reconstructed continually over the centuries.\textsuperscript{188} Thus, this emphasis on surveillance and the regulation of sexuality and behavior is something else passed from the French colonial period of the Code Noir to later decades in distinct but still recognizable forms, which can be seen during both the U.S. occupation and François Duvalier’s regime, described above.\textsuperscript{189} The transmission of the surveillance central to the Code Noir to later periods shows the degree to which this ideology was embedded in Haitian society during the colonial era and the far-reaching network of its effects. I trace this surveillance and regulation of behavior, and, specifically for my purposes, the policing of sexuality, that occurs during the contemporary period in the novel back to the colonial period in order to illuminate the effects of colonial ideologies not only on the individual level (as I explore in relation to the novella’s narrator, Claire Clamont) but also on a broader, collective scale.

The Code Noir’s emphasis on surveillance and the policing of the interactions between slaves and masters may be seen as the historical precursor to the observation and regulation of others’ behavior depicted in the multilayered setting of \textit{Love}. As such, the policing of sexuality in Vieux-Chauvet’s novel, such as spying on the every move of others from one’s window,

\textsuperscript{187} Not only the general control of both women and the colonized but also the “regulation of sexual relations was central to the development of particular kinds of colonial settlements and to the allocation of economic activity within them” (Stoler, \textit{Carnal Knowledge}, 47, emphasis mine).
\textsuperscript{188} I thank Laura Prieto for this insight.
\textsuperscript{189} For example, during the occupation, armed patrols enforced the “Marine-imposed curfew,” confiscated arms from Haitians, and collected intelligence about where potential revolutionaries lived through surveillance (Renda 83). Moreover, the suppression of any form of dissent was central to the reign of François Duvalier through his “ever-widening web of repression and terror” and the notion that he had eyes everywhere due to his Tonton Macoutes, or as they were officially known “National Security Volunteers” (Dubois 327-8).
gossip, and preoccupation with other people’s business, is reminiscent of similar policing in the Code Noir. Like the Code Noir, Commandant Calédu seeks to regulate interpersonal relationships and so requires surveillance. The novella’s narrator Claire, a dark-skinned member of the typically light-skinned mulâtres-aristocrates, cannot visit her childhood friend Dora Soubiran, who has been ostracized after her torture-rape at the hands of Commandant Calédu, without the rest of her community knowing it. As Scharfman notes, the streets of Claire’s town are empty but everyone sees and knows everything: “The whole town watches, posted behind windows, curtains, shutters. The other is there, s/he is watching me, but never to share anything. S/he is there, threatening to denounce me without me knowing” (234). The inhabitants of the town do not know exactly when eyes are on them, but there is always the potential that they are being watched closely, and they must regulate their behavior accordingly. Claire is caught up in this system of surveillance. She herself spies on the interactions of others in many instances: for example she watches the uprising led by Jean Luze and Joël Marti from her window, before she participates in it—arguably in one of her less lucid moments—by stabbing Calédu (155).

Moreover, sexuality in particular is policed so severely in Claire’s town that even sexless encounters are sexualized by the community. The quasi-paternal bond shared between Tonton Mathurin (a black man) and Agnès Grandupré (a young mulâtre-aristocrate) is sexualized both by Agnès’s parents and by their neighbors. Claire’s parents state that Claire is not to play with Agnès anymore because “[s]he’s a nasty little girl who goes to old Mathurin’s house behind her

\[190\] Claire wonders: “Is it like that everywhere? Are there towns in the world like this one, half mired in ancestral habits, people spying on each other?” (4). Edwidge Danticat notes that Claire’s unnamed town of X could “stand in for many Haitian towns,” which implies that this surveillance is endemic to small Haitian towns (xi).

\[191\] This portrayal calls to mind Michel Foucault’s description of Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon, an “architectural apparatus [that] should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it,” in which power must be visible yet unverifiable (201). As in the Panopticon, the inhabitants of Claire’s town are potentially monitored at all times, as it is not possible for them to determine when the eyes of others are on them.
parents’ back” (89). Licentiousness is seen as transmittable by Claire’s parents, who assert that Mathurin lives in sin and “sin is contagious” (89). As a result, they also sexualize Claire’s encounters with Agnès: “Who? How many times have you seen her? What did she tell you? What have you done together?” (90, emphasis added). This form of the sexual policing of the community by its own members is sanctioned in the novella, as it is committed not only by lay people, but also by clergy members like Father Paul. Father Paul interrogates Claire as to why she visits the home of Jane Bavière, another woman shunned by the community as a result of her bearing a child out of wedlock. Father Paul tells Claire: “I don’t need to tell you these visits worry your sister and that she’s the one who alerted me. I hope there is nothing untoward in your relations with Jane Bavière,” and later, “Life has denied you certain pleasures, my child; try not to seek them in sin” (132). Although Father Paul insinuates otherwise, the friendship between Claire and Jane, like that between Old Mathurin and Agnès, does not have a sexual component. Nonetheless, in addition to interracial interactions, intragender relations are also policed by the community.

In the same way that consensual interracial relationships, for example both Roth Edmonds’s and Hubert Beauchamp’s liaisons in *Go Down, Moses* described in Chapter 2, challenge colonial hierarchies, “queer egalitarianism,” which includes both homosexual and homosocial relationships, “marks the limits of the plantation myth by presenting an image of interpersonal relations not distorted by any kind of power differential” (Bibler 4). Therefore, consensual intragender relationships, like that between Claire and Jane, are more of a threat to the colonial order, due their dismantling of hierarchical associations, than exploitative relations

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192 In *Anger*, one of the character wonders: “If God exists, could it be that He spies on His creatures the way this old woman [an elderly neighbor] does?” extending the priest in *Love’s* stake in surveillance all the way to God himself (178).
that reinforce such hierarchies, like Calédu’s violent rape of Dora. The policing of sexuality and other relationships in the community—particularly of interracial or intragender pairings as in the cases of Old Mathurin and Agnès, and Claire and Jane—is an attempt by the community to maintain colonial hierarchies and the status quo. This impulse originated with the Code Noir yet continues unchecked in the post-/neo-colonial period in this novella.\textsuperscript{193}

Given her longing for intimacy and a child—she envies the ostracized Jane and at one point expresses her wish to switch places with a prostitute whom she describes as young, beautiful, and free—Claire may have made different sexual choices if not for the prying, damning eyes of her community (38). Along with racism towards blacks, she has internalized her community’s rules concerning sexual conduct and appropriate pairing, and admits: “For fear of a scandal, I have repressed an ocean of love within me” (25). This phrase “fear of a scandal” is repeated elsewhere in the novel, highlighting its centrality not only for Claire but also for the community on which she reports to the reader.\textsuperscript{194} Claire notes that it was “for fear of scandal” that her sister Félicia agreed to reconcile with her other sister, Annette, and that if vivacious Madame Audier, a fellow mulâtres-aristocrate, settled solely for her husband, “it was only for fear of scandal” (56, 57). The collective fear of a scandal in Claire’s community connects to the fear of the loss of colonial order among its former beneficiaries—the mulâtres-aristocrates. The private, public, and national are inextricably linked, as revealed by the rampant anxiety about keeping the private out of the public, and in this way, the fear of a scandal functions as a

\textsuperscript{193} This regulation of sexuality, particularly of what the community would deem non-normative sexuality, connects to the situation of Charles Bon in \textit{Absalom, Absalom!} whose relations were heavily policed due to their interracial and intragender components. In both Faulkner’s novel and \textit{Love}, heteronormative relationships are not monitored as closely as atypical coupleings. For example, it is revealed that Jean Luze and Fèlicia conceived Jean-Claude before they were married, a scandal of which the town was not aware.

\textsuperscript{194} Ronnie Scharfman notes that the terror of scandal and the hypocrisy and cowardice that result are some of the most important themes linking the triptych (230).
successor to the policing properties of the Code Noir. In other words, colonial values are dispersed among the community at large, which then tries to impose them in the private sphere in order to control the behavior of individuals, as seen most overtly in the example of the Code Noir. As part of the mulâtre-aristocrate community, Claire adheres to the principles regulating sexuality purely for decorum’s sake, resulting in her abstinence and to an extent in her alienation, her obsession with sexuality, and her at times irrational behavior, which one scholar, Hellen Lee-Keller, has gone so far as to label her “madness.” As I’ll examine in the final section of this chapter through the example of Claire’s repressed sexuality, the regulation of the individual by the community through the fear of scandal helps to maintain colonial ideologies, including gender, sexuality, class, and race (the latter of which I will turn to next), at the personal and the collective levels in the post-/neo-colonial period.

Racism and Social Stratification: Colonial Remnants in the Post-Independence Period

The collective fear of a scandal and policy of surveillance inherited from the Code Noir exposes the centrality of not only the lingering effects of the colonial system on sexuality and gender relations, but also racial categorization and the cycles of racial violence, as well as their interrelation. Before further developing my discussion of Haiti’s colonial inheritance through describing the novella’s critique of racial hierarchies, I will define race as I conceive of it in this chapter. In his essay, “The Social Construction of Race,” Ian Haney Lopez develops the idea that race is not based on biological fact but is “a social phenomenon…Race is neither an essence nor an illusion, but rather an ongoing, contradictory, self-reinforcing, plastic process subject to the macro forces of social and political struggle and the micro effects of daily decisions” (Lopez 195 I credit Elizabeth Hopwood with these insights about the relation between the public and the private.)
For Lopez, race is constructed through social codes that only make sense relationally and have no meaning independent from other racial categories (971). The mulâtres-aristocrates in Vieux-Chauvet’s depiction of Haiti construct themselves as a racial group in relation to the black and white races. While the mulâtres-aristocrates exist as a separate racial group in Haiti, this was not the case in the United States where according to the one-drop rule, “all persons of African ancestry were lumped together as Negro both socially and legally,” as we saw in the case of Charles Bon and his trace of African ancestry in Chapter 1 (Mohammed 36-7). Specific racial groups and their relation to others were conceived of differently according to various cultures. For example, historian Martha Hodes describes how in the U.S., “‘mulatto’ lay closer to ‘black,’ [yet] in the British West Indies, those labeled ‘colored’ could be counted closer to white” (105). Races and the comparative positioning of them are not standardized across cultural or national boundaries, which supports the existence of race as a social construct as opposed to biological fact.

Furthermore, in his presentation of race as socially constructed, Lopez asserts that there are “no genetic characteristics possessed by all Blacks but not by non-Blacks, there is no gene or cluster of genes common to all Whites but not to non-Whites…The data compiled by various scientists demonstrate, contrary to popular opinion, that intra-group differences exceed inter-group differences” (967). Over the centuries, scholars have nevertheless attempted to fasten race to genetics and skin color and even tried to prove, through the use of scientific racism or racial anthropology, that the black and white races are different species (Mohammed 23). However, as Lopez argues, the grouping of individuals into races according to skin color does not always

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196 Although in America, the term “colored” is understood as an outmoded term for black, it is defined as another word for mulatto or mixed race in the British West Indies.
hold; for example, the white race includes the light-skinned people of Western Europe, yet excludes the fair-skinned people of Northern China and Japan (967). Claire Clamont herself is evidence of this, as her skin color (black) conflicts with her racial group and class (light-skinned mulâtress-aristocrate), which, as I will return to, accounts in large part for her alienation and fragmented identity. As Lopez states, race is not an illusion (966). The ramifications of this social construct are very real, which is shown through the mulatto racism as both internalized by Claire and displayed more overtly against black characters in the novel.

The racism depicted in the novella differs from the racism traditionally seen in the United States where race adheres to the strict binary division “built on the polar categories of ‘black’ and ‘white,’ with American Indians and Asian immigrants occupying a place outside of that central duality” (Hodes 88). Due to the more fluid conception of race in the Caribbean that resulted from the succession of dominant European cultures in the Caribbean, including the Mediterranean cultures of France and Spain, the mulatto race in Haiti “represents historically a class of racialized identity that is neither black nor white but distinct” (Saldívar 104-105). Thus, the racism portrayed by Vieux-Chauvet in *Love* is specifically that of a distinct mulatto racial group towards the black race. The antipathy of the mulatto towards the black race can be characterized as “colorism”; however, I will refer to it as racism, as this chapter argues that the mulatto class functions as a distinct race in Haiti.

While early in Haiti’s history, Jean-Jacques Dessalines “decreed that all Haitians would ‘henceforth only be known generically as blacks,’” (Dubois 43) historically there has been a

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197 This division is also associated with the geography of Haiti, as there has historically been a large population of landowning free people of color in the south and a strong black population in the north. This is illustrated by the rulers who took over the country after Dessalines’ assassination: Henri Christophe, a black man who had a loyal following in the nation’s army and the north and the mulatto army officer Alexandre Pétion, the son of a white man and free women of color, who ruled in the south (Dubois 54-55).
division between a mulatto commercial and a black military elite, a separation which developed from the caste distinctions of the colonial era (Nicholls 8). This aversion is central to Vieux-Chauvet’s novella, in which we see the formerly elite mulâtres-aristocrates in conflict with a black military elite represented by Commandant Calédu. While historically black and mulatto Haitians acknowledged that they belonged to the black race, they often denied the “objective significance” of this fact, arguing that the human races were equal and did not differ in any important way (Nicholls 1-2). Before the 1770s-1780s, old colonial biracial families who usually owned property and slaves were classified as white, but after this time they were considered nonwhite, causing a dramatic growth in the free population of color (Garrigus 144). Therefore, it was not until the 1770s-1780s that race supplanted social class as a defining feature of local relationships, and the separation of the upper mulatto class from the upper white class became significant (Garrigus 53). This shows the ways in which understandings of race and class in Haiti are fluid—constructed and reconstructed over time. However, I argue that even while conceptions of race changed from the colonial era into the post-/neo-colonial period, certain patterns and relationships remained, such as the tension between the need to join together as Haitians to combat foreign interference (symbolized in the novella by the U.S. marines and later by Mr. Long’s American export company) or to dominate each other in the nation’s political and economic spheres.

Moreover, the racism between the black and mulatto groups is entwined with classism, as in general both the white and mulatto races compose the upper class in Haiti, while the black

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198 Historians, such as David Nicholls, have seen this hostility between the black and mulatto racial groups in Haiti as to blame for the vulnerability of the nation to foreign intervention (1).
199 David Nicholls explores this tension in From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti.
race remains impoverished. Throughout most of Haitian history, the mulatto class has been able to “concentrate a great deal of the country’s wealth and a disproportionate share of the country’s political power,” but in Love this position is endangered by the rise of a movement based on black power (Bell par. 4). In the words of one observer commenting on racial interaction in Jamaica, “the antagonism between the brown and the black is greater than that of either against the white,” which, as the novella exemplifies, is also the case in Haiti (Hodes 104). For example, the Clamont family is pleased by Félicia’s decision to marry Jean Luze, a Frenchman, but balks at Annette’s engagement to Paul Trudor, a black man. As a result of the racial stratification in Haiti and the status of Paul’s nouveau riche family, this reaction encompasses both racism and classism, which are intimately related in Haitian society and at times indistinguishable.

The Europeans are portrayed as returning the affection of the mulâtres-aristocrates in the text, and according to Mme Camuse, this circle of fondness stemmed from the colonial period: “The Europeans adore us. I’ve heard that back in colonial times, Frenchmen deserted their wives for the beautiful mulatto girls” (Vieux-Chauvet 79). Mme Camuse’s statement about the white colonizers’ preference for mulatto women should not be dismissed as mere arrogance but is supported by Patricia Mohammed’s scholarship examining the position of the mulatto woman as desired in different Caribbean societies. Mohammed asserts that “the conditions of the past may have influenced ideas and constructions of desire,” which she traces back to the colonial period

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200 This fact opened the way for François Duvalier to use noiriste ideology to acquire the backing of the black middle class in the Port-au-Prince and win the presidency (Nicholls 209). In his campaign addresses, Duvalier praised the army and the “dignity of peasant life,” and promised to raise the wages of the lower classes—pledges which did not reflect the policies of his regime (Nicholls 210-211).

201 This corresponds historically with the rise of the noiriste movement during the 1930s in Haiti, which “emphasized Haiti’s African past” (Nicholls 167). Nevertheless, Madison Smartt Bell notes that although Vieux-Chauvet sets the story in 1939, this power reversal “resembles nothing so much as the Duvalier regime” (par. 5).
Through her reading of various historical documents and texts, such as Michael Scott’s *Tom Cringle’s Log* and the diary of Lady Nugent, Mohammed confirms the positive relations that have existed and continue to exist between white men and mulatto women. Martha Hodes expands upon this argument, asserting that white people generally treated both mulatto women and men better than black people, since “it was in their interest as a numerical minority to keep colored [or mulatto] people on their side” (96). Therefore, while they were not ultimately considered equals by the white population, “a well-to-do, educated, and mostly light-skinned faction among the colored classes [such as the mulâtres-aristocrates in Haiti] allied itself with whites and was permitted entry into white society” (Hodes 96). Hodes’s research supports the fact that upper-class mulatto men, along with the “desired” mulatto women, were treated with a certain amount of respect by the white race, which was absent from their interactions with the black race. This accounts for the “affection” described by Mme Camuse as existing between the two groups. By treating the mulatto race as an ally, white people prevented the black and mulatto races from banding together against the whites, as occurred during the Haitian Revolution. Although the relationship between the mulâtres-aristocrates and the white former colonizers is depicted in a positive light in the novella, the relations between the mulâtres-aristocrates and the black race remain hostile, even after the colonial period.

While racism and classism are intertwined in Haitian society, I will focus specifically on racism and its overt depiction in Claire’s narration. Epithets, such as “these black imbeciles” and “that awful little negress,” are used without a second thought by Claire and the other women of

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202 Mohammed argues that the present-day affirmation of mulatto desirability found in Jamaican dancehall music, such as Buju Banton’s “Love Me Browning,” has been inherited from the past.
her class (18, 30). Félicia’s reaction to her sister Annette’s engagement illustrates the ingrained nature of mulatto racism in this society:

‘A black man! A black man in our family. And one of the lowest sort! Can you believe this?’

‘My God!’ Jean Luze said, stroking her hair indulgently, ‘there is no need to get worked up about this.’

‘It’s not so much the color of his skin that I mind, but his vulgarity and especially his father,’ she stammered, a little ashamed of herself. (71)

In this example, Félicia is clearly dismayed at the thought of allowing a black man into her family, but her racism is mitigated by her white husband who insists that it is of little consequence, resulting in her feeling vaguely ashamed. While Félicia claims that her reaction relates to class after detecting her husband’s disapproval of her attitude, her more tempered response does little to mask the fact that it was Paul’s blackness and not his nouveau riche status that precipitated her initial reaction. Jean Luze’s reply to his wife’s overt racism confirms the view that the antipathy between the black and mulatto races is worse than between either group and the white race—another remnant from the colonial period. The heightened hostility between the black and mulatto races remains from the inferiority complex imposed by colonialism which caused colonized peoples to simultaneously reject and unconsciously internalize what they had been told about their own moral, intellectual, and physical failings (Munro “Hatred Chérie” 163). As Martin Munro writes “even if [the colonized] manifest an outward contempt for the oppressor, they nurture at the same time an impregnable core of antipathy towards themselves and ‘their people’” (“Hatred Chérie” 163). I argue that this self-hatred is present in the relations between the mulatto and black races in the novella and differentiates the mulatto racism found in
Love from other forms of racism, such as that of the former plantocracy against the black population in the U.S. South.

The mulatto racism depicted remains from the colonial era and endures in post-/neo-colonial period in which the mulâtres-aristocrates took over, leaving the same hierarchical system in place. The racism of Félicia and her sisters is portrayed as something that they inherited from their parents, along with their house and servants. At one point Félicia describes the fact “[t]hat [she] had never seen blacks at [her] parents’ table,” to which Dr. Audier responds that the same was true for the Camuses, the Duclans, the Soubirans, and all the members of their class (119-120). Another example of this form of racism and its consequences is seen in Claire’s memories of her father and his interactions with the peasants who worked on his coffee plantation and who both feared and respected him (92, 111). Although Henri Clamont’s relationship to his coffee workers is in some ways more complex than the relationship between a master and his slaves, since he has ties both to their community and the white master class, similarities (such as the material conditions of each group) exist between the two. As on slave plantations or in the example of the occupation-era corvée, the peasants in the novella work hard but are still unable to earn enough food to ease the hunger of their families, as in the case of Louisor (the son of Alcius who is the oldest of the farmers), while the coffee plantation owners enjoy a life of luxury and opulence beyond the basics (94).

Henri Clamont’s opinion that the black race lacks discipline elucidates this comparison between himself and a slave master: “Ours is a race lacking discipline and our old slave blood requires the lash, as my late father used to say….Tell me, if you hadn’t known me for so long, would you have believed that I have black blood in my veins? This means that my own black blood has been reabsorbed and that I inherited certain traits that will blemish [Claire] unless I
correct her” (90). Henri believes that blacks, including his ancestors, inherently lack discipline, which justifies the former slave masters’ use of the lash. At the same time, he recognizes that his disdain for the black race encompasses a self-hatred, since a mixture of black and white blood flows through his own veins. Similar to the white Southerner’s status as simultaneously colonizer and colonized, Henri is a hybrid of both masters and slaves. Henri embodies contradictory positions in the story of colonialism. As a result, the representation of Henri’s subjectivity would seem to be conflicted to the same extent as that of Absalom, Absalom!’s Quentin Compson or Charles Bon; however, by fully subscribing to the ideology of the colonizers, Henri limits the degree to which he is affected by his bivalence. For example, Henri exploits his connection to the culture of the former slaves to his advantage; he performs “voodoo spells” and appears to serve his grandmother’s loas in order to make his workers afraid to steal from him (103).\(^{203}\) In a similar way, Henri uses the blood he inherited from slave masters to validate his intimidation of his workers. Thus, Henri uses his connection to both the former slave and master communities to achieve the same purpose—the preservation of colonial hierarchies.

Nevertheless, Henri Clamont’s critique of black blood reflects back on himself, which positions his subjectivity as conflicted to an extent, as a result of the level of self-hatred involved. In his opinion, as a light-skinned mulatto, his black blood has been “reabsorbed,” and consequently his daughter, a dark-skinned mulatto, must work harder to remain unblemished by her inherited black blood. Henri watches Claire closely and punishes her for such things as the ink blots in her notebook: she would kneel “with arms crossed, chin up, next to her father” until he told her to get up, but the torment would last longer if she cried (85). When repeating her

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\(^{203}\) The term loas refers to voodoo gods or deities in Haitian Kreyòl.
lessons, Henri would pinch his daughter’s ear “hard enough to draw blood for the smallest error” (84). As Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw notes, the “extent to which [Henri] has internalized racial self-hatred is shown in the abuse he inflicts on his own daughter; he literally wants to beat the blackness out of her to try to correct this regression” (47). Henri’s self-hatred extends to his daughter who despite her name, Claire (which ironically means “clear” or “light” in French), symbolizes the return of the repressed: the black blood of his ancestors. While both mulatto racism and white racism are about blood—the white fear of miscegenation stems from a fear of the contaminating qualities of black blood originating in the colonial era—the difference is that Henri’s mulatto racism turns him against the blood running through his own veins.

In addition to ideas about the corrupting features of blood, colonialism institutionalized the belief that black skin is inferior to white or light skin, as “the division of human society in this way [by skin color] is inextricable from the need of colonialist powers to justify the imperial enterprise” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 198). Despite her propensity for using phrases such as “these black imbeciles,” Claire recognizes the connection between the current state of her nation and the overvaluation of light skin resulting from the hierarchies left in place from the colonial era. She states in the beginning of the novel: “By what miracle has this poor nation managed to stay so good, so welcoming, so joyful for so long, despite its poverty, despite injustice, prejudice, and our many civil wars? We have been practicing at cutting each other’s throats since Independence…It’s a colonial legacy to which we cling, just as we cling to the French” (8).204 As Claire herself observes, the racist hierarchical structures which continue to govern Haitian society, pitting racial groups against each other and developing feelings of

204 This line is echoed in *Madness*, the final story of the triptych, in which René, a persecuted poet, states: “I wrote verse in French about Christophe, Dessalines, Toussaint and Pétion. I am clinging to the colonial legacy like a louse” (322).
inferiority and hatred against one’s own blood, were not only inherited from the colonial oppressors but have remained in place since independence.

At the same time that Vieux-Chauvet criticizes Haitian society for the racism of the mulâtres-aristocrates towards the black race, her portrayal of this racism is complicated. Although racial prejudice is positioned as “out of fashion” in the Clamont household and is censured by Jean Luze—who is both an outsider and a white Frenchman—it nevertheless endures, as is shown by Félicia’s reaction to Annette and Paul’s engagement (15). Sympathy for the formerly subjugated black race is obscured by the fact that, as a result of a power reversal that occurred previous to the events of the novel, members of the black race are in power and portrayed as violent criminals, such as Commandant Calédu, or corrupt social climbers, such as Paul Trudor and his family.205 From the outset, Claire introduces the reader to Calédu as “a ferocious black man” who abuses the right of life or death he holds over his people, which interestingly demonstrates her racism through the language she chooses (“ferocious” carries with it animalistic connotations) at the same time that it accurately depicts Calédu’s cruelness (8, emphasis mine). Moreover, as an outsider, Jean-Luze notes: “Calédu and the others in power do nothing to make themselves likable. One is a vulgar criminal and the others are vile upstarts ready to do anything to fill their pockets” (119). Jean Luze argues that Calédu’s situation would be sympathetic to an outsider had he not abused the power he holds over his community: “Too bad the commandant is a criminal…because otherwise I might sympathize with him. In any case, he has made himself the representative of hatred and violence and no honest man could

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205 In addition to Calédu and those in power with him, the other black characters in the novella’s present period are relegated to the background, such as the poor peasants who have been armed by Calédu. Along with the coffee plantation workers, who also remain in the background, Tonton Mathurin is another black character who exists in Claire’s reconstruction of the past, but he is dismissed by Claire’s parents as a licentious old man and instigator who denounces Henri Clamont as a “phony” (110).
agree to absolve him” (120). As Jean Luze demonstrates, the compassion felt towards blacks—symbolized by Calédu, the novel’s central black figure—while not entirely erased, is tempered by the violence and corruption of the people presently in power, as well as their racism towards the mulâtres-aristocrates.  

This complicates the portrayal of race in the novel, as the association of blackness with criminality is one of the foundations of racism, yet is nevertheless warranted in the case of Calédu and his corrupt upstarts.

Commandant Calédu’s violence and persecution affect members of both the black and mulatto racial groups, such as the members of the black poor in his jail and the poets he harasses, recalling the ubiquitous violence of the Duvalier regime. However, Calédu’s violence also takes the form of retribution towards the mulâtres-aristocrates, specifically women reminiscent of those who scorned him before the occupation. When recalling her torture at the hands of Calédu and his men, Claire’s friend Dora Soubiran recalls that “[w]ith each blow he would yell: ‘snobs, you bunch of snobs, mulatto snobs, I’ll make cripples of all of you, you snobs…’”, exposing Calédu’s persecutions to be racially and sexually motivated, echoing the obsession with the compounded hierarchies of race and sexuality policed since the Code Noir (136).

More overtly, Calédu “avenges his own past colour discrimination by raping lighter-skinned, middle-class women” (Munro “Hatred Chérie” 166). Although this does not excuse his behavior, to an extent this racism may be seen as a reaction to the mistreatment of the black race by the mulatto race, revealing the vicious cycle of racism, violence, and sexual violence that Haiti inherited.

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206 Scholars, such as Martin Munro, have taken this further, arguing that the presentation of Calédu may be seen as the novella’s critique of black nationalism (“Hatred Chérie” 166).
207 I credit Nicole Aljoe for this insight.
208 This trope is continued in Anger, in which the Calédu figure, left nameless, states that he had been a “flea-ridden beggar” before climbing the ladder that led to commandant: “Yes, my beauty, a beggar, despised, shunned by haughty little saint’s faces like yours” (245).
As Ronnie Scharfman notes, “Calédu’s obsessive-compulsive behavior fuses race, class, and gender in one single horrific gesture of punishment” (231). The cyclical nature of this violence is exemplified through the next story in the triptych, *Anger*, in which the rape victim, Rose, is given an interiority and makes this connection herself, reflecting on “the man avenging himself through me for having been rejected by the women he desired” (251). The violence of Calédu and his men, as well as the nameless commandant in *Anger*, continues the succession of racism and persecution in Haitian society and is reminiscent of Claire’s musings referenced earlier: “We have been practicing at cutting each other’s throats since Independence. The claws of our people have been growing and getting sharper. Hatred has hatched among us, and torturers have crawled out of the nest” (8). Since the pronouns used by Claire do not reference a specific racial group, I read her observation as indicting the Haitian people more generally. The cycle of violence and racial hatred was imposed on the island by the colonizers, and, along with the propensity for alienation and fragmented subjectivities and the hierarchies of race, class, and color, this cycle is another residual effect that Haiti is left with after independence.

**Racial and Sexual Stereotypes: Tools for Controlling Image**

The fixation on the intersection of race and sexuality seen in both the policing inherited from the Code Noir and Calédu’s sexual violence towards mulâtres-aristocrates manifests in a

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209 Munro would agree with this circular understanding of Haiti’s history, as portrayed by Vieux-Chauvet. He states that it is “in large measure the cycle of revenge and hatred itself that creates this circular temporality, the feeling that time is still turning in circles inherited from the past, and that present time is in many respects indistinguishable from any moment over the course of the last two hundred years” (“Avenging History” 37).

210 The section of *Anger* narrated by Rose does not spare us the details left out of Dora’s torture-rape in *Love*. The sadistic pleasure taken by the rapist is made clear through his violence: “Then he thrust his fist into my body and watched in ecstasy as the blood poured out of me. Vampire! Vampire! I saw him sipping and getting drunk on my blood like wine” (248).
third way in Marie Vieux-Chauvet’s depiction of Haiti: the use of stereotypes to marginalize and control women and colonial subjects. I argue that these racial and sexual stereotypes—both acknowledged and subverted by the novella—may also be traced back to Haiti’s colonial past. Sylvia Wynter argues that the “incredible inventiveness of black culture” was perceived as a threat by the dominant order in the U.S. and “was marginalized and contained by the fabrication of the minstrel stereotype” (149). In the same way that the minstrel stereotype was constructed purposely by the dominant order, other stereotypes, such as the black race as hypersexual, were invented for a multitude of reasons, including to ease white men’s guilt for the sexual abuse of black women. Similarly, black men were also seen as stereotypically licentious—a purposeful stereotype leading to the myth of the black or mulatto rapist that was created intentionally to produce certain political consequences described more overtly in Chapter 2. While conceptions of race differed in Haiti and the United States, such stereotypes existed in each society as an attempt to control the characterization of others, which is affirmed by Love’s portrayal of Haiti.

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211 In Joan Dayan’s words: “Chauvet’s stories force readers into a purgatory of non-acceptability, as she risks the recuperation of what might first seem sensational or tasteless categories and stereotypes” (79). I argue that, like Faulkner before her, Vieux-Chauvet incorporates these stereotypes ultimately for the purpose of subversion. 212 Through the stereotype of hypersexuality and scientific racism, scholars attempted to prove that black women not only possessed “a ‘primitive’ sexual appetite but also the external signs of this temperament—‘primitive’ genitalia” (Gilman 213). They believed that if sexual parts and drives were different among the black race, then this could be taken as a sign that “blacks were a separate (and, needless to say, lower) race, as different from the European as the proverbial orangutan” (Gilman 216). While they ultimately failed in this endeavor, nevertheless, there was a conceptual split between the gender roles of black and white women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, (Abrahams 230) where black women were viewed as inherently promiscuous or savage and white women were domesticated and desexualized, “the repositories of white civilization” (Jordan 148). 213 Stoler describes the “heightened sexuality” assigned to colonized men by the colonizers and notes that the fear of the sexual assault of white women by black men in the British Empire was so widespread (and yet unfounded) that it was given a specific name, the “Black Peril” (Carnal Knowledge 58). 214 At the same time that mulattos in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were considered a separate and elite racial group in Haiti, they were stigmatized in the Southern U.S., since the mixture of blood through miscegenation was seen as responsible for the rise in crimes against white women (Frederickson 277). Henri Clamont refers to this mixture of blood in his own body, yet believes that in his case, his black blood has been reabsorbed by his white blood. Regardless of Clamont’s views on the mixture of blood, the mulâtres-aristocrates were not subjected to the
Although the mulatto male as rapist stereotype is absent from Vieux-Chauvet’s work, other flat characterizations, such as the trope of racialized doubling, are present. Claire feels closer to her sister Annette than she does to Félicia, as is shown both by the way she lives through Annette and believes that she can control her youngest sister’s actions. Claire refers to Annette as, aside from the difference in skin color, “a touched-up copy of me sixteen years ago,” positioning Annette as her light-skinned double whom, in her mind at least, she is able to manipulate (6). This doubling puts the novella in dialogue with literature of passing, such as Pauline Hopkins’ *Contending Forces* (1900) or Nella Larsen’s *Passing* (1929), which often includes stories where two characters “change places, encounter each other as mirror images of themselves, or recognize their interior doubleness” (Sollors *Neither Black nor White* 499). However, while in Claire’s mind she is able to think and act for both women, Claire ultimately cannot control Annette’s behavior, which collapses the racialized doubling and reaffirms the separation between Annette and Claire’s identities and their existence in the text as unique and complex individuals.

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215 While part of this may be attributed to the fact that Annette, unlike Félicia, is not married, in Claire’s flashbacks to childhood, she never portrays herself as having been close to Félicia, who even as a young child seems fixated on their differences in skin color (98).

216 In addition to racialized doubling, Claire may also be seen as othering herself or serving as a double for herself through the contrast between her thoughts and actions, behaving as a loyal sister and house-keeper yet secretly plotting to murder Félicia. Scholars, such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, have read the character of Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* in psychological terms, “as Jane’s dark double,” while others like Gayatri Spivak focus on the way that Bertha/Antoinette others herself in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Spivak 248). Spivak argues that Antoinette must “play out her role, act out the transformation of her ‘self’ into that fictive Other, set fire to the house and kill herself, so that Jane Eyre can become the feminist individualist heroine of British fiction” (251). Spivak takes this destructive doubling or othering of the self to be an allegory for the violence of imperialism, in which the colonial subject must immolate herself for the exaltation of the colonizer’s social mission (251). While arguably Claire’s self is othered through the alienation she experiences, ultimately she replaces self-immolation, in the form of stabbing herself, with political action, stabbing Calédu in her place.
In addition to the trope of racialized doubling, sexual stereotypes, such as white women as cold or repressed and black men as virulent, are evoked in interesting ways. The novella seems to affirm these stereotypes at the same time that it subverts them. For example, as has been mentioned before, sympathy for the blacks presently in power, symbolized by Calédu, is assuaged by his portrayal as a violent rapist who targets mulatto women. Further, Annette portrays her black husband Paul in a predominantly sexual manner. When asked by Félicia if Paul is a good husband, Annette replies that he is a good lover: “He’s a black man and he knows how to take a woman. He is so passionate that all he would have to do is brush against your hand to desire you” (128-9). Annette depicts Paul not only as a primarily sexual being, but in accordance with the stereotypes, as unable to control his own desires and arousal. Along the same lines, Félicia, whose skin is lighter than Claire’s, is described by the latter as “too white, too blond, too lukewarm, too orderly,” as if the fact that she is too lukewarm directly results from her whiteness (11).

At the same time that the text seemingly affirms these racial and sexual stereotypes, it also undoes them through the portrayals of Annette and Claire. As the lighter of the two, Annette is depicted as passionate and promiscuous, while Claire, darker than both of her sisters, hides her passion to the extent that she is sexually repressed. While the characterization of light-skinned Annette subverts the figure of the promiscuous black woman, at the same time, it affirms another stereotype, the sexualized mulatto woman—evidence of the complicated ways in which Vieux-Chauvet plays with both racism and sexual stereotypes in the novel. According to Werner

217 Although Dora’s torture is not explicitly described by Claire as rape, scholars such as Martin Munro have used that term to characterize Calédu’s actions. Further, Madison Smartt Bell argues that Dora was clearly beaten and gang-raped at Calédu’s headquarters: “the rape is unmistakable, and for a long time afterward Dora ‘hobbles along with legs spread apart like a maimed animal’” (Bell par. 7).
Sollors, the sexualized or “wily mulatto was reputed to try to use her sexual hold on white men as leverage to advance the black race as a whole by vying for the inheritance of white male power” (Interracialism 168). This stereotype is traced by John Garrigus back to the eighteenth century in the French colony of Saint-Domingue, when it was widely believed that “[m]ulattos lived for sexual gratification” (158). During that period whites stressed the ways in which ménagères, or free women of color who worked as housekeepers on plantations, manipulated their French employers (Garrigus 57). While Claire can be read as the ménagère or housekeeper figure, which I will return to in a moment, Annette represents the hypersexual mulatto who attempts to use her sexuality to manipulate a Frenchman into sleeping with her, directly referencing this historic stereotype. As Annette ultimately fails to seduce Jean Luze away from his wife and marries a black man, upon second glance, her character challenges the stereotype of the hypersexual or wily mulatto, at the same time that it acknowledges it.

Moreover, as Barbara Christian notes, the promiscuous black woman, or in her words the “concubine” figure, was not the only stereotype applied to black or mulatto women (2). Through the character of Annette, Vieux-Chauvet plays with the figures of the promiscuous black woman and the sexualized mulatto. However, as the caretaker of the household, Claire correlates more closely with the manipulative ménagère figure through the control she wields in the home and her attempt to influence the sexual liaisons that occur in that space. Christian argues that literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries “fashioned an image of the black woman intended to further create submission, conflict between the black man and woman, and importantly, a dumping ground for those female functions a basically Puritan society could not
confront”—the mammy stereotype (2). Claire is also linked to the mammy stereotype (more prevalent in the United States while the ménagère figure was more widespread in Haiti) whom Christian describes as “black in color, fat, nurturing, religious, kind, above all strong, and…enduring” (2). Claire is seen to nurture and care for her family. She serves as a surrogate mother to Félicia’s baby (and in her mind, wife to Jean Luze) while her sister is ill, and appears religious to those who have not read her journal, yet the reader knows that Claire resents her role as parent to her sisters and would like to kill Félicia to earn a more permanent place in the life of Jean Luze and his son. In this way, Claire subverts the flat characterizations usually found of the mammy stereotype, who was “so loyal to her white family that she was often willing to risk her life to defend them” (Pilgrim par. 10). Through her actions, such as the risk she takes in murdering Calédu—a threat not only to her family but also her class and community more broadly—Claire would seem to comply with the mammy figure, yet through her thoughts and the hatred they reveal towards that same family, she simultaneously undermines the stereotype.

Additionally, Claire may seem to occupy the role of a third stereotyped figure, the tragic mulatta, who, in the words of Werner Sollors, was a popular and typically “white invention and literary vehicle,” which allowed white readers to sympathize with heroines closer to themselves in appearance, while at the same time the tragic outcome was seen to support the belief that the mixture of races is a curse (Neither Black nor White 225). Although there is much tragedy in Claire’s life, in part resulting from the discrepancy between her skin color and social position,

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218 In Slave in a Box: The Strange Career of Aunt Jemima, Maurice M. Manring interrogates the mammy stereotype both as portrayed by historians “as a real person and as a largely imaginary symbol of white male ideology in the Old South,” as well as the way fiction writers in the North and South “used her to explain differing ideas about race class, and gender, starting with the years after the Civil War and ending about 1970” (10).

219 This stereotype also recalls Faulkner’s depiction of Dilsey in The Sound and the Fury, as discussed in Chapter 2, particularly in the Appendix: “DILSEY. They endured” (Faulkner The Sound and the Fury 215).
she challenges the tragic mulatta stereotype, both through the depth of her character (the tragic mulatta in literature usually lacked individuality and psychological depth and was “quickly and recognizably sketched and given only a few memorable traits”) and the action she takes at the end of the novella (Sollors *Neither Black nor White* 228). As opposed to passively watching the tragedy of her story unfold, Claire takes control over her fate through her final action that ends the novel, her stabbing of Calédu, which goes against the typical use of the tragic mulatta as a determinist concept (Sollors *Neither Black nor White* 228). Therefore, in addition to her use of the promiscuous black woman and sexually repressed white woman, Vieux-Chauvet plays with other stereotypic figures, such as the mammy and tragic mulatta (and arguably also the Caribbean madwoman, which I will explore in the final section of this chapter), through her characterization of Claire. I am interested in the ways in which Vieux-Chauvet uses these literary vehicles to both evoke and critique the cultural work of stereotypes but ultimately to emphasize the characters’ existence as distinct and multifaceted individuals.

To return to Vieux-Chauvet’s use of the figures of the asexual white woman, the promiscuous black woman, and the virulent black man, the text may seem contradictory in the way that it both affirms these sexual stereotypes, through its portrayal of Félicia and Paul, and undermines them, through the depiction of Annette and Claire. Employing racial and sexual stereotypes in this novella would seem to perpetuate the flat characterizations of diverse individuals ingrained through colonial ideologies. However, it is important to note that these stereotypes are confirmed not by characters’ behavior but by their descriptions of others. For example, through the ways in which they act, Claire and Annette unknowingly undermine the stereotypes, while through their words and own racist views of Paul and Félicia, the two women support them. Through the stereotypic descriptions given by Annette and Claire, Vieux-Chauvet
depicts her characters as prejudiced, as opposed to representing the stereotypes themselves as realistic. Claire’s narration seemingly promotes but ultimately subverts stereotypic associations developed by colonialism. Thus, Claire and Annette verbally affirm the stereotypes, while at the same time undoing them through their own behavior, which positions the stereotypes along with the characters’ racism and the hierarchies themselves as the inheritance from colonialism. The all-encompassing aspect of this inheritance becomes even more visible when considering not only the characters’ views of each other but also of themselves, as can be seen in Claire’s internalization of her society’s racism and the fragmentation of her subjectivity that results, as I will explore in the final section of this chapter.

The Effects of Racism on the Individual Level: Claire as Narrator

In addition to Love’s critique of racism, sexism, hatred, and violence on the broader scale of the community—shown by Claire’s society’s self-policing, racial stratification, and use of sexual and racial stereotypes—Vieux-Chauvet’s novella is also invested in the effects of colonialism at the level of the individual, as depicted through the portrayal of Claire’s past and present. A focus on the character of Claire reveals the ways in which outmoded colonial relations persist in the novella, such as represented in the mutual abhorrence/attraction between Claire and Calédu, which I argue below is a microcosm for the colonial experience in the post-/neo-colonial era. While Claire is aware of the detrimental effects of colonial ideologies, she herself cannot escape their impact. For instance, Claire internalizes the racism of her father towards his own black blood and questions her position in the family. After overhearing her

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220 This work done by Claire’s narrative links her purposefully with Erzulie, the Haitian loa who often embodies oppositional characteristics, such as good and evil or young and old, only to destabilize easy categorizations. I will expand on this connection in the next section of this chapter.
father discuss his desire to “correct” the traits she supposedly inherited along with her dark skin, Claire begins to question her race: “I stared with astonishment at my dark arm resting on the sheets. Was I really their daughter? No, it did not seem possible. How could I be the daughter of two whites?” (90). Claire’s racism towards herself and its impact on her subjectivity, relationships with others, and sexuality show the reach of Haiti’s colonial inheritance and its influence on an individual scale, as well as another point of intersection between race and sexuality in the novella.

Martin Munro argues that Claire is “doubly alienated in that her dark skin sets her apart from the light-skinned bourgeoisie and, conversely, her middle-class background differentiates her from the dark-skinned lower classes” (“Hatred Chérie” 166). In spite of her light-skinned parents and heritage as a member of the mulâtres-aristocrates, Claire has black skin and has been identified as black by others since her childhood. Claire is referred to as black by a young servant who tells her, “Black, you’re black like me…and when I am bigger I will marry you”; Alcius who says to her father, “that’s one beautiful black girl you got there”; and Félicia who innocently asks, “Why is Claire black, Mama?” (91, 92, 98). In response to the latter exchange between Félicia and her parents, Claire states: “And I began to loathe the forebear whose black blood had slyly flowed into my veins after so many generations” (98). Although her class positions her alongside the other members of her family as a mulâtres-aristocrate, due to the dark hue of her skin, Claire follows her father’s example and turns the racism of her class inward against herself, which both Dr. Audier and Claire herself refer to as her “complexes” (77, 126). Dr. Audier states in conversation with Jean Luze: “for a long time Claire had a complex about not being her sisters’ equal, about not being as white and pink as a lily” (79-80). Claire pulls away from suitors, such as Frantz Camuse, literally and figuratively as a result of “the contrast
between [their] joined hands” (99). Later a French officer refers to Claire as “a black goddess” and “the prettiest black girl he had ever seen,” highlighting not only her beauty but also her dark skin (105-6, emphasis mine). Although part of her appeal to the French officer seems to be her dark hue, both Frantz and the officer are attracted to Claire. She however ignores their attentions, believing their flattery and interest to be only owing to her social position.

Thus, Claire doubts herself in social situations, as is shown in the above examples, in part due to her internalization of the racist views of her class. As a result of her inferiority complex, Claire “ends as the embittered, unmarried eldest sister who runs the family’s household” (Lee-Keller 1293). As a consequence of the conflict between her color and racial group, as well as the political chaos and violence experienced by her island, Claire becomes alienated from herself and others, resulting in the fragmentation of her subjectivity, which Lee-Keller refers to as Claire’s “madness” (Lee-Keller 1297). While I am unconvinced of Claire’s identity as a “madwoman,” as opposed to her propensity to commit irrational acts or behave eccentrically, I agree with Lee-Keller that Claire experiences alienation and a fragmented subjectivity due to the contradictions between her race, color, and social position and the racism she internalizes. In addition to the power structures and racist ideology that have remained in place since colonialism, the fragmentation of individual subjects is “another damaging residual effect of

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221 Using Frantz Fanon’s analysis in the *Wretched of the Earth*, Lee-Keller argues that the fragmentation of the individual subject, as well as the subject’s alienation from herself and others, is a destructive and enduring effect of colonialism, as “the colonial system implicitly denied the humanity of the colonized peoples during colonization, the colonized learned to separate what they knew about themselves (‘we are human’) from what they had to dissimulate to their colonizers (‘we are less than human’)” (1296).

222 Similarly, Evelyn O’Callaghan argues that “the figure of the schizophrenic madwoman in the work of Caribbean women writers works as a ‘social metaphor’ to explain the ‘damaged West Indian psyche…fragmented as a result of colonial/postcolonial conflict’” (Renk 89).
colonialism” (Lee-Keller 1296). I argue that Vieux-Chauvet’s portrayal of the alienation and fragmentation Claire undergoes due to her treatment as a dark-skinned member of the mulâtres-aristocrates is a critique at the level of the individual of Haiti’s racism, continued adherence to social hierarchies, and the violence which both racism and social stratification commit upon former colonial subjectivities.

Although it remains unclear in Claire’s narration whether her younger sisters were married before her as a result of their light-skin or the effect of Claire’s family’s racism on her self-confidence and self-presentation, I argue that there is more evidence to support the latter. Claire’s internalization of her family’s prejudice has serious repercussions on her relationships and life decisions. For example, looking back on the events of her youth, Claire admits that Frantz Camuse had preferred her over her light-skinned friends but that she was “too young to realize the sincere interest [she] had aroused in him” (98). Moreover, Claire describes her relationship to Justin Rollier, a supporter of her father, and wonders if all three Clamont sisters had been in love with him. She recalls Justin’s reaction upon being asked to choose the most beautiful among them: “‘My heart cannot choose between the three of you,’ he answered laughing, but his eyes met mine in a very loving way” (117). In private, Justin asks Claire to wait three years for him to find a position for himself and return to Haiti, promising to marry her. However, as with Frantz, Claire does not return his displays of affection, in spite of her true feelings, and when he returns, Annette’s aggressive attentions distract him from the seemingly indifferent Claire. In her own words: “I was too practiced in my art of deception, and behind my

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223 Lee-Keller goes on to describe the “raw clarity” with which Vieux-Chauvet writes about the “perverse alienation that results from specific class and gender contradictions fueled by neo-colonization” (1306).
224 As the entire story is told from Claire’s perspective, our understanding may be skewed. However, given Claire’s inferiority complex, I argue that she would be more likely to downplay or dismiss her suitors’ attentions rather than embellish them.
mask of detachment, I burned in silence like a torch” (11). Through these examples, I aver that the eligible bachelors in Claire’s town are initially drawn to her and attempt to pursue her while she gives no indication of her reciprocal interest, which supports the claim that her aloof manner is responsible for her spinsterhood, as opposed to the color of her skin. This is reinforced by Mohammed’s assertion that while mulatto women figure as desired in Caribbean culture, “[i]t is not exclusively so, as black women continue to retain their appeal for white, black and coloured men” (43). Therefore, whereas the desirability of mulatto women can be traced to colonial Caribbean society, it is not to the exclusion of the desirability of black women. Claire’s belief that her black skin renders her ultimately undesirable to her suitors does not result from the reality of her situation, but the racism of her class that she has internalized. While the racism of her suitors may be imagined by Claire, her racism towards herself, which causes her to doubt her ability to attract suitors, is very real.

In addition to her skewed relationship with others and society due to her inferiority complex and resulting alienation, Claire’s relationship to her sexuality is distorted. As a virginal old maid, Claire’s repressed sexual desires cause her to have an elevated interest in sexuality and motherhood—to the extent that she becomes obsessed with her brother-in-law Jean Luze and considers murdering Félicia in order to replace her in his bed.225 This fixation on sex is shown through the way it constantly intrudes on her thoughts and her clandestine devouring of romance novels and pornographic postcards (10). Kathleen Renk argues that “sexual deviance in women defined insanity” in the nineteenth century, which may explain the inclination of critics to position Claire as a madwoman as a result of this underlying mentality that considers both

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225 Joan Dayan connects Claire to one of the most frightening ghosts of Haitian folklore: the djablesse, “a female ghost, she must live in the woods for years, as punishment for the crime of having died a virgin before she can enter heaven” (which may explain Claire’s obsession with her virgin status) (235).
females and the colonies themselves as prone to madness (Renk 89). While Claire’s behavior may be deemed strange, in my opinion, it is not abnormal enough to position her as insane as opposed to just lonely and sexually repressed (10).

Moreover, Claire’s desire for a baby has led her to purchase a doll that she secretly cares for (and successfully fights the urge to breast feed), which is surely eccentric, but I argue is evidence of her lonely, repressed life-style and alienation, not her madness (34). As soon as she is given the role of surrogate mother to Jean-Claude, Claire gives up her doll and cache of pornographic postcards. While Claire’s alienation, sexual repression, and loneliness cause her to behave eccentrically, not all abnormal acts should lead to the label “madwoman” (34).

I am interested in the ways in which scholarship on this novella, and perhaps the novella itself, position Claire as a madwoman. Of the three narrators with fractured subjectivities I explore in this project—Quentin Compston, Claire Clamont, and Faustin Nsenghimana—only Claire, the sole woman, is considered crazy by critics. Thus, the propensity to label someone mad, as opposed to describing her behavior as eccentric due to the toll life’s stressors have taken on her

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226 The colonies and the Caribbean in particular were thought to be “loci of madness” with English visitors becoming “maddened by the tropics, supposedly through association with the climate of the cultural practices visitors observed” (Renk 89). Thus, madness was considered a feature of the Caribbean landscape—a trope running back to the colonial era. It was believed that white Europeans would go mad if they spent too much time in the Caribbean and that creoles were “tropicalized” by their environment and were “emotionally high-strung, lazy, and sexually excessive” (Rhys 33, note 1). Marie-Chantal Kalisa notes that Caribbean madness is rooted in historical violence (120).

227 I’d like to extend Kathleen Renk’s association of Great Expectation’s Miss Havisham and the suicidal Ophelia with ‘tainted’ chastity to include Claire Clamont (106). Like her predecessors, Claire may be seen as “the impassioned nun, the sensual celibate, who has felt passion and love, but unlike the sexual witch, she has never fully consummated her passion” (Renk 106). The colonial association of licentiousness and dark skin would seem to complicate Claire’s chastity but is directly contrasted by her obsessive virginity, undercutting that stereotypic association. Another moment that could be used as evidence of her fractured mental state is when Claire waters an artificial plant, claiming that “it seemed to revive with cool water,” which as she states could have been the fault of her eyesight or the power of ideas over our senses (70). Her desire to murder her sister Félicia in order to take her place as Jean Luze’s wife and Jean-Claude’s father could also be seen as pathological, though something she could talk through with a therapist had that been a possible treatment. Her violent behavior, such as her murder of the Audiers’ cat and later Calédu with a dagger, in my opinion, is more convincing evidence of her increasingly fragmented subjectivity, though it may be attributed to the stress of life under violent, tyrannical Calédu.
Subjectivity is directly connected to gender. In this way, the pathologization of women, particularly subaltern women, which can be seen through the perhaps unconscious readiness of critics like Lee-Keller to read Claire as mad, is a way to dismiss their voices and negate their subjectivities. What is considered to be madness can also be understood as the nonlinear experience of the subaltern mind, which may perceive things in a different way from the Western academics who critique postcolonial novels, or as a metaphor for colonialism as a senseless entity in these works (as the domination of one population by another outside group logically does not make sense). As a result of the different roles this “madness” can play—particularly in postcolonial novels—I argue we should not blindly accept characters as “madwomen” as a result of criticism or how other characters position them but should interrogate our readiness to use this label and consider how else their behavior can be understood in the text. Therefore, while Claire behaves eccentrically as a result of her alienation and fragmented subjectivity, I assert that we should not necessarily jump to the label of “madwoman,” but focus more on the ways that her mental state may be seen as a product of her circumstances and the violence colonialism inflicts on individuals.

Interestingly, while female characters are labeled mad, male characters with similar symptoms in the colonial context are often described as “shell-shocked” or as having combat- or resistance-related injuries, such as in Phyllis Shand Allfrey’s The Orchid House or Shanti Mootoo’s Cereus Blooms at Night (Hopwood). In Love and Madness, however, both Jacques Marti and the starving poets are depicted as “mad,” although this madness is also shown to result from their resistance. For another example of this we can look to Jean Rhys’s Wide Sargasso Sea, which according to some scholars, such as Elizabeth Hopwood, has become the ur-text for the trope of the Caribbean madwoman. Antoinette Cosway Mason, the novel’s protagonist who correlates with Bertha Mason Rochester in Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre, is pathologized by her husband (as a result of his desire to control and possess her) and her Caribbean community. This leads to her captivity in the attic of her husband’s English manor.

I credit Nicole Aljoe with these ideas in her 2010 graduate student seminar, “Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Caribbean Cultural Production.” While, as noted above, I disagree with Lee-Keller’s description of Claire as mad, I concur with the way that she acknowledges the role of colonialism and the effect of the resulting alienation on Claire’s subjectivity.
In addition to her heightened interest in sex and motherhood, Claire’s fragmented/alienated subjectivity and her resulting skewed relationship to her sexuality is revealed through both her sexual fascination with and repugnance towards Commandant Calédu, whom she murders in the final pages of the novel. Although Claire hates Calédu, whose own inferiority complex manifests in his sexual abuse of women of the mulâtres-aristocrates, he appears often in her sexual fantasies: “I closed my eyes and drew him to me, a naked, big, and black athletic body I did not want to recognize” and “I am no longer seeing him [Jean Luze] but another. Who is it? I don’t dare comprehend” (66, 69). In the latter example, Jean Luze, the object of Claire’s acknowledged affection merges into Calédu, whom she prefers not to consciously recognize; this duality highlights the fact that the two men are positioned as foils. Calédu is dark-skinned, cruel, and authentically Haitian, while Jean Luze is white, compassionate, and an outsider from France, which exemplifies Joan Dayan’s point that Vieux-Chauvet examines the ways in which “women are forced in between two constructs not of their own making: black nationalist and white foreigner” (231). The two men, however, are at the same time off limits to Claire, and she positions her feelings for both on opposite ends of the spectrum: “We’re on, Commandant! Whatever you may think, you are up against a strong opponent. Our hatred is mutual. Bless this love that imprisons me, praise be to Jean Luze the Frenchman who enthralls me so much that nothing matters apart from my love…Because for now, love saves me from hatred” (50, emphasis mine). While Claire is explicit that she hates Calédu and loves Jean Luze, the same passionate foundation of visceral emotional response underlies her reactions to both, and at a certain point, love and hate may be seen to intersect in Claire’s subconscious, exemplified by her dreams.
In addition to love and hate, violence and sex are also shown to overlap, overtly through Calédu’s torture-rape of mulâtres aristocrates and Claire’s stabbing of Calédu (and its Freudian implications), but also in Claire’s dreams. In addition to her unwanted sexual fantasies about Calédu, Claire has a violent response to the sight of him: “I recognize Calédu’s silhouette. He can’t sleep either. I feel like running up to him to dig my nails into his eyes and drag him blind and bleeding along Grand-rue” (137). Scholars such as Walcott-Hackshaw and Scharfman trace Claire’s obsessions with Jean Luze and Calédu back to her relationship with her father: “The complex, violent, and ambiguous relationship that Claire has with her father translates into perverse desire for her brother-in-law, Jean-Luze, a white Frenchman, and for the local commandant, Calédu, another terrorizing patriarchal figure” (Walcott-Hackshaw 49). Both scholars cite Claire’s dreams as evidence of this connection. In one dream a naked Claire in the midst of a crowded arena throws herself at the feet of a statue of Calédu that has come to life with an erect “phallus [that] wagged feverishly” (120). The crowd incites Calédu to murder Claire, which here can be seen as standing in for rape given Calédu’s state of arousal, and he beheads her (120-1). In the next paragraph, Claire describes another dream from her childhood in which her father was “transformed into a roaring two-legged creature with a lion’s mane” who whips her as she attempts to exit his cage (121). The juxtaposition of these two dreams supports the connection between her suppressed attraction to Calédu and her complex relationship with her abusive father, as well as the overlap between sexuality and violence in Claire’s subconscious, which may account for her unwanted attraction to the commandant.

Regardless of her subconscious sexual attraction to him, Claire hates Calédu by the light of day to the extent that she refuses to greet him on the street. Fully aware of the commandant’s penchant for violence, other characters encourage her to hide her antipathy (18). Claire has
difficulty hiding her distain when she declines to dance with Calédu at Annette’s birthday party. He does not take “no” for an answer, however, and Claire describes their dance in the language of sexual violence: “And, wrapping an authoritative arm around me, he twirled me until I was dizzy. His hands seemed to possess such prodigious strength that I felt like my whole body was locked in a vice. I tried to free myself. He tightened his grip. Our two bodies intertwined and seethed with hatred. Suddenly I stopped short and his feet awkwardly caught mine. I tore my hand from his” (48). The language of physical struggle used here calls to readers’ minds Calédu’s penchant for sexually assaulting women of the elite mulatto class, like Claire, as well as her own unwanted sexual fantasies about the commandant, complicating her feelings for him (but not her refusal of the dance). As referenced above, Claire and Calédu’s seemingly mutual attraction/hatred can be read as a microcosm for the colonial experience more generally by way of Homi Bhabha’s theory of ambivalence in which a “complex mix of attraction and repulsion” characterizes the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 10). Whereas outsider Jean Luze would seem to be a more appropriate stand-in for the traditional European colonizer evoked by Bhabha’s concept of ambivalence, Commandant Calédu colonizes the bodies of his Haitian town, particularly those of the mulâtresses-aristocrates, through the absolute power he wields in this space.

As a result of her contradictory feelings for Calédu, scholars, such as Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw and Joan Dayan, have convincingly connected Claire (and Rose, the protagonist of *Anger*) to Erzulie, an ambivalent loa who has darker skin (like Claire), often embodies oppositional characteristics, and has been described alternatively as the goddess of love, “Black
Venus,” “Virgin Mary,” or “Mater Dolorosa” (Dayan 239). Erzulie takes forms ranging from “good” Erzulie-Freda to “evil” Erzulî-gé-rouge and from beautiful, young Maitress Erzulie to old Grand Erzulie, dramatizing the separation of women into objects of desire or abhorrence (Dayan 240). In vodoun this dichotomy is dismantled, as is seen through the erotics of Erzulie-Freda who “takes on the garb of femininity—and even speaks excellent French—in order to discard it” (Dayan 240). Erzulie endorses extremes and subverts binary categorization in the same way that Claire does, for example through Claire’s dark skin color and social position as a mulâtress-artistocrate and her attraction to both Jean Luze and Calédu (Dayan 240-1). I extend this reading and argue that Claire, as an Erzulie figure, destabilizes a range of other dichotomies, for example through her corrupt yet virginal sexuality, as well as her alternation between passive voyeurism and moments of action.

In addition to the binaries collapsed through the characterization of Claire, the novella as a whole works to unravel others. In the words of Martin Munro: “What is at once terrible and fascinating in this work of internal exile and intimate hatred is the breakdown of conventional binaries of meaning,” such as for Claire’s society light-skin and upper-class versus dark-skin and lower-class (which Claire herself challenges) (166). Other binaries, such as guilt versus innocence are called into question, as few characters, including Claire herself, are innocent (although some, such as Calédu, are more guilty than others). Scharfman contends that the novella “does violence to us by subverting our habitual concepts of notions such as love, anger, madness, but also of terms such as black and white, power and submission” (232). I argue that

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233 If further evidence of this connection is needed, Erzulie is often associated with Catholicism’s Saint Claire (Dayan 234).

234 In a flashback, it is revealed to the reader that during Claire’s tenure as head of the Clamont’s coffee plantation, she set the price for the coffee too low one year to “ruin the peasants and get [her] revenge on them” (Vieux-Chauvet 112). The farmers paid with their lives for Claire’s scheme, as twenty planters murdered them with machetes in order to remove the unnaturally low coffee prices from the market.
there is a limit to the breakdown of binaries discussed by Munro and Scharfman, as it would be problematic to extend this conflation to certain pairings, such as pleasure and pain, and imply that the victims of Calédu’s sexual and physical violence received anything but pain as a result of his torture. Nevertheless, the collapse of conventional binaries is a concept that helps the reader account for the novella’s complicated character portrayals and rejection of easy categorizations. By addressing these binaries and deconstructing the rule of colonial narratives, this novella positions itself within the modernist tradition but more accurately within Hosam Aboul-Ela’s “poetics of peripheralization,” described earlier, through its engagement with Haiti’s political history. Moreover, the breakdown of binaries reflects the complexities of increasing globalization in the post-/neo-colonial period in which notions of core vs. periphery, First World vs. Third World, white vs. black, men vs. women, and other similar binaries become more complex but the mindsets that produce them do not disappear completely.

Marie Vieux-Chauvet’s Love—a novella epitomizing Aboul-Ela’s “poetics of peripheralization”—is a critique of post-independence Haitian society and the ways in which Haiti remained haunted by its colonial past and affected by outside intervention both in the post-U.S. occupation period and the years of the Duvalier dynasty. Through the persistence of the hierarchies of race, color, class, gender, and sexuality and the complicated ways in which they

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235 In a similar way, although Vieux-Chauvet conflates the immediate post-occupation and the Duvalier eras through her setting, she does this as a way to more discretely comment on her country’s current political situation while the repressive regime remains in power, as well as to emphasize colonial continuities, but not to argue that the periods are the same or interchangeable. There are important differences between the occupation and Duvalier eras, as discussed in the opening section of this chapter, including the fact that in the latter instance, the threat came more overtly from the outside—the aggressive U.S. military—as opposed to from the nation’s own leader as was the case under François Duvalier and his son Jean-Claude.

236 This is in part due to the adherence to the meaning produced by these binaries in the face of subversion, exemplified in the revision of the colonial system itself in which the colonized/colonizer dichotomy is replaced by more complicated colonial relations. Specifically, in France’s overseas départements d’outre-mer (DOM), such as Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guyana, colonial ties have not been completely severed “but have evolved in ways that perpetuate attachment to the French métropole and frustrate the instinct to avenge a barbaric, horrifying history” (Munro, “Avenging History,” 18).
intersect, as well as American interference, violence, mulatto racism, the perseverance of the sexual stereotypes imposed by the colonizer, and the fragmented subjectivities of the formerly colonized, Vieux-Chauvet shows that Haiti did not get as far from its history as a French colony as it would have liked to through the Haitian Revolution. Nevertheless, while the “promise of that revolution, disparaged and undermined by the powerful both within and outside Haiti, has remained unfulfilled,” like colonial mindsets themselves, this promise “has never disappeared” but remains a shining beacon in Haiti’s history (Dubois 13). Although Haiti will always retain its title as the first black republic in the world, Vieux-Chauvet’s novella reveals the island’s need to dismantle the tools of colonialism —for example through the destabilization of binary thinking and the disavowal of racism and social stratification. Through its interrogation of flat categorizations and the violence that racism perpetuates on individual subjectivities, *Love* recognizes the continuities of the colonial in the post-/neo-colonial period. Such recognition, even in the form of literary texts, is the necessary first step towards the eradication of colonialism’s effects. Thus, in order to achieve true independence and fulfill the promise of the sole successful slave revolution in world history, Haiti needs to acknowledge and disavow its enduring colonial inheritance (Dubois 13).
Chapter 4: Exploring Colonial Inheritance, Traumatized Subjectivities, and Skewed Sexuality in
Tierno Monénembo’s *The Oldest Orphan*

Tierno Monénembo’s *The Oldest Orphan* (2000) uses the 1994 Rwandan genocide and its aftermath as the backdrop to a story of a young man who fell through the cracks of his society and is currently awaiting execution on death row.\(^{237}\) Monénembo’s novel demonstrates through the content and form of the narrative that the fifteen-year-old survivor’s subjectivity had been irremediably fragmented by the trauma he experienced when a group of Hutu extremists massacred the Tutsis and moderate Hutus in his village.\(^{238}\) In comparison to most of the literature about the genocide, *The Oldest Orphan* is less directly about the event, which is always

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\(^{237}\) Guinean writer Tierno Monénembo’s novel, *The Oldest Orphan* (first published in French 2000 and translated into English by Monique Fleury Nagem in 2004) was written as part of a project of Fest’Africa, the annual African arts and literature festival based in Lille, France (Small 1). The project was entitled “Rwanda: écrire par devoir de mémoire,” which translates as “writing so as not to forget,” and encouraged African writers to address the Rwandan genocide (King vii). The organizers, such as Nocky Djedanoum from Chad, felt that Africans had been too silent about it, and the project was formed “in reaction to the Western media’s ‘colonisation’ of the genocide,” for example presenting it as a civil war or tribal conflict (King vii, Hitchcott 152). The writers involved in “Rwanda: écrire par devoir de mémoire” were from eight different African nations (Hitchcott 151). The group went to Rwanda in 1998 to participate in a residency, show their moral solidarity with the Rwandan people, tour genocide sites, and interview survivors from both sides (Jean-Charles 253). Nine published texts resulted from this project (four novels, two travel narratives, two essays, and a poetry collection) (Hitchcott 151).

\(^{238}\) Starting in April 1994 and continuing for three months, an ethnic genocide occurred in Rwanda during which likely over one million Tutsis, Twas, and moderate Hutus lost their lives, according to official reports (Melvern *Conspiracy to Murder* 250). The physical violence towards Tutsis was accompanied by the “systematic and serial rape of Tutsi women”; between 250,000 and 500,000 rapes were committed during the genocide (Gourevitch 113, Jean-Charles 252). In addition, reprisal killings of suspected génocidaires, the French word for one who commits an act of genocide, and other atrocities against Hutu civilians were committed by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (or RPF, a rebel army that was led by Tutsi refugees from earlier persecutions) (Gourevitch 113, 219, 20). Although both the Tutsi and Hutu groups perpetrated acts of violence, the genocide was not the result of ancient tribal warfare, an interpretation that was widely dispersed by the press, but was the consequence of careful planning by the Akazu (the inner circle of Rwandan President Junéval Habyarimana’s regime) and the Zero Network (the death squad controlled by the Akazu) (Kroslak xi). While we will probably never know for sure who was responsible for shooting down President Habyarimana’s plane on April 6, 1994—an event used as justification for the genocide—Fergal Keane believes the most plausible explanation is that “soldiers of the presidential guard based next to the airport fired the missiles” (27). Similarly, Daniela Kroslak finds it likely that members of the Akazu were involved; they were not willing to give up their power as a result of the concessions President Habyarimana made during the Arusha Accords (47). This explanation would account for the fact that the first road block in Kigali was set up an hour before the plane went down (Kroslak 47).
looming in the background but is not represented until the final pages.\(^{239}\) In this way, the form of the novel highlights the content; a discussion of the central event of the novel, the 1994 genocide, is relegated to the periphery or margins of the text. Monénembo has stated that he could not be a witness or a journalist but wanted to make the experience more human (King x). He has said he needed to have some distance from the events, which comes through in his choice of formal techniques (King x). By employing the “poetics of peripheralization” to tell his story, Monénembo bestows tremendous weight on his young narrator’s experience of the genocide and the fragmentation of his subjectivity that results. Further, through educating readers about this historical trauma, including both its causes and the relentless ramifications, Monénembo’s novel works to instill renewed meaning in the phrase “never again.”

Like Marie Vieux-Chauvet’s critique of François Duvalier’s regime in Haiti, which is masked by her decision to set the novella in 1939, Monénembo’s novel uses literary devices, such as Faulknerian deferral, to distance readers from the colossally tragic event, while simultaneously building towards the final release when the genocide is described. In this chapter, I will explore Monénembo’s use of the “poetics of peripheralization” not only to portray the fragmented subjectivity of titular orphan and narrator of the novel, Faustin Nsenghimana, and the textual manifestation of his trauma, but also to subtly condemn the groups who were warned about the imminent genocide yet did nothing to stop it.\(^{240}\) I will demonstrate the negative effects

\(^{239}\) Although the description is delayed, Monénembo accurately portrays the event; Adele King refers to his depiction as being “very close to what happened” (xi).

\(^{240}\) Faustin’s name recalls the protagonist of the German legend, Faust, who supposedly makes a pact with the Devil; Faust exchanges his soul for worldly knowledge and pleasures. If Monénembo’s Faustin loses his innocence and perhaps his soul, it is not as a result of any pact he has made but a consequence of the actions of adults and his nation’s colonial inheritance. Roméo Dallaire, the Canadian senator and humanitarian who served as Force Commander of UNAMIR (the UN peacekeeping force in Rwanda) in 1993 and 1994, authored a book about the experience entitled \textit{Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda}. The title of Dallaire’s book may also be seen as a reference to the Faust legend.
of colonial inheritance on the future of Rwanda, symbolized by Faustin, and also on sexuality and gender relations through analyzing the depiction of damaged sexuality in the book. I argue that colonial policies and mindsets are largely to blame for the racist, sexist, and violent culture inherited by post-independence Rwanda, and as a result the genocide itself, as portrayed in Monénembo’s *The Oldest Orphan.* Through his language, voice, and the form of his narrative—the absences and gaps as well as what is present—Faustin’s story and its accompanying traumas reveal the ways in which cycles of unspeakable violence and the devaluation of human life remain in place in the bedrock beneath the post-/neo-colonial period and the widespread range of their effects.

The Politics of Peripheralization: Rwanda’s Inescapable Colonial Inheritance

Through its contemporariness, *The Oldest Orphan* extends my argument about the entwinement of colonialisms made in previous chapters, demonstrating their continuation into the present era. As was the case in Faulkner’s South and Vieux-Chauvet’s Haiti, in Monénembo’s portrayal of Rwanda, it is difficult to tell where colonial relations end and neo-colonial relationships begin. Faustin’s narration reveals that Rwanda’s colonial past remains

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241 In addition to the brutal violence and sexual violation to which the Tutsis were subjected, the RPF killed hundreds and possibly thousands of Hutu civilians and suspected génocidaires; atrocities were committed on both sides (Gourevitch 219). Observers, nevertheless, were impressed with “the overall restraint of this rebel army [the RPF towards the end of the genocide], even as its soldiers were finding their ancestral villages, and their own families, annihilated” (Gourevitch 219). Other scholars agree with this characterization, such as Alain Destexhe, who argues that the “FAR have committed genocide and the RPF have carried out exactions: two things that cannot be compared” (61). In addition to the reprisal killings, another human rights tragedy that resulted from the genocide was the cholera epidemic in July 1994 that swept through the Hutu refugee camps in Goma killing more than thirty thousand (Gourevitch 163). As if trying to make up for its inaction during the genocide, the international community came to the aid of the Hutu refugees immediately and intensely (Gourevitch 163). Philip Gourevitch describes the response as “the largest, most rapid, and most expensive deployment by the international humanitarian-aid industry in the twentieth century” (165). The camps receiving aid were organized into replicas of the Hutu power state; thus, the génocidaires were able to manipulate the international community to come to their aid—something their Tutsi victims had never been able to accomplish (Gourevitch 166).
present through the West’s predatory relations with the small nation, in addition to the lingering effects of colonial hierarchies and ideologies on Rwandan society (which will be explored in more depth through the focus on sexual violence in the final sections of this chapter). In my analysis of Monénembo’s novel, I build on Marie-Chantal Kalisa’s argument that “colonialism [is] the root of postcolonial violence” and argue that the causes of the Rwandan genocide in 1994, as well as the massacres of Tutsis in 1959, 1963, 1967, and 1973 and the reprisal slaughter of Hutus, can be connected back to Rwanda’s colonial heritage and the influence of the European colonizing powers (11). 242 In precolonial Rwanda, the Hutus and Tutsis spoke the same language, practiced the same religion, and intermarried. 243 There were no innate racial or biological differences between the Hutus and Tutsis but social differences, for instance based on cattle-ownership (Gourevitch 47, Keane 17). 244 By gaining land and cattle or through marriage, Hutus could become Tutsis in precolonial Rwandan society, and in the reverse situations, Tutsis

242 Ali Behdad writes that “In the colonial project, violence is not opposed to reason; rather it completes the colonialist logic,” through the purported civilizing mission espoused by the colonizing nations (Behdad 202, Morgan and Youssef 10). Like Behdad, Alain Destexhe traces many of the current problems experienced by postcolonial nations back to colonialism. Destexhe describes “the Hutu radicals [as] inheritors of the colonial lunacy of classifying and grading different ethnic groups in a racial hierarchy,” making that connection between European colonial hierarchies and the ethnic divide in Rwanda even more explicit (Destexhe 28). Of this connection between the colonial system and the European conception of race, Anne McClintock writes: “imperialism is not something that happened elsewhere—a disagreeable fact of history external to Western identity. Rather, imperialism and the invention of race were fundamental aspects of Western, industrial modernity” (Imperial Leather 5).

243 The three central ethnic groups in Rwanda are the Hutus who are the majority and traditionally worked as farmers, the Tutsis who included the royal family in the pre-colonial period and customarily owned cattle, and the Twas, also known as the pygmies, who were looked down upon by both Hutus and Tutsis (King v, Gourevitch 7). While the Hutus and Tutsis would intermarry in the pre-colonial era, the Twas tended to remain separate. During the genocide in 1994, the Twas were sometimes considered to be “royalist tools” and were put to death, while in other instances they were employed by the extremist Hutus as rapists, in Gourevitch’s words, “to add an extra dash of tribal mockery to the violation of Tutsi women” (8).

244 The idea that the Hutus and the Tutsis were different races seems to have originated with John Hanning Speke, the English colonial agent and explorer (Melvern A People Betrayed 11). Speke believed there was a natural explanation for the social differences he observed and that the Tutsis were a superior race (Melvern A People Betrayed 12). Fergal Keane notes that if he had learned anything during his time in Rwanda, it is that the pure ethnic divide is indeed a myth, citing that the “leader of the Interahamwe militia [a Hutu civilian militia, whose name means ‘those who work together’], Robert Kajuga, was a Tutsi whose father had succeeded in changing the family identity to Hutu” (Keane 11, Kroslak 40).
would become Hutus. The divide between Hutus and Tutsis was fluid before the identity card system imposed by Belgium, positioning the categories more accurately as social rather than ethnic or racial. These social distinctions were reified by the European colonists in order to underwrite colonial hierarchies, emphasizing the centrality of difference to the colonial system (Gourevitch 47). Racial differences in Rwanda were not the precolonial inheritance from fixed ethnic groups, but the consequence of European notions of racial distinctions. The Oldest Orphan subtly challenges this emphasis on racial difference by way of the absence of this central information in the text. The novel does not reveal Faustin’s ethnicity (he is of both Hutu and Tutsi heritage) until the end of the narrative, deemphasizing this aspect of his identity. In this way, the novel can be seen as rewriting the identity card system, which blatantly underscored ethnic differences and was a tool that helped génocidaires to target victims in 1994.

Indeed, the colonial crimes of racism and violence in Rwanda may in part be seen as originating with the colonial administrations of Belgium, Germany, and later France both through warped European notions of racial difference and direct contact with these Western

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245 The Belgians considered the Tutsis to be superior Africans or the missing link between the black and white races, in opposition to the Hutus, who were seen as uneducated and simple peasants (Destexhe 38). According to the stereotypes created by the colonizers: “Tutsis had ‘nobler,’ more ‘naturally’ aristocratic dimensions than the ‘coarse’ and ‘bestial’ Hutus” (Gourevitch 55-6).

246 By intensifying the ethnic divide in Rwanda, the Belgians, in particular, used features of the existing social structure to subjugate Rwandans (Gourevitch 55). While the ethnic categories Hutu and Tutsi were not altogether invented by the colonizers, “the policies practiced by the Germans and the Belgians only exacerbated them. They played an essential role in creating an ethnic split and ensured that the important feeling of belonging to a social group was fuelled by ethnic, indeed, racial, hatred” (Destexhe 41). In the words of Philip Gourevitch: “Colonization is violence, there are many ways to carve out that violence…the Belgians dispatched scientists to Rwanda. The scientists brought scales and measuring tapes and calipers, and they went about weighing Rwandans, measuring Rwandan cranial capacities, and conducting comparative analyses of the relative proturbance of Rwandan noses,” which lead to the solidification of ethnic differences through the system of identity cards (Gourevitch 55). In addition to their role in exacerbating the ethnic divide, the Belgians, after supporting the Tutsis as the ruling class/native elite, changed allegiances and shifted to backing the “causes of the suppressed masses” or the Hutus, leading to the escalation of social and political animosity (Destexhe 43).
nations. Old colonial relationships linger under a different guise, for example in the case of Rwanda and France. Their formal ties remained in place after Rwandan independence was granted in 1962. France played a role in the 1994 Rwandan genocide through offering military training and financial support to the extremist Hutus in power. Therefore, the cyclical nature of colonial crimes discussed in previous chapters is also visible in late twentieth-century Rwanda: the violence and racism of the colonial system is in part responsible not only for the solidification of the separate Hutu and Tutsi racial groups but also the animosity between them and the resulting waves of genocide from the 1960s to the 1990s.

Further, the neocolonial character of the relationship between Rwanda and the West can be seen not only in the continued inflation of Rwanda’s civil politics and racial differences, but also in the global community’s failure to take the actions necessary to avoid the slaughter.

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247 Some scholars, such as Linda Melvern, trace the violence in Rwandan society back to the pre-colonial period, as “[t]he king’s armies would plunder and pillage harvests and seize and rape girls and women” (A People Betrayed 10). However, the king Melvern describes as having “institutionalized state violence,” King Rwabugiri, is the same king who received German Count Gustav Adolf von Götzen at his court after, unbeknownst to the king, the European powers had bestowed Rwanda upon Germany after the Berlin Conference of 1885 (Melvern A People Betrayed 10, 8). Therefore, while less direct, there is still a connection between the institutionalization of violence in Rwanda and colonialism, even in the pre-colonial era.

248 Rwanda also remained close to Belgium, as the latter continued to rule Rwanda as a UN Trust Territory after World War II and oversaw the transition to independence. However, I am interested in the less public relations that existed between Rwanda and France, as well as France’s role in the 1994 genocide. France’s culpability in the genocide goes beyond Belgium and Germany’s inflation of social distinctions and the effects of the violence of colonial rule. France directly supported the extremist Hutus in the form of arms and military training—the roadblock to the crash site of President Habyarimana’s plane “contained elements of a French-created unit in the para-commando brigade,” and it is believed that there were at least “forty senior French military personnel involved in advising Rwandan armed forces” (Melvern Conspiracy to Murder 58, 135, 258). French intervention was the key to halting the RPF advances in 1992-1993 and also ensured that the perpetrators of the genocide were not arrested (Destexhe 52, 54). Further, in June of 1994, France decided to lead a military expedition into Rwanda guised as a humanitarian mission, Opération Turquoise, which shipped arms for the Hutu Power regime; the French military was welcomed by bands of interahamwe singing and waving signs with slogans like “Welcome French Hutus,” as well as French flags (Gourevitch 155). According to Linda Melvern, this operation achieved “in fact nothing less than a resurgence in the genocide” (Conspiracy to Murder 247).

249 French President François Mitterrand was quoted in Le Figaro as saying: “In such countries, genocide is not too important” (Gourevitch 325). However, in the case of France, inaction or indifference was not the problem, so much as aiding the Hutu extremists in what may been seen as the extension of a colonial relationship into the neo-colonial period. The French would benefit from Rwanda’s inflamed civil politics and were invested in the defeat of
According to “Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide,” those “who most egregiously failed to use their power and influence included the governments of France, Belgium, the US, the UK, the Catholic Church and the US Secretariat” (Melvern Conspiracy to Murder 256). The money that paid for the arming of Rwanda came from international funding: the World Bank, the IMF, France, Germany, Belgium, and the U.S. (Melvern Conspiracy to Murder 57). In his memoir of traveling in Rwanda in late May and early June of 1994, journalist Fergal Keane succinctly summarizes the global failings in response to the genocide:

the Americans were dithering over whether to use the word ‘genocide’ and haggling over the terms for the hire of armoured cars to the UN force; the Belgians had pulled their troops out after 10 soldiers had been disarmed and tortured to death; the French were supplying the government side; Britain said little and did nothing; and the countries of Africa shouted loud but were also doing little. (125)

In this way, along with the violence of colonial rule and the former colonizers’ establishment of their notions of race in Rwanda, global complicity failed to prevent the genocide and may be seen as the reason that it lasted as long as it did. The world knew of the violence but did not effectively act to prevent or curb it. The remainder of this chapter will examine Faustin’s
portrayal of the enduring effects of the genocide on the generations that survived, including the fragmentation of subjectivities, damaged relationships, and the social acceptance of sexual violence, and argue that these effects can be traced to the violence of colonial relations and the sustained neocolonial contact between Rwanda and the West.

“My memory of the genocide stops here”: Trauma and Form in The Oldest Orphan

Although genocide is often referred to as “ultimately unthinkable, unspeakable, and certainly unrepresentable, the Rwandan genocide has very much been thought about, spoken about, and represented and very soon after the event” (Small 2). Following Paula Morgan and Valerie Youssef’s belief that narrative can function as a palliative and that “major therapeutic intervention resides in the ability to speak one’s pain in the face of traumatic events which stun individuals and peoples into silence,” I argue that writing or sharing one’s experience with a community can help one cope with a traumatic experience (222). Narratives of trauma allow the healing subjects to “reconstruct themselves as empowered survivors” and also to connect with others in their communities, replacing their isolation with networks of support (Morgan and Youssef 210). Trauma is defined as an event “whose violent singularity overwhelms the psyche’s capacity to assimilate or represent it” (Stringer 67). Nevertheless, the unrepresentability of a traumatic experience does not negate the healing potential in speaking, writing, and sharing one’s story. Faustin Nsenghimana, the narrator of The Oldest Orphan,

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252 For more information about the relationship between trauma and literature see: Nicolas Abrahahm and Maria Torok’s The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis, Cathy Caruth’s Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History, Greg Fortier’s Gender, Race, and Mourning in American Modernism, E. Ann Kaplan’s Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature, Dominick LaCapra’s Writing History, Writing Trauma, Elaine Scarry’s The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World, Susan Sontag’s Regarding the Pain of Others, Dorothy Stringer’s Not Even Past: Race, Historical Trauma, and Subjectivity in Faulkner, Larsen, and Van Vechten.
overcomes the repression of his experience of the genocide through narrating his story—as fragmented and achronological as his account may be.

If, as Shoshana Felman writes, “The breakage of the verse enacts the breakage of the world,” then narratives of trauma necessarily depend on experimental formal techniques to portray the inner turmoil of a subject (25, emphasis in original). Thus, fragmentation is not just an effect but a way of telling the story. As a case in point, Monnéembo’s *The Oldest Orphan* relies heavily on techniques, such as Faulknerian deferral and a fragmented narration jumping frequently between the past and present without warning, as well as an unreliable narrator and a muted critique of those organizations warned about the genocide that appears in Faustin’s misuse of language to which I will return in the next section. Monnéembo’s novel uses these literary devices not only to distance readers from the horror of what occurred—the unspeakable acts of genocide—but also in an attempt to depict a subjectivity that has undergone a traumatic experience. Monnéembo’s engagement with politics and use of experimental formal techniques positions him alongside William Faulkner and Marie Vieux-Chauvet as a novelist employing the “poetics of peripheralization” towards particular ends, in this case, portraying the painful history of postindependence Africa (King x). As described in the previous chapters, the “poetics of peripheralization” is a term coined by Hosam Aboul-Ela to describe the use of experimental formal techniques in a way that is more engaged with political history and economy than typical modernist literature, as we see in the writing of many postcolonial authors, including Faulkner, Vieux-Chauvet, and Monnéembo. I argue that as a result of each author’s use of the “poetics of peripheralization,” these disparate novels can be seen as doing similar work: critiquing the

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253 As explored in Chapter 1, the term Faulknerian deferral refers to Faulkner’s use of deferred revelation as “an accumulating mystery and a whirling vertigo—gathering momentum rather than being resolved, through deferral and disclosure—and centered in a place to which he felt a need to give meaning” (Glissant *Faulkner, MS 9*).
lingering effects of colonialism on various post-/neo-colonial regions. Faustín’s narrative does not distinguish between the present and the past, underscoring the inescapable nature of colonial crimes.

It is no accident that Monénembo employs the Faulknerian technique of deferral, since Faulkner had a strong influence on him as a writer. Monénembo believes that in Faulkner’s works, the “sin was committed in the beginning,” which means that “people are not really born: they come into the world to atone for their sin” (“Faulkner and Me” 14). This theme can be seen linking Monénembo’s portrayal of Rwanda’s youth in *The Oldest Orphan* to Faulkner’s depiction of Quentin Compson, Isaac McCaslin, and those of their generation who inherited the U.S. South’s colonial legacy in the post-/neo-colonial period after Reconstruction. Monénembo has stated that “the tragedy of the descendants is truly a constant in the Faulknerian approach,” not only the tragedy of the curses from the Civil War or the death of a patriarch, but also of genealogical lines (“Faulkner and Me” 14). This is another point of contact between Faulkner’s work and Monénembo’s novel in which we see the obliteration of genealogy (and Faustin’s resulting obsession with procreation, explored in full below), leading to a bleak portrayal of Rwanda’s youth and by extension Rwanda’s future (14). These connections lead me to argue

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254 In a speech given at the 33rd annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference in Oxford, Mississippi, Tierno Monénembo addressed the question of why writers of the Third World are so fascinated with the works of William Faulkner. Monénembo responded: “For one very simple reason: because he deals with the two big questions that haunt African literature: language and history” (“Faulkner and Me” 15).

255 Another connection between Monénembo and Faulkner is the experimental narrative style shared between the two, which has the effect of depicting the shifting relationship between the past and the present. For example, like the cyclical narrative style used in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Monénembo’s novel *Un rêve utile* is told “in continual circles of events between Lyon and Guinea, to give the reader a feeling of the shock of an exile moving from one city to the other” (King ix). Further, Monénembo himself considers his novel *Pelourinho* to be closely related to the works of Faulkner. It was his intention in this novel to “conjure up Salvador de Bahia [a city on the northeastern coast of Brazil] on the measure of Faulkner” (“Faulkner and Me” 8). Like *Absalom, Absalom!*, the novel is concerned with an unearthing of the past; it is the story of an African man who searches for the history of his family among a former slave colony in Brazil (King ix). As in *Absalom, Absalom!*, the events of the novel are told indirectly through multiple narrators. Throughout his body of work, Monénembo reveals that, like Faulkner, he is
that the works discussed in this dissertation may be seen as foundational to an alternative literary canon, privileging the work done by the “poetics of peripheralization” and what these novels reveal about the persistence of colonial ideologies.

*The Oldest Orphan* has a complicated relation to memory and the past. Like Faulkner’s Quentin Compson, Monénembo’s characters are “obsessed with memory, for they have a heavy unbearable past” (King x). The story is told from the perspective of a single narrator, young Faustin, who has “a past so heavy that he seems unable even to recall it” (King x). Indicative of the state of Faustin’s subjectivity, the narrative flashes back and forth between his life after the genocide and his present in which at fifteen he is on trial for the murder of his friend in Kigali. Although we are not privy to this information until the end of the narrative, we discover that in the years after the genocide while they were living on the street, Faustin killed his friend, Musinkôro, for sleeping with his younger sister, Esther. While Esther’s level of consent is unknown, she was between eight and ten years old at the time. As readers wade deeper into the narrative, it becomes clear that Faustin’s subjectivity has been damaged by the trauma he experienced when the génocidaires arrived in his village shortly after his tenth birthday.

Monénembo uses Faulknerian deferral as a way of coping with a subject deemed unspeakable, which comes across in the novel as Faustin’s repression of his experience of the genocide. Faustin does not use the word “genocide” until the final page; after filling in the missing pieces of his experience, he states: “My memory of the genocide stops here” (96). Only after reaching particularly invested in exploring the ways in which the present period connects to the past—both through his chosen subject matter and narrative techniques.

²⁵⁶Faustin’s murder of Musinkôro for sleeping with his younger sister is reminiscent of Quentin Compson’s defense of his sister Caddy’s purity in *The Sound and the Fury* and also of the love triangle between Charles Bon and his half siblings, Henry and Judith Sutpen, as reconstructed by Quentin in *Absalom, Absalom!* This is further evidence putting Monénembo’s novel in dialogue with Faulkner’s work.
the novel’s conclusion do readers learn that he survived the massacre at the church at Nyamata in which approximately 10,000 Rwandans, including his parents, were killed (www.genocidearchiverwanda.org).\textsuperscript{257}

Faustin’s act of murder must be read in light of his traumatic experience during the genocide, marking him as “both victim and murderer, child and man, innocent and guilty” (McNee 2). Faustin has seen his entire community, including his own parents, horribly violated. He no longer has restraint when the protection of his family is concerned. Lisa McNee regards Faustin’s murderous act as directly resulting from his experience of the genocide; the murder was his way of attempting to recreate his family. McNee states that “Faustin seems able to bridge the gap between the present and pre-genocidal life through memory and language; however, language fails him, and he uses violent retaliation in order to recreate the family and the role of the patriarch who protects his own” (McNee 7). I argue that Faustin’s language ultimately does not fail him: if the failure is seen in his inability to speak the truth of his experience, then the narrative itself embodies his victory over language. Further, while I do not think the link between Faustin’s murder and his experience of genocide is as necessarily straightforward as McNee’s reading purports (although from his perspective it was done with the defense of his family’s honor in mind), the two are clearly connected. Faustin does not overtly acknowledge this link, yet he reveals to the readers that he decided to get a gun after noticing that his sisters were growing up and attracting attention on the streets: “A gnawing anger mixed with an incomprehensible feeling of shame took hold of me. These fevered looks directed at

\textsuperscript{257} Faustin survived buried beneath a mound of bodies. Linda Melvern, in describing another massacre that occurred during the 1994 genocide at the École Technique Officielle (ETO), noted that the survivors were “mostly children who hid under the bodies” (A People Betrayed 5). Monénembo’s use of this detail helps to position his account as true to the reality of what occurred. This connection to bodies also emphasizes Faustin’s attempt to protect his sister’s body in another sense, through killing Musinkôro for his sexual violation of it.
their bodies reminded me of a swarming of caterpillars on a newborn’s back” (51). I would not go as far as to call the murder premeditated, but Faustin did purchase a gun with the knowledge that he may need to use violence to protect his sisters from sexual assault. Therefore, we cannot interpret Faustin’s murder accurately unless the traumatising impact of the genocide on his life and family is considered as well: his inability to protect his family from genocidal violence results in his elevated desire to protect his sisters from sexual violence. This impact is not revealed directly by Faustin but must be inferred through the gaps, silences, and misinformation, as well as the detachment with which he tells his story. Throughout the novel, readers are kept at a distance from Faustin’s interiority and the truth of his experiences and must work to put the pieces of his story together in spite of this—both an effect of Faustin’s trauma and the physical manifestation of this trauma in the text.258

As described in Chapter 1, deferral and repetition are two common textual expressions of trauma. Monénembo’s novel relies primarily on the former to depict Faustin’s trauma through his unconscious repression of his memory of the genocide; he does not reveal his experience until the end of the novel. Morgan and Youssef note that trauma’s “quality of belatedness is rooted in the protective device of dissociation and distancing of the conscious memory while the event is taking place” (217). The mind is unable to take in the horror of the event experienced, yet the body remembers and represses until the full weight of the experience comes rushing back, which in The Oldest Orphan occurs on the last page (Morgan and Youssef 217). In the penultimate paragraph, Faustin states that his memory of the genocide stops here: “The rest, I was told later, or it resurfaced on its own in my tattered memory, in spurts, like muddy water

258 An example of this work done by readers includes the fact that Faustin hides his direct experience of the genocide until the end of the novel, forcing readers to discover the truth of his brush with genocide through the gaps and nuances of his story.
pouring out of a clogged pump” (Monénembo 96). Not only is a description of the actual events of the genocide deferred until the end of the novel, but so are the particulars of Faustin’s story, including which side of the violence he is on. Monénembo seems to leave this purposely vague. Towards the beginning of the novel, Faustin momentarily breaks down the mental walls he has built around his traumatic experience: “Was it to save my skin, or was it the effect of his authoritative presence? I made a superhuman effort to go back over the famous advents that my memory refused to revisit. Suddenly, it was all clear. My mouth opened and words spurted out…” (26). While Faustin is able to acknowledge that there are missing pieces to his story, he is not yet ready to confront the content. Faustin temporarily overcomes his repression of the genocide in this episode; however, shortly after, he puts his defenses back in place. He returns to his blocked version of the past, as well as his drive to locate his parents. Faustin follows this onslaught of memory with the statement: “My confession lasted a week” (26). His use of the word “confession” reinforces the ambiguity of his position and implies that if anything he is a génocidaire as opposed to a survivor—although in the final pages of the novel he reveals himself as the latter. Perhaps reconstructing himself as an implied génocidaire helps Faustin to feel less vulnerable and to disassociate himself from the reality of his situation. In other words, by imagining himself on the opposite end of the violence, Faustin inverts his victimization to increase the distance between himself and the truth of what occurred.

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259 Between his characterization of the words spurtling out of his mouth in this scene and his description on the final page of the novel of his memory returning in spurts “like muddy water pouring out of a clogged pump,” Faustin emphasizes the similarity between his returning memory and flowing water (Monénembo 96). This metaphor illustrates Faustin’s need to tie his repressed memory to something concrete like water spurting out of a clogged pipe in order to make sense of what is happening to him, which emphasizes his young age. Further, his characterization of his memory as water flowing bestows agency on the water through its ability to flow, downplaying his control over the release.
Similarly, throughout the novel Faustin’s ethnicity is unknown, until the last few pages in which it is revealed that his father is a Hutu and his mother is a Tutsi. Even though he is a Hutu, however, his father chooses to remain with his wife and son in the church and the two adults are murdered side-by-side. The only reference to Faustin’s race previous to the novel’s conclusion occurs when he is captured by a young member of the Rwandan Patriotic Front. Because he was living on his own immediately after the genocide, he is automatically suspected of being a génocidaire. The young RPF member who captures him tells him, “you’re better off in our hands. With the FAR [Forces armées rwandaises (Rwandan Armed Forces) or President Habyarimana’s army] you wouldn’t stand a chance; you could be taken for a traitor since you waited so long to follow the others, and besides, I don’t know if you’re aware of it, but you look like a Tutsi” (23). This comment is not followed up until the end of the novel when readers discover that Faustin resembles a Tutsi because he is of combined Hutu and Tutsi heritage.

In addition to the deferral of information central to the story, such as Faustin’s ethnicity and direct experience of the genocide, the interlacing of the past and present in the novel reveals that the violence Faustin witnessed on the day he survived the massacre at Nyamata impacted his entire life. The violence he experienced is partially responsible for his own murder of Musinkôro and for the detachment with which he views his life and trial. As Lisa McNee writes: “the novel, like a double-bottomed drawer, offers one version of its hero’s life that is followed by a different version after he has been imprisoned and can tell the listener/reader about his experience during the genocide” (2). I understand the narrative as working as a palliative for Faustin—through telling readers the truth of his past, Faustin is able to admit the reality of his traumatic experience. Nevertheless, Faustin’s narrative is fragmented and disorients readers by constantly switching between the events of the past and the present without warning—another
experimental formal technique used by Monénembo to represent the impact of the genocide on Faustin’s psyche and his attempts to use language in the face of trauma. Marc Nichanian writes that traumatized subjects can “tell it only in bits and pieces. The event has annulled in them the possibility of recounting the totality. In essence, the event is such that beyond it there remains only a speech in pieces, splinters and fragments of speech” (*Loss: The Politics of Mourning* 112). In this way, Faustin’s inability to tell his story as a cohesive whole but only in achronological fragments directly results from his traumatic experience during the genocide and represents his psyche working through that experience. By the end of the narrative, Faustin is able to process the reality of what happened, as conveyed through the form of the narrative. He is able admit to the truth not only to the readers but also to himself—although in order to arrive at this awareness, the readers have to cull through his repression of the event and the narrative unreliability that results.

**Faustin’s Language, Lies, and Unreliable Memory: A Critique of Rwanda’s Colonial Inheritance**

In an interview, Monénembo described the novel: “C’est d’abord une mémoire tordue, disloquée. Des bribes de mémoire. Car nous sortons d’une longue amnésia [In the first place, it’s a dishonest and dislocated memory. The fragments of memory. For we are coming out of a long amnesia]” (“Le Rwanda: Le désir de mémoire” 4, translation mine). Not only is Faustin’s narrative of trauma fragmented and achronological, but it is also to an extent dishonest. Faustin is an unreliable narrator. Throughout the novel, he misleads readers as to what happened to his family during the genocide until the last few pages. When interrogated by the RPF captain as to the location of his parents, he replies, “They’re in Gitarama,” to which the captain responds,
“Two days ago you were saying Byumba and even, I think, Kayonza” (25). He unconsciously lies to the readers and seemingly to himself, stating that if he had not been kept in jail: “[he] could have met [his] parents at Gabiro or Kigembe” (56). In the above examples, Faustin appears to act out of involuntary repression. Nevertheless, he also intentionally invents a false account of his parents’ deaths under the big kapok tree to deceive a group of BBC reporters investigating the aftermath of the tragedy in Rwanda (64). He wrongly identifies a man who murdered his father and another who raped his mother among a group of convicted génocidaires (65). With each Western television station and different genocide site, Faustin invents a new false testimony: “In places where I had never set foot, I’d immediately recognize the charred hovel my parents had been dragged out of; the yard filled with hibiscus where their hamstrings had been slashed; the church hall where they had been murdered…I’d remove my cap to show the scars across my head, lift my old sweater to expose the machete cuts on my shoulders and torso” (66). Through both lying to himself and consciously inventing multiple false accounts of what happened to his parents, Faustin attempts to distance himself from the reality of what occurred at the church at Nyamata.

Audrey Small finds the invented testimonies Faustin gives about the genocide to be problematic, while interestingly the scene is referred to by Adele King in the novel’s introduction as a “humorous episode” (Small 6, King x). Small argues that the false accounts given by Faustin “ride roughshod over any thought of respectful memory of the dead or justice for those still alive” (6). However, even before Faustin’s participation in the genocide has

260 Small notes that as a narrator, Faustin is not depicted as overtly distressed or traumatized (Small 9). She claims that he is not consciously trying to come to terms with the genocide, and she finds his flippant tone and the seeming lack of traumatism problematic in a novel about something as horrifying as the Rwandan genocide (Small 9). While I agree that Faustin does not appear directly traumatized throughout most of the novel, this is in part due to the tool
been revealed, readers are led to suspect that there is more to the story than Faustin’s seeming disrespect for the memories of those impacted by the violence. In the same paragraph in which he invents genocide memories, Faustin describes unveiling his own legitimate machete scars to add to his believability, leaving readers to wonder about the violence that caused them. I argue that the novel hints at the layers beyond the surface of this scene, which form yet another postcolonial palimpsest. By the time readers conclude the novel, it is clear that Faustin’s wild lies to the Western news stations were a coping mechanism used to distance himself from the unprocessed reality of his experience of the genocide. As Small herself notes, “[the] device of repressed memory is the key to understanding Faustin and to understanding the novel,” and I agree (9). Although the knowledge of Faustin’s participation in the genocide is deferred, it retrospectively changes the readers’ understanding of Faustin, his actions, and his narrative. Faustin’s traumatic experience accounts for his unreliability, achronological narrative, and the detachment with which he views the events of his life. The entire novel should be understood through the lens of his experience of trauma and the resulting fragmentation of his subjectivity. Readers do not have all of the pieces to clearly judge Faustin as a narrator or his experience until the final page of the novel.

Moreover, on another level, one can perhaps read the scene of Faustin’s invented genocide testimonies as a critique of Western news outlets. These media stations are portrayed as hungry for sensationalized accounts of the genocide off of which they can capitalize. Rodney, of Faulknerian deferral in the form of Faustin’s repression. To judge Faustin without an understanding of what he has been through and the toll it has taken on his psyche is to react to an incomplete version of the story. While Small finds this episode problematic, she notes that it is essential to recognize that although Faustin lies in episodes like this one, he does not consciously lie to readers at any point in his narrative (10). Unlike his misguidance of the BBC reporters, which he does for money and amusement (and perhaps to further distance himself from his experience of the genocide), Faustin misleads readers as a result of his own unconscious inability to accept the truth of the past.
an English journalist that Faustin meets in Kigali, describes his work as a freelancer for various television stations in this way. Rodney states: “There’s an earthquake in Columbia and Rodney’s there. A strong monsoon in India, and here comes weird Rodney and his strange gear. A massacre in Somalia, they call Rodney. Rodney is everywhere there’s trouble. Rodney is a doctor who arrives hoping things are even worse…” and later reiterates this sentiment in the form of an invented proverb: “Pierre’s tears? Honey for Rodney” (59). Rodney, like his employers, makes money off of the world’s catastrophes: the worse the destruction and the more sensational the account, the more lucrative the story. Rodney admits that if there is nothing to see in a given location, he makes it up: “That’s the gift of the cameraman: always give something to see, even if there’s nothing to show” (59). In addition to the critique of Western journalists and sensationalized representations of tragedy, another layer of criticism is present in the narrative, condemning the media and the West more generally for their deferred interest. Faustin asks Rodney why he is coming to Rwanda well after the genocide’s conclusion, to which Rodney replies: “Why, why? I don’t know. I’m just a bloody old wretch, Faustin; I come only when I’m called. And this time no one called me” (59). This moment in the text emphasizes the West’s belated investment in the genocide and gestures towards the world’s apathetic response when warned of the impending violence poised to ravage the small nation of Rwanda. If Rodney can be seen as a symbol for enterprising Western journalists, then he also represents the West’s disavowal of the Rwandan genocide. Monénembo’s critiques of the West are subtle and hidden beneath layers of the story, yet are cutting and in this case effectively reflect the West’s apathy.

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262 Proverbs are part of the culture in Rwanda, which is established in the novel from the epigraph forward: “The pain of others is bearable. Rwandan proverb” (2). Faustin’s narrative is sprinkled with proverbs, usually passed down to him by his father or Funga, his community’s witch doctor.

263 As discussed above, not all Western nations were indifferent to the violence. Former colonizing nations, like France, would benefit from the exacerbation of civil politics in Rwanda, which led to further neocolonial complicity between the former and the Hutu government.
and alternatively its predatory interest in Rwanda—which can be seen as the inheritance from the West’s colonial relationship with Rwanda.

Additionally, Monénembo’s subtle censure of the West’s belated concern with the genocide (or, in the case of former colonizing nations like France, the aggravation of the conflict) is revealed through a formal technique: Faustin’s misuse of language. Faustin’s innocence (or what Small deems his ignorance) is highlighted through his multiple mispronunciations or malapropisms that appear in the text as misspelling of words that he does not fully understand, such as “Hirish” for Irish, “pedrophile” for pedophile, “taumatrisms” for traumatisms, and “busenessmen” for businessmen (Small 8, Monénembo 37, 51, 55, 61). He attempts to follow others in his country, who refer to the genocide euphemistically as “the events” (or événements in French), but mistakenly uses the term “the advents” (or avènements) throughout his account, betraying his youth. While the genocide could be seen as the “advent” or arrival of the génocidaires to his village, it is clear that Faustin misuses the commonly used name for the genocide, betraying his youth and his ignorance of the details of the tragedy he survived. Faustin also unintentionally refers to the Vatican as the “Watican” and the United Nations as the “United Notions” (74). Through his malapropisms, Faustin is in conversation with Homi Bhabha’s conceptualization of colonial mimicry, “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (126, emphasis in original). Faustin’s language is recognizable in its resemblance to the terminology used by the adults around him in Kigali but is not quite the same. Through the incorrect

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264 A parallel can be seen here between Faustin’s innocence/ignorance of the details of the genocide he survived, as well as other aspects of his society, and Thomas Sutpen’s infamous innocence/ignorance of race and class relations, as described in Chapter 1. Further, Faustin and Sutpen are positioned as both innocent and guilty: Sutpen’s bivalence comes across in his identity as colonizer and colonized and Faustin’s in his status as murderer and victim.
syllables located within his attempts at real words, Faustin’s language, like Bhabha’s discourse of mimicry, “is constructed around an *ambivalence*” or in other words recurrently produces a slippage or difference in relation to the original (126, emphasis in original). In a reversal of the way in which colonial powers would enter peripheral regions and rename existing places, Faustin appropriates Western words for his own use. By misusing words as significant to the Rwandan genocide as the events, the Vatican, and the United Nations, Faustin appropriates political language and words signifying Western institutions; Faustin’s is a mimicry of the language of the West but also of adults more generally, underscoring his young age and innocence/ignorance.

In addition to defining Faustin through comparing him to what he is not (an adult knowledgeable about politics, the West, and the full significance of the events he survived), Faustin’s misuse of language can be read as another subtle condemnation by the author of the West’s inaction—in this case of two organizations which were warned about the genocide but did nothing to prevent it. Faustin uses the terms “the Vatican” and “the United Nations” when he is recounting the story of his Italian neighbor, Tonia Locatelli, a real-world figure who tried to warn the world of the impending genocide in 1992 before her murder by the Hutu militia (King xi). Faustin states: “And so her voice was heard on all international radios. She was asking that the *Vatican* and the *United Nations* be alerted. A great tragedy was about to happen. Tutsis were going to be killed, Hutus who weren’t for President Habyarimana were going to be killed, everything that moves was going to be killed, if nothing was done” (74, emphasis in original). Monénembo’s veiled critique results not only from Faustin’s malapropisms, but more directly from his inclusion of this historical figure who sacrificed her life two years previously to warn these organizations about the genocide only to have them fail to act against it. Faustin’s misuse of language and the indirect critique of the Vatican and United Nations illustrate my claim that
the novel employs the “poetics of peripheralization” and experimental techniques, from Faustin’s fragmented narrative to his unreliability and misuse of language, to comment on Rwanda’s post-/neo-colonial situation and the culpability of European colonialism.

Further, the contrast between Faustin’s seemingly innocent misuse of language and other formal techniques—his brutal descriptions and detached, derisive voice—is striking. Small describes Faustin as an intentionally shocking narrator: “he is by turns flippant, cynical and caustic, and full of aggression and bravado, with a good deal of boasting about sex and status, and his descriptions of places and people are no less colourful” (4). Instances of Faustin’s blunt language and insensitive descriptions of the violence and destruction of the genocide occur throughout the text, for example: “Like the mutilated bodies scattered throughout the brush, the night was thick enough to cut with a knife,” “Even in the stench of the gutters where, as the days went by, the piss of the drunkards and the whores replaced the coagulated blood and the sticky brain matter of the dead,” and “the next day her friend Suzanne got a surprise visit from a machete whiz” (22, 27, 45). Faustin’s language and images are brutal and graphic at times; however, when interpreting them, readers should keep in mind his experience of trauma and its impact on his subjectivity. I argue that not only is his repression of the genocide a coping mechanism but so is his detached, caustic approach to the violence his community suffered. While Faustin’s abrupt and dispassionate language would seem to reveal his loss of innocence, at the same time it speaks to his young age and the significant impact of the violence he survived on all aspects of his life.265

265 In addition to Faustin’s brutal language and impassive descriptions, his loss of innocence is revealed through the murder he committed and his life on the street, which includes stealing in order to survive and sleeping with the young girls in his street gang.
Faustin lost his innocence on the day the extremist Hutus came to Nyamata. This loss impacted him both physically, by leaving him a homeless orphan, and mentally, through his change in world view and the fragmentation of his subjectivity. Young Faustin embodies Monénembo’s belief that “une fois l’innocence perdue, ne reste plus rien [once innocence is lost, nothing remains]” (King xi, King’s translation). This belief is echoed in the text by the young RPF soldier who found Faustin walking about on his own after the events. Faustin asks the soldier if he really thinks that Faustin is a génocidaire, to which the soldier responds: “Everyone is! Children have killed children, priests have killed priests, women have killed pregnant women, beggars have killed other beggars, and so on. There are no innocents left here” (23). With the RPF soldier as his mouthpiece, Monénembo voices his belief that the violence of the genocide resulted in the death of innocence. Moreover, Faustin’s own loss of innocence is underscored by the use of metaphor in the text. Throughout the book Faustin refers to the day of the massacre as the day when the corporal took away his kite; until the novel’s end, readers do not know what else occurred that day. When the events of the genocide are finally described in the last few pages, Corporal Nyumurowo is depicted taking away Faustin’s kite, while Faustin, his parents, and his fellow villagers are huddled in the church at Nyamata: “‘Shut up!’ said Nyumurowo grabbing the kite from my hands. ‘Look at this kid, he brought his kite!...You think we’re here to play?’” (95). This is one of Nyumurowo’s last statements before he padlocks the door and begins the massacre. Faustin’s repeated references to the day “Corporal Nyumurowo grabbed [his] kite” emphasize the fact that he not only lost his family and mental stability that day, but also his innocence and ability to be a child, through the violence he survived (44).

If we, as readers, extrapolate from the portrayal of Faustin’s experience after the genocide and his loss of innocence (with the understanding that as a survivor, he is one of the
lucky ones) to the future of Rwanda more broadly, then Monénembo’s novel projects a pessimistic view of Rwanda’s prospects. Through the violence wreaked on his community and broader nation, Faustin lost everything from his parents and stable home environment to his sense of safety and cohesive subjectivity. Aside from Faustin, a brief survey of the other young characters in the novel reveals the negative state of the youth in the country. In addition to the dire situations of Faustin’s fellow prisoners (thirty boys are packed into a “cubbyhole” cell), the members of his young street gang are mostly orphans who sleep in an abandoned, unfinished building, steal to survive, and live to get high (10). The orphans are not strangers to death among their brood, as Sembé died from AIDS at fourteen and Musinkôro is shot by Faustin. Moreover, the situation at HQ (the headquarters of Faustin’s street gang) is worse for girls, who work alternatively as thieves and prostitutes. For example, ten-year-old Emilienne paints “her vagina with chicken blood she kept in a tube and carried with her at all times” and causes a scene, accusing one of her customers of brutal rape (50). The fact that Emilienne carries the tube of chicken blood with her “at all times” points to the regularity with which she is given work as a prostitute and, as a result, runs this scheme. Further, Faustin’s siblings were not present at the church at Nyamata on the day of the massacre and while the details of what they survived are never filled in, it is clear that their experiences were traumatic, adding to the bleak portrayal of

266 Like Monénembo, Linda Melvern also provides a bleak assessment of children’s situations in post-genocide Rwanda: “At least 100,000 children had been separated from their families, orphaned, lost, abducted or abandoned. Most of Rwanda’s children had witnessed extreme forms of brutality and 90 per cent of them had at some point thought they would die. Most children felt they had no future. They did not believe that they would live to become adults” (A People Betrayed 247). Additionally, Melvern writes that more than three hundred children had been accused of acts of genocide, some of whom were less than ten years old, and around 300,000 are believed to have been killed (A People Betrayed 247).

267 In reference to the situations of his fellow members of the Juniors’ Club or the youth prison, Faustin states: “we don’t have a fifty-fifty chance of getting a fungal infection, tuberculosis, or a stab in the belly; we just get it, period, and usually in the first two months, and it’s not rare for it to all happen to you in the same damn week” (10). As a specific example of the dire conditions in the prison, Faustin describes Agide, with whom he shares a mat, and his testicles that are “like porridge…his balls floating in pus and white worms crawling between his legs” (11).
children’s situations in post-genocide Rwanda. We are first introduced to them as anonymous children who are never seen but are notorious for the “absolutely unbearable hysterical weeping off and on, day or night, coming from the girls’ wing” at the orphanage and later discover that they are Faustin’s young siblings. If, as the common adage states, the youth are the future of a nation, then The Oldest Orphan leaves readers with a bleak picture of Rwanda’s outlook. A quotation on the back of the French edition of the book encapsulates the view that results when we extrapolate from the experiences of the youth in the novel to Rwanda’s future: “Les Adolescents doivent-ils payer pour les crimes des adultes? [Must the adolescents pay for the crimes of adults?]” (translation mine).

Pushing this concept a step further, we might also ask: must the formerly colonized continue to pay for the crimes of the colonial system? If the racial tensions between the Hutus and Tutsis were exacerbated by the Belgian colonial policy, the money that paid for the arming

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268 Faustin’s sister, two years his junior, is found having sexual relations with Musinkôro. While her level of consent is unknown, given her age, psychological instability, and Faustin’s reaction, a case can be made for rape, adding to the unpromising outlook for Rwanda’s youth.

269 This phrase, while a common saying in today’s world, is attributed to Phillipino nationalist, Jose P. Rizal, in his poem “To the Filipino Youth” translated by Charles Derbyshire: “Hold high the brow serene, / O youth, where now you stand; / Let the bright sheen / Of your grace be seen, / Fair hope of my fatherland!” (107).

270 When considering the novel’s negative outlook, one must keep in mind the context of the Fest’Africa project, “Rwanda: écrire par devoir de mémoire,” which intended to respond to and spread awareness of the horrors of the 1994 Rwandan genocide shortly after the events. Between the publication of The Oldest Orphan and now, there have been more positive takes, including that of David Kampf, who in the New York Times in 2013 describes the progress Rwanda has made since the genocide as “nothing less than remarkable” with millions out of poverty and nearly universal health care coverage (Nytimes.com). Kampf notes that over the last decade, “Rwanda’s economy has averaged above 8 percent growth per year, according to the IMF, and it is considered the best place in Africa to start a business, according to the World Bank’s latest rankings” (Nytimes.com). Another more positive take comes from Paul Kagame, the sixth and current president of Rwanda, who has stated: “People are not inherently bad. But they can be made bad. And they can be taught to be good” (Gourevitch 224). As Rwanda has the death penalty, to avoid more slaughter after the genocide, the RPF worked to distinguish between the masterminds behind the genocide and the “lesser offenders,” who were often assigned to “public works or reeducation programs” (Gourevitch 249-50). The RPF in post-genocide Rwanda was more concerned with “denazification” than holding each individual guilty of acts of genocide accountable: healing what was left of the country became the priority over vengeance (Gourevitch 250). While according to a UNICEF study, five out of six children who were in Rwanda during the genocide had witnessed violence in the least and the path towards recovery has been long and arduous, hope for the future would seem to be present when healing is prioritized over retribution (Gourevitch 224).
of Rwanda came from international sources (such as the World Bank, the IMF, France, Germany, Belgium, and the U.S.), and the West after it was warned failed to prevent or effectively curtail the genocide, then the nation’s bleak future may be seen as the negative result of Rwanda’s colonial inheritance (Melvern *Conspiracy to Murder* 57). Beyond the historical connection between Rwanda and the West, described in the previous section, Monénembo’s novel subtly exposes this association through its negative view of the belated yet predatory interest of Western media outlets in the genocide and its aftermath, its veiled critique of the “Waitcan” and the “United Notions,” and the fragmented subjectivities and seemingly impossible future inherited by Rwanda’s youth, symbolized by Faustin.

**Skewed Sexuality and Damaged Gender Relations in Monénembo’s Post-/Neo-Colonial Rwanda**

If Rwanda’s ethnic tensions, violent atmosphere, and bleak future are seen as the country’s inheritance from colonialism, then the same can be said about its skewed relationship to gender and sexuality, which even the novel’s young narrator demonstrates through his sexual relationships with the other children in his street gang and his demeaning, violent fantasies of Claudine, a social worker who befriends him. Not only are violence and racism key components of the colonial enterprise, but so are misogyny and sexual violence: Marie-Chantal Kalisa argues that “gendered violence is a corollary to imperialism and colonialism” (185).²⁷¹ For example, the violent occupation of a land by a foreign imperial power is often characterized as the possession

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²⁷¹ In their book, *Writing Rage*, Morgan and Youssef state that violent sexuality has often been connected to “the outworking of a history of traumatic imperial encounters,” as writers constructing Western patriarchal masculinity “propose a correlation between fear of femaleness and the impulse towards imperial conquest” (133). Thus, in their view, the fear of femaleness and the impulse to colonize and subdue nations are intertwined and both have a hand in the production of the colonial project.
of a woman’s body in colonial texts. As a result, the body of the colonized woman has come to represent both a national emblem and land itself—land that has been “violated by external assailants” (Kalisa 25, 164). Sexual violation of colonized women is central to the colonial system, both at the metaphoric level representing the occupation of land and, more concretely, as a direct and widespread consequence of colonialism. Therefore, damaged sexuality and gender relations in many postcolonial countries can be traced back to the ideologies and hierarchies of colonialism, in which white men were positioned above white women and colonized men and women and given free reign over those below them.

Similar to the ways in which the German and Belgium colonial systems exacerbated the existing social distinctions between the Hutus and the Tutsis to further their own ends (in a political system know as a ‘dual colonialism’ in which the Tutsis were put in an elite position over the Hutu majority but under the European colonizers), I argue that the colonizing countries also exploited preexistent gender divisions within Rwandan culture (Gourevitch 54, Mama 48). Generally precolonial Rwandan society was patriarchal; David Schoenbrun writes that the ‘marginalization of women from direct control of emerging forms of wealth was thus not only a colonial experience’ (486). A good amount of ethnographic evidence exists which supports separate gendered spheres or “deeply rooted cultural definitions of the hearth and the house as

272 One infamous example of the use of this metaphor comes from John Donne’s poem “To His Mistress Going to Bed.” In this poem, the speaker positions himself as an imperial adventurer and his lady as conquered terrain: “O my America! My new-found-land, / My kingdome, safest when one man man’d, / My mine of precious stones, my empery, / How blessed am I in discovering thee!” (25-30, Guibbory 53).

273 There were aspects of Rwandan society that challenged the patriarchal structure (Doyle 561). For example Cwezi-kubandwa, a religion that involved a form of spirit possession in the Great Lakes region of Africa (found in modern-day Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, northwest Tanzania, and eastern Congo), “provided women with status and an area of activity where they could experience some autonomy from male domination” (Doyle 561). The predominance of women in kubandwa groups gave women a sphere of influence separate from “male-focused ancestor veneration” and enabled women to resist the ideology of male control over female fertility, which was otherwise prevalent in precolonial society (Doyle 561).
female domains” in the Great Lakes region of Africa of the pre-colonial period (Schoenbrun 470). Both the colonial hierarchies of gender and race or ethnicity were not created by the colonizers outright but were certainly inflamed by their arrival. The “colonial period saw an increased vulnerability of African women to various forms of violence,” and colonialism can be seen as a source of contemporary forms of patriarchal violence in Africa (Mama 48). This gendered and sexual violence transitioned into the post-/neo-colonial period, as the colonial system created a situation in which black women were exposed to abuse by black men (Kalisa 4). In addition to more overt acts of physical and sexual violence against African women, “the colonization process also transformed African gender relations in complex, diverse, and contradictory ways that we have yet to fully understand” (Mama 55). The range of skewed sexuality and gender relations is illustrated in Monénembo’s novel through young Faustin’s interactions with women, which I explore before turning more specifically to the use of sexuality as a weapon during the genocide and the acceptance of sexual harassment on the streets of post-genocide Kigali.

_The Oldest Orphan_ illustrates the effects of colonialism on sexuality and gender relations, both through Faustin’s treatment of women and his observations about Rwandan society. While

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274 According to Anne McClintock, before the start of the Victorian imperial era, Africa and the Americas became the “porno-tropics for the European imagination—a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears” (22). The colonies were used as an outlet for Europe to work through and project the sexual desires considered taboo by the stipulations of the conservative Victorian mores. Similarly, McClintock continues: the “Victorian middle-class home became a space for the display of imperial spectacle and the reinvention of race, while the colonies—in particular Africa—became a theater for exhibiting the Victorian cult of domesticity and the reinvention of gender” (McClintock 34). Not only the hierarchies of race and class, but also gender in particular, were enmeshed with the development of Europe’s imperial enterprise and relation to the colonies. Traditional white European gender relations could be said to have developed in reaction to the interplay of race and gender in the colonies.

275 Similar to the slave system in the Southern United States, European colonialism more generally worked to both emasculate black men (through their lack of power over their conditions and the colonizers’ treatment of their families) and position them as rapists, as discussed by Jenny Sharpe in relation to British colonialism in India in _Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text_.
Faustin seems to buy into this mentality on one level—through sleeping with the girls in his street gang, his sexual bravado, and his incessant sexualization of Claudine—this is tempered by his own actions: specifically, murdering his friend when he discovers him in the sexual act with his young sister. It is within this disconnect between Faustin’s acceptance of this mentality and resistance to it as it directly affects his life and family that I locate a seed of hope for the future of Faustin’s Rwanda. All cannot be lost if after everything Faustin has experienced and witnessed, he on some level still knows that there is something wrong with the sexual violation of young girls—even if his society dictates otherwise.

Aside from the young girls in his street gang with whom he has unprotected sex, Faustin has significant interactions with a few women throughout the novel, which helps to elucidate his feelings about gender roles and sexuality. The social worker Claudine, the “Hirish” woman who runs the City of Blue Angels Orphanage, and Madame Clementine (the owner of a bar/whorehouse in Kigali) are all older women who function as mother figures to Faustin. Faustin makes this connection himself when Sembé suggests that they steal the money that the “Hirish” woman uses to fund the orphanage. Faustin states: “I don’t like the Hirish woman much, but I would never do that to her. If I weren’t so ungrateful, I should be calling her Mama” (51). To this, Sembé responds: “Oh, all those poor women who’ve been our mamas!” (51). This interaction highlights the centrality of the relationships between Faustin and prospective mother figures to the novel, as well as his repeated rejection of their influence, such as running away from the City of Blue Angels and refusing to work with the lawyer Claudine hires to remove him from death row. Thus, after the deaths of his parents, Faustin’s actions and choices reinforce the walls he has built between himself and others and his status as the oldest orphan of the novel’s title.
Further, Faustin’s interactions with another older female character, an unnamed white female journalist (who does not attempt to relate to him as a mother figure), reveal his feelings about gender roles. He describes her as “one woman who had no clue she was a woman because her behavior and her clothes were a lot like that of her companions” and later “a little laugh softened her face, which I found particularly masculine” (63). Faustin seems to be offended by the woman’s defiance of what he considers to be conventional gender roles. He purposely continues to call her “madame” after she discloses that she hates that term; in this way, he insists on gendering her (and as a result himself in relation to her) through refusing to refrain from using that courtesy title (63). When she asks if his parents are at the co-op, he replies: “No, with the other skulls” and states to the readers: “I was glad to unnerve her like that. She wasn’t the strongest after all” (64). Even though he positions the statement as a lie given to upset the female reporter, this is the one moment previous to the last page of the novel in which we get the truth of what happened to his parents. Unnerving the woman seemingly means more to Faustin than keeping his walls of repression in place, and I argue that this is also a method through which he attempts to affirm his masculinity. In the same way that colonized men were emasculated by their inability to protect their families from colonial violence and oppression, Faustin is unable to

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276 Another point of contact between the works of Faulkner and Monénembo, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, is that both authors include masculine female figures in their works, perhaps in order to comment on conventional gender roles and relations. In *Light in August*, two of Joe Christmas’s lovers of are depicted in a masculine way. His first lover, Bobby, not only has a man’s name but is described as having “big hands”—a masculine trait (180). Christmas’s last lover, Joanna Burden, is compared to a man multiple times throughout the novel: “Sometimes he thought of it in that way, remembering the hard, untearful and unselpworthy and almost manlike yielding of that surrender,” “It was as if he struggled physically with another man for an object of no actual value to either, and for which they struggled on principle alone,” “[she wore] a garment that looked as if it had been made for and worn by a careless man” (234, 235, 275). In addition to subtly commenting on Joe’s sexual type, these examples also seek to complicate our understanding of sexuality, traditional gender roles and interactions.

277 On another level, perhaps Western readers are invited to see themselves in both Rodney and the white female journalist—Westerners that on the surface seek to understand what happened in Rwanda in 1994, but cannot themselves avoid falling into a sensationalist relationship to the tragedy.
protect his family in the face of genocidal violence and sexual violation, which may explain his drive to assert his masculinity.

Faustin’s interactions with Claudine also reveal his relation to women and his sexuality, including both his performance of masculinity and his fixation on sexual acts and procreation. Faustin sexualizes Claudine during almost every encounter with her, including one of his more aggressively sexual soliloquies:

Watch it, lady, I’m no longer what you think! Ask Gabrielle, Séverine, Alphonsine! I’ve had them all! Of all my pals, I’m the one with the longest thing. When I’m really hard, it’s longer than a big soup spoon, and it fills my hand when I’m pleasuring myself in front of the women selling banana beer. I’d really like to mount you in a real iron bed with a mosquito net and some flowered pillows, given your social rank, but that I don’t dare tell you. (15)

In this passage, Faustin not only admits to having casual, unprotected sex with other street children, but also to pleasuring himself in front of the women who sell banana beer, perhaps to unsettle them in the same way that he does the female reporter and, consequently, to affirm his own sense of gender identity. Further, he graphically describes his fantasies about having sexual relations with Claudine, using a derogatory verb to express his wish to “mount” her. As I noted above, Faustin sexualizes Claudine in almost every interaction he describes between them and every memory he has of her throughout the novel; however, it is unclear whether he is affecting his over-the-top sexual bravado as another form of defense mechanism. In any case, Faustin focuses on Claudine’s body in order to divert his attention from the reality of his life on the streets and in prison. Why Claudine? Unlike the female reporter, Claudine’s clothes and body type position her as the embodiment of stereotypical femininity. This comes across through
Faustin’s descriptions of her, for instance: “Her breasts were larger, more worthy of being fondled and nibbled than the last time. She wore a flesh-colored wrapper that blended in with her complexion and was so tight around her rump that each time she took a step it looked like she was nude and that it was the skin of her August buttocks quivering before me,” “it was the wrapper that flared as she got out of her car, revealing a knee and a thigh,” and “More than ever I wanted her. I managed to curb my impulses. Otherwise my lips would have jumped on her mouth, my hands would have gotten lost in her large breasts” (19, 34, 53). The multitude and range of these examples disclose that Faustin is fixated on Claudine’s physical body (references to her “large breasts” and “sexy rump” occur throughout the text), illustrating in particular his obsession with her reproductive organs and his fetishization of pleasure (53, 36). As John Matthews suggests, the substitutionary fetishization for the destroyed or lost bodies could account for Faustin’s aggressively sexual treatment of Claudine (Matthews “Dissertation Update and Revised Chapter 2”). On the other hand, we may perhaps see his bond with Claudine as an attempt to develop an alternative kinship system or as the postcolonial mimicry of Western kinship systems; Faustin appropriates traditional kinship systems for his own use, positioning Claudine as a sexual mother figure, which may seem distorted to readers through the exaggerated emphasis on sexuality and procreation.\(^ {278} \)

Moreover, Faustin’s desire for Claudine (and in particular his fascination with her breasts and hips) could also be seen as a fantasy of regeneration after the genocide—an unconscious

\(^ {278} \text{Emphasizing the relationship between sex, motherhood, and the effects of the genocide, Faustin states that the women working as prostitutes after the genocide “were all respectable mothers who came looking for company and, well, a little money to take care of their brood since the husband wasn’t around anymore; he was either in jail because he was found guilty of genocide or in a common grave if it was the other way around” (58).} \)
desire to reproduce or replicate the generations lost to the violence. In any case, Faustin appears more affected by his lust for Claudine than his own life and murder trial, which is indicative of the innocence/ignorance of his youth, as well as his fixation on bodies. Faustin’s concern with bodies recurs throughout his narrative, including the fact that he survived the genocide by being physically trapped beneath bodies and that he is in jail due to his effort to protect his sister’s body. Moreover, bodies and the corporeal may be seen to function as a counterpoint in the text to mental fragmentation and trauma. In other words, in an attempt to escape or ignore his traumatized psyche, Faustin focuses on the physicality of body. In addition to Faustin’s strong sexuality, the corporeal saturates the text in another sense through the descriptions of bodily functions. For example, once the genocide reaches his village, Faustin remarks: “This time, I was really scared. And for me, fear always settles in the bladder. I handed [Lizende] my kite and went over to the ditch to have a long pee” (93). Similarly, when Faustin meets Claudine for the first time, he has been accused (rightly so) of stealing a car radio. In this example, he also focuses on the functions of his body: “I was so worn out and terrorized [at the accusation] that I let out a fart and relieved myself of a few gallons of pee in the ditch. ‘Why don’t you shit too, thief!’ someone yelled out” (33). These episodes occur while Faustin should be concerned with larger problems, yet perhaps are indicative of the fact that he distracts himself from more serious occurrences and the resulting mental anguish through concentrating

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I’d like to thank Lana Cook and Elizabeth Hopwood for their help with the development of this idea.

While Claudine attempts to better the conditions of Faustin’s life in prison and works to liberate him, he seems to be interested only in having her around to ogle and fantasize about. The day before his trial, Faustin seems less concerned with his fate than with Claudine’s body: “My future—if perchance I still had one—I didn’t give a damn about it. But my body was driving me crazy. I rose on my tiptoes, kissed her on both cheeks, and fled like a thief” (79). A page later, when describing Claudine’s visit on the day of his trial, Faustin wants to tell her that if she is really worried about him, “Then, love me once and for all. Lift your wrapper and squat on my legs. Let’s do what is required in such cases and let the jabirus [prison guard] croak with resentment and jealousy. After that, they can hang me if they want or throw me from the rock of Kagera!” (80).
on his body. Faustin does not view the events of his reality in perspective—confirmation of his fragmented subjectivity—and he also focuses on his body (as well as Claudine’s) during times of distress as a way to distract himself from the seriousness of his predicament.

In addition to the offense he takes at the masculine female reporter and his obsessive sexualization of Claudine, Faustin’s distorted relationship to his sexuality is exposed through his violent sexual fantasies about the latter. When Claudine first appears uninvited at HQ, he states to the readers: “I wanted to scratch her and, once my fit of jealousy was over, to throw her down right there in front of everyone and wallow in her body” (36). Faustin is angry at Claudine for visiting HQ and is jealous that she pays attention to the other street children. As a result, he wants to scratch her and, after his rage passes, to rape her in front of everyone—presumably to add to her humiliation and to demonstrate to the community his power over her. Even though he is a child, Faustin is knowledgeable about rape. In the episode in which he invents false genocide testimonies for Rodney and the Western reporters, Faustin not only wrongly accuses a man of murdering his parents but also identifies another as his mother’s rapist. In spite of his young age, Faustin is aware that sex can be used as a weapon alongside murder—an awareness that infiltrates his own erotic fantasies about Claudine. This is further support for Monénembo’s statement that once innocence has gone, nothing remains, as well as for my argument about the damaged sexuality and gender relations left from colonial hierarchies in post-/neo-colonial Rwanda (King xi).

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281 As a result of the way in which he “pleasures himself” in front of the women selling banana beer and wishes to rape Claudine while everyone watches, Faustin seems to display exhibitionist tendencies—another instance of his warped relationship to sexuality.  
282 There is a tension in the novel between Faustin’s innocence (revealed through his young age, belief that he can protect his family, and misuse of language) and the fact that, in Monénembo’s words, “Once innocence is lost nothing remains,” which Faustin demonstrates through his brutal descriptions, violence, and sexual aggression (King
Faustin is uncomfortable with strong women who have power over him and mother figures, as is shown through his thoughts in reaction to unnerving the female reporter—“She wasn’t the strongest after all”—and also his need to degrade Claudine through his violent sexual fantasies. As Faustin’s interactions with women reveal, rape and gendered violence are enmeshed with networks of power and control. Nellie McKay describes rape “as a crime of violence and intimidation with intrinsic connections to sexual aggressiveness and political and economic power” (McKay 248). Rape is not only a sexual crime but involves exerting power—both in terms of physical power and emotional control—over another human being. Thus, rape, as described in earlier chapters, was essential to both colonialism and slavery as a tool to regulate the behavior of women, humiliate both women and the men who were unable to protect them, and produce more children or more laborers. Amina Mama describes the use of rape as “a frequent accompaniment to military conquests, and was a favored means of ensuring the defeat and pacification of entire nations” (51). In this way, rape was widespread during the 1994 Rwandan genocide to the extent that it was established as a crime of genocide by the United Nations’ International Criminal Court for Rwanda following the events (Kalisa 4). The “systematic and serial rape of Tutsi women” was not only encouraged, but opportunities to rape young Tutsi girls were distributed in advance, along with Tutsi belongings, as incentives to

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283 For example, Angela Davis notes that slavery in the United States relied as much on institutionalized sexual violence as it did on the whip and the lash (175). Therefore, sexual violence and the rape of women were not only endemic to the Middle Passage, but also constitutive of the plantation system (Morgan and Youssef 172).

284 This is not only a maneuver common to postcolonial nations or guerilla warfare; during the Vietnam War, U.S. soldiers were instructed to use rape as a tactic of terror, which they were told was justifiable since they were fighting against an “inferior race” (A. Davis 177).

285 Judges of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda ruled that “the crime of rape was ‘a physical invasion of a sexual nature, committed on a person under circumstances which are coercive’, and underscored that sexual assault constituted genocide in the same way as any other act as long as it was committed with the specific ‘intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a particular group, targeted as such’” (Melvern A People Betrayed 255).
commit acts of genocide (Gourevitch 113, 115). More specifically, in her essay focusing on representations of rape during the Rwandan genocide, Régine Michelle Jean-Charles notes that rape as a layered form of violence “was an essential component of the Hutu strategy,” as it concurrently accomplished multiple goals: “1) inflict pain on women considered as the enemy; 2) force women into shame; 3) symbolically emasculate Tutsi men by forcing them to watch the ‘taking of their women’; and 4) further ensure the future obliteration of the Tutsi ethnicity by impregnating women with Hutu genes” (252). The use of rape in the 1994 Rwandan genocide was decisive and had the intended effect of not only impacting those who experienced it directly, but also future generations of Rwandans through the psychological damage inflicted.

The intentionality behind rape is not only to cause physical pain, emotional distress, and humiliation but also psychological anguish or trauma. Rape is a particularly gendered type of violence that is intended to leave the recipient scarred emotionally, physically, and psychologically; the ultimate goal of rape is to divest women of their power (Jean-Charles 247). Not only was rape employed to perpetuate psychological damage on later generations through the inheritance of memory traces (or the transgenerational phantom) from their predecessors, but also to destroy the Tutsi ethnicity through interbreeding between the two groups. A pure

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286 Phillip Gourevitch notes that throughout Rwanda, rape and looting supplemented the slaughter as “[d]runken militia bands, fortified with assorted drugs from ransacked pharmacies, were bused from massacre to massacre” (115). Fergal Keane notes that rape often accompanied the beatings, humiliation, and murder that occurred at roadblocks, and that not too far from each roadblock is one or more mass graves (167).

287 For a dramatization and an extended meditation on the effects that the use of sex as a weapon have on women’s lives, see Lynn Nottage’s play Ruined, which examines women’s hardships in the worn-torn Democratic Republic of Congo. As stated in the introduction by Kate Whoriskey, this play examines why rape has become central to war and is not “just a tool to humiliate the women or degrade the opposing side’s masculinity, [but also is] a way to strip women of their wombs,” due to the physical damage inflicted by gang rape (xi).

288 In Judith Herman’s words, “the purpose of the rapist is to terrorize, dominate, and humiliate his victim, to render her utterly helpless. Thus rape, by its nature, is intentionally designed to produce psychological trauma” (57).

289 As described in Chapter 1, according to the theory of the transgenerational phantom, some individuals “unwittingly inherit the secret psychic substance of their ancestors’ lives,” as familial traumas are passed down to later generations (Abraham and Torok 166-7).
ethnic divide between Hutus and Tutsis is a myth; however, through “brutally enforced hybridity,” the extremist Hutus planned to eradicate the group that Belgian colonial policy designated as the separate Tutsi ethnicity (McClintock 67). Therefore, rape was used during the 1994 genocide and its aftermath to directly terrorize the present generation, as well as to traumatize their descendents and attempt to obliterate the Tutsis as a distinct ethnic group (to which Faustin’s obsession with sex and reproduction may be seen as a reaction). In Monénembo’s novel at least, the extremist Hutus appear to have succeeded as far as the infliction of trauma is concerned; Faustin and his generation are not only left physically and emotionally scarred but are also warped in regard to sexuality and gender relations.

The skewed relationship to sexuality appears not only to plague Faustin and his generation but also post-/neo-colonial Rwandan society more generally. Faustin describes the prevalence and seeming acceptance of the sexual abuse of young girls in post-genocide Rwanda through the example of M. Van der Poot, a man of Flemish and Belgian origins living in Kigali. Given the centrality of sexual abuse to the colonial project, as a descendent of the colonizers, M. Van der Poot may perhaps consider himself entitled to prey sexually upon young Rwandan girls. As a result of M. Van der Poot’s interactions with the ten-year-old prostitute, Emilienne, Faustin labels him a “pedrophile”: “Here, Monsieur Van der Poot, when a man wants a girl, he gives her parents some sorghum and some beer, and he deflowers her with the whole tribe’s knowledge, and when there is no tribe, he jumps her in the nearest ditch without preliminaries and without getting caught. But you, you got caught!” (49). Faustin characterizes the relations between older

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290 The Hutu militia employed a similar policy in the Zaire refugee camps where “the coerced impregnation of any [Hutu] female of reproductive age was regarded as a sort of ethnic public service among the resident interahamwe” (Goureivitch 269). Through the forced impregnation of Hutu women, the Hutu extremists attempted to expand their own ethnic group, while using the same tactic to deplete the Tutsi population.
men and young girls as a type of community-sanctioned rape, which, in the absence of a community or tribe, becomes a more overt sexual violence with men “jumping” young girls in the nearest ditch. Faustin’s tone in this passage is frank and derisive; he implies that M. Van der Poot’s crime was not the sexual violence itself but the fact that he got caught. Faustin continues to describe the treatment of young girls in Rwanda by way of an address to the foreigner M. Van der Poot and also indirectly to the readers:

There’s nothing more natural in our hills than to marry a pubescent girl or, if we live in the city, to jump her at the first opportunity. We see one going down the street? We don’t just ogle her, we feel her butt, we fondle her breasts without fear of judges or the staunch eye of Christ. And if in the meantime the boldest ones unbutton their flies or venture some inane remarks, those present will just laugh (to each his own customs and mores, Monsieur Van der Poot). (51)

In this example, Faustin compares marriage to a young girl in a rural community to molestation on the streets of Kigali, which may lead to gang rape with the boldest men unbuttoning their flies in preparation. Faustin’s choice of pronouns is of particular interest in this passage; his use of “we” would seem to include himself, even though he was a child (between ten and twelve years old) when he was last on the streets. His use of “we” positions himself with the other Rwandan men, and his candid tone seems to suggest his approval of this behavior. In this passage Faustin appears to agree with the rural communities in their unofficial authorization of this sexual violation through marriage and the men on the streets of Kigali who allow this abuse.291 In response to the question what motivates men to rape, Paula Morgan and Valerie Youssef state

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291 Amina Mama implies that this type of atmosphere, in which girls are sexually harassed and grabbed on the street, is common to other African cities and questions “the kind of political climate which empowers officials to perpetrate mass abuses against women on the streets of many African cities” (47).
that the common denominator appears to be men’s belief that it is their right to possess the women that they desire through force, which also seems to be the case in Faustin’s description of the sexual abuse of pubescent girls that is permitted on the streets of Kigali (189). The men in Faustin’s society believe that they are entitled to control the women they choose through sexual violence, which I argue is a lingering effect of the colonial hierarchy of gender.

Although through his matter-of-fact tone and pronoun choice, Faustin seems to consent to the brutal treatment of young girls on the city streets in Rwanda, later in the same paragraph he describes his feelings when “the leers and the racket” of the men are aimed at his young sisters (who are two and five years his juniors respectively, making Esther between eight and ten and Donatienne between five and seven when they are living on the streets) and states: “That was the day I decided to have a gun too” (51). As mentioned previously, Faustin resolves to get a gun as a direct result of the sexual attention his sisters attract on the Kigali streets. Even if he is unable to consciously acknowledge it, on some level Faustin rejects the culture of sexual violence currently rampant in his home country. He further underscores his rejection of this culture by shooting Musinkôro for having sexual relations with Esther. His seeming support of the sexual abuse of young girls, quoted at length above, may simply be another instance of Faustin repressing his true feelings, as he does in response to his parents’ deaths, his experience of the genocide, and his impending death sentence. However, if we ignore his words and investigate his actions—from buying a gun with the protection of his sisters in mind to murdering Musinkôro—Faustin seems to feel strongly about the subject of sexual abuse. His violent reaction reveals that, to some degree, even young Faustin knows something is off in regards to his community’s acceptance of sexual violence. While it would be problematic to position his act of violence as commendable, as it results in the murder of a young boy, at the same time,
Faustin’s action shows that he does not approve of the sexual violence sanctioned by his society. In an ideal world, murder would not be the best way to express his view, yet nevertheless within Faustin’s actions I locate a kernel of hope for the future. Faustin refuses to buy in entirely to what his society tells him is right and wrong, including the persistent colonial ideologies that give men control over the bodies of women and girls and that damage the relations between the genders in post-/neo-colonial societies.\textsuperscript{292}

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\textsuperscript{292} As a young, traumatized orphan on death row, Faustin is not in a position to guide his nation away from the lingering, toxic consequences of European colonialism in the aftermath of the genocide. However, through telling Faustin’s story as part of the Fest’Africa project, “Writing so as not to forget,” Tierno Monénembo, along with his fellow participants, can raise awareness of the bleak outlook for Rwanda’s youth and ensure that the world will neither turn too quickly away from nor forget the events of 1994. Although Monénembo has stated that “literature can never teach lessons, that ‘one always writes in vain,’” his novel has shown that literature can raise awareness and clear a path towards change (King X). The content and form of Monénembo’s narrative have led the way for others more directly impacted by the genocide to speak through their trauma—in the same way that the fictional Faustin overcomes his repression through his palliative narrative—including the firsthand accounts, Immaculee Ilibagiza’s \textit{Left to Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust} (2006) and Joseph Sebarenzi’s \textit{God Sleeps in Rwanda: A Journey of Transformation} (2009), and the anthology \textit{The Men Who Killed Me: Rwandan Survivors of Sexual Violence} (2009).
Conclusion

The Remnants of Colonial Sexual Violence in Twentieth-Century Literature: A Call for Further Scholarship

Through its contemporariness, published in 2000, *The Oldest Orphan* exemplifies the ubiquity of sexual violence in post-/neo-colonial societies throughout the centuries and into the present period: the racism and sexism inherited from colonial regimes manifest themselves generations later in sexual violence. The instances of sexual violence in this novel are overt and depicted by Faustin as the norm on the streets of Kigali, where groups of men molest and sometimes rape the young girls of their choosing (Monénembo 51). Visions of rape have infiltrated adolescent Faustin’s own subconscious, making their way into his sexual fantasies of Claudine (Monénembo 36). In addition to its prevalence in post-genocide society, sexual violence played a key role in the genocide itself. Not only was rape used decisively during the genocide by the Hutu extremists to spread physical and psychological pain and deplete the Tutsi ethnic group (a social group in pre-colonial Rwanda that was solidified as an ethnicity by Belgian colonial policies), but also to inflict trauma on later generations. I argue that the sexual abuse of girls and women prevalent in post-/neo-colonial Rwanda, as depicted in this novel, is positioned as the inheritance from colonialism, which skews a society’s relationship to gender and sexuality more broadly. Even after generations have passed, the sexual violence employed as a tool of control during the colonial era lingers in liberated formerly colonized societies where the racism, sexism, and violence of the colonial system reveal that once they have gotten a foothold in a society, they prove more difficult to eradicate than one may think.²⁹³

²⁹³ Paul Gilroy supports the argument that past is responsible for many of the present’s problems and warns against failing “to recognize that the ambiguities and defects of past colonial relations persist and [failing] to appreciate that
In addition to *The Oldest Orphan*, the other novels explored in this project, such as Marie Vieux-Chauvet’s *Love, Anger, Madness* and William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Go, Down, Moses*, illustrate the interconnection between colonial ideologies and sexual violence. The dual setting of Vieux-Chauvet’s *Love* (1968)—the events of the novella take place during the immediate post-occupation era but while evoking the Duvalier period—demonstrates that sexual violence was utilized as a tool for control by both the U.S. military during the 1915-1934 occupation of Haiti and dictator François “Papa Doc” Duvalier. Scholars, such as Marie-Chantal Kalisa, analyze the connection between Haiti’s use of military forces to control its citizens and patriarchal domination or gendered violence. Kalisa describes the latter as anything from the use of women as sex slaves during war to the employment of rape as a weapon to both humiliate the enemy and enable troops to fight better (176-7). She notes that “[r]ape and sexual violence continue to be used in Haiti as a weapon of political repression during the many bouts of violence,” as during the Duvalier dynasty when military organizations, which were intended to protect the country, “waged war against the Haitian people” or throughout the occupation when the rape of Haitian women and girls by American marines stationed there was omnipresent, depicted in Chapter 3 (177-8). The predominance of sexual abuse in Haiti during both the Duvalier regime and post-occupation period is illustrated in Vieux-Chauvet’s *Love* through the ways in which government officials, such as Commandant Calédu, the novella’s Duvalier figure, avenge the past color prejudice they experienced through the bodies of mulâtres-aristocrates.

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those enduring consequences of empire can be implicated in creating and amplifying many current problems” (*Postcolonial Melancholia* 3). Thus, while the Akazu, the Hutu militia, and civilians throughout the country are ultimately responsible for carrying out the Tutsi genocide in 1994, the flaws in past colonial relations and mentalities, which may be seen as leading to this point, are also deserving of attention in an analysis of the causes. 294 Kalisa writes that dictatorship “is perhaps the most visible form of government that uses violence as a way of controlling people during so called peace-time” (154). François Duvalier, Haiti’s notorious dictator, was known for using violence against his own people, and while U.S. officials in Haiti were aware of this fact, due to the government stability resulting from his regime, he had the backing of the U.S. (Dubois 335).
women—for example the torture-rape of Dora Soubiran. Therefore, in addition to the centrality of rape to the 1994 Rwandan genocide, sexual violence was used as a tactic of terror in Vieux-Chauvet’s novella, which enables us to trace the universality of sexual violence as a weapon from modern-day post-/neo-colonial Rwanda back to earlier twentieth-century neocolonial regimes, such as the U.S. military occupation of Haiti or the presidency of François Duvalier.

Further, we can connect the centrality of sexual violence to a range of neocolonial regimes both to the sexual crimes of the post-/neo-colonial South in the decades after Reconstruction and also to the institutionalization of rape under slavery in the colonial period. As described in Chapter 2, sexuality can be seen as a particular expression of the neocolonial relationship in the postbellum South: for example, through the sexual abuse of black women which remained pervasive after slavery by white supremacist groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, to force black Americans to remain in a secondary social position. This situation is prevalent in many works of William Faulkner which feature the sexual abuse of black women, such as young Mink Snopes’s seeming rape of “the almost invisible unwashed Negro girl,” as described in The Mansion (1959), as well as what appears to be the gang rape of a young black girl by Joe Christmas’s acquaintances in Light in August (1932) (Faulkner 589). These scenes of violation are temporally located in the neo-colonial period yet are indistinguishable from the instances of rape which were rampant under the slave system. The sexual abuse of black girls and women remains central to the U.S. South after Emancipation, as illustrated by the way that the scenes of rape described above could have been taken word-for-word out of the colonial era.

The rape of female slaves accompanied physical violence as a central tool for the dehumanization of slaves by the plantocracy. The centrality of abuse can be traced from Monénembo’s depiction of Rwanda during the 1990s, back through the neocolonial regimes that
retained power in Haiti and the U.S. South in the early twentieth century, finally to the South’s plantation culture of the colonial period. Instances illustrating the institutionalization of the rape of black women under slavery are even more widespread in Faulkner’s fiction: from Absalom, Absalom!’s (1936) depiction of Sutpen’s sexual relationships with his slaves, such as Clytie’s mother, and of the Caribbean slave plantation lineage of Charles Bon (who is not himself the product of rape but through his ancestry is connected to coerced sexual relations between slaves and masters) to Old Carothers’s violation of both his slave Eunice and the daughter resulting from that first union in Go Down, Moses (1942). Not only would slave masters use sexual violence to exert control over their slaves, in the same way that neocolonial governments employ rape to wield power over their people, but they could also use the violation to produce more slaves over whom they held property rights, in addition to gratifying their lustful urges. That the use of rape under slavery provided masters with power, pleasure, and property—with little to no negative social ramifications aside from resentful wives—in part explains why sexual violence was so widespread in the antebellum U.S. South.

What conclusions should we draw from the ubiquity of the sexual abuse of women and girls in colonial and later post-/neo-colonial societies as depicted in this literature? Colonialism draws its strength from ideologies of hate or fear of difference, and hierarchies of race and also gender were central to the power held by the colonial system. Thus, racism, sexism, and violence are the key components of a country’s colonial inheritance, in addition to economic instability, corruption, and the depletion of resources, which I did not have the space to cover in this project.295 Given this knowledge, what can be done to mollify the hate and fear of

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295 For studies that focus on the economic and material conditions of postcolonial nations, see Benita Parry’s Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique, which emphasizes the socio-material conditions of postcolonial
While literature cannot change political policy or make rape a punishable offense in all societies, I believe it can raise awareness and bring the crimes of colonialism into the light. Consequently, the work done by the novels explored in this project is essential. Only when we start to recognize the wide-ranging and still present effects of colonialism, can we try to root out the problems and eradicate the mindsets and damaging remnants in post-/neo-colonial societies, in order to heal individual subjectivities and prevent future large scale atrocities.

The major work of decolonization is to liberate people and spaces from the exploitative structures of colonialism. Through acknowledging the continuities of the colonial in the neo-colonial period, novels, such as those by Faulkner, Vieux-Chauvet, and Monénembo, can help to raise awareness of the cyclical nature of colonial crimes and mitigate the damage they cause. As a result of the use of form and experimental techniques to expressly critique enduring colonial values, such as the racism, sexism, and violence that persist in post-/neo-colonial societies and their impact on families and individuals, I position *The Oldest Orphan; Love, Anger, Madness; Absalom, Absalom!;* and *Go Down, Moses* as foundational to an alternative literary canon. The poetics of peripheralization literary canon needs to develop in response to the privileging of Western literature and themes in traditional configurations of the literary canon. I urge scholars to work towards the development of this new canon, which would grant long overdue recognition to distinct but connected postcolonial novels for their combination of modernist

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countries as tied to historical circumstances, and Hosam M. Aboul-Ela’s *Other South: Faulkner, Coloniality and the Mariategui Tradition*, which argues for a comparison between literature of the U.S. South and other global regions where questions of colonial economy and spatial/regional inequalities (central to Faulkner’s work) come into play. In terms of culture, Arjun Appadurai’s *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* investigates the cultural networks that result from globalization, and David Scott’s *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality* is interested in the relationship between culture, politics, and modernity in modern postcolonial states, such as Jamaica and Sri Lanka. Further, Frederick Cooper’s *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* explores the ways that the trajectories of a colonized Africa and Asia and a colonizing Europe have affected each other over time, and Paul Gilroy’s *Postcolonial Melancholia* focuses on the ways that the imperial past continues to shape political life in overdeveloped countries, focusing on England.
aesthetics and an engaged commitment to exposing the traumas, violence, and skewed relationships resulting from the sustained impact of colonial hierarchies and ideologies on a region.

Moreover, within the poetics of peripheralization canon there is space to follow the thread of sexual violence that has run through many post-/neo-colonial societies from the colonial era and its overthrow to the present day. Essays such as Ali Behdad’s “Eroticism, Colonialism, and Violence” (1997) and Amina Mama’s “Sheroes and Villains: Conceptualizing Colonial and Contemporary Violence against Women in Africa” (1997) were foundational to the study of the overlap between gendered violence and colonial inheritance. In a few instances, scholarship since then, such as Paula Morgan and Valerie Youssef’s Writing Rage: Unmasking Violence through Caribbean Discourse (2006), Régine Jean-Charles’s “Beneath the Layers of Violence: Images of Rape in the Rwandan Genocide” (2009), Marie-Chantal Kalisa’s Violence in Francophone African & Caribbean Women’s Literature (2009), and the anthology The Men Who Killed Me: Rwandan Survivors of Sexual Violence (2009) edited by Anne-Marie de Brouwer and Sandra Ka Hon Chu, has continued in the same vein, but overall the field of postcolonial studies needs to devote more time and space not only to an exploration of sexual violence as depicted in art and literature but also to an understanding of its function in post-/neo-colonial societies more generally. I believe the development of this alternative literary canon presents the academy with the opportunity to do so: sexual violence is a central theme connecting this literature. As one of the most recent advocates for the pursuit of this line of scholarship, Marie-Chantal Kalisa notes that while natural disasters, history, and politics can explain “the pervasive climate of violence in these lands,” this violence has “existed in the past, persists in the present, and threatens the future” (2). I echo Kalisa’s call for critics to fill the void.
in the study of gendered and sexual violence in African and Caribbean literature and would also like to add U.S. Southern literature to the list. Only through attention to the thread of gendered violence linking postcolonial literature from around the globe and throughout history can we come to a greater understanding of the problems and hope to change these patterns in the future.
Coda:

Looking Forward: Can Literature Ever Translate to Political Action?

On the surface William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) and *Go Down, Moses* (1942), Marie Vieux-Chauvet’s *Love, Anger, Madness* (1967), and Tierno Monénembo’s *The Oldest Orphan* (2000) are novels set in diverse locations—Mississippi, Haiti, and Rwanda—describing events from distinct time periods. While these novels may seem exceedingly diverse, I demonstrate their interrelation through focusing on the ways in which the ideologies, policies, and racisms that accompanied colonialism are responsible not only for tragic events depicted (both the loss of Civil War from the perspective of the white southern plantocracy and slavery itself from the broader historical perspective, the Haitian Occupation and Duvalier dictatorship, and the Rwandan genocide) but also the violence and fragmented subjectivities which colonialism left in its wake. Like the past in Faulkner’s often quoted line from *Requiem for a Nun*, “[colonialism] is never dead. It’s not even past” (80). Through this project, I intend to make my readers aware of the running thread of colonialism in these seemingly disparate novels from a range of countries throughout the twentieth century, recognize the way seemingly free societies today are still impacted by these issues, and attempt to prevent the repetition of these tragedies through the reconfigurations of colonialism present in our globalized world by another name. Tierno Monénembo has stated that “literature can never teach lessons, that ‘one always writes in vain’” (King x). Can literature create change? What would it look like to translate these fictive arguments into real political action?

Arundhati Roy, activist and author of *The God of Small Things*, argued in 2004 that if we are against imperialism, we need to be against the U.S. occupation of Iraq: “We have
to become the global resistance to the occupation” (4, emphasis in original). Roy believes she can motivate her readers to work for change more concrete than the raising of awareness: “Our resistance has to begin with a refusal to accept the legitimacy of the US occupation of Iraq. It means acting to make it materially impossible for Empire to achieve its aims. It means soldiers should refuse to fight, reservists should refuse to serve, workers should refuse to load ships and aircraft with weapons…” (4). Roy believes the readers of her article have the power to shut down major corporations profiting from the destruction of Iraq, asserting that it is “a question of bringing our collective wisdom and experience of past struggles to bear on a single target” (4). Similarly, Lynn Nottage, author of Ruined, a play examining the plight of women in the worn-torn Democratic Republic of Congo, would seem to agree that literature has the capacity to produce real change. In reference to what Africa means to her as a playwright and global citizen, Nottage states:

I want Americans to understand that they have a very deep investment in what happens in Africa and in the Congo. We’re beneficiaries of the abundance of resources that exists there. About 90 percent of coltan, the semi-conductive mineral that's used to fuel cell phones and laptops, comes from the Congo. We're invested in the instability there. As long as they can extract coltan cheaply, we continue to buy our cell phones and laptops for very little. I want Americans to acknowledge that we have a stake in the war that's being fought there. (Gener 122)

Although literature and art are limited in their ability to directly impact politics or end violent conflicts, they have the capacity to move the viewers and readers to question aspects of contemporary society, for instance dependence on cell phones and laptops and the reliance of this technology upon the cheap extraction of coltan from Africa. Nottage wants her viewers to
understand the interrelation of countries and cultures through globalization and neocolonial networks of power, as well as the impact First World consumer culture and technological advances can have on Global South regions like Africa, and to reconsider their inadvertent roles in this cycle.

While less direct, in *Nationalism and the Imagination*, literary theorist and postcolonial scholar Gayatri Spivak believes in the potential of comparative literature to work at “keeping the civic structure of the state clear of nationalism and patriotism, altering the redistributive priorities of the state, creating regional alliances” (55). More specifically, Spivak proposes “a multilingual Comparative Literature of the former empires which will arrest the tide of the creolization of native literatures” and that “Higher education in the humanities should be strengthened so that the literary imagination can continue to de-transcendentalize the nation and shore up the redistributive powers of the regionalist state in the face of global priorities” or more concisely that introducing a comparativist point-of-view will “enhance the democratic spirit” (58, 78). In Spivak’s mind a comparativist perspective to global literature is a tool we can use to redistribute power in today’s persistently hierarchical society—a point which I argue elucidates the need for the poetics of peripheralization literary canon, described in Chapter 4. In a similar manner, Marie-Chantal Kalisa believes in the capacity of literature to deconstruct the social order, asserting that African and Caribbean women writers “who create such tragic characters are cognizant that power is still out of reach unless patriarchy is destroyed. Hence, writing serves to deconstruct the system as a first step toward empowerment” (188). I agree with Kalisa’s claim: I believe literature has the power to impact society, through leading readers to question the way things are and raising awareness of the issues inherited from the past.
My project seeks to impact the global community through spreading awareness of the cyclical nature of colonial crimes in order to mitigate its destructive effects. Through my focus on racisms, violence, sexuality, individual subjectivities, and interpersonal relations, I explore the complexities of increasing globalization in the neo-colonial period and analyze the palimpsest of colonial ideologies which remains firmly in place in the bedrock beneath the post-colonial period. It is my intension for this project to both give weight to the past and identify the reconfigurations of colonialism present in our globalized world. I believe that the stakes for this type of work are high, and I argue that one cannot effectively move into the present without considering the power that the past still has over us. Exposing the remnants of colonial mentalities and hierarchies in contemporary society, not only in the political arena but in fields such as art and literature, presents the world with the opportunity to overturn the status quo and slowly but surely to undo the ties of colonial inheritance.
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