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Haiti and Abolitionism in 1825: The Example of Sophie Doin

Slavery and abolition gained newfound prominence as popular subjects in the 1820s after having been suppressed through censorship for the nearly two decades after Haiti gained its independence from France in 1804. Incidents contributing to the renewed interest in these subjects include the abolition of the slave trade at the Congress of Vienna in 1814; the scandal surrounding the sinking of the *Méduse* off the coast of Africa in 1816; the resumption of abolitionist activity by the *Société de la morale chrétienne* in 1821; the publication of Thomas Clarkson's *Cries of Africa* in 1822, which brought graphic, empirical evidence of the abuses of the slave trade; and the choice of the subject of abolition by the *Académie française* as the subject of the poetry prize in 1823. An important catalyst sparking enthusiasm specifically for the subject of Haiti was Charles X's recognition of that country's independence in 1825, which then opened the door for recognition by other countries, who had been loath to incur the displeasure of France. The price that Haiti paid for the acknowledgment of its legitimacy as a nation was exorbitant reparations earmarked to repay former colonists for their lost property. Those reparations proved ruinous to Haiti's economy and were not paid off for nearly a century.¹ French writers at the time, however, saw Charles X's act as a humanitarian gesture that would make Haiti a symbol of hope for oppressed people worldwide and a first step in bringing about the end to France's failure to deal with its illegal slave trade and with the inhuman treatment of slaves in the remaining French colonies. The literary record for 1825 contains numerous encomiums for Charles X along with various other works expressing sympathy for Haiti or concern for the welfare of enslaved blacks elsewhere.⁰

A representative example considered in this essay is a little-known abolitionist writer, Sophie Doin, born in 1800. Although no personal ties linked her to Haiti or the French colonies, the fate of those places and their inhabitants clearly concerned her throughout the 1820s, when the recognition of Haitian independence surfaced as an urgent issue in France. Subsequent literary, journalistic, and autobiographical writings published up to the time of her death in 1846 focused on the plight of the working poor and the social benefits of a non-doctrinaire, ecumenically conceived Christian religion. Sharing her abolitionist convictions with her husband William Tell Doin, a Protestant doctor and writer, Doin informed herself about the activities of the abolitionist *Société de la morale chrétienne*, whose publications—newspapers, letters, and English brochures about slavery—she refers to in her own writings. In one of the many footnotes from her didactic novel *La Famille noire*, she admonishes her reader to consult “all that has been published in England, an admirable nation, one must agree, when it comes to generous sacrifices and philanthropic associations” (Doin, 54).

Sophie Doin's proclaimed goal was to extend the reach of the elitist French abolitionist movement to the common people, an objective that had met with greater success in England than in France. At the beginning of *La Famille noire*, Doin explains that her purpose is to “instill in all ranks of society a feeling of horror for the slave trade” by conveying information about the misfortunes to which Africans have been subjected for centuries. She goes on to claim that “no

work has yet made known to the masses in our country the true position of blacks; I do that here”; and she specifies that, by using the “light form” of literature, she will assure that “truth will shine through for all classes.”³ Looking closely at the plot and characters in three works—the novel *La Famille noire* and two short stories, *Blanche et noir* and *Noire et blanc*—this essay examines how Sophie Doin placed Haiti at the center of a new vision of abolitionism that gave a voice to both persons of color and women. The importance of doing so for both groups cannot be emphasized enough. At stake for blacks was nothing less than their very humanity: a recognition that they were feeling, thinking human beings endowed with the same moral and intellectual capacities as whites. For women, the stakes were similarly high. Historians such as Karen Offen and James Smith Allen have observed that, unlike English or American feminists in the nineteenth century, who sought political rights, women in France defined equality largely through writing as a gesture of autonomy. For women of Doin’s generation, social cohesion required complementary roles for men and women: public and political for men, moral and intellectual for women.⁴ To claim, as I do here, that Doin deserves consideration for having exercised the moral and intellectual authority of female authorship is not to say that she thereby stands as a first-rank author, feminist, or figure in the abolitionist movement of the 1820s. But by wielding her authority as a writer at the particular historical moment when she wrote, when the French public was still largely indifferent toward and uninformed about the horrific conditions of the slave trade and slavery, she did enter the fray in attempting to affect how the French viewed Haiti and abolitionist causes. Works such as hers functioned to affirm the rightness of the Restoration’s recognition of Haiti and build confidence in the black republic’s future. Doin is also worthy of study as representative of the many minor women writers who similarly wrote about blacks in the 1820s. For too long scholars have looked at the treatment of blacks in this period through the prism of a few famous authors such as Claire de Duras and Victor Hugo, whose perspectives are then assumed to be the only or most representative ones. Study of an admittedly minor author like Sophie Doin has the potential to illuminate a broader range of attitudes towards Haiti and blacks held by writers of her time.

This essay also looks at a number of other, non-literary authors to whom Doin refers in the footnotes of *La Famille noire*. Other than Clarkson, Doin also referred to the writer, publisher, and former naval officer Bouvet de Cressé, who published *L’Histoire de la catastrophe de Saint-Domingue* in 1824, and the black writer, Juste Chanlatte, the secretary of the Haitian king Henry Christophe, who is identified as the author of the major portion of the text that bears Bouvet de Cressé’s name.⁵ My aim in following up on these non-literary sources provided in Doin’s footnotes is not, as one might be tempted to think, to track down the “objective” story of Haiti or slavery. Objective fact did not stand in opposition to literature for abolitionists. Doin does not look to Clarkson or Bouvet de Cressé as white, male, Europeans endowed with an intellectual superiority denied to her as a woman or Chanlatte as a black. Nor do Clarkson or Bouvet de Cressé conceive of authority or knowledge in such a manner. Rather, Doin reconfigures mastery, as did those authors themselves, as deriving from sources that were both literary and non-literary, black and white, masculine and feminine, European and Haitian. Her writing thereby expresses in literary form the very freedom from repressive forms of domination that Haiti as a locus of freedom and black empowerment embodied in the nineteenth century.

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Doin's focus on Haiti is most apparent in her short stories—*Blanche et noir* and *Noire et blanc*—and in the closing pages of her novel *La Famille noire*. Although *Blanche et noir* does not name Haiti until the last paragraph of the story, from the start the revolutionary events the story recounts point clearly to that country as its setting. Moreover the future viability and value of the new nation is central to the plot, which focuses on the way in which the slave Domingo gains his freedom and lives happily ever after in a free and prosperous independent Haiti. Orphaned at a young age, Domingo grows up with Pauline, the daughter of his kindly white mistress, Mme de Hauteville, who educates him alongside her own child. Domingo revels in his love for Pauline despite his enslaved condition. However, as signs of the approaching revolution loom, M. de Hauteville, a haughty, prejudiced plantation owner, arranges the marriage of Domingo's beloved Pauline to Léopold, whom she respects but does not love. At this time, Hauteville also becomes suspicious of Domingo, who has in fact become increasingly committed to the cause of freedom spreading through the island. Domingo decides to flee, promising Pauline on the night of his departure to protect her and those she loves from the furor of the rebels. At a point in the ensuing battles when Hauteville, defending the property of the white plantation owners, faces certain death, Domingo comes to the rescue. Although Hauteville is unable to survive the injuries sustained in battle, he expresses his thankfulness to Domingo on his death bed: "You deserved to be white" (Doin, 93). Pauline's expression of gratitude is even greater. Instead of marrying Leopold and returning with him to France, she chooses a solitary forest retreat in Haiti with Domingo as her husband. There, years later, her black neighbors, who admire the mixed couple's happiness and devotion to one another, ironically echo the words of M. de Hauteville when they observe that "she deserved to be black" (Doin, 94). The existence of harmonious relations between blacks and whites is the condition that Doin envisions in the years to come for Haiti.

Noire et blanc, similarly prefigures a happy outcome for Haiti. The story begins with the revolutionary events: "A whirlwind of flames rose over the city of Le Cap. Human blood foamed in the streets. Everywhere torrents of vengeance paid for murder with murder, torture with torture. The independence of blacks had just been proclaimed, and degraded creatures, brutish slaves flocked from everywhere, with hatred in their hearts and weapons in their hands, asking that barbarous masters account for having destroyed their intelligence and crushed their freedom" (Doin, 97). In the midst of this scene of disorder, Nelzi rescues her white master, Charles de Méricourt, thereby setting in motion a drama about relations between blacks and whites that corresponds closely to the drama of dealings between Haiti and France in the years leading up to the recognition of Haitian independence in 1825. Like those two countries, in the years following the traumatic events in Haiti, Nelzi and Charles, who live together in exile in America, experience but do not fully realize the depth of the lasting affective and moral bonds that unite them. A turning point in their personal relationship occurs, however, that parallels the public events of 1825. Charles is summoned to return to France where his uncle's fortune awaits him, under the condition that he marry his cousin Mlle Darbois. As with Restoration France, so too

with Charles and Nelzi, the freedom and equality that form the legacy of revolution are put in doubt. Ultimately, however, French society proves capable of tolerance and justice. Although Charles comes close to succumbing to the class expectations placed upon him and abandoning the woman to whom he owes his life, a benevolent Frenchwoman, Mme de Senneterre, intervenes to bring the couple back together and enable a repentant Charles to see the error of his ways. Charles's public recognition of his love for Nelzi emblemizes France's public recognition of Haiti's independence and the lasting bonds of friendship, filiation, mutual interest, and loyalty that unite the two countries.

The future of Haiti is similarly bright in *La Famille noire*, which presents Phénor, a brave and compassionate young African, who has lived through the horror of seeing his compatriots and family members enslaved. Devoted to his mother, he surrenders himself to slave traders, believing that he is sacrificing his freedom for hers. Indifferent to his sacrifice, however, the whites capture and mistreat her, prompting Néala, a complete stranger who shares Phénor's compassionate nature, to offer herself in exchange for his mother's freedom, thereby demonstrating her profound respect for the value of motherhood. Although her sacrifice too is in vain, the two young Africans, now slaves, fall in love, marry, and bear a son. When Néala spurns her master, who has tried to seduce her, she and her son are sold and sent away, causing Phénor to fall into a mood of deep despair. Merville, a French abolitionist traveler who meets the despondent Phénor, vows to help him recover his lost family. The two men set off in search of Néala, glimpsing from afar "beautiful Haiti . . . land of justice and freedom" (Doin, 62-63), that has risen above its past under slavery and achieved the respect due to a free nation. Merville explains that God has forgiven the Haitian people for the ferocity and violence of the slave revolts leading up to independence in 1804 "because he undoubtedly felt that the whites alone should be held accountable for a rage that their cruelty had nurtured for so long." He emphasizes the agency exercised by blacks who "discovered heroes in the midst of ignomy. These heroes gave them strength, led them to glory and broke their chains." He goes on to explain how they declared themselves independent and created a country, where "a wise leader now presides . . . over a regenerated black people. Wisdom, talent and genius illuminate all its efforts and assure the glory and prosperity of happy Haiti. Time and perseverance have strengthened its progress and its power; the republic no longer has enemies . . . Haiti, land of justice and freedom, you will bear the burden of slavery no longer" (Doin, 62-63).⁶ The two travelers ultimately discover Néali on another island where slavery still prevails. But at the very moment when she rushes forward to embrace her long lost husband, her cruel master strikes her with a fatal blow. Heartbroken, Phénor dies of grief, leaving behind a son whom Merville raises and educates as his own. No longer willing to remain on the island which witnessed Néala's tragic death, Merville chooses to live in Haiti, where the boy is able to receive "the treasures of the most rigorous and distinguished education" (Doin, 67). The seeds planted in his young mind bear fruit. Merville leaves Haiti when the boy reaches manhood and can himself assume the responsibilities of educating and leading his people.

Doin's works assign important roles to women which, although not equivalent to those played by men, indicate the moral and intellectual significance if not superiority she attributed to women and the degree to which their authority is envisioned as central to the future of Haiti. In *Blanche et noir* two women exemplify feminine authority. As the name Hauteville implies, Mme

de Hauteville is endowed with the lofty intellectual mission of educating the black child Domingo, whose later accomplishments depend in part on her. Continuing along the path traced by her mother, Pauline plays the exemplary moral role of rising above common prejudices of color in choosing Domingo as her husband. Her moral authority can perhaps best be appreciated if we choose to compare her to Virginie, the heroine of the best known treatment of colonial relationships at the time, Bernardin de Saint Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*. Pauline's name recalls that of Virginie's beloved Paul; and the slave Domingue in Bernardin's novel reappears as Domingo in Doin's work. Salient differences can be noted, however. In contrast with Paul et Virginie, who attempt, ineffectually, to help a mistreated runaway slave they encounter on their island, Pauline acts in a meaningful way to combat prejudice and racism. Also, instead of sacrificing herself to an outmoded notion of feminine virtue, like Virginie, Pauline asserts her will to live and to choose her partner, who happens to be a black man. She thus stands as a model of the will to liberate herself, non-violently, from the racist conventions of her society, to achieve a humanity free of prejudice and based on love, and to participate in the founding of a new multiracial Haitian society.

In *Noire et blanc*, Doin attributes feminine authority to black and white women alike. Nelzi is not a mere passive recipient of Charles's love and gratitude for having rescued him at the time of the revolution. Like Boyer, whom Doin implicitly praises in *La Famille noire*, Nelzi fights to forge and cement her ties with France in the person of her beloved Charles. Moreover, like the enlightened Haiti that Phénor's son also emblemizes, Nelzi is an apt and eager student, to whom Charles is able to teach the natural sciences, arts, religion, and other subjects which will make her an equal intellectual partner in the future. Mme de Senneterre, like Mme de Hauteville, Pauline, and Merville, is a model of tolerance and compassion. Not content to merely embody benevolent attitudes, she actively exerts her influence in French society in order to assist a black woman and to combat social inequality and injustice in France.

In *La Famille noire*, Phénor's wife Néali shoulders a heavy narrative and symbolic burden. Her initial sacrifice in the futile but noble attempt to save Phénor's mother sets the tone for her moral exemplarity and her profound devotion to the ideal of motherhood. Subsequently she works diligently, acts intelligently, and faces with courage and determination the task of surviving under often insufferable conditions. In keeping with her irreproachable character, she is granted the exalted charge of bringing forth Phénor's son, the symbol of the future of Haiti. As the maternal source and creator of this son, she thus shares in the authority exercised in other ways by the four other main narrative agents: the fictional white abolitionist author, the white male abolitionist Merville, Phénor, and his son. The importance of Néali's African origin cannot be overlooked. Prefiguring the early twentieth-century notion of negritude, Doin posits Africa as the ultimate source from which Haitian identity derives.

Along with shared authority between men and women, Doin's writing develops to a significant extent the notion of authority shared between whites and blacks. In *Blanche et noir*, Domingo, the black protagonist, exerts moral authority through his conduct, both with blacks, as a participant in their fight for freedom, and whites, as the rescuer of Pauline's father. His actions thus go against two common pro-slavery views: first, that whites were responsible for giving blacks their freedom; and, second, that all blacks were savage and cruel in their treatment of whites during the uprisings. Still another widespread misconception that Domingo serves to

counter is that blacks were incapable of intelligent thought and meaningful discourse. The opening sentence of *Blanche et noir* is significant. Its very first words evoke Haiti as a “land of freedom.” But freedom is not a mere gift that Domingo has received. Doin emphasizes the political agency of her black protagonist, who helped to gain that freedom, by making him an active narrative participant and highlighting his voice: “Land of freedom, I salute you; finally I am a free man, I am free! O sun . . . may your salutary rays warm our glorious country, may they make it fertile, with the help of God and our independent arms” (Doin, 85). Although “the help of God” is acknowledged, it is put on an equal level with the force of “our independent arms.” After this opening section of the story, Doin establishes the kind of narrative partnership characteristic of her writing, with an omniscient narrator taking over the task of telling the story of how Domingo acquired his liberation from enslavement.

Noire et blanc presents two individuals of different races, each contributing to the common good of their partnership, as abolitionists envisioned Haiti and France cooperating in the future. Nelzi demonstrates the heroism of the successful Haitian revolution in her courageous rescue of Charles, whereas he embodies the civilizing factors of education and religion that Doin sees as the positive legacy of the French colonizing mission. At the close of the novel, Charles and Nelzi will presumably marry. But the prospect of their physical union is not what matters to Doin. Although she does not explicitly rule out the possibility of mixed race children, as Duras does in *Ourika*, she chooses not to dwell within the pages of *Noire et blanc* on interracial marriage as a means of bringing forward a next generation of mixed race children. As the title of this story and *Blanche et noir* both indicate, black and white ultimately remain distinct and separate. But the separation in no way implies hostility or indifference. On the contrary, by locating shared authority between whites and blacks within the innermost space of the family unit, *Noire et blanc* articulates the primacy of racial equality, commitment, and loyalty as the bases of the future moral and political ties between France and Haiti.

Shared black and white authority is developed even further in *La Famille noire*. A privileged authorial voice makes statements at the beginning of the novel such as the following: “This book is not a novel, it is the scrupulously faithful story of the crimes that the slave trade and the enslavement of blacks caused and continue to perpetuate to this day” (Doin, 5). That voice, identifiable as that of a white abolitionist having access to a wide range of historical and political sources, later disappears, replaced by the closely related white, abolitionist voice of Merville. But with his entry into the story, there is a shift from a monologic to a dialogic narrative structure. Merville, unlike the omniscient authorial voice in the beginning, does not himself display his command of issues relating to slavery; instead, through long discussions with Phénor, he shares his information and learns from his African interlocutor, whose direct experience bears equal if not greater weight than Merville’s purely second-hand knowledge as a European. And in the future, we learn, it is the voice of Phénor’s son who “will honor his new country by his talents, who will illustrate it by his eloquence, and, in works filled with energy and truth, will enlighten the world and console his afflicted brothers” (Doin, 67). The white abolitionist Merville, a stand-in for Doin herself, thus continues the pattern of sharing authority with Phénor by extending it to Phénor’s son, Merville’s black pupil. Merville may have provided for the young man’s education, as abolitionists aimed at facilitating the successful future of Haiti; but when the boy comes of age, as Haiti has in 1825, whites need to bow out as a sign that they

fully recognize the intellectual as well as the political independence of blacks. At the end of *La Famille noire*, the abolitionist effort will be fought on two fronts: by Phénor's son, a black writer in Haiti, and by Merville, a white abolitionist in France. Doin's novel thus actively promotes a strong component of black authority. Significantly, the son, whose lack of a name suggests the non-specific, allegorical role that he is called upon to play, is presented as an author. The future of Haiti, for Doin, must ultimately lie to a significant extent in black hands.

The abolitionist nature of Doin's shared authority can be illuminated through comparison to the notion of authority in the painting *Oath of the Ancestors* (1822) by the Guadeloupean artist Guillaume Guillon-LethiIre, a little known painting that Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby has recently analyzed in the pages of *Yale French Studies*.⁷ The painting, which depicts two leaders of the Haitian revolution and founders of the nation—the mulatto officer Alexandre Pétion and the black slave leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines—harks back to Haiti's revolutionary past. Its subject matter represents a departure in the artistic career of LethiIre. A member of the elite class of persons of color living in France, he was a successful, respected painter during the Restoration, holding prestigious appointments as director of the Academy in Rome, member of the Legion of Honor, and professor at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Unlike Doin, who was wealthy but marginalized by her Protestant religion and female gender, LethiIre belonged to the fashionable salon culture during the Restoration in which hostile feelings about the slave uprisings in Haiti were the order of the day. Those feelings, famously expressed by the black heroine of Claire de Duras's *Ourika*—“Until then, I had been distressed at belonging to a prescribed race; now I was ashamed of belonging to a race of barbarians and murderers”—were commonplace among conservatives in Duras's salon like Chateaubriand, who declared: “who would still dare to plead the cause of blacks after the crimes they have committed?”⁸

LethiIre clearly does not share the hostility toward the past actions of Haitian blacks that Duras and Chateaubriand expressed. Drawing on his positive feelings toward Haiti's revolutionary past dating back to the French Revolution and his commitment to the Haitian cause at that time, LethiIre chose to paint this work and have it personally delivered, covertly, to the Haitian people by his son. He thus anticipated the Restoration government's act of recognizing Haiti's legitimacy three years later and paid tribute to its heroic past: “*Oath of the Ancestors* was therefore a surreptitious revolutionary picture made in honor of another revolution won at France's expense. In this painting LethiIre aligned himself with . . . the black and mulatto men who rebelled as soldiers . . . LethiIre's painting bravely refuses to repress the war—the conflict—that brought Haiti into existence” (Grigsby, 212).

Nevertheless, significant limits are apparent in LethiIre's allegiance to Haiti's revolutionary past. Despite LethiIre's race and the Haitian audience for whom his work was destined, ultimately he subordinated both the black and mulatto figures in the dark foreground of the painting to the white God who hovers over and sheds light on them:

[t]his clandestine, indeed rebellious, act by a man of color sadly reinscribed the ultimate authority of the white patriarch . . . Recognition is a gift, not an accomplishment; recognition represents benevolence toward a subordinate rather than surrender to a victor. Moreover, the Haitian revolution, this picture implies, remains incomplete without the recognition of the white French father (Grigsby, 216).

Visually privileging the mulatto figure of Pétion over the black figure of Dessalines, the painting indicates a diagonal line descending from God the father toward Pétion, not towards Dessalines (Grigsby, 221). That privileging corresponds to the sense of privilege that in real life the painter enjoyed and can be related to his persistent attempt to obtain legitimacy from his white father.

Matters are far different in the abolitionist rendering of similar dramatic scenes involving men of two races that occur in the final pages of two of Doin's works. At the end of *Blanche et noir*, Léopold and Domingo stand before Pauline, presenting her with the choice between returning to France with a white man or living in Haiti with a black man. As Léopold promises to join with her "on the steps of the altar" (Doin, p. 94), Pauline interrupts him to announce her choice to remain in Haiti. Instead of bowing to the white, religious authority evoked in LethiIre's painting, Domingo, in the closing scene of *Blanche et noir*, "remained bowed for a long time before his divinity" (Doin, 94), his wife Pauline. It is Pauline with whom he is living happily, twelve years later, at the end of the story, "when the republic of Haiti was gloriously established on solid ground" (Doin, 94). The degree to which both black men and white women are empowered in this scene contrasts sharply with the privileging of the white father and his elite mulatto son in *Oath of the Ancestors*.

In *La Famille noire*, the beach scene occurs when Merville's ship leaves Haiti. As Phénor's son kneels, with arms outstretched, in affection toward his protector, both men look upward toward the sun shining down benevolently upon them. "My God! exclaimed the Black, protect my father! My God! spoke Merville, grant your benediction to this regenerated being! Watch over his destiny and the destiny of Haiti!" The last sentence of the novel—"And you, Haiti! may your splendor be not only a brilliant meteor, but an immortal beacon of salvation and freedom!"—is followed by a lengthy footnote praising the Christian king who, by recognizing Haiti's independence, sanctifies the regeneration of this oppressed race of men. It ends, "May his protective hand stretch out equally over all Blacks who still suffer!" (Doin, 68). As in *Oath of the Ancestors*, two men of different races appear beneath the benevolent eye of a God whose transcendent powers parallel those possessed on earth by the white patriarchal figures of fathers and kings. LethiIre's and Doin's works are ultimately very dissimilar, however. LethiIre aspires to be recognized by and be a part of the patriarchal system he evokes. Doin, in contrast, calls into question its oppression of the downtrodden. Although she respectfully acknowledges the powers of God and the white king, she places greater emphasis on human agency, and especially the shared strength that educated black Haitians and enlightened white Europeans can derive from relationships of respect and reciprocity.

Ironically, the LethiIre family history comes closer to the novelist's vision than to that of the painter. LethiIre's son Lucien, who brought *Oath of the Ancestors* to Haiti in 1822, chose to define himself as a "man of color" and to remain in Haiti, where he married a Haitian woman (Grigsby, 224). Like Domingo and Phénor's son, Lucien LethiIre, whose untimely death occurred several years after his return to Haiti, had faith in the future of the former French colony. Like Pauline he made a conscious choice to pick an uncertain but hopeful future in Haiti over a secure and established life in France. And like Phénor's son, he presumably believed that the place for the educated man of color was on Haitian, not on French soil. Those choices, whether real or fictional, are indicative of how much the kind of black agency that abolitionists sought to promote differed from the recognition passively received from white fathers that *Oath*

of the Ancestors implies.

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The first of the published sources that Doin refers to in the footnotes of *La Famille noire* that I wish to discuss is *L'Histoire de la catastrophe de Saint-Domingue*, a work that embodies a similar notion of shared authority as that which occurs in Doin's texts. The structure of Bouvet de Cressé's work recalls that of literary works like *Ourika* in which a white European provides prefatory remarks followed by a story in the voice of a black; in the case of *Ourika*, a white doctor's words are followed by those of the ailing black woman whom he is attempting to cure. Similarly, in *L'Histoire de la catastrophe de Saint-Domingue*, Bouvet de Cressé introduces the author of the work he is publishing, who, as noted earlier, can be identified as a black writer in the entourage of Henry Christophe, Juste Chanlatte.

Why Bouvet de Cressé chooses to identify Chanlatte only in a footnote and only as "M. J. C.," or why Chanlatte opts to identify himself in the Author's preface only as "J...E CH.....E" is unclear. One recalls Doin's reticence in naming Phénor's son, as if in both cases the act of black authorship needs to be protected from the white enmity that a too public declaration might incur. Hostility on the part of former white colonists would have been especially strong in 1824 when Bouvet de Cressé's work was published and when hopes for blocking the recognition of Haiti's independence was still being fueled by ultraconservative political forces. It is undoubtedly to placate such unsympathetic French readers that the opening sentences of the Author's preface hasten to make clear that references to Frenchmen, colonists, and Europeans in this work do not refer to "those whose honorable traces marked their passage on the island of Saint-Domingue" (Bouvet de Cressé, i). To draw on examples from Doin's literary texts one could say that M. de Hauteville and Néala's cruel master, not Mme de Hauteville and Merville, are the whites who are targeted in *L'Histoire de la catastrophe de Saint-Domingue*. "Catastrophe" in the title refers to what happened to whites after the French left, for which the Haitian leaders, according to Chanlatte, were not at fault: indeed, he claims that Christophe did all he could to protect white property owners in Haiti (Bouvet de Cressé, 77). Elsewhere in the book, acknowledgment is given to all those whites who fought for the black cause, especially Englishmen like the "immortal Wilberforce": "We will always look upon these benevolent creatures, who devoted their night hours and their writings to the amelioration of the fate of mankind, as divinities" (Bouvet de Cressé, 89-90). One is struck by the similarity between Chanlatte's designation of benevolent whites as divinities and Domingo's similar language in describing his feelings for that exemplar of tolerance and good will, Pauline.

Chanlatte provides an eye-witness, first-hand account, which he chooses to present in the collective voice of all formerly enslaved Haitians: "Go speak to the unhappy victims whom you have condemned to the torments of hell; here is what they say through my mouth: 'What good things have you done for us? What gratitude do we owe you? Rather, what well justified injustices are we not entitled to reproach you with?' " (Bouvet de Cressé, 15-16). What follows this sentence is page upon page of arguments against claims by whites to have acted in a civilized way toward blacks and to occupy a moral and intellectual high ground. The litany of horrors perpetrated by whites that Chanlatte provides serves as the basis for his conclusion, which Doin

makes hers as well, that the violence that occurred during the Haitian revolution has as its root cause the culpable conduct of whites: “On whom should the blame fall, the responsibility for these disasters, if not on those who provoked them?” (Bouvet de Cressé, 82-83). In contrast with the frequently quoted condemnation of the revolutionary events that Duras enunciates in *Ourika*, or the implied reprobation Hugo expresses by emphasizing the ferocity of the black rebels in *Bug Jargal*, Chanlatte points to the mistreatment of slaves as the salient feature of Haiti’s tragic past.

The emphasis on intellectual achievement as the solution to Haiti’s future is another common thread in the writings of Doin and the author of *L’Histoire de la catastrophe de Saint-Domingue*. But whereas Doin only touches on black intelligence by giving Domingo voice and agency in *Blanche et noir*, by bringing out Nelzi’s intellectual capacities in *Noire et blanc*, and by designating Phénor’s son as a future writer at the end of *La Famille noire*, Chanlatte dwells on this subject at great length in his work, providing a long catalogue of the arguments upon which Doin and other abolitionists could draw in making the case for Haiti’s promise for the future. His plea to the French to provide “zealous teachers” (Bouvet de Cressé, 10) to guide them on the path to enlightenment announces the pedagogical function assumed by Merville. His praise for those new Haitians who succeed in manifesting “sparks of genius and erudition” (Bouvet de Cressé, 19-20) recalls Phénor’s son. And most importantly his faith in the intellectual and artistic future of Haiti, like Doin’s, is unshakable: indeed, he envisions the moment when true civilization and creativity will stem less from Europe than from “the virgin energy, joined with the merit of experience and instruction” of the New World (Bouvet de Cressé, 29).

Bouvet de Cressé’s role in promoting acceptance of Haiti compliments Chanlatte’s. By coordinating the publication of the work, polishing the writing, and writing a series of lengthy footnotes, he explains that his purpose is “to teach our political dreamers who count money for everything and the blood of their compatriots for nothing that it is physically impossible and morally stupid to take back Saint-Domingue through the force of arms and thus pointlessly expose the French army to danger again in this torrid climate” (Bouvet de Cressé, vi-vii). He also states that he is fulfilling a promise made some twenty years earlier to “the youngest of the sons of Toussaint Louverture, my friend, on an island in the western ocean” (Bouvet de Cressé, 70). It is highly probable that in his capacity as official printer for the navy, Bouvet de Cressé had close familiarity with colonial affairs; and thus it is not surprising that he had formed bonds of friendship with Toussaint Louverture. Following Chanlatte’s account, Bouvet de Cressé presents correspondence from general Leclerc, Napoleon’s brother-in-law, who basely betrayed Toussaint, along with letters to Henry Christophe and others proving the deception that the French practiced toward Haiti. He thereby bolsters the case that abolitionists were eager to make against further political or military action against Haiti and in favor of diplomatic ties and commercial development between the two countries.

The fact of the black authorship of *L’Histoire de la catastrophe de Saint-Domingue* clearly matters to Doin, for in a footnote she recommends that readers consult this “admirable book by a black” (Doin, 20). What is more, one is struck by the degree to which the style, tone, themes, and arguments of *La Famille noire* resemble those found in Chanlatte’s writing. As noted above, her justification for the violence that occurred during the Haitian revolution echoes his, as does the central place she assigns to arguments in favor of the humanity and intelligence of blacks. Of course many of the similar features of the two works occur throughout the body of

abolitionist writing of the time. But justifying Haiti for the writers in question had little to do with originality. It had to do with disseminating information, especially that derived from reliable sources and from first-hand accounts such as Chanlatte's. Doin's role in this affair could be described as that of an intermediary, someone who could reach out to the French people, including women, translating abolitionist writings into touching stories. Interestingly, Bouvet de Cressé makes a point of saying in his preface that women should not read the work he is publishing: "they would be too painfully affected; there would be too much danger for them even in glancing at this long series of crimes against humanity" (Bouvet de Cressé, vi). This sentence suggests the role that an enlightened mediator such as Doin could have seen herself called upon to perform. As a woman and a writer, she would be an appropriate choice to produce stories bringing the abolitionist program suitably to the attention of women readers.

The other writer to whom Doin makes extensive reference in *La Famille noire* is Thomas Clarkson. Although his reputation has often been eclipsed by that of Wilberforce, whose parliamentary advocacy of the cause of abolitionism was more visible, Clarkson devoted his entire life to that cause, publishing works about the subject as early as 1786 and traveling extensively to interview witnesses and procure other kinds of empirical information. Well known in France, where he played a role in initiating the first abolitionist society in France, the Société des Amis des noirs founded in 1788, Clarkson worked actively during the Restoration. Louis XVIII actually encouraged him to try to inform the French public of the horrors of the slave trade. Realizing how powerful colonial interests were in France and how ignorant the public was of the facts, the king conveyed to Clarkson through Wellington that "he would welcome a 'current of popular feeling' which would allow him to ban the trade."⁹ Disseminating Clarkson's writings, as Doin does in *La Famille noire*, was a high priority in French abolitionist circles.

Shared authority of the kind found in the writings of Doin and Bouvet de Cressé clearly pertains to the writing of this celebrated English abolitionist. *Cries of Africa*, published in 1822, followed a five-year correspondence between Clarkson and King Henry Christophe, in which the English writer played the role of friend, foreign policy advisor, and good-will ambassador. Impressed with Christophe's positive accomplishments—instituting a new code of law, breaking up large plantations, developing irrigation, disciplining the army, promoting education, among others—Clarkson formed a relationship with Christophe that was built on strong trust and led to Clarkson's intense involvement in Haitian affairs. For example, Clarkson intervened to enlist the support for Haiti from the emperor of Russia by showing him a copy of one of Christophe's letters. It produced the desired effect:

He had been taught by the French and German newspapers . . . that Hayti was inhabited by a people little better than savages. He now saw them in a very different light. The letter which I had shown him was a letter of genius and talent. It contained wise, virtuous, and liberal sentiments. It would have done honour to the most civilized Cabinets of Europe. To see, said his Imperial Majesty, a person rising up in the midst of slavery and founding a free Empire was of itself a surprising thing, but to see him, in the midst of ignorance and darkness, founding it on the pillars of education under Christian auspices was more surprising and truly delightful.¹⁰

This example of Clarkson and Christophe's relationship recalls the collaborative partnerships of

Phénor and Merville, or Bouvet de Cressé and Chanlatte. And although Haiti is not directly mentioned in *Cries of Africa*, it is clear that its future weighed heavily on Clarkson at the time when he wrote that book in 1822. After Henry Christophe's death in 1820 and the brutal execution of his sons at the hands of his enemies, Clarkson helped orchestrate the removal of Queen Marie-Louise Christophe and her two daughters to England, where they were house guests of Clarkson and his wife for nearly a year (Christophe, 78-79). It is Mrs. Clarkson who, with the help of a young French refugee Benjamin Laroche, translated *Cries of Africa* (Wilson, 157-58).

It is interesting to observe the ways in which Clarkson promoted black agency and developed the kind of shared authority in *Cries of Africa* that inspired Doin and other abolitionists. From the start, he quotes extensively from the account of how Africans are enslaved that is provided in Mungo Park's *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* published in 1799. Park's trip, which began in 1795 and ended two years later, was sponsored by the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Districts of Africa, which had been formed in 1788 by men of wealth with the goal of improving knowledge of African geography and markets and, by peaceable means, bringing civilization to what were considered barbarian nations. Subscribers were from both sides of the slavery debate. Although Park devotes an entire chapter to the institution of slavery in Africa, and was often appalled by what he saw, he can hardly be said to make an argument for doing away with it as a practice. Indeed, he considers its so pervasiveness in Africa that European efforts would probably do little to affect its continued practice. Leaving such reservations about the possible benefits of the English anti-slavery movement aside, Clarkson draws on those parts of Park's work that had the greatest potential for furthering the abolitionist cause such as human interest stories. What Clarkson saw as uniquely valuable in those stories was their potential for giving a voice to Africans and thus producing first-hand testimony to the ill effects of slavery on real individual lives. Peter Kitson observes that *Cries of Africa* owed much of its originality to Clarkson's willingness to let Africans speak, thus going beyond "the sentimental ventriloquism of William Cooper's and Hannah Moore's abolitionist verse."⁹ Drawing upon *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* for both facts and narrative material, Clarkson's work functions in relation to Park's as Doin's does to both his and Bouvet de Cressé's. Advancing the abolitionist cause required translating relevant material into a form that was effective and appealing to large audiences of uninformed readers.

One especially touching episode, which appears in both *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* and *Cries of Africa* and then finds its way into *La Famille noire*, provides an apt illustration of the strategies which are at work in abolitionist literature. Park describes Nealee, a young girl being led to the coast in a procession of slaves, who is too weak and suffering to keep up with the others. Having refused food and drink, complained of extreme pain in her legs, and suffered an attack by a swarm of bees as well as numerous beatings, Nealee is left by the leaders of the group in a deserted place, "where undoubtedly she soon perished, and was probably devoured by wild beasts."¹⁰ This is the episode that Clarkson includes in *Cries of Africa*, with reference to Park as his source.¹¹ In Doin's novel, the reference is to Clarkson, and the episode is changed, perhaps to make it less shocking for women readers, although the name Néala that Doin gives to her character would have clearly signaled Clarkson's or Parks's versions of this story to certain informed readers (Doin, 40-41). In all three versions, the episode focuses on a young African girl who is uprooted and made to suffer and who expresses the wish that her tormentors

just kill her rather than force her to go on. The difference is the black agency that Doin attributes to Néala: first she chooses to sacrifice herself for Phénor's mother; and later she revives and is able to rally Phénor's will to live. Doin takes Clarkson's strategy of giving a voice to black subjects a few steps further by transforming Nealee, a mere victim, into a Néali who possesses both a voice and a will of her own.

For both Park and Clarkson, writing about women was a key to achieving a popular appeal; and thus, along with instances of victims such as Nealee they, like Doin, acknowledged women's authority in matters of race and slavery. Park claims that charity and solicitude were constants in the character of African women: "I do not recall a single instance of hardheartedness toward me in the women" (Park, p. 240). An arresting example of women's agency occurs in Chapter 15 of *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa*, a touching scene in which African women take pity on Park, a lost and starving traveler, and offer to feed and lodge him. As he lays down to sleep, the women continue their work of spinning cotton and compose a song about him, which begins: "The winds roared, and the rains fell.— The poor white man, faint and weary, came and sat under our tree.—He has no mother to bring him milk; no wife to grind his corn. Let us pity the white man . . ." (Park, 195-98). Clarkson repeats this episode as well (Clarkson, *The Cries of Africa*, 12-13). What is more, Park chooses to include as a postscript a poem that this episode in his book inspired, entitled "A Negro Song" and penned by Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, who presumably read Park's book before it reached the final stage of publication. She also had a composer put her poem to music. Park observes that he is honored by this poetic and musical production, "in both parts of which the plaintive simplicity of the original is preserved and improved" (Park, 196). I find Park's comment about literature's ability to "improve" his first-hand account revealing. It suggests that literature was viewed as possessing an authority that complemented rather than competed with eye-witness testimony because it could touch people in ways that objective accounts were unable to do. That "A Negro Song" has both a feminine subject and author supports my argument about the centrality of women to the abolitionist cause. Georgiana, like Doin, could make a contribution that was recognized as valuable and unique.

Other practices emerge when one looks at the way in which Clarkson's work was translated into French.¹² The change in the title alone is revealing: *Cries of Africa to the Inhabitants of Europe* becomes the far more aggressive and polemic *Cri des Africains contre les Européens, leurs oppresseurs* [*Cries of Africans against Europeans, their oppressors*]. Whereas the preface in English is addressed "To the Benevolent Reader," the French text reads merely "Préface de l'Auteur" [Preface of the Author]; and the more personal "you" to address the "benevolent reader" disappears. In these and many other cases, it would appear that the English text strikes a note of appealing to the good will of a public more receptive to the message of abolition than in France. The French text, in contrast, adopts a somewhat confrontational stance, adding phrases like "ce commerce odieux" [this odious trade] that do not appear in the original version (*Cri des Africains*, 6). There are also frequent uses of a more emotive language in the French translation, presumably better suited to the stylistic expectations of French readers at the time, and especially perhaps humanitarian minded women. Significantly, although the text of Georgiana's poem does not appear in either the original or translated versions of Clarkson's text, *Cri des Africains* does include a complete poem in a footnote entitled "Romance," which the

translator presents as “an imitation of the poem that Mungo Park recites through the mouth of his hostesses” (*Cri des Africains*, 14-15). As an example of the emotive language used in the French translation of Clarkson’s work one finds “Ask any man in Europe . . . whether he does not consider war as one of the greatest plagues with which the human race can be visited” (Clarkson, *The Cries of Africa*, 4) translated as “Ah! quel est l’Européen qui . . . n’a pas dit dans son coeur que la guerre est le plus grand des fléaux qui puissent affliger la malheureuse humanité” [Ah! what European has not said in his heart that war is the greatest plague that can afflict suffering humanity] (Clarkson, *Cri des Africains*, 4). Doin’s text, relying not on the original but on the translation of Clarkson’s text, echoes this tone, with the addition of myriad rhetorical flourishes including repetitions, exclamations, antitheses, and any other stylistic tool capable of touching the heartstrings of the sensitive reader. For example, “Quelle épouvantable effronterie! Eh! quel fruit doivent tirer de tant de meurtres, d’infamies et de cruautés les Européens insatiables?” (Doin, 14). [What astonishing insolence! Ah! what benefit can the insatiable Europeans draw from so much murder, infamy, and cruelty?] Interestingly, this is one of the passages for which Doin refers the reader to *Cri des Africains*. The combination of a reference to an objective source and this flowery language may seem incongruous to us today; but for Doin it was undoubtedly just another instance of drawing on multiple strategies to achieve a common goal and of refusing to see the literary and non-literary as dichotomous forms of writing.

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Sophie Doin positioned Haiti at the center of an abolitionism that gave a voice to both persons of color and women. She accomplished this task in various way. They include providing first-hand accounts, telling touching stories, identifying black authors, mediating between educated and popular audiences, putting graphic material into a form suitable for women, and modifying texts through translation for different audiences. Her writing provided authority to Haiti as a nation, but in a non-authoritarian way that entailed sharing information and relying on a multiplicity of sources and voices. As noted at the start of this essay, Sophie Doin may not be well known as a prominent abolitionist, although frequent references to her in works against the slave trade in the beginning of the nineteenth century indicate her importance among literary abolitionists of her time (Debbasch, 316-51). Most importantly, however, the strategies she deployed in *Blanche et noir*, *Noire et blanc*, and *La Famille noire* and are significant, both in their own right, and in their congruence with similar strategies used by writers who were abolitionist leaders such as Thomas Clarkson. And to the extent that her writing illuminates the literary, political, and intellectual history of France in the 1820s, as I hope to have shown here that it does, she deserves to emerge from the almost total obscurity to which literary history has condemned her for so many years.

NOTES

1. Before having been driven into exile on February 29, 2004, the president of Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, demanded repayment for those reparations of \$22 billion dollars. His successor, the U.S.-backed leader Gerard Latortue, has dropped those demands, which he has called ridiculous.

0.1. See Benoît Joachim, "L'Indemnité coloniale de Saint-Domingue et la question des rapatriés," *Revue historique* 246 (1971): 359-76; Lydia Polgreen, "200 Years After Napoleon, Haiti Finds Little to Celebrate," *New York Times*, January 2, 2004, 3; Yvan Debbasch, "Poésie et traite: l'opinion française sur le commerce négrier au début du XIX^e siècle," *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, 48 (1961): 311-52; Léon François Hoffmann, *Le Nègre romantique: personnage littéraire et obsession collective* (Paris: Payot, 1973); Doris Y. Kadish, "Présentation," in Sophie Doin, *La Famille noire, ou la Traite et l'esclavage, suivie de trois Nouvelles Blanches et Noires* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002), ix-xxxv.

3. Sophie Doin, *La Famille noire, ou la Traite et l'esclavage, suivie de trois Nouvelles Blanches et Noires* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002), 6.

4. Karen Offen, *European Feminisms 1700-1950: A Political History* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000), 90-91; James Smith Allen, *Poignant Relations: Three Modern French Women* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000), 178-80.

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5. Auguste Jean Baptiste Bouvet de Cressé, *Histoire de la Catastrophe de Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Librairie de Peytieux, 1824). Bouvet de Cressé identifies the author in a footnote as “M. J. C., an orator, historian and poet, and one of the most distinguished writers of the New World”; the writer identifies himself in the Author’s preface as J...E CH.....E.
 6. After Henry Christophe became paralyzed on August 15, 1820, his control of the northern part of Haiti waned and insurgents increasingly gained the upper hand, conspiring to unite the part controlled by Christophe with the southern part under the control of the mulatto President Boyer. On October 8, Christophe took his own life, after which Boyer declared himself president of a united Haiti on October 28. He is the “wise” leader to whom Doin refers, despite the fact that he showed no interest in the kind of support for education and social improvement for blacks that Christophe emphasized.
 7. My analysis of this painting is based on Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby’s “Revolutionary Sons, White Father, and Creole Difference: Guillaume-LethiPire’s *Oath of the Ancestors* (1822),” *Yale French Studies* 101 (2002): 201-26.
 8. Doris Y. Kadish and Françoise Massardier-Kenney, *Translating Slavery* (Kent, Oh.: Kent State UP, 1994), 203, 42.
 9. Ellen Gibson Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson: A Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1968), 127-28.
 10. Henry Christophe, *Henry Christophe & Thomas Clarkson; a Correspondence*, ed. Earl

Leslie Griggs and Clifford H. Prator (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 121-22.

9. Peter J. Kitson, “‘Bales of Living Anguish’: Representations of Race and the Slave in Romantic Writing,” *ELH*, 67, 2 (2000): 522.

10. Mungo Park, *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa*, ed. Kate Ferguson Marsters (Durham: Duke UP, 2000), 286.

11. Thomas Clarkson, *The Cries of Africa to the Inhabitants of Europe* (London: Harvey and Darton, 1822), 21-23. In the same year, the same publisher published the French translation of this work, *Cri des Africains contre les Européens, leurs oppresseurs* (Londres: Harvey et Darton, 1822).

12. French translations of *The Cries of Africans* drawn from the published translation *Cri des Africains* appear in quotation marks. My English translations that appear in brackets are intended either to translate words added in the French translation or to show the extent to which it departs from the original English text. I also provide a translation in brackets of a passage from Doin’s *La Famille noire*.