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White Women, Black Men: Interracial Intimacy in Adolphe Duhart and Samuel Snaër's Short Stories

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In 1865, Adolphe Duhart's "Simple Histoire" and François-Michel-Samuel Snaër's "Souvenirs de Bonfouca" appeared in *La Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orléans.*[1] These two short stories bear a thematic thread in which childhood friendships between white girls and black boys flourish into love in adulthood. The intertwining of race, gender, and sexuality in the stories makes the body a compelling and contested site because it is "inextricably connected with conceptions of American identity in the antebellum era" (Sorisio 20). As such, the exploration of interracial desire alerts the reader to broader implications and thrusts to the forefront nineteenth-century body politic, in the way bodies become vessels for larger political and social meanings (Sorisio 28; Rosenberg and Fitzpatrick 1). At first glance, the stories expose what might seem mundane oppositions: a woman and a man, an enslaved man and his enslaver mistress, privileged and precarious status. Interestingly, they also center on two groups that nineteenth-century science categorized as childlike and inferior beings: white women and blacks (Sorisio 29). It is worth remembering, whether in medicine, marriage, or property, laws converge to sculpt a subservient role for women and slaves based on their biology.

The discourse of the period frequently and metaphorically merged the body of the woman and the body of the slave in their bound oppression, as illustrated by the suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton. During the 1856 Women's Rights Convention, she exclaimed, "A woman has no name! She is Mrs. John or James, Peter or Paul, just as she changes masters; like the Southern slave, she takes the name of her owner" (qtd. in Sánchez-Eppler 31). While the symbolic linking of women and slaves focuses on "their shared bodies to be bought, owned, and designated as a grounds of resistance, it nevertheless obliterates the particularity of black and female experience, making their distinct exploitations appear as one," which of course, it is not (Sánchez-Eppler 31). The black body in particular, much like a text, vividly displays his master's brutality and ownership through the branding of hot irons and the jutting welts and scars (Sánchez-Eppler 30). Carolyn Sorisio puts it this way, "[m]ore than any other body, the African American body was the one that was

[1] The short stories were published in French in the March 9-10, 1865 and September 7-15, 1865 issues.

scrutinized, taxonomized, and chattelized. It was whipped, worked, sold, raped, and studied with a ferocity close to frenzy" (28). This study closely analyzes how Duhart and Snaër's fiction depicts romantic relationships between (enslaved) black men and white women while acknowledging the complexities of consensual intimacy within a hierarchical system.

Long considered taboo, black-white interracial relationships have elicited severe anxiety, and their literary portrayals "have been very rare" (Sollors 4). Speaking on Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson,* the critic Thomas W. Ford notes that Twain broached "a theme which was totally avoided in nineteenth century American literature," praising his "skillful handling" of the "forbidden theme of miscegenation" (Ford 13).[2] Much analysis has been dedicated to interracial relationships, but it is often the relationship between white men and enslaved and free women of color that has been explored more deeply. Writing on American abolitionist literature, Karen Sánchez-Eppler remarks, "at least so far as I am aware, no antislavery fiction admits the possibility of a white woman loving or wedding a black man" (44). According to legend, antebellum miscegenation coupled "occasionally black men and poor white women, but rarely if ever black men and white women of the planter class" (Genovese 422). The historian Eugene Genovese observes that in spite of the legend, "white women of all classes had black lovers and sometimes husbands in all parts of the South, especially in the towns and cities" (422).

In the American South, miscegenation commonly occurred through the "rape and concubinage of slave women by their white masters" (Sánchez-Eppler 41). Scholars like Angela Davis view sexual encounters between white men and black women as inherently rape. She writes, "[i]t would be a mistake to regard the institutionalized pattern of rape during slavery as an expression of white men's urges, otherwise stifled by the specter of white womanhood's chastity" (23). She forcefully decries rape as a "weapon of domination" and a "weapon of repression" (23). The following questions thus arise: In what ways does the paradigm of a white woman and a black man trouble our understanding of white womanhood and black masculinity in the nineteenth century? Is it possible to dislodge power in the erotic relationship between rich white women and free and enslaved black men? How do we account for the ways in which childhood frames these relationships? How might the authorship change the narrative of interracial desire?

With this in mind, I proceed cautiously in my close reading of Duhart's "Simple Histoire" and Snaër's "Souvenirs de Bonfouca." First, I situate briefly the texts in their historical and literary context, then, I follow a linear path in which I analyze the inception, development, and the end of the relationships. When relevant, I engage with scholarship on the body and sexuality, intently attentive to the intersection of race, gender, and class. I demonstrate that in the texts, the corporeality of the characters simultaneously reveals and masks intimacy. While the contours of their bodies latch onto spaces and landscapes for exploration and respite, along the way mothers and servants abet, charting a path of resistance that pushes aside norms and conventions in favor of feminine sexual autonomy, however brief or fraught. Ultimately, the white women's intimate bodies bear life and death, consequences of their liaisons, while the black men's bodies endure exile. As Duhart and Snaër's depictions of interracial intimacy call attention to the plight of those deemed "inferior beings," I argue that these inherently political texts fit into a wider

[2] In Louisiana, in both the francophone and anglophone literature of the time, relationships between white men and women of color are rather common plot devices.

frame in which emancipation and citizenship hold both individual and collective impulses. In the concluding portion of this essay, I consider how the provocative portrayal lays bare the anguish and revolt embedded in these texts, entangling authors and characters in a net of despair and radical optimism. In sum, this essay brings attention to texts that have been overlooked, and partakes in critical conversations around race, sexuality, and citizenship in nineteenth-century Louisiana.

Creole Literature in Civil-War Era Louisiana

Adolphe Duhart and Samuel Snaër published their works in 1865, a year when the United States was embroiled in a four-year-long conflict between free and slave states. The fainted pulse of the American Revolution and the roar of the twinned revolutions of France and St. Domingue/Haiti impelled French-speaking creoles of color in New Orleans towards the ideals of *liberté, égalité, fraternité.* And months after the start of the Civil War, they launched *L'Union*, a newspaper in which readers could find editorials, essays, and literary works that situated the Civil War in the same vein as eighteenth-century democratic revolutions (Bell 2).[3] For them, the Civil War meant more than holding the Union together, they viewed it as "a necessary step in mankind's progression toward a republican millennium" (Bell 3).

The urgency that fueled the writing of these intellectuals stemmed from a desire to acquire full citizenship. Before the war, and going back to at least one century, the mixed-race population of New Orleans, also known as *gens de couleur libres* (free people of color), found themselves in a caste of their own, existing in between white citizens and enslaved blacks. As they grew in number and in wealth, they shaped the economy with their labor skills. Highly literate, the most affluent among them sent their children to study in France or to French schools in the city. Yet, their movement and their bodies suffered oppressive measures with no right to vote, to assemble or to speak. Under constant surveillance, many feared being snatched and sold into slavery, and as such, carried on their persons official passes that attested to their free status (Michaelides 19).

For the creole of color writers, it seemed that the echo of the Haitian revolution pulsated in their veins. For one thing, most had at least one parent who emigrated from there, and second, the activism baked into every piece of writing, carried a purpose, "every demonstration of exceptional literary or artistic gifts served to discredit the dominant racist ideology, which marked people of color as inferior to whites and therefore not entitled to full citizenship" (Michaelides 17). The creole writers found inspiration in French Romanticism, which, as a literary movement, embodied a compelling tool to "challenge existing social evils" (Bell 7). In France, writers portrayed the predicament of the reprobate and the vulnerable, and in so doing, created not only empathy in their readership but aroused emotions for social and political change. Victor Hugo and Alphonse de Lamartine foregrounded the slave revolt of St. Domingue in their works (Bell 98–99). Romanticism regarded the authentic expression of self and cultural identity as fundamental to the formation of a nation (Bruce 12). Unsurprisingly, a shared passion for civic engagement unites the two authors in their fight for civil rights.

The son of Haitian immigrants, Pierre-Adolphe Duhart (1830-1908) was born in New Orleans and studied in France. Under the pen name of his five-year-old deceased

[3] In July 1863, the paper became bilingual. Another newspaper, *La Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orléans* soon followed in *L'Union*'s bilingual footsteps. Well-read worldwide, it became the first black daily in the United States.

sister, Lélia Duhart, he published numerous poems in the *Tribune.* An activist and a prominent educator, he along with other creoles of color, mounted a campaign to create a school for orphans of color, several of whom were the illegitimate children of interracial liaisons, and would serve as one of its principals. As an amateur actor, he most likely kept company at the Orleans Theatre with the teacher and musician François-Michel-Samuel Snaër (1833-1890). The well-accomplished Snaër composed a rich repertoire of music that crossed genres. Most of his pieces have been lost due to his avoidance of publication. He preferred circulating them among friends, which were seldom returned to him. Both authors embedded real events in their works, events with deafening resonance for that period and beyond. For instance, in Duhart's "Simple Histoire," Vincent Ogé, a wealthy mulatto merchant from St. Domingue, is the descendant of illicit lovers. In 1790, the real-life Ogé faced a brutal public execution after his failed revolt. Snaër's "Souvenirs de Bonfouca" starts with Édouard's narrative, a soldier in the First Regiment of the Louisiana Native Guards, one of the first all-black regiments in the Union Army during the American Civil War. Captain Louis A. Snaër, Snaër's half-brother, fought courageously within the regiment (Michaelides 81).

"when we were both still but children"

In true form of antislavery fiction in which the story begins by citing its source, the narrator soldier in "Souvenirs," having befriended the twenty-seven-year-old Édouard, recounts his sorrowful story. In both this text and in "Simple histoire," childhood bond takes roots against the backdrop of an inviting landscape, in which adults remain conspicuously absent. As one child moves away and one lingers, the distance between them inevitably widens, filled with the gritty reality of the adult world of propriety and hierarchy of domination, marring inordinately their interactions, and putting to test the reliability of their childhood memories. In this section, I study the depiction of friendships between black boys and white girls, and how childhood serves as both a beginning and end to amorous possibility.

"Simple Histoire" takes place in eighteenth century St. Domingue on a prosperous plantation owned by a wealthy French family. The daughter, Mlle de Sauillac exudes the easy nonchalance of the creoles and the gallantry of the French, a duality that makes her attractive and captivating.[4] The text immediately frames her as an egalitarian, "rid by her education of all the ridiculous prejudices that are the fruit of slavery, she saw in the wretched Africans fellow human beings whom a terrible fate had reduced to servitude" (Duhart, "Simple History" 170).[5] Mlle de Sauillac's wet nurse, an enslaved woman named Man Maria, raised her alongside her mulatto son, Clément.[6]

Duhart and Snaër immerse their characters in an exotic landscape, from which the interracial children draw to commune with their surroundings and themselves. While studying in France, Mlle de Sauillac remembers her adoptive brother

[4] "Simple History." *Favorites of the Gods: An Anthology of Short Fiction by New Orleans Creoles of Colors (1837-1867)*, edited by Chris Michaelides, Éditions Tintamarre, 2021, pp. 169–73. Duhart, Adolphe. "Simple Histoire." *Paroles d'honneur : Écrits de Créoles de couleur néo-orléanais 1837-1872*, edited by Chris Michaelides, Éditions Tintamarre, 2004, pp. 81–85. For this analysis, I am using Chris Michaelides's translation. The original French will be in the footnotes to enhance readability.

[5] "dépouillée par son éducation de tous ces préjugés ridicules, fruits de l'esclavage, elle ne voyait dans les malheureux Africains que des frères qu'un sort affreux avait réduits à la servitude" (Duhart, "Simple Histoire" 82). Hereinafter subsequent citations will be by page number.

[6] The setting of the story is in Haiti, and Chris Michaelides points out that in Haitian Creole, the term "Man" is used to address an older woman, a practice common in nineteenth-century Louisiana Creole.

with fondness, whose brown face stands out against the green banana leaves.[7] She reminisces on "the lemon and orange groves where she had spent the sweetest moments of her life with her dear nurse and her adoptive brother"[8] (171). Her memory narrows on Clément "always running and jumping around her, would rush either to bring some of those savory fruits […] or to steady her wavering steps on the rocky crest of small hills that surrounded their plantation" (171).[9] Likewise, in "Souvenirs," Édouard reflects on his childhood encounter with Amélie, a young girl with blonde hair and black eyes, when they were fifteen and ten to twelve years old, respectively. The bountiful landscape becomes a territory that they conquer with their affectionate tokens. He recalls, "over *there,* I had picked fruit for her […] over *here*, I had put a white rose in her hair, and she had given me in return one of those sweet-smelling granadillas […] over *there,* we had promised each other, in our chaste and pure love, never to forget one another" (225; emphasis in original).[10] Every summer, they dive into a serene and pure happiness, like a peaceful lake undisturbed by the breeze (217).

The perfumed landscape coincides with the fruits that the children can smell and consume, and the figurative sensation of sweetness it arouses in them. But still, the tropical landscape conceals the violence that most certainly and repeatedly occurs in its midst. I find Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley's reading of exotic gardens as countertopos particularly useful in the way the garden, as an ordered space, could "magically" repel the savagery of hills and woods, and as a visual symbol, show the "colonists' will to reexert control over the wildly multicolored Caribbean landscape, demarcating space in which colonists live in luxury and that no maroons could penetrate or savage" (41). The prosperous plantation belonging to Mlle de Sauillac's father is worked on by thousands of enslaved workers (169). Amélie belongs to a wealthy family and her father is a proud creole who belongs to the aristocracy. He possesses "vast lands fertilized by the sweat of a great many slaves" (219).[11] Tinsley argues that the tropical gardens also "formed a strategy of symbolic warfare," and I am inclined to read the presence of the interracial bodies in the luxuriant landscape as a disruptive act (41).

If nature, notably, the outdoors, provides the vibrant setting for childhood exploration, time on the other hand, tests memory and permissibility, and imperils carefree and shared experience. For instance, Mlle de Sauillac, upon her return, instantly recognized her childhood friend, Clément, "but it was in vain that she recalled to him the games they played as children and memories of their closeness" (171).[12] With perfect recollection, Édouard identified his old companion, but Amélie walked past him without even glancing, causing a bewildered Édouard to inquire, "Have four years changed me so much, then, that you can no longer recognize Édouard, the boy with whom you shared your childhood games?"

[7] By omitting a first name for Mlle de Sauillac, the text emphasizes her high social standing. Moreover, the story mentions that Clément's father was white, which was a common occurrence in the colonies. We can surmise rape but all forms of liaisons, including consensual, could be the cause, as Dorris Garraway explores in *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean* (2005).

[8] "ces allées de citronniers, d'orangers, où elle avait passé les plus doux moments de sa vie avec sa chère nourrice et son frère" (82–83).

[9] "qui toujours courant, gambadant autour d'elle, s'empressait soit à lui porter quelques-uns de ces fruits savoureux […] soit à soutenir sa marche chancelante sur la crête rocailleuse des petits mornes qui avoisinaient leur habitation" (83).

[10] "là, j'avais cueilli pour elle des fruits […] ici, j'avais mis dans ses cheveux une rose blanche, et elle, en retour, m'avait donné une de ces grenadilles au suave parfum […] là, nous nous étions promis, dans notre chaste et naïf amour, de ne jamais nous oublier" (158).

[11] "de vastes campagnes fertilisées par la sueur de nombreux esclaves" (151).

[12] "mais ce fut en vain qu'elle lui rappela les jeux de leur jeune âge, le souvenir de leur ancienne familiarité" (83).

(220).[13] If Clément's lips narrowly stretch into a smile, it is simply to acknowledge his enslaver, "he no longer appeared to feel for her anything but the respect due to a mistress" (171).[14] And though Amélie apologizes for her failure to recognize him, her words are wrapped in cold politeness. Mlle de Sauillac and Édouard expect recognition to yield identification, acceptance, and a collective return to a happy place, but what takes place instead is a nonreciprocal and detached encounter. The discordant recognition and its embedded distress serve to illuminate the demise of their childhood and their inaugural steps in an intransigent world that mercilessly regulates their interaction solely on their black, white, and gendered bodies.

"their hearts were of one accord"

Writing about antislavery fiction, Karen Sánchez-Eppler argues that "the story of the white woman's desire for the black man is not told, and his desire for her is constantly reduced to the safer dimensions of a loyal's slave nominally asexual adoration of his good and kind mistress" (43). Of interest here is how the creole writers imagine the subversive act of an interracial relationship, in which erotic desire throbs undeniably in the texts and is acted upon. In "Simple Histoire," the characters first engage in a subtle cat-and-mouse dance. Seemingly indifferent, the sight of Mlle de Sauillac does affect Clément, "the strongest passion enflamed his heart" (172).[15] It is worth noting that the power imbalance between Mlle de Sauillac and Clément reverberates throughout the text. As the historian Thomas A. Foster notes, "enslaved men could not consent to sexual intimacy with enslavers because of their legal status as property and because of their vulnerability as enslaved people within the hierarchical ordering of society" (5). Duhart intimates that Mlle de Sauillac and Clément are perceptive of their respective status, which particularly for Clément, induces his initial reticence and amnesia. He depicts Clément as a proud man who resents his masters' preferential treatment, finds the yoke of slavery repressive, and the passiveness of his enslaved compatriots disappointingly vexing. In a short amount of time, Clément, the rebellious and proud, gives in to his love for Mlle de Sauillac, who is likewise "[c]onquered by her passion" (172).[16]

Duhart shrouds Mlle de Sauillac and Clément under a veil that serves as an intimate space where their interracial bodies can safely explore and consume their love, "Man Maria easily saw through the veil that covered the two young lovers, but it was in vain that she urged them to be sensible. They were young and in love, so they saw each other every day […] and Mademoiselle de Sauillac became a mother" (172).[17] The corporeal implication of their interracial intimacy is tangibly present in the flesh of their daughter, "as beautiful as love itself and the spitting image of her mother" (172).[18] Duhart deploys various strategies to make the corporeal daughter both private and public.

First, the naming of Clémence echoes that of her enslaved father. In French, the adjective *clément* and the noun *clémence* denote a person who extends forgiveness and compassion to offenses. The naming begs us to question whether Mlle de Sauillac seeks to legitimize in her own way a child

[13] "Quatre années m'ont-elles donc tellement changé que vous ne puissiez plus reconnaître Édouard, celui qui partagea les jeux de votre enfance" (153).
[14] "il ne paraissait plus avoir pour elle que le respect que l'on doit à une maîtresse" (83).
[15] "la plus forte passion embrassa son cœur" (84).
[16] "[m]aitrisée par sa passion" (84).
[17] "Man Maria pénétra facilement au travers du voile qui couvrait celui des jeunes gens; mais ce fut en vain qu'elle les exhorta à la prudence. Ils étaient jeunes, ils s'aimaient, ils se voyaient tous les jours […] et Mlle de Sauillac devint mère" (84).
[18] "belle comme l'amour et la vivante image de sa mère" (84).

that her white world would never recognize. Second, the two mothers devise a plan to pass the baby as Man Maria's. Furthermore, Madame de Sauillac, fearing her husband's wrath, convinces him to free Man Maria and Clément. He consents, except for baby Clémence, whom he gives to his daughter. Clémence, thus, benefits from her white mother's presence while her black grandmother raises her. Yielding to the relentless pleas of her parents, Mlle de Sauillac reluctantly enters into a marriage, accompanied by Clémence, and later becomes a mother to a son. Her husband dies never discovering her secret. Duhart pulls the reader into a subterfuge at the expense of the white men in the text—Mlle de Sauillac's father, her husband, and her son. Despite embodying the social structure, their power is momentarily overshadowed by their unawareness of the familial bond that so intimately binds one of their own to the enslaved Clément. As she nears the end, she asks her son to look after Clémence like a sister and share his inheritance. Duhart may not have tied Clément, Mlle de Sauillac and Clémence in a conventional familial bond, but textually and corporeally, the link is formed.

In "Souvenirs," Édouard navigates a sea of disappointment and latent eroticism. Seemingly unreachable, Amélie's white body can only be gazed at and touched from a distance. When he notices Amélie's handkerchief on the grass, he eagerly picks it up, "happy to be able to press my lips to this piece of cloth, perfumed by her breath, which her beloved mouth had perhaps touched" (220).[19] When at dawn his wandering feet bring him to Amélie's window, he imagines her corporeal body, "she was lying at that very moment on her maiden's bed. I was happy to be so near her" (221).[20] When an accident brings him into Amélie's home for care, his wish to dwell near her is thwarted when the devastating news of her impending nuptials forces him to flee.

Yet, it is leaning over Édouard's incapacitated body in the intimate setting of his bedroom that Amélie first responds to Édouard's pursuit, "the curls of her blond hair brushed against my face. With the same handkerchief that I had picked up the night of the dance, she wiped my brow all beaded with sweat, and her sweet voice murmured these words in my ear: 'Édouard, I love you!'" ("Memories of Bonfouca" 224).[21] Amélie uses her prized handkerchief to tend to Édouard's black body. At once, a material symbol of her class, gender, and whiteness, the handkerchief passes between their hands and embodies the locus of their embodied desire, sensuality, and solitude.[22]

Amélie and Édouard have their final moment against an enraged nature, with flashing lightning and boisterous thunders. Their last conversation illuminates the overlapping of their respective oppressions. Édouard painfully reveals how his black body has caused her to reject his love and marry another man. By proposing that she was pressured into marriage and secretly has lingering emotions for Édouard, Amélie challenges his assumption. Amélie's distress suggests the lack of autonomy over her own body, similar to Mlle de Sauillac. Both Duhart and Snaër demonstrate literary coherence in their portrayal of patriarchal order being restored for white women, whose bodies are owned by white men while their love is devoted to their black lovers.

Amidst the raging storm, Amélie implores Édouard to flee and save himself,

[19] "heureux de pouvoir appuyer mes lèvres sur ce morceau de toile parfumé par son souffle que sa bouche adorée avait peut-être touché" (153).

[20] "elle reposait dans ce moment sur sa couche virginale. J'étais si heureux d'être si près d'elle" (154).

[21] "les boucles de ses cheveux blonds effleuraient mon visage; avec le même mouchoir que j'avais ramassé le soir du bal, elle essuyait mon front perlé de gouttes de sueur ; sa voix douce murmurait ces mots à mon oreille 'Édouard, je t'aime !'" (157-59).

[22] With the handkerchief as a motif and its treatment of miscegenation, Snaër is probably giving a loose nod to Shakespeare's *Othello*. Snaër conducted the orchestra at the Orleans Theatre.

and he grasps her hand, asking for a keepsake. Resting her head on his shoulder, Amélie and he share a wordless exchange, culminating in a passionate kiss. Édouard poignantly evokes their final adieu and the power of that kiss, ["she had put all her soul into that kiss"]. Édouard vows that even in death, when rain drips onto his casket on stormy nights, he will shiver with delight in his burial garment, reminiscing about that inexplicable moment of sheer ecstasy. The text employs words like "stormy nights" "dying," "rain," "grave," "coffin," "burial shroud" and "pleasure" to capture Edouard's romantic soul and how nature, desire, and death converge. They also reflect Amélie's fate, as that fateful night resulted in her contracting tuberculosis, which he only discovers six months later from a letter. In her final moments, she reveals that Édouard's absence makes death even more sorrowful for her. She writes:

> it would not be a final adieu that I would give you in my last hour; I would clasp your hand gently and say to you: "Don't cry, my dear, we will see each other again in a better world where a barbaric prejudice won't keep us apart from each other despite our mutual love. For, since the day of our first meeting, we have not ceased to be in love, though we never said it to each other." (231)[23]

Even as she comforts Édouard, Amélie herself longs for consolation. By acknowledging the societal barriers caused by race, Amélie shows her lack of naiveté when comforting Édouard. It is only in the face of certain death that Amelie can let go of pretense and norms, and open herself to love and being loved by Édouard.

"a remedy for my pain"

In the concluding section of this essay, I analyze the perspectives of Duhart and Snaër on slavery and the subjugation of black men and white women. Duhart lambastes the "greed" ["avidité"] and barbarism ["barbarie"] of the white planter class whose wealth comes at the detriment of abused African bodies, and to which, Mlle de Sauillac and Amélie belong (169; 81). In their texts, both Duhart and Snaër capture a moment where black men painfully and progressively acknowledge the undeniable gap between them and their childhood friends due to white and class privilege. Clément became fully aware of the magnitude of "degradation to which he was bound," and recognized the immense gap between himself, a slave and Mlle de Sauillac, his enslaver (171).[24] Though not enslaved, Édouard's painful reckoning equally captures the salient distance, "There is between her and me an insurmountable barrier" (221).[25] Snaër's much longer narrative enables Édouard to fully examine the intersection of race and class, underscoring the immense contrast between Amélie, a wealthy heiress, and himself, an ordinary man. He concludes, "I had no trouble understanding that, even if I were to inherit heaps of gold, the strength of prejudices that weigh down upon the oppressed race would prevent me from ever claiming her hand"[26] (219).

Duhart and Snaër deny their characters the possibility of interracial intimacy cementing into marriage, so long as the

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[23] ce n'est pas un dernier adieu que je vous ferais à mon heure suprême ; je vous serrerais doucement la main en vous disant : "Ne pleurez pas, ami nous nous reverrons dans un monde meilleur ou un préjugé barbare ne nous tiendra pas séparés l'un de l'autre malgré notre amour mutuel. Car depuis le jour de notre première entrevue, nous n'avons pas cessé de nous aimer, sans nous l'être pourtant jamais dit" (166).

[24] "l'avilisssement dans lequel on le retenait" (83).

[25] "Il y a entre elle et moi une barrière infranchissable" (153).

[26] "Je n'eus pas de peine à comprendre que, eussé-je en partage des monceaux d'or, la force des préventions qui accablent la race opprimée m'empêcherait de prétendre jamais à sa main" (151).

patriarchal white gaze looms over their bodies. Michel Foucault reminds us that disciplinary power "is exercised through its invisibility" (187). Though invisible, the white fathers nonetheless maintain the characters in subjection. In "Simple Histoire," the mothers fear Mlle de Sauillac's death at the hands of her father if he discovers her pregnancy. In "Souvenirs," the white planter class finds Édouard's free black body suspicious and seeks his death. After shattering white virtuous womanhood, Mlle de Sauillac and Amélie concede to its demands through contracted marriages. As a married Amélie warns Édouard of the danger, and physically expresses her love for him, she eventually dies, ["the doctors have given me a death sentence," she writes in her letter to Édouard (231).[27] White patriarchy, in the form of medicine, condemns Amélie. Snaër, thus, does not afford Amélie, a white woman, any control over her desire and her body. Her sensual body, ravaged by disease, eventually dies. Édouard's black body, contrary to Amélie's, overcomes the illness, but it is to be immediately expelled to a war zone with onset signs of decline. As a twenty-seven-year-old soldier, acute grief has whitened his hair and etched his face. All he yearns for is a bullet from an enemy to finally escape his misery. Snaër suggests that an emancipation for the black body and the white body occurs in death.

In "Simple Histoire," Clément is expelled figuratively and literally, but Duhart concludes by having his daughter, Clémence, partake in the wealth of her father's enslavers. Clémence, married and with two children, had one child who became the first martyr to die fighting for Haitian freedom and independence. Duhart plants the seed of emancipation, first with Clément's ownership of his own body and second, through his lineage contributing to the liberation of Haiti.

As creoles of color, part of a third racial caste in Louisiana, Duhart and Snaër were not exempt from punitive restrictions that the Black Code and municipal laws enacted. During a tumultuous period in American history, they write a humanizing narrative of love and pain on the canvas of the black body. Their pens serve as potent tools that rip into shreds, centuries of racist ideology, restoring literary dignity to abused and suspicious black bodies. In writing human suffering, they hold up an interracial mirror of overlapping oppressions that concerns bodies of black men and white women. Mere quasi-citizens, Duhart and Snaër demonstrate their civic duty in articulating a universal message, daring and hopeful, that speaks to the ongoing entanglement and promise of race relations in America.

[27] "les médecins m'ont condamnée" (165).

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