Émeric Bergeaud (1818–1858), Haitian politician and man of letters, explained in the prefatory note to *Stella* that he had taken pains not to “disfigure history” in the writing of his only novel. Although *Stella*’s main characters—Romulus, Remus, the Colonist, Marie the African, and Stella—are fictional, Bergeaud assured his readers that there was truth in the book he wrote to honor his country. He wanted the “attraction of the novel” to “capture” readers “who do not subject themselves to in-depth study of our annals.” Like other Haitian writers of the nineteenth century, Bergeaud believed it was crucial to retell the Haitian Revolution from a positive perspective so as to counter the hostile representations of his country that were so common at the time. For this reason, the novelist wanted his story of Haiti’s transformation from French colony to independent nation to alter the perception of his native country both at home and afar.

*Stella*, the nation’s first novel, seeks to enshrine the Haitian Revolution and the Haitian people as the true inheritors of liberty, and Haiti as the realization of the French Revolution’s republican ideals of freedom, equality, and brotherhood. *Stella* tells of the devastation of colonialism and slavery in the colony of Saint-Domingue, as Haiti was known before independence, and it chronicles the events of the Haitian Revolution, which is portrayed as a bloody yet just fight for emancipation and a period of sacrifice that all future Haitians are charged to honor and remember. While *Stella* provides a captivating and admirable origin story for Haiti and Haitians, the fact that it was out of print for more than one hundred years means that the novel has struggled to fulfill its author’s wish of attracting a wider readership to his nation’s history.
Editors’ Introduction

When Bergeaud wrote *Stella* in the late 1840s and into the 1850s, he was living in exile on the small Caribbean island of Saint Thomas (now part of the U.S. Virgin Islands). When the novel was finally published in 1859, it appeared in Édouard Dentu’s busy Parisian bookshop rather than on the bookshelves of Charlotte Amalie or Port-au-Prince. Bergeaud had given the manuscript to his friend and relative, the historian and politician Beaubrun Ardouin (1796–1865), also in exile, when the two were together in Paris in 1857. After Bergeaud’s death the next year, Ardouin had his friend’s novel published in the City of Lights. It was never printed in Haiti. That *Stella* appeared in Haiti’s former colonial capital was due as much to Bergeaud’s personal circumstances and Haitian politics as it was to the cachet of the nineteenth-century Parisian literary scene.

The legacy of the novel’s publication history, Bergeaud’s particular blending of history and fiction, as well as an unfortunate general hostility toward early Haitian literature continue to influence how *Stella* has been received over the last century and a half. Despite *Stella*’s strong message against slavery, colonialism, and the racism intrinsic to these systems, the novel has been understudied. The few studies of *Stella* that exist—and in this sense, Bergeaud’s novel is representative of a wider trend in the reception of early Haitian literature—have tended to view the novel as derivative of French literary models and therefore imperfect or unworthy of study. The bases for these dismissals, and the novel itself, deserve to be reexamined.

The goal of this introduction is to contextualize *Stella*’s political and literary world for an English-speaking audience. Here, we provide a brief overview of the history that *Stella* relates, for while the novel certainly provides insight into the political and social conflicts of Bergeaud’s world, a reader unfamiliar with the intricate details of Haitian history may find following the novel’s allegorical account of the nation’s founding challenging. In making *Stella* and the story of Haitian history that it recounts available to Anglophone readers and thereby introducing the novel to a new generation of scholars, it is our hope that Haiti’s first novel will find its place within a revitalized study of early Haitian literature.
Editors’ Introduction

Early Haitian Politics

From Émeric Bergeaud's birth just over a decade after Haiti's independence to his death in exile forty years later, the life of Stella's author was deeply connected to the fortune of his country. Jean-Pierre Boyer (1776–1850) became the second president of Haiti the year that Bergeaud was born. Boyer went on to rule Haiti, and later the entire island of Hispaniola, for most of the novelist's life. Boyer, who fought in the Revolution, was born part of a small but powerful group of free Euro-African people known as gens de couleur (free people of color). Before independence in 1804, some gens de couleur played a role in French politics; after 1804, many members of this population and their descendants were active in Haiti's early governments. Throughout much of the nineteenth century, this group maintained political and economic control of the country; known for their support of Boyer and then later the maintenance of his status quo, members of this group were often referred to as “Boyerists.”

Bergeaud was born into this wealthy, well-educated, Boyerist class of early Haitians in the southwestern city of Les Cayes. This city had been the home of another important gens de couleur military leader of the Revolution, André Rigaud (1761–1811), who designated it the capital of his secessionist Department of the South, which Bergeaud's uncle, General Jérôme-Maximilien Borgella (1773–1844), led from 1811 to 1812. Between 1807 and 1819, another autonomous region existed in the neighboring area of Grand’Anse, which was comprised of slaves-turned-farmers and led by the former maroon Goman. As part of Boyer's centralizing plan, Borgella helped to reabsorb Goman's region into the Republic in 1820, although the area continued to remain out of direct political control from Port-au-Prince. In Bergeaud's youth, he worked as Borgella's personal secretary, thus learning about Haitian regional and national politics—and about the factions that split his country—at an early age.

Many gens de couleur had both French and African ancestry, and before the Revolution some had completed their schooling or military training in France. This sector of the population often included people free before the 1793 decree abolishing slavery in Saint-Domingue, and many of them had themselves owned slaves. Even after independence, descendants of the gens de couleur continued to look to France
as a source of education and culture. For this reason, Haitian elites were often accused of “francophilie,” preferring French or “Frenchified” culture over African and creole traditions, and of holding power in such a way as to exclude and denigrate—both politically and culturally—the African-descended majority in Haiti. For example, the 1835 Penal Code criminalized the practice of Vodou, which was seen as including acts of “spell-making” (sortilège), along with the creation of various kinds of potions and amulets. Stella’s editor, Beaubrun Ardouin, who was elected to the Haitian Senate in 1832, helped to pass these anti-Vodou laws. Elite Haitians also distanced themselves from the African-descended majority—often inhabitants of rural areas who had only enjoyed freedom after 1793 and their offspring—in the realm of language as well: for while most people in colonial Saint-Domingue and nineteenth-century Haiti spoke a language that combined French with African languages—an earlier, noncodified version of current-day Haitian Kreyòl—only some of the population spoke both Kreyòl and French. In the colonial period, French was the language of power; after independence, access to spoken—and especially written—French marked the wealthy and educated apart from the rest of Haitian society. Thus, literacy in French ensured access to the avenues of political power and influence, and guaranteed that political and cultural power would remain with a small group of Francophone Haitians. These regulations and exclusive practices were designed not just to maintain power within one group, or to denigrate the black majority; they were also about presenting a certain image of Haiti to the international community in the face of persistent anti-Haitianism in France and the United States. These anti-Haitian attitudes stemmed from prejudice against a nation whose foundation rested upon the complete opposition to the economically powerful institution of slavery.

When the Republic of Haiti was proclaimed on January 1, 1804, the new country became the second postcolonial nation in the Americas and the first to be built from a successful revolution against slavery. From 1791 to the Revolution’s end in 1804, Haitians saw countless acts of violence, and they suffered years of terror, famine, and hardship. Yet, by 1804, Haiti’s people—most of whom had been slaves under French rule—emerged as citizens. From that moment, they swore to “live independent or die.” Yet, as is often the case for new countries, Haiti
struggled in its early years. As a result, Haiti was often called upon by members of the international community, especially France, to justify its freedom.

Soon after independence, Haiti's governor-for-life, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, a former slave and hero of the Revolution, declared himself emperor of the first Haitian Empire. Dessalines drew much opposition as a ruler; two years later he was assassinated. In 1810, after his death and a subsequent civil war, Dessalines's assistants-turned-rivals Henri Christophe (1767–1820) and Alexandre Sabès Pétion (1770–1818) split the country into two. Christophe, a former slave who fought against the British at the 1779 Battle of Savannah, headed the State—later the Kingdom—of Haiti in the North (including Artibonite) from Cap-Haïtien. There, he maintained a system of forced labor which Bergeaud highly criticizes in Stella, one that was instituted by Dessalines and Toussaint Louverture before him; it centered on the cultivation of sugar and coffee for export. In the South and West regions, Pétion, a man of Euro-African descent who had trained at a military school in Paris, led the Republic of Haiti from its capital, Port-au-Prince. Pétion embarked on a program of distributing the land of the former sugar and coffee plantations to the local peasants and soldiers; this created a system of subsistence smallholdings, the products of which Pétion taxed heavily. In both territories, the gap between the wealthier, city-dwelling Euro-African elite and the poorer African-descended peasants widened. Opposition groups emerged in both areas, and each country established a strong military presence to maintain a tense peace. Within a few years, an additional two regions proclaimed independence. By the time of Bergeaud's birth in 1818, Haiti had effectively shattered into four separate countries. Early in the century, the future of the new nation was unclear, and both France and the United States—and to a lesser extent, Great Britain—were ready to capitalize on any real or perceived weaknesses. Furthermore, not one of these countries recognized Haiti as officially independent from France.

When Pétion died from yellow fever in 1818, his protégé Boyer became president. During his first few years in office, Boyer worked to reunite the fractured nation and to bring its separate regions under centralized control, both physically and legislatively. When Christophe died in 1820, Boyer rejoined the Kingdom of Haiti to the Republic, extending
Pétion’s practice of land redistribution to the North. Just as it had in the South and West, this policy—later enshrined in law in the 1826 Rural Code—ensured that, while able to survive, the peasant classes would have little chance of amassing sustained political power. In 1822, Boyer’s forces invaded the eastern half of Hispaniola (the current-day Dominican Republic), and Haitian forces occupied this part of the island until 1844.

Despite Boyer’s policies of land distribution and centralization, the abolition of slavery during his occupation of Spanish Haiti, and his support for African-American migration, his longest-lasting legacy remains the 1825 agreement he negotiated with France for its official recognition of the independent Republic. Until this time, the former colonial power had not only refused to recognize Haiti’s independence, it had also constantly threatened to launch campaigns to take back its “property” (Haiti and Haitians). Although important to guaranteeing Haiti’s continued sovereignty, official recognition came at an enormous price: Boyer agreed that Haiti would pay a large indemnity to compensate the former slaveholders. The new country continued to send payments to France, with interest, for over a century. This was a debt that, incurred so early in Haiti’s history, weakened its economy from the start. Furthermore, delayed international recognition undermined Haiti’s membership among the world’s nations. Despite the indemnity agreement and France’s official recognition, most countries did not formally recognize Haiti until the second half of the nineteenth century; the U.S. did not grant Haiti diplomatic recognition until 1862.

Boyer was deposed in 1843, the result of a struggle both within and without the ruling class. In 1842, an opposition party called the Society for the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which was based near Les Cayes and composed of elite members such as Hérard Dumesle (1784–1858) and his cousin Charles Rivière-Hérard (1789–1850), began to agitate for economic and democratic reforms. This led to what is now known as the Liberal Revolution of 1843, which succeeded in unseating Boyer. Rivière-Hérard became the head of a provisional government with a new constitution, and he officially took the presidency in 1844. With Boyer gone and Haiti’s leadership in question, the Dominican Republic took the opportunity to declare its independence. Soon afterward, Louis Jean-Jacques Acaau (d. 1846) led a revolution comprised of black peas-
ant farmers known as the “Piquets” who decried the elite class’s control of the government and called for new land reforms. The Piquets continued their campaign until 1848, but an immediate result of their movement was the overthrow of Rivière-Hérard and his replacement, over the next three years, by a succession of black presidents: Philippe Guerrier (1757–1845), Jean-Louis Pierrot (1761–1867), Jean-Baptiste Riché (1780–1847), and Faustin Soulouque (1782–1867). While these men were intended as figureheads to be controlled by the Boyerist establishment, the ruling class soon discovered that they had misjudged Soulouque, who proved to be a strong leader in his own right.

When Soulouque became president of Haiti in 1847, Bergeaud, Ardouin, and their peers expected him to maintain the status quo. Instead, Soulouque consolidated his power and had several of his political enemies, many of whom were descendants of the gens de couleur, killed. Bergeaud, Beaubrun, and his brother Céligny Ardouin (1806–1849) found themselves on the wrong side of politics; yet while Bergeaud and Beaubrun Ardouin were able to flee Haiti, Céligny was not as fortunate. Céligny Ardouin was executed in 1849, the same year that Soulouque declared himself Emperor Faustin I.

The political tumult of Bergeaud’s early adulthood clearly influenced his life and his writing. The turmoil that affected him, furthermore, was not only domestic; it included political developments in the greater Caribbean as well as in France. The same year that he fled Haiti, slavery was abolished in both the Danish and French colonies. This meant that Bergeaud and his compatriots did not have to fear enslavement when traveling in much of the Caribbean, for slavery had already been abolished on the British-held islands in 1833. However, chattel slavery and plantation-based forced labor were still legal in the U.S., Spain (in Cuba and Puerto Rico), and Brazil. At this time, writing to oppose the system of slavery, as Bergeaud did, ran contrary to the existing economic and political systems of these influential nations.

Bergeaud, however, was not unique as an exile. The 1840s and 1850s saw many politicians, reformers, agitators, and revolutionaries exiled in the Caribbean, on mainland America, and in Europe. Paris, in particular, was a popular destination for Caribbean writers of African and Euro-African descent, and pockets of anticolonial and antiracist activism flourished in Haiti’s former colonial capital, led by figures such
as Cuban journalist Andrés Avelino de Orihuela (1818–1873), Haitian American writer Victor Séjourn (1817–1874), and Martinican politician Cyrille Bissette (1795–1858). In 1857, Bergeaud left Saint Thomas for Paris to meet Beaubrun Ardouin, who had been in France negotiating the opening of Haitian embassies. Suffering from ill health, Bergeaud soon returned to his island exile, but, before leaving Paris, he consigned his manuscript to Ardouin, who set about editing and arranging it for publication. On February 23, 1858, Bergeaud died on Saint Thomas; he never returned to Haiti after his 1848 departure. Soulouque continued to rule the Empire of Haiti until he was deposed in January 1859. Stella was published in Paris eight months later.

**STORY AND HISTORY**

*Stella* begins with the story of two brothers, Romulus and Remus; one is born of an African father, the other is the son of a French colonist. Both enslaved in Saint-Domingue and toiling on the Colonist’s plantation, the brothers are motivated to revolt by the violent death of their mother, Marie the African. Much of *Stella* follows the two sons, who represent multiple historical figures, through the events of the Haitian Revolution. The novel’s dedication to history means that its storyline recounts, usually in symbolic or allegorical form, nearly all the complex details of Haiti’s founding.

*Stella* dates the crime of Marie’s death to the year 1789, amid a period of great political upheaval in France. Debate over the question of slavery in particular intensified in France in 1788 with the formation of the first French abolitionist society: the Société des Amis des Noirs. Influenced by British abolitionists such as Thomas Clarkson, Granville Sharp, and William Wilberforce, the Société sought the amelioration of the conditions of enslaved people. Indeed, few antislavery thinkers in the 1780s were arguing for an immediate end to slavery; in 1781, the Marquis de Condorcet, for example, had argued for a process of gradual emancipation. For many revolutionaries, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen that was written in 1789 placed the principles of chattel slavery in question. Heated arguments over the extent to which the rights to freedom and equality applied to all people were heard throughout
France and in the French colonies. Saint-Domingue, a colony fueled by enslaved labor, featured heavily in these debates.26

*Stella* highlights the connection between France and Saint-Domingue at this time. Initially, many *gens de couleur* residents of the colony who were not represented in the newly formed National Assembly in Paris protested their exclusion. In 1790, frustrated by the slow expansion of republican rights to free people of color, Vincent Ogé (1755–1791), an influential Saint-Domingue planter, traveled to Paris and, with fellow *gens de couleur* planter Julien Raimond (1744–1801), argued for their rights in the French National Assembly.27 Upon his return to Saint-Domingue, a frustrated Ogé and an accomplice, Jean-Baptiste Chavannes (1748–1791), led a revolt that was quickly put down by the colonial government. Ogé and Chavannes were brutally executed. Although they were fighting for the rights of the *gens de couleur* rather than for all of the colony’s people, Bergeaud depicts Ogé and Chavannes as early martyrs to Haiti’s cause of independence.

Though *Stella* lauds these men’s sacrifice, the sons’ attack on the Colonist’s plantation, where they find the divine incarnation of Liberty, can be understood to coincide with what is often considered the beginning of the Haitian Revolution: August 21, 1791, when enslaved people initiated a full-scale uprising. Though it is believed that the seed of revolution was planted during a religious service known as the Bois Caïman (Bwa Kayiman) ceremony, led by *houngan* Dutty Boukman (d. 1791) and *mambo* Cécile Fatiman in August 1791, this event does not feature in *Stella*.28 Instead, the divine figure of Stella encourages and guides the brothers in their revolt. The sons’ attempt to avenge their mother’s death begins with setting fire to the Colonist’s mansion. During this attack, the brothers come across a young woman whom they initially take to be the Colonist’s daughter. An unknown force prevents them from killing her, and Romulus and Remus find that they have rescued a fellow sufferer. The woman—Stella—had been in Paris during the revolutionary period of 1789, but fled to Saint-Domingue at the beginning of the Terror. Stella originally met the Colonist in Paris, but rejected his advances; when she landed in Saint-Domingue they met again, and emboldened there, he took her to his mansion as his prisoner. Stella pledges to aid the brothers in their mission to free Saint-Domingue and avenge their mother’s death in return for their help in liberating her from the Colonist.
Editors’ Introduction

As the Haitian Revolution progressed, fighting between European powers and among the diverse population of late Saint-Domingue contributed to a complex story of multiple power struggles, which Bergeaud attempts to outline in his novel. In 1793, republican France declared war on Britain; on the island, Spain sided with Britain against France. At this time, many former slaves—including Toussaint Louverture (1743–1803), Jean François (d. 1805), Jeannot (d. 1791), and Georges Biassou (1741–1801)—joined the Spanish forces in fighting against republican France, believing that the Crown, not the Republic, had their best interests at heart. In order to convince these fighters otherwise, in August 1793 French civil commissioners Léger-Félicité Sonthonax (1763–1813) and Étienne Polverel (1740–1795) decreed general emancipation in Saint-Domingue. Polverel and Sonthonax, who appear as heroic characters in Stella, had hoped that emancipating the enslaved population would bring them to side with France against invading British forces. On February 4, 1794, the republican National Assembly abolished slavery in France and its colonies, making the previous decree by Polverel and Sonthonax official, and securing republican France’s commitment to universal equality. Nevertheless, intermittent fighting continued between formerly enslaved, gens de couleur, French, British, and Spanish forces on the island. Sonthonax was recalled to France in 1796, a specific historical moment detailed and lamented in Stella.

In 1797, Toussaint Louverture took charge of the French forces in Saint-Domingue. In order to control the population of former slaves and to stimulate the country’s agricultural output, he instituted the dreaded Rural Code in 1800. According to this legislation, the military forced former slaves to work on plantations—not as slaves but as cultivateurs (sharecroppers)—or face severe penalties. Bergeaud harshly criticizes this law in Stella, referring to it as “slavery in all but name.”29 In 1801, Louverture created a constitution for the colony in which he named himself governor-for-life. Bergeaud criticizes this move in his novel as a “direct attack on the sovereignty of France.” Displeased with the growing power of Louverture and the other “black generals” in 1802, Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) sent a French military expedition to Saint-Domingue led by his brother-in-law, General Charles Leclerc (1772–1802), to restore a white colonial government to the island. In the meantime, Napoleon had overturned the abolition of slavery and, as
Bergeaud laments, succeeded in reestablishing the institution in Guadeloupe. Leclerc was in charge of over forty thousand men; the expedition that bore his name was the largest French military mission sent such a distance from Europe. In *Stella*, Bergeaud describes the attack of the expeditionary forces against Saint-Domingue as that of “an unnatural mother who desires the destruction of her child.” In May 1802, French troops captured Louverture, and he and his family were sent to France. There the famous general died in a dungeon near the Swiss border, a secret prisoner of the state.

*Stella*’s account of this period of the Revolution involves describing divisions between the brothers initiated by the machinations of the evil Colonist. Eventually Stella and a figure known as the “Spirit of the Nation” convince Romulus and Remus that they can succeed in their mission only once they are reunited. After a long struggle, the brothers and their united force of *Indigènes* are victorious over the French, and they proclaim the birth of an independent Republic of Haiti. Indeed, after Louverture’s ouster, the black and *gens de couleur* forces—led by Dessalines and Christophe on the one hand, and Rigaud and Pétion on the other—combined to form the Army of the *Indigènes*, or the Indigenous Army. Dessalines and Rigaud led this united force against the invading troops from France, and, at the Battle of Vertières on November 18, 1803, the *Indigènes* prevailed against the French. Dessalines proclaimed independence on January 1, 1804.

**UNDER THE OLD REGIME**

Although *Stella*’s story of the two founders of Haiti ends with the establishment of their new nation on January 1, 1804, its final chapter refers to the long history of colonization in the area and thereby places the novel and its subject within the wider context of Atlantic exploration, expropriation, and exploitation. The novel thus locates Haiti’s origins at a much earlier moment. As a consequence of Europeans’ arrival on **Ayiti** in 1492, many of the island’s Arawak-speaking Taíno inhabitants perished from disease, warfare, or the rigors of forced labor. Although the entire island, now called Hispaniola, was nominally claimed by Spain, a small colony of European pirates and adventurers (called *boucaniers*) who had settled in northern parts of Hispaniola and on the
coastal island of Tortuga provided France with the grounds to make a claim to part of Hispaniola in 1665. The French called their new colony “Saint-Domingue,” a version of the name given the Spanish settlement at the eastern end of the island, “Santo Domingo” (now the Dominican Republic). At times, both designations have been used to refer to the island in its entirety. Thus by 1665, the French laid claim to five colonies in the Caribbean—Saint Christopher (now St. Kitts), Guadeloupe, Saint Lucia, Martinique, and Saint-Domingue—in addition to French settlements on the Atlantic coast of South America and the North American mainland.32

France’s participation in the transatlantic slave trade, which led to the conditions that incited the Haitian Revolution, was well underway by the end of the seventeenth century. In 1685, King Louis XIV signed le Code noir (the Black Code), which stipulated restrictions on the rights of the African population in the French colonies, and effectively legalized the institution of slavery in the French-speaking world.33 It was one of the first sets of laws concerning slavery established by a European colonial power, even though its stipulations were infrequently implemented.34 When France officially assumed control of the western half of Hispaniola in 1697 as a condition of the Treaty of Ryswick that ended the Nine Years’ War (1688–1697) between France, England, Spain, and the United Provinces, the population of French settlers on the island multiplied. With the influx of settlers and the organization of large-scale sugar plantations also came a demand for labor that was fulfilled by the importation of more and more enslaved Africans. Le Code noir outlined the social differences that would increase as the colony of Saint-Domingue became France’s most profitable in the years to come. Thus, by the turn of the eighteenth century, the foundation for the country that would later become Haiti was already established.

In eighteenth-century Saint-Domingue, wealthy French planters were known as grands blancs; they, along with a group of colonists consisting of artisans, laborers, and former indentured servants known as petits blancs, made up the colony’s population of European and European-descended colonists. Communities of escaped slaves or maroons, known as nèg mawon, and small pockets of indigenous people—both of whom often lived together in the mountainous areas—made up another part of colonial society.35 Under the Old Regime, the African and African-
descended communities in the French Antilles were categorized according to place of origin and cultural affinities; proof of these divisions and the way that they were used to designate individual members of communities can be found in records of advertisements for runaway slaves. This population was also divided according to who had—or had not—endured the Middle Passage. The most recently arrived Africans were called bossales, while those who were born in the colony were referred to as nègres créoles. Due to the incredibly harsh conditions of the slave system, the créole community stayed much smaller than the population who had been forced to traverse—and had survived—the Middle Passage from Africa.

A small number of Africans were able to purchase or otherwise obtain their freedom; these free black people were known as affranchis (although this term was sometimes used to refer to all free people of color). The African and Euro-African partners and children of French colonists comprised the majority of the free population of gens de couleur in eighteenth-century Saint-Domingue, but colonists did not always recognize or free their offspring of African heritage. In some instances, however, gens de couleur children were sent to France to receive an education or to live with their extended French family. At the end of the century, gens de couleur became known as anciens libres, distinguishing this group from the rest of the population that became free in 1793. The population of late Saint-Domingue was thus complex and multifaceted, and its diversity continued to influence the world in which Bergeaud wrote. Divisions based on longstanding colonial-era ethnic categorizations factored in his exile; countering these separations became a central focus of Stella’s promotion of a sense of national unity.

Bergeaud’s notorious antagonist, the Colonist, is a member of the grands blancs of late Saint-Domingue. These white colonists, most of whom were absentee planters living off of their riches in Europe, owned large plantations on which grew sugar, coffee, cacao, indigo, and cotton. These owners formed the most powerful group—and the group most dependent on maintaining the exploitative system of plantation slavery—as they controlled the distribution and reinvestment of the colony’s wealth. Their dependence on economic exploitation trumped their national allegiance to France, a trait that Bergeaud sternly criticizes in his novel. Colonial goods, meanwhile, had become important commodities.
This was especially true of sugar, the export of which reached its height in the late eighteenth century. *Stella* occasionally insists on separating its criticism of the Colonist from its criticism of France in general, but a significant portion of the French population benefited from the economic profits of slave labor by the time of the Haitian Revolution.

This overseas demand drove the plantation industry in Saint-Domingue, which absorbed the energies of most of the people on the island; while sugarcane was grown and processed into sugar by enslaved African workers, *petits blancs* often worked as plantation managers or slave drivers. In some instances, the plantations themselves (as well as slaves) were owned by wealthy *gens de couleur* or even *affranchis*. Much of the capital generated from the colonial trade was used by the planters to construct lavish mansions on the island as well as to build up the elaborate port cities of Cap-Français in Saint-Domingue, and Nantes and Bordeaux in France. By the end of the eighteenth century, one out of eight French people lived—in some manner or another—on the products of Saint-Domingue.

Just before the Revolution began, the population of *gens de couleur* almost equaled that of the white population in Saint-Domingue. At that same time, the African population was nearly ten times as large. In the 1780s, this population imbalance, along with the existence of a strong maroon community—which had played a part in previous insurrections—and the colony’s deplorable working conditions, caused French colonists to fear that Saint-Domingue was a powder keg just waiting for a match.

### Stella in Context

While *Stella* has the honor of being Haiti’s first novel, Haitians were active producers of literature—including long works of fiction—before 1859. Hérard Dumeslé’s *Voyage dans le nord d’Hayti, ou Révélations des lieux et des monuments historiques* (1824), for example, recounts a story of travel that is, at least somewhat, fictionalized. *La Mulâtre comme il y a beaucoup de blanches* (1803), an epistolary novel written by an anonymous woman from Saint-Domingue, could also merit the title of Haiti’s first novel, although it was published before independence. *Stella* emerged from a rich literary context in which public discussions
The unusual mixture of history, politics, and literature that defines the writings of early Haitians also stems from the fact that many authors were both politicians and writers. Félix Boisrond-Tonnerre (1776–1806), for example, who attended school in France and was Dessalines’s personal secretary, both drafted the Declaration and penned his own history of the Revolution, Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire d’Haïti. Pompée Valentin de Vastey (1781–1820), apologist for and secretary to King Henri Christophe, wrote to audiences in France and Britain decrying the colonial system and demanding that Europeans recognize the humanity of African and African-descended people. Others, including Juste Chanlatte (1766–1828), Jules-Solime Milscent (1778–1842), and Jean-Baptiste Romane (1807–1858), circulated their writings in the era’s literary and news magazines, such as L’Abeille Haytienne, L’Eclaireur haïtien, and L’Union. These periodicals reported political events alongside poems and short stories that also often had political aims. Dumesle, whose 1824 travel narrative recounts a story of the Bwa Kayiman ceremony in French and Kreyòl, was also a politician and leader of the movement to oust Boyer in the 1840s.

Though influenced by the same tradition of intertwining history and politics, Bergeaud belongs to a slightly later generation of authors known as the “School of 1836.” Other journalists, poets, and historians of the school include Émile and Ignace Nau (1812–1860; 1808–1845), Beaubrun, Célinigny, and Coriolan Ardouin (1812–1836), and Beauvais Lespinasse (1811–1863). Debates over language and nationalism shaped the writings of the School of 1836, as it had those of their predecessors. Members of the group aimed to follow its motto—“Be ourselves”—and to cast off previous literary and linguistic models in a search for Haitian styles. For example, the movement’s founder, Émile Nau, advised his followers to “naturalize” their adopted language by lending it Caribbean cadences and a “warmth” it never had in France. Ardouin argued similarly for the importance of his French’s Caribbean difference. Stella’s inclusion of a creole story and proverb attest to a similar approach by Bergeaud.

Much of the search for a Haitian identity in literature, history, as well as politics was marked by the challenges the country faced in its first half century. In 1814, Vastey predicted that the printing press would be a
tool for exposing the crimes of colonists and for responding to the false accusations of prejudiced historians of the Haitian Revolution. Members of the School of 1836 continued to use the written word as a means to defend Haiti and its independence. To refute calumnies made against their country—usually claims that Haiti’s continuing problems were due to the circumstances of its founding—many early Haitian authors wrote histories. Bergeaud’s Stella follows Dumesle’s Voyage and Thomas Madiou’s (1814–1884) Histoire d’Haïti (1847) in this vein; moreover, Ardouin, the historian who published the novel, certainly contributed to its blurring of the lines between history and fiction.

Stella’s distinctiveness comes from the fact that it is a fictionalized account of the Haitian Revolution that places Haiti’s history in an explicitly positive context. This perspective ran contrary to that of much literature on similar topics produced at the time. Not only is Stella one of the few positive representations of the Haitian Revolution written in the nineteenth century, it is, along with Pierre Faubert’s play, Ogé, ou le préjugé de couleur (1856), one of the first fictionalizations of the Haitian Revolution to be written by a Haitian. Other early fictional accounts of the Revolution—such as Jean-Baptiste Berthier’s Félix et Éléonore, ou les colons malheureux (1801), René Pépin’s L’Incendie du Cap, ou le règne de Toussaint-Louverture (1802), Leonora Sansay/Mary Hassal’s History; or, the Horrors of St. Domingo (1808), Mlle de Palaiseau’s L’Histoire de Mesdemoiselles de Saint-Janvier, les deux seules blanches conservées à Saint-Domingue (1812), E. V. Laisné de Tours’s L’Insurrection du Cap ou la perfidie d’un noir (1822), Victor Hugo’s Bug-Jargal (1826), and Fanny Reybaud’s Sydonie (1846)—all present Haiti’s history from the viewpoint of Europeans. Bergeaud was, no doubt, familiar with some, if not all, of this literature. Indeed, the first section of Stella reads much like the sentimentalist antislavery literature that was part of a slowly reemerging French abolitionist movement beginning in the 1820s.

Stella thus might have seemed somewhat familiar to French readers at the time of its publication in Paris, despite its pro-Haitian message; Bergeaud sought to capitalize on this familiarity in order to reach a population that did not, he admits, often concern itself with an “in-depth study of our annals.” The novel’s publication, during a time when other Haitians were writing and publishing in Paris, however, also encouraged a new French approach to remembering its former colony. Fighting back
against a French tendency to denigrate Haiti was a project with admittedly limited impact. The end of slavery in its overseas colonies in 1848 in fact allowed France to return to the troubled subject of Haiti in a way that ignored the reasons for the country’s 1804 loss of its prized colony, contributing to a general amnesia surrounding the Saint-Domingue expedition’s goal to reestablish slavery. Typically, when the French read or wrote about Haiti, their nostalgia for the former colony of Saint-Domingue mixed with anxieties about what Haiti meant for France’s international standing; this combination made Haiti into a literary subject consistent with nineteenth-century themes of melancholy and loss. The French often approached the topic with questions about what went wrong or what might have been.

The second abolition of 1848, however, meant that metropolitan French and outre-mer readers alike were able to celebrate a newly authorized diversity permitted by the end of slavery. In the years following, Paris saw a wave of works about Haiti written by Haitians. These include Beaubrun Arduin’s Études sur l’histoire d’Haïti (1853–1865); Céligny Arduin’s posthumously published Essais sur l’histoire d’Haïti (1865); Pierre Faubert’s aforementioned Ogé, ou le préjugé de couleur (1856); and Joseph Saint-Rémy’s Vie de Toussaint Louverture (1850), Mémoires du Général Toussaint-L’Ouverture écrits par lui-même (1853), and Pétion et Haïti (1853–1857). In contrast to the literature written by their French counterparts—who often understood colonialism and slavery as separate institutions—the works of these authors sought to defend Haiti’s sovereignty by explaining that independence had been the only way to guarantee Haitians’ freedom from slavery. At a time when the abolition of 1848 overshadowed memories of slavery’s 1794 abolition and its 1802 reestablishment, this insistence on the necessity of independence often went unheard. Nevertheless, Stella takes a similar approach.

This attempt to appeal to a French audience, along with Bergeaud’s French heritage and erudition, have contributed to modern-day criticism of Stella. Bergeaud fits the profile of an elite Haitian “francophile” of the mid-nineteenth century: someone who spoke French, practiced Catholicism, and followed French literary and artistic fashions. In his novel, Bergeaud is clear about his appreciation for France’s language, religion, and culture. More than one critic has noticed that, although he was presumably writing for a Haitian audience, Bergeaud consistently
employs European and classical imagery, such as figs, the Alps, and Apollo. The few instances of native plants or materials—ironwood or makoute, for example—that do appear in Stella are usually explained for the reader. Yet the very fact that he wrote Stella with an eye toward France helps us to place Bergeaud, as well as his novel and his history, in the context of his social class and political milieu. His literary choices hint at the contemporary life of a particular class of Haitians in the nineteenth century, and they highlight the importance attached to their presentation of national history. It is via his particular expression of “francophilia” that Bergeaud is able to suggest that the ideals of republican equality were truly realized in Haiti, not France, and thereby argue for Haiti’s right to be recognized among the world’s nations.

Nevertheless, Bergeaud does combine Haitian and French literary traditions in his writing, perhaps in response to Émile Nau’s call for new literary forms. In 1837, Nau suggested that young Haitian writers should study all schools of literary thought but “belong to none.” Stella responds to this call through its own attempt to blend history and literature, but Bergeaud’s novel is also very clearly written in the style of the historical romance, that is to say, the form made famous by Sir Walter Scott, Victor Hugo, and James Fenimore Cooper. Like the historical texts written by these giants of the nineteenth-century Atlantic literary world, Stella takes the general outline of a historical event and recasts its details through the lives of invented, even abstracted characters, not unlike Edward Waverley, Jean Valjean, or Natty Bumppo. As in the genre popularized by Scott, much of the action in Stella, especially the military accounts, is taken from published historical sources. Indeed, much of the novel’s historical detail comes from Ardouin’s Études sur l’histoire d’Haïti, possibly inserted by the editor himself; but Bergeaud also draws on information from Pamphile de Lacroix’s La Révolution d’Haïti (1819), Antoine Métral’s Histoire de l’Expédition des Français à Saint-Domingue sous le consulat de Napoléon Bonaparte (1825), and Madiou’s Histoire d’Haïti. However, unlike historical work at the time, Stella unites the threads of different historians—particularly Madiou and Ardouin—by portraying the Revolution as both a successful slave uprising and a national independence movement. Furthermore, Bergeaud weaves aspects of allegory—both in terms of rhetorical device as well as generic form—together with abstraction and symbolism so that the novel is not explic-
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itly controlled by any one device or formal approach. While Bergeaud builds upon previous models, ultimately **Stella** takes a form of its own.

Bergeaud’s narrator explains that the presentation of a fictional, rather than a historical, account allows for an exploration of the hidden human motives behind the struggle for freedom:

History is a river of truth that follows its majestic course through the ages. The Novel is a lake of lies, the expanse of which is concealed underwater; calm and pure on the surface, it sometimes hides the secret of the destiny of peoples and societies in its depths . . .

For Bergeaud, history’s sight is “limited to the horizon of natural things,” and thus cannot always know that which is beyond the horizon: “History leaves the field of mystery to the Novel. [. . .] The Novel tells the secret story.” It was Bergeaud’s design to develop interest in the history of Haitian independence through the popularity of the genre of the novel, and it therefore makes sense that he would choose as his model a literary form that overtly combines both fiction and history. For although Bergeaud insists that **Stella** is more of a novel than a history, the exact genre to which it belongs might be said to exist somewhere in between. In fact, its distinctiveness has led to confusion as to how to classify **Stella**, which has also led to difficulties in judging its literary value; these problems have contributed, in part, to the novel’s obscurity up to this point. In particular, **Stella**’s deviation from Scott’s genre involves Bergeaud’s connection to epic and oral storytelling traditions, evidenced through the author’s consistent use of “we,” and illustrated in, for example, the family scene in the *ajoupa*. If one of the aims of the School of 1836 was to distill familiar, oral renditions of history into a new written genre, **Stella** follows those indications well. In this way, his novel has more in common with Nau’s “*contes historiques*” or “*contes créoles*” and Dumesle’s travel writing than with Scott’s romances. Bergeaud’s goal of reaching both French and Haitian readers mirrors his novel’s combination of Haitian and European literary traditions.

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Reading Stella

At the time of Stella’s publication, the population of Haiti was categorized and hierarchized according to color and class based on divisions inherited from the colonial era. After independence, some categorizations changed shape and the country further split along the lines of region, religion, and language. Haiti’s population differed most considerably from that of Saint-Domingue in that much of the white population had either fled the island or perished during the final days of the Revolution, a moment described in Stella with regret. In the early years of the country, the peasant or cultivateur class also expanded, which resulted in the development of a social distinction based on whether one lived in one of the wealthy cities (gens de la ville) or the rural outskirts (moun an deyò). Although skin color continued to be a defining characteristic in nineteenth-century Haiti, some political distinctions that seemed to be based on color—such as the constant conflicts between what have been called the “mulatto” or Boyerist and the “noiriste” or black populist factions—were often the result of intersecting differences in heritage, class, region, religion, and language; assumptions that a given person acted solely on the basis of skin color are frequently inaccurate. While the racialist distinctions that shaped the political world in which Bergeaud wrote had their bases in the colonial era, when they were specifically tied to issues of wealth, culture, language, and degrees of freedom, the social divisions of the early national period were not simply based on race or color prejudice. Stella both illustrates and responds to early Haiti’s cultural divides, and locates the origins of the history of difference and disunion in the machinations of the greedy Colonist.

Bergeaud’s insistence on the connection between his main characters, the fraternal founders of Haiti, has much to do with his decision to name them after the mythical twin founders of Rome. As does the figure of the Colonist, the brothers represent, however, multiple historical characters. They embody the actions and spirit of most of the revolutionary leaders: Romulus represents, at times, Toussaint Louverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, and Henri Christophe, while Remus is André Rigaud, Alexandre Pétion, and Charles Boyer. The brothers are the allegorical representations of the division—and eventual reunion—of the two dominant classes of Haitians at the time: the formerly enslaved black population.
and the Euro-African population. Bergeaud avoids discussing the division between those freed before 1793 and those freed after by making the experience of slavery common to both brothers who also share the same connection to Marie l’Africaine, Mother Africa. The other characters in the novel—Stella, Marie the African, and the Spirit of the Nation—are allegorical representations that portray archetypes rather than specific people from Haiti’s past. Stella is structured by its dedication to history, and its allegorical elements emphasize that Haiti’s transformation is significant not just to Haitians but to all humanity.

**THIS TRANSLATION**

Stella appeared in print over 150 years ago, but until recently it has not been available to English-speaking audiences. It appeared twice in the nineteenth century, originally in 1859, and a second time in 1887, apparently at the request of Bergeaud’s widow. Physical copies of either edition, which were printed in the small decimo-octavo (18mo) and duodecimo (12mo) formats, are exceedingly rare. Our edition is based on a microfilmed copy of the 1859 version held by the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris that belongs to Duke University. The University of Florida has digitized its copy of the 1887 edition, and made it available at the Digital Library of the Caribbean, [http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00089373/00001](http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00089373/00001). A modern French version was published in 2009 by Éditions Zoé in Geneva, Switzerland.

We have taken every effort to preserve the feeling of the 1859 text, including retaining much of the text’s italicization and punctuation—especially when used for emphasis—as well as the two original sets of notes with which the book was published. Bergeaud, for example, uses italicized print to emphasize the word “property” in the first chapter: the people described are the *property* of another person, just like the fruit tree outside their abode is the property of the Colonist. Our translation keeps these kinds of words italicized for emphasis whenever possible, and we have also provided a glossary for certain terms, such as *ajoupa*, *boucan*, and *indigènes*. When we did make changes from the original, these usually involved the separation of longer sentences or the combination of shorter paragraphs. Only rarely did we reorder sentences or paragraphs in order to make the meaning clearer. A few times,
we corrected minor errors or inconsistencies in the original; these we have documented in our notes. So as to retain the original format of the authorial and editorial annotations, we have located our notes after the original endnotes. In practice, this means that there are three sets of notes running through the text: footnotes by Bergeaud (lowercase Roman numerals), endnotes by Ardouin (uppercase Roman numerals), and our own endnotes (Arabic numerals). Although potentially confusing, we believe that this arrangement is the best way to balance our desire to respect the integrity of the original while providing modern readers with necessary, and ideally unobtrusive, guidance.

In his own prefatory note, Bergeaud reports that Stella was a long time in completion, and that the work had been often interrupted through the years. While meant as a conventional apology, his words also give clues to the condition of Stella’s composition and hint that it was—at least preliminarily—finished when he handed it to Ardouin in Paris. While it has been suggested that Ardouin’s editorial efforts were confined to the preface and editorial notes, our translation and collation work reveal the mark of Ardouin’s editorial hand elsewhere as well. This is particularly apparent in Stella’s citation of previously published historical material. In the original version of the novel, italicized print, in addition to being used for emphasis, also often indicates direct quotations from other sources; closer attention to these italicized passages reveals that Stella contains numerous quotations from Ardouin’s eleven-volume Études sur l’histoire d’Haïti. For example, in the thirty-third chapter, entitled “Rochambeau,” the words “the leader needed in Saint-Domingue and required for the public good” are italicized in the original. This is an actual quotation from the colonists who were recommending Rochambeau to Napoleon in 1802. It is cited in volume five of Ardouin’s work, on page 343. These insertions suggest that Ardouin altered the text—perhaps significantly—after Bergeaud’s return to Saint Thomas and before its publication. Ardouin’s influence certainly heightens the novel’s unusual dedication to history. For each of these quotations, we have removed the italics and footnoted the original source.

In our translation, we sought to retain a vocabulary, language, and style that was as authentic as possible to the period of the novel’s first publication. We used, for example, the word “colonist” to translate the French term “colon.” Although the word “colonizer,” which is more closely
related to the verb “to colonize,” might have emphasized the political nature of Bergeaud’s message, “colonizer” was less common in English at the time. Based on a nineteenth-century translation of Vastey’s work that used “colonist” over “colonizer,” we decided to use this word as well.\textsuperscript{59}

We translated this text with the historical, political, and literary conditions of its production in mind, and hope that this edition will contribute to a newfound appreciation for Bergeaud’s novel and a renewal of interest in early Haitian literature in general. \textit{Stella’s} challenge to generic expectations, Bergeaud’s alleged “francophilia,” the novel’s place of publication, and a general tendency to undervalue Haitian literature—especially early texts written in French by members of a certain class—have all contributed to the text’s relative obscurity. In the nineteenth century, regrettably, the literary merit of Haitian authors such as Bergeaud—or earlier writers like Juste Chanlatte, Jules Solime Milscent, and Antoine Dupré—was often judged according to French literary standards and based on their works’ similarity to those of French authors. Frustratingly, any signs of resemblance were also identified as evidence of a lack of innovation.\textsuperscript{60} This accusation of mimicry was repeated by later generations of Haitian writers who sought a return to and appreciation for Haitians’ African heritage.\textsuperscript{61} Unfortunately, this attitude perpetuated powerful nineteenth-century dismissals of the first nation formed from a successful slave revolt, and it continues to influence studies of Haitian literature today. The goal of this edition is to offer a new population of readers the opportunity to fully engage with this unique text, its historical context, and its political aims—which are, perhaps, still in the process of realization.

\textit{LSC and CM}

\textbf{NOTES}

1 An announcement for \textit{Stella} first appeared in the September 10, 1859, edition of the weekly \textit{Bibliographie de la France: Journal général de l'imprimerie et de la librairie}. Dentu was known for publishing travel writing and histories, such as those by Jules Michelet and Beaubrun Ardouin, as well as the works of socialist politicians and intellectuals including Louis Blanc and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.

3 While the main events of the novel center on the years 1802–1803, its timeline covers the period from 1788 to 1804; the final chapter provides an even deeper history for the nation, one that begins before 1492.

4 The term “mulatto” does not accurately describe this diverse population, but rather reinforces a racialized system of categorization carried over from the French colonial era. We have chosen instead to use the term *gens de couleur*, “free people of color,” or people of Euro-African ancestry.

5 The first five volumes of Beaubrun Ardouin’s *Études sur l’histoire d’Haïti, 11 vols.* (Paris: Dézobry et E. Magdeleine, 1853–1865), are subtitled “Followed by the Life of General J.-M. Borgella,” and include a substantial amount of information about the general, the biography of whom Ardouin claims was the genesis of his seminal work on Haitian history (*Études* I: 1).


7 For more information on laws against Vodou, see Kate Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law: Vodou and Power in Haiti* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). Ramsey notes that the 1835 Code differs from the 1826 Penal Code, which had outlawed only the selling of *macandal* rather than “spell-making” (and thereby religious practices increasingly grouped under the term “Vodou”) more generally, in that the 1835 Penal Code “criminaliz[ed] an entire field of ritual practices” (59–60). Ramsey also notes that the 1835 prohibitions were, compared to similar laws in the colonial Caribbean, relatively mild (59).

8 It was, however, the Americans who established French as the official language of Haiti during their 1915–1934 occupation. French was the sole official language of Haiti from the time of the American occupation until 1987.

9 The phrase “live independent or die” is written in the *Declaration of Independence*, drafted by Boisrond-Tonnere and announced by Dessalines on January 1, 1804. Significantly, the original motto of the French Republic was “*liberté, égalité, fraternité, ou la mort*.”


11 France sent envoys to negotiate with Pétion and Christophe. French agents suggested to Pétion that Haiti be put back under the control of France (Dubois, *Aftershocks*: 79). Former French colonists argued for some kind of return to French rule as late as 1825, the year of France’s recognition of Haitian independence. See, for example, the anonymous text *De Saint-Domingue. Moyen facile d’augmenter l’indemnité due aux colons de Saint-Domingue expropriés* (Paris: Imprimerie de Goetschy, 1825).
12 Under Boyer, the Haitian government encouraged African American emigration; in the mid-1820s, the government subsidized the travel of six thousand African Americans to Haiti (Dubois, Aftershocks: 93–94).

13 The writings of the man charged with negotiating the indemnity were republished in 2006. See Gaspard Théodore Mollien, Haïti ou Saint-Domingue (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006) and Mœurs d’Haïti (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006).

14 After the 2010 earthquake, several French intellectuals called for France to reimburse Haiti. See, for example, “Un appel pour que la France rembourse à Haïti la dette de son indépendance,” Le Monde (August 16, 2010).

15 In fact, Haiti was originally ordered to pay 150 million francs in gold, although that figure was reduced to 60 million in 1838, when French recognition became official. Furthermore, as a condition of recognition in 1825, the import and export fees levied on French ships and goods in Haiti were ordered at half of all other nations’ fees. While it is difficult to estimate how much money this would equate to in the twenty-first century, the figures run into the billions of dollars. See Joseph Saint-Rémy, Mémoires du général Toussaint L’Ouverture (Paris: Pagnerre, 1853): 138–139; Jean-François Brière, Haiti et la France: le rêve brisé (Paris: Karthala, 2008); and François Blancpain, Un siècle de relations financières entre Haïti et la France (1825–1922) (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2001).


18 Guerrier and Riché were both over eighty years old when they became president. Beaubrun Arduin served on the powerful Council of Secretaries of State, which was established in 1843 after the presidential term was set at four years, during the Guerrier administration, while his brother Céligny Arduin served on it under Riché. For more on the complicated “politique de doublure” in Haiti, see Nicholls, From Dessalines to Duvalier.

19 See Justin Bouzon, Études historiques sur la présidence de Faustin Soulouque (Port-au-Prince: Bibliothèque haïtienne, 1894).

20 Slavery was officially abolished in the U.S. in 1865, in the Spanish colonies of Puerto Rico and Cuba in 1873 and 1886, and in the Empire of Brazil in 1888.
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23 However, many of their members were executed before news of abolition reached Paris in the winter of 1793–1794. Jacques-Pierre Brissot laments in his letters from prison, written in late 1793, that “all our efforts” could not break free the “unfortunate” slaves (excerpt from Brissot’s *Papiers inédits: Archives Nationales, 446 AP 15*).

24 Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Condorcet published *Réflexions sur l’esclavage des nègres* with the *Société Typographique* in Neuchâtel under the pseudonym M. Schwarz in 1781.

25 In 1790, the colonist Jean-Baptiste Mosneron, heavily invested in the slave trade, warned against allowing these new revolutionary laws to extend beyond French borders in his *Discours sur les colonies et la traite des noirs, prononcé le 26 février 1790 par M. Mosneron de l’Aunay, député du Commerce de Nantes près de l’Assemblée Nationale, à la Société des Amis de la Constitution* (s.l.n.d.): 9–10.


27 The proslavery Club Massiac, whose members included some of Saint-Domingue’s absentee planters, formed an influential political block that tried to halt any laws extending universal rights to people of African descent. Nonetheless, in 1791, the National Assembly officially stated that *gens de couleur* were entitled to the same rights as all French citizens. However, this was not an easy law to implement in a time of such upheaval and in a colony so far from Paris.


29 Indications of Bergeaud’s political views, such as his support for Ogé and Chavannes and his dislike of Louverture’s policies have, over the years, contributed to the controversial reception of his novel. Ghislain Gouraige cited political reasons when he wrote, for example, that the novel “merited little interest” in his *Historie de la littérature haïtienne de l’indépendance à nos jours* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie Théodire, 1960): 29.

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31 The use of the term “indigenous” connected early Haitians to the native Taíno Arawak population of the island, as did the choice of the name “Ayiti.” In our translation, we have kept the French term “Indigène” for this reason.

32 France was rapidly expanding its colonial empire during the second half of the seventeenth century. By 1665, it had also established a colony on the Île Bourbon (La Réunion); others followed on Chandernagore and Pondichéry in 1673–1674, and modern-day Senegal in 1677. France’s colonial expansion increased dramatically in the following two centuries.


34 Many colonists admitted that the law was hard to implement, including Jean-Philippe Garran-Coulon in his *Rapport sur les troubles de Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1798–1799), IV: 26, which was published during the Haitian Revolution.


36 See the database of marronage history at the University of Sherbrooke: http://marronnage.info/en/index.html.

37 Dubois, *Avengers*: 39. The number of enslaved African workers brought to Saint-Domingue reached its peak in 1790, with the arrival of forty-eight thousand people in one year.

38 As we have mentioned, many leading Haitian politicians, including the sons of Toussaint Louverture, received education in France.


41 See Marlene Daut, *Tropics of Haiti: A Literary History of Race and Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1789–1865* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015). These examples all counter the idea that the genre of the novel did not develop in Haiti until the late nineteenth century.

Boisrond-Tonnerre's memoir, which has been criticized for its too partisan (pro-Dessalines) account, was published by Joseph Saint-Rémy in 1851.

The first account of the ceremony was written by a Frenchman, Antoine Dalmas, in his *Histoire de la Révolution de Saint-Domingue* (Paris: chez Mame frères, 1814). The story has become legendary, even as its specifics are hard to verify. It is not known how many details Dumesle acquired from oral histories gathered among residents of northern Haiti and how much he borrowed from Dalma's account.


Léon-François Hoffmann mentions this connection in his *Essays on Haitian Literature* (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1984): 111. Many of these abolitionist stories appear in the 1820s, after Britain's 1807 abolition of the slave trade, the tenuous Congress of Vienna's 1815 condemnation of the slave trade, and the 1821 formation of the pro-abolition group *Société de la Morale chrétienne*. The novel's one-word title, the name of its main character, equally reflects a literary trend of its time, but in Bergeaud's novel, Stella names more than just one individual: she is the earthly incarnation of divinely inspired Liberty, the "Star of Nations."


In *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, Dayan points to Ardouin as exemplary of an elite Haitian population who wished to "progress away from the dark continent" (16). This criticism of "francophilia" became a common way of reading French influence on Haitian literature, especially after Jean Price-Mars's theory of "bovarysme," which was developed during the American occupation of the early twentieth century. While Price-Mars meant to encourage his compatriots to embrace African culture, the concept of *bovarysme* has often been used to denigrate Haitian artists as derivative or lacking in innovation.

Hoffmann, *Essays*: 121. In current-day Haiti, the *Ficus carica* is called a "French fig" to distinguish it from a Haitian fig, which is a type of banana.

Émile Nau, "Littérature": 4.

According to Hoffmann, Jules Michelet, the great French historian of the day, knew and corresponded with both Madiou and Ardouin (*Haiti: lettres et l’être*, 1992): 234. In the early twentieth century, some Haitian readers tired of reading Bergeaud's style of "great men" history and, as with the examples of Frédéric Marcelin, Jacques Roumain, and Jacques-Stéphan Alexis, began to focus their literature on the lives of middle-class, peasant, and working-class Haitians. See Marcelin, *Autour de deux romans* (Paris: Kugelman, 1903): 27.
55 Pradel Pompilus explains the confusion surrounding the text’s generic uniqueness when he writes: “We are forced to count Stella as a novel because of the author’s considerable use of fiction, but in the end, it is really just a story of our battles for independence livened up by ingenious inventions of imagination” (Manuel illustré d’histoire de la littérature haitienne, Port-au-Prince: Deschamps, 1961): 201. Our translation.

56 See Duraciné Vaval, Histoire de la littérature haitienne: ou, “L’âme noire” (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie Aug A. Héraux, 1933): 137. Nau’s periodical L’Union was filled with these types of history-stories.


58 Pompée-Valentin, baron de Vastey, for example, insisted on solidarity between Haitians of different hues. He remarked on the fact that he was of an extremely fair complexion and politically sided with Henri Christophe, a man of dark complexion in his Le Système colonial dévoilé (Cap-Henry: Chez P. Roux, 1814).


RECOMMENDED READING


Editors’ Introduction


