Article

Excluded from Paradise: Race, Romance, and Haiti in the Colonial Novels of Fanny Reybaud

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summary

Madame Charles [Fanny] Reybaud, a popular novelist of the early to mid-nineteenth century, imagines the positive potential of a colonial leadership headed by the idealized moral French woman in her novels Marie d'Enambuc (1840), Les Epaves (1838), and Madame de Rieux (1840). These novels then connect this act of moral leadership to equal and satisfying romantic relationships for women who, as colonial leaders, are able to save their male partners from slavery. The birth of Haiti, which, for Reybaud, spells the demise of a feminized French humanitarianism in its colonies, amounts to the end of her fantasy of a re-defined heterosexual relationship that favors both the French woman and nation.

In this article, I examine the way in which Reybaud's racialized marriage plots contribute to a false yet reassuring understanding of the history of French colonialism in the Caribbean at a moment when France was turning its attention to Africa. By substituting national affiliation for racial categorization and relying on the Saint-Simonian belief in woman's innate moral superiority, Reybaud contributes to what Christopher Miller calls France's "calculated plan" of forgetting Haiti.

keywords : colonialism – novel – nineteenth-century – Martinique – Haiti – race – women – romance

Madame Charles Reybaud (1802-1870), a popular French novelist who made a successful living from her writing, published six novels in total about the New World and the Caribbean.[1]

1 Thanks to the research of Barbara T. Cooper, more information about Fanny Reybaud, including two handwritten letters and several reviews, is now available. These letters are now located at Duke University Library. Reybaud's colonial novels, or perhaps more precisely, her novellas, are: *Les Epaves* (published in the *Revue de Paris* in 1838), *Mézélie* (1839), *Marie d'Enambuc* (published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in 1840), *Madame de Rieux* (1840), *Mademoiselle de Chazeuil* (1844), and *Sydonie* (1852). Her novel *Pierre* (1836) takes place in Vietnam. Madame Charles Reybaud originally published under the androgynous name H. Arnaud. According to an 1839 review of *Mézélie* in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, her "pseudonyme … n'a pas tardé à devenir transparent." As Cooper writes, an earlier version of *Sydonie* was published as *L'Habitation Kerna-*

Though, as a woman writer typical of her era, she consistently downplayed the political aspects of her work, her novels demonstrate an engagement with a common colonialist representation of French intervention in the Antilles. Her interpretation of French colonialism was, however, unusual in that it was simultaneously nationalist and feminist.[2] For this reason, Reybaud's colonial novels deserve to be dusted off and (re)read by scholars interested in nineteenth-century conceptions of race, gender, romance, and early post-colonialism.[3]

In this article, I read three of Reybaud's novels together—*Les Epaves* (1838), *Marie d'Enambuc* (1840), and *Madame de Rieux* (1840)—as a tale of what could have been for French women and the French nation had women been in positions of power in the French colonies of the Caribbean. Reybaud theorizes that French leadership, which she feminizes and presents as consistently moral, would have allowed for a non-discriminatory, hierarchically organized colony. For her, this hierarchy was positive because it dictated the way individuals contributed to the common good, thereby outlining a path to an ideally ordered society. In these imagined societies, women actively oppose unjust leaders and save their male partners from slavery. Their participation in colonial administration contributes to their country's political power while also providing them satisfying romantic relationships with male partners who share their understanding of suffering and oppression.

Reybaud's work stands as one of the most unmistakable examples of what Robyn Wiegman calls feminist-abolitionism. The hyphenation of these two terms suggests that the movement should be understood not as a feminist kind of abolitionism, but as a theory that promoted an "analogic wedding of women and slaves" (Wiegman 197). For Reybaud, this analogy highlights the common suffering of men, women, whites, and blacks in a colonial setting where freedom is always elusive. The positive potential of a nationalized humanitarianism emerges as the dominant theme of what I term the racialized marriage plots of Reybaud's novels; it allows white women to oppose unfair and prejudicial colonial practices as active participants in their nation's *mission civilisatrice*.

The racialized marriage plots of Reybaud's novels, while remarkable for their unusual portrayal of empowered women and freed slaves, present a kind of feminist ideology that highlights the positive potential of colonialism for white women. Reybaud writes, according to Werner Sollors, as if French is "synonymous with being open-minded and humanitarian" (Sollors 168). To be more

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dec in 1846 and listed as authored by Claude Ahlvel, a pseudonym she appears to have only used once. For more information about Reybaud's life, literary career, and the theatrical adaptations of her works, see Barbara Cooper's articles, cited below.

2 I recognize the anachronistic nature of my use of the word *feminist*. In this article, I define *feminist* as promoting a positive portrayal of women, which, for Reybaud, involved highlighting French women's lack of prejudice and conceptualizing new kinds of heterosexual romantic relationships.

3 Four of Reybaud's colonial novellas, *Les Epaves*, *Marie d'Enambuc*, *Madame de Rieux*, and *Sydonie*, will be republished with L'Harmattan's Autrement Mêmes series, forthcoming in 2013. Though many of Reybaud's novels have become available in digital format in recent years, this edition will be the first republication of these four novels since the nineteenth century. Reybaud, Fanny. *Quatre romans antillais: Marie d'Enambuc, Les Epaves, Sydonie, Madame de Rieux*, Edited by Lesley S. Curtis. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013.

specific, she accepts a particular notion of racial hierarchy that is propped up by her unwavering belief in the possibilities of a *feminized* French humanitarianism. Feminism, in Reybaud's novels, thus works in the service of a nationalized racial hierarchy that she makes acceptable, justifiable, and even unrecognizable by shifting the lines of demarcation between white and black and French and foreign. Her imagined feminized colony strengthens France's image of its colonial mastery at a time when the country was dealing with the loss of Saint-Domingue by extorting money from Haiti in exchange for its recognition.[4] These racialized marriage plots make France out to be the sole promoter of unity and fairness in a New World of differently raced and sexed individuals.

Reybaud's Feminized Colony

Each of Reybaud's novels is typical of the sentimental novel of the early nineteenth-century in that its sets up a tension between a dedication to society at large and a desire for personal freedom (Cohen 34). As Margaret Cohen explains, in the sentimental novel, "[a] woman's choice of erotic object unavoidably raises questions of collective welfare and can never be simply a matter of individual feeling" (47). Reybaud profits from this generic convention by making a woman's dedication to the collective welfare of a colonial society (one in which every individual's freedom is constantly in peril) the means by which she finds her romantic partner. Colonialism is so beneficial to the idealized French female character of Reybaud's novels that independent Haiti, as described in *Madame de Rieux*, can be nothing more than a place where French women find themselves alone and powerless.

Marie d'Enambuc (1840), *Les Epaves* (1838), and *Madame de Rieux* (1840) describe a fantastical colonial system in which French women demonstrate the proper way to run a colony and, in turn, find romantic happiness. *Marie d'Enambuc* tells the story of a woman who controls her husband's plantation in seventeenth-century Martinique after his death. Through her capacity for compassion, she creates a supposedly moral colony, has the support of the enslaved and the free alike, and loses her authority only when a foreign and therefore immoral Spanish man named Monsieur de Loinvilliers takes revenge against her because she refuses to marry him. In *Les Epaves*, a young French woman named Cécile living in eighteenth-century Martinique saves a light-skinned man from slavery by marrying him, despite the threats of the racist Belgian plantation owner M. de la Rebelière. The third novel that I discuss here, *Madame de Rieux*, cements the relationship that Reybaud establishes between French colonial domination and French women's romantic happiness by telling a pessimistic story of loss for French women and Haiti. The main character, Christine de Rieux, a young French widow, embarks on a trip with her father to regain his lost treasure in nineteenth-century Haiti. Once his treasure is restored, all hope for empowerment and romantic satisfaction for the French woman is lost. For Reybaud, Haiti spells the demise of a feminized French humanitarianism that afforded French women their choice of respectful romantic partner.

Reybaud's feminized colony begins with the story of Marie d'Enambuc, a woman who defies racial and gender stereotypes in order to rule over Martinique after the death of her beloved and benevolent husband. The novel highlights Marie's significance and superiority most notably during

4 For more information about Haiti's 1825 payment to France, see Gusti Klara Gaillard-Pourchet, "Aspects politiques et commerciaux de l'indemnisation haïtienne," 231.

its description of her departure from Martinique after the king has chosen her successor. This is a moment of mourning for the oppressed, which suggests that only a leader like Marie could truly recognize the suffering of the enslaved:

> Les noirs chantaient sur un air monotone et plaintif des paroles improvisées; tous aimaient cette jeune femme, dont ils n'avaient jamais aperçu que de loin le doux visage; ils la pleuraient, car ils savaient qu'elle avait souvent jeté sur leurs misères un regard de compassion, et qu'elle les protégeait contre l'oppression des blancs (Marie d'Enambuc 800).[5]
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> [The blacks sang improvised lyrics to a mournful and dreary tune; they all loved this young woman whose gentle face they had only seen from afar. They mourned her because they knew that she had often looked upon their miseries with compassion and that she had protected them from the oppression of the whites.]

The novel proposes here that France, represented by Marie, showed compassion for victims of the colonial system from a distanced position of authority. As is common in Reybaud's novels, France bears no responsibility for the "misères" of the enslaved. Marie's compassion for the victims of a misfortune imposed by an unnamed outside force allows her to gain the respect she needed to rule and, upon her departure, evokes an emotional outpouring. At this moment, Marie is not a member of the oppressing "blancs" of the colonial system, but instead a beautiful and moral French woman who defies the separation between *blanc* and *noir*.

By defying this separation, Marie functions to remove France from a system of racial discrimination, but she also suggests that women have a particular capacity for moral leadership that erases any prejudice against them. She is such a great leader that even those opposed to a woman in a position of authority mourn her upon her departure:

> Les regrets et l'attendrissement étaient universels; en ce moment on ne se souvenait que de la bonté, de la justice, des nobles qualités de Marie; ceux-là même que l'idée d'être gouvernés par une femme avait le plus révoltés, la pleuraient maintenant. (800)
>
> [The grief and emotion were universal; at this moment, only Marie's goodness, justice and noble qualities were remembered. Those who had been the most outraged by the idea of being governed by a woman mourned her now.]

A population that universally regrets her departure disregards any controversy surrounding Marie's femaleness and her leadership. Martinique's grief, like Marie, is collective; it is not black, white, male, or female and it is through a French-female role model that this universality comes to be. The emotion of this scene conveys a common respect for France's colonial leadership, which began with Marie's husband and continues with his wife and then brother; "sa majesté" has re-

5 These page numbers come from *Marie d'Énambuc, Revue des Deux Mondes*, Tome XXII (May 15, 1840), 672-700 and (June 1, 1840). Another version of this story was republished as "*Marie*" in L'*Écho des feuilleton*s, 13e année (1853), 5-54. The story was also published as *La Petite Reine* with Méline in Brussels in 1841. I cite from the 1840 version.

placed Marie with her brother-in-law, but this transition from female to male leadership only serves to highlight the importance of the colonial leader's nationality and the *lack* of importance of the leader's gender. Marie establishes a de-racialized and de-masculinized form of French rule that, as I discuss below, allows Reybaud to imagine that French women benefit both politically and personally from their country's colonial prowess, which they, in turn, promote and encourage.

In the process of highlighting the "universal" nature of Marie's leadership, *Marie d'Enambuc* takes pains to set up Monsieur de Loinvilliers, Marie's antagonist, as a foreign and therefore immoral character. Marie's kindness toward the oppressed is, for example, opposed by Loinvilliers's harsh indifference in nationalist terms and is meant to show that French Marie can run a colony better than foreign Loinvilliers; but Loinvilliers' ruthlessness and ineffectual leadership are also presented as traits that he cannot avoid. This portrayal racializes immoral colonial leaders and conflates national affiliation and racial categorization.

The following conversation between Marie and Loinvilliers reveals this dichotomy between Frenchness and colonial mastery on the one hand and foreignness and immorality on the other. As the island is preparing for an approaching storm, Marie asks Loinvilliers if the slaves are protected; he is unconcerned and even chastises Marie for her compassion: "Les nègres? Je ne me suis pas occupé d'eux … J'ai dû songer à la sûreté des habitan[t]s, et non à la conservation de leurs propriétés" (755) [The negroes? I have not concerned myself with them. I had to think of the safety of the inhabitants and not of the conservation of their property]. The novel continues to describe harshly Loinvilliers's treatment of slaves, whose racialization and enslaved status are conflated through the simplified description of "la race noire":

> [La] commisération et cette humanité [de Marie] envers la race noire n'étaient point du tout dans les idées de M. de Loinvilliers … [Un] nègre était pour lui un animal domestique; il le voyait du même œil que son chien ou son cheval. (755)
>
> [Marie's sympathy and humanity toward the black race were not at all in the thoughts of Mr. de Loinvilliers. A negro was for him a domestic animal; he thought of him in the same way one would think of his dog or his horse.]

Marie's behavior wholly opposes this dehumanization of "la race noire" because she offers slaves humane treatment, which is interpreted as her concern for their wellbeing and comfort during the storm. The novel finds Loinvilliers to be in the wrong for ignoring slaves' humanity, but it also emphasizes that he is entirely and inherently incapable of properly running a colony due to his identity. Reybaud makes the French, represented by Marie, compassionate colonial leaders who bear no responsibility for the kinds of immoral and discriminatory deeds that Loinvilliers practices. In this moment, the novel equates being French with a supposedly moral form of colonialism that is more effective than that of foreign leaders.

This connection between nationality and colonial mastery, which requires compassion and concern for the enslaved, becomes racial at the point when Loinvilliers cannot escape his immoral and ineffectual ways. The description of his physical traits shows the uncertainty of his racial affiliation:

> [Loinvilliers] était un homme d'environ trente ans, dont la peau avait un reflet si bronzé, qu'on aurait soupçonné en lui un mélange de sang africain, si ses cheveux, d'un noir brillant, son profil aquilin et ses lèvres finement découpées n'eussent clairement prouvé qu'il était de pure race européenne. (680)
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> [Loinvilliers was a man of about thirty years of age whose skin was so bronzed that one might have suspected that he had a mixture of African blood in him if it were not for his hair, a brilliant black, his aquiline profile, and his finely carved lips which proved he was of pure European race.]

In this passage, Loinvilliers' whiteness comes into question, but is reaffirmed. It is implied here, though, that the physical markings that come from prolonged exposure to the climate of the tropics (in this case, tanned skin) expose a person's tendency for a certain kind of behavior. The racialization of Europeans born in the Caribbean was not an unusual move for a French author of this period; as Christopher Miller notes, despite the similarity of Europeans in France and those in the colonies, Creoles were often racialized (95). For Reybaud, this "race," the Creole "race" represented by Loinvilliers, is responsible for the mistreatment of slaves. Despite his European "purity," Loinvilliers maintains "les inflexibles préjugés des créoles" [the inflexible prejudices of the Creoles] *because* he is "né et élevé en Amérique" (755) [born and raised in the Americas]. Two kinds of "white" are thus formed. The Creole Loinvilliers is excluded from a French national-racial model assumed to be morally superior. Creoles become the racialized Other that differentiates French women and their "well-treated" slaves from a mass of victims and the evil masters who would otherwise dominate in the colonies.

Reybaud's novels exclude evil foreign leaders in an attempt to unite the French and the enslaved, but the threat of these malevolent leaders also helps create this fortuitous union. Loinvilliers's ultimate triumph over Marie demonstrates that the frustration of the white, foreign, and immoral colonial leader will lead him to oppress the French and the enslaved alike; this connection reaffirms the novel's conflation of *French*, *woman*, and *slave*. After Marie's departure, Loinvilliers waits for her in the middle of the Atlantic. He jumps onto her ship to find her dead. Once he hears that her body will be returned to a man she had married secretly, he cruelly dumps her body into the ocean, declaring that "[son mari] ne la reverra ni vivante ni morte!" [her husband will not see her again either alive or dead!] (Marie 803). Reybaud's story ends with Loinvilliers's bitter declaration. Marie is forever caught between her homeland and "cette terre où elle avait régné, où elle avait tant souffert" [that land where she reigned, where she suffered so much] (800). She suffered in order to rule in Martinique; she had to fight Loinvilliers's attempts to take power from her in order to maintain a "morally respectable" colony. The end of the novel upholds the analogy that Reybaud establishes between women and slaves as Marie's body joins the bodies of so many unknown Africans, falling into oblivion along with all hope of a moral colonialism. Because the rejected Loinvilliers cannot possess Marie, cannot subsume and therefore suppress her form of moral colonialism, he ensures that any record of her attempt at moral leadership vanishes with the memory of the victims of the Middle Passage. It is in fact the cruel foreign leader who promotes the "analogic wedding of women and slaves" that we observe in Reybaud's novels; Loinvilliers causes the suffering of both the French and the enslaved, who are united by a common enemy. Reybaud expresses pessimism about her idealized French colonial model, but not about the superiority of the model itself.

Marie's final resting place in the middle of the Atlantic among thousands of unknown Africans demonstrates how profoundly nationality, gender, and social status become intertwined in the novel. This confusion continually emphasizes that the French, led by its women, are, in fact, on the side of the enslaved, because they, too, understand suffering. "Les noirs" thus join French Marie to side against the shifty, immoral, and *foreign* white master. This reworking of racial categorizations lies at the foundation of the romantic relationships of Reybaud's novels. A reformation of whiteness removes controversy from the portrayal of interracial relationships by emphasizing national affiliation instead of racial categorization.

Romancing the Slave

Within Reybaud's de-masculinized and de-racialized French colonial model, empowered women find romantic happiness in a system that negates the inevitability of the connection between femaleness and oppression by making the subjugation of men possible. Because in this world French women have power, they save their potential mates from slavery; an experience of suffering shared by both men and women thus forms the basis of happy romantic relationships. In *Marie d'Enambuc*, Henri de Maubray, whom Marie marries, is a man she saves from indentured servitude. In *Les Epaves*, Cécile saves her love Donatien from slavery by marrying him, which leads to a relationship that her descendent later describes as "un mariage heureux" (*Valdepeiras* 206).[6] Happy marriages, however, are a consequence of French women's involvement in colonial politics and are therefore only possible when they can be moral leaders in a place where men risk enslavement. As a result, the loss of Saint-Domingue is, for Reybaud, more than a loss for the French nation, it is a loss for French women personally. Additionally, she implies that had French women had more power, Haiti might never have come to be.

Reybaud's novels present male characters who are racialized by their experience of enslavement or potential enslavement in such a way that race and gender are reoriented toward the advancement of the moral feminist-abolitionist French colonial ideal. In Marie d'Enambuc, when Marie saves Maubray, he is barely clothed, injured, and marked by his enslavement: "Les pieds nus portaient encore la marque d'un anneau de fer longtemps rivé à la cheville" [His bare feet still bore the mark of an iron cuff that had been attached to his angle for a long time] (777). These scars racialize Maubray; his physical marks prove his experience of suffering and therefore make him a kind and worthy romantic partner. In *Les Epaves*, Donatien has non-white ancestry and therefore risks enslavement. He, too, has physical markings that indicate he is a potential mate:

> …ses traits, d'une régularité qui rappelait les beaux types antiques, exprimaient une fierté calme; ses cheveux, lisses et luisants, ne ressemblaient que par la couleur à ceux des nègres, son teint était clair; mais de légères nuances bronzées s'étendaient des tempes à la région supérieure du front, et ses lèvres minces avaient une certaine pâleur brune (*Les Epaves* 35).
>
> […his characteristics, of a regularity that reminded one of the Ancients, expressed a calm pride. His hair, soft and shiny, only resembled that of the negroes by its color. His comple-

6 *Valdepeiras* contains a later version of *Les Epaves* in which the story is introduced by a narrator, Zoé, Cécile and Donatien's great-granddaughter.

> ion was fair, but slight hints of brown were susceptible around his temples and the upper part of his forehead and his thin lips were of a pale brown color.]

In this description of Donatien's physical traits, however, his whiteness is highlighted while his relationship to "les nègres" is minimized. As with Maubray, the men's (potential) enslavement physically marks them, but this does not exclude them from a French national-racial category. Race, for Reybaud, is malleable according to a character's exposure to French customs. For Loinvilliers, his lack of Frenchness made his bronze-colored skin indicative of immorality. For Donatien and Maubray, their physical marks only accentuate their ability to empathize with women who will save them. Donatien's position on the edge of slavery parallels that of the white female characters of Reybaud's writing, making the experience of subjugation a precursor to moral action and placing the French, once again, in the heroic position of savior rather than master. This reformulation of whiteness that includes Donatien while excluding the evil Loinvilliers avoids the controversy of portraying interracial romance while simultaneously depicting France as a country impervious to racial prejudice.

Reybaud's assumed French reader is thus free to appreciate that it is the tension between collective welfare and individual freedom that matters when the desire of the white, male, and foreign leader is thwarted. Donatien's and Maubray's enslavement—what in the end makes them romantically available to French women—comes from the white slave master's frustration at being unable to possess the French woman. Loinvilliers's reaction to learning that Marie, a woman he could not dominate, had secretly married Maubray, a man he had tried to enslave, was to throw her body overboard, forever separating the two. In *Les Epaves*, the evil Belgian slave owner La Rebelière, reacts by threatening Donatien with enslavement after learning of Cécile's and his wife Eléonore's love for this potential slave. Marriage, as established by the French Code Noir, is the only way for Cécile to prevent La Rebelière's attempts to buy (and kill) Donatien. Reinforcing French legal and moral presence in the colony, Cécile forces the evil slave master to acquiesce after explaining that French law stipulates that "tout esclave qui épouse une femme libre est libre de droit" [any slave who marries a free woman is free according to the law] (*Les Epaves* 83). In fact, it does not appear that Cécile considers marriage to Donatien before realizing that it might be the only way to oppose the white slave master. When Marie and Cécile choose an equal and empathetic partner, they assert power over the foreign immoral leaders of the colony in a way that demonstrates their dedication to the welfare of the collective.

If *Marie d'Enambuc* tells a story of what might have happened in the French colonies if French women had participated in early colonial endeavors, *Madame de Rieux* tells a story of profound loss for France and its women of the nineteenth century; *Madame de Rieux* reinforces Reybaud's belief that French colonialism offered a unique path to individual and collective harmony by portraying nineteenth-century Haiti as an example of the incongruity between a successful past and a disastrous present. Christine de Rozan becomes Madame de Rieux upon an arranged marriage to her cousin, an older man who is the only one in his family to have escaped the slave uprisings of the late eighteenth century. Soon after her marriage, Christine, her father, and her husband leave France in order to find treasure and reclaim property in their native Saint-Domingue, now Haiti. Her husband, the only one who knew the location of the hidden treasure, dies during the

transatlantic journey; his death leaves Christine, her father, and a white servant named Julien to search for money amid the ruins of the old Rozan and Rieux plantations. At the novel's end, a former slave helps Christine's father find treasure. Yet Christine, who discovers that she cannot be with the man she loves, kills herself. Her father, once again rich, returns to France, leaving Christine and all hope *she* had for love and wealth buried in Haiti. Christine replaces her father's treasure; she, in the end, is what the French leave behind in Haiti.

Madame de Rieux speaks to Reybaud's great nostalgia for Saint-Domingue. As a representative of the same "moral" colonialism that Marie sought to encourage, Christine symbolizes a rupture with an imagined past that respected women and the enslaved in the name of the French nation. Christine has no agency in her story; she does not choose her marriage nor does she choose to return to Haiti. Her father entirely controls her destiny and she trusts him to ensure her happiness, even though he eventually abandons his daughter and Haiti. Max is not the ideal partner that Donatien and Maubray were. Christine explains: "Depuis qu'il est devenu mon mari, je le crains" [Since he became my husband, I fear him] (*Madame de Rieux* 19). As a widow, Christine only follows her father's whims. The only way in which she asserts her moral superiority is by refusing to discriminate against those of African descent. Her willingness to accept the Haitian senator Santo-Christo into her home and even, to everyone's surprise, shake his hand implies that, had feminized French humanitarianism reigned in Saint-Domingue, the disparity between past and present would not be so stark.

A Social Utopia

This focus on women's moral leadership and the harmony that it can produce connects Reybaud to the Saint-Simonian feminists of her era. Though little is known about her official connection to the movement, her husband, with whom she worked closely after he began directing the newspaper *Le Constitutionnel*, joined the movement around the time of the 1830 revolution. In 1831, Prosper Enfantin, leader of the Saint-Simonian movement inspired by the works of aristocrat Henri de Saint-Simon, called for a "femme-messie."[7] He envisioned his movement led by a couple-pope, a man to deal in the realm of reason, a woman in the realm of sentiment. The movement took many preconceived notions about women of the time and transformed them to assets, making woman a moral example for man and making the ideal leader a doubled man/woman. *Marie d'Enambuc* reveals Reybaud's association with the movement in that it evokes the image of a "femme-messie," suggesting that what the colonies lacked was the sentimental leadership of women. This addition of woman and the way in which it allows for successful romances echo the words of the authors of the Saint-Simonian journal *Tribune des femmes* who suggest that women should, "[refuser] pour époux tout homme qui n'est pas assez généreux pour consentir à partager son pouvoir" [refuse to marry any man who is not generous enough to consent to share his power] (Jeanne-Victoire). Reybaud's female characters force the white slave master to "partager" or even relinquish his power in favor of the idealized, feminized leadership that only she, as a representative of her nation, can provide.

7 For more information about gender and the Saint-Simonians, including the concept of the "femme-messie," see Naomi Andrew's informative book *Socialism's Muse*, 35-45.

The feminist thinkers within the Saint-Simonian movement were building upon a contemporary attitude about women's social and political roles when they posited that essentialized definitions of masculinity and femininity formed a path to sexual equality. Women's participation in the political sphere was not unheard of in France in the 1830s and 1840s. As Sarah Horowitz explains, women's association with the private, emotional realm of the domestic sphere meant that they were often understood to offer unique talents as participants in the public sphere. Horowitz writes that "[as] 'private' actors, women could operate within the political system in ways that men could not, and they were especially able to manage relationships between politicians and factions" (578). The French female characters in Reybaud's novels also offer unique leadership in colonial politics, which confirms this belief in the powerful potential of women's distinctive abilities.[8]

The Saint-Simonians took these attitudes about women's contribution to politics a step further by making them *necessary*; similarly, French women's participation in colonial politics, for Reybaud, is *necessary* to the success of the French nation and its colonies. By valorizing qualities assumed to be naturally and inescapably feminine, Saint-Simonianism corrected the masculine half by adding its feminine other to make one whole, thereby making the feminine essential. Leslie Rabine and Claire G. Moses describe the movement as "recuperating the feminine from … women's detractors" (28-29). Moreover, by focusing on women's supposedly inherent nature, Saint-Simonians could strategically avoid the controversy of empowering women. Like the population who grieved Marie upon her departure, they ignore any controversy about women in power and instead focus on the common good. Moses and Rabine explain that "unlike the Revolutionary feminists, Saint-Simonians specifically sought to allay the fear of women's power, and to do so they drew heavily upon the romantic idealization of women" (28-29). Reybaud's feminization of French control also works to "allay the fear of women's power" as the romantic idealization of woman turns Marie into a symbol for a colonial empire and makes Cécile simply an enforcer of French law. In Reybaud's works, nationalism and feminism work together in a way that makes women's empowerment uniquely beneficial to a patriarchal colonial system. At that, the novels assert that women's empowerment is necessary and foundational to the success of the French colonial project.

Because, in Reybaud's novels, nationality dictates moral behavior, belonging to the French nation, no matter how far away one is from the metropole, makes gender and race matter less. This emphasis on French universalism minimalizes certain kinds of difference in favor of national belonging, but, as we have seen, it does not erase fundamental differences based on race and social status. Reybaud and her utopian socialist contemporaries understood the placement of individuals in groups as positive because it was a way to define an individual's contribution to the collective. Moses describes Enfantin's feminism as related to his rejection of "radical individualism in favor of a harmonious association of differentiated classes […and] sexes" (Moses 244). Reybaud shows how she is influenced by this social theory most notably in her 1839 novel *Mézélie*, which takes place

8 Even though her public statements deny a belief in the appropriateness of women's involvement in public affairs, Reybaud demonstrated a personal acceptance of women's capacity for involvement in public affairs as she helped in the administration of her husband's newspaper by negotiating with writers and editors. A letter dated June 5, 1837 to the author Virginie Ancelot confirms Reybaud's involvement in the administration of *Le Constitutionnel*. In it, she promises to speak to her husband on behalf of Ancelot.

partly in Mexico. *Mézélie* describes the New World as a place where a moral community of differently colored people might happily join together:

> Les gens de la nuance la plus foncée s'arrêtaient aussi bien devant [la porte du père Cyrillo] que l'aristocratie blanche du pays. … [Un] soir.. le cercle s'agrandit peu à peu… Quelques habitants de couleur mélangée vinrent baiser la main du père Cyrillo et prirent ensuite place sur le gazon, à une distance respectueuse; un peu plus tard l'alcade arriva et on lui apporta un siège à côté du curé. Les servantes de la maison, rangées derrière leur maîtresse, filaient du coton…. *C'était comme une scène de la Bible renouvelée dans les solitudes du Nouveau-Monde* (*Mézélie* 235-237, my emphasis).
>
> [People of the darkest skin color stopped by the home of Father Cyrillo as often as the white aristocracy of the country. … One night, the circle grew little by little. … A few inhabitants of mixed color came to kiss the hand of Father Cyrillo; they then took their place on the grass at a respectful distance. A little later the governor arrived and was brought a chair that was placed next to the priest's. The servants of the house, who were arranged behind their mistresses, spun cotton. … It was like a scene from the Bible repeated in the solitude of the New World.]

In this scene, black people, white people, those of mixed ancestry, political officials, religious officials, masters and servants blend harmoniously. The political exists beside the religious. Though distanced from the white masters, slaves and non-whites are members of the community. Each group of people feels included; black people can stop to see the political and religious leaders as often as white people can. Yet, when everyone is gathered together, everyone respects the established hierarchy. The darker one's skin, the further away from the religious and political center one is. For Reybaud, this hierarchical differentiation by group affiliation is only positive. No one questions it; organizing the world in such a manner is even raised to the level of the biblical. As Michael Behrent explains, the Saint-Simonian view of reality "was predicated on a hierarchy of articulated social functions, existing over and above individual volition" (229). Individual volition is entirely excluded from this scene; respecting one's assigned social function creates harmony for all. For Reybaud, the New World, with all its color, was a particularly wonderful place to try out new theories of social invention, which is how her novels promote a vision of the French nation as "open-minded and humanitarian" while simultaneously reinforcing racial and class distinctions.

Forgetting Haiti

In *Madame de Rieux*, Christine's death means that the harmoniously organized hierarchical society, the one that Reybaud called biblical, has come to an end with France's abandonment of Saint-Domingue. Reybaud makes the religious symbolism of her novels obvious. Marie, the mother of Christ, is chased out of power at the beginning of French colonial expansion in the Antilles by the evil Loinvilliers. Christine, a feminine Christ figure, is dying as her father, who symbolizes France, collects his treasure and prepares to leave the former colony. Haiti obtains its freedom, but France's departure from the former colony signals the demise of the feminized French humanitarianism that began with Marie. Consequently, no romantic partner exists for Christine in Haiti. The

only man worthy of Christine's affection, the Haitian senator Santo-Christo, is one whose skin color makes their relationship impossible. Loinvilliers's cruelty thus leads not only to Marie's demise, but eventually to slave insurrections that result in a world where Christine has no power. Reybaud suggests that the "femme-messie" that the Saint-Simonians so eagerly sought lived and died in an imagined colony run by morally superior French women. When Santo-Christo, who had secretly admired Christine only from afar, tells her father that he will watch over her in her grave, the novel establishes a connection between France and Haiti by making Christine and the morality she represents an altar at which both French and Haitian people may pray.

Even in the face of the loss of Saint-Domingue, the novels continue to assert the morality of French nationalism and colonialism. The impossibility of the relationship between Christine and Santo-Christo underscores the fact that the relationships between Maubray and Marie and Cécile and Donatien were only possible because the men's blackness, the trait that made them susceptible to slavery, could be overcome by becoming French. Santo-Christo's placement beneath the virtuous Christine implies that Haiti should accept a similar position in relation to France, but that this should not be understood as negative. Santo-Christo's consistent respect for Christine, his unwillingness to divulge his love for her, and his continued respect for her after her death suggest that a brighter future for Franco-Haitian relations must be based on a mutual respect for the "good" kind of colonialism that Reybaud's French female characters were meant to promote.

Reybaud's novels thus do not oppose the notion of the superiority of white French people; they instead reformulate whiteness according to national boundaries. In so doing, they contribute to the false yet reassuring notion that France was a morally superior, non-racist society, but they also make gender, specifically femininity, crucial to the formation of this new French racial identity. Etienne Balibar explains that a practice of blaming the other was common among colonial powers who "[projected] the image of racism on to the colonial practices of their rivals" (43). In Reybaud's portrayal of the colony, French national identity absorbs and then stands in for white racial identity.

Yet, this new French racial categorization does not erase distinctions; it only removes the French from the responsibility for colonial wrongdoings and thus makes them benevolent leaders in charge of a new kind of hierarchy—one in which group affiliation and identification are useful instead of detrimental. Reybaud's works offer scholars an opportunity to examine how nineteenth-century conceptions of race and gender, even when understood to be such fixed, inescapable, and defining methods of categorization, might have offered hope to French intellectuals, especially women, in search of a way to form a harmonious society of diverse people. The colonial setting allowed Reybaud to imagine that an idealized France might create a world in which racial discrimination (albeit not racial categorization) was entirely foreign. Following the Saint-Simonian utopian imagining of a society comprised of well-defined and distinct, yet amicably associating groups, Reybaud sees no problem with maintaining hierarchy. In fact, she finds within the racial hierarchy of the colonies an opportunity for the French woman to prosper. Ultimately, Reybaud's racialized marriage plots show us that French socialist utopian thought of the 1830s and 1840s, through its repudiation of the individual and support of social categorization, allowed for a kind of feminist-abolitionism that helped France move on from the loss of Saint-Domingue without altering the as-

sumption of national superiority that undergirded the country's practice of colonial expansion and domination well into the twentieth century.

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