

## **Pale imitations: White performances of slave dance in the public theatres of pre-revolutionary Saint-Domingue**

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### **Abstract**

This article offers an original and nuanced contribution to the larger discussion of dance in the colonial Caribbean. Its focus is on the largely neglected phenomenon of the colonial imitator, and specifically on white imitations of local slave dances in the public theatres of Saint-Domingue in the 1770s and 1780s. Colonial accounts of different types of slave dance (*calenda*, *chica* and vodou) are examined as an important point of reference for the subsequent analysis of theatrical performances of what were heralded as slave dances. The majority of these formed part of the performance of a local Créole-language work called *Jeannot et Thérèse*, set explicitly in Saint-Domingue and featuring slave characters. Despite a number of claims to verisimilitude in relation to these dances, it is clear that they bore little resemblance to their supposed models and that what was presented was, from the colonial perspective, a less threatening, more Europeanized form of slave dance. Most revealing of all is the fact that white dancers in the theatre appear never to have imitated vodou dances, which were bound up with spirit possession, even in a work that does allude to local vodou practices. Rumours had no doubt spread of the involuntary imitations that some colonials had experienced when spying on vodou rituals in secret. This avoidance of vodou dance – and the careful negotiation of a pseudo-vodou ritual in the body of the work – is further evidence of a genuine fear – and, crucially, recognition – of the potency of vodou practices even before the Haitian revolution.

**Keywords:** slave dance; *calenda*; *chica*; vodou; Saint-Domingue; colonial Caribbean; imitation; mimicry; Créole drama; *Jeannot et Thérèse*

### **1. Introduction**

In his 2015 critical survey of academic research into the relationship between colonialism and mimesis, Ricardo Roque identifies imitation of the colonizer by the colonized (or, in his terms, “indigenous”) people, as explored by Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, Paul Stoller (following Jean Rouch) and Michael Taussig, among others, as the primary mode of interaction.<sup>i</sup> This form of imitation has been interpreted in many different ways, notably as an integral part of the process of colonial domination (turning colonized people into near replicas of the colonial model) and/or as a means of resistance and subversion (the appropriation, distortion and/or mockery of the behaviour of the colonizer). It has also been seen as an important element in the creation of new identities and/or the conservation of existing identities. By contrast, Roque highlights the relative neglect in the literature of the colonial imitator. He rightly notes, however, that “Europeans in the colonies could be mimetic agents, active subjects of imitative behaviour, rather than simply objects of, and models of indigenous reproduction.”<sup>ii</sup> One goal of the present article is to respond to Roque’s call for more research in this area. Roque identifies two emerging themes in the small amount of research that does consider European imitators in the colonial context: first,

the European colonizers who imitate other European colonizers and second, European colonizers who refer in some way to “*Indigenous Others*,” including colonizers who “go native.”<sup>iii</sup> In what follows, I shall examine white imitations of slave dance in the French colony of Saint-Domingue (now Haiti) in the late eighteenth century – a phenomenon that represents an intriguing counterpart to the more familiar model of domestic slaves imitating their masters performing European dancers, with which it will be briefly compared.<sup>iv</sup> White performances of slave dance clearly reference the behaviour of the colonized and, more specifically, the enslaved, but there is no evidence of the dancers “going native”. Rather, I will suggest that, in keeping with the model of imitation as a potential means of gaining power (a tool that is, however, generally employed by the colonized), white colonials in Saint-Domingue sought to control – and to diffuse – the power that they reluctantly detected in slave dance, and especially in vodou dance, by re-performing it in a non-threatening form. The public theatre offered a context for this new performance of slave dance that both acknowledged and debunked the power of imitation by recasting it primarily as fictional entertainment.

## 2. Slave Dance

In order to understand what – and whom – it was that white performers claimed to be imitating (and what – and whom – the predominantly white theatre audience thought they were seeing being imitated), it is important to examine colonial accounts of slave dance in some detail. Such accounts raise the spectre of two major racial stereotypes: the African or black dancer and the African or black imitator. Both stereotypes have a long – and enduring – history. In a section on the nature and customs of slaves in the French West Indies, the Père Labat (1663–1738) noted that “la danse est leur passion favorite [...] je ne croi [*sic*] pas qu’il y ait Peuple au monde qui y soit plus attaché qu’eux” (dance is their greatest passion [...] I don’t think that there is any group in the world that is more attached to dance than they are).<sup>v</sup> This view was echoed by, among others, the white Martiniquan-born observer, Moreau de Saint-Méry (1750–1819) a century later, who insisted on the racial nature of the question by noting that what African-born and Caribbean-born slaves have in common is a passion for dance: “ce qui ravit les nègres, soit qu’ils aient reçu le jour en Afrique, soit que l’Amérique ait été leur berceau, c’est la danse” (what delights the slaves, whether they were born in Africa or in America, is dance).<sup>vi</sup> The image of the dancing African was perpetuated and popularized in France by would-be authoritative sources such as Diderot’s *Encyclopédie* (which is in fact based partly on Labat).<sup>vii</sup> While this image might seem relatively innocuous, particularly when many of the white-authored accounts contain what appear to be complimentary assessments of the African dancer’s exceptional skill, these should be understood in the broader context of a discourse that sought to portray the African as a profoundly and inherently sensual being (a body), in contrast with the European who possessed a far superior intellect (a brain).<sup>viii</sup> If the black African could dance, the white European could think, and this in turn was part of the justification for the enslavement of the former by the latter.<sup>ix</sup>

The sensual, non-intellectual African was also understood to be closer in nature to animals and particularly, even in the pre-Darwinian era, to apes or, rather, monkeys. This in turn fuelled the popular image of the African imitator, skilfully aping those around him.<sup>x</sup> Moreau de Saint-Méry, for instance, describes the newly arrived African slave seeing himself in a mirror for the first time in terms that both reveal and promote this stereotype: “il fait mille singeries, mille grimaces, et prend toutes les attitudes pour jouir d’une imitation dont rien ne peut lui expliquer” (he does

a lot of monkey business, grimaces a lot and adopts all sorts of postures in order to enjoy an imitation that he cannot understand).<sup>xi</sup> It is unsurprising, then, that the double stereotype of the dancing African imitator should have taken hold in the colonial context, at least in the colonial mind. This stretches at least as far back as Du Tertre (1610–87), who, in a section on slave recreation in the French Antilles, notes that young slaves of African origin learned to dance precisely by imitating their parents. Although this is of course a perfectly commonplace method of learning dance, Du Tertre’s seemingly neutral – even indulgent – account is significant in its juxtaposition of these two stereotypes:

Pendant que les hommes et les femmes dansent et sautent de toute leur force, les petits enfants composent une autre danse à part, où il y a du plaisir à les voir imiter les postures de leurs Pères et Mères, et contrefaire leurs gestes.<sup>xii</sup>

While the men and women dance and jump with all their might, the small children create another dance separately, in which it’s pleasing to watch them imitate perfectly their fathers’ and mothers’ postures and mimic their gestures.

Moreover, Du Tertre’s account of slave dance forms part of a discourse that marvels at the slave’s apparent gaiety in the face of his miserable condition and concludes, all too conveniently and with supposed echoes of Plato, that the slave must be missing half his mind. Du Tertre notes that “ils [les nègres] ne sont pas moins joyeux dans leur servitude, que s’ils estoient parfaitement libres, car ils chantent, dansent, & se divertissent, bien souvent mieux que leurs Maistres, & que ceux qui leur commandent” (they are no less cheerful in their servitude than if they were completely free since they sing, dance and enjoy themselves often a lot more than their masters and those who command them).<sup>xiii</sup> This perverse and insidious logic of course serves to perpetuate slavery on both humanitarian and philosophical grounds. At another level, it also overlooks the meaning of slave dance, for while slaves may sometimes have danced for recreational purposes as Du Tertre assumes (or pretends to assume), dance also offered other possibilities to the enslaved. From this, we begin to gain a sense of some of the ways in which slave dance was politicized.

The African dancer is not of course synonymous with the slave dancer, but colonial accounts of slave dance, as we have seen, repeatedly impute a strong racial dimension to the figure of the slave dancer. Furthermore, the term “nègre”, with its racial (and racist) overtones is used in the majority of contemporary sources to designate slaves even though in the period that interests us there were a small number of free black people among the free people of colour. Of course slave dance in Saint-Domingue is indebted to African dance traditions in many ways, but it may usefully be considered a category of dance in its own right since it drew on the dance traditions of many different African groups and developed under very particular conditions. Indeed, the African dancer may be understood to have become a slave dancer during the middle passage when the crews of the slave ships periodically “danced” the slaves on the ship’s deck. The primary purpose of this practice was to maintain the slaves’ value by allowing them to exercise occasionally during a journey that put them under extraordinary strain, at a high risk of disease and during which many slaves died. It was, in other words, a means of protecting the ships’ cargo. While the idea that the slaves took recreational value from the practice is dubious, forcing and then watching the slaves dance may have provided a form of entertainment for the ship’s crew.

Geneviève Fabre notes that while dance was sometimes used rhetorically by slavers and ships' captains as evidence of how well slaves were treated on board their ships, more objective observers noted the coercive nature of the practice, which often involved the "cat" or the "lash" and implicitly questioned whether or not this type of movement could more accurately be termed jumping than dancing.<sup>xiv</sup> Indeed, the coercive – as well as the abusive – nature of the practice was exposed when William Wilberforce delivered a speech to the House of Commons in April 1792 alleging that Captain John Kimber of the slave ship *Recovery* had flogged a slave girl to death for refusing to dance (naked, according to some sources) the previous year.<sup>xv</sup> Kimber was tried for murder and eventually acquitted.

### 3. The *Calenda* and the *chica*

In January 1799, metropolitan readers of the *Journal des théâtres, de littérature et des arts* were told that:

Les nègres de St. Domingue ont une passion extrême pour la danse: celle qui leur plaît le plus est *le Calenda*; mais elle est si indécente qu'on la defend: les nègres ne s'y livrent qu'en secret.<sup>xvi</sup>

The slaves of Saint Domingue have an intense passion for dance: the one that they like the most is the *calenda*, but it is so indecent that it has been banned; the slaves only perform it in secret.

The term *calenda* appears frequently in documents commenting on slave dances in the pre-revolutionary and revolutionary era in Saint-Domingue, but it is not always clear to what exactly the term refers.<sup>xvii</sup> Sometimes it is used to refer in a generic sense to a range of night-time slave gatherings involving dancing. Both Alfred Métraux and Pierre Pluchon claim that *calenda* was synonymous with vodou, and Pluchon suggests that the less alarming term was used euphemistically in colonial statutes to indicate something that was taboo (this usage of course suggests that the two were in fact different).<sup>xviii</sup> While it is undoubtedly true that, when used generically to designate night-time gatherings, the term would sometimes have encompassed vodou rituals (more on which below), it seems clear too that there existed a form of dance that did not involve spirit possession also known as *calenda*. In *De la Danse*, Moreau de Saint-Méry writes of "cette espèce de bals nommés *Kalendas*"<sup>xix</sup> (these kinds of balls known as *Kalendas*) and describes in some detail what is in his view a lively, well-executed, simple and surprisingly graceful mixed couple dance, the female dancers holding a handkerchief. Moreau de Saint-Méry provides a similar, though not identical description of the *calenda* in his *Description topographique*, noting that it is an African dance that has been adopted by African-born and island-born slaves alike.<sup>xx</sup>

Moreau de Saint-Méry describes in both publications another African-inspired dance, probably of Congolese origin, called the *chica*.<sup>xxi</sup> This too is a mixed couple dance in which the female dancers hold a handkerchief (or the skirts of their apron), but, according to Moreau de Saint-Méry, the execution and mood of this dance is entirely different:

un danseur s'approche de la danseuse [...] il tombe en mesure presque à la toucher, recule, s'élançe de nouveau, et semble la conjurer de céder avec lui au charme qui les maîtrise.<sup>xxii</sup>

The male dancer approaches the female dancer [...] he falls down in time [to the music] and almost touches her, moves back, darts forward again and seems to entreat her to join him in giving in to the spell that controls them.

The reference to control and the supernatural are significant here. The system of slavery depended on the control (and commodification) by the colonizer of the bodies of slaves; Moreau de Saint-Méry's account reveals that when slaves danced, the colonizers not only lost control temporarily of the slaves' bodies, so too, on occasion, did the slaves. Having described the *chica*, Moreau de Saint-Méry then offers the following evaluation of it:

Il n'est rien de lascif qu'un pareil tableau ne puisse offrir, rien de voluptueux qu'il ne peigne. C'est une espèce de lutte où toutes les ruses de l'amour, et tous ses moyens de triompher sont mis en action.<sup>xxiii</sup>

No lascivious element is spared in this spectacle, there is no voluptuousness that is not portrayed. It's a kind of battle in which all love's ruses and all its methods for success are brought to bear.

The charges of lasciviousness and voluptuousness chime with that of indecency mentioned in the *Journal des théâtres, de littérature et des arts*, and raise the spectre of another racial stereotype: the hypersexualized African. Beneath this stereotype lies a more complex attitude towards the supposed sexual prowess of men of African origin and especially towards the supposed sexual allure of woman of African origin. At the same time that broadly colonial accounts appear to condemn what they present as the unbridled sexuality of many slave dancers, we know that it was not uncommon for masters to have sexual relations with their female slaves and even to take them as their concubines. These value-judgements, then, reveal not only a fascination with and a fear of African sexual potency, but sometimes conceal (or perhaps reveal) a wish to have some part in that potency.

This ambiguity can be detected in a picture of a *calenda* (here spelled *calinda*) by the Swiss painter, Dumoulin (1753–1834). The viewer's eye, like that of most of the figures in the picture, is drawn to the female dancer because she is fairer skinned than the figures immediately around her and because of her semi-exposed breasts, which catch the light of the sun.<sup>xxiv</sup> [INSERT IMAGE NEAR HERE] According to the *Journal des théâtres, de littérature et des arts*, the colonial authorities in Saint-Domingue sought to prohibit *calendas* for reasons of public decency. But, as the Père Labat had already observed, these were also prohibited for another reason: fear of revolt, uprising and theft.<sup>xxv</sup> Indeed, any kind of slave gathering was feared by the planter class and by the authorities, who repeatedly tried to suppress them in a series of prohibitive decrees.<sup>xxvi</sup> In 1758 the manager of a plantation was fined for having permitted a *calenda*,<sup>xxvii</sup> and the *calenda* is named in a 1765 decree and a special branch of the rural police set up to enforce the decree.<sup>xxviii</sup> The fact that the prohibition on slaves dancing *calendas* was renewed in 1772 would suggest that this was difficult to police partly, as the article in the *Journal des théâtres, de littérature et des arts* indicates, because such gatherings were now held in secret.<sup>xxix</sup> It is debatable whether Dumoulin's picture depicts the colonials on horseback on the left hand side of the image taking the dancing slaves by surprise or simply monitoring (and

enjoying?) the dance. The apparent confrontation between the slaves' dog and the bay horse would seem to suggest an intrusion.

Moreau de Saint-Méry's account of the *chica* in *De la Danse* suggests a further reason to be wary of the dance: the profound effect that a well-executed *chica* can have even on the spectator. He reports that it moves even the most unresponsive of spectators and describes the phenomenon as "en quelque sorte magique" (in some ways magical).<sup>xxx</sup> It is not difficult to detect a sensual even erotic dimension to Moreau de Saint-Méry's account of spectatorship (here and indeed throughout his treatise, which is, revealingly, dedicated to Créole women), but his suggestion of there being a supernatural element to the effects of dance is significant and will become even more so as we turn to the case of vodou.

#### 4. *Vodou*

Moreau de Saint-Méry addresses vodou briefly in *De la Danse* and at more length in his *Description*. The latter includes a detailed account of the vodou ceremony while the former gives only a brief description of its danced portions. Dance is a crucial part of the vodou ceremony and the most common means for the vodou spirits or *loa* to take possession within and communicate via an initiate. In *De la Danse*, Moreau de Saint-Méry notes the effect of vodou dance, accompanied by a drum, handclapping and singing, on the slaves: "ils dansent quelquefois jusqu'à tomber en défaillance" (they sometimes dance to the point of fainting).<sup>xxxii</sup> In both sources, Moreau de Saint-Méry singles out for particular comment the vodou rite known as *Don Père* or the *Danse à Don Père*, which he dates back to 1768 and attributes to a slave from the Spanish part of island who was something of a hero among local slaves and seen as a fomenter of unrest by the local authorities.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Moreau de Saint-Méry describes the physical movement of the *Don Père* as being extremely violent, and further augmented by a cocktail involving alcohol and possibly also gunpowder. The result is, according to Moreau de Saint-Méry, that the slaves go into a fury, have convulsions until they fall into a kind of epilepsy that appears to put their lives at risk.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Although he does not use the term, Moreau de Saint-Méry is clearly describing a particularly violent form of spirit possession. The violence of the Petro ceremony, which is still practised today albeit in a different context, has been commented on by more recent scholars, including Katherine Dunham who, after extensive work in the field, noted that "the atmosphere of a true Petro ceremony is hostile, negative. The possessions are apt to resemble frenzy rather than ecstasy."<sup>xxxiv</sup> More remarkable (and, for the colonial authorities, more alarming) still is the effect that the *Don Père* had on its slave spectators. Moreau de Saint-Méry notes that

les spectateurs eux-mêmes partageaient cette ivresse, et au lieu de cesser leurs chants en voyant naître la frénésie, ils redoublaient les éclats de leurs voix, précipitaient la mesure, et accéléraient la crise en la partageant jusqu'à un certain degré.<sup>xxxv</sup>

the spectators also experienced this drunken state, and, instead of stopping their singing when they saw the frenzy taking hold, they increased the intensity of their voices, sped up the tempo and precipitated the climax by taking part in it up to a point.

Moreover, Moreau notes that during the vodou ceremony, slaves asked the spirit for control over their masters.<sup>xxxvi</sup> It is unsurprising that slave owners, fearful of slave revolts and of these manifestations of the power of slave rituals and the potential power of slaves, sought to prohibit the practice.

In *De la Danse*, Moreau de Saint-Méry, however, makes no mention of what was surely one of the most frightening elements of vodou: its unwanted effect on the covert white spectator. In his *Description topographique*, he makes the following observation:

Des Blancs trouvés épiant les mystères de cette secte, et touchés par l'un de ses membres qui les avait découverts, se sont mis quelquefois à danser, et ont consenti à payer la Reine *Vaudoux*, pour mettre fin à ce châtement.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

White people found spying on the mysteries of this sect and touched by one of its members who had discovered them sometimes began to dance, and agreed to pay the Vodou Queen in order to bring this penance to an end.

The powerful effect of vodou is thus presented by a white author aspiring to be both empirical and rational in his account of life in the colony, as not limited to the barely human slaves, but to extend also to the curious white observer. For the effects to be felt, it would appear that the white observer must have physical contact with the possessed dancers and that the effect is somehow transmitted from one body to another in a way that echoes the transmission of the *loa* that is the very point of the ceremony. The extent of the effect is powerful enough, according to Moreau de Saint-Méry, to make some white observers dance in a process of unconscious or at least unwilling imitation.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Further participation in the vodou ceremony was required in the form of an offering to the vodou queen before the white observer could be released from what Moreau de Saint-Méry calls a penance, but what might more accurately be termed a spell or charm. Although Moreau de Saint-Méry is quick then to add the more reassuring detail whereby members of the police force charged with patrolling these events were never subject to its powers in this way, his account nonetheless offers a potent testimony to the power of slave dance, some of its supernatural effects and to the fact that these are not limited to the slave population and can extend to white people as well. The power of vodou was rightly feared by the planters and colonial authorities owing both to the effect it could have on the slave population and to the effect it could have on them, and it is surely above all for this reason that there are no pictorial representations of vodou rituals in the pre-revolutionary period.<sup>xxxix</sup> Indeed, detailed written accounts of vodou from this period are extremely rare; more surprisingly, legal prohibitions that mention the practice explicitly are entirely absent.<sup>xl</sup> Vodou rituals took place in secret and were thus difficult to observe; they were not something of which the colonial purchasers of paintings wished to be reminded. But above all, the fear of contamination if one came into close contact with vodou (even, perhaps, by painting it) represented too great a risk.<sup>xli</sup> As will be seen, there is only one documented instance where white people performed something directly inspired by vodou, and this did not involve dance or spirit possession.

### 5. White imitators

Why, then, might white people have sought to imitate slave dance at all given its overarching reputation for violence and lasciviousness and even uncontrollable,

supernatural frenzy? Plausible explanations for why slaves might have wished to imitate white dance are certainly easier to come by. According to Franklin Midy, island-born (rather than African-born) slaves, who held the majority of the more desirable positions as domestic slaves, were more closely associated by contemporary observers with a wish to imitate their white masters.<sup>xlii</sup> In so doing, according to the social politics of the day, they asserted their increased superiority over African and plantation slaves. Dance, then, was a means of social mobility, and a slave who could perform European dances would potentially reach a higher price when put on sale.<sup>xliii</sup> Another important element of slave imitations of white dance is mockery and thereby resistance. In the absence of any contemporary first-hand accounts from domestic slaves, one can only speculate on this in the case of Saint-Domingue, but later accounts from American slaves on the southern plantations indicate that imitation through dance was often derisive.<sup>xliv</sup> Recalling her life in the 1840s, one former slave commented in 1901 that:

us slaves watched white folks' parties where the guests danced the minuet and then paraded in a grand march [...] Then we do it too, but we used to mock 'em, every step. Sometimes the white folks noticed it, but they seemed to like it. I guess they thought we couldn't dance any better.<sup>xlv</sup>

A similar account is provided by 90-year-old Shephard Edmonds who explained how the slaves in Tennessee

would dress up in hand-me-down finery, to do a high-kicking prancing walk-around. They did a take-off on the high manners of white folks in the 'big house', but their masters, who gathered round to watch the fun, missed the point.<sup>xlvi</sup>

But our white performances of slave dance embody neither social aspiration nor mockery. Whereas the notorious minstrel performances of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries mocked black people but also women (white or black), northern dandies and other pretentious or hypocritical types, as well as the Irish and visiting European stage performers,<sup>xlvii</sup> there is no evidence in the sources that remain to suggest that our dancers in Saint-Domingue were mocking their models.

The fact that all documented accounts of white performances of what claimed to be slave dances took place in the public theatre is certainly significant.<sup>xlviii</sup> The theatre is of course a place where imitation is de rigueur and, more importantly, can be controlled, and the ability to control slave dance seems crucial from a colonial perspective. While the colonials could not always control dancing black bodies on the plantation and elsewhere, they could control the representation of dancing black bodies in the playhouse. But the portrayal in the theatre of local slaves appears anomalous, for the theatre in the French Caribbean colonies was established as a place where metropolitan theatrical practices would be imitated in order to bring French culture – and especially the French language – to the colonies, thereby, it was alleged, rescuing French citizens (the white population) and would-be French citizens (the small number of free people of colour who were admitted to the public theatre and sat in special seats) from the dangers of degeneration.<sup>xlix</sup> The great majority of works performed in the public theatres of Saint-Domingue were indeed imported from France, and announcements in the local newspapers of upcoming performances often allude to previous performances of the same works in Europe. The theatre's job was,



in theory, to imitate the French model (another form of colonial imitation), and many theatrical events featured dances that were popular in the metropole, such as the minuet, the contredanse, the Anglaise, the Allemande and the Basquaise between theatrical works or at the end of the event. This European imperative makes the appearance of slave dances in the theatre even more intriguing.

We know of two early instances, both in Le Cap in the 1770s, of slave dances being performed at the end of a theatrical event featuring a work imported from France. The first was in April 1773, when a performance of Gibert/Favart's *Les Trois sultanes ou Soliman second* was to be followed by a Turkish dance and a "pas de nègres."<sup>l</sup> Here it would seem that the slave dance was conceived as an exotic addendum to the exotic Turkish ballet that was in keeping with the setting of the French-composed *opéra-comique*. The second instance is detailed in a reference in 1777 to the white performer, Chevalier, who would dance "un Pas de Negre dans le genre grotesque" (a slave dance in the grotesque style) at the end of a theatrical event featuring Grétry's *Zémire et Azor*.<sup>li</sup> Here the use of the term "grotesque" almost certainly refers to the European tradition of grotesque dance which included among its types various dancing slaves. Rebecca Harris-Warrick and Carol G. Marsh describe a popular European slave dance in which the slave initially appears chained, and his dancing restricted, before being liberated from his chains, and his movements expanded.<sup>lii</sup> However, it seems unlikely that any performance in Saint-Domingue would have featured the liberation of a dancing slave but, in the absence of any further detail, it is difficult to speculate on how these dances were performed.

All the remaining documented performances of slave dances in the public theatres of Saint-Domingue feature at the end of performances of a single work, *Jeannot et Thérèse*, by a local author and man of the theatre called Clément.<sup>liii</sup> *Jeannot et Thérèse* is a parody of Rousseau's musical intermède, *Le Devin du village* or, more precisely, a rewriting of the patois parody of *Le Devin du village* by Favart and Sodi, *Les amours de Bastien et Bastienne*. Clément's work is a linguistic hybrid: its dialogue is in Créole – according to Hazaël-Massieux, a form of Créole spoken by white people in Le Cap<sup>liv</sup> – but its stage directions are in French; the music is in vaudevilles, featuring (except for the first number) not Rousseau's original score but a series of popular tunes by different composers, all of them as far as we can ascertain, written in the French style.<sup>lv</sup> Rousseau's work features a shepherdess, Colinette, who has been abandoned by the shepherd, Colin, for the lady of the manor. Following the soothsayer's advice, Colinette tells Colin that she is in love with a townsman. Colin and Colinette are reconciled and there is rejoicing at their simple, idyllic and appropriate match. In *Les amours de Bastien et Bastienne*, the lovers are peasants who speak a crudely rendered dialect that is not unlike some of the crude renderings of Créole in some later French works. In Clément's work, featuring not shepherds or peasants but "nègres" (an ambiguous term, but one that usually designates slaves) and the class dimension of its models is compounded by racial distinctions as Thérèse complains that Jeannot has left her for a rich *mulâtresse* and claims to have turned down for him not only a wealthy free man of colour but also a wealthy white man from France (sc 2).

Of the small number of local works produced in Saint-Domingue, *Jeannot et Thérèse* was the most popular: we have evidence in local newspapers of nine performances of *Jeannot et Thérèse* in five different towns in Saint-Domingue between 1773 and 1788,<sup>lvi</sup> and it appears that the work had been premiered as early as 1758.<sup>lvii</sup> *Jeannot et Thérèse* is set explicitly in Saint-Domingue and features black characters who are almost certainly slaves – a conclusion that is supported by

Jeannot's threat in sc 6 to "alé marron" (become a maroon) if Thérèse leaves him. With one notable exception,<sup>lviii</sup> these roles were all performed by white performers, sometimes in blackface. The full extant copy of the work features "nègres et négresses dansants" in the cast (in place of Rousseau's villagers and Favart's peasants) and concludes with an invitation to dance and sing.<sup>lix</sup>

The question of why white performers might have wished to imitate local slave dance is thus closely related to the broader question of why white performers might have wished to imitate local slaves in the theatre at all. It is important to bear in mind that *Jeannot et Thérèse* remained something of an anomaly: although nine documented performances of a local work was an exceptionally high number in Saint-Domingue, this does not compare favourably with the number of performances of popular imported works. Rousseau's *Devin du village*, for instance, was performed at least 17 times in the same period.<sup>lx</sup> No doubt Clément sought in creating his parody to benefit from the popularity of a well-known work (or works) from Europe; equally, it is clear that he sought to adapt it in some way to local conditions. What we see in *Jeannot et Thérèse* is evidence of a tension between an undeniable interest in local life and even, to a limited degree, in the *culture* of slaves, and that of a vested interest in portraying an idealized form of slave life. For, despite being set explicitly in Saint-Domingue and despite, as will be seen, including a number of references to local life, the protagonists of *Jeannot et Thérèse*, like those of its models, suffer only in love and not in work. From a theatrical perspective, performing in *Jeannot et Thérèse* may have offered the more adventurous and talented performers in Saint-Domingue the opportunity to display their skill and flexibility by performing these unusual roles. To perform convincingly the role of a Saint-Dominguan slave before an audience familiar with real-life Saint-Dominguan slaves is no mean feat, and it will be seen that on several occasions special performers were brought in for this purpose. For the theatre audience, similarly, the particular pleasure may have resided precisely in that of a theatrical double consciousness enhanced by the particularly large discrepancy between the white performers and their slave roles.

Returning specifically to the question of slave dance, it is useful to look at how this is presented in the newspaper announcements advertising upcoming performances of *Jeannot et Thérèse*. The press announcement for the 1773 performance in Léogane of *Jeannot et Thérèse* states that it will include "des danses analogues au Sujet" (dances in keeping with the subject) performed by two local children. It is likely that the dances in question represented the slave dances that feature the end of the work.<sup>lxi</sup> Although we have no additional information about how *Jeannot et Thérèse* or its dances were performed on this occasion, the fact that the latter were performed by children is significant. The prevailing colonial view of slave dance was, as we have seen, that it was lascivious and voluptuous, featuring a highly sexualized – and sometimes violent – encounter between male and female dancers. The use of local children may have represented a deliberate attempt to desexualize and thereby sanitize slave dance, more in keeping with Du Tertre's account cited above of the pleasure to be gained from watching the children of slaves imitate their parents in a more seemly form of slave dance. That the children in the Léogane performance were no doubt white would have further sanitized the dance from a colonial perspective. What we know of the music for this work would suggest that this too was Europeanized, and a note (found in one of the two surviving manuscripts of the work) indicates that it ends with a contredanse.<sup>lxii</sup> While we do not know which contredanse was (supposed to be) used, we can be fairly certain that the music was

remote from the drum-based music that accompanied authentic slave dances on the island.

In the 1780s, two references to performances of *Jeannot et Thérèse* (here described as an “Opéra créole”) in Port-au-Prince explicitly mention slave dance (a “pas créole”). The newspaper announcement notes that Mme Acquaire will play the role of Thérèse, her husband, that of Jeannot, and Goulard, that of the magician figure, Papa Simon. Readers are told that the work will be “ornée d’une décoration analogue au sujet, & terminée par un *Pas Créole*, dansé par le *S<sup>r</sup> Acquair* [sic]” (performed with an appropriate set and will end with a Créole [slave] dance performed by Mr Acquaire).<sup>lxiii</sup> Here again, the link between the dance and the subject of the play strongly suggests that the “pas créole” is supposed to represent a local black or slave dance and that white actor-dancer, Acquaire, who would later become director of the playhouse in Port-au-Prince, was representing the dancing slaves of the text in a solo dance. According to the fiction of the work, Acquaire also represented the character of Jeannot: in fictional terms, it would seem that Jeannot danced to celebrate his upcoming marriage to Thérèse; in reality, Acquaire performed what was no doubt a much-modified version of a slave dance for the pleasure and entertainment of the predominantly white theatre audience.

A repeat performance with the same cast, also featuring Acquaire performing a solo “pas créole” took place in Port-au-Prince on 13 February 1781.<sup>lxiv</sup> Later that same year, we read of another production in the same town of *Jeannot et Thérèse* with a new, unnamed cast member in the role of Papa Simon: “un amateur” who will, moreover, perform the role “sous le vrai costume & la couleur Nègre” (in the real costume and colour of slaves). On the final dance, we read that “Le Spectacle sera terminé par une Danse créole, exécutée par l’Amateur et le Sieur *Acquaire*” (the performance will end with a Créole [slave] dance by the amateur and M. Acquaire).<sup>lxv</sup> This performance marks an important development in the story of *Jeannot et Thérèse* and of its dances. The term “amateur” in this context does not necessarily indicate a lack of professionalism or experience, rather it designates someone who was not a regular paid member of the troupe. It would appear, then, that the unnamed amateur performer was brought in precisely because of his particular ability to portray what passed for black performance, including black dance, and, no doubt, to speak (and sing) the Créole language with fluency. This is also the first reference to the use of blackface performance in the theatres of Saint-Domingue and thus the first known instance of dance in blackface.<sup>lxvi</sup> The darkening of the amateur’s skin (there is no mention of any of the other performers having darkened skin), combined with the adoption of what passed for slave clothing demonstrates an increasing concern for verisimilitude that can be detected in theatre productions as the century wore on. It is not impossible that with the costume and colour of slaves came a form of slave dance that more closely resembled its real-life models.

In the northern city of Cap-Français, known as Le Cap, *Jeannot et Thérèse* and its final dance were described using the adjective “nègre”.<sup>lxvii</sup> The newspaper announcement relating to an upcoming performance in Le Cap of *Jeannot et Thérèse* in January 1783 tells the tale of the work’s premiere in the city in 1758, followed by the theft of the manuscript (subsequently circulated round the colony) and the writing of a new version of the work, featuring new but still European-sounding musical accompaniments, but makes no mention of dance or of the use of blackface.<sup>lxviii</sup> However, it is in relation to a performance of the same work in Le Cap in February the following year that we find, in a detailed account, the only instance of white

performers attributing a more specific name to their performances of black or slave dance.<sup>lxi</sup>

Cette Piece [*Henriette, ou l'amant déserteur*] sera suivie de *Jeanno & Thérèse*, Parodie negre du *Devin du village*, par le sieur *Clément*. Les personnages seront *Thérèse*, Madame *Marsan*, *Jeanno*, le sieur *Dupontet*, & *Simon*, le sieur B. Amateur de la Ville. Ils joueront tous à visage noir. Cette couleur imitative, une décoration analogue, & un *Calenda* ou Danse negre exécuté par plusieurs Amateurs, rendront cette Parodie très-agréable, & digne de plaire au Public.<sup>lxx</sup>

This play will be followed by *Jeannot et Thérèse*, a negro parody of *Le Devin du village*, by Mr Clément. The characters will be Mme Marsan as Thérèse, Sieur Dupontet as Jeannot and Mr B, a local amateur, as Simon. They will all perform with blackened faces. This imitative colour, the corresponding stage set and the performance of a *calenda* or slave dance by several amateur dancers will render this parody most agreeable and pleasing to the public.

The explicit mention of the “calenda”, however ambiguous the term may sometimes be, picks up on an internal reference in the play when Thérèse recalls dancing a calenda,<sup>lxxi</sup> and clearly aligns the performance with the well-known phenomenon of danced slave gatherings that were the object of widespread fear and fascination and, as we have seen, of regulation, even prohibition. Why, then, was something claiming to represent this type of dance deemed appropriate and even desirable for performance in the public theatre or, more specifically, for inclusion in a newspaper article advertising an upcoming performance?

The announcement suggests that one answer might lie in the audience pleasure to be derived from the experience of double consciousness, as outlined above.<sup>lxxii</sup> It is not stated whether the amateur dancers are also to perform with blackened faces, but it seems likely that they – and Mr B – were brought in, like the amateur performer in Port-au-Prince and like another anonymous amateur who performed black characters in the town of Saint-Marc,<sup>lxxiii</sup> owing to their perceived skill at performing what was alleged to be black or slave dance. Alongside claims to increasing realism (however realistic these really were in practice), we note the expansion of the concluding slave dance to feature several performers, rather than the two children of Léogane, the solos by Acquire in Port-au-Prince or his duet with the talented amateur.

In this relatively detailed account, there is, as always, no suggestion of the dance being performed in a grotesque or mocking manner (the only element of parody mentioned in the announcement is a slightly misleading reference to the relationship between Clément’s work and Rousseau’s). Something that gestured towards accurate imitation – and the pleasure to be derived from this – appears to have been the goal. Whether or not this was deemed successful in the eyes of the audience is another matter: certainly, it is unlikely to have passed muster with any slave musicians in the theatre orchestra or any undocumented slaves who may have accompanied their masters to the playhouse. This was a deliberately whitened version of slave dance that sought to be increasingly recognizable at the same time that it kept real slave dance at a safe distance.

This need for distance was particularly important in the case of vodou. The closest I have found to a white person *choosing* to imitate vodou in this era is precisely in performances of *Jeannot et Thérèse* where Papa Simon supposedly performs a magic ritual in sc 4. Rousseau’s original stage directions for the “magic”

scene in *Le Devin du village*, which is glimpsed by some young peasant girls, appear serious in tone:

Le Devin tire de sa poche un livre de grimoire et un petit bâton de Jacob, avec lesquels il fait un charme. De jeunes paysannes, qui venaient le consulter, laissent tomber leurs présents, et se sauvent tout effrayées en voyant ses contorsions.

The soothsayer takes a spellbook and a small Jacob's staff out of his pocket and performs a spell. The young peasant women who had come to consult him drop all their gifts and run away frightened by the sight of his contortions.

The equivalent passage in *Les amours de Bastien et Bastienne*, with its reference to the popular literature published in the Bibliothèque bleue series is more obviously tongue in cheek, and here it is the male lover (Bastien) who is afraid: “[Colas] tire de sa besace un livre de la Bibliothèque bleue, et fait en lisant plusieurs contorsions qui font enfuir Bastien” ([Colas] takes a book from the Bibliothèque bleue series out of his pouch and, while reading from it, contorts himself, which makes Bastien run away). The stage directions for *Jeannot et Thérèse* indicate that Jeannot runs away even before Simon opens his wanga (a term used in vodou that here indicates a charmed object or fetish that possesses the power to communicate) or begins to chant:

Jeannot se sauve aux premières grimaces de Simon qui pour lors fait tous les lassets du sac et du ouanga puis il dit en chantant et en grimacant: “oualili, quacoucou, Dahomé, coroco, calaliou.”

Jeannot runs away when Simon starts grimacing. Simon then unties the laces of his bag containing the wanga, and sings and grimaces “oualili, quacoucou, Dahomé, coroco, calaliou.”

Simon then closes his bag and invites Jeannot to join him again. The daring of this theatrical representation of a pseudo-vodou magical ritual, featuring a wanga and an explicit reference to Dahomey (the African kingdom in which vodou originated), in the context of pre-revolutionary Saint-Domingue should not be underestimated and is, as far as we know, exceptional. However, its threatening potential is also attenuated by a number of factors: first, the fact that it is theatre and in some way understood by the audience not to be real; second, because it is performed not only by actors but by white actors; and also because it is drawing on theatrical sources that ground it in the European tradition and in that of musical parody. Above all, perhaps, Simon's theatrical ritual is far remote from an authentic, full-scale vodou ritual and, crucially, while he sings and grimaces, he does not appear to dance<sup>lxxiv</sup> and there is no suggestion of spirit possession in the perfunctory five words that he pronounces. As far as we know, the only dance that was performed during the work is the one at the end in celebration of the marriage between Thérèse and Jeannot.

## 6. Conclusion

By paying attention to the relatively rare and still neglected phenomenon of the colonial imitator, the present article has established that imitation through dance in pre-revolutionary Saint-Domingue was a strategy of empowerment and control employed not only by the colonized or enslaved classes but also, on occasion, by

representatives of the colonial class. These “pale imitations” by white performers represent an intriguing colonial rendering that is part mimesis – “the symbolic representation of reality through artistic and literary images” – and part mimicry – “camouflage and dissimulation oriented towards subversive or disruptive copying.”<sup>lxv</sup> While slaves sometimes used dance as a form of resistance and mockery, white dancers in the colony also used dance, specifically theatrical dance, to produce an attenuated version of something that they clearly found fascinating and, above all, frightening. At first glance, the creation in the public theatres of Saint-Domingue of works featuring local slave characters and dances would appear to be at odds with the theatre’s supposed civilizing mission (aimed not at converting the local population but at protecting French citizens from the corrupting influence of life in the tropics). However, it is clear from our examination of local performances of the slave dances of *Jeannot et Thérèse* that these served a similar purpose: rather than simply bringing the healthy influence of French culture to the colony, *Jeannot et Thérèse* offered a temporary theatrical inoculation against the very local threat posed by the supposed violence and lasciviousness of slave dance on the island. However, Moreau de Saint-Méry’s account of colonials experiencing the powerful effects of spirit possession when spying on danced vodou rituals in the island suggests why even this attempt at inoculation did not extend to the representation of dance involving spirit possession. Theatre directors and practitioners could control the performance of some slave dances in the theatre by performing them in a way that was entertaining and non-threatening, but it would seem that they could not take the risk of replicating any form of danced spirit possession because they had reason to believe that a theatrical performance of a danced vodou ceremony might just result in some of the uncontrollable effects that they had witnessed or heard about elsewhere. Papa Simon’s brief performance of a short pseudo vodou ritual in the body of *Jeannot et Thérèse* thus (if only temporarily) took the sting out of the real rituals that took place among slave populations outside the theatre at a time when the power of vodou was still mocked but also reluctantly – and increasingly – acknowledged.

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**Caption for image:** François Aimé Louis Dumoulin, *Calinda: Danse des Nègres en Amérique* (1783). Musée historique de Vevey. Wikimedia Commons.

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<sup>i</sup> Roque, "Mimesis and Colonialism," 201–206.

<sup>ii</sup> Roque, "Mimesis and Colonialism," 206.

<sup>iii</sup> Roque, "Mimesis and Colonialism," 206, 208.

<sup>iv</sup> See, notably, Moreau de Saint-Méry's account of this phenomenon in Saint-Domingue in his *Description topographique*, 1:69. His account is similar to that of Marsden's description of slaves in 1780s Jamaica in Marsden, *An Account*, 33.

<sup>v</sup> Labat, *Nouveau voyage aux isles*, 2:51–52.

<sup>vi</sup> *Description topographique*, 1:63.

<sup>vii</sup> See entries under "nègres". See also Camier for how the *Encyclopédie* drew on earlier sources, including Labat: "Moreau de Saint-Méry," 185.

<sup>viii</sup> Gordon has also outlined how many of the same characteristics were attributed to other groups perceived as inferior, such as hysterics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See *Dances with Darwin*, passim.

<sup>ix</sup> Moreau de Saint-Méry tried to explain this propensity towards dance by linking it to climate theory, likening the dance-friendly sunny climate of Africa with that of the West Indies. See *De la Danse*, 12–20.

<sup>x</sup> Interestingly, Darwin notes in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* that mimicry inevitably inspires laughter in "savages" and in Europeans. "With Europeans, hardly anything excites laughter so easily as mimicry; and it is rather curious to find the same fact with the savages of Australia, who constitute one of the most distinct races in the world." Cited in Gordon, *Dances with Darwin*, 27.

<sup>xi</sup> *Description topographique*, 1:58.

<sup>xii</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des Antilles*, 2:527.

<sup>xiii</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des Antilles*, 2:526.

<sup>xiv</sup> Fabre, "The Slave Ship Dance," 35.

<sup>xv</sup> Davis, "Slavery, Sex and Dehumanization," 51.

<sup>xvi</sup> *Journal des théâtres*, Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer, 87MIOM/85 (no page).



- <sup>xvii</sup> Munro reminds us that African dances including the *calenda* and the *chica* had arrived in Spain in the late sixteenth century, where they were commented on by Golden Age writers and later outlawed by the Spanish Inquisition. See *Different Drummers*, 6.
- <sup>xviii</sup> See Métraux, *Voodoo in Haiti*, 33 and Pluchon, *Vaudou, sorciers, empoisonneurs*, 64–65.
- <sup>xix</sup> Moreau de Saint-Méry, *De la Danse*, 39. This treatise was originally intended as an entry in a larger work called *Notions coloniales*.
- <sup>xx</sup> *Description topographique*, 1:63–64
- <sup>xxi</sup> Moreau de Saint-Méry notes in the *Description topographique* (1:64) that the *chica* is known simply as the *calenda* in the Windward islands, and in *De la Danse* (43) he notes that it is called the *chica* in both the Leeward islands and in Saint-Domingue.
- <sup>xxii</sup> *De la Danse*, 44.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> *De la Danse*, 44.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> For more on the particular sexual appeal of the woman of mixed racial ancestry, see Garraway, *The Libertine Colony*, Chapter Five.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Labat, *Nouveau voyage aux isles*, 2:53.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> See Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions des colonies françoises de l'Amérique sous le vent*, 6 vols, Paris: [by the author], 1784–90, passim, and Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law*, 24–53.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> See Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law*, 36. Wimpffen, who visited Saint-Domingue in 1788, 1789 and 1790, noted that when news from France reached Saint-Domingue in August 1789, it was considered a cause for celebration and the local slaves were not only granted a day off work and given meat, cod and eau de vie, they were also permitted to dance a *calenda*. See Wimpffen, *Haiti au XVIIIème siècle*, 128. Jean-Paul Pillet recorded the special performance of a *calenda* on his family plantation in 1791 to mark his return to the colony. See Pillet, *Mon Odyssée*, 84–87.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> See Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions*, 4:825–831.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Interestingly, the ordinance also included an article prohibiting free people of colour, some of whom were of course manumitted slaves, from holding “dances de nuit ou Kalendas” (night dances or calendas). Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law*, 38 and Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions*, 5:385.
- <sup>xxx</sup> *De la Danse*, 45. Moreau de Saint-Méry’s passing reference to the *chica* having been banned from balls for white women, coupled with his observation that the *chica* used, earlier in the eighteenth century to be a part of the Christian ritual at Christmas time (*De la Danse*, 46–47), reminds us that this African-inspired dance was at times adopted at balls by the white population as well.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> *De la Danse*, 41.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Daniel notes that there are two major rite ceremonies in vodou: the Petro ceremonies and the Rada ceremonies. She identifies Petro explicitly as a slave dance, along with the *chica* and the *calenda*. See Daniel, “The Potency of Dance,” 64, 71.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> *De la Danse*, 42.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> *The Dances of Haiti*, Mexico, D.F.: Acta Antropologica, 1947, cited in Daniel, “The Potency of Dance,” 65.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> *De la Danse*, 42–43.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> *Description topographique*, 1:66.
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> *Description topographique*, 1:68.
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> Unconscious imitation and the fear of degeneration are described in detail in a later dance context by Gordon in *Dances with Darwin, 1875–1910*, passim.

<sup>xxxix</sup> By contrast, more recent pictures of vodou ceremonies are quite common in a context in which they represent ongoing celebrations of the beginning of the liberation from slavery and French rule.

<sup>xl</sup> Geggus notes that the word *vaudou* did not feature in a colonial decree until 1797. “Haitian Voodoo,” 45n117, 47. See Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law*, 40–41 for a longer discussion of this absence.

<sup>xli</sup> Interestingly, vodou was clearly seen as threat to all in power, not just white colonials. In 1796, vodou dance was banned by the new civil commission in Saint-Domingue (see Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law*, 47) and in January 1800, Toussaint Louverture issued a decree outlawing nocturnal dances and ceremonies, especially vodou (see Munro, *Different Drummers*, 25). In 1801, he declared that Catholicism was to be the only publicly professed religion of Saint-Domingue. Dessalines and Piétion also banned dances and Dessalines had some recidivists put to death (Munro, *Different Drummers*, 27, 48). We know that in the early Haitian era, Henry Christophe, head of the army took measures to suppress vodou dances in the northwest of the new republic (Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law*, 51).

<sup>xlii</sup> Midy, “Les congos à Saint-Domingue,” 190.

<sup>xliii</sup> See, for instance, an announcement in the *Supplément aux Affiches Américaines*, 6 January 1770, 12.

<sup>xliv</sup> It would be more accurate to speak of aspirational imitation among the free people of colour in Saint-Domingue, most of whom appear genuinely to have sought to emulate white life in the colonial period.

<sup>xlv</sup> Cited in Levine, *Black Culture*, 17.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Levine, *Black Culture*, 17. It is believed that this type of performance, called a “whiting up act” by Marvin McAllister, was the origin of the cakewalk dance, which was later imitated by white dancers, who thus imitated black dancers imitating white dancers. See *Whiting Up*, 32–34.

<sup>xlvii</sup> See Mahar, *Behind the Burnt Cork*, passim.

<sup>xlviii</sup> This is in contrast with various syncretic dances drawing on a combination of European and African influences that were sometimes performed during public balls held for white people and/or free people of colour.

<sup>xlix</sup> For evidence of this, see, among others, “Mémoire concernant l’établissement d’un spectacle à Saint-Pierre de la Martinique,” 1780, Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer, COL C8b 15, Number 43bis.

<sup>l</sup> *Supplément aux Affiches Américaines*, 27 March 1773, 142.

<sup>li</sup> *Supplément aux Affiches Américaines*, 15 November 1777, 550.

<sup>lii</sup> Harris-Warrick and Marsh, “The French Connection,” 195.

<sup>liii</sup> Camier and Hazaël-Massieux, “*Jeannot et Thérèse*,” 138. This article includes the full text of the play (145–166) based on the 1783 manuscript held at the Public Record Office in Kew, Box HCA 30/381. See Hazaël-Massieux, *Textes anciens*, 149–152 for a comparison of this version with the extant portion of an earlier, incomplete version of the text held at the Library Company of Philadelphia (undated MS, call number scraps 60). For more information about Clément, see Camier and Hazaël-Massieux, “*Jeannot et Thérèse*,” 140–141 and Hazaël-Massieux, *Textes anciens*, 127–128.

<sup>liv</sup> Hazaël-Massieux, *Textes anciens*, 131.

<sup>lv</sup> Bernard Camier and Claude Dauphin are currently undertaking the long and painstaking process of attempting to identify all the melodies to which the sung portions of *Jeannot et Thérèse* were performed.

<sup>lvi</sup> See my database of documented performances in Saint-Domingue (1764–91) at <https://www.theatreinsaintdomingue.org>, accessed 5 April 2018.

<sup>lvii</sup> This includes one performance of a work referred to as *Les Amours de Mirebalais*, performed in Saint-Marc, which is also described as a “parodie nègre” of *Le Devin du village* (see *Les Affiches américaines*, 28 January 1786), and features characters of the same names. Camier suggests that the Saint-Marc performance was of the same work using a stolen copy of the play. See “*Jeannot et Thérèse*,” 137n8, 143. See also *Les Affiches Américaines*, 31 December 1772, 634.

<sup>lviii</sup> A young female actor of mixed racial ancestry, Lise, performed the black role of Thérèse in *Les Amours de Mirebalais*, which we understand to be Clément’s *Jeannot et Thérèse*. See footnote 57 above.

<sup>lix</sup> See Camier and Hazaël-Massieux, “*Jeannot et Thérèse*.”

<sup>lx</sup> See <https://www.theatreinsaintdomingue.org>, accessed 5 April 2018.

<sup>lxi</sup> *Les Affiches Américaines*, 31 December 1772, 634.

<sup>lxii</sup> The manuscript in question is the one held at the Library Company of Philadelphia. My thanks to Bernard Camier for sharing the information about the contredanse with me.

<sup>lxiii</sup> *Supplément aux Affiches Américaines*, 17 October 1780, 333.

<sup>lxiv</sup> See *Supplément aux Affiches Américaines*, 6 February 1781, 53. This announcement also mentions briefly the stage set, featuring Papa Simon’s hut and the market place.

<sup>lxv</sup> *Supplément aux Affiches Américaines*, 30 October 1781, 431.

<sup>lxvi</sup> Taken in isolation, it would be possible to read this as a description of a black performer. While this is not absolutely impossible, given the evidence of a what turned out to be an emerging trend of performing *Jeannot et Thérèse* in blackface combined with the dearth of black performers, it seems unlikely.

<sup>lxvii</sup> With regard to the difference in terminology, Camier has noted that what is referred to in Port-au-Prince as “opéra créole” is referred to in Le Cap as “opéra nègre”. See Camier, “Les concerts,” 89. By the same logic, the “pas créole” of Port-au-Prince would be the same as the “pas de nègre” of Le Cap – something that is borne out by subsequent quotations in the present article.

<sup>lxviii</sup> *Les Affiches Américaines*, 15 January 1783, 19.

<sup>lxix</sup> Radet and Barré’s *La Nègresse, ou le pouvoir de la reconnaissance* (premiered in Paris in 1787) features a so-called *calenda* in sc 5. When the work was transferred to Saint-Domingue and renamed *Les Créoles africaines, ou les effets de l’amour* (with a newly-composed “créole” overture), the performance may have featured a dance that was somewhat more recognizable as a *calenda* to the local audience. See Powers, *From Plantation to Paradise?*, 12–24, 106–107 and *Les Affiches américaines*, 24 January 1788, 38.

<sup>lxx</sup> *Les Affiches américaines*, 28 January 1784, 60.

<sup>lxxi</sup> “Quand nous dansé calinda” (when we danced the calenda). See “*Jeannot et Thérèse*,” 151.

<sup>lxxii</sup> This interpretation chimes with an announcement of a performance of another play by Clément, *Les Nègres de place*, about which readers of the *Affiches américaines* were told that the work would be performed “en langage et costumes Nègres” (in the language and costumes of slaves) and in which “un Amateur, connu pour imiter parfaitement les Nègres dans leur idiôme & leurs manières, remplira le principal rôle” (an amateur, known for being able to imitate slaves perfectly in their

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idiom and their mannerisms, will play the lead). *Les Affiches Américaines*, 24 December 1785, 576.

<sup>lxxiii</sup> See *Les Affiches américaines*, 24 December 1785, 576 and 28 January 1786, 44.

<sup>lxxiv</sup> In a mid-nineteenth-century Guadeloupian version of the work by Paul Baudot, entitled *Fondoc et Thérèse*, the Simon figure (here called Mabial) does dance. See Hazaël-Massieux, *Textes anciens*, 173.

<sup>lxxv</sup> Roque, “Mimesis and Colonialism,” 201.