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### **Border (Un)Writing: Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal***

In *Nation, State and Society in Haiti 1804-1984*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot defines the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic as “the longest and most significant land boundary in all the Antilles.”<sup>1</sup> Like most borders, it has both a vertical and a horizontal dimension—the vertical interface, as Richard Muir reminds us, is at the intersection between state sovereignties and the surface of the earth while Gloria Anzaldúa insists on the horizontality of the borderland, an undertermined place constantly in transition where one can question old beliefs and change fixed viewpoints.<sup>2</sup> Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal*, a so-called *récit d'adolescence* set in Saint Domingue at the time of the 22 August 1791 revolt, is a productive exploration of the tension between the vertical border where national or colonial powers intersect, the horizontality of kinship that characterises the borderland and that such verticalisation tries to crush and, ultimately, of the global forces that play a part in constituting both borderline and borderland.

The border that divides the island of Hispaniola in two between Haiti and the Dominican Republic is 193 miles long and as tortuous as its complex history. The first disputes over it date back to the seventeenth century. Officially under Spanish rule, the island was mostly left unpopulated for three-quarters of a century. Until the

official recognition of the French colony of Saint Domingue in 1777, the French constantly pushed their unofficial borders, while the Spanish carried on punitive raids to eradicate the French presence. In 1792, in the course of the slave rebellion on the French side, war was declared between French and Spanish Saint Domingue, and in February 1793 Toussaint L'Ouverture, Georges Biassou and Jean-François crossed the border and formally joined the Spanish forces to fight against the French. In September, the British invasion began and, at the end of the year, Toussaint, still fighting for the Spanish, occupied central Haiti. When slavery was abolished in Saint Domingue in February 1794, he returned to fight for the French, expelled the Spanish from the north and drove the English back from the fortifications of the Cordon de l'Ouest. In 1795, Toussaint continued to sweep the Spanish out of the French territory and, in September, the Spanish part was ceded to France in exchange for the return of all continental territories taken by France during the monarchist war. After being defeated by Toussaint's army, the English withdrew from Saint Domingue in 1798. In January 1801 Toussaint invaded the Spanish side of the island and kept it under his own control until the arrival of the French the following year. After that, Hispaniola again became a war zone, especially after Dessalines's Declaration of Independence in 1804. Reconquered by the Haitians in 1805, the Spanish part was reclaimed by Spain (with the military help of British Jamaicans) in 1809. In 1822, Jean-Pierre Boyer annexed the former Spanish colony of Santo Domingo; the Haitian occupation of Santo Domingo lasted twenty years, until 1844. The relationship between the two sides of Hispaniola, however, was not only characterised by antagonism but also by other kinds of interactions, mutual influences and collaborative linkages; in fact, the border between the Spanish and French sides of the island had always been a contact

zone endlessly traversed by discourses and practices aiming at its watertight closure, but discourses and practices that, instead, kept the gates open.

Victor Hugo first wrote *Bug-Jargal* as a short story in 1819, when he was only seventeen years old, and then substantially revised it in 1826. In the Preface for the 1826 edition, Hugo asserts that by that date his “subject matter ha[d] acquired a new degree of interest” (57). Many critics have pointed out that Hugo probably revised his short story because in 1825 Haiti had just agreed to pay France an indemnity for property lost by the colonists during the Revolution, in order to have its independence officially recognised and regain access to the international market. One should stress, though, that if this indemnity made Haiti topical once again in 1826 France, Hugo was never enthusiastic about his country’s decision to recognise Haiti officially. In a note to *Bug-Jargal* he explains:

Our readers will doubtless not be unaware that [Hispaniola] was the first name given to Saint Domingue, by Christopher Columbus, at the time of the discovery in December 1492.<sup>3</sup>

This short account of the history of the island is inflected by Hugo’s political views: by calling Hispaniola “Saint Domingue,” Hugo does not acknowledge, *de facto*, the existence of Haiti. He was not alone, of course: in 1819, for example, Baron de Vastey, the secretary to King Henry Christophe wrote that “while we uniformly adopt these new names [Haiti, Haitians], the French pertinaciously adhere to the term Saint Domingue, both in their acts and writing.”<sup>4</sup> It is noteworthy that Vastey’s declaration precedes the Franco-Haitian agreement, while Hugo’s footnote to the second version of *Bug-Jargal* follows it.

In 1819, when Hugo was working on the first version of *Bug-Jargal*, the Spanish part of the island, previously captured by the rebels, had been re-Hispanized

and the frontier reinstated. Haiti was also effectively divided in two: the north was under the black king Henri Christophe, while the south was a republic led by the mulatto Alexandre Pétion. When Hugo revised the novel in 1826, however, things were very different indeed because the Haitian state had then taken over Santo Domingo. In other words, when Hugo was revising his short story, he was writing about a border that no longer existed and, most importantly, about a border whose erasure magnified the threat that a unified Haiti represented to the rest of the colonial world, if not as a belligerent force, at least, as a dangerous example. Hugo, in fact, appears profoundly disturbed by the existence of a linguistic and cultural plurality; remarkably more so when he wrote the 1826 version. His anxiety percolates through his writing, informs the two versions of *Bug-Jargal* and provides what I consider a plausible but so far neglected explanation for the substantial variations that the second version contains.

The first version revolves around the friendship between the noble black slave Pierrot and the white narrator Delmar. Delmar is the young nephew of a rich slaveholder of Saint Domingue; the slave Pierrot is also Bug-Jargal, one of the leaders of the revolt and the son of the King of Kakongo. The second version complicates their relationship with the introduction of two new characters, Marie and Habibrah. Marie is the narrator's fiancée (later his wife) and the white woman with whom Bug-Jargal is in love; Habibrah is a house servant, fool and dwarf of Spanish origin who is also a *griffe de couleur*.<sup>5</sup> In 1826, the name of the white narrator changes from Delmar to D'Auverney, and critics have noticed the fact that D'Auverney was a name derived from Auverné, the place of birth of Hugo's maternal grandfather, Jean-François Trébuchet. This grandfather actively participated in the Middle Passage and it is possible, although unsubstantiated, that Hugo may have had some biographical

connections with Saint Domingue.<sup>6</sup> In a letter dated 18 December 1829 Hugo claims that his family belonged to the list of Saint Domingue's colonists who had been financially ruined by the revolution, and holds the Haitian president Jean-Pierre Boyer responsible for withholding his family's indemnity.<sup>7</sup> It has been noted, however, that if Hugo was indeed entitled to any compensation (and historians are still debating whether this is the case), Boyer himself had nothing to do with the repartition of the money since French officials, not the Haitian president, were in charge of distributing it.<sup>8</sup> Hugo's animosity towards Boyer, however, can be better understood if one considers that in 1829, when the letter was written, Boyer was synonymous with an officially recognised and unified Haiti.<sup>9</sup>

The novel and the short story both begin in French territory, a plantation near Fort Galifet, at 30 km (more or less) from what was then the border between Saint Domingue and Santo Domingo. In both versions, a Spanish song sung by Pierrot and entitled *Yo que soy contrabandista* reminds the reader that the border is not too far away and that it can be easily crossed. Significantly, Hugo leaves the title in Spanish in the text and includes his French translation in a note (*Moi qui suis contrebandier*, 87; in English: A smuggler am I). *Yo que soy contrabandista* is the title of a famous early nineteenth-century aria by the Spanish singer Manuel Garcia. Garcia had his international debut in Paris in 1807, that is, sixteen years after the events recounted in *Bug-Jargal*. This gap has been dismissed by Hugo scholars as a “minor anachronism.”<sup>10</sup> I would argue instead that the fact that Hugo chose this particular song—a reconfirmed choice because it appears in both versions of *Bug-Jargal*—carries substantial weight if we consider it in the context of the internal borderland of Hispaniola. Contraband and illicit trade between the two parts of the island were an open secret—for a long time, the two colonies were prevented from trading with one

another by their respective metropolises but they did it all the same, out of necessity and mutual advantage. Santo Domingo's livestock economy, for example, depended in great part on the contraband trade with Saint Domingue.<sup>11</sup> In the second version of *Bug-Jargal*, Hugo informs us that some of the livestock eaten in the French part of the island was actually raised on the Spanish side.<sup>12</sup>

In both versions, Pierrot, the slave who sings the song of the *contrabandista*, recounts that before arriving to Saint Domingue he was brought to Santo Domingo by a Spanish captain and then sold “to different masters as one sells a head of cattle” (171).<sup>13</sup> Like leather and beef, slaves were bought and sold across the border (both legally and illegally), or even borrowed: the French, in fact, did sometimes borrow them from the Spanish when they needed more workers. Slavery was practised in both parts of the island but there were important differences in the way of life of the slaves: the fact that the economy of the Spanish colony was livestock- and not plantation-based gave rise to a different relationship between masters and slaves, who shared hardships and formed bonds of intimacy unknown (and abhorred) on the French side.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, a source of the time reports that between 1786 and 1787 “over four thousand slaves fled into Spanish territory [from Sainte Domingue]. The Spanish hardly returned any of them [... T]here are now [in 1787] six thousand [runaway slaves] in the Spanish colony.”<sup>15</sup> Before Haiti became independent, marronage had become a major problem for the French plantation owners and represented a crucial means of resistance for slaves who identified the border with freedom. The colony of Santo Domingo, in fact, was a popular refuge for the maroons who had established permanent communities there from the beginnings of slavery.<sup>16</sup> This symbolic function of the border is clearly illustrated in *Bug-Jargal*: when the rebel army feels threatened, its leaders decide to “head for the Spanish frontier” (178). Interestingly,

while the title of the song of the *contrabandista* is repeated twice in each version, the lyrics are withheld: this seems to suggest that what mattered to Hugo was mainly the reference to contraband contained in the title and what it signified in relation to border politics.

In the second version of *Bug-Jargal*, Pierrot sings another Spanish song right at the beginning of the novel. Accompanied by a guitar his voice suddenly disturbs the peace of the plantation of Fort Galifet and in particular of the pavilion where the lovely Marie normally retreats with her beloved Leopold. A Spanish song emphasises once again the vicinity of the colonial frontier, a frontier that, at the time of writing, did not exist any more. When Leopold sets off to ambush the unknown singing intruder, he finds himself fighting against someone who easily escapes him and who can speak both Spanish and French: his words are “*Te tengo, te tengo*” (“I’ve got you! I’ve got you!”—Spanish in italics in the text, which Hugo translates in a note)—and the French for “no! no! she would weep too much!” (72). Undeterred by Leopold’s attack, Pierrot comes back the following night and sings another Spanish romance to Marie—whom, however, he calls *Maria* in the Spanish fashion (75). The politics of translation are illuminating here: this time Hugo includes in the text *all* the lyrics of the song but crucially *translated* into French. In a note he explains: “it was deemed unnecessary to reproduce here in their entirety the words of the Spanish song ‘*Porque me huyes, Maria?*’” (75). In other words, a translation (crucially deprived of the original language version) here becomes a useful tool to reinstate a hierarchy between the languages that the presence of the border made readily available (French and Spanish), and to absorb and neutralise the disorder that the lyrics of the song seem instead to uphold. Here are the concluding lines of the song:

You are white, and I am black, but the day needs to join with the night to bring forth the dawn and the sunset which are more beautiful than itself! (76)

These are words directed to the “white daughter of Hispaniola” Marie/Maria by the black Pierrot/Bug-Jargal—however, the *griffe de couleur* Habibrah defiantly claims the song as a description of himself:

Now, if this song speaks the truth, the griffe Habibrah, your humble slave, born of a negress and a white man, is more beautiful than you, *señorito de amor*. I am the issue of the joining of day and night. I am the dawn or the sunset referred to in the Spanish song, and you are only the day. So I am more beautiful than you, *si usted quiere*, more beautiful than a white man. (77-78)

It goes without saying that the subtext is the threat of miscegenation: Habibrah has been repeatedly identified as the tragic mulatto and scapegoat of this mixophobic text.<sup>17</sup> Yet, I would like to focus here not on what Habibrah says but on *how* he speaks.

The *griffe* Habibrah speaks Spanish as well as French, plus Latin, English and Creole, but he mixes all these languages in a confusing fashion. In the above quotation, for example, some Spanish words pronounced by Habibrah are translated by Hugo in the text (*si usted quiere*—if you will) while others (*señorito de amor*) are not: this is a repeated pattern throughout the novel and adds to the threatening confusion that Habibrah is supposed to represent. Habibrah’s code-switching and his “opacity,” in fact, reveal Hugo’s anxiety in relation to a border that did not hold and, as a result, was eventually erased by the Haitians. The simultaneous presence of different languages in the territory, however, testifies to the permeability of the internal border of the island, and signposts the existence of locally-derived multilinguistic and multicultural formations which refuse homogenisation. Hugo deals with the multilingualism of the text by trying to absorb the threat to the established order that such Babel entails: his use of notes and translations, in fact, chimes with his other strategies of containment: for example, his decision to end both versions of *Bug-*

*Jargal* by foregrounding the weakness of the rebel army, which is seen retreating after the death of one of its leaders. We know instead that the revolt continued and, crucially, it expanded into a war, once the Spanish side became involved by lending its support to the insurgents.<sup>18</sup> As C. A. Chauvet wrote in an unusually perceptive reading of the novel in 1831,

Why is it that [the author] nowhere acknowledges Spain's role in inciting the negro insurrection and assisting it? No doubt the Spanish titles that the leaders of the revolt assume were extremely ridiculous, but their relations with Spain are nonetheless an established fact, one which can no longer be omitted from the historical record.<sup>19</sup>

Hugo's omission is consistent with the fact that, in the second version in particular, in order to counterbalance the function of the border as a signifier of freedom, he repeatedly mentions the Ogé case.

In 1790 Vincent Ogé led a mulatto rebellion against the white planters. His army of three hundred enthusiastic *sang-mêlés* overtook the Cap but was quickly overpowered by the militia and forced to withdraw into Spanish territory. The Spanish, who were not keen to import racial insurrection, immediately handed Ogé over to the French authorities.<sup>20</sup> In Hugo's first version, Bug-Jargal tells Delmar that his father was tortured and killed with Ogé but never mentions his extradition, while in the second version the rebel Biassou makes an explicit reference to it when he declares that he would not mind raiding the Spanish side of the island for cattle, because he would be "delighted to punish those damnable Spanish planters; they are the ones who handed over Ogé" (139). Biassou's statement ironically undermines Hugo's attempt to portray the border as a colonial frontier whose gates are opened and closed exclusively by colonial powers: the rebel's words, in fact, attract our attention to the illicit activities that took place across the border, and reveal that the colonial powers were incapable of stopping or even restricting them.

In his preface to the 1826 version, Hugo declares that several distinguished witnesses of Saint Domingue's troubles contributed to his revision by handing over to him unpublished materials and documents (57). Some of these documents and testimonials must have been concerned with one of the legendary slave leaders referred to in the revised version, namely Romaine Rivière or Romaine the Prophetess.<sup>21</sup> Maintaining that he was the Virgin Mary's "grandson," Romaine the Prophetess is well-known for his subversive appropriation of the Mary symbol which, from the arrival of Columbus on the *Santa Maria*, was deployed to legitimise Hispanic colonisation, significantly described also as "Marian colonization."<sup>22</sup> After 1697, when Saint Domingue became officially French, the Virgin Mary continued to enjoy a privileged iconic status as moral authority.<sup>23</sup> According to some sources, Rivière was a *griffe* of Spanish origin<sup>24</sup> who set up quarters in an abandoned church near Trou-Coffy and preached mass before an inverted cross with a sabre in his hand.<sup>25</sup> In the novel, he is disparagingly described by Bug-Jargal himself as "a mulatto charlatan [who] profanes the sacred mass [...] incites his comrades to murder and pillage, all in the name of *Maria!*" (162, italics in the text). His blasphemous attitude is not the only trait that he has in common with Hugo's Habibrah, who is depicted officiating at mass on a sugar box instead of an altar, using his dagger as a cross (119).<sup>26</sup> In *Bug-Jargal*, the *griffe* Habibrah's practices as an *obi* and Romaine the Prophetess's "religious" activities are revealed as fake, and as a strategic move to keep the superstitious insurgents under a spell.<sup>27</sup> According to some scholars, Rivière might have adopted a shamanistic pretence to reinforce his influence on his army of former slaves,<sup>28</sup> but others have insisted that despite the fact that Rivière's religious practice was very different from those of other leaders of the rebellion, he should still be considered as a Vodou practitioner, whose activities testify to the variety one finds

among Vodouisant cults of the time, and whose appropriation of Mariology could identify him as Congolese, that is, from a part of Africa which had been exposed to, and had freely adapted, Catholic symbolism for three hundred years.<sup>29</sup> In Hugo's 1826 version, Bug-Jargal is also Congolese (the son of the King of Kakongo) and his interracial love for Marie/Maria can be seen as a disturbing version of Rivière's devotion to the Virgin.<sup>30</sup> Importantly, however, Bug-Jargal renounces his claim to Marie/Maria, efficiently polices his subversive (blasphemous) desire for her and, after saving her, he generously gives her back to D'Auverney.<sup>31</sup> Romaine operated in the area surrounding Jacmel and Leogane, that is considerably far from the border, but the fact that he was an *affranchi* who had actually crossed over from the Spanish part makes him a "vector of revolution" and the very embodiment of the danger that a porous border represented at the time:<sup>32</sup> as a matter of fact, other insurgents in *Bug-Jargal* are reported as coming from the Spanish side (127). It is easy to argue here that Hugo tries to reduce the threat implicit in such border-crossing by turning the free rebel Romaine into the house slave/fool and dwarfish Habibrah.

Despite their differences, the cruel Spanish *griffe* Habibrah and the compassionate *contrabandista* Pierrot/Bug-Jargal are both actively involved in the Saint Domingue revolt of 22 August 1791, and their fluency in Spanish coupled with their revolutionary activities reminds Hugo's readers of the existence of licit and illicit trafficking across the border. In both versions of *Bug-Jargal* the action progressively moves towards the border and the closer one gets to it, the more disorderly things become. In the second version, the number of Spanish words increases exponentially. Many critics have declared themselves baffled by the presence of so much Spanish in the text, especially considering that Hugo had only an approximate knowledge of the language, as testified by his frequent "mistakes."<sup>33</sup> However, such "mistakes" could

well be deliberate, an attempt to both represent and vilify the language spoken by the rebels: the narrator himself explains that “many negroes who had originally belonged to colonists in Santo Domingo or were born there—mixed the Spanish language with their own jargon” (“*jargon*” in French, 80). Pierrot’s, Biassou’s, Habibrah’s and the other rebels’ (bad) Spanish appears in the text alongside the French spoken in Saint Domingue, African words, Creole expressions, Latin and English.<sup>34</sup> Hugo highlights the “impropriety” of such mixture of languages in chapter thirty-eight of the second version, where D’Auverney, a prisoner of the rebel army, is offered the possibility of saving his life if he consents to become Biassou’s “diplomatic orthographer” (153). Biassou and Jean-François have just finished writing a letter addressed to the assembly in which they outline their conditions for surrender but, before sending it, they ask D’Auverney to get rid of any error that, as Biassou puts it, “could provoke the arrogant *burlerias* of [their] former masters” (153). It is worth reproducing Biassou’s exact words here, because of the presence of the Spanish word *burlerias* (in italics and untranslated in the text), a reminder of his connection with the other side of the border: in the second version we are told that Biassou was sold by his first master in Saint Domingue to “a dealer from Santo Domingo for thirteen piastres-gourdes” (134). The principled D’Auverney predictably refuses to help the rebels, but what is interesting here is the fact that Hugo presents us with multilingual insurgents who, he insists, are more than willing to have their own heterogeneity erased in favour of what they call “*style blanc*” or “the *white style*” (179, italics both in the French original and the English translation). The rebels’ multilingualism and multiculturalism, however, had deep cultural, historical and political roots which could not be as easily “translated” and made homologous as Hugo hoped. In a note to the text, Hugo explains that Jean-François’s and Biassou’s “ridiculously characteristic letter was

indeed sent to the assembly” (153), and what he offers us in the pages of *Bug-Jargal* is a pastiche of three different documents that he found in one of his sources, namely, Lacroix’s *Mémoires*.<sup>35</sup> One, in particular, records the response that in June 1793 the slave Macaya gave to the Republican Commissioner Étienne Polverel, when the latter was trying to convince the rebel to return to support the Republic after he had sworn allegiance to the King of Spain. Macaya’s words to Polverel are copied almost verbatim and then attributed by Hugo to Biassou and Jean-François. This is how they appear in Bongie’s translation of Hugo’s text:

We are the subject of three kings: the king of Congo, born-master of all the blacks; the king of France, who represents our fathers; and the king of Spain who represents our mothers. These three kings are the descendants of those who, guided by a star, went to worship the Man-God.<sup>36</sup>

One should not necessarily conclude that these words prove that the rebels were backward-looking and royalist, as Madiou does, or assume that in their camps reigned what Pierre Laforgue calls “*la confusion du symbolique*” (“a confusion of symbols”) and that all they aspired to was a “*royauté carnavalesque*” (“carnavalesque royalty”).<sup>37</sup> In the 1780s Congolese slaves made up sixty per cent of the slaves in the North Province, where the rebellion began:<sup>38</sup> like the fictional Bug-Jargal who also has an immediate African background, the real Macaya, his name suggests, was actually from Congo.<sup>39</sup> As John Thornton has pointed out, Congolese society was resolutely monarchic, but absolutism was not the only way: its opposing political model was one that required the king to rule by consent and to make decisions after consultation.<sup>40</sup> In the eighteenth century, Congo became so heavily involved in the slave trade precisely because of numerous civil wars, fought in part to determine what powers the king of Congo was allowed to have. The Congolese presence was so remarkable that even if many of the leaders of the revolution had never been to

Africa, they still had to take into consideration the ideology of their followers. Important cases in point are, for example, Romaine the Prophetess who was probably either Congolese or heavily influenced by Congolese religious culture, but also Boukman, who despite the fact that he was not from Congo, was still known among the rebels as Kakongo or by a Kakongo nickname, Zamba (from *nzamba*, elephant).<sup>41</sup> Different Congolese views on monarchical powers and leadership were imported into the New World and, concomitantly with European political ideas, informed ideological perspectives on the revolution, which were also complicated by the fact that the rebels could take advantage of the island's division in two. The fact that, for the fulfilment of their own agenda, two monarchical (and, more recently, a republican) governments were ready to make different concessions to the rebels in order to enlist them to their service cannot be neglected. Far from being a disorderly "agglomeration of means without an end" (150), as Hugo disparagingly suggests, the heterogeneous and multilingual rebel force was actually able to make the most of French internecine conflicts, of the Congolese's political, cultural and religious traditions and of their military experience (an experience that many leaders born on the island did not actually have) and, most importantly, of the presence of a disputed and permeable colonial border. The disorderly uniforms worn by the rebels and vilified by Hugo because of their mixed, often contradictory nature, can instead be seen as visual evidence of the rebels' capacity to take advantage of a strikingly confusing situation and adopt the "style" that gave them the best result.<sup>42</sup> After all, far from opting for an alteration of substance, Biassou and Jean François are keen to display a "white *style*" for purely strategic reasons.

Ironically, D'Auverney and, ultimately, Hugo cannot help but adopt a multilingual and multicultural idiom in order to reflect life in the borderland. In the

second version of *Bug-Jargal*, multilingualism and code-switching are not limited to Habibrah's and other rebels' interventions. D'Auverney/the narrator seems incapable of keeping himself to standard French, when he approaches the border and describes life in the rebels' camp:

The time had come for [the] *almuerzo*. A large turtle shell was brought before the *mariscal de campo de su magestad catolica*: steaming inside it was a sort of *olla podrida*, abundantly seasoned with slabs of lard, turtle flesh substituting for the *carnero* and sweet potatoes for the *garganzas*. An enormous Caribbean cabbage flowed on the surface of this *puchero*. On each side of the shell [...] were two cups made out of coconut husks and filled with raisins, *sandias*, yams, and figs; this was the *postre* (147, italics in the text).

Some of the foreign words are translated into French in the text, but others are left untranslated.<sup>43</sup> Overall, the presence of these different languages on the page overwhelms the reader despite the (partial) translation, and, most importantly, articulates the intersection of a metropolitan/colonial culture with a local and global culture from below. Strategies of containment notwithstanding, Hugo's metropolitan representation of the 1791 rebellion ultimately reveals the revolutionary potential of the border by depicting it as a dangerously interactive contact zone, through which emancipatory and revolutionary ideas and people could and did flow. Apart from the 1791 revolt with which the plot is directly concerned, *Bug-Jargal* presents us with another powerful rebellion: the insurrection of a discredited transcultural and multilingual borderland culture which brings to the fore a different linguistic and cultural landscape, and a literary geography that goes well beyond national languages and colonial mappings.

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- <sup>1</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Nation, State and Society in Haiti, 1804-1984* (Washington: The Wilson Center, 1985), 5-6.
- <sup>2</sup> Richard Muir, *Modern Political Geography* (New York: Macmillan, 1975), 119; Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 25 and Gloria Anzaldúa and Analouise Keating, eds., *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Revisions for Transformations* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 10.
- <sup>3</sup> Victor Hugo, *Bug-Jargal*, trans. and ed. by Chris Bongie (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 2004), 75. All subsequent references to the English translation of the text will be to this edition and will appear in parenthesis in the text.
- <sup>4</sup> Pompée Valentin de Vastey, *An Essay on the Causes of the Revolution and Civil Wars of Hayti*, 1819 (Exeter: n.p. 1823), 44, quoted in Bongie, 26.
- <sup>5</sup> According to the racial taxonomy of the time, a *griffe* was a type of mixed-race individual. For more information see Médéric-Louis-Elie Moreau de Saint-Méry's monumental *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: chez l'auteur, 1797-1798), vol. 1, 71-99.
- <sup>6</sup> See Graham Robb, *Victor Hugo* (London: Picador, 1997), 4, and, for a more detailed discussion of the issue, Jacques Cauna, "Les sources historiques de *Bug-Jargal*: 'Hugo et la Révolution Haitienne'" (*Conjonction: Revue Franco-Haitienne* 166, 1985), 23-26.
- <sup>7</sup> Letter quoted in Bongie, 32.
- <sup>8</sup> De Cauna, 25.
- <sup>9</sup> In the 1850s Hugo attacked vehemently and repeatedly the former slave Faustin Souloque who in 1848 became the Haitian Emperor Faustin I. Hoffman has pointed out that Hugo's attacks on Souloque should be regarded as indirect attacks on an Emperor closer to home, i.e. Napoleon III. Léon-François Hoffman, "Victor Hugo, les noirs et l'esclavage" (*Francofonie: studi e ricerche sulle letterature di lingua francese*, 16.31, 1966), 57-58. It is worth remembering, however, that Souloque had tried, repeatedly, to unify the island under the Haitian flag: a move that France, Britain and the United States were keen to obstruct and Hugo was certainly not enthusiastic about. Moreover, Hugo's animosity towards Souloque reminds one of his hostility towards Boyer, former ruler of the entire island of Hispaniola, and it should also be noted that Hugo's disparaging comments are not restricted to the Emperor but are extended to all Haitians and assume clear racial connotations.
- <sup>10</sup> Chris Bongie, "Endnotes to *Bug-Jargal*," in Bongie, 202.
- <sup>11</sup> Eugenio Matibag, *Haitian-Dominican Counterpoint: Nation, State and Race in Hispaniola* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 50.
- <sup>12</sup> This is what Biassou has to say about livestock in Hugo's *Bug-Jargal*: "When there are no more cattle in the French colony for me, I'll cross over the morne [hills] on the frontier, and I'll get myself some of those Spanish oxen and sheep that are bred on the farms of the great plains of Cotui, La Vega, Santiago, and on the banks of the Yuna" (137).
- <sup>13</sup> The slave merchant is identified as a Spaniard in both version.
- <sup>14</sup> For more information see Matibag, 50.
- <sup>15</sup> From a 1788 letter from the Marquis de Najac to La Luzerne, minister of the marine and former governor of Saint Domingue. Archives Coloniales at the Archives Nationales, Paris, C9B39, quoted in Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 297 note 20.
- <sup>16</sup> Fick, 51-52.
- <sup>17</sup> See, for example, Chris Bongie, *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/Colonial Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 231-261.
- <sup>18</sup> A *propos* of strategies of containment, it had been noted that Sainte-Beuve's review of *Bug-Jargal*, the first serious piece of Hugo criticism and the first comparative study of the two versions (Bongie, 275 and 287) omits any reference to the slave revolt of 22 August 1791 or to the Haitian Revolution. It is worth mentioning that Sainte-Beuve wrote his review in 1832, i.e. when the island was unified under the Haitian flag.
- <sup>19</sup> C. A. Chauvet, "Des romans de M. Victor Hugo" (*Revue encyclopédique* 50, April-Juin 1831), quoted in Bongie, 287.
- <sup>20</sup> As one of Hugo's sources puts it "le gouverneur de la partie espagnole ne fit aucune difficulté de livrer Ogé et les siens à la fureur de leurs ennemis." Pamphile de Lacroix, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la révolution de Saint Domingue*, vol. 1 (Paris: Pillet aîné, 1819), 58.
- <sup>21</sup> It is unclear why this male rebel chose to call himself Romaine la prophétesse: we know that he was married to a mulatress and was a father of two children (Fick, 128).
- <sup>22</sup> Nicholas Perry and Loreto Echeverria, *Under the Heal of Mary* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 31.

<sup>23</sup> See Terry Rey, “The Virgin Mary and the Revolution in Saint-Domingue: The Charisma of Romaine the Prophetesse” (*Journal of Historical Sociology*, 11.3, 1998), 345, and “The Politics of Patron Sainthood in Haiti: 500 Years of Iconic Struggle” (*The Catholic Historical Review* 88.3, 2002), 519-526.

<sup>24</sup> In “The Virgin Mary and the Revolution in Saint-Domingue,” Terry Rey clarifies that when Romaine is described as a “grif [sic] espagnol,” such definition should be understood as an indication that he was originally from the Spanish side of the island and a native speaker of Spanish (365).

<sup>25</sup> Flick, 127.

<sup>26</sup> Hugo emphasises the common trait between the fictional Habibrah and Romaine the Prophetess when he makes Bug-Jargal say to Biassou, “In your camp you have some obi or other, some trickster like this Romaine the Prophetess” (163).

<sup>27</sup> Romaine is called a “charlatan [who] persuades his followers that he is in contact with the Virgin Mary, whose supposed oracles he listens to by placing his head in the tabernacle,” and, later, a “trickster.” Moreover, Bug-Jargal tells Biassou that a “common bond” between the rebels should have been created “through other means than a ferocious fanaticism and ridiculous superstitions” (162-163).

<sup>28</sup> Flick, 127-128.

<sup>29</sup> Terry Rey, “The Virgin Mary and the Revolution in Saint Domingue,” 354, 350 and 343.

<sup>30</sup> He was from Gamboa (Senegal) in the first version.

<sup>31</sup> When Bug-Jargal mentions the Virgin Mary as the alleged inspiration for the unlawful activities of Romaine the Prophetess he calls her *Maria* (in italics in the text), i.e. with the same name he uses when he refers to D’Auverney’s beloved. D’Auverney feels “offended” and “provoked” when he hears Bug-Jargal mention the name of Maria with “something even more tender than religious devotion” (163). At the end, however, Marie/Maria will be lost to both—she will perish “in the first conflagration of Le Cap” (197).

<sup>32</sup> I have borrowed this definition from Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 241.

<sup>33</sup> De Cauna, 31; Hoffmann, 71-72.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, French/Saint Domingo words such as *chica* (113), *ajoupa* (115) *griffe* or *sacatra* (67), African words like *obi* (69), *balafó* (113), *griot* (112), and *wanga* (112), Creole expressions like *Zoté cordé! Zoté cordé!* (113), *bon Giu* (119), *Guetté blan si la la* (121), Latin phrases (*In exitu Israel de Aegypto* 146), (presumably) Arabic (the “unfamiliar [to D’Auverney] characters” traced on palm leaf and read by Bug-Jargal when in prison, 87) and English, *Death* (141). English is one of the languages spoken by the composite rebel army: one of the leaders of the revolt and a crucial vector of revolution, the maroon Boukman Dutty, was from Jamaica, and was not the only Jamaican who participated in the Saint Domingue revolt. It is noteworthy, however, that when Boukman is mentioned by Hugo, much more is made of his capture and death and their detrimental effect on the rebels’ army than of his victories as a leader. The perfidious villain of the second version, the Spanish *griffe* Habibrah, is actually described as having been given to the narrator’s uncle “as a toy monkey of sorts by Lord Effingham, Governor of Jamaica” (67).

<sup>35</sup> Lacroix, 148-153; 252; 253.

<sup>36</sup> Bongie, 152-153. “Je suis le sujet de trois rois; du roi de Congo, maître de tous les noirs; du roi de France qui représente mon père et du roi de Espagne qui représente ma mère. Ces trois rois sont les descendants de ceux qui, conduits par une étoile, ont été adorer l’Homme-Dieu.” Macaya’s oral statement reproduced in Lacroix, 253.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d’Haiti* (Port-au-Prince, 1947), 104; Pierre Laforgue, “‘Bug-Jargal’ ou la difficulté d’écrire en ‘style blanc’” (*Romantisme* 69, 1990), 30, 32.

<sup>38</sup> John Thornton, “‘I Am the Subject of the King of Congo:’ African political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution” (*Journal of World History* 4.2, 1993), 185. They also constituted the most numerous ethnic grouping among the maroons (Fick, 59).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>41</sup> Terry Rey, “The Virgin Mary and the Revolution in Saint-Domingue,” 350; On Boukman’s name, see Fick, 92 and 297 note 5, and Thornton.

<sup>42</sup> “First came gangs of negroes, absolutely naked [...] then it was a battalion of mulattoes, fitted out in the Spanish or English fashion [...] Fluttering above all these heads were flags of every colour, displaying every slogan imaginable: white ones, red ones, tricoloured ones, flags with the fleur-de-lys or topped with the bonnet of liberty, and bearing such inscriptions as ‘Death to priests and to

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aristocrats!' ... 'Long live religion!' ... 'Liberty!' ... 'Equality!' ... 'Long live the king!' ... 'Down with France!' ... 'Viva España!' ... 'No more tyrants!'" (150).

<sup>43</sup> Hugo includes only the following translations in his note: *almuerzo* = lunch // *carnero* = lamb // *garganzas* = chickpeas // *sandias* = watermelon // *postre* = dessert (147).