

Nathalie Dessens, Jean-Pierre Le Glaunec, eds.. *Haïti, regards croisés*. Paris: Editions Le Manuscrit, 2007. 385 pp. EUR 25.90, paper, ISBN 978-2-7481-8492-1.



Reviewed by Jean-François Brière

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Haïti, regards croisés is a collection of articles from two international colloquia held in 2004 at Université Paris VII and Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin en Yvelines on the occasion of the two bicentennials celebrating the inclusion of Louisiana into the United States (1803) and the birth of Haiti (1804). The idea behind these colloquia and the book was to examine the largely unexplored connections between Louisiana and Saint-Domingue/Haiti in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when the entire Caribbean region was in upheaval.

Haïti, regards croisés is divided into three parts, each of which looks at Haitian history from a specific angle. The first part, entitled "A Return to Sources," deals with Saint-Domingue during the revolutionary and Napoleonic periods. Ted Wilmer studies the little-known role of music during the Haitian Revolution; Jacques de Cauna shows, though a rigorous analysis of primary sources, that the circumstances of the slave insurrection of August 1791 and the role played in it by Toussaint Louverture and his friends differ from what has been commonly assumed. Nathalie

Dessens explores the important but largely forgotten migration of thousands of white and non-white refugees from Saint-Domingue to Louisiana between 1790 and 1810, leading to a doubling of the population of New Orleans (Dessens published a book on that subject in 2007, *From Saint-Domingue to New Orleans: Migration and Influences*). Jean-Pierre Le Glaunec examines the world of a New Orleans merchant, Jean-Michel Fortier, through his correspondence during the years 1801-04.

The second part deals with Haiti as seen from the United States. Marie-Jeanne Rossignol offers a new interpretation of the classic work by the African American historian Rayford Logan on relations between Haiti and the United States between 1776 and 1891. Maria Diedrich and Jacques Pothier analyze the presence of Haiti in literary works by three anglophone writers. Diedrich examines *The Hour and the Man* (1839), a novel by British abolitionist Harriet Martineau, with Toussaint Louverture as the central figure. Pothier concentrates on the symbolic role of Haiti in *Ab-*

salom, Absalom! (1936) by William Faulkner and *Continental Drift* (1985) by Russell Banks.

The third part is centered on post-1804 Haiti. Louis Naud Pierre examines how the Haitian system of government evolved between 1804 and the end of Boyer's presidency in 1843 and its long-term impact on Haitian history. Rafael Lucas studies the representation of Vodou in Haitian literature. Cécile Accilien writes about the art of Ulrick Jean-Pierre, a Haitian historical painter living in New Orleans. The book ends with an epilogue from Ulrick Jean-Pierre on post-Katrina New Orleans.

The editors of this book should be thanked for having selected high-quality articles, each of which brings fresh perspectives on some aspect of Saint-Domingue/Haiti and Louisiana during a key period in the history of the Caribbean. The editors have done their best to give a maximum of coherence to a rather eclectic collection of contributions. Such fragmentation is not problematic as long as editors manage to select excellent articles, as in this case. Two contributions are especially interesting for historians because they clarify issues with broad implications that have long been mired in uncertainty or largely ignored. Jacques de Cauna's article revisits in great detail the geography of the 1791 slave uprising against the planters who threatened to secede from France. He examines how and where it started and the key role played in it by Toussaint Louverture and his close friends Jean-François, Georges Biassou, Boukman, and Jeannot. Nathalie Dessens unearths valuable information on the mass migration of white colonists and "people of color" from French Saint-Domingue to Louisiana, showing the profound demographic, social, and cultural impact that these refugees had on the city of New Orleans in the early nineteenth century. There is a minor factual error on page 151: Great Britain recognized Haitian independence in 1826, not in 1833.

The book is well organized, with a dozen illustrations taken mainly from Ulrick Jean-Pierre's paintings (reproduced in black and white, unfortunately), a bibliography for each article, and biographies of the authors. To the extent that this is a book published in France targeting a franco-phone readership, an effort should have been made to translate articles written in English into French. It is puzzling that French scholar Jean-Pierre Le Glaunec, Haitian scholar Cécile Accilien, and Haitian painter Ulrick Jean-Pierre felt compelled to write their contributions in English. Nonetheless, overall, this is an excellent book for all scholars interested in the Haitian Revolution and nineteenth-century Haiti or Louisiana. Everyone, whether a specialist of history, literature, or art, will find something well worth reading in it.

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