Postcolonial Slavery

Postcolonial Slavery:
An Overview of Colonialism's Legacy

Edited by

Charlotte Baker and Jennifer Jahn

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Charlotte Baker and Jennifer Jahn

FOREWORD

CHARLES FORSDICK

> Comment peut-il être permis de dire "tu dois te souvenir", donc tu dois décliner la mémoire au mode impératif, alors qu'il revient au souvenir de pouvoir surgir à la façon d'une évocation spontanée.
>
> How can anyone be allowed to say "you have to remember", implying that one must decline the verb remember in the imperative mode, when it is the nature of Memory itself to be able to spring up as a spontaneous evocation.
>
> —Ricoeur, *La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, p. 106[1]
>
> [I]l n'existe pas une mémoire, mais des mémoires de la traite et de l'esclavage. Elles sont fragmentaires, dispersées, et surtout fortement territorialisées. Elles ne se sont pas élaborées de la même façon en Guadeloupe, en Martinique, en Guyane, à La Réunion, en Afrique, à Madagascar et en France, et l'étude de leur construction respective est nécessaire. Ce travail a été entamé mais beaucoup reste à faire.
>
> There does not exist a memory but several, varied memories of the slave trade and of slavery. They were not formed in the same way in Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyana, Reunion, Africa, Madagascar, and in France, and it is essential to study the various ways they came about. This work has been started but there is still much to do.
>
> —Vergès, *La Mémoire enchaînée*, p. 137

As an unofficial slogan for the celebrations marking the 1998 sesquicentenary of the (second) abolition of slavery in the French empire, Daniel Maximin, chair of the organizing committee, selected the now widely cited conclusion to Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs*, truncated and misquoted in the following form:

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[1] All quotations translated by the editors.

> Je ne suis pas esclave de l'esclavage qui déshumanisa mes pères. Je ne suis pas venu sur terre pour faire le bilan des valeurs nègres. Je ne suis pas venu sur terre pour faire payer au monde blanc, par mon ressentiment, le malheur fait à mes pères. Mon unique [*sic*] prière: ô mon coeur, fais de moi toujours un coeur qui interroge![2]

> I am not a slave to the slavery that dehumanised my forefathers. I did not come to this earth in order to assess Black values. I did not come to this earth to make the white world pay, with resentment, for the misfortune done to my forefathers. My only prayer: Oh my body, make of me always a man who questions!

The meanings and ongoing implications of the original quotation—and especially of the key phrase: "Je ne suis pas esclave de l'esclavage qui déshumanisa mes pères"—have stimulated searching debate, amongst scholars of Fanon as well as in postcolonial studies more generally. The apparent refusal in the early Fanon to be locked into a cycle of victim-hood—according to which the brutal dehumanization that characterized Atlantic slavery is seen inexorably to dictate the postcolonial connections between peoples and cultures—is associated with what may be seen as its later corollary, i.e. an internationalist, Black Atlantic perspective that refuses to restrict historical phenomena such as slavery and colonialism to specific geographical locations, nor to reduce their impact exclusively to particular ethnic groups. The liberation towards which Fanon's subsequent work aimed depended accordingly on a permanent interrogation of the colonial present, exploring the historical circumstances from which it has emerged but focusing at the same time on the possible futures to which it might lead. Central to such a project is the realization—shared with contemporaries such as Sartre—that the then coming decolonization, in its many forms, was to be neither unilateral nor time-ended, but instead an ongoing process whose "success" depended on the involvement of all parties associated with the colonial process—as colonizer, colonized, or those located somewhere in-between.

That such a complex and loaded quotation should have been chosen in the context of 1998 is telling, for the tensions between singular event and ongoing process are essential to an understanding of both slavery and abolition—as well as of their impact and afterlives. As the contributions to

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[2] Fanon 1952, 186. See also Daniel Maximin, "Il faut arrêter d'être esclave de l'esclavage", *Internaute Magazine*, December 2006 [available online: http://www.linternaute.com/histoire/magazine/interview/daniel-maximin/retranscription-daniel-maximin.shtml]. For the passages containing the original quotation, see Fanon 1952, 186-88.

the present volume make clear, the historical experience of slavery does not end with abolition and emancipation, but persists as a trigger to legacies of metaphorical and often literal modes of (re-)enslavement. Commemoration of chattel slavery, like the historical phenomenon of slavery itself, is best understood as a transnational phenomenon, but the unevenness of memorial practices, transcending national and cultural boundaries, make it clear that any consensus implicit in—and often intended by—the activity of "remembering-together" becomes increasingly unlikely. The official slogan of 1998, "Tous nés en 1848", "All born in 1848", disguised the very different memorial traditions that the sesquicentenary attempted to federate. Tensions between, on the one hand, the desire to share multiple memories and, on the other, the ongoing fragmentation of often divergent narratives of the past have persisted in recent debates in the French-speaking world regarding Atlantic (and, to a lesser extent, Indian Ocean) slavery, with hostility towards the sesquicentenary of 1998 serving as a catalyst in such developments.[3]

The year 1998 did not of course mark the re-emergence of slavery into the arena of public and academic debate in the French-speaking world: the centenary of abolition, marked in 1948 in the immediate aftermath of Brazzaville and departmentalization, had itself merited official commemorations, in which the young *député* Aimé Césaire had played a key role;[4] more recently, François Mitterrand's election to the Elysée was accompanied by his solemn, solitary visit to the Panthéon, during which he had laid red roses on the tombs of Jean Jaurès, Jean Moulin and the abolitionist Victor Schoelcher;[5] the official bicentenary of the French Revolution, from which any overt reference to the Haitian Revolution was largely absent, nevertheless conscripted Toussaint Louverture to its own celebrations;[6] 1992 saw the inauguration in Nantes of *Les Anneaux de la Mémoire*, one of the first major exhibitions in France on the Atlantic slave trade; and, although largely unnoticed in France, the bicentenary of the first abolition of slavery was marked in Guadeloupe and Martinique in 1994.[7] Slowly woven into the calendar of commemorations by which late twentieth-century France was characterized, memories of slavery became increasingly prominent in 1998—i.e., in the year following UNESCO's proclamation of 23 August (the anniversary of the Bois Caïman ceremony,

[3] Vergès 2006, 90-91
[4] Césaire 2004
[5] Northcutt 1991
[6] Trouillot 1995. There was also speculation during the preparations for the Bicentenary regarding the Pantheonization of Toussaint. See Forsdick 2005.
[7] Dorigny 2003

seen by many as the trigger for the Haitian Revolution) as the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition; and the same year that UNESCO additionally launched "Breaking the Silence", an international project aimed at highlighting, through educational initiatives, the historical significance of the slave trade, and its social, cultural and economic impact on the Atlantic world.

Developments in France occurred therefore in an international context, but gained increasing national prominence not least because of the controversies that marked this sesquicentenary, the emphasis of which progressively risked becoming at worst Franco-centric—in Glissant's terms, an "affaire franco-française"—or at best polarized on different sides of the Atlantic along the predictable lines of divergent memorial practices.[8] As the Bicentenary of the first abolition (largely ignored in France, but prominent in the then DOM-TOMs) made clear in 1994, members of formerly enslaved societies tend to remember the long experience of enslavement (and its permanent resistance), whereas metropolitan commemoration is more likely to privilege the process of abolition, often seen as a primarily judicial and parliamentary process dependent on metropolitan philanthropy.[9] Political activism regarding recognition of memories of slavery—and acknowledgement of their implications for present experience—became increasingly apparent in France's overseas departments throughout the 1990s, culminating in the Taubira Law in 2001 ("tendant à la reconnaissance de la traite et de l'esclavage en tant que crime contre l'humanité", "towards the recognition of the slave trade and slavery as a crime against humanity"), a legislative manoeuvre ensuring the imprescriptibility of slavery, voted in response to protests at what Geoffroy de Laforcade dubs the "timorous official commemoration" of 1998.[10]

Whether this legislation—despite the very real commitment of its proposer (the French Guyanese MP Christiane Taubira) to anti-racism and equality—was viewed officially as a means of appeasing protest remains a subject of speculation. What is clear, however, is that pressure groups based in France and the Caribbean have continued to challenge the sleight of hand implicit in French commemoration of slavery. They refuse to accept that any celebration of the judicial process of abolition should be allowed either to eclipse the centuries of resistance that predated such a move or to ignore the progressive entrenchment of colonization for which emancipation prepared the way. In the most recent (and far from

[8] Catinchi 1998
[9] Forsdick 2008
[10] De Laforcade 2006, 228

concluded) debates regarding colonial memory and French legislative practice, slavery and its afterlives have accordingly played a key role. This is not least the case in those events surrounding the controversial fourth clause of the 23 February 2005 law, about which Dominic Thomas writes in his afterword to this volume. The signatories of the "appel" of the Indigènes de la République (itself launched in January 2005) identified themselves as "descendants d'esclaves et de déportés africains, filles et fils de colonisés et d'immigrés", "descendants of slaves and deported Africans, daughters and sons of the colonized and of immigrants",[11] and later in the same year, in a case against the historian Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, another group of activists, the Collectif des Antillais, Guyanais, Réunionnais, was responsible for the first invocation of the Taubira law.[12]

***

In evoking "postcolonial slavery", and engaging with the questions that such a concept betokens, the current volume represents a reaction to the evolving contemporary debates outlined above. The essays that follow address the various legacies—tangible and intangible, direct and indirect—of slavery in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean; at the same time, they ensure that the persistence of contemporary forms of enslavement—seen, for instance, in the figure of the Haitian *restavec*, studied here by Sadie Skinner—are not ignored. Approaches deployed in the volume are innovatively cross-disciplinary, illustrating the many ways in which historical approaches to slavery are increasingly complemented by work in other fields. Historiography, representational studies and literary criticism are adopted in the essays that follow to explore a range of textual and other cultural forms—fictional, autobiographical and journalistic—produced in or inspired by traces of slavery and its aftermath in a variety of geographical locations, most notably the Caribbean, but also India, Madagascar, North Africa and France itself. The chapters in this collection engage with and explore a series of prominent key issues, the implications of which are at once social, cultural, political and intellectual. In what remains of this foreword, I intend to outline three principal areas around

[11] For the complete text, see <http://indigenes-republique.org>

[12] The case centred on Pétré-Grenouilleau's comment, in an interview with the *Journal du Dimanche* (12 June 2005), that "les traites négrières ne sont pas des génocides", the slave trades are not genocides". A petition signed by nineteen leading historians was published in Pétré-Grenouilleau's defence, and the case was subsequently withdrawn (in February 2006).

which much current research on slavery and its contemporary avatars might be situated:

i. slavery and colonialism? The links between the histories (and memories) of slavery, and those of colonial expansion with which they are often simultaneously evoked, are explored in a number of contributions to the current volume. Key events in French colonial history—such as the Haitian Revolution, or the legislation leading to abolition in 1848—reveal that, although closely intertwined, colonialism and slavery are far from synonymous and resist any easy conflation. This distinction is apparent in tensions amongst the leadership of the Haitian Revolution: Toussaint Louverture's motivation was primarily centred on the destruction of slavery, seen as contrary to the ideals of the French Revolution; historians continue to debate whether the proposal of dominion status for Haiti in his 1801 constitution, seen by Aimé Césaire (1960) as a move towards "un commonwealth français", "a French commonwealth", was an attempt to protect freedoms recently acquired through armed struggle, or a step towards inevitable post-colonial independence. For Toussaint's successor Dessalines, faced with Napoleon's efforts to re-impose slavery through the Leclerc campaign, the distinction was no longer sustainable: opposition to enslavement was rapidly transformed into an overtly and prototypically anti-colonial war. As Nick Nesbitt reminds us, despite the upheavals experienced by post-independence Haiti, the new state's citizens nevertheless avoided the implications of the slavery re-imposed elsewhere in the Francophone Caribbean. In quantifying the gains of the Revolution, Nesbitt writes: "they [the Haitians] avoided precisely forty-six years of enslavement",[13] and to this we might add: "…and two centuries of colonial, then neo-colonial, dependency". For the philanthropic spin to which 1848 has subsequently been subject often disguises the fact that, with slavery abolished in the French Empire, the formerly enslaved remained oxymoronic "colonized citizens" for almost a further century before departmentalization in 1946—a process itself recently described as "the most complete form of colonization possible".[14] Vergès underlines the centrality of these links to current debates on slavery in the French-speaking world: "L'abolition reconduit l'inégalité en organisant la transition de l'esclavage à la servitude", "Abolition redirects inequality in the transition from slavery to servitude".[15]

[13] Nesbitt 2005, 8
[14] Dash 2005, 20
[15] Vergès 2006, 75

From these complex historical circumstances—and the often misleading narratives by which they are presented in the present—emerge important questions about sequence, and cause and effect: to what extent, for instance, did early Atlantic slavery create assumptions about race that facilitated the ideological justification of colonial expansion? To what extent did New Imperialism perpetuate in France and the wider French-speaking world pigmentocratic prejudices regarding race and ethnicity—and the representational strategies with which these are associated—after formal abolition? In addressing these issues of continuity and discontinuity, Kathryn Dale's chapter below coins the phrase "visual enslavement" to describe the means whereby indigenous subjects were conscripted to play a role in the exhibitionary order of France's late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century *expositions coloniales*. Her argument suggests that the abolition of 1848—enacted in the brief window of opportunity provided by the Second Republic—exists in an uneasy relationship with the consolidation of colonial power by which it was followed. Nicki Frith pursues a related line of inquiry by proposing that, post-abolition, slavery continued to play a rhetorical role in inter-colonial rivalries, with the French-language press equating British imperial activity during the Indian Uprisings of the late 1850s with practices of slavery.

In such analyses, slavery and colonialism emerge therefore as distinctive without necessarily being distinct, an observation associated with the fact that the impact, perception and memorialization of each of these phenomena depends on the respective subjectivities—and associated agency—of, on the one hand, those descending from colonizing and enslaving societies, and, on the other, of those belonging to groups that were colonized or enslaved. As I have already suggested (and as critical reactions to the commemoration of slavery, or to groups such as the Indigènes de la République make clear), despite the constructively polemical purposes to which it might be out, any such compartmentalized, even Manichean view of historical process does not bear close scrutiny. Whereas in French historiography, 1848 is associated with (and even celebrated as) a rapid shift in balance away from slavery towards colonialism, the experience (and legacy) of that same moment amongst the formerly enslaved populations of the French-speaking Caribbean has proved to be entirely different. There is thus evidence of a double slippage, not only between the relationships of particular groups to specific but often interrelated series of historical moments, but also between divergent and even contradictory associations with seemingly shared historical phenomena. The former relates to wider debates about multiple, "multidirectional" memories; the latter to questions of memory-sharing,

and of shared memories, that have for some decades been particularly apparent in the "history wars" relating to Australia's aboriginal population, but are equally pertinent to and increasingly present in the search for a "mémoire partagée", "shared memory", increasingly associated with the afterlives of slavery in the French-speaking world.[16]

ii. "multidirectional memories", *mémoire partagée*? One of the repeated criticisms of the "appel" of the Indigènes de la République (already cited above) is its tendency to conflate historical periods and the different events and phenomena with which they are identified in statements such as:

> Nos parents, nos grands-parents ont été mis en esclavage, colonisés, animalisés. […]. Nous sommes leurs héritiers comme nous sommes les héritiers de ces Français qui ont résisté à la barbarie nazie.
>
> Our parents, our grandparents were enslaved, colonised, animalised. […]. We are their heirs as we are the heirs of those French who resisted Nazi barbarity.

In studying the intersections of the Shoah and the Algerian War of Independence, Michael Rothberg (2004; 2006) has moved away from any potentially damaging notion of competing or conflated memories that such rhetoric may be seen to imply, and focuses instead on interconnections revealing the convergence and divergence of what he dubs "multidirectional memories". Two chapters among those that follow illustrate the ways in which such a concept might permit careful exploration of the entanglement of memories of enslavement with those of other major historical forces and events: Claire Riffard, in an innovative reading of Raharimanana's *Nour, 1947*, suggests how readers might approach the complex layering in that text of Madagascar's very specific history of slavery and abolition, the experience of Madagascan *tirailleurs* in the World Wars, and the brutal massacres following the 1947 uprisings on the island; Christina Oppel presents in her study of Michelle Maillet's *L'Étoile noire* links between the legacies of slavery (in the Caribbean and North America) and the Shoah. To an awareness of such complex interconnections should, as I have suggested above, be added an acknowledgement of the competing memory traditions that emerge from shared historical events or processes. A recently published collection of essays (Myazhiom, 2006) marking the first official celebration of France's slavery memorial day presents in its title the tensions that such sharing,

[16] Attwood 2005

related for instance to any such attempts at creating consensus through commemoration, might entail: *Esclaves noirs, maîtres blancs: quand la mémoire de l'opprimé s'oppose à la mémoire de l'oppresseur* (*Black Slaves, White Masters: When the Memory of the Oppressed is opposed to the Oppressor's Memory*).

Dichotomized views of memorial practices have recently been challenged by scholars such as Emmanuel Terray (2006), whose distinction between "victimes directes" and "victimes indirectes" has attempted to highlight the transformations and deformations inherent in the transgenerational freighting of the past; at the same time, official French approaches to memorial politics and practice—apparent in documents such as the first report of the Comité pour la Mémoire de l'Esclavage—have highlighted the desirability of a consensus-building "mémoire partagée" in relation to traumatic events of the past.[17] The risk of a singular "shared memory"—evident politically in decisions such as the choice of a national slavery memorial day—is that it erodes the specificity of different and often divergent memory traditions. In reporting Jacques Chirac's announcement in January 2006 (shortly before his repeal of the fourth clause of the 23 February 2005 law) that 10 May would be the date selected to "honorer le souvenir des esclaves et commémorer l'abolition de l'esclavage", "honour the memory of the slaves and commemorate the abolition of slavery", the French media largely ignored, for instance, the pre-existence of competing dates in the French-speaking world. On 30 June 1983, in the early years of the Mitterrand presidency, Loi n°83-550 ("relative à la commémoration de l'abolition de l'esclavage", "relative to the commemoration of the abolition of slavery") had established commemorative public holidays in Mayotte (27 April), Martinique (22 May), Guadeloupe (27 May), Guyane (10 June) and La Réunion (10 December) to reflect regional histories of resistance and abolition. As the various contributions to this volume make abundantly clear, in the field of slavery studies it is essential to ensure that attention is directed to the cultural and geographical specificity of memory, and to the distinctiveness of memorial practices, whether these are related to the

[17] For the committee's reports, see <http://www.comite-memoire-esclavage.fr/>. The presence of a more general policy of "mémoire partagée" can be seen in Jacques Chirac's October 2006 speech to the inaugural "Rencontres Internationale sur la Mémoire partagée", read by Hamlaoui Mékachéra, ministre délégué aux Anciens combattants. See
<http://www.elysee.fr/elysee/elysee.fr/francais_archives/interventions/lettres_et_messages/2006/octobre>

individual, the collective or the national (and intermediate social groups).[18] There is a risk that the goal of a singular "mémoire partagée" may become disabling in terms of potential dialogue, whereas permitting plural "mémoires partagées" or shared memories, can have more unexpected, enabling effects. As Françoise Vergès notes in *La Mémoire enchaînée*:

> Cette histoire [the history of Atlantic slavery], partagée par les maîtres et les esclaves, les colonisateurs et les colonisés, dans la mesure où ils l'ont faite ensemble, sur un même sol, à travers les conflits et les négotiations, le rejet et la rencontre, a produit des récits opposés, qui s'excluent. Or, […] ces histoires se croisent, s'interpellent, s'influencent.[19]
>
> This history, shared by masters and slaves, colonisers and colonised, in so far as they created it together, on the same earth, through conflict and negotiation, rejection and encounter, has produced opposing stories that exclude one another. Yet, […] these stories meet, call out to and influence each other.

iii. colonial and postcolonial slavery: continuities and discontinuities. A final key question regarding the "legacies" or "afterlives" of slavery—concepts often alluded to in both the political and academic spheres, without necessarily being associated with careful reflection on the logic of cause and effect that they may be seen to imply—relates to contemporary forms of slavery. Just as focus on modern forms of global exploitation—such as debt bondage, sex trafficking and forced labour—should not detract attention from the historical role of slavery in the formation of national cultures and societies, so study of memories of the past trade must not obscure the persistence of enslavement in the present. Literature on contemporary slavery is growing rapidly, thanks to the work of pioneering scholars and activists such as Kevin Bales (1999) and Joël Quirk (forthcoming), and of organizations such as Anti-Slavery International, WISE (Wilberforce Institute for Slavery and Emancipation) in Hull and ISM (International Slavery Museum) in Liverpool. Stephanie Decouvelaere's study in this volume of "disposable people" in Kateb Yacine and Tahar Ben Jelloun suggests how literary texts might be used to explore further the (dis-)continuities between historical slavery and contemporary forms of exploitation and enslavement. The literary text serves as a means of preserving or unearthing those "non-histoires"

[18] For a discussion on the practices of memory in Martinique—and in particular of how local memories of slavery have been articulated through the vandalism of official statues—see Curtius 2008.

[19] Vergès 2006, 35

invariably absent from official narratives, but which emerge, in Ricoeur's terms in the epigraph to this foreword, "à la façon d'une évocation spontanée", "in the way of a spontaneous evocation", the study of such material is instrumental in the types of dynamic, multi-lateral "memory-sharing" described above, and is increasingly proving itself to be central to avoidance of the reduction of the memory of slavery to something "muséifiée, sacralisée, judiciarisée, banalisée et instrumentalisée", "sacralised, legalised, banalised, utilized and transformed into a museum piece".[20]

* * *

In the ten years since the sesquicentenary of abolition in the French-speaking world, the attention directed to slavery in France and in the wider French-speaking world has therefore markedly increased, and as this volume amply demonstrates, studies in slavery continue to develop. Many of the chapters that follow, especially those by Aurélie L'Hostis and Jennifer Jahn, make clear that literature—as well as, one might add, the visual arts—has continued to play a key role both in the excavation of memories of enslavement and in reflections on the resonance of such memories in the present. Whilst knowledge of essential empirical and statistical detail continues to be extended, scholars have also begun to explore the cultural impact and legacies of enslavement and abolition, and to address those subjective, "affective" and even sensory aspects of the experience of the slave trade without which our understanding of the lives of individuals can be reduced.[21]

The rise of awareness of the histories of slavery, in addition to closer exploration of the ways in which such histories permeate contemporary societies, nevertheless continues to attract hostile attention: in France, from writers such as Pascal Bruckner (2005), for whom excessive intellectual attention to questions of enslavement are part of "la tyrannie de la pénitence", "tyranny of punishment", dictating the West's supposedly expiatory relationship to the rest of the world; in Britain, from historians such as Jeremy Black, by whom collective grief and official apologies are dismissed as the "curse of history".[22] Reacting to the risks of such revisionism, Myriam Cottias notes in *La Question noire*:

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[20] Vergès 2006, 129

[21] Rediker 2007; Smith 2001

[22] 2008; see also Black 2006. The Social Affairs Unit, publisher of these two volumes by Black, is a right-leaning think tank based in the UK. For a balanced

> Il n'y a pas d'esclavage heureux, bien que toutes les situations ne soient pas semblables. Il faut donc accepter l'histoire des esclaves dans leurs diversité, leur complexité, dans leurs contradictions dérangeantes; dans leurs phases de révoltes héroïques et triomphantes; comme tout sujet d'histoire.[23]
>
> There is no happy slavery, although all situations might not be the same. One must therefore accept the history of slaves in their diversity, their complexity, in their disturbing contradiction; in their heroic and triumphant revolt; as with every historical subject.

It is an essential commitment to the exploration of diversity and complexity that inspires and underpins the chapters that follow.

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reflection on official apologies, and on their motivations and implications, see Nobles 2008 (especially 132-35).

[23] Cottias 2007, 89

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INTRODUCTION

POSTCOLONIAL SLAVERY—NOW AND THEN

CHARLOTTE BAKER AND JENNIFER JAHN

On 22 May 2008, France commemorated the 160th anniversary of the abolition of slavery. Incidentally, UNESCO chose this same day to honour Aimé Césaire who had passed away the previous month. In 1946, Césaire headed the committee in favour of the departmentalization of Guadeloupe, French Guyana, Martinique and Reunion Island; a move that would not only economically secure these overseas departments, but that would eventually lead to "le problème de l'identité", "the problem of identity".[1] One of the main factors contributing to such identity problems, which, as will be seen, are by no means inherent to the DOM-TOMs, is the former empire's involvement in the slave trade and the ambivalent relationship this creates between formerly colonized and former colonizer. More than six decades later, the problem of identity and the repercussions of the French colonial empire—and more importantly the legacy of slavery—continue to occupy the academic world and have led to a number of important publications.[2]

Despite almost a decade having passed since France's sesquicentennial commemoration, debates over the propriety of commemoration continue to pervade political and intellectual scenes, questioning not only the act of slavery, but, moreover, the system behind it: colonialism. This became most obvious in 2005 when then Minister of the Interior Nicolas Sarkozy proposed a law requiring teachers and textbooks to acknowledge and teach the positive role of French colonialism. This led to such outrage, followed by Césaire's public refusal to meet with him on a scheduled visit to Martinique, that Sarkozy had to cancel his trip to the island. Martinican lawyer and politician, Marie-Alice André-Jaccoulet states that

[1] Césaire 2005, 37

[2] Recent publications include, for example: Miller 2008; Reinhardt 2006; Vergès 2006.

"L'esclavage est encore trop présent dans notre inconscient. Ses séquels aussi", "Slavery is still very present in our subconscious. Its sequels as well".[3] It becomes evident, then, that colonialism and its legacy still present a burning issue that needs to be addressed in metropolitan France, its overseas departments, the wider Francophone world, and, indeed, globally.

The contributions in this collection specifically tackle slavery and its different manifestations, whether past or present, metaphorical, figurative or literal, from varying points of view, encompassing historical, rhetorical and literary approaches, among others. We define postcolonial slavery as the manifestations of enslavement in modern, speak: post-colonial times. This can cover slavery in the form of dependence on certain literary traditions, psychological enslavement, manifest in blind obedience and the absorption of doctrines or behaviour, or such practices as the sex trade and forced domestic labour. Postcolonial slavery can be an instrument of oppression or a socio-economic tool used in the subjugation of citizens. In short, postcolonial slavery represents the continuing legacy and influence that a past of oppression and domination, a past of slavery and colonialism, still has on women and men from former colonies.

A wide range of critical approaches are taken by the authors of the papers in this collection to examine different forms of slavery, from types of enslavement during the colonial era to modern manifestations of slavery. They tackle questions such as how was slavery represented in discourse during the time of the empire and how is it portrayed today? Has discourse on slavery changed since the independence or departmentalization of former colonies? What other forms of slavery exist? How do the formerly colonized deal with such questions of enslavement? What are some of the questions and issues that arise when treating the topic of slavery? And finally, what is the legacy of slavery, both for France and her ex-colonies?

The question of representation predominates in the first part of the volume. The papers address representations of the colonial *other* and how (mis)representations in the domain of the Colonial Exposition in Paris as well as French newspapers in the 19th century led to a new form of slavery: the visual enslavement of the colonial *other* and the silencing of (hi)story and consequent enslaving of Indian voices by French journalists. The volume opens with Kathryn Dale's examination of the Colonial Exposition in Paris, held in 1889 and 1900. These expositions were a means by which to promote the colonial possessions of the Third Republic

[3] Maignan-Claverie 2005, 213 (Our translation)

to its citizens in the metropole, advocating the continuation of colonialism in places as far as the West Indies, Africa and the Indian Ocean. They informed the French about the colonial subjects exhibited in human zoos. Such exhibitions not only misrepresented and tokenized a small group of people to stand for an entire culture, but visually enslaved them and denigrated their status as human beings. Nicki Frith's analysis of the rhetoric employed in French newspapers when reporting on the Indian Mutinies uncovers similar enslavement. Here, the representation of the British colonial system is used to foil the French system, describing the British as despotic and uncivilized. This French juxtaposition of two systems of oppression and France's attempt to redress through journalistic channels its failure to colonize India led to the enslavement of the actual protagonists in the mutinies: the Indians. It is their story and their making of history that are silenced in French newspapers; French rhetoric effectively enslaving their voices.

The essay by Aurélie L'Hostis marks the transition from representation to the re-writing of history in this following section. Again, the silencing of voices of the past is a central theme. However, this section is more concerned with actively breaking such silences. L'Hostis examines the commemoration of slavery in France, from 1998 onwards and, through the analysis of Edouard Glissant's work, proposes the necessity for a re-imagination of Caribbean history, a history that has thus far been ignored or rather silenced. This erased past needs to be re-established in order to re-constitute a form of collective memory. She calls Glissant's œuvre a work of rehabilitation of the Caribbean's suppressed history and proposes that he "tr[y] to define a space where a literature of 'national consciousness' can finally emerge." Claire Riffard's examination of Rharimanana also explores how this writer tries to break the silences of the past. In this case, it is silence about slavery in Madagascar, instituted in colonial times and widely ignored in literary circles. By writing about such past wrongs, Raharimanana attempts to include slave memory in contemporary Madagascan society, making it a vital part of who Madagascans are and where they come from. Another act of re-writing the past is found in Christina Oppel's chapter. Through her examination of Michelle Maillet's *L'Étoile noire*, she establishes a new genre of the traditional Holocaust novel: the Black Holocaust novel. This contribution to French-Caribbean German history has thus far barely been represented. Oppel proposes that Maillet's novel delivers an alternative history by responding to white Holocaust discourse through expansion to include a transatlantic interracial context. She calls this act "literary archaeology" and, by placing *L'Étoile noire* at the intersection of Holocaust literature

and French Caribbean writing, creates ground for the French Caribbean neo-slave narrative.

The final section of this collection takes a closer look at different forms of postcolonial slavery. Stephanie Decouvelaere's chapter addresses precisely this colonial legacy. Although, as she points out, the Maghreb, or North Africa, does not have a history of French-enforced slavery, the consequences of France's colonization of the area are highly visible and problematic. The poverty caused by colonialism in Morocco through modernization and the industrialization of agriculture led many to move to France in an attempt to find work during the 1950s and '60s post-war reconstruction. Kateb Yacine's references to slavery are pervasive throughout his work and Tahar Ben Jalloun's writings, although not explicitly referring to it, can be similarly interpreted in such terms. Decouvelaere proposes that the victimization established through a capitalist system of exploitation, resulting in postcolonial migration, can in fact be interpreted as metaphorical slavery. Similarly, as proposed by Sadie Skinner, does metaphorical slavery appear in the works of Jean-Robert Cadet and Henriette Akofa, who examine the Haitian tradition of *restavecs*. Her examination of these modern-day slaves focuses on racial and class differences and places the neo-slave narratives in the context of a modern-day audience. Although these narratives raise "awareness of perpetuation of slavery in the modern era," she cautions against their marketing for a predominantly white, metropolitan audience in order to avoid the silencing of the *other*. Finally, the metaphorical slavery in Jennifer Jahn's paper is concerned with Martinican women's enslavement by ideals, attitudes and practices of the past as shown in the novels *D'Eaux douces* and *C'est vole que je vole*. The protagonists struggle with their sexual identities, influenced by a past of rape and emasculation, and with a subtle form of madness, *folie douce*, which represents a means of escape from socially oppressive forces. The roots of both areas of conflict can be traced back to the time of slavery and colonialism, as the author proposes. The obsession and awareness with such a past and an inability or unwillingness to come to terms with a present deeply influenced by it, lead to very different results.

The papers in *Postcolonial Slavery* provide a fresh contribution to the field of Francophone postcolonial studies and their subjects could not be timelier than at this moment of commemoration of a past of slavery and colonialism. The authors' approaches draw out themes and issues that have previously not been considered and place them together in one coherent volume. Combining literary, theoretical and historical perspectives, the multi-faceted nature of postcolonial slavery is laid bare.

The inclusion and examination of texts from former colonies such as Haïti, Madagascar and Morocco, assimilated colonies such as Martinique, and visual and journalistic sources from the French Republic creates an extensive portrait of the issue of postcolonial slavery and opens up as yet untapped possibilities for the continuing study of Francophone postcolonial texts.

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PART I

(MIS-)REPRESENTATIONS

Fig. 1-1. © Graham Hoggarth

CHAPTER ONE

THE *EXPOSITIONS COLONIALES*: A "VISUAL ENSLAVEMENT" OF THE COLONIAL *OTHER*?

KATHRYN DALE

In 1998 France commemorated the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the final abolition of slavery. Despite its initial abolition in 1794, under the *ancien régime*, the slave trade was reinstated by Napoleon in 1802 and its ultimate prohibition was not until 1848, during the Second Republic. Republican values following the end of slavery were built upon the tripartite motto *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, which was born from the Revolution of 1789, and became the official slogan of France during the Third Republic. Despite these Republican ideals, however, this article will reassess whether the concept of enslavement, commonly associated with degradation, oppression and forced labour as outlined by Mary E. Modupe Kolawole, was definitively laid to rest following the creation of the French Third Republic.[1] It will use the example of the human zoos—a *mise-en-scène* of the colonial Other—at the *Expositions Coloniales* of the Third Republic (herein referred to as the exhibitions) in order to question whether the displays of the colonial Other constituted the enslavement of the indigenous peoples of France's colonial possessions, and whether the process of enslavement thus continued beyond 1848.[2]

Building upon a range of essays in the book *Zoos humains* edited by Pascal Blanchard and Nicolas Bancel et al. (2004), which consider the visual displays of alterity at the exhibitions, this chapter will analyse how the human exhibits were visually employed to provide an image of the French empire to the French public. Some of the essays in Blanchard and

[1] Modupe Kolawole 2005, 103

[2] For a more detailed definition of the human zoos see Bancel, Blanchard, Boëtsch, Deroo and Lemaire 2004, 5.