

Trans-Atlantic Interrogation: Fabienne Pasquet's *La deuxième mort de Toussaint Louverture*

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Mariana Past,
"Trans-Atlantic Interrogation: Fabienne Pasquet's *La deuxième mort de Toussaint Louverture*"

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Abstract: In "Trans-Atlantic Interrogation: Fabienne Pasquet's *La deuxième mort de Toussaint Louverture*," Mariana Past situates the Haitian-Swiss novelist's understudied narrative within the context of Caribbean letters and the Haitian literary tradition, then discusses the broader, intertextual implications of Toussaint Louverture's "second" death for Haiti and the trans-Atlantic world. To what end does Pasquet deploy the aged ghost of a Haitian revolutionary icon being invoked by German Romantic writer Heinrich von Kleist in the Fort de Joux castle-cum-prison within France's remote, mountainous Jura region? What is at stake when the diasporic writer reincarnates a legendary German poet as protagonist, placing him in conversation with a deceased Haitian general? By reassessing Louverture's enduring revolutionary possibilities and reframing his colonized subjectivity, Pasquet's innovative text makes an important cultural gesture towards decolonizing Haiti's standing with respect to the West. Through dying anew, and dying "better," Louverture is able to recognize and recover an African past encompassing a wealth of knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual power that he previously disavowed in his quest to be "free and French."

Mariana Past

Trans-Atlantic Interrogation: Fabienne Pasquet's *La deuxième mort de Toussaint Louverture*

Trinidadian scholar J. Michael Dash has suggested that "a literary history of the Caribbean could conceivably be constructed around a literary tradition that attempts to write itself free of myths imposed from abroad" (312). Arguably, such a literary history could also be constructed around the need for Caribbean writers—both within the region and the broader diaspora—to collectively make sense of the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), addressing myths and legends from the inside out and "writing itself free" of customary interpretations or silences. Fabienne Pasquet's groundbreaking novel *La deuxième mort de Toussaint Louverture* (The Second Death of Toussaint Louverture) (2001) exemplifies this tradition of reassessing Haiti's place in the trans-Atlantic world system, and is also aligned with emerging trends in Caribbean and Haitian cultural production.¹

Questions about trans-Atlantic history have long interested Pasquet, a diasporic author who is often described as "Haitian-Swiss" (she was born to a Franco-Swiss mother of Russian origins and a Haitian father). Her first book, *L'Ombre de Baudelaire* (1996), fictionalizes four tempestuous years (1855-1859) of the two-decades-long relationship between French poet Charles Baudelaire and Jeanne Duval, a mixed-race woman of Haitian origins; Duval, struggling with the inescapable difference she embodies within the rapidly-changing social landscape of nineteenth-century Paris, elects to lose herself in the writing of her male/European partner.² Given this strong emphasis on negotiating Caribbean/Haitian (in)visibility with respect to Europe and its cultural canonicity, *L'Ombre de Baudelaire* arguably prepares the terrain for Pasquet's in-depth treatment of Haiti in *La deuxième mort de Toussaint Louverture*. I have previously proposed that the literary contributions of the Haitian-Swiss writer help reinforce the idea of a "particularly Caribbean postmodern aesthetic" rooted in the fragmentation of the colonial experience (281). Contemporary re-readings of the Haitian Revolution uncover and productively examine historical complexities and underlying tensions, exploring the frequently ambiguous meanings associated with revolutionary protagonists; history is thus mobilized to engender deeper reflection on contemporary injustices.

This essay examines how and to what ends Pasquet's second book provocatively opens up and deconstructs German Romantic writer Heinrich von Kleist's celebrated novella *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo* (The Betrothal in St. Domingo) (1811), and, more broadly, some heavy and enduring cultural baggage in the form of dominant (European/Western) discourses about Haiti. Ultimately, Pasquet's writing illuminates the coloniality of power that has persistently characterized the relationship between Haiti and Europe.³ Her novel also subtly critiques what many scholars regard as the authoritarian tendencies inherent within Toussaint Louverture's approach to revolutionary leadership, which—particularly during the later stages of the Revolution—inconsistently upheld the interests of the formerly enslaved.⁴

Although Caribbean intellectuals are well aware of the relevance of Haiti's Revolution and Independence to the outside world, others—whether in Europe, Latin America, or the U.S.—remain much less familiar with this history. Nevertheless, cultural production about the events in the former French colony of Saint-Domingue has abounded on both sides of the Atlantic. From Victor Hugo's 1804 *Bug-Jargal* to Alphonse de Lamartine and William Wordsworth, to twenty-first century novels, poems and

¹ *La deuxième mort de Toussaint Louverture* is Pasquet's second published novel. Her first novel, *L'Ombre de Baudelaire* (1996), was selected for Chambéry's First Novel Festival in 1997.

² See Sarah Davies Cordova's entry on the writer ("Fabienne Pasquet").

³ Walter Dignolo develops the "coloniality of power" theory in *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*.

⁴ In 1800, for the sake of economic development in the former French colony of Saint-Domingue, Toussaint Louverture's government established a notoriously repressive agrarian regime wherein formerly enslaved people were forcibly required to continue laboring on plantations, producing exclusively commodity crops that primarily benefited foreign interests. Twentieth-century scholars including CLR James, Alex Dupuy, Robert Fatton, and Philippe Girard have debated the degree to which Toussaint's policies can retrospectively be considered authoritarian and/or lay the groundwork for "predatory" practices carried out by the contemporary Haitian state. Worthy of mention here is that the first book published by renowned Haitian intellectual Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Ti difé boulé sou istoua Ayiti*, sympathetically yet powerfully critiques how the iconic Haitian revolutionary general succumbed to, and upheld, class and color prejudices in his efforts to control and stimulate economic development in what would soon become the Republic of Haiti. Toussaint's actions ultimately resulted in a selling-out of the interests of the Haitian people—arguably the real heroes of the revolutionary struggle.

plays, writers reframe, and reclaim, the unprecedented revolution carried out by a formerly enslaved population. *Stella* (1859), considered Haiti's first novel—written by exiled Haitian author Émeric Bergeaud and published in Paris by the similarly-displaced writer Beaubrun Ardouin—is an allegorical treatment of Haitian independence. Nineteenth-century European texts—including Kleist's work—tend to privilege monstrous aspects of Haiti's Revolution, while later texts—especially by Caribbean writers—often seek to fill silences and settle scores.

Today, while noxious discourses about Haiti recirculate within the North American political landscape, and many people easily recall the excessive, prejudicial images propagated by the international media following the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the world's first black republic sorely needs "new narratives," in the words of Gina Ulysse, a prominent Haitian-American anthropologist, performance artist and activist. It is well worth breaking the silence surrounding Pasquet's *La deuxième mort de Toussaint Louverture* (The Second Death of Toussaint Louverture), which is one of the most important recent literary representations of the Haitian revolutionary leader. Although Pasquet's book was well-received—it was awarded Switzerland's Schiller Prize in 2002 and the Marcel Aymé Prize in 2003—to date it has received scant critical treatment, and fully merits renewed discussion.

La deuxième mort, grounded in philosophical and ideological debates originating in the complex aftermath of Haiti's Revolution, contests not only negative associations surrounding the formerly enslaved revolutionary general, but persistent social and political discourses depicting Haiti as a hopelessly failed state. Pasquet's novel engages in the practice of "arguing around Toussaint," as described by Édouard Glissant in his well-known *Discours antillais* (Antillean Discourse). In an innovative manner at once incongruous and spot-on, *La deuxième mort* posits the hoary ghost of Haiti's martyred revolutionary icon being purposefully invoked by the more youthful Kleist, his European contemporary, in a shadowy, frigid cell in the Fort de Joux castle-cum-prison situated in France's mountainous Jura region. The men were indeed imprisoned in the same location, albeit four years apart; the actual, or "first" death of Toussaint Louverture (who was born in Cape Haitien in 1743) occurred in the spring of 1803. Marie-José Nzengou-Tayo notes that both of Pasquet's protagonists were victims of the Napoleonic wars: the emperor directly ordered Toussaint's imprisonment, and Kleist (1777-1811) was accused of spying during the French occupation of Berlin (208).

The idea of death bears some preliminary discussion here. On the one hand, it is a common trope in Haitian literature,⁵ and the theme of Toussaint Louverture's demise in a European jail is well-established during the nineteenth century.⁶ Within the Haitian popular imaginary, on the other hand, death is neither definitive nor tragic. When people die, they are believed to go *anba dlo* (underneath the waters), where they spiritually rejoin the ancestors in Guinée, across the Atlantic. Pasquet's Toussaint is depicted as having "failed" in his first death primarily because he did not acknowledge the inherent contradictions in his approach to revolutionary leadership, wherein he adhered too closely to French cultural models and showed repressive authoritarian tendencies. The Haitian general also gains perspective on the constraints imposed by his relationship to the dynamics of colonial power, lamenting that he "had believed it necessary to be just what the whites expected him to be" (185; translation mine). Only through realizing a "second," more introspective death is Toussaint able to recognize and recover an African past encompassing a wealth of knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual power that he previously denied in his tenacious revolutionary quest to be "free and French."

So what specifically is at stake when a deceased Haitian revolutionary hero interacts with a reincarnated German literary giant? With an eye to discussing the larger, intertextual implications of Toussaint's "second" death for Haiti and the trans-Atlantic world, this essay will position Pasquet's understudied novel within the Haitian literary tradition and unravel some of the multiple layers of meaning behind the doubling of Kleist and his Haitian interlocutor. *La deuxième mort*, simultaneously harnessing

⁵ In *Haiti: Writing Under Siege*, Marie-Agnès Sourieau and Kathleen Balutansky observe: "Death permeates the Haitian unconscious, obsessively appearing both in reality and in fiction as vengeance, penitence, transcendence, or metamorphosis, always violent and excessive in its display. From the first slave rebellions to the latest dictatorships recurring reigns of terror have besieged the national psyche, and this, like an unalterable genetic code, has incited natural fear and distrust" (29).

⁶ See for example the one-act play by Vendénisse Ducasse (1872-1902), *Toussaint au Fort de Joux* (Toussaint at the Fort de Joux) (1896). Also, a dramatic piece by Alcibiade Pommayrac (1844-1908), entitled *La Dernière nuit de Toussaint Louverture* (The Last Night of Toussaint Louverture) (1877). Twentieth-century representations include, among others, Édouard Glissant's *Monsieur Toussaint* (Mister Toussaint) (1961) and Jean Métellus's *Toussaint Louverture* (2003). Besides Toussaint's demise within the Fort-de-Joux prison, other moments from his pivotal role in Haiti's revolutionary history often surface in literary representations—including Toussaint's swift change of allegiance from the Spanish army to the French side, as well as his arrest and boarding of the European-bound ship *Le Créole*.

Toussaint's enduring revolutionary possibilities and humanizing the iconic general, performs nothing short of a literary decolonization of Haiti's standing with respect to the West.

In the realm of Western letters, Kleist persists as a towering figure. A cursory search of the MLA International Bibliography shows that over the last half-century, eighty-two publications in various languages—mostly German and English, but also Spanish and Portuguese—have addressed his *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo* (The Betrothal in Santo Domingo). Moreover, Andreas Gailus noted in 2010 that *The Germanic Review* "receives more submissions on Kleist than on any other German writer" (1). In contrast, the MLA database lists a single study of Pasquet's text, in French: Joëlle Cauville's "Jeu de doubles à Joux: *La deuxième mort de Toussaint Louverture*" (A Doubles Game at Joux: the Second Death of Toussaint Louverture). This article's psychoanalytic approach to Pasquet's novel examines the two protagonists through the myth of the "double," with Toussaint being the "monstrous" invention of Kleist's mind, or his alter ego. For Cauville, the men's personal resemblances—as opposed to historical, political ones—are what underpin their pairing in *La deuxième mort* (The Second Death). She does grant the relevance of the fact that Kleist published *The Betrothal in Santo Domingo* in 1811, but de-emphasizes the novella on account of its limited plot, perhaps inadvertently reproducing some of its reductive aspects:

This story recounts the revolt of the Blacks against the whites and the barbaric atmosphere into which the island has fallen, without directly mentioning Toussaint Louverture. Rather, it deals with the personal drama of Gustav, a Swiss officer, who in seeking to help his family to safety, finds asylum, comfort and love in a young mestiza, Toni. However, doubting the latter's intentions, Gustav kills her and then himself, after having realized his scorn. (42; translation mine).

Moreover, Cauville's reading of Pasquet's novel lacks a political conclusion. While the "double" topos may well serve as a metaphor for questioning the human condition, the significant historical tensions Pasquet engages within *La deuxième mort* merit consideration.

A broader bibliographic search through Google Scholar reveals at least two additional published studies of *La deuxième mort*; to my knowledge, none exist in English. One study in Spanish by Anna Raventós Barangé focuses entirely upon Kleist as a subversive figure within both Pasquet's novel and an eponymous publication by Jean Grosjean; Toussaint Louverture goes essentially mentioned. The other essay, authored by Nzengeu-Tayo, previously cited, compares *La deuxième mort* to fiction by another female Haitian writer, Marie-Vieux Chauvet, highlighting Pasquet's project of wresting Toussaint Louverture and Haiti's history away from European/Western history through Toussaint's return to Africa—which is only achieved through his "second" death. Nzengeu-Tayo's analysis—the most thorough and convincing study of Pasquet's novel—is both persuasive and well-written. To my mind, however, in order to fully understand Pasquet's Kleist-Toussaint scheme, one must take into account Kleist's *Betrothal* and unpack the ideological baggage it drags along. After briefly examining the current cultural popularity of Toussaint Louverture, subsequent sections of this study will explore potential reasons for why Pasquet takes Kleist, a monumental German writer, to task, in a sense putting him on trial alongside Toussaint.

Situating Toussaint Louverture

In his essay "Toward New Paradigms in Caribbean Studies," Jean Jonassaint discusses the appeal of Haiti's revolutionary past for twenty-first-century Haitian writers. Regarding their interest in producing works of fiction set in the Revolutionary period, about their "colonial or Revolutionary memories," he suggests: "The post-Duvalierism trauma with the very long and painful transition to 'democracy,' the pressure of the independence bicentennial, and so on, could be one key reason. So, we can say that the narration does take place in a context of proximity, of immediacy, of burning issues, as a response to an emergency or a crisis" (219). At the forefront of this cultural production is Toussaint Louverture and a host of burning issues surrounding his legacy.⁷ Historically speaking, Toussaint has arguably enjoyed the widest international acclaim amongst the triumvirate of Haitian Revolutionary heroes (which also includes Jean-Jacques Dessalines—who declared Haiti's independence in 1804—and Henri Christophe, who unified Haiti's Southern and Northern regions and governed the world's first black republic through 1820). Increasingly, writers of narrative are taking up Toussaint.

⁷ Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Ti dife boule sou istoua Ayiti* (1977), the first book on Haitian history written in Haitian Creole, directly addresses Toussaint Louverture's limitations.

Charles Forsdick, author of numerous publications on Haiti's best-known revolutionary figure, notes Toussaint's "recurrently spectral presence" in fiction by twenty-first-century Haitian writers⁸ who began to refigure and rethink the revolutionary icon ("Arguing Around Toussaint" 55). In a broader essay on contemporary representations of Toussaint, Forsdick succinctly addresses *La deuxième mort*:

I would now go further to suggest that the Haitian revolutionary's ungoverned wandering – evident in the unwieldy transcultural, transhistorical, increasingly multi-media corpus of representations of him that is increasingly used to grant him a globalized iconic status slowly approaching that of Che Guevara – forces us to revisit Trouillot's thesis of historiographic silencing, as well as Fischer's notion of disavowal. For *Louverture*, a defiantly ambiguous vehicle of Haiti and its revolutionary tradition, has consistently refused to go away. He is a wandering, travelling revolutionary, who has been uprooted, displaced, deterritorialized, and, in such processes has been instrumentalized, allegorized and mythologized. ("J'ai survolé" 113)

Haiti's most famous revolutionary figure, even if overexploited, serves as departure point for more nuanced conversations about Haiti. What is perhaps most appealing about Toussaint is that he provides a tertiary space in which discourses of resistance can be grounded. Forsdick proposes that "Continued representation of Toussaint—fictional and historiographic—is tempered by a growing awareness of the pitfalls of monumentalism, hagiography and hero creation, and of the construction of representativity or exceptionalism—as well as associated exclusions—that these imply" ("Arguing" 46). To my mind, Pasquet's narrative amply illustrates this inclination, and, arguably, *La deuxième mort* also contests the literary monumentalism of Kleist alongside Old World dominance over New World realities.

Who is best positioned to speak about Haiti's history? In Pasquet's novel, protagonists Toussaint and Kleist squabble over the scarcity of writing instruments in their prison cell—an allegory for processes of historiography. In contrast to the prolific German Romantic writer, who takes his voice for granted, the Haitian revolutionary figure—whose military exploits did not rely on a background of formal education—meditates on his abilities to express himself through writing.⁹ It bears noting that literary canonicity is less of a concern for Toussaint than are problems related to justice and legitimacy. On uneven ground, Toussaint and Kleist compete in their quest to convey the moral failings of humankind, the horrors of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and the significance of Haiti's revolution. Pasquet presents the act of writing itself as a corrective gesture, and in Toussaint's "second" set of reflections on his deathbed, Haiti's oral traditions are implicitly validated. By asserting his voice—both on the page and in dialogue with Kleist—Toussaint is able to enjoy a more dignified and peaceful death. The following section addresses the importance of Pasquet's fictional Kleist, embodying European perspectives, coming around and recognizing Toussaint *Louverture's* legitimacy as an African hero.

Kleist Up Close

At first glance, Kleist's novella *The Betrothal in St. Domingo*, originally *Die Verlobung in Santo Domingo* (1811) is just about a forbidden love affair in Saint Domingue between a young white man and a black rebel woman in 1803, the chaotic later stages of the Haitian Revolution (though the man is not actually French—rather, Swiss, and the woman isn't really black—rather, mestiza). But looking more closely, the text deals with much more than impossible love, or tragedy. Gailus points out that a "push toward embodiment is ubiquitous in Kleist" and "Representation and enactment, difference and presentness, are the two signature poles of the Kleistian text" (1-2). Due to race and color politics Kleist's short novel is a particularly apt target for Pasquet's novel protagonizing Toussaint. While critics including Martin (2008) and Niekerk (2013) have addressed the question in more depth, a straightforward working explanation suffices for the purposes of this Pasquet-focused study: "For the first time in German literature Kleist addresses the politics of a race-based colonial order and shows, through a careful exploration of a kind of politics of color (black, white, and intermediate shades), the self-deception and ultimate impossibility of existence in a world of absolutes" ("Heinrich von Kleist").

Regarding Kleist's treatment of Haiti's revolution underway, Gailus observes: "This intense European interest in the faraway Caribbean island was more than mere fashionable curiosity in the exotic. In the eyes of European observers, at stake in the events in Haiti was the meaning of their own history—that is, the meaning of the French Revolution" (21). The uprising of enslaved individuals in Saint Domingue was impossible for them to comprehend, and the specter of black revolution ultimately led to a breakdown of linguistic signs. Kleist's *Betrothal* boldly exposes the arbitrariness and instability of

⁸ Jean-Claude Fignolé's *Moi, Toussaint Louverture avec la plume complice de l'auteur* (2004) also directly engages Haiti's revolutionary past.

⁹ For in-depth discussion of Toussaint *Louverture* and the significance of his writing, see Désormeaux and Saint-Aubin.

categories of racial identity in colonial Saint Domingue. The novella's protagonists include a white/Swiss soldier (Gustav), a "yellow-skinned mestiza" woman (Toni), and a formerly enslaved African man (Congo Hoango) portrayed as having "an inhuman thirst for revenge." Gustav finds himself attracted to Toni despite her complexion, which repels him; she arouses in him a "strange mixture of desire and fear" (247). Tellingly, Gustav proclaims to Toni, "'You are someone I can trust; in your face, like a gleam of light, there is a tinge of my own complexion [...] If I am not much deceived' [...] 'heaven has led me to compassionate people who do not share the cruel and outrageous resentment that has seized all the inhabitants of this island'" (236). Throughout the text—which ends in tragedy for Toni and Gustav—Kleist depicts the Haitian Revolution as outrageous, cruel, and unreasonable—reflecting a conventional European view of Haiti's anticolonial struggle.

Even more importantly, Kleist's *Betrothal* contributes to the substantial evidence for the fact that Europeans knew full well what had happened in Haiti, and in many cases were actively endeavoring to silence it. Susan Buck-Morss' well-known study "Hegel and Haiti" articulates how the Haitian Revolution—and the notion of black people acting upon their own free will—directly challenged Enlightenment ideas of freedom (837). Underscoring "a glaring discrepancy between thought and practice," Buck-Morss proposes that "the economic practice of slavery—the systematic, highly sophisticated capitalist enslavement of *non*-Europeans as a labor force in the colonies [...underwrote] the entire economic system of the West, paradoxically facilitating the global spread of the very Enlightenment ideals that were in such fundamental contradiction to it" (821). Because Haiti's Revolution contested the colonial system itself, the event generated shock and unsettlement on the part of Europeans, who despite having ample knowledge about it, refused the possibility that black people could enjoy agency, legitimacy and autonomy. Kleist's prose—simultaneously set during Haiti's Revolution, yet sublimating specific details about it—reflects these tensions. *Betrothal in St. Domingo* emphasizes only the general climate of fear and uncertainty in the former French colony, negating the achievement of a formerly enslaved population. Textually speaking, narrative and narrator alike are subverted through the use of minute details, and the entire process of narration is thrown off.

Similarly, in Pasquet's novel, when Kleist asks the ghostlike figure appearing before him, "Vous êtes Toussaint Louverture?" (Are you Toussaint Louverture?) Toussaint answers, "That appearances can be deceiving is a natural law, and it is all the more so for men because they know how to play with them. It is better to trust the experiences that one has. As for truth or ideals, they are preferable to an intolerable reality" (63; translation mine). Toussaint's non-response corresponds neatly to the slipperiness of the signs in Kleist's *Betrothal in St. Domingue*: people see what they want to, and at times the consequences can be dire. For example, the "betrothal" of Gustav and Toni, Kleist's protagonists, ends in death. Gailus notes that in Kleist's novella, "Instead of inaugurating a genuinely new connection, the 'betrothal' appears to be the medium of a repetition compulsion that moves toward death and the dissolution of otherness" (34). The following section of this essay argues that in *La deuxième mort*, on the other hand, the death of Toussaint completes this cycle, and fills the void: in Pasquet's novel, Toussaint's death is arguably a kind of betrothal.

Trans-Atlantic Icons Face Off

What Pasquet performs in her narrative interrogation of Toussaint and Kleist is a revolutionary re-visioning of two national icons haunted by phantoms from their colonial pasts. We have briefly examined some of the biases of Kleist, the German writer-cum-protagonist, and his cultural landscape. Toussaint, his fictional interlocutor, appears to him as a specter that his imagination invoked. Kleist—the-protagonist initially distrusts the vision before him, but he eventually begins to engage in conversation with the elderly Haitian general after repeating his name several times in a range of tonalities, as though to convince himself of his legitimacy (28). The simple gesture at once registers and validates Toussaint's presence as summoned by the mind of the German writer-as-protagonist, and metaphorically repositions the revolutionary icon—a metonym for Haiti itself—on the trans-Atlantic map. Together, across over 200 pages, Kleist and Toussaint enact a reparative reading of the history of Haiti's Revolution and its impact in the Atlantic world, with Toussaint at times pausing to reconsider the significance of his own military endeavors. Nzungou-Tayo submits that "It is not a question of historical revisionism, strictly speaking, but rather an effort to fill in the blanks of French/European memory, and to highlight hidden aspects of the reality of colonial slavery" (211; translation mine).

Pasquet depicts Toussaint somewhat generously as a contemplative sage, a veritable repository of secret knowledge and experiences that nevertheless bear nuancing. Over the course of the novel the phantasmagoric Haitian general fills in the blanks for his European interlocutor, whose questions help him revisit his successes and explore his various shortcomings, such as having executed Moyse, his more radical, left-leaning nephew (and, though Toussaint harbors remorse, he still feels justified in

having carried out this action). The ghost of the Haitian leader also denies having hidden any treasure on the island—a rumor that circulated widely after the Revolution. To the contrary, Toussaint references as his "treasure" a small collection of herbs (175) that stands in for Haitian folk wisdom. Ultimately Kleist is transformed by his fresh understanding of Toussaint, and just prior to Toussaint's "second," better, death the Haitian employs natural medicines to heal a wound on Kleist's leg—a palliative process which clearly transcends the literal. When the Prussian implores the dying Haitian to stay alive, Toussaint refuses, saying he must rejoin the land of his ancestors. In dying (again), the humanized hero (in European eyes) experiences a more dignified and peaceful death—and he also gets to have the last word.

Juxtaposing Kleist and Toussaint is thus fitting in many ways: both men fought against France, suffered Napoleon's wrath, and were imprisoned in the Fort de Joux; arguably, each committed a kind of suicide—Kleist's being literal, and Toussaint's conceivably a result of his willingness to be captured.¹⁰ Significantly, in the freezing prison cell the two men are equally displaced: Toussaint, the peripheral African/American general, who was forcibly brought from the periphery to the metropole, and Kleist, the Romantic icon-in-the-making, who's jailed in an outpost of Western civilization. That Pasquet places these binary figures (representing white/black, and "civilization"/"barbarie") on a parallel, if improbable, path is a literary gesture underscoring Haiti's relevance on the world map, and retrospectively legitimizing its standing in the nineteenth century, when Haiti struggled at great cost to have its existence acknowledged.

What is the precise point, then, of Toussaint's "second" death? Pasquet's Haitian hero benefits in several ways from expiring anew: he enjoys a better, more understood, death, a departure preventing the relatively younger Kleist—a double for Gustav?—from challenging him directly anymore, as Toussaint's statement is the last to go on the record. The Haitian general's martyrdom is therefore complete, and he successfully bridges the gap between Haiti and the larger world—too late for Hegel to acknowledge the emergence of Haiti's modernity, but not for contemporary readers. On the other hand, given that death is not a fixed endpoint in Haitian culture, Toussaint can also be seen as returning to the land of the ancestors under the waters, rejoining his African precursors in a way that makes amends for his adhering to French cultural approaches throughout the Revolution. Fordick proposes,

For Pasquet, the Haitian revolutionary's second death occurs as a result of the 'immense travail de mémoire auquel il venait de se consacrer' (immense work of memory to which he had just dedicated himself). It is as if he is attempting to wrest back the means of his own representation: 'le seul moyen pour moi,' he states, 'de mettre définitivement un terme à mon errance et de rejoindre le monde des ancêtres est de me retrouver moi-même' (the only way for me to definitely end my transitoriness and rejoin the world of the ancestors is for me to find myself). ("J'ai survolé" 123)

Indeed, Trouillot implies in *Ti dife boule sou istoua Ayiti* that during the later stages of the Haitian Revolution, Toussaint betrayed the Haitian people by harnessing the emerging black republic to the (literal) fortunes of France and other colonial powers.

Pasquet's project involves Toussaint decolonizing himself within the mind of Kleist—a metonym for official European/Western history—by reclaiming his African origins. Nzengou-Tayo underlines Africa's centrality in Toussaint's quest to rethink his geopolitical identity: "During a fit of anger, Kleist reminds Toussaint that he is a product of the Western imaginary, and therefore a 'white' hero [...]. This declaration provokes a shock in Toussaint (165-66) and makes him aware of his alienation. We then witness his efforts to succeed in his second death by rediscovering his African origins and enabling his return to Guinée according to traditional beliefs" (211-12). In Pasquet's novel, we thus witness the rebirth of a Haitian revolutionary hero who is finally able to be black.

Toussaint as literary protagonist, as well as historical figure, is emerging from his metaphorical prison of fixed meanings. Today, as the Haitian hero becomes increasingly iconic—à la Che Guevara—does he run the risk of becoming devoid of meaning? I think this is unlikely. Over time, as the scenario of Toussaint's imprisonment repeats itself across narrative and dramatic works, I cannot help but wonder whether Caribbean writers, increasingly critical of his legend, are consciously or unconsciously performing the subtle gesture of returning Toussaint to France, so to speak (where his cultural influences resided, and whose (neo)colonial approach he arguably adopted through a repressive agrarian regime tying formerly enslaved to plantations), and at last ascribing Haiti's revolutionary triumph to the formerly

¹⁰ This idea remains controversial amongst Caribbean intellectuals: Martiniquan writer Aimé Césaire advances the argument that Toussaint was willing to be captured, for example, while Trinidadian writer CLR James vigorously disputes that thesis.

enslaved masses. Certainly, Toussaint played a pivotal role in the Revolution, but ultimately independence was won by those who had nothing to lose. Coincidentally, Toussaint described himself as a tree that had to be cut down so its shade would not choke off other life, leaving the *racines* (roots) to continue the struggle that he began. Do these new literary-historical narratives reflect efforts to contain the myths surrounding Toussaint, and let the *racines* speak for themselves on the other side of the Atlantic—effectively burying a certain, complex part of the past? Or, on the other hand, do they represent an effort to symbolically colonize France itself, through the permanent presence of a larger-than-life native black hero buried in the white Jura? Are we witnessing a collective shutting down of Toussaint, and perhaps an implicit—and figurative—letting loose of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, affectionately known to Haitians as "Papa Desalin" (Father Dessalines)? The latter is unlikely, given the present-day proliferation of representations of Toussaint, and the fact that Dessalines receives far less attention than Toussaint in fiction. But a literary insistence on Toussaint's exile to France, and, the notion of a black hero dying (and re-dying) in the white Jura over and over is compelling. Symbolically but powerfully, these images force the issue of Haiti and its neglected history back onto the discussion board in France, which still considers Haiti as part of the Francophone family—albeit in the position of "little brother."¹¹

Imperfect though Toussaint Louverture may individually be, in Pasquet's novel he stands as nothing short of a metonym for resistance on the part of colonized, racialized subjects across the Americas. Opposing Toussaint's history with that of Kleist, the Haitian Revolution is reclaimed as a collective and universal event, not a singular or exceptional case. So if—as some scholars maintain—cultural production represents one of Haiti's greatest riches, and thereby its most important export, then perhaps Toussaint's figurative voice can remain an inspiration for what Balutansky and Sourieau have described as "a people entrapped by irrepressible forces of domination, but determined to persevere [...] a people deprived of their fundamental rights but resolute in their struggle and determined to live" (9; translation mine).

In closing this study of trans-Atlantic cultural production about and from Haiti, it is fitting to circle back to the question of writing. On the one hand, Kleist's well-known novella intensifies the instability of meaning and articulates different psychological and political responses to it. On the other hand, Pasquet's important but underappreciated novel plays upon this instability, but insists that historical density be restored, and the specificity of Saint Domingue be acknowledged. By re-inserting Toussaint into a trans-Atlantic context, firmly planting his articulate spectral presence in the mind of the German literary giant, Pasquet enacts a crucial reparative gesture. She reframes Haiti's history in global terms, refusing to allow understandings of the Revolution be (at best) romanticized as an exceptional but isolated event. "Arguing around" Toussaint, she argues for a more trans-national view of history. It is significant that Pasquet's project echoes concerns articulated previously by Haitian Spiralist writers Frankétienne, René Philoctète and Jean-Claude Figolé, publishing at home during the darkest days of the Duvaliers' dictatorship.¹² Kaiama Glover notes in *Haiti Unbound: A Spiralist Challenge to the Postcolonial Canon* that these writers collectively consider Haiti's Revolution as a process as yet unfinished: "Haiti is still in the process of being born, of readying itself to assume its 'destin de peuple' (people's destiny).¹³ Haitian literature must, therefore, not only reflect but help facilitate this rebirth and (re)insertion into world culture" (249).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Pasquet's narrative enables the productive "rebirth" of Toussaint Louverture through the spectral yet vivid apparition invoked by Heinrich von Kleist in the cold Fort-de-Joux cell both men inhabited at the beginning of the nineteenth century—when the newly-established black republic of Haiti struggled in vain for international recognition¹⁴. Toussaint's rebirth is followed by a "second" death that is more mindful, reflective and "successful" than his "first" death because he finally acknowledges his, and Haiti's, African heritage. Thus, *The Second Death of Toussaint Louverture* facilitates the reinsertion of Haiti into world culture. Pasquet renders an iconic ghost from

¹¹ This is the general tone manifested within the official January 2004 report produced by France's *Comité indépendant de réflexion et de propositions sur les relations Franco-Haïtiennes* (Independent Committee for Reflection and Proposals on French-Haitian relations), articulating France's refusal to honor a request made by then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide for financial reparations for slavery.

¹² François Duvalier, known as "Papa Doc," was elected president of Haiti in 1957 and ruled the country until his death in 1971; his son Jean-Claude Duvalier, or "Baby Doc," continued his despotic regime through 1986, when a popular uprising toppled him.

¹³ Here Glover cites Fardin's "Entretien avec Jean-Claude Figolé" (Interview with Jean-Claude Figolé) in *Le petit samedi soir* (Fardin 27).

¹⁴ France recognized Haiti's independence in 1825, for the equivalent sum of \$21.7 billion as indemnification for property losses in the former colony; the United States only recognized Haiti in 1862.

Haiti's past more transparent, bringing repressed and forgotten memories to the surface, yielding for both Toussaint and Kleist new understandings of their shared, if problematical, trans-Atlantic history. In the ongoing contemporary struggle to decolonize Haiti's relationship to the West—however challenging the term may be—Pasquet's literary contribution stands out on the front lines.

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