Condamné à mort:
Slavery and the Hangman of New France, 1733-1743

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Abstract

This case study strives for a greater understanding of slavery as experienced in New France, as well as its relationship to the French Atlantic. It draws on documents related to Mathieu Léveillé, the executioner of the colony from 1733 to 1744. Léveillé lived as a plantation slave in Martinique for 24 years. He was sentenced to death after being caught making a third attempt to escape, but his sentence was commuted to serving as the hangman of New France. His life speaks to the relationship between slavery and the early modern scientific understanding that black bodies were unfit for northern climates. Léveillé's doctors diagnosed his depression through this theoretical framework, thus confirming French prejudices. As this case study demonstrates, slavery in New France cannot be separated from slavery in the Caribbean. Black slaves in Canada are best understood through an Atlantic perspective as chattel slavery did not exist in Canada without its existence in the Caribbean. This perspective is not confined to national borders which is key to a better understanding of slavery in Canada. The value of this study therefore comes from its contributions to understanding the connection of black slaves to the colonies in which they were born and touches on racism in scientific frameworks and mental health.

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I dedicate my thesis to my mother.

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Introduction

A ship arrived in Quebec carrying human cargo in 1733. The man suffered as a slave in Martinique for twenty-four years and detested his position. He escaped slavery three times and was caught three times. His ears were cut off after his first escape; his hamstrings were cut after his second; and after his third escape, he was sentenced to death. Instead of suffering this sentence, the Martinican slave was brought north to New France to serve as the executioner. The letters calling him to New France did not name him. In this system, he was merely "le nègre." His name was Mathieu Léveillé. As the hangman, he executed nine people, including two slaves. Léveillé lived alone in a house near the walls of the city, hidden away from everyone else. He was one of very few slaves in the city, separated by his skin colour from other people in town. With regret and loneliness bottled inside him, doctors diagnosed him with melancholy caused by an excess of black bile in his black body that was out of place away from the tropics. In 1741, to cure him of his melancholy, the King of France bought him a wife who had also been sentenced to death for the same crimes as he. His fiancée, Angelique-Denise, arrived while he was in the hospital. Léveillé died in 1743, and the two never married. Angelique-Denise was baptised three months later. She had been sentenced to die, just like Léveillé and the people he executed, but his plea for comfort saved her life.

Léveillé lived during the first half of the eighteenth century. Europeans settled the island on which he was born in 1635 and adopted a slave code twenty years before his birth. Black slaves were used because they were cheaper and better labourers compared to French servants who languished on the plantations. This feed the false consciousness of humoral theory that bodies fit certain zones and were out of place away from those zones.

From this time until Léveillé was sent to Quebec in 1733, the slave population of Martinique quadrupled, and 40,000 people lived in bondage. The city in which he arrived was settled by Europeans in 1608. Settlers sought to legitimize their presence by constructing a religious hospital in the 1630s that treated native peoples for Old World diseases that, the Church believed, were sent by God to punish them for their pagan beliefs. This colony asked for black bodies in 1689 and were warned that they should be brought carefully because science taught that black bodies could not survive in Canada's fridgid climate. When Léveillé visited the hospital throughout the 1730s and early 1740s, the medical staff based their theoretical framework on humoral medicine as described by Hippocrates.

Mathieu Léveillé was one of very few slaves living in New France; however, various First Nation tribes occasionally sold humans to their French allies. Some of these aboriginal slaves also lived in Quebec. In 1744, five thousand settlers owned forty-seven slaves, thirty of whom were aboriginal and seventeen of whom were black. Slaves counted for less than one percent of the population. Most black slaves were born in the Americas, like Léveillé and Angelique-Denise. Those brought from the Caribbean spoke French and were instructed in Catholicism. The majority of slaves served as domestics and underlined the status of the people who owned them. To demonstrate his wealth and power, the governor of New France exploited child slaves as footmen. The King owned Léveillé and used his slave to carry out his justice.

Léveillé's life, unique in its own ways, reflects common themes of slavery in the French Atlantic and offers insight into the little-known experience of slaves in Canada. These themes have been studied for the last fifty years. In particular, historians have been

unable to conclusively determine whether there were few black slaves in Canada or whether the importation and presence of slaves was poorly documented. As a result, case studies have been a key means of understanding how and why slaves were brought to New France. Léveillé and Angelique-Denise were unique because their importations were documented. This historiography has often omitted the Caribbean and its connections to slave ownership along the St. Lawrence Valley. Martinique, with its 40,000 slaves, was one of a handful of French slave societies that participated with New France in an empire. The earliest historical studies of slavery focus on class rather than individual agency. The documents surrounding Léveillé's life offer their own answers to these questions: What factors encouraged and discouraged slavery in Canada? What was the influence of the French Empire and its slave societies on New France? How did Léveillé respond to his position as a slave in New France?

Outline

This thesis begins with an examination of the historiography to which it contributes. Historians such as Marcel Trudel, Denyse Beaugrand-Champagne, Afua Cooper, and Brett Rushforth have each added to the study of slavery in New France. Trudel's formative study *L'esclavage au Canada français; histoire et conditions de l'esclavage* was published in 1960, which laid the foundation for studying slavery in French-Canada.[1] While the American historiography on slavery evolved, this was the only major work on slavery in New France for quite some time. Only in the last decade have historians re-examined slaves' lives in New France. Many of these have been invaluable interpretations of legal documents.

[1] Marcel Trudel, *L'esclavage Au Canada Français; Histoire Et Conditions De L'esclavage* (Quebec: Presses Universitaires Laval, 1960).

Studies of the trial of Marie-Joseph Angelique have shown what life was like as a black slave woman in Montreal.[2] Rushforth has perhaps made the largest contribution since Trudel. He works from a hemispheric perspective and steps out of Canada to understand how the complex series of military and trade alliances brought aboriginal slaves to the St. Lawrence Valley. Methodologically, he does not tell the story of Europeans settling a continent, but rather how natives interacted with newcomers to build Canada.[3] This methodology creates an important study of early modern North America. Trudel provides a narrative that perpetuated and intensified French-Canadian nationalism while it fortified perceptions of national boundaries through the scant inclusion of indigenous people. Rushforth's attention of the interaction between native and newcomers acknowledges that indigenous peoples lived in Canada before the settler state.

This case study takes a particular interest in the corporality of colonialism as it is emblemized by Mathieu Léveillé's body. The horrors of the slave system stayed with Léveillé as they did with all slaves brought from the Caribbean to New France. National histories of Canada have omitted the relationship between the Caribbean and Canada. The second chapter of this thesis studies the relationship between French colonies as demonstrated in the evolution of government policies regarding black bodies and the assessment of Léveillé's health. Black slaves were effectively banned from this northern colony until 1689, at which point the king allowed black slaves but cautioned against

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[2] Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angelique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montreal* (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers, Ltd., 2006).

[3] Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slave Trades in New France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

importing them in large numbers because it was believed that black bodies could not thrive in Canada's climate.[4] Léveillé's doctors at the Hôtel-Dieu diagnosed him with depression resulting from the humoral imbalance of his dark complexion being out of place in temperate Canada, continuing earlier prejudice on which they based economic decisions. The result was that Canada had few black slaves—just seventeen lived in Quebec in 1744.[5] The third chapter examines how the slave society of Martinique marred Léveillé's body. We know that he was convicted of three counts of marronage before being pardoned for these in 1733; the combined punishments for these three offenses meant he was branded with the *fleur-de-lys*, his ears were cut off, he was hamstrung, and, on his final capture, he was sentenced to death. His sentence was commuted and he was sent to Quebec to be the executioner of New France. This chapter argues that the formative experiences of living in a slave society in the Caribbean stayed with individuals who were sold into slavery in Canada, diminishing the barrier between a society with slaves and a slave society within the same empire. The few slaves who did live in New France were brought from the Caribbean and were an extension of this system. The final chapter responds to these punishments and his career as the executioner. Léveillé's punishments for marronage disfigured his body. He had no ears and, without hamstrings, he stumbled through the town in which his dark complexion already separated him from settlers. His role as executioner forced him not only to take the lives of others but to punish slave resistance. This weighed on him; he was lonely and full of regret. When the government offered to buy him a wife, he

[4] Memorandum to Denonville and Champigny, May 1, 1689, in ANQ, *Ordres du roi*, series B, vol. 15, 108.

[5] "Recensement de Quebec."

asked for a woman who had also been sentenced to death, a request they granted. Angelique-Denise escaped execution and was imported to Canada to live. The hangman was kind and found a way to forgive himself for his service.[6]

This case study allowed for a greater understanding of slavery as experienced in New France. Early modern climate and medical understanding limited the importation of black slaves. French attitudes towards racial difference dictated that black bodies could not thrive in a cold climate, which produced an imbalance of black bile. Why, then, were there black slaves in New France? The few slaves that were imported from the Caribbean represented the hegemony of slave holder wealth and power. The disjointed French empire weakened this connection and meant that few black slaves were trafficked to Canada. Those that were brought to Canada, such as Mathieu Léveillé and Angélique-Denise, were an extension of Caribbean slave society. Their bodies were marred by slavery and disfigured. Léveillé was able to use this system to spare the life of his fiancée when he asked for a wife who had been sentenced to death. Through their attempts to escape, these two brave people resisted a system powerful enough to demand their deaths under the guise of justice. Léveillé defied this system and its conception of justice.

Terminology

The North American territory claimed by France, at its height, stretched from the Atlantic, over the Great Lakes, spanning the Mississippi River, reaching to the river's mouth, and into the Great Planes. The children of French immigrants called their settler state along the St. Lawrence "Canada" and they were *Canadiens*. Canadian historians have a

[6] Lettre de Louis XV au Champigny et La Croix en fev. 16 1741. Quoted from Bile, Escalve et bourreau, 142.

habit of institutionalizing the history of the territory of modern-day Canada; this paper does not limit itself in that way because this habit of thought omits the interior that included the modern-day American Midwest. In writing about the colony, I am referring to the multinational sphere of influence built by the French and native peoples.[7] When referring to "New France," I am referring to the alliances within this sphere; Canada refers to newcomers and the land they settled along the St. Lawrence; and Quebec—as not yet a province in the temporality of this paper—singularly refers to the capital of New France.

Throughout out this thesis, I use the terms "black" and "aboriginal" to refer to people held in bondage. I choose these from the variety of other words that might be used to describe the racial groups of those held in bondage. I choose "black" as opposed to "African" because, factually speaking, slaves with black skin in New France were likely born in the Americas. "African" implies that they would be more in tune with African cultures through speaking African languages and practicing African faiths. They did not; slaves with black skin at least superficially practiced Christianity and spoke European languages.[8] "Aboriginal" is used throughout this paper to refer to slaves taken from the interior and brought to the St. Lawrence Valley. I chose this word over others in part because the people indigenous to Canada are referred to under the name "aboriginal" in the repatriated Canadian Constitution of 1982. Indigenous is a more precise word and became prominent in the international indigenous rights movement, yet the two words have slightly different

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[7] Allen Greer, "National, Transnational, and Hypernational Historiographies: New France Meets Early American History," *Canadian Historical Review* 91, no. 4 (2010): 701-703.

[8] Trudel, *L'esclavage au Canada français*, 87-94.

meanings as indigenous refers to those with a claim to a territory while aboriginal does not automatically carry that meaning. A member of the Pawnee tribe was indigenous to the interior, but after being sold and trafficked to the St. Lawrence Valley, they were not indigenous to that land. For this reason, a slave native to this continent is an aboriginal slave.[9]

[9] "Aboriginal Identity & Terminology," First Nations and Indigenous Studies, University of British Columbia, accessed: April 13, 2016, http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/identity/aboriginal-identity-terminology.html.

Chapter One: Historiography

The Canadian national narrative has typically remembered the welcoming of fugitive slaves from the United States and, in the process, has overlooked its own history of slave ownership. The institution of slavery never grounded itself in Canada as deeply as it had in other colonies and had more or less faded from Canadian society before the British Empire emancipated their slaves in 1833. Slave ownership decreased to the point that, while slaveholders in other colonies collected damages in their lost human property, British North America received none of the funds to pay for these damages. Slavery effectively ceased to exist.[10] Thirty years later, during the American Civil War, a historian responded to the already formulated identity that "Canada never had slaves" with a lightly annotated collection of documents that underline how people had in fact been held in bondage throughout modern-day Canada.[11] This might very well have been the first history of slavery in Canada and demonstrated a primary burden of historians: we first have to prove that Canada had slaves.

The historiography of slavery in Canada grew during the last fifty years. The subject was often limited to the institution's marginality and its demise.[12] This narrative had the dangerous potential of making slavery seem negligible. It turned "Canada never had slaves" into "Canada had a few slaves a long time ago." More recent studies of favoured slavery's evolution over time in such a way that it remained part of our history. Studies have kept a

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[10] British Parliamentary Papers, session 1837–38 (215), volume XLVIII.

[11] Jacques Viger, *De l'esclavage en Canada* (Montréal, Impr. par Duvernay, 1859).

[12] Harvey Amani Whitfield, "The Struggle over Slavery in the Maritime Colonies," *Acadiensis* 41, no. 2 (2012), 17-44.

mind toward inclusivity; slaves were a marginal but diverse group. Historians paid careful attention to constructions of nationalism. Looking beyond Canada's national boarders was a natural consequence of these arguments; the memory that Canada never had slaves ignored that both the French and British Empires as well as aboriginal tribes practiced slavery. Separating "Canadians" from these groups excused their connections to disparate parts of the world that supported slavery. The larger empires to which Canada once belonged and the indigenous land on which it was founded were all part of a world that owned slaves.[13]

These considerations shaped this chapter's exploration of the previous studies of Mathieu Léveillé's life. To André Lachance, Léveillé was the "Negro hangman"[14] in the line of executioners in New France, while Jane Coleman Harbison claimed to be the first person to have studied his life as a Canadian slave.[15] In the last year, Serge Bilé, a Franco-Ivorian journalist, published a novel recreating the pathos of this Atlantic slave's difficult journey.[16]

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[13] The generalization "Canada had no slaves" is based in part on Trudel's assessment of his contemporaries' beliefs as well as Viger's a hundred years before. Both of these works perpetuated the idea that slavery was in Canada's past. For example, Trudel titled a chapter of his book, "Do Canadian's have slave blood?" (or at least this is how his translator titled it) in which he demonstrated the genealogical connection between slaves and possible descendants but did not have the theoretical tools to scrutinize the connections between slavery, memory, and national identity—nor did he include that Haitian immigrants in Montreal, for example, are Canadians who like carry "slave blood." Nevertheless, Trudel, as the best example of early writing in Canadian slave studies, did not connect slavery to Canada's present and leaves it in Canada's past.

[14] Lachance, "Léveillé, Mathieu."

[15] Jane Coleman Harbison, "The Black Executioner: The Intercolonial Interactions of a Martinican Slave in Quebec, 1733-1743," (Masters thesis, McGill University, 2011).

[16] Serge Bilé, *Esclave at bourreau: l'histoire incroyable de Mathieu Léveillé, esclave de Martinique devenu bourreau en Nouvelle-France* (Quebec: Septentrion, 2015).

Each of these reflected the habits of thought at the time in which they were written. Lachance took a solidly biographical approach that limited interpretation and hardly mentions that Léveillé lived in slavery. In 2011, Harbison defended a thesis that stayed close to the American historiography and included, for example, a chapter on Léveillé's "social death," referring to the process that allowed for the master-slave system to recreate itself in the antebellum South. Harbison did not yet have the privilege of using Rushforth's *Bonds of Alliance,* a major contribution to the historiography, but was able to draw on his doctorial thesis. In this way, Harbison participated in a historiographical moment concerned with the inclusion of intersectional power dynamics. What it meant to be a slave was coloured by the gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and disability/ability of slaves. Bilé published *Escalve et bourreau* in 2015 with the intent of re-examining injustices that formed the world in which we live and wrote much more militantly than academic studies. His indignant tone lacked gravity, but the novel was passionate.

These three historians framed an analysis of the historiography of slavery in New France. With Lachance, Harbison, and Bilé in hand, we can see a clear evolution in the habits of thought. Lachance and his contemporaries—important here being Robin Winks, Eugene Genovese, and Marcel Trudel—have an interest in class, and their understanding leaves little room for individuals aside from dictionary biographies. On our side of the millennium, we have historians such as Harbison who have been influenced by Ira Berlin and Brett Rushforth to understand the intersectionality of power and a renewed dedication to the nuance of change over time. Finally, Bilé is not the only person to revisit the history of slavery to politicize this memory; Walter Johnson's recent work is more damning of the institution than we have seen before.

Early Works

Slavery in the American South formed the ideology of white supremacy which in turn intensified slavery as a system that degraded humans. This was the world the slaveholders made. Prior to the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, the result of slavery meant that studies in slavery supported ideologies of racial difference. The conversation started by such events as *Brown v. Board* found its way into the writing of presentist historians, such as Kenneth M. Stampp, to revaluate the history of slavery. His work, *The Peculiar Institution*, embraced a new understanding of race. Stampp wrote:

> I have assumed that slaves were merely ordinary human beings, that innately Negros *are*, after all, only white men with black skins, nothing more, nothing less. This gives quite a new and different meaning to the bondage of black men; it gives their story a relevance to men of all races which it never seemed to have before.[17]

His work was revolutionary in that he removed himself from the racist beliefs that were, in large part, created by the institution he studied. The work that came out of this assumption lacked the nuance (or fragmentation) seen in more recent literature. His metanarrative of slavery gave little regard to its evolution and adaptation to a changing political atmosphere or geography.

Shortly after Stampp revolutionized slavery studies, other Canadians and Americans added their names to the historiography. Marcel Trudel dedicated a large portion of his professional career to the study of slavery and slave-ownership in French Canada and produced two major volumes of work: *L'esclavage au Canada français: histoire et conditions de l'esclavage* and a second volume subtitled *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs*

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[17] Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), vii.

propriétaries. The latter responded to the lack of sources on slavery in Canada and compiled the records of all people Trudel assumed lived in slavery in French Canada. In turn, these numbers allowed Trudel to write his own metanarrative of slavery in French Canada. Again, very little attention was paid to change over time. While Stampp would have benefited from an understanding of the difference between slavery in Virginia during the New Republic compared to the Mississippi Valley on the eve of the Civil War, Trudel's impressive study paid minimal attention to the differences between slavery under the autocratic and Catholic French regime or proto-capitalist British regime. He ignored the world before French Canada and the world that came after emancipation. Trudel could not be expected to immediately find what made slavery uniquely Canadian on the first go, and his metanarrative forgoes uniquely Canadian questions. For example, nearly two-thirds of people held in bondage in French Canada were aboriginal slaves. Trudel included them in his analysis but did not study aboriginal agency in the dynamics of the system.

Robin Winks' *The Blacks in Canada: A History* was distinct from Trudel's work in very limited ways. When discussing French Canada, Winks relied heavily on Trudel's work—including the privilege of access to the unpublished manuscript of Trudel's second volume.[18] In writing *The Blacks in Canada*, he never set out to write about aboriginal slaves, but the conversation regarding slavery would have gained strength through their inclusion. Winks' chapter on French-Canadian slavery is little more than a translation of Trudel's work. He located slavery within a much larger narrative and organized it chronologically. Winks complemented slavery along the St. Lawrence with a look at the Maritimes and the

[18] Robin Winks, *The Blacks of Canada: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971; reprint, Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1997), 24.

changes brought by Conquest and the American Revolution. Winks went on to show how this population remained important in the history of Canada, which is the greatest strength of his work.

These class narratives left little room for the agency of singular individuals. Within this habit of thought, a biography from the discipline of history written about Mathieu Léveillé offered little more than a chronology of the events in his life. André Lachance included Léveillé in *Le bourreau au Canada sous le regime français*[19] and later in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*.[20] These entries singularize him as a person in the teleological progression of society. To Lachance, Léveillé's life is only significant in that his constant illness was proof to the French that black slaves could not adapt to the climate of New France. Later works by Lachance transferred his bulleted list of events into a connected chronology.[21] Lachance studied criminal history, not slavery, but interpreted the government's purchase of a slave to be the executioner as a demonstration of the difficulty to fill this position as well as the impracticality, he wrote, of owning black slaves in Canada.[22]

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[19] André Lachance, "Un maître des haute oeuvres noir, Mathieu Léveillé, 1733-1743," in *Le bourreau au Canada sous le regime français* (Québec : Société historique de Québec, 1966).

[20] "Léveillé, Mathieu."

[21] André Lachance, *Délinquants, juges et bourreaux en Nouvelle-France* (Quebec: Libre Expression, 2004), and André Lachance, *Juger et punir en Nouvelle-France: chroniques de la vie quotidienne au XVIIIe siècle* (Quebec, Libre Expression, 2011).

[22] Ibid. Other work by Lachance include: *Délinquants, juges et bourreaux en Nouvelle-France* (Quebec: Libre Expression, 2011) and *Juger et punir en Nouvelle-France: chroniques de la vie quotidienne au XVIIIe siècle* (Quebec, Libre Expression, 2011).

Eugene Genovese was employed at Sir George Williams University in Montreal soon after. Genovese had as large an impact on the study of slavery in New France (while never properly writing about Canadian slavery) as the study of New France had on him. Genovese applied a Marxist teleology to studying slavery and placed it in class history: slavery was the New World's manorial system. Throughout his oeuvre, Genovese used the term "seigneurial" to refer to the master-slave class relationship, a word he likely became familiar with while living in French Canada. Use of the term was limited to Southern plantation systems and cannot apply to slaveholders in the northern parts of the continent. He is not saying that Canada did not have slaves, but rather that the slave system here was not the system that it was in the American South. Nevertheless, we can see that in Genovese's mind the Southern plantation system and the seigneurial system of New France were comparable.[23] Interaction and negotiations between classes of people are important. By making this connection, Genovese changed the way that historians have conceptualized how a plutocracy profited from the mass exploitation of plantations of slaves. His omission of slaveholders in areas with a very small population demonstrated his habit of thought that singular interactions between people were historically insignificant in the larger history of class war.

Taken together, these histories were problematic because they omitted the agency of individuals and their ability to effect change and continuity. For example, while much was gained from intellectual connection of serfdom to slavery in the South, we lose the uniqueness of the system that was developed there by English settlers whose institutions

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[23] Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Press, 1972), 5.

were notably different from the French—namely, that Chesapeake planters were not representatives of the Crown while seigneurs were. Bacon's Rebellion—one of the most important events in the creation of race in the history of the United States—restructured Virginia's institutions towards "seignurialism" and demonstrated that the plantation system was homegrown, not imported from the Old World, and unique to the United States.

National Works

Since the 1990s, historians responded to these foundational interpretations in the study of slavery. Historians took a fragmented piece of the history of slavery and polished it with careful attention to changes over time and place.

Ira Berlin's *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* was one of the more ambitious and methodologically important studies of slavery. Berlin took care to distinguish how slavery and slaveholding were experienced in different geographies and at different periods in time. Genovese's use of "seigneurial" is replaced with "slave societies" as opposed to a "society with slaves." In this binary, a slave society is one in which the economy is based in slavery and the master-slave relationship is reflected in a superstructure where slaveholders place themselves as autocrats. In such a society, wealth and class are measured by the ownership of humans. A "society with slaves," such as New France, is one in which "slaves were marginal to the central productive processes; slavery was just one form of labor among many."[24] Bacon's Rebellion, Berlin argues, moved the Chesapeake economy and society from a society with slaves to a slave society. Similar to the French and Spanish in the Caribbean, British slaveholders developed a racialized

[24] Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1998), 7-8.

code to protect them from the people they claimed to own, and, as Berlin argues persuasively, modern racism wove its place into our institutions. The historiographical import of this argument was that slavery was not a continuation of Old World serfdom but a new creation. Berlin demonstrated new habits of thought that are representative of recent historians. From their conversation, the study of New France gained an understanding that facilitated Genovese's arguments on class, which were refined by Berlin to include areas without a class of slaves. Berlin's assessment of how slavery created racism would not be entirely possible without Genovese.

Historians seem to have spent the first decade of the 2000s writing biographic studies of people living in bondage in New France. In 1734, a slave woman named Marie-Joseph Angelique was accused of burning down Montreal. Her court records were essential in the creation of Denyse Beaugrand-Champagne's *Le Procès de Marie-Josèphe Angélique* and Afua Cooper's *The Hanging of Angélique*. These studies offered some of the best examinations of what it was like to be a black woman living in slavery in New France. Marie-Joseph's agency was perfectly highlighted in these biographies, even when the central arguments were that she was used as scapegoat by the majority white culture that oppressed her; that is, while slavery defined her position in society, we should not be led to believe that slaves had no decision-making process and therefore no freedom and no means to resist, contrary to what the institution and the ideology it left us with led people to think (this habit of thought can be seen in Trudel's work and limited Lachance's interpretation of Léveillé). The case studies by these authors highlighted the decisions she and society made. That they focus on a woman also reclaims the position of women in New France. This is an important addition to the sources used by historians to understand

slavery along the St. Lawrence. Trudel and those who relayed his work relied on historical demography to find trends in figures. Beaugrand-Champagne and Cooper, through the employment of this case study in their works, wrote about how one person experienced slavery rather than working from generalization based on parish and government documents. In many ways, the use of a case study such as this is the opposite of Trudel's demographics and lacks contextualization to the greater population. Problematically, Marie-Joseph as a single individual was not representative of all people, especially because she was alleged to have burnt down a city. The court documents come from white sources convinced that this woman committed arson—she lived a very different life than other slaves.

These works were limited nationally. Berlin refined Genovese's seigneurial thesis while Cooper and Beaugrand-Champagne better inserted women into Canadian racial history. They also became more aware that national histories limited scholarship and worked from outdated nationalist agendas. More recent work—typically in the second decade of the century—undoes national boundaries. This thesis draws from slave studies outside the province of Quebec, unlike Lachance and Trudel and to a much larger degree than Cooper or Beaugrand-Champagne.

Post-National Works

Post-national studies focused on connections between areas outside of the St. Lawrence Valley and their effect on New France's urban centers. Slavery in the St. Lawrence Valley relied much more on slaves from the interior than the Maritimes of the eighteenth century, which were significantly more connected to the Atlantic and brought black slaves from further south. The largest movement of either free or enslaved blacks

followed the American Revolution; by this time, the practice of aboriginal slavery had died out. This history was studied recently by such historians as Kenneth Donovan, Frank Mackey, Harvey Amani Whitfield, and Brett Rushforth. These studies demonstrated the direction of studies of slavery in what is now Canada. Serge Bilé's *Esclave et Bourreau*, a popular history, reflected the trend best in his work that is centered in the Caribbean and looks outward to create a fantastically Atlantic study.

Brett Rushforth's *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slaveries in New France* uncovered the experience of aboriginal slaves. Trudel borrowed from the American historiography when examining documentation on slaves in French Canada; however, the British of the American colonies seldom employed aboriginal slave labour and the historiography did not prepare Trudel to assess aboriginal slavery. Rushforth creatively mixed government documents, court papers, church records, and anthropology to draw a picture of aboriginal slavery. His text moved from the St. Lawrence Valley to the Mississippi River Valley to study first people sold as slaves to the French in the 1600s through Conquest. Rushforth had a particular interest in Montreal in part because there were more aboriginal slaves held there than in Quebec or Detroit. Through a mix of sources, he connected slavery there to places with larger populations. Rushforth responded well to the lack of sources on the experience of aboriginal slaves in Montreal and used three court proceedings to ascertain what would be an average life for a person living in slavery.

Kenneth Donovan studied the lives of slaves in île Royale. Donovan maintained an Atlantic perspective due to the fact that most slaves on the island were black and brought from the Caribbean; that the island was a society with slaves made it comparable to New France and New England. Donovan's greatest strength was his use of personal examples to

show who slaves were and what they did to contribute to the success of the colony. He focused on how slaves contributed to the society in which they lived. This argument differed in tone from other studies in that it focused less on the fact that the contributions of slaves resulted from exploitation (which of course they did) and more on how this exploitation was also important work that slaves produced. He focused on how slaves formed communities and were individuals who "did not remain socially dead. They formed relationships with the families for whom they worked and the children they likely nursed. They also formed relationships with each other."[25] This conclusion contrasted with other historians, like Jane Coleman Harbison, who concluded that slaves were socially isolated in majority European communities. Societies with slaves were not a place of "social death" but rather a place where people held in bondage had greater autonomy and more opportunities to socialize than plantation slaves.

Studies of Canadian abolitionism and attitudes towards free blacks have been major contributions to the study of slavery and race. Harvey Amani Whitfield looked at slavery in the Maritimes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when significant numbers of Black Loyalists lived in freedom. By this time and in this place, slavery and freedom were as much economic issues as they were racial. Antagonism towards blacks defined their inclusion in society and this historical fact demanded his use of a racial perspective. He underlined Berlin's conclusion that slavery made race as much as it made class in North America and that, even once freed, blacks continued to be degraded by both

[25] Kenneth Donovan, "Slaves in Île Royale, 1713-1758," *French Colonial History* 5 (2004), 37.

race and class through today.[26] The transition from slavery to freedom is also the topic of Frank Mackey's *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840*. His archival work is impressive as he seeks to find and recognize black people in the city during these years. His contribution is not only important to the historiography in itself but also allows him to critique Trudel's findings. Mackey writes:

> "[His study focused on] the roughly 370 black slaves whom [Trudel] locates at Montreal from 1760 onward. We believe that perhaps as many as 150 of those, or roughly 40 per cent, were not slaves while in French Canada, or were slaves but not black, or were black slaves counted in Trudel's survey more than once at Montreal, or at Montreal and some other place. On the other hand, about 100 black slaves who show up at Montreal are not listed. If we are correct, any statistical analysis based on such a compilation is vitiated from the outset."[27]

This was not to say that we should dismiss Trudel entirely. His work was significant, admittedly overly ambitious, and provided a starting point for historians to understand this dynamic population; rather, we should be cautious in using case studies such as Angélique or Léveillé because they risk saying that Canadian slavery was negligibly small. One might read Mackey's work almost as an agglomeration of several hundred case studies compared to Trudel's cliometrics.

Anya Zilbertein studied the relationship between climate, race, and political economy of the British Empire in her book *A Temperate Empire: Making Climate Change in Early America*. In 1796, the governor of Nova Scotia received a Maroon community from Jamaica after successfully petitioning for their migration to his colony. He fought this battle

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[26] Whitfield, "Slavery in the Maritime Colonies."

[27] Frank Mackey, *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2010), 96.

against Members of Parliament who favored sending the Maroons to Sierra Leon instead, where they would remain in the tropics and far from what they believed to be a frigid and inhospitable northern colony unfit for human life. The conversation around this reflects medical understanding that black bodies could not survive there as well as conceptions made by nonresidents of the colony that the climate was unacceptable. The governor used this opportunity to create a test case in which to force a "rhetorical climate change," as Zilberstein termed it. That is, he hoped to change the perception that the climate was unfit for human life to instead read that Nova Scotia is hospitable to those believed to be most vulnerable to it. The test case failed and in 1800 the Maroons were sent to Sierra Leon. Humoral understanding the fitness of black bodies to certain climate zones coloured this conversation (and others) but Zilberstein argued that race "never uniformly guided policy-making across the empire." Her focus on the relationship between race and political economy and the way in which medical and scientific vocabulary was used by those in power informed the writing of this thesis in the deepest of ways. The inclusion of sources speaking about migration between London, the Caribbean, Canada, and Africa supplements Rushforth's continental perspective with the Atlantic. [28]

In the last few years, studies on slavery became more militantly aware of the creation of race and racism. Walter Johnson remarked that slavery in the Antebellum South was cruel in the ways that it recognized the humanity of its victims. Walter Johnson argued

[28] Anya Zilberstein, *A Temperate Empire: Making Climate Change in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), Chapter 4.

that "paternalism was rooted in perversion."[29] The slave dealers of New Orleans marketed young women and girls specifically to be raped.[30] Slaves would also be purchased to cook and to care for children; the practice of having a slave as a wet nurse was one of the acts most vividly recognizing a slave's humanity; that this woman was separated from her own children is dehumanizing. Slavery exploited both.[31] Johnson's *River of Dark Dreams* examines the relationship between slavery and the Antebellum plutocracy committed to the perpetuation of racism. The slave system in the American South would not be possible without the exclusion and genocide of the indigenous people who lived there. It is not enough for historians to connect how people formed a class. One woman purchased by a white man to be raped and to endure the abuse of his jealous wife is still a woman. Her tortured soul is still a soul and as historians, we should be careful not to fall into old habits and deny that when we agglomerate her into a class. She was one of many women whose humanity was underlined by the violence that took it away.

How have historians translated the circumscription and subscription of slaves' humanity to New France? Serge Bilé explored this in *Esclave et bourreau*. Bilé often referred to Léveillé's status as a "sous-homme." However, this was done with little regard to historical method. Rarely did he work chronologically. When Léveillé fell ill, Bilé suggested that the man feared for his life: maybe the people who owned him would execute

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[29] Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 192.

[30] Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 113-115.

[31] Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 196-197.

him for being, effectively, a bad investment.[32] The previous authors came from the United States or Canada; Bilé was Franco-Ivorian and wrote from the Caribbean. He wrote far from the national limitations seen in Lachance or Trudel's writing and instead offered a perspective that examined sources from a variety of places.

Conclusion

Where does this leave the study of slavery in New France? In what directions should we head? What sources provide the best understanding of life in bondage in New France?

Historians of slavery in the United States have the benefit of using slave narratives and other first-hand accounts of slavery. More recent works have relied on the use of legal documents—which carry less bias than, say, a master's journal or letters—to see how people living in slavery participated in our world. Historians of New France do not have first-hand accounts and have relied on bureaucratic, church, and legal sources for some time. Much has been gained from Trudel's *Dictionnaire*, and his work compiling these sources is specifically thanked mid argument by almost all New France historians mentioned in this chapter. Angelique's trial records as well as the trials used by Rushforth in his monograph provide testimony from the mouths of slaves and are the closest we have to first-hand accounts of slavery. These sources provide evidence of the character and quality of life in New France.

Drawing from the historiography, it became apparent that the strongest authors considered a variety of aspects in order to create the most methodologically sound study. The strongest studies considered the intersections of power. Black slaves were not the only

[32] Bilé, *Esclave et bourreau*, 78.

slaves as some Atlantic studies have implied, but most slaves were aboriginal people. A historian should not write about one and omit the other and should consider how one group of slaves affected the other group. Another consideration in studying New France is the lack of sources, which made case studies important contributions that underline the humanity of marginalized groups. At the same time, case studies needed to connect that person to the group in question in order for this example to have value. A great case study examined the humanity of slaves here. Did they suffer "social death" as Harbison argued, or, like Rushforth found, does living in bondage in New France carry a level of liberty unseen in other parts of the slaveholding world?

For this thesis, the most important historical problem to be explored is the connection between black slaves in New France and in the Caribbean. Black slaves had been considered a luxury good in eighteenth century New France created and shipped in the same way as commodity crops.[33] They were connected to the Atlantic and this connection reflected French continuity within its own very fragmented empire. Just as Rushforth connected aboriginal people to their lives before Europeans claimed to own them—highlighting their agency and value as people—this study sought to understand the connection between black slaves in New France and the Caribbean. Léveillé's well-documented life offered this opportunity because he was noted in government letters as the "nègre servant de maitre des hautes œuvres."[34] He was one of few slaves who has a record throughout the French empire.

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[33] Trudel, *L'esclavage Au Canada Français*, 116-121.

[34] Lettre de Louis XV au Champigny et La Croix en fev. 16 1741. Quoted from Bile, *Escalve et bourreau,* 142.

Chapter Two: "Les fasse mourir": Climate and Slavery

Introduction

The social processes that forced Mathieu Léveillé to be the executioner for New France did not begin when he stepped onto the banks of the St. Lawrence. Nor did they begin when Hocquart wrote to the office of the Marine asking for an executioner. Rather, the processes that brought him to New France should be examined from the beginning of slavery in French colonies, rather than the singular colony along the St. Lawrence. Colonists throughout the empire's diverse climate zones developed distinctive interpretations of racial difference. These interpretations came into conversation with each other most when colonies compared themselves, such as when New France wanted to mimic the economic success of the Caribbean. The office of the Marine sent Léveillé from Martinique to New France within this conversation.

French settlement that exploited black bodies began in the Caribbean when the first twenty-four settlers brought forty black slaves in the 1620s.[35] Slaveholders believed that slaves taken from Africa were more capable labourers because they fit the tropical heat that smothered French workers. In the same belief, settlers did not bring black slaves to Canada until the 1690s because they believed that black bodies were unfit for the climate. In 1689, Louis XIV permitted slaves to be sent to Canada but encouraged the settlers to proceed with caution as he did not want to send unseasoned slaves just for them to die of

[35] Clarence J. Mumford, *The Black Ordeal of Slavery and Slave Trading in the French West Indies, 1625-1715* vol. II *The Middle Passage and the Plantation Economy* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 362.

cold because "la difference du climat de ces nègres a celuy de Canada ne les fasse mourir."[36] The French empire of the seventeenth century strongly subscribed to a humoral understanding of racial difference and discouraged the forced migration of tropical bodies to Canada because it would cause a humoral imbalance too great for the slave to bear.

Forty years later, in 1728, from the same offices in Versailles, the government recommended that the Sovereign Council of New France purchase a black slave to serve as their executioner.[37] Léveillé's importation represents a milestone in slavery in New France because it marked a moment when the government admitted that black bodies were able to at least survive in Canada. Even so, Léveillé was diagnosed in 1740 with "*mélancholie*" because of his homesickness and seeming inability to adjust to Quebec's climate.[38]

The French believed black bodies could not survive in Canada. To this end, they self-legitimized their colonization through medicine as a means of pacifying native people by comforting them during small pox epidemics as well as treating both aboriginal and black slaves. The hospital that treated Léveillé was built in the 1630s as a means of strengthening French contacts with aboriginals. Textual evidence showed a consensus that black bodies could not survive in Canada. The few black slaves permitted in Canada, such as Léveillé, confirmed French beliefs about racial fitness, slavery, and climate.

Humoral Medicine

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[36] Memorandum to Denonville and Champigny, May 1, 1689, in ANQ, *Ordres du roi*, series B, vol. 15, 108.

[37] Lettre de Ministre à Beauharnois et Dupuy, 18 Mai 1728, Fonds des Colonies. SérieC11A, Correspondance Générale, Canada, vol. 50, fol. 492-493 v, National Archives of Canada.

[38] Lachance, *Délinquants, juges et bourreaux,* 182-183.

Medical science in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries drew from ancient texts. Jean-Francois Gaultier was appointed as the King's Doctor in New France and worked as well in the Hôtel-Dieu beginning in 1742. He enrolled in law classes taught by the attorney general of the colony and was appointed to the Sovereign Counsel in 1744. Not only was Gauliter a physician and a bureaucrat, he was also an academic. He studied the academic writing of Michal Sarrazin, the previous physician, and continued his botanical studies. In 1745, he was elected a corresponding member of the *Académie royale des sciences* in Paris. This election was in part based on earlier work in which the Gaultier connected the weather to mortality. In a 1743 letter published by the *Académie*, he wrote that he agreed with Hippocrates' humoral framework of health and used it as the theoretical framework of his own work.[39]

The humoral understanding of science was developed and described in Hippocrates's writing:

> The Human body contains blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. These are the things that make up its constitution and cause its pains and health. Health is primarily that state in which these constituent substances are in the correct proportion to each other, both in strength and quantity, and are well mixed. Pain occurs when one of the substances presents either a deficiency or an excess, or is separated in the body and not mixed with others.[40]

These humors were represented in the complexions of people and matched their geography, which informed early modern science that taught that certain humans were built for the climate in which they were born and moving from one climate zone to

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[39] Jean-François Gaultier, "Observations botanico-météorologiques faites à Québec," in *Histoire de l'Académie royale des sciences* (1744). BNF NUMP-253.

[40] Hippocrates, *Hippocratic Writings*, ed. G. E. R. Lloyd, John Chadwick, and W. N. Mann, *(Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983),* 262.

another—for example, from a temperate climate to a tropical one—resulted in an imbalance in humors that could manifest in a number of ways such a depression or physical illness. Indeed, the Greek word for "black bile" was μέλαινα χολή (melaina kholé) and was, of course, the etymological root of today's "melancholy."[41] Removing a person from their geography resulted in poor health because the humoral constitution of a person—the liquids in their bodies—became imbalanced. Diseases were the result of bodily imbalances.[42] There were, however, medical remedies. The imbalance would go away, they believed, as soon as a person was seasoned to the climate. This might involve manually correcting the imbalance with blood letting or other medical procedures. For Europeans moving to the tropics, the physical act of sweating corrected the humors as a person's blood dried out as it acclimated, much like the seasoning or drying out of wood.[43] The medical understanding of racial difference at the time was used to justify slavery in the Caribbean: black bodies laboured better in the Caribbean than the bodied of white labourers because of climactic fitness. It followed that tropical bodies should not move to temperate climates such as Quebec.

Health Care in New France

Health care in New France was inseparable from the Church. The Church believed that diseases—for example, smallpox—were a tool of the Creator to bring people to him.

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Ré nald Lessard, *Au Temps De La Petite Vérole: La Médecine Au Canada Aux XVIIe Et XVIIIe Siècles* (Qué bec: Septentrion, 2012), 18-19.

[43] Karen Ordahl Kupperman, "Fear of Hot Climates in the Anglo-American Colonial Experience," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1984): 215.

Humoral medicine did not fully explain diseases like smallpox nor the epidemics afflicting North America's native peoples. A desire to colonize and convert these peoples added a layer of explanation of disease to Hippocratic medicine. To the Catholics of New France, disease was a warning and divine punishment. A nineteenth century French theologian, working from eighteenth century texts, taught that "Dieu vous a inspiré plus d'une fois de quitter votre péché, et de retourner à lui: vous n'en avez rien fait, vous avez méprisé ses avertissements: il vous envoie une maladie fort sérieuse qui vous oblige à recourir à sa miséricorde, et à vous soumettre aux ordres de sa souveraineté."[44] Medicine in New France subscribed to both Christian teachings and pre-modern science. The superstition that disease was a punishment from God invited treatment of the soul as well as the treatment of humoral imbalances.[45]

The suffering of indigenous people was therefore an opportunity to be exploited by seventeenth century colonizers. In the 1630s, the Jesuits asked for a hospital in order to centralize healing as a means of conversion and pacification. Health care self-legitimized French settlement and established its place in the French Atlantic. The Hôtel-Dieu de Quebec was an important institution in Léveillé's life and was equally important in the documentation of his life that allowed us to better understand race in New France. If health care cannot be separated from the Church, Léveillé cannot be separated from the hospital.

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[44] *Cours de prones à l'usage des curés de la campagne, contenant Des Instructions sur toutes les vérités de la Religion, mises à la portée de leurs Paroissiens, et formant un nombre de Prônes, pour l'espace de deux ans*, vol. II, (Avignon: Chez François Chambeau, 1803), 205.

[45] Bernard Boivin, "GAULTIER, JEAN-FRANÇOIS," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 3, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 12, 2016, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/gaultier_jean_francois_3E.html.

The construction of a Hôtel-Dieu met the needs of both natives and newcomers. The inhabitants of the St. Lawrence Valley weathered wave after wave of Old World diseases. In 1634-35, an unidentified rash spread along the St. Lawrence Valley, leading Father Le Jeune to conclude that "If we had a Hospital here, all the sick people of the country, and all the old people, would be there."[46] Two years later, the priests believed that a hospital would have "powerful results" because:

> It is certain that all the sick Savages will come to die there. For to be sick among these Barbarians, and to have already one foot in the grave, is one and the same thing; of this they are very well aware. Hence, I know none among them who do not prefer in sickness the poorest house of the French to the richest Cabin of the Savages. When they find themselves in comfortable beds, well fed, well lodged, well cared-for, do you doubt that this miracle of charity will win their hearts?[47]

The pleas of the missionaries were answered in the generosity of Duchesse d'Aiguillon, born Marie Madeleine de Vignerot du Pont de Courlay, the niece of Cardinal Richelieu. After the death of her husband, Marquis of Combalet, in 1620, the childless widow entered the Carmelite Order in Paris until her uncle was able to establish her as a lady in waiting for Marie de Médici. Her wealth and connections allowed her to direct donations to several Catholic institutions in France as well as her largest project: the foundation of a hospital in New France.[48] In 1636, Madame de Combalet asked Father La Jeune how she could help:

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[46] *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610—1791,* vol. VI, ed. by Reuben Gold Thwaites, (Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers Company, 1898), 143.

[47] *The Jesuit Relations,* vol. IX, 97.

[48] François Rousseau, *La croix et le scalpel: historire des Augustines et de l'Hôtel-Dieu de Québec: 1639-1892* (Quebec: Septentrion, 1989), 35-37.

> God having given me the desire to aid in the salvation of the poor Savages, it has seemed to me, after reading the Account which you have written of it, that what you consider can best serve for their conversion is the establishment in New France of Hospital Nuns. I have therefore resolved to send thither this year six workmen, to clear some land and to construct a lodging for these good Sisters. I entreat that you will take care of this establishment. I have asked Father Chastelain to speak to you about it for me, and to explain to you my plans more in detail. If I can do anything else for the salvation of these poor people, for whom you take so much trouble, I shall consider myself happy..[49]

Again, the Duchess underlined the goal of bringing indigenous peoples under the control of the Catholic church. The hospital, she agreed, would be a tool in converting the indigenous people dying of European diseases. Further, that the Duchess sent money underlined the relationship between the French government in Versailles and the church as a means of self-legitimization in the New World. Through her work in founding the hospital, Madame de Combalet was made the Duchess d'Aiguillon in 1638.[50]

To the Jesuits, health care would win the hearts of sick native peoples. The French should provide care, they argued, in order to comfort the dying and bring them in to the Catholic Church to save their souls from the tortures of Hell. The nuns of the Gallican Church were responsible for the practice of medicine in this purposed hospital. While Catholic, the nationalized characteristic of the Church in New France was essentially an arm of French colonization and the hospital was state medicine put in place to cure diseases that were an inadvertent result of environmental imperialism. The hospital, as the Jesuits proposed it to be, was a tool of colonialism on the bodies of indigenous people for French self-legitimization in their land.

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[49] *The Jesuit Relations*, vol. VII, 233.

[50] Rousseau, *Le criox et le scalpel*, 37.

Black Slavery in the Caribbean

The colonies of the Caribbean had very different problems. The devastated remains of aboriginal tribes in the Caribbean limited conversion efforts. More importantly, slavery and the plantation system were present in the Caribbean from the very beginning. The first French settlers in the Caribbean arrived with twice as many slaves as settlers.[51] Twenty years later, the settlement's success inspired further colonization and expanded to other islands, and more slave ships arrived.

The colony in which Léveillé lived, Martinique, was assessed in 1640. The official was sure to describe the utility of slave labour:

> Parmy les François il y a des noirs, ou mores du cap-vert, & ailleurs assez bon nombre, non pas si grand toutesfois, qu'on n'en desirast davantage, & que ceux qui en ameneroient ny trouvassent bien leur compte, d'autant qu'un esclave noir est bien plus utile qu'un serviteur francois, qui n'est que pour trois ans, a besoin d'habits, demande des gages, n'est pas si accoustumé aux chaleurs; là où les noirs font pour toute leur vie, n'ont besoin que de quelque linge pour couvrir leur honte, n'ont rien que leur vie, encore bien misérablement, se contentant de cassave & de pois, & font faits a l'air & au chaud, quoy que s'ils n'y prennent garde ils font sujets a la vilaine maladie des plans.[52]

Slavery was an integral part of the French Caribbean from the beginning because of the affordability of labour. A slave population was such a necessity to the settlers that they had a "bon nombre" in just a few years. Black slaves imported from Africa were used to the tropical heat compared to European indentured servants who "n'est pas si accoustumé aux

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[51] Mumford, *The Black Ordeal*, 362.

[52] Jacques Bouton, *Relation de l'establissement des François depuis l'an 1635 en l'isle de la Martinique*… (Paris: S. Cramoisy, 1640), 98-99. Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Philosophie, histoire, sciences de l'homme, 8-Lk12-99. Accessed on July 10, 2016: http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb30150057j.

chaleurs." The author describes the utility of slaves taken from the tropics as people who did not need to be clothed and were "se contentant" by cassava and peas. Africans were already accustomed to and contented with tropical poverty, he says, and therefore better fit for work on plantations compared to French servants. This justification of slavery demonstrated prejudices of racial difference that allowed the French to believe that black slavery was more profitable and natural than indentured servitude and were part of the foundation on which racist beliefs were built and in which Léveillé was fostered.

This report informed the crown's beliefs regarding slavery in the tropics as well as those of Canadians. Reports such as this one encouraged readers to believe that slaves were content labouring in the tropics in scant clothing. These beliefs shaped the empire's policies on slavery. During his twenty-four years in Martinique, Léveillé's life was dictated by prejudices that had become tradition.

Louis XIV Cautions Canadians

Black slaves were exploited in the French Caribbean since the 1620s, yet it took until the year 1689 for Louis XIV to legalize the ownership of black bodies in Canada. By then, slaveholder ideology had developed to support black slavery in the tropics. The documents underline that Versailles worried that Africans might not be able to survive the harsh Canadian climate. Canada and its climate was the inverse of the climate-based ideology that justified slavery in the Caribbean. The utility of a black slave's ability to labour in tropical heat does not extend to the climate of Canada. The perpetuation of this ideology limited the spread of slavery northward.

Desperate for labourers, the Sovereign Council asked the king to allow black slaves to be sent to New France. They based their argument in the extreme cost of labour that

ruined anyone interested in creating a business. The cheap labour provided by slavery would remedy this problem and allow the colony to succeed. They anticipated that the king would be concerned for the health of slaves when taken to Canada and included in the brief that black slaves lived well in New England and New Holland. The brief also argued that black bodies would be warmed by Canadian furs.[53] He demonstrated that slaves survived in Canada because the climate was not as harsh on their bodies as to be expected and that the scant clothing provided to slaves would be replaced by heavy furs. He worked within the framework of prejudices that structured policy towards slavery.

The returning memorandum from the king to the governor and intendant of New France gave his consent to bring black slaves to Canada to clear and cultivate land. However, the King requested that Canadians exercise caution. He worried that "la difference du climat de ces negres a celuy de Canada ne les fasse mourir." He suggests "afin qu'ils ne s'engagent que peu a peu dans l'execution de ce projet, et qu'ils ne se constituent pas dans de grandes depenses qui pourroient leur devenir inutiles et faire un tort considerable a leurs affaires et par consequent a la Colonie."[54]

Louis XIV's memorandum reflected the contemporary scientific understanding of racial difference that Africans fit in the tropics while Europeans fit in temperate zones. Moving a person from the tropics to more northern and temperate climates risked a humoral imbalance.[55] The King understood slavery in New France as an experiment. If the

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[53] Memorandum to Denonville and Champigny, May 1, 1689, in ANQ, *Ordres du roi*, series B, vol. 15, 108.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Lessard, *Au Temps De La Petite Vérole*, 18-19.

experiment was a success, then black slaves might be exploited in clearing and cultivating Canada like the slaves of the Caribbean. It seems possible that the government was allowing one experiment to test the waters and see if monoculture commodity crops could be grown with a slave workforce. If it failed, it proved that black slaves could not live in Canada, supporting at the same time the thesis that black bodies were designed to labour in the tropics. If the colony proved that the climate supported slaves, then they could invest in this capital. Louis XIV based his relatively logical assessment on both contemporary science and testimony from the Caribbean. Islanders believed that black bodies did better than the French in the Caribbean, as evidenced in the report on the success of the Îles du Vent in 1640, who "n'est pas si accoustumé aux chaleurs."[56] The French could not ideologically support slavery there with the belief that slaves were better for that climate and not apply the same logic to Canada. Slaves could not live in Canada for the same reason that they should be imported in mass to the Caribbean: black bodies were designed for the tropics while Europeans were designed for temperate and cold areas. Contemporary science on humoral zones and previous French reports on the utility of black slaves in the Caribbean created the suspicions of Louis XIV and his advisors as they agreed to send black slaves to Canada.

Hemp as Canada's Cash Crop

The documentation of the conversation of slaves' fitness in Canada changed during the 1720s. What the experiment in slavery failed to incorporate was that New France did not have a viable cash crop. The fur trade was an extraction of resources collected by

[56] Bouton, *Relation de l'establissement,* 98-99.

aboriginal allies and had more or less no use for gang labour that we see in Caribbean slave societies. Ira Berlin argued successfully that societies with slaves could become slave societies if a cash crop was discovered that was then monopolized by a class of planters who utilized slave labour to secure their wealth and power in society.[57] That means that New France would not turn from a society with slaves to a slave society because there was no crop to be grown similar to the plantation system. The colonial government had a vague understanding that a crop could create demand for labour and sought to find such a commodity.

Of course, sugar and cotton were unlikely to do well in Canada's soil and short growing season. Hemp was the closest Canada had to a cash crop, and colonists bought slaves to produce hemp. Intendant Bégon artificially raised the price of hemp to encourage exportable agriculture. This incentive encouraged Batiscan, a seigneury between Trois-Rivières and Quebec, to exploit twenty-six slaves in hemp production.[58] In 1721, Bégon wrote to Versailles that a shortage of labour was hampering the production of hemp as much as the short growing season. An influx of black slaves, he argued, would allow agriculture to thrive in the colony, and therefore Bégon requested to have 200 slaves sent to New France, for another increase in the price of hemp, and for the Ministry of the Marine to send 30 barrels of hemp seed.[59] He never received the 200 slaves, but maintained the price controls on hemp. The program was unpopular with the next two intendants—Dupuy

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[57] Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 9.

[58] Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance,* 187-189.

[59] Résumé d'une letter et de memoirs de Bégon. January 13, 1721, ANOM, colonies, C11A, XLIII, 74-87.

and Hocquart—both of whom decreased the artificially high price and, without government support, the experiment ended entirely.[60] Price controls supported the creation of a market but would not command the world market in such a way to justify itself. Bégon's high hopes for hemp vanished in a cloud of smoke and slavery was a non-starter. The climate of Canada restrained the transformation into a slave society. New France did not have a commodity crop that could transform the colony.

Lifestyle Effects of Slavery

The slaves who did live in New France experienced health problems. Susan E. Klepp's study of the seasoning of black slaves to the climate and culture of eighteenth-century Philadelphia serves as a jumping off point for my research. Klepp's research draws several conclusions on the poor health of people living in bondage in this mid-Atlantic port city. Blacks were more likely than whites to die of respiratory diseases, often in late fall and winter. The diseases characteristic of the Atlantic system also influenced crude death rates for both whites and blacks; notably, the 1731 smallpox epidemic (that reached Quebec in 1733 through aboriginal contacts[61]) claimed more black lives than white. When typhus became an epidemic in Philadelphia in the 1750s, proportionally more whites died of the disease than blacks.[62] Klepp's conclusions on the effects of "mundane" aspects of life such

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[60] Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance,* 187-189.

[61] Lessard, *Au Temps De La Petite Vérole*, 34.

[62] Susan E. Klepp, "Seasoning and Society: Racial Differences in Mortality in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (1994): 473-506.

as climate, the origin of slaves, and the demographic makeup of the enslaved population was representative of other northern cities with small numbers of slaves.

The health of slaves in Quebec compared well to Klepp's study. Neither Philadelphia nor Quebec imported slaves directly from Africa but imported black bodies from more southern parts of the Americas. They were better seasoned to Atlantic diseases and had been less susceptible to epidemics. However, being born in the Americas carried another health cost: these people were raised in slavery and their bodies bore the neglect of plantation life. Neither Philadelphia nor Quebec saw significant natural reproduction of their enslaved populations, leaving both to rely on importation to maintain the labour sources. Adolescents and young adults made up most of Philadelphia's black population, which should mean that the black crude death rate would be lower than the European crude death rate, but it was not. Demographically, the two populations of black slaves were comparable. Societies with slaves provided a similar standard of living. Diet factored into the year-long discrepancy between white and black crude death rates; slaves were often provided "low" or "lean" meals meant to give them energy and save owners money while also underlining status. Slaves in Philadelphia often lived in their masters' kitchens; these drafty, smoke-filled rooms provided a layer of privacy but also meant that slaves did not have space for beds. Slaves in New France had similar experiences; Marie-Joseph Angelique testified that she slept on her master's kitchen floor. Mathieu Léveillé, as the executioner, lived on his own and had the benefit of owning his own blanket.[63] Climatically, though, the

[63] Procès contre Marie-Josèphe-Angélique, née au Portugal, esclave noire de Thérèse de Couagne, veuve de Poulin de Francheville, et Claude Thibault, faux-saunier, accuses d'incendie criminel," Apr. 11, 1734, BANQ-M, TL4, S1, D4136; "Procè s criminel contre

two environments were less similar. Quebec's average low temperatures during winter were -12 degrees Celsius.[64] Another key difference between the two cities was that Quebec's Hôtel-Dieu was founded in the 1630s but Philadelphia's Pennsylvania Hospital would not open for another 100 years, and this institution was more similar to the hospice care provided by Hôpital-Général de Québec.[65]

Léveillé and the Hospital

Léveillé arrived in Quebec at the end of a smallpox epidemic. He was one of two black slaves who visited the hospital in 1733 and was admitted twice during that month.[66] Léveillé likely suffered from his life on a plantation in Martinique and, the illness he had on his arrival was characteristic of the intra-colonial slave trade in which trafficked persons suffered from yaws, stomach disorders, distemper, the flux, dropsy, injuries, exposure, and malnutrition.[67] Serge Bilé wrote that Léveillé became ill while being transported to Québec and led his readers to believe that he was afraid for his life, and Bilé asks his readers, "Va-t-

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François Mousset, Nicolas Coutant dit Lafranchise, vagabonds, et Elizabeth Coutant, sa soeur, femme d'Antoine Tranchant, accuses d'un vol chez Mathieu, maître des hautes œuvres." 6 - 19 dé cembre 1740. Collection Piè ces judiciaires et notariales, D1234. Archives Nationales du Quebec.

[64] February 1743 temperatures recorded by Jean-François Gaultier in his article: "Observations botanico-météorologiques faites à Québec." In *Histoire de l'Académie royale des sciences* (1744). BNF NUMP-253.

[65] Klepp, "Seasoning and Society," 491.

[66] Marcel Trudel, *Dictionnaire Des Esclaves Et De Leurs Propriétaires Au Canada Français* (Ville LaSalle, Qué bec: Hurtubise HMH, 1990).

[67] Klepp, "Seasoning and Society," 475.

il être exécuté?"[68] Quite the opposite occurred, as Léveillé was admitted to the hospital twice in one month and several times afterwards.

The timing of Léveillé's admissions to the hospital suggest that he might have been prone to typhus. Typhus, or ship fever, was the second deadliest epidemic in New France. While fevers can be hard to distinguish, typhus was closely associated with the arrival of ships during the summer, with epidemics throughout the seventeenth century, in 1718, 1733-34, and repeatedly in the 1740s. The typhus epidemic of 1718 saw a third of the city's poor in the hospital; 1733 and 1734 were other years with "ship fever." The descriptions made at this time were of people with hugely swollen faces, and any of the remedies used failed to help, leading people to suffer for a month before dying. Starting in 1740, typhus arrived on ships and became an epidemic routinely; John J. Heagerty noted that this disease became an epidemic in half of the summers of the 1740s and '50s.[69] The bishop of Quebec wrote in 1744 that the disease "has hardly left us since last year; it has taken away great numbers; nineteen of our consecrated religious were reduced to the last extremity." That the disease seemed to only arrive on the King's ships, rather than merchant ships, led the bishop to request that the King only send merchant ships to the colony.[70]

Hospital admissions of people living in bondage were generally higher during the 1740s than other times. Further, the disease tended to strike during the summer with the

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[68] Bilé, *Eslcave et bourreau*, 57.

[69] John J. Heagerty, *Four Centuries of Medical History in Canada* (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Limited, 1928), 110-111.

[70] Lettre de l'évêque de Québec au ministre, 4 novembre 1742, ANOM, Fonds des Colonies, série C 11 A, vol. 78, f. 431v-432r.

arrival of ships. As a whole, the early 1740s saw an increase in admissions to the Hôtel-Dieu; for the five years before 1739, an average of 6 aboriginal slaves and 2.4 black slaves were admitted to the hospital annually. In 1740, these numbers increased to 14 aboriginal slaves and 6 black, and increased to 17 aboriginal and 7 black slaves the next year. Three of the people living in slavery counted in the census of 1744 were admitted to the hospital during the summer of 1743, one in 1744, and two in 1745. Of the years noted as times with epidemics of typhus, Léveillé was admitted to the care of the nurses (twice) in July 1733, July 1734, July 1741, and September 1743.[71]

His health and demeanor concerned Intendant Hocquart. When Léveillé returned to the hospital on February 9, 1740, the Intendant asked the hospital staff their opinion on the slave's health. They responded by saying that Léveillé suffered from "mal du pays" and "mélancholie." [72] Depression was a symptom of having too much black bile (melaina kholé,

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[71] Trudel, *Dictionnaire.*

[72] All of the scholarship on Léveillé's "mélancholie" quotes Andre Lachance who himself published assessments of the executioner's health in various publications from *Le bourreau au Canada sous le régime français* (Quebec: La Société Historique de Québec, 1966) through his *Délinquants, juges et bourreaux en Nouvelle*-France, (Quebec: Libre Expression, 2011). His 1966 work includes footnotes referring to *Le registre journalier des malades de l'Hôtel-Dieu de Québec* (none of these say why he was admitted, nor a cure or treatment, simply the patient's name, age, and place of birth; in Léveillé's case, his place of birth is "nègre") and letters from 1733 and 1744 as well as the baptismal record of Léveillé's fiancée and his burial record. Later works rely on the same bibliography and cite *Le bourreau* but go on to quote the source that speaks to his "mal du pays" and "mélancholie." These works also add that the "medicine du roi" diagnoised him; *Juger et punir* (2000) says that Jean-François Gaultier diagnosed him in 1740. This is impossible: Gaultier arrived in Quebec in 1742. This source is increasingly suspect. Lachance retired in 1999. In email correspondence, he referred me back to his bibliographies and to the letters between Hocquart and Gauliter in 1740 as well as to Serge Bilé (Andre Lachance, Personal Correspondence, August 9, 2016). Bilé, in his extensive research, was also unable to find this piece of evidence and argues in personal correspondence between himself and me that "Pour moi qui travaille beaucoup sur la question de l'esclavage et de ses conséquences,

in Greek).[73] Their recommendation was to find him a wife with whom he could pass his nights. This was a jump from the many other treatments used to cure a person of depression at this time; purchasing a wife was a desperate treatment that likely followed trials of various methods to correct this imbalance. The humoral understanding of science that restricted the importation of black slaves was self-confirmed by the doctors of the Hôtel-Dieu when, with their understanding of medicine, they diagnosed his symptoms as a humoral imbalance of black bile—melancholy—in his body.

That five of Léveillé's nine admissions to the hospital came during months when ships and diseases entered the St. Lawrence indicated that he might have had typhus at least once but likely more. Léveillé entered the colony on the tails of the largest smallpox epidemic and lived through the aftereffects of this. Furthermore, as a person living in bondage and therefore in poverty, we can assume that Léveillé was also in generally poor health due to a depressed immune system resulting from his lifestyle. Léveillé lived the first twenty-four years of his life in the tropics; this led his doctors to conclude that he was slow to season to Quebec's hard winters and that this brought him to the hospital. What is more important than his black skin is that Léveillé lived in slavery in the tropics; he was likely

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Léveillé est aussi une... victime de ce système effroyable. Certes il avait le choix d'accepter ou de refuser la charge de bourreau, mais peut-on accabler dans le contexte inhumain de l'époque un jeune homme de 24 ans qui cherchait à vivre à tout prix ??" (Serge Bilé, Personal Communication, July 19, 2016). His argument is that we don't need a doctor to tell us that Léveillé was depressed. Further, that we have letters saying that a wife was purchased for him means that there was, at some point, something that happened that lead the government to purchase a wife. Central to the argument of his book is the idea that "dans la ville, tout le monde murmure son nom avec mépris" because he is one of a handful of black faces in Quebec as well as—if I may—the human butcher (*Esclave et bourreau*, 77).

[73] Hippocrates, *Hippocratic writings,* 262.

malnourished. For all of this, it becomes evident that Léveillé was often in poor health while living in Quebec.

Conclusion

Prejudices developed to justify black slavery in the Caribbean. Slaveholders believed that their human chattel were better fit for tropical labour because they required less clothing and could better withstand the heat than Europeans. These beliefs spread throughout the empire. They correlated with medical interpretations of humoral climate zones that prescribed each race to stay within its own zone to prevent an imbalance resulting in discomfort or depression. It followed that black slaves should not be taken to Canada. Slaveholders brought black bodies to New France one by one. Any doctor would have consulted humoral medicine, which would confirm and perpetuate its own logic.

Mathieu Léveillé was brought to Canada as this understanding became clear. The idea of importing black bodies to New France was no longer immediately dismissed. Even so, Léveillé's visits to the hospital attest to the hard lives of black slaves living in Quebec. He visited the hospital twice in the first month he arrived because he was likely in terrible health from years of plantation slavery. He visited several more times, likely from various epidemics affecting the colony as well as from difficulty adjusting the environment. Finally, his poor health was attributed to depression and homesickness caused by the imbalance of humors, they believed, that had hindered the importation of black bodies to Canada.

Léveillé experienced the corporality of colonialism. His race served to justify his enslavement in the Caribbean. His body was forced to Quebec to serve as the hangman. Here, he suffered from depression because of his enslavement. His body was forced between various corners of the empire and subjected to prejudice and abuse throughout.

Chapter Three: "Marronnage au Troisième Cas": The Code Noir and its Effects on New France

Mathieu Léveillé embodied the connectedness of the dissimilar corners of the French Empire. The office of the Marine purchased him from Martinique for New France. The sugar planters of the tropics were distant from the fur-trading *coureurs-de-bois* of Canada but were integrated in a transatlantic empire connected economically, culturally, and legally. Planters constructed a slave society in the Caribbean where they monopolized labour and used their power to create legal regulations giving them more control over the people they claimed to own. These regulations were simplified when slaveholders created the *Code Noir* in 1685 and further self-legitimatized the extent of slaveholders' power over their human property and marginalized other classes. This document reflects the values of the men who created it and the society they wanted it to create.

The *Code Noir* synthesized the laws of the various colonies into one unit of regulations studied by lawyers and slaveholders alike from the time of its enactment through the French Revolution. Some of the articles of this law spoke to the religion of slaves; these required all slaves to be baptised into the Catholic faith (art. II) and to rest on Sundays and holidays (art. VI). Other articles regulate the reproduction of slaves (art. XIII said that the children of a slave father and a free mother were born slaves) and limitations of owners (art. XLVII forbade separating a married couple) while others specified that slaves must be fed and clothed (arts. XXII-XXVII). The *Code Noir* gave certain basic protections to slaves, but these were eclipsed by protections to slave owners. A primary function of codes in the Americas was to marginalize other classes—specifically, the class they claimed to own. The code forbade slaves from carrying weapons (art. XV),

congregating with the slaves of other owners (art. XVI), and specified that a slave who struck his or her owners was to be executed (art. XXXIII). Marronage, as one of the most active forms of resistance to ownership, was punished along three margins: a first-time offender had his or her ears cut off and was branded with the *fleur-de-lys*; a second marronage merited clipping his or her hamstrings and a second branding; and, having been caught after three escapes, he or she was executed (art. XXXVIII) and his or her master would be reimbursed for the full value of the person (art. XL).[74] Laws do not exist without the society that created them. The society that created the *Code Noir* was controlled by slaveholders who used this document to strengthen the status of their class.

New France, on the other hand, was a society with very few slaves without slave regulations, another important characteristic that separated slavery in New France from the Caribbean. Two thirds of slaves in Canada came as tributes from aboriginal allies and the remaining third came from the Atlantic. Those purchased from France's native allies had been abducted and enslaved from the interior of the continent and given to the French as offerings of peace and friendship. Their contributions to the society of natives and newcomers along the banks of the St. Lawrence deserve to be mentioned as much as those of black slaves taken from the Caribbean.

This chapter argues that black slavery in New France was an extension of slavery in the Caribbean. Mathieu Léveillé's body reflected this connection, and in many ways his

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[74] *Le Code Noir ou Edit du roy, servant de reglement pour le gouvernement & l'administration de justice & la police des isles françoises de l'Amerique, & pour la discipline & le commerce des negres & esclaves dans ledit pays. : Donné à Versailles au mois de mars 1685. Avec l'Edit du mois d'aoust 1685. portant établissement d'un conseil souverain & de quatre sieges royaux dans la coste de l'Isle de S. Domingue* (Paris, au Palais : Chez Claude Girard, 1735), accessed on May 30, 2016, https://archive.org/details/lecodenoirouedi00fran.

Atlantic experience was typical for black slaves in New France. Like many other black slaves in Canada, he was born in Martinique and lived there for most of his life before being imported to Quebec. Black slaves in New France were seasoned under the *Code Noir*.[75] Léveillé learned his value during the twenty-four years he lived in Martinique. He was marked with his value as emblems of the slave society were carved into his body. Years of plantation slavery left him and other slaves in New France malnourished. Punishments required by the colony's slave code could be seen in the *fleur-de-lys* branded into their flesh. Léveillé's ears and hamstrings had been clipped in order to prevent repeated escapes. The slave code sentenced him to death but, instead, he was brought to Canada to serve as the executioner. These mutilations did not disappear, nor did people unlearn their value as slaves as they sailed north. Canadian slavery was an extension of Caribbean slavery.

Society with Slaves Compared to a Slave Society

These laws deserve to be studied as a reflection of the society that made them. Léveillé was seasoned to slavery in the Caribbean and was shaped by the laws of the slave society. New France and the Caribbean had vastly different population makeups reflective of their contrasting societies. On the surface, the difference between the economies was evident simply in their demographic makeups. Northern outposts of the French empire typically had very few slaves while the Caribbean had more slaves than free people. Those who held power in the Caribbean therefore had an interest in protecting themselves and their class's way of life. This was the creation of the *Code Noir*. This code of laws was limited to the Caribbean and did not apply to New France. However, that nearly all black

[75] Trudel, *L'esclavage Au Canada Français*, 93.

slaves in New France had lived in the Caribbean meant that this system seasoned them and their owners. The traditions of slavery became habits that continued into life in a society with slaves.

By the early eighteenth century, clear differences emerged in the racial makeup of various French colonies. Quebec's 5,050 residents in the census taken in 1744 was nearly entirely white; slaves made up a single percent of the population and a third of those enslaved were black, which was typical for the colony of New France. Louisbourg was closer to the Atlantic in a geographic sense and culturally; about ninety percent of slaves in this city were black while about a third of slaves in the St. Lawrence valley were black.[76] The Caribbean was starkly different. Here, the population of settlers and slaves was significantly larger. From the passage of the *Code Noir* in 1685 until Léveillé's sentencing, the white population grew from 4,500 to 10,000, while the black population grew from 9,300 to 40,000. That is, slaves outnumbered whites two to one when the *Code Noir* was written, then grew to outnumber whites four to one some forty years later.[77] These numbers demonstrate how the Caribbean colonies held significantly more slaves and in a radically different proportion than northern colonies. Regardless of the economic and geographic causes of this difference, the two locations employed contrasting economic systems upon which their legal and cultural systems were structured.

Mathieu Léveillé moved from an island with a black slave population of 40,000 to a city with less than two dozen black slaves. What are the implications of these contrasting

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[76] Donovan, "Slaves in Île Royale," 30.

[77] James Pritchard, *In Search of Empire: The French in the Americas, 1670-1730* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 54-55.

demographics? Ira Berlin studied the differences between these two extremes. A colony might begin as a "society with slaves" and later adapt into "slave society." New France and Île Royal were societies with slaves: slavery was auxiliary to the means of production. "Slave societies," as Berlin names them, were the more commonly studied economies such as the Caribbean or the American South. These societies evolved in such a way to place slavery at the center of economic production, transforming and contrasting from what was before. This transformation followed the discovery of a commodity— sugar, in the case of the French Caribbean—and the landholding class "capitalized production and monopolized resources, muscled other class to the periphery, and consolidated their political power. The number of slaves increased sharply [and…] other forms of labour declined as slaveholders drove small farmers and wage workers to the margins."[78] Berlin argued that, having eliminated other forms of production, the slaveholding, landowning class sought to solidify its rule and instituted codified slavery giving itself "near complete sovereignty over their slaves." The slave population increased in response to these securities—as we see in Martinique.[79]

The French empire as a whole saw a change in attitudes around slavery with the creation of the *Code Noir*. Soon after it was written in 1685, Canadian settlers began to petition for slaves as well. They were granted this right in 1689 having demonstrated that because other colonies had the right to slaves, New France should as well. The document effectively legalizing black slavery in Canada underlined connections between these

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[78] Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone,* 7-10.

[79] Ibid., 9.

colonies within these references.[80] Even so, Canadian society specifically was distant from the Caribbean and few slaves were imported over the next decade. To distort Berlin's terminology: New France remained a society without slaves for another ten years before becoming a society with very few slaves. However, the empire to which it belonged included and was influenced by a slave society. Other documents on slavery in New France underline this difference while highlighting these connections. New France, in cultural negotiations with their aboriginal allies, adopted their version of slavery. They gave legal footing to aboriginal slavery in 1709 but never regulated slavery. Slave owners in the Caribbean, having been transformed in the way described, simplified their various regulations into the sixty articles of the *Code Noir* in 1685, limiting their freedom and cleaving away at slaves' humanity.

Slave Society in the Caribbean

Mathieu Léveillé lived in a slave society for the first twenty-four years of his life. Institutions shaped his relationship to others and to his own body. Slaveholders needed to monopolize the bodies of their slaves in order to monopolize the economy. To achieve this, slaveholders weighed the costs and benefits of slaves' diets, for example, and found the point at which slaves had the exact energy to work and to produce a profit without having the energy for marronage or, quite literally, to eat into the profits. The self recreation of their class required an ideological basis for exploiting black bodies. For this, the French explained that bodies native to Africa were accustomed to tropical climates and diets. They were, in European eyes, ideal for tropical living and work.

[80] Memorandum to Denonville and Champigny, May 1, 1689, in ANQ, *Ordres du roi*, series B, vol. 15, 108.

French colonies did not begin without drawing from precedents. The plantation system in the Caribbean exploited slave labour based on Spanish models to create spectacular sums for those engaged in the ownership of humans. The first Spanish plantations on Hispaniola set the precedent on which other slave societies were based, including the French as they began colonizing the Antilles as well as the western third of Hispaniola. Spanish regulations on slavery were nearly as old as the plantation systems themselves. The first slave insurrection occurred on Christmas Day, 1521; the following year, masters acted under an ordinance to keep better track of their slaves—that is, to limit their freedom and nip resistance in the bud.[81]

The French arrived in the Caribbean hardly a hundred years before Léveillé was sentenced for marronage. French settlements in the Caribbean exploited slaves from the beginning, when twenty-four colonists arrived on St. Christopher in the 1620s and brought forty slaves. This was the beginning of the French experiment in the Caribbean. By 1635, the colony changed its name from *Compagnie de Saint-Christophe* to *Companie des Iles d'Amérique*, signifying emboldened plans in the region. Guadeloupe was occupied the following June; Martinique followed in September. [82]

The crippling punishments for marronage that marred Léveillé's body evolved to empower slaveholders. Their interest in their self-perpetuation as a ruling class required control over those from whom they extracted that power. Nothing was more necessary for

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[81] Lynne Guitar, "Boiling it Down: Slavery on the First Commercial Sugarcane Ingenios in the Americas (Hispaniola, 1530-45)," in *Slaves, Subjects, and Subversives: Blacks in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Jane G. Landers and Barry M. Robinson (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 49-52.

[82] Mumford, *The Black Ordeal*, 362.

the security of the *Habitans* of the islands and for the prevention of revolts than the observation of blacks. Economically speaking, it was also important to ensure the security of their investment in human bodies. The government of the Islands required unescorted slaves to carry a "billet" from their masters.[83] Maroons were especially dangerous because they represented the fears of slave owners: slaves claiming freedom for themselves, uncontrolled by the landowning class and free of that class's exploitation. In 1671, the Sovereign Council of Martinique regulated the treatment of escaped slaves and listed the bounties paid for fugitive slaves. Slaveholder government institutionalized a cruel punishment "to prevent the future escape of said blacks, and to ensure they do not continue their marronage," reads the ordinance, "the Conseil allows *Habitans* to cut the tendons in the knees of their blacks who continue to escape."[84] This painful surgery permanently handicapped the person and turned them into a disfigured example of the punishment for resistance. Finally, they were written into the *Code Noir* to say that:

> L'esclave fugitif qui aura été en fuite pendant un mois, à compter du jour que son maître l'aura dénoncé en justice, aura les oreilles coupées et sera marqué d'une fleur de lis une épaule; s'il récidive un autre mois pareillement du jour de la dénonciation, il aura le jarret coupé, et il sera marqué d'une fleur de lys sur l'autre épaule; et, la troisième fois, il sera puni de mort.[85]

Slaveholders increased their control through this legislation. Tighter punishments for marronage meant that fewer slaves would escape and that slaveholders were more secure

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[83] Louis-Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions des colonies françoises de l'Amérique sous le Vent* vol. I (Paris: chez l'Auteur, 1784-1790), 348. http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb30977497c.

[84] Moreau de Saint-Méry, "*Loix,*" vol. 1, 248-249.

[85] "Le Code Noir."

in their investment in human bodies. The result of laws such as this were the increase in the slave population and of course the mutilated body of Mathieu Léveillé. The increase in the population here increased the supply of slaves to New France—such as Léveillé himself. The *Code Noir* and the protections it provided to slaveholders had implications for the rest of the French Empire.

The *Code* not only mandated this punishment, but also touched on slaves' needs to be fed, acknowledging that slaves were underfed and malnourished. Léveillé—like many other black slaves brought to Canada—was likely poorly fed and suffered from malnutrition. Owners' greed meant that slaves were fed the minimal amount to keep them alive. The original assessment of slaves' diets—that they were content to eat cassava and peas[86]—was maintained throughout the seventeenth century. Most plantations either provided rations of cassava or allowed slaves to grow their own. Either situation limited slaves' diets and led to slaves stealing from other plantations or escaping in order to survive.[87] Slaveholders' interest in the bottom dollar led to their agreement as a class to invest in their slaves' nutrition; to correct these externalities, the *Code* specified rations:

> Seront tenus les maîtres de faire fournir, par chacune semaine, à leurs esclaves âgés de dix ans et au-dessus, pour leur nourriture, deux pots et demi, mesure de Paris, de farine de manioc, ou trois cassaves pesant chacune 2 livres et demie au moins, ou choses équivalentes, avec 2 livres de boeuf salé, ou 3 livres de poisson, ou autres choses à proportion: et aux enfants, depuis qu'ils sont sevrés jusqu'à l'âge de dix ans, la moitié des vivres ci-dessus. (art. XXII)[88]

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[86] Bouton, *Relation de l'establissement*, 98-99.[87] Mumford, *The Black Ordeal*, vol. III, 619.

[87] Mumford, *The Black Ordeal*, vol. III, 619.

[88] *Le Code Noir*.

The *Code Noir* protected slaves from malnutrition but, like many other protections for slaves, these provisions were ignored by slaveholders. Jean-Baptist Labat, the manager of a sugar plantation in Martinique at the turn of the eighteenth century, wrote in his memoir that "Cette Ordonnance n'est pas mieux observée que beaucoup d'autres, ou par la negligence des Officiers qui devraient y tenir la main, ou par l'avarice des Maîtres, qui veulent tirer de leurs Esclaves tout le travail qu'ils peuvent sans rien dépenser pour leur nourriture."[89] Labat referred to an alternate way of feeding slaves contrary to the rations stipulated in the *Code*. This system gave slaves one day a week to work their own gardens. Labat said this went against the logic of slave ownership and that owners who used this flawed system passively allowed for the poor health of their slaves. First, it did nothing to ensure the investment in the person: a slave could be sick on this one day of the week or the weather could force slaves indoors and leave them without any food for the week.[90] He included this in his argument because he saw it happening and could not justify this failure of slaveholders. Secondly, he appealed to the Christian souls of planters:

> qu'elle est fondée sur l'obligation qu'ils ont comme Chrétiens, de fournir à leurs esclaves, qu'ils doivent regarder comme leurs enfants, tout ce qui est nécessaire à leur subsistance, sans les mettre par leur dureté, dans la nécessite prochaine de périr de misère, ou d'offenser Dieu de dérobant pour vivre & pour s'entretenir.[91]

Habitans had the moral obligation to provide for their slaves, he argued, or they should not have slaves in the same right that they should care for their children or not have children.

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[89] Jean-Baptiste Labat, *Nouveau voyage aux isles de l'Amérique*, vol. III (Paris: G. Cavelier, 1722), 439-440.

[90] Ibid., 443.

[91] Ibid.

Labat demonstrated an early version of paternalism based in the ethics in his critique of the many other planters who were not providing for their slaves. His critique ended with a list of expenses for slaves compared to the revenue they brought in; Labat demanded that the many other slaveholders admit to caring for their slaves even if the state did not hold them to the law.[92] Masters were not properly feeding their slaves in order to increase the surplus value exploited from them. Slaves were underfed by masters who gave them a single day of the week to care for their own plots, forcing slaves to risk being unable to work on these specific days and therefore limiting or eliminating their food supply.

Léveillé survived slaveholder neglect for the first two and a half decades of his life. His health was likely as weak as we can expect most slaves' to have been. This is reflected in his admission to the Hôtel-Dieu of Quebec twice in the month he arrived in Quebec and his return again that month.[93] While the records do not tell us why he was admitted, we can assume that his first two admissions in July were not because he was poorly seasoned to Quebec's northern climate but instead were related to his inability to recover from diseases stemming from his poor diet as a slave.

Attitudes and slaveholders' policies around feeding their slaves exemplify how the *Code* was ineffective. Nearly sixty years of French ownership of slaves in the *Îles du Vent* had developed certain traditions meant to be broken by the regulations. Owners would not go on to nourish their slaves any more than they gave them all of the required holidays. There simply was no system in place to monitor slave owners and hold them to the laws.

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[92] Ibid., 448.

[93] *Registre journalier des malades de l'Hôtel-Dieu de Québec*, ed. Marcel Fournier (Longueuil: Productions Marcel Fournier, 1998).

Instead of providing rations, slaveholders let slaves care for their own gardens once a week, freeing themselves from this burden.

Slavery in Canada

New France was not the slave society from which Léveillé risked his life to escape. The settlers along the St. Lawrence owned few enough slaves that a slave code was never warranted. Berlin argued that slave codes were a mark of a slave society that was interested in the protection of owners from marginalized classes; Canada was instead a society with (few) slaves in which slavery was marginal to the means of production.[94] The few slaveholders in Quebec were either aristocrats, the Church, or members of the emerging bourgeoisie. The intendant and governor both owned slaves. Intendant Gilles Hocquart personally owned about six slaves according to Trudel, whose collection of documentations of slaves duplicated some people and omitted many more. Of the six people Hocquart claimed to own, five were aboriginal slaves and one was black. The aboriginal slaves were, on average, younger than the one black slave and while the aboriginal slaves entered the record in the 1730s, the black slave entered a full decade later. Governor Beauharnois owned twenty-seven slaves, all of whom were aboriginal except for two black slaves. This is unsurprising in that tribal leaders gifted the Governor slaves as a sign of peace.[95] In 1733, four of them were admitted to the Hôtel-Dieu as "laquais du fort," or footmen, at ages 15, 11, and 9 (one was admitted without an age and died in the hospital). While we do not know for sure how long any of the slaves were with

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[94] Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 9.

[95] Trudel, *Dictionnaire.*

the governor, that four of them entered the hospital during a smallpox epidemic makes it likely that Beauharnois owned more slaves than the record indicates. His wealth and power as governor of New France, comprised of both French settlers and indigenous peoples, was symbolized by child slaves he used as footmen.[96]

The *Code Noir* was limited to the *Île du Vent* and did not apply to other colonies. New France asked the king for permission to hold black slaves in 1689.[97] Aboriginal slavery was not properly legalized until a 1709 ordinance by Intendant Raudot. His intent was to mimic the agricultural success of the Caribbean and create a demand for slave labour in New France by first creating a supply. His ordinance stated that aboriginal slaves could be owned as property "like the Negros of the islands."[98] comparing themselves directly to the planters of the Caribbean and gang labour there. Raudot justified slavery in New France because it was legal in other colonies and his colony should be no different. The connectedness of the French Atlantic, Raudot asserted, justified possessing aboriginal people as legally as planters owned black people.

The government of New France therefore had personal experience with slave ownership. They understood the pragmatism of owning slaves as domestics to underline their status as well as to care for themselves and their homes. Indeed, the ordinance giving

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[96] *Registre journalier des malades de l'Hôtel-Dieu de Québec*. Editor Marcel Fournier. Longueuil: Productions Marcel Fournier, 1998.

[97] Memorandum to Denonville and Champigny, May 1, 1689, in ANQ, *Ordres du roi*, series B, vol. 15, 108.

[98] "Ordonnance de Mr. Raudot Intendant de Canada… 13 avril 1709," ANOM, Colonies, C11A, XXX, 334-335; Jacques Raudot, April 13, 1709, BANQ-Q, E1, S1, P509. Translated by Brett Rushforth in *Bonds of Alliance*, 395.

a legal footing to slavery in the colony underlined that slavery was economically beneficial in that slaves could be put to work in gardens and fields to free time for the people who owned them to do more specialized labour. Their employment as footmen by the governor is another example of slaves being placed in unattractive work. The government understood that there were some jobs that European immigrants would not willingly do when there was free land to farm for themselves.

Hangmen Through the Years

The position of hangman was particularly hard to fill. Indeed, the human butcher was so repugnant to the people of Quebec that in 1686, the intendant bought a house for the executioner and his family near the ramparts because they were unable to find a landlord willing to rent to them.[99] If no one wanted to rent to the executioner, then certainly no one wanted to be the executioner. The Sovereign Council utilized criminals to fill the office. A convict's labour had very little opportunity cost[100] and indeed a person sentenced to death had even less as corpses are the least productive labourers. Of the fifteen men in the role during the French regime, we know that ten were criminals and four others were unemployed, single men already living in Quebec.[101] The remaining man was

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[99] Lachance, *Le bourreau*, 97.

[100] *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics* (second Edition, 2008) defines opportunity cost as "the evaluation placed on the most highly valued of the rejected alternatives or opportunities. It is that value that is given up or sacrificed in order to secure the higher value that selection of the chosen object embodies." In this case, the opportunity cost of the hangman is any labour that he would be preforming if he was not the executioner. Accessed from: http://www.dictionaryofeconomics.com/article?id=pde2008_O000029 on July 13, 2016

[101] Lachance, *Le bourreau*, 53-54.

Léveillé, a slave, who had been sentenced to death for a third count of marronage. These men had essentially no opportunity cost when they were placed as the executioner.

The process of replacing the three men who served as hangman prior to Léveillé illustrated the difficulty of replacing the hangman and how this problem could be solved through connections between slavery in the Caribbean to Versailles and New France. For a person to be willing to become the executioner, he had to have no other means of survival. Pierre Rattier began his service in 1710. Rattier understood too well the horrors of the career when he took it up; his father had served as executioner from Pierre's birth until his death seven years before. The younger Rattier had been arrested for frequently instigating fights. Rattier died in 1723 after 13 years of service.[102] As soon as he did, Governor Beauharnois and Intendant Dupuy wrote to Maurepas to request a replacement. Maurepas, from his office at Versailles as the King's advisor and representative regarding the colonies, floated the idea of purchasing a slave for this position in a letter to the colonial government on May 18, 1728, five years before Léveillé arrived.[103] A month after making this suggestion, though, the Marine changed its mind and sent Gilles Lenoir, a committed alcoholic. Lenoir's violent drunkenness meant that he often visited Quebec's prison. In terms of economic value, an alcoholic plucked from the Hôpital-Général of Paris was a better fit to be the hangman of New France than a productive slave on a sugar plantation. The opportunity cost of taking a productive slave from the Caribbean were the pounds of

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[102] Ibid., 72.

[103] Lettre de Ministre à Beauharnois et Dupuy, 18 Mai 1728, Fonds des Colonies. SérieC11A, Correspondance Générale, Canada, vol. 50, fol. 492-493 v, National Archives of Canada.

sugar he or she could have produced, which was in no way close to the minimal cost of a violently alcoholic man's labour. By October of the following year, Beauharnois was already unimpressed and sent Lenoir back to France. Calling him "furieux dans le vin" and an "imbecile," the governor asked the Marine to return to the idea of purchasing a slave to fill the position.[104] Around this time, Guillaume Langlais was found guilty of sedition and, instead of execution, took the role of executioner. Langlais was 51 years old and, again, an alcoholic. Hocquart began the process of finding a replacement and decided to take the "les mesures nécessaires pour avoir un nègre de la Martinique pour servir d'exécuteur."[105] Langlais remained in service until the arrival of the enslaved hangman. The Marine utilized Atlantic connections when they picked Léveillé and demonstrated that demand for slaves in Quebec came from Atlantic society. These connections provided access to the labour of a person who not only had no opportunity cost to his labour but was also a slave and able to be forced into service.

Léveillé was both a slave and a criminal. As a slave, the people who claimed to own him were able to put him in uncomfortable and degrading work. For the first half of his life, he was chattel on a plantation but refused to submit to the degradation of slave life. For this, he was sentenced to death. Other executioners had been equally alienated. Rattier grew up as the hangman's son, marking him as an outcast and possibly causing his frequent

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[104] Lettre de Beauharnois et Dupuy au Ministre, 30 Octobre 1730, Fonds des Colonies. Série C11A, Correspondance Générale, Canada, vol. 48, fol. 90-105 v, National Archives of Canada.

[105] Copie d'un lettre de Beauharnois et Hocquart au Ministre. 12 Octobre 1731. Fonds des Colonies. Série C11A. Correspondance Générale. Canada. National Archives of Canada.

fights that led him to become his father's successor. Lenoir was such a violent drunk that he was even unfit to serve as hangman yet was placed as the executioner because, economically speaking, the opportunity cost of his labour could not be lower. He could not produce value through any other labour than by being a state-sponsored human butcher. When the Marine requested a slave, the options had been either to send a productive slave who had an opportunity cost or to send Léveillé. As an enslaved convict, Léveillé's value included that he could be forced into work as well as that he was unable to continue to live in the Caribbean. He was the perfect fit to be a human butcher.

Marronnage au Troisième Cas

Many of the historians who have explored Léveillé's life concluded that because other executioners had been criminals, it is likely the Léveillé had been as well. In many ways, they seek to naturalize his service. Afua Cooper studied the life of Marie-Joseph Angélique and created one of the first detailed case studies of slavery in New France. It was Léveillé who applied the *brodequins* to Angelique's legs in order to shatter them with a hammer. Cooper referred to Léveillé as the "slave-murderer" because, as she wrote with assurance, "Léveillé had murdered a fellow slave in Martinique and would himself have been executed had it not been for the vacant post in Canada." She based her assertion solely on the assumption that convicted murderers often served as executioners rather than be executed.[106] These historians limited their research to the present national boundaries of Canada. An Atlantic perspective connects French colonies and is true to Léveillé's lived experience.

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[106] Cooper, *The Hanging of Angelique,* 276.

It took the Marine eighteen months to respond to the Sovereign Counsel's request for a slave executioner. On March 24, 1733, Jean-Frédéric Phélypeaux, comte de Maurepas and Minister of the Marine, wrote to Hocquart that he had asked the Intendant of the Îles du Vent to answer the request.[107] Léveillé departed the island three months later, on May 16, on the *Marie-Jeanne* and arrived before he entered the Hôtel-Dieu on July 12.[108] After all of this, the Intendant of the Îles du Vent wrote in the minutes of the August meeting of the Superior Council: "J'ay envoyé a Quebec le negre que M. Hocquart Intendant en Canada m'a demandé pour server des hautes œuvres. Ce nègre avait été condamné a mort par le Conseil Supérieur de la Martinique le pour marronnage au troisième car."[109]

These few words illuminate how Léveillé lived before his time in Quebec. As a plantation slave, Léveillé suffered a malnourishing diet and workload. These had been passively designed to imprison him; a weak slave could not resist as capably as a healthy person. His body was disfigured in punishments. His back was likely marred by whippings. He had been found guilty of marronage for the third time and was maimed further by slaveholders in their quest to perpetuate control over the population they claimed to own. Their quest to maintain control over the society and economy of the islands, reflected in the *Code Noir*, demanded his execution—and the financial reimbursement of his master for his lost property.

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[107] Comte de Maurepas, President de Condeil de la Marine, à Hocquart, 24 mars 1733, RAC 1904, K: 169.

[108] Bilé, *Esclave et bourreau*, 47.

[109] Session du conseil supérieur, 21 juillet 1733. FR ANOM COL C8A 44 F° 265. ANON.

The man from whom Léveillé escaped was reimbursed by the government for the slave they were prepared to execute. A 1735 letter to the Marine says that the *habitant* Sarrau was paid eight hundred *livres* for "la prix d'un Negre a luy appartenant envoye a Quebec pour y servir de m. de hautes oeuvres."[110] Because Sarrau had not helped Léveillé escape and should not be punished for what might be considered faulty property, he was reimbursed by the state for the slave sold to Quebec. The slave society in which the two interacted was constructed to support Sarrau against Léveillé. Léveillé acted against the system, actively resisting enslavement. For his crimes, he was sentenced to death and the man he resisted, Sarrau, was financially rewarded. This system gave no thought to what Léveillé wanted and this allowed them to place him in work even more degrading than sugar cultivation.

Conclusion

Léveillé exemplified how a man living in slavery was brought from Martinique to Quebec. He demonstrated how a slave seasoned in the tropics was formed by the *Code Noir*. He was likely malnourished and had been disfigured by the regulations supporting slaveholder dominance over the Caribbean colonies. He escaped his owner on three occasions; for this, he was punished with brandings, clipped ears, the severing of his hamstrings, and finally, he was sentenced to death. Rather than execute him, Versailles determined that he was to be sent to Quebec to serve as the executioner. In this way, he was shaped physically and psychologically by the *Code Noir* and the slave society of Martinique. Like most Atlantic

[110] Marine, 1734, au S. Sarrau habitant de la Martinique pour le prix d'un nigre envoyee a Quebec pour service de la m. de hautes oeuvres, MG1-F1A, vol. 32, folio 177, Aug. 1st, 1735, Fonds des Colonies. Série F1A. Fonds des Colonies.

slaves in Canada, Léveillé was born in the Caribbean and seasoned there, knowing no other language than French and no other faith than Catholicism.

Chapter Four: "Et non pour d'autre crimes": The Hangman's Fiancée

So far, this thesis has explored how Léveillé experienced the corporality of colonialism. His experience as a slave demonstrated changing conceptions of race in the French empire. His life in the Atlantic system demonstrated how the French empire was connected as a legal system and by centralized government and how distant corners of the empire contrasted immensely. The climates of New France and Martinique influenced people's beliefs and economic possibilities. In turn, slaveholders in Martinique created the slave society in which Léveillé tried to escape three times. These attempts at freedom would have cost him his life but instead he was imported to New France as its executioner. Conceptions of race had prevented the importation of black bodies for some time, but ultimately it was simply a low demand for black slaves as opposed to cheaper aboriginal slaves from the interior. Conceptions of medicine and health taught that Léveillé's depression was owed to his dark complexion. The medical staff of Quebec attributed his many illnesses to his race and focused on how to correct imbalances based on racial difference. It was in the quest to cure him of his melancholy that the government asked for a wife.

The hangman's fiancée, Angelique-Denise, arrived in the final months of his excruciatingly difficult life. Léveillé's service as the hangman required him to torture other victims of the French Atlantic system to their deaths—of the nine people Léveillé executed, two were slaves, the same as he.[111] The arsonist Marie-Joseph Angélique, a black woman, was the first person he executed. Rarely did Léveillé see other faces like his own and the

[111] Bile names 9 people throughout his text; *Esclave et bourreau,* 99-132.

majority white townspeople of Quebec were likely afraid of him.[112] His life was lonely and his career was no respite. The purchase of a wife was meant to change this. In many ways, it worked to exonerate and comfort him more than the administration could have planned. Louis XV asked for a slave woman condemned to death to be sent to New France to marry the hangman. This repeated precedent, where the lowest and cheapest slaves with nothing to lose were sent to Canada for this hideous profession. It also saved Angélique-Denise's life.

The Hangman's Regret

The position of hangman was horrific. His work, when he was called to it, included corporal and capital punishments. When the Sovereign Council condemned Marie-Joseph Angélique to die, it was Léveillé who carried out the sentence and hanged the woman. The report of the execution stated that she "Eté Conduitte par ledit Executeur Dans la Place vuide au devant des maisons incendiées ou Elle a Eté pendue et Etranglé et Ensuitte Jettée au feu, Et les Cendres au vent…."[113] A little over a year later, Léveillé carried out two more death sentences, putting another slave and a free man to death, as well as the flogging and branding of two accomplices.[114] These two examples demonstrate the variety of

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[112] Ibid., 77

[113] Archives nationales du Québec, Centre de Québec, Jugements et délibérations, TP1, S28, P17230, Conseil supérieur, Rapport de l'exécution, 21 juin 1734.

[114] Procès contre Jean-Baptiste Thomas, esclave noir chez Louise Lecomte, veuve de Magnan, accusé de vol, et François Darle, faiseur de bas, Charlotte Daragon dit Lafrance, servante chez Guy, Charlotte Ondoyer dite Martin, épouse de Laurent, et Marie Venne, épouse séparée d'Étienne Métenier dit Larose, accusés de recel . - 6 juin 1735 - 22 août 1735. TL4,S1,D4251.

punishments. Hangings, floggings, and brandings were used as well as sentencing criminals to be galley slaves or banishment as ways that the Sovereign Council practiced justice.[115]

Slave resistance was punished in New France similarly to the resistance of free people. Marie-Joseph Angélique was found guilty of arson in her attempted escape from her mistress and from the Atlantic slave system as a whole. A year later, the Sovereign Council found Jean-Baptiste Thomas guilty of stealing household goods from his master, sentencing him and his accomplice to death.[116] As there were no regulations specifying how slaves were to be treated as opposed to free people—such as there were in Martinique—these punishments were extensions of laws for free, French-Canadian citizens of the St. Lawrence Valley, as exemplified by Thomas receiving the same punishment as his white accomplice.

We cannot know how Léveillé felt during any of these executions, but it must have troubled him that he was saved from death only to execute two more slaves for their own resistance to the Atlantic slave system. Léveillé escaped from slavery three times; this cost him his ears and hamstrings and caused him two brandings. The disfigured hangman had no common ground with the government of Quebec but must have felt some sort of kinship with the slaves he executed. In addition to this, Léveillé was a man with no ears, who could not walk well, who was branded with the *fleur-de-lys*, and whose black skin alienated him as much as his service as the hangman. He was lonely. He felt regret.

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[115] Lachance, *Délinquants, juges et bourreaux*, 169, 173.

[116] Procès contre Jean-Baptiste Thomas, esclave noir chez Louise Lecomte, veuve de Magnan, accusé de vol, et François Darle, faiseur de bas, Charlotte Daragon dit Lafrance, servante chez Guy, Charlotte Ondoyer dite Martin, épouse de Laurent, et Marie Venne, épouse séparée d'Étienne Métenier dit Larose, accusés de recel . - 6 juin 1735 - 22 août 1735. TL4,S1,D4251.

Léveillé's Decision

For these reasons, the colonial and metropolitan governments worked together to find the hangman a wife. Léveillé made this more than an opportunity to find a bed mate, but rather a partner and a chance for exoneration. The hangman, who had executed eight people during his life, branding and flogging others, asked for a woman sentenced to death. His request rose all the way to the desk of Louis XV, who wrote to authorities in Martinique on February 16, 1741:

> Sa majesté étant informée que le nègre servant de maitre des hautes œuvres à Québec aurait demande à épouser une négresse condamnée a mort, s'il plaisait à sa majesté de vouloir bien lui faire grâce, à quoi ayant égard et étant d'ailleurs toujours disposée a préférer miséricorde a rigueur de justice, sa majesté veut et entend que s'il se trouve quelque négresse condamnée a mort aux îles du vent pour simple fait de marronnage au troisième cas, et non pour d'autre crimes…[117]

The King made sure to not transgress justice as he extended his mercy. He chose to send another slave condemned to die for repeated escapes to be the hangman's wife. This woman was not only the same colour as Léveillé, but would also bear the same disfigurations. As someone who was sentenced to death for "marronnage au troisième cas," this woman also had no ears, could not walk well, and was branded with the *fleur-de-lys*.[118] As a person who tried to escape on three occasions, the gravity of her motives for escape must have resembled Léveillé's in order for her to try so desperately.

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[117] Lettre de Louis XV au Champigny et La Croix en fev. 16 1741. Quoted from Bile, *Escalve et bourreau,* 142.

[118] *Le Code Noir*, Art. XXXVIII.

As if his life could get any harder, Mathieu Léveillé never married the woman. He visited the hospital twice in 1741 and was so ill after Angélique-Denise arrived in 1743 that the two were kept apart to preserve her health.[119] He likely suffered from pneumonia.[120] As the weather turned colder in September, the colony saw an increase in mumps unlike in previous months.[121] Léveillé entered the hospital on September 5, 1743. He passed away four days later and was buried the next day in the hospital cemetery. The record of his death says he was thirty-four years old.[122]

Angélique-Denise outlived her fiancée. She was baptised on December 23, 1743, two days before Christmas.[123] Just two years before, she had been sentenced to die for having attempted to escape slavery. Like Léveillé, she seemingly dedicated her life to obtain freedom from the plantation system. She was pardoned by King Louis XV in order for her to be the bride for which the hangman asked. She was disfigured in the same ways he was. And, because of him, she was given a second chance in Canada just as he had been. This woman was taken from the gallows and brought to Canada to be the hangman's fiancée but she really was his redemption. The hangman saved her life.

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[119] Lachance wrote that Angelique-Denise arrived in 1741; her 1743 baptism says she was "venue des îles de l'an passe" and therefore arrived in 1742. Reg. Notre-Dame-de-Quebec, 1743, baptême no. 280.

[120] Lachance, *Juger et punir*, 179-180.

[121] Gaultier. "Observations botanico-météorologiques faites à Québec."

[122] *Registre journalier des malades.*

[123] Reg. Notre-Dame-de-Quebec, 1743, baptême no. 280.

Conclusion

Slaveholder hegemony extended outward from the plantations of the Caribbean. The availability of slaves from this source and the ideology developed by planters influenced the French empire. When the government of New France sought greater wealth, they looked to the Caribbean model and asked for black slaves as a means to mimic their success. This was evidenced in both the legalization of black slavery in 1689 as well as the legalization of aboriginal slavery in 1709. It was even more obvious when Bégon asked for black bodies to cultivate hemp plantations in the 1720s. Slaves and the people who owned them were influenced by this society as well. The conversation between Versailles and Quebec regarding replacing the executioner reflected the existence of slavery and the utilization of enslaved bodies. These bodies were drawn from the Caribbean as much as the ideology of slavery. In this way, slaves had been seasoned in the Caribbean and this seasoning took two parts. First, slaves were accustomed to slavery and French society. Being accustomed to slavery meant that their bodies bore the wait of those that exploited them for wealth and power that was consolidated in 1685 *Code Noir*. Léveillé had been sentenced to death by slaveholder power and his fiancée had been as well. Their seasoning in the Caribbean was carried to New France in their crippled bodies. The second way that black bodies were seasoned in the Caribbean was the allegation that they were better suited but still unfit for the climate of New France. Slaves born in North America were brought to New France one by one and never shipped en mass to the colony because the government worried that they would die from the cold. Léveillé was diagnosed with melancholy within this conversation. His life contributed to the false consciousness that black bodies and the labour extracted from them were unfit in Canada while this

consciousness served as a justification for greedy slaveholders to buy and exploit African slaves in the Caribbean.

This thesis used a variety of sources from archives throughout the former French empire. The largest contribution made in this thesis to the historiography of slavery in New France is the conversation between the slave society of the Caribbean and a society with very few slaves in New France. They did not exist in separate worlds but instead were separated geographically and economically within the same empire. The slave society provided an easy source of labour in the body of a disfigured man unwilling to accept the terms of plantation slavery. The society with slaves cared for him in the Hôtel-Dieu and asked to buy him a wife to cure him of his depression. In doing so, they were able to answer the hangman's request to save a woman's life.

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