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Abstract

This paper investigates the unique literary production of francophone Creoles of color in New Orleans during the Civil War and early Reconstruction as published in the daily newspaper *La Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orléans* (The New Orleans Tribune). The newspaper's contributing writers, many of whom were products of the Haitian diaspora following the Revolution, had a political agenda expressed in *La Tribune* through fervent political discourse. The literary contributions to the paper, published in the form of progressive poems and moralistic short fiction, served as a radical platform for the political aspirations of the newspaper and a reflection of the community's complex identities. This study highlights the influence of French Romanticism, The French and Haitian Revolution on these works, while also mapping the arc toward realism in the Reconstruction-era as Creoles of color struggled to maintain their relevance in the political arena of New Orleans. Key works such as the poems "Le Triomphe des Opprimés" by an anonymous author, "La Marseillaise Noire" by Camille Naudin and the short stories "Simple histoire" by Adolphe Duhart and "Monsieur Paul" by Joanni Questy are analyzed for their thematic and stylistic evolution, showing how literature functioned as a tool for social discourse and political activism among the community. This investigation concludes that this understudied literary tradition was not only a reflection of the changing socio-political landscape of New Orleans from the Civil War to Reconstruction, but also a strategic medium for advancing the community's goals for freedom, equity, and recognition.

Keywords: African-American Literature, American Literature, Creole Literature, Civil War, Creative Writing, French and Francophone Studies, New Orleans, Poetry, Political Writing

New Orleans, known historically as “Bulbancha” by the Chotcaw, meaning “the place of many tongues,” has long been associated with cultural diversity. Prior to European colonization, this land was a meeting ground where approximately forty different Native groups traded, hunted, and shared resources (Darensbourg 1). Subsequent waves of French, Spanish and American colonization introduced new layers of complexity to this space, ultimately contributing to the development of a unique ethno-racial identity: Creole. Now associated with multiracial identity, the term “Creole” in the context of Louisiana has historically encompassed any person, black and white, born within the colonies. In legal terms, Louisiana’s free black population were designated as *gens de couleur libre*, or free people of color. This essay employs the use of the term “Creole of color” to describe this population of free people of color with an emphasis on African ancestry and mixed descent. Crucial to this history is the migration of newly freed refugees from Saint Domingue following the Haitian Revolution in 1809-1810, bringing with them a unique cultural history of resistance that sparked politically charged cultural production.

In the mid-19th century, these French-speaking Creoles of color became central to the development of a unique literary tradition that both reflected and shaped their hybrid identities. Their work, published in the daily newspaper, *La Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orléans* (The New Orleans Tribune), functioned as a radical platform for the community’s socio-political ambitions. The corpus of poems featured commentary on local and national issues, fostering inter-community dialogue. The short fiction published in *La Tribune* brought a different kind of moral storytelling to the readership by drawing on history while maintaining its activist agendas and social critiques. The criticisms embedded in each work reveal layers of dissent to the norms of New Orleans society and unfair conditions faced by the free people of color writing them. Thus, these poems, stories, and their advocacy for political change in a time of a highly polarized climate are surely considered radical. Mirroring the evolving socio-political contexts from the Civil War to Reconstruction, these publications by New Orleans Creoles of color in *La Tribune* map an arc that reflects both their authors’ political ambitions and stylistic aesthetics. The sampled poems and short fiction from 1864-1868 highlight distinct shifts in literary tone and thematic complexity from direct expressions of wartime poetics stylized by French Romanticism toward nuanced narrative characteristics leaning toward Realism in early Reconstruction.

The era preceding the Civil War starting from the 1840’s realized a wave of literary production for Louisiana’s French-speaking free people of color. Well-educated, oftentimes abroad in Europe, a community sprung with an interest and fondness for French Romanticism. Inspiration from this style prompted the publishing of a literary journal called *L’Album littéraire: Journal des jeunes gens, amateurs de littérature* (Literary Album: Journal for young literary enthusiasts)(1843) and a poetry collection called *Les Cenelles: choix de poésies indigènes* (Holly Berries: A selection of Creole poetry) (1845). *L’Album littéraire* was curated by Creoles of color Armand Lanusse and Joanni Questy, two prominent literary and social figures within New Orleans. *L’Album* featured essays, poetry, and short fiction by both black and white Creoles. Clint Bruce notes that the tone of the journal “was often scathing. Several texts denounced in vague terms the injustice of Louisiana society, like exclusion of children of color from public schools” (12-13). This highlights the pointed political critique layered within the narratives, with its Creole of color contributors utilizing the written medium as a tool for social discourse.

L'Album littéraire, though culturally ambitious*,* saw a short-lived publication with only six issues (Shapiro xxvi).

Armand Lanusse went on to publish a collection of poetry called *Les Cenelles: choix de poésies indigènes* in 1845. *Les Cenelles* featured eighty-five poems in French by seventeen local poets, most of whom were Creoles of color. Of the literary style, Catharine Savage Brosman notes that the poems in *Les Cenelles* featured the "influence of the French Romantics, especially Alphonse de la Martine, from whom lines are frequently quoted as epigraphs" (81). While the State Legislature required censorship "prohibiting anything having a tendency to produce discontent among the free colored population of the state" (*Acts Passed at the Second Session*), the community continued to publish, though the political nature of the poems was more subtextual. Scholars have thus previously cast the collection away as unimportant or unworthy of scholarly inquiry with its exclusion from major anthologies of African American literature (Haddox 758). Brosman, however, argues that "the anthology was an admirable expression of consciousness by a group representing the larger caste and should not be dismissed as an elitist publication by privileged authors" (80). The inclusion of this important work to the larger literary oeuvre of New Orleans Creoles of color can be analyzed within the context of the aforementioned legal constraint on publishing, and Brosman's argument justifies the positionality of this collection to the more overtly political literary production that succeeded *Les Cenelles*. Thus, *L'Album litteraire* and *Les Cenelles* served as early, albeit subtle, vehicles for expressing dissent and highlighting systemic barriers faced by Creoles of color despite their formal freedoms as *gens de couleur libre*.

This literary tradition was transformed during the Civil War with the advent of two French-language abolitionist newspapers published by these Creoles of color: *L'Union* (The Union), and its bilingual successor *La Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orléans* (The New Orleans Tribune). *L'Union* premiered on September 28th, 1862 and was edited by Paul Trévigne and Louis Charles Roudanez. The inaugural issue of the paper read its mission: "Without fear and without doubt, we inaugurate today a new era in the destiny of the South."[1] *L'Union's* format was much like its successor in that it featured updates about the war, local and international communications and radically charged op-eds. Among these, *L'Union* began publishing explicitly political poetry from the local community no longer restricted by censorship laws when New Orleans surrendered to Union forces on April 25, 1862. However, *L'Union* would fold after only two years of publication due to death threats to its editor Paul Trévigne.

Not long after the closing of the newspaper, Roudanez purchased the press and the paper and *La Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orléans* circulated its first issue on July 19th, 1864. Following the radical foundation of *L'Union*, *La Tribune* pledged itself as an "organ of the oppressed" and used its pages to advocate for radical political change such as suffrage rights for all people of color, participation in the war by free people of color, and the integration of public schools. Chris Michaelides notes that *La Tribune,* "owned and managed by creoles of color, articulated in daily French and English editions the most radical socio-political agenda in the country and became an official organ of the new Louisiana Republican Party" (*Favorites of the*

[1] Translation note: all translations in this essay are by the author. The original French will be notated as footnotes. "Sans crainte et sans trouble, nous inaugurons aujourd'hui une ère nouvelle dans les destinées du Sud" ("Au public.")

Gods 20). The objectives of *La Tribune* are perhaps best summarized in a proclamation from an issue published on January 24th in 1865:

> Freedom is the same for all men. If freedom differs for each person, those who enjoy the least amount of rights are not truly free. We therefore demand, like all other citizens, and on the same page as them: the right to come and go; the right to vote; the right to public education; the right to hold public office; the right to be judged, treated, and governed according to a common law. Here is our mission: may all those who wish to exercise these rights, just as white people do, help us obtain them.[2]

The clear ambitions articulated here represent the radical ideas that Creoles of color audaciously endeavored toward with their publication. These ideas, being vocalized by people of color in the South, were bold and unprecedented. This fervor, combined with significant political backing from the state and a rapidly changing political landscape allowed the community's polemical literary contributions in *La Tribune* to be published without restraint, though pseudonyms were often used to conceal their identities.

Poetry was the medium preferred by the community of Creoles of color for publication in *La Tribune*. Bruce notes that the poetic corpus "demonstrates the day-to-day challenges of uniting the communities and the importance of awareness of Atlantic history in imagining a new racial solidarity, centered on blackness and adapted for the American context" (46). Bruce also identifies key thematic connections to French Romanticism, the French Revolution, and the Haitian Revolution in the poems published in *L'Union* and *La Tribune*. He argues that notions of *Liberté*, *Egalité* and *Fraternité* are present allusions through the frequency with which this rallying cry appears in the poems, establishing the French Revolution's connection to the group's collective poetic voice (53). Additionally, the migration of formerly enslaved Francophone refugees from Haiti to New Orleans connects an ancestral heritage to its writers, many of whom had at least one parent emigrate from Haiti, Michaelides notes (*Favorites of the Gods* 20). With the tumult of the Haitian Revolution within the recent memory of the newspaper's contributors, the legacy of freedom, solidarity and justice within the context of Atlantic history asserted their commitment to the advocacy for racial and social equality. Thus, the political mission and ancestral history of contributing writers to *L'Union* and *La Tribune* informed their literary production. Embedded within this context of historical resonance and cultural interconnection, the poem "Le Triomphe des Opprimés" captures the political aspirations of the community for their readership.

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[2] La liberté est la même pour tous les hommes. Si cette liberté diffère, ceux qui jouissent des moindres droits ne sont pas réellement libres. Nous réclamons, par conséquent, comme tous les autres citoyens, et sur le même pied qu'eux:
Le droit d'aller et de venir;
Le droit de vote;
Le droit à l'instruction publique;
Le droit à occuper des fonctions publiques;
Le droit d'être jugés, traités, et gouvernés suivant le droit commun.
Voilà notre programme; Que tous ceux qui se sentent dignes d'exercer ces droits, comme les blancs les exercent, nous aident à les obtenir. (*La Tribune*, 24 January 1867)

"Le Triomphe des Opprimés" or "The Triumph of the Oppressed," like many poems featured in *L'Union* and *La Tribune*, was published anonymously in *La Tribune* on November 8th, 1864. Featuring 35 lines, 5 stanzas in a fixed meter of AABBCCB, the poem is both a call to arms and an affirmation of the inherent humanity and freedom rights of those of African descent in the United States, juxtaposing this view against that of a slaveholder. The first stanza of the poem takes the voice of an oppressor who seeks to maintain the status quo of the institution of slavery, representing the ethos of the confederacy. The voice speaks in lines 6-7:

Tandis qu'à l'animal on donne sa pâture,
N'a-t-on pas satisfait à la loi de nature? ("Le Triomphe")
(As long as the animal is given its pasture,
Have we not satisfied the laws of nature?)

The voice seeks to rationalize the legality of servitude as a "natural" status quo. The oppressor attempts to reason with the reader that as long as the slaves, who are compared to animals, are fed, that the natural order that enforces the institution of slavery is both satisfied and justified. The second stanza takes a different voice, appealing to the conscience of the oppressor with the first two lines:

«Mais à ces oppresseurs une voix plus humaine,
Une voix qui flétrit et le fouet et la chaîne» ("Le Triomphe" lines 8-9)
("But to these oppressors came a voice more humane,
A voice to cripple both the whip and the chain")

This stanza positions an opposite view from the first, where an abolitionist adopts a certain humanity for the "black Africans" referenced in the following line and a desire to abolish the literal symbols of their oppression: whips and chains. The voice articulated in the second stanza is thus the central ethos of the Union. These two contrasting voices illustrate the nexus of the tension that ignited the Civil War and the ongoing struggle between the two in conflict.

Stanzas three, four and five shift to the voice of the oppressed, though more specifically, "The brave children of the exploited race."[3] These stanzas realize the political angle of the poem: to encourage its free black readership to enlist and participate in the war efforts alongside Union forces and to memorialize those who have fought and died. The "brave children'' are asked to "fly to combat" with enthusiasm to "defeat their oppressors or die as soldiers"[4] in an effort to utilize their free position for all those of the "exploited race." The final stanza of the poem establishes a negotiation between the contributors of *La Tribune* and its Creole of color readership:

Pour prix du sang versé, pour ces larmes amères
À la mémoire aimée et d'époux et de frères,
Oui, vous aurez conquis des droits à l'équité;
Vous aurez votre rang parmi l'humanité.
La chaîne ni l'encan, broyés par vos batailles,
Ne viendront plus, hideux, déchirer vos entrailles,
Fils de la liberté ("Le Triomphe" 29-35)
(For the price of blood shed, for these bitter tears

[3] "Les enfants courageux de la race outragée" (Anonymous)

[4] "Se levèrent gaiement pour voler aux combats, Vaincre leurs oppresseurs ou mourir en soldats" (Anonymous)

In the loving memory of husbands and brothers once here
You will have won the rights to equity;
You will have your rank among humanity.
The chain nor the auction, quelled by your battles,
No longer will these monsters arrive to tear your entrails,
Sons of Liberty)

Participation in the war by free people of color was a frequent political angle of *L'Union* and *La Tribune*. This particular section of the poem directly appeals to the intended reader's sense of justice and collective memory, which ultimately links personal sacrifice to a broader societal gain. Liberty and equity are positioned in the final stanza as prizes to be inherited by future generations for the "price" of their participation and risk in combat, invoking the anthem of the French Revolution. While "Le Triomphe des Opprimés" attempts to appeal to *La Tribune's* readership through a direct call to arms and memorialization of those that had already fought and perished, prolific Creole of color writer Adolphe Duhart employs this tactic through a different narrative approach in his short story "Simple histoire."

"Simple histoire," or "Simple story" was first published in *La Tribune* on March 9th and 10th in 1865 under Duhart's pseudonym, "Lelia D. . .t." The publication begins with a dedication to Louis Charles Roudanez, with Duhart thanking him for his work propelling New Orleans forward during the Civil War as the end was approaching. "Simple histoire" takes place in Saint Domingue at least two generations prior to the Revolution. The story is centered on plantation owners, the Saulliac family and their slaves. The Saulliac family is presented in the narrative as a historically wealthy French lineage living in the colony. Although the family benefits from the oppressive colonial terrain in Saint Domingue, Duhart describes them as having a certain humanity and difference in worldview compared to the "groups of men coming from all parts of the globe who infested the Colony"[5] (Duhart 3-4). Favoring the open-minded French way of life, Monsieur de Saulliac had sent his two children to be educated in Paris when they came of the appropriate age. Upon her return as a young lady, Mademoiselle de Saulliac, the daughter, is enlightened and "rid by her education of all ridiculous prejudices that are the fruits of slavery"[6] (Duhart 4). Similar to the "humane voice" in "Le Triomphe des Opprimés," Duhart imparts a conscientious voice through Mademoiselle de Saulliac. The empathy he imparts on her allows her to see "in the unfortunate Africans only brothers whom a terrible fate had reduced to servitude"[7] (Duhart 4). Mademoiselle de Saulliac then falls in love and bears a child with Clément, a slave of the family.

Clément is described as having a desire for freedom like a "sacred fire" that consumes him (Duhart 6). This aspiration foreshadows the rebellion that eventually leads to the Haitian Revolution. The narrator abruptly shifts from a description of Clément's circumstances to a broader historical allusion stemming from his conviction:

[...]if he had cried out for vengeance, he would have been lost, he would have found no echo. The hour had not yet struck for the deliverance of humanity in Haiti. Other crimes

[5] "tourbe d'hommes venus de toutes les parties du globe et qui infestaient la Colonie" (Duhart 3-4).

[6] "dépouillée par son éducation de tous ces préjugés ridicules, fruits de l'esclavage" (Duhart 4).

[7] "elle ne voyait dans les malheureux Africains que des frères qu'un sort affreux avait réduits à la servitude" (Duhart 4).

> were to bloody this troubled land, before its descendants, heirs of its strength of soul and its energy, were the first to utter this cry of freedom, which must resound, from country to country and from age to age, wherever there are slaves, and conquer at the price of their blood the independence under which the children of Haiti now live. (Duhart 6)[8]

The purpose of the allusion to the victory of the uprising that led to Haitian independence is to invoke the ancestral heritage of the Haitian Revolution to the call to participate in the Civil War. Duhart himself, like many other Creoles of color in the *La Tribune* community, had familial ties to Saint Domingue through both maternal and paternal lineages (Bruce 301). The crimes that were to "bloody this troubled land" alludes directly to the violence of the Civil War just as the "heirs" to freedom are those enslaved and without rights. Duhart's proclamation that this universal cry for freedom must resound from "country to country and from age to age, wherever there are slaves" appeals to the circumstances of Haiti's past and the present circumstances of the Civil War. By drawing this parallel in "Simple histoire," Duhart signals that the contemporary struggle for freedom and equality is linked to the cultural memory of the Haitian Revolution and is a reminder that the values actualized by Haitian slaves could—and should—resonate within the radical spirit of the Civil War.

The connections to the French Revolution's themes of *Liberté*, *Égalité,* and *Fraternité* are employed in both texts to resonate with the ethos of the readership. The parallels with allusions to the French and Haitian Revolutions create connections to two relatable historical events for *La Tribune's* Francophone audience. By placing these calls to action within these literary frameworks, the poem and short story are used as an educational and mobilizing tool tailored to inspire the readership to see their participation in the war as a continuation of this cultural history of resistance. Duhart draws a parallel between the cultural heritage of Creoles of color with the history of racial mixing in Saint Domingue to draw attention to the multi-racial identities of New Orleans Creoles of color and their Haitian roots. Similarly, the anonymous author of "Le Triomphe des Opprimés" uses the change of voice in each stanza to position the agency that free people of color have in the liberation and solidarity with those enslaved. *Fraternité* is displayed here not only between the free people of color to their enslaved brothers, but also between the white oppressors whom they'd fight alongside in the war.

Early Reconstruction brought a rapidly changing political landscape to New Orleans. As the Creoles of color at *La Tribune* endeavored to uphold the radical agenda established during the Civil War, they faced turbulent upheaval. The end of the Civil War prompted a series of local elections across the South, which were met with considerable resistance and violent conflict. One pivotal moment of this tension was the Mechanic's Institute Massacre of 1866 in New Orleans. Republicans reconvened a state constitutional convention with the aim of enfranchising black Louisianians. News of this event spread to white supremacist confederates and sympathizers, erupting in violent targeted killings and attacks on black political organizers.

[8] "s'il avait poussé un cri de vengeance, il aurait été perdu, il n'aurait point trouvé d'échos. L'heure n'avait point encore sonné à l'horloge de l'humanité, pour la délivrance d'Haïti. D'autres crimes devaient ensanglanter cette terre infortunée, avant que ses descendants, héritiers de sa force d'âme et de son énergie, ne jetassent les premiers ce cri de liberté, qui doit retentir, de contrée en contrée et de siècle en siècle, partout où il y aura des esclaves, et ne conquissent au prix de leur sang l'indépendance sous laquelle vivent maintenant les enfants d'Haïti" (Duhart 6).

This resulted in the deaths of approximately 40 people and the injuries of 200, becoming one of the deadliest in Louisiana history (Bruce 35). The violence of the Mechanic's Institute Massacre exacerbated divisions within the Louisiana Republican Party which was split between newly settled former Union officers known as "carpetbaggers," their local ally's known as "compromisers," and the "pure radicals" of the *La Tribune* community as described by F. Wayne Binning (1). These internal conflicts and the external pressures from conservative factions significantly impacted the socio-political realities of New Orleans Creoles of color.

The literary production within *La Tribune* also shifted as a result. Earlier poetic engagements of the corpus were marked by their allusions to French Romanticism and references to the Haitian Revolution for the common goal of asserting their identities and furthering their political agenda. However, early Reconstruction saw a bifurcation in this literary output: while some poems continued to draw upon historical allusion and the ethos of prior works in an attempt to reflect and uphold the ongoing political mission of the paper, the short fiction began to depart from this method and skew toward a more realist tone in an attempt to address the immediate political challenges of Reconstruction. This divergence is illustrated through two contrasting pieces published in *La Tribune* following the end of the Civil War: the poem, "La Marseillaise noire: chant de paix'' or "The Black Marseillaise: Song of Peace," by Camille Naudin and the short story,"Monsieur Paul," by Joanni Questy. These literary works reveal a continued struggle for political influence and the role of literature in navigating and articulating the ongoing complexities of resistance among New Orleans radical Creoles of color amidst the upheaval of Reconstruction.

"La Marseillaise noire" or "The Black Marseillaise" was first published in *La Tribune* on July 21st, 1867 by Camille Naudin, who scholars believe to be a pseudonym for an unknown author. A byline to the title reads, "to the tune of La Marseillaise,"[9] which references the French Revolution anthem of the same name by Claude Joseph Rouget de Lisle from 1792. The poem also alludes to Alphonse de la Martine's drama about the Haitian Revolution, *Toussaint Louverture,* which features a black Marseillaise. In the post scriptum of the poem, Naudin acknowledges this connection and writes, "Of course, only the title resembles my poem" (Bruce 168). From the byline to the post scriptum, Naudin frames these important allusions to *La Tribune's* readership in the context of Reconstruction. By drawing on a well-recognized anthem from the French Revolution and a play set during the Haitian Revolution, Naudin invites the readership to consider the past in the continued pursuit toward equality. Naudin employs the compelling refrain, "Stand up! The time has come, to each worker/ The bread (*repeat*) that he has earned, no matter his color"[10] (lines 9-10) to emphasize the call for collective action across racial divides. This refrain, repeated at the end of each stanza, positions a shared struggle and common goal that ultimately transcends racial boundaries and invokes a class solidarity.

The second stanza of the poem embodies the core thesis of the poem: it first condemns the effects of slavery, then calls for the needed coalition for progress to continue:

Assez longtemps ! le fouet infâme
De ses sillons nous a brisés,
Sans nom, Sans patrie et sans âme ;

[9] La Marseillaise was written following the War of the First Coalition during the French Revolution

[10] Debout ! l'heure est venue, à chaque travailleur/ Le pain (*bis*) qu'il a gagné, qu'importe sa couleur (Bruce 166)

Assez de fers ! de honte, assez! *(bis)*
Que dans une sainte alliance
Les noirs et les blancs confondus
A la mort des anciens abus,
Marchent tous pleins de confiance,
Debout ! etc. (Naudin 11-19)

(For long enough! That infamous whip
Whose lashes left us fractured,
And without souls, homelands and names;
Enough of the chains! Enough of the shame! *(repeat)*
May the blacks and the whites unite
In the ruins of these old crimes
And march together with determination
Stand up! etc.)

By recognizing the lasting effects of the institution of slavery, the poem shifts from a narrative of pain and dehumanization to a call for action, repeated for emphasis: "Enough of the chains! Enough of the shame!" This use of repetition is not just to assert a rejection of the past, but a call for unity amongst the Republican party. Naudin thus projects a path forward for Reconstruction– one that relies on the political cooperation between the "compromisers" and "pure radicals" in Louisiana. In a vision of "a sacred coalition," the poem urges black and white people to unite in the aftermath of these atrocitie and rebuild on the "ruins of these old crimes." This rallying cry reflects the broader political reality and persisting divisions following the Mechanic's Institute Massacre. By advocating for this alliance, Naudin emphasizes that the only viable means to achieve the political goals perpetuated in *La Tribune* rest in cooperation within the party. Through this, Naudin posits that enduring progress hinges on the ability to forge partnerships across both ideological and racial divides. This stanza, therefore, reinforces the practical political strategy needed during early Reconstruction in New Orleans.

The following stanza functions as a moral imperative for the political motivations articulated in the previous stanza. The repeated call to "Stand up!" in the first line reinforces the urgency and critical nature of the moment:

Debout ! c'est l'heure solennelle !
Où sur le vieux monde écroulé
Le despotisme qui chancelle
Vient couronner la Liberté;
La discorde reprend sa pomme,
La raison humaine grandit ;
C'est l'intelligence et l'esprit
Et non plus la peau qui fait L'homme.
Debout ! etc. (Naudin 20-28)

(Stand up! It is the solemn hour!
As the old world falls away
A trembling despotism
Arrives to award the prize of *Liberté* ;
As discord unsows its seeds,

And human reason expands ;
It is the intellect and the spirit
–no longer the color of skin– which makes the man.
Stand up! etc.)

The emphasis on "intellect and spirit" over skin color challenges the entrenched racial prejudices of the time, as well as the barriers dividing the agendas within the Republican party. It advocates for a meritocratic society where individuals are valued for their intellectual contributions and character, reaffirming the forward-thinking attitude necessary for political progress in Reconstruction. Furthermore, the line that recognizes the need for "human reason" to expand, suggests that the reconstruction of society requires not only legal changes, but also a dramatic shift in social consciousness. By integrating these ideals into the poem, Naudin presents the potential for collaboration and places the demand on *La Tribune's* readership. It is a formal call for a reflection of *La Tribune's* Reconstruction goals.

The short story, "Monsieur Paul," by Joanni Questy, which appeared serially in *La Tribune* from October 25 to November 3, 1867, is a significant turning point in the literary production by New Orleans Creoles of color. Questy was a key figure in the city's educational and literary circles. He served as the principal of the Couvent School's Institute Catholique, which was run by Creoles of color that provided education to orphaned children of color. Active and dedicated to the literary scene, Questy also served as an editor and contributor to *L'Album litteraire* and *Les Cenelles*. Published just two years before his death, "Monsieur Paul" encapsulates Questy's literary vision and his response to a prevailing mercantilism that he felt was inhibiting the creative viability of the literary production in New Orleans. In the post scriptum, Questy articulates a manifesto for literary revival directed at "the apostles of French literature in Louisiana."[11] He posits that the city's everyday reality – filled with "drama, comedy, and catastrophe"– provides fertile grounds for literary exploration. Thus, Questy calls for a departure from the Romantic tradition toward an angle which might now be attributed to Realism. By documenting the city's complexities, Questy calls for the ushering in of "a new era of literary renovation in Louisiana."[12] This vision reflects a broader aspiration to nurture the literary production by Creoles of color in New Orleans that could preserve and renew the writer's cultural heritage and identity. Though "Monsieur Paul" surely has characteristics of a Romantic drama, Questy notes that the tale draws from his own life as an attempt to "report mediocrely but as faithfully as possible some interesting particularities of the life of a man with whom [I] had frequent relations with for four years."[13]Taking his own advice, Questy begins the practice for which his post scriptum advocates in order to usher in a new era of literary production. Through the post scriptum, Questy not only highlights that literature could counteract the creeping mercantilism taking over the city, but also affirms the value of literature as a medium for authentic cultural expressions of identity.

[11] "les apôtres de la littérature française en Louisiane" (Michaelides, *Paroles d'honneur* 168).

[12] "une nouvelle ère de rénovation littéraire en Louisiane" (Michaelides, *Paroles d'honneur* 168).

[13] "Telles sont les réflexions que fit l'auteur de l'écrit qui va suivre, après qu'il eut essayé de rapporter médiocrement, mais aussi fidèlement qu'il lui a été possible, quelques particularités, peut-être intéressantes, de la vie d'un homme avec lequel il eut des relations assez fréquentes pendant quatre ans." (Michaelides, *Paroles d'honneur* 168)

"Monsieur Paul" is a narrative set just prior to the Civil War that details a brief friendship between the narrator, who is a Creole of color, and a white Creole named Monsieur Paul. The two first connect on a dark evening over a shared passion for French literature. After an unsettling incident where Monsieur Paul mistakes the narrator for being white, he confides in the narrator about his impending duel with a man named Ernest Day. The context of the duel is deeply tied to racial and social tensions in New Orleans. Monsieur Paul had been involved in a "marriage of conscience" with a Creole of color– a form of union that was culturally common, though legally unrecognized in New Orleans as interracial marriages were prohibited. The relationship produced two children before his wife left him for Ernest Day, a friend of Monsieur Paul:

> I let, without any suspicion, a hypocritical friendship penetrated the sanctuary of my affections; betrayal, once established in my home, unfortunately ended up attaching infamy to my doorstep, and since then… since then,... all these walls, all these furnishings, you see, seem to shout with reminders of my shame(Michaelides, *Paroles d'honneur* 178).[14]

The friendship described is a reflective commentary on the turbulent landscape of early Reconstruction New Orleans. Monsieur Paul, with his open-minded French ethos, symbolizes a progressive white Creole perspective, while the Anglo-Saxon name of Ernest Day suggests that he represents the opportunistic carpetbaggers who flooded New Orleans post-Civil War to exploit political positions in the upheaval of the political arena. The narrator, a Creole of color, epitomizes the local Creole community– intellectually engaged and culturally sophisticated yet politically almost powerless. Additionally, the conflict between Monsieur Paul and Ernest Day embodies the internal discord among the Republican party following the Mechanic's Institute Massacre. The story highlights how Creoles of color, despite their immense contributions to the city, remained largely spectators in the political arena of New Orleans due to systematic disenfranchisement. The lack of legal recognition and failure to maintain the radical momentum perpetuated during the Civil War left them as onlookers rather than participants in the unfolding space of New Orleans.

Questy also uses "Monsieur Paul '' to critique race relations in New Orleans. Upon first meeting the narrator on a dark evening, Monsieur Paul mistakes him for a white man. Their first interaction in the daylight proves awkward for the two when Monsieur Paul is surprised by the narrator's appearance. Monsieur Paul apologizes saying, "Forgive me. I was weak enough to yield to the influence of a prejudice as fatal as it was stupid: I am ashamed of myself and I bitterly regret it" (Michaelides, *Paroles d'honneur* 172)[15]. In his apology, Monsieur Paul recognizes that his reaction was the product of a social folly and not his own perspective position – the result of a segregated and prejudiced society. This interaction serves the narrative as a critique of the circumstances contributing to racial prejudice in New Orleans. The narrator then reminds Monsieur Paul of the intellectual connection they shared from their first

[14] "Je laissai, sans défiance aucune, l'amitié hypocrite pénétrer dans le sanctuaire de mes affections ; la trahison victorieuse, une fois installée chez moi, finit malheureusement par attacher l'infamie à mon seuil, et depuis... depuis,... tous ces murs, tous ces meubles, voyez-vous, semblent avoir emprunté une voix pour me rappeler ma honte" (Michaelides, *Paroles d'honneur* 178).

[15] "Plaignez-moi. J'ai eu la faiblesse de céder à l'entraînement d'un préjugé aussi funeste que stupide: j'ai honte de moi-même et je deplore amèrement…" (Michaelides, *Paroles d'honneur* 172).

meeting and that the color of his skin should not dictate his worthiness as a friend. This interaction is similar to the line in "La Marseillaise Noire," where Naudin heeds that the progress of society relies on a shift in social consciousness and the arrest of these prejudices.

An additional critique of race relations is seen in the conclusion of the story when the true genealogy of Monsieur Paul's slave, Georges, is revealed: "Georges was not his slave but his nephew; that the mother of Georges, a slave of Pensacola, had died three months after she had given birth to him, and that his father had fallen from a steamboat after the kettle had burst."[16] Georges' true identity recalls the hidden genealogy of Clemence in "Simple histoire" where a child of mixed-descent is raised without knowing their origins. It goes without saying that these motifs do not merely serve as narrative devices but are deeply emblematic of the realities of these Creoles of color and their mixed origins. Mixed race appears in these two short stories to articulate the complexity of their cultural origins under slavery in both the United States and in Haiti.

The trajectory of literature by Creoles of color prior to the Civil War and to the Reconstruction era demonstrates the way that the corpus was laden with social and political imperatives. Analyses of the literary production published in *La Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orléans* not only reflect the shifting socio-political landscapes from the Civil War to Reconstruction but also exhibit an evolution in literary form and thematic complexity. This transition from expressions mirroring French Romanticism to a call for the shift toward realism during Reconstruction reflects literature's role as a dynamic medium of expression for New Orleans Creoles of color. This literary arc, spanning poetry and short fiction, functioned as a mechanism for articulating the community's multifaceted identities and social engagements. From the fervent calls to action in the verses of "Le Triomphe des Opprimés" to the manifesto in the post scriptum of "Monsieur Paul," each piece hitherto carries an advocacy for freedom, equity and recognition. The evolution in literary style and focus was not just a response to the transforming political climate in New Orleans, but a strategic and creative medium for engaging a community determined in their aspirations. In summation, the exploration of the literary contributions by Creoles of color in New Orleans reveals a certain interconnection between literary production and social identity which showcases the capacity of literature to influence and reflect the realities of political and social transformation. As these authors continued to write, their works remained indelibly linked to the core of their community's ethos – persistently radical and resilient.

[16] "Déclarait dans cette lettre que Georges était son neveu et non son esclave; que la mère de Georges, esclave d'un habitant de Pensacola, était morte, trois mois après qu'elle l'eut mis au monde, et que son père s'était tombé d'un vapeur dont la bouilloire avait crevé" (Michaelides, *Paroles d'honneur* 184-185).

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