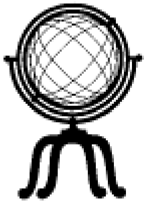

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Motion in the System:

Coffee, Color, and Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Saint-Domingue*

Michel-Rolph Trouillot

Introduction: System and Particulars

This article starts with a very basic fact: between 1767 and 1789, slightly more than two decades, the volume of coffee exports from the French Caribbean colony of Saint-Domingue quadrupled while sugar export volumes rose at a lower rate. During the same period, values from coffee exports nearly sextupled, thereby matching the values of white sugar exports and equaling more than two-thirds of the hitherto unmatched values from coarse sugar exports. This startling development

*A version of this paper was presented at the Johns Hopkins Seminar in Atlantic History and Culture in November 1979. Some of its theoretical implications have been developed elsewhere (see Trouillot, 1981). I owe thanks to David W. Cohen, Philip Curtin, Scott Guggenheim, Patricia Kluck, Philip Morgan, Scott V. Parris, William Roseberry, William C. Sturtevant, Dale Tomich, Patricia Torres, Katherine Verdery, and Drexel Woodson for comments and suggestions. I am particularly grateful to Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price for their advice and encouragement and to Kettly Ménard-Trouillot who, among other things, drew out of Moreau de Saint-Méry's work the parish charts of population and production without which this work could not have been done.

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has been largely neglected in analyses of eighteenth-century Saint-Domingue. The image of a complete social and economic disjuncture created by the Haitian Revolution persists, and we are asked to believe that the destruction of the sugar industry during the War of Independence fully explains the transformation of sugar-oriented Saint-Domingue into coffee-oriented Haiti.[1] Though the Haitian Revolution, which led to the creation of the second independent nation of the Americas, was in and of itself a radical break,[2] the importance of coffee in independent Haiti is closely related to the prior expansion of its production during the colonial era. That relationship cannot be fully interpreted without thorough studies of coffee production and its social ramifications in Haiti, on the one hand, and analyses of the colonial boom on the other. Unfortunately, studies of the latter kind are wholly lacking. The article attempts to redress the balance. In so doing, and because of the status of the countries involved, it is also a case study of economic and social change in a colonial situation. More generally, it may serve to enlighten our perception of the links between what dependency theorists have labeled the "core" and the "periphery".

One of the most stimulating versions of dependency theory to reach the general public came with the publication of Immanuel Wallerstein's *The Modern World System.*[3] But many—even among those who endorse Wallerstein's general argument—will admit that those two volumes offer only a limited treatment of differentiation within the semiperiphery and, more importantly, within the periphery. As Mintz has pointed out, Wallerstein recognizes that particular peripheral subareas like the Caribbean "fitted differently into his conception of a World-system," but he does not himself deal specifically with such local ensembles.[4] That absence limits the

1. "Saint-Domingue" refers only to the former French colony on the western third of Hispaniola. "Haiti" refers to the independent nation that this colony became in 1804 after the slave revolution of 1791-1803. It is also used in reference to the ecology of the whole island.

2. See James (1938) and Trouillot (1977).

3. See Wallerstein (1974, 1980).

4. See Mintz (1977).

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applicability of the model and leaves those whose interests lean more toward historical particulars—say anthropologists, historians, or historically oriented anthropologists—with a series of unanswered questions.[5] How does a peripheral area "fit" into the general scheme at some particular moment? What factors contribute to the part it plays in the world-system? What happens in the peripheral area before, during, and after whatever changes result from its new position? What changes, in turn, does this newly acquired position produce within the total structure? To what extent do "local initiative and local response" account for motion in the system? These are still open questions, questions which cannot be answered without more attention to the particulars of social, economic, and cultural history but also reveal the need for a methodology integrating the study of such particulars within an approach sensitive to world-historical forces.

Indeed, since the sixteenth century, peripheral areas, with the particular forms of labor exaction that have typified them, the specific political ties they have maintained, and the particular commodities they have produced or bought, have affected in variegated ways the class relations, economic trends, and conflicts characteristic of the core itself. In the particular case that concerns us here, it will become clear as this article develops, that coffee production in Saint-Domingue, by reinforcing the profits made from sugar and by giving France an early edge in a new market in the crucial aftermath of the Seven Years' War, enhanced that country's position among the European core states. Yet *at the same time* the coffee boom operated to loosen France's grip on the island. The important point is that contradictory variables and the consequences of the startling evolution of coffee in colonial Saint-Domingue are to be looked for at both ends of the dependency relationship—or, better said, perhaps, in the very web of that relationship.

Most dependency theorists,[6] and certainly Wallerstein himself, would not deny the importance of peripheral initiatives

5. See Mintz (1977, 1978) and Tomich (1976).

6. See, for example, Frank (1972) and Chirot (1977).

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and responses. But the crux of the matter is to go beyond that simple acknowledgement to build an adequately detailed version of the world-system that can account for dialectical movement. This implies a *methodology for the study of particulars as sources of change* in their own right, constantly reacting to, but also constantly affecting, often in unexpected ways, external impulses and pressures. The *caféières* of Saint-Domingue existed within a succession of ever-wider ensembles, from the parish and the colony to the French empire and the system at large.[7] Many of their particularisms also sprang from the island's geopolitical inclusion within the Caribbean region and the Americas of plantation slavery. A proper analysis of coffee production in Saint-Domingue should thus begin with the larger units, moving down from the level of the system at large to that of the unit of production and paying due attention in this theoretical course to the progressively narrower intermediate levels of organization. The task of the social scientist remains to determine the complex relations which led particular people at particular times to feel the way they felt and act the way they did—for the sources of change always turn out to be a particular configuration of divergent impulses. This article will show, for instance, that the initial pressures for Saint-Domingue's coffee expansion can be located at the core. But it will also make clear that this "moment" was itself a vanishing one, for these pressures were *from the very beginning* transformed by conditions in the periphery. Ensuing factors, even when ascribed to one end of the system, showed the influence of the other end and similarly acted upon it. The difficulty for the social scientist is to circumvent the contradiction inherent in the linear output of language in describing things which cannot be defined outside of their moving and contradictory relations.

The article is divided into three parts. Part One sketches the chronological evolution of coffee production in Saint-Domingue in the context of the world-system. As coffee consumption

7. I use the colonial terms *caféière* and *caféterie* to acknowledge the fundamental differences between the coffee units of production and the sugar *plantations*.

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increased in the core, growing production moved from external arenas to outer peripheries of the system, and then to the more controlled peripheries (e.g., the Caribbean). I also hope to show that in Saint-Domingue itself, environmental conditions and the different requirements of sugar and coffee resulted in a limited need for initial capital in coffee production as compared to the relatively high requirements of sugar.

Part Two deals with the varied groups of people who took advantage of the natural and economic particularisms which favored coffee production in Saint-Domingue. Part Three examines some of the contradictory effects of their actions on the colony and on the links between colony and metropolis. More generally, the progression of the article represents the movement from one level to another within the system. From the beginning of Part One to the conclusion of Part Three, the underlying progression carries us from the level of the system at large to the level of the unit of production. Yet in the text, as it develops, no dichotomy between internal and external situation is intended. A look at one should entail a look at the other, and every "new" factor should be carefully weighed in the light of those previously specified. Such back-and-forth movement may soften the lines of the sketch, but it should not surprise, for it is the very motion of which I claim the relevance.

Part One: World System, Local Opportunities

In 1697 official Spanish acknowledgement of French dominion over the western part of Hispaniola opened the way for the development of sugar cane plantations in what had legally become Saint-Domingue. Four years after the Treaty of Ryswick, there were thirty-five working mills in Saint-Domingue, "twenty-five more ready to crush and nine in course of erection."[8] In 1717 there were only a hundred in the whole colony; in 1724, two hundred could be found just in the area around Cap Francais. In the late 1730's, many cacao orchards

8. See Deerr (1949, Vol. 1).

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were replaced by cane plantations and, by 1742, exports from Saint-Domingue surpassed the century-old production of Martinique. In 1754 the colony counted 539 sugar works and, by 1789, its 800 cane plantations were producing 143,000,000 pounds of sugar—that is, nearly as much as all the British Caribbean islands.[9] Between 1730 and 1760 Saint-Domingue had become "L'Isle à Sucre" *par excellence*. Debien rightly assesses the situation of the times:

> Since the destruction of the cacao fields—around 1736—and the retrogression of indigo, in the middle of the eighteenth century, there was not any country in the world more completely attached to one crop than Saint-Domingue to sugar-cane.[10]

Yet at the very same moment that Saint-Domingue seemed to have found its colonial vocation, the production of a new crop developed, one which was to double the revenues of the colony, influence the relations between colony and metropolis, modify the balance of politicoeconomic power within the island, and strengthen France's position in the world-system. That new crop was coffee.

Coffee was introduced into Saint-Domingue at least twice from Martinique, first around 1715, then in 1726, without any major immediate consequences.[11] Coffee exports from the French Caribbean islands were forbidden before massive cultivation had developed in order to promote the trade from the Echelles du Levant.[12] Since 1723 the Compagnie des Indes had held a royal monopoly over that trade, which was certainly impressive as early as 1730. Caribbean planters were kept from interfering. In Saint-Domingue, the government simply "advised" them that tobacco was more profitable.[13]

9. See Deerr (1949, vol. 1), Bonneau (1862, 35), Moral (1961, 20), and H. Trouillot (1965, 125-26).

10. Debien (1943, 13). This quote (and all others from French sources) is my own translation.

11. See Moreau de Saint-Méry (1958, 173, 1117) and Ukers (1935, 5).

12. See Vignols & Sée (1925) and Frostin (1975, 268).

13. Cabon, cited in Brutus (n.d.)

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The planters did not follow the advice—tobacco prices were too low—and after the repeal of the interdiction, coffee production for export started in the French Caribbean, though at a rather moderate pace. The first commercial shipment from Saint-Domingue may have reached France in 1738 under special royal license.[14] Yet up to the Seven Years' War, the island's role remained modest, and the bulk of Caribbean coffee imported to France came from Martinique, most probably through Marseilles and Bordeaux.[15] The boom and those related events which, as an angry observer, Hilliard d'Auberteuil called the coffee "Revolution", did not start before the late 1750's. The rapidity of growth thereafter was dramatic. It is expressed by the estimated number of trees: from 22,000,000 in 1750 to 100,000,000 by the late 1760's.[16] It is expressed by the export figures: 7,000,000 pounds in 1755; 15,000,000 in 1764; 15,600,000 in 1767; nearly 40,000,000 in 1774; and 77,000,000 in 1790.[17] But for the planters of Saint-Domingue, the "Coffee Revolution" was more significantly expressed in millions of colonial *livres*. Coffee export values rose from an annual average of 12,000,000 in 1767 to 48,800,000 livres in 1783-84 and 71,500,000 in 1787-89, hence almost equal to the 75,000,000 livres that the colony received for its exports of white sugar. By 1789, revenues from coffee were six times as much as 30 years before, and Saint-Domingue was producing about 60% of all the coffee sold in the western world. If the course of sugar development in Saint-Domingue had been spectacular, that of coffee was thrilling.

What were the causes of this development? What were its consequences? To what extent was the rise of coffee in Saint Domingue due to social, political, and economic changes occurring outside of the geographical limits of the island? How

14. See Ukers (1935, 30).

15. See Rambert (1949), Carrière (1973), and Butel (1974).

16. See Frostin (1975, 268).

17. See Hilliard d'Auberteuil (1779, 1:61-72), Malouet (1802), H. Trouillot (1965), and Moral (1961, 20, 264-66). Moral suggests that eighteenth-century censuses may have been significantly behind the expansion as it happened on the ground.

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much do systemic relations determine particular peripheral developments?

An analysis of the rise of coffee as an export crop in eighteenth-century Saint-Domingue would lack proper perspective if not done within a framework broad enough to take account of the modern world-system. Slavery in the Caribbean cannot be disassociated from the expansion of capitalism.[18] Even the fact that the crop was introduced by Jesuits from Martinique underlies the colony's inclusion within Catholic France's network. The subsequent interdiction fostered by the Compagnie des Indes also underscores the extent of the control exercised over the island by factions within the metropolis concerned about the specialization of diverse colonial areas. The repeal of the interdiction reveals yet another concern—not incompatible with the first—that of securing a more important share of a growing market for the new commodity.[19] But the spectacular rise of coffee in Saint-Domigue does not merely exemplify the dependency relationship between metropolis and colonies within the world-system. It also shows very convincingly that world-system analyses can and should address themselves to what Marx presented as the "unity" of production and consumption.[20] Indeed, when Saint-Domingue's coffee revolution is looked at within the world-system framework, it becomes the historical apogee of a course which was to put the means of production of another "tropical" crop, thrown into the international market, under the total control of European dominant classes and power groups. A sketch of the history of coffee from about 1600 to 1789 clearly shows that as consumption expanded in Europe and North America, cultivation moved from areas where the means of production were not under the direct control of European classes to areas increasingly integrated within the world-economy. I will

18. See Williams (1968), Mintz (1974, 1977), Tomich (1976), and Wallerstein (1976).

19. See Carrière (1973) and Rambert (1949, especially 192ff.) for two complementary descriptions of the struggle of Marseilles-based houses to enter the Caribbean coffee trade.

20. See Marx (1973) and Nicholaus's introduction.

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briefly outline the sequence as reconstituted from partial descriptions.[21]

Base Time (1580-1650)

Coffee drinking, spreading through the Near East, reaches Venice, the Netherlands, England, and France, but it remains the fancy of a few wealthy aristocrats. The limited trade is divided between European (especially Dutch) and non-European merchants (Lebanese Jews, Turks), but production occurs in an "external arena" of the European world-economy (Arabia).

First Step (End of the Seventeenth Century—First Quarter of the Eighteenth Century)

A substantial part of production still occurs in Arabia, and growing production within the system is mostly confined to dependencies of the Indian Ocean (Ceylon, Java, Bourbon, Mauritius). Only the Dutch start export-oriented production in a Caribbean colony (Surinam), but French, British, and Portuguese entrepreneurs are also trying to acclimatize the plant in their American dependencies. Consumption spreads in the courts of Europe, and the drink is praised by the leisure classes while mercantile interest groups (e.g., the Dutch East India Company, the French Compagnie des Indes, and some newly created, Marseilles-based merchant houses) try to take control of trade and distribution. One needs to emphasize the different processes simultaneously set in motion at this first crucial stage:

(a) demand is being created;
(b) control of the trade is being secured by European merchants;

21. See Ukers (1935), Rambert (1949), Carrière (1973), Carrière & Courdurie (1975), Sturtevant (1979), Wickizer (1943), Cole (1938), Drummond & Wilbraham (1939), Williams (1975), and Nassy et al. (1798).

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(c) the locus of production is moving from areas where the core has no control over the means of production to areas within the European world-economy;
(d) structures are being established for the expansion of production in more tightly controlled peripheries.

Second Step (Second Quarter of the Eighteenth Century)

Production increases in the Caribbean (Martinique and especially Surinam) while the use of coffee spreads quantitatively among specific categories within European core societies: merchants, nobles, clerics, intellectuals. But demand is also being created among the lower clases. Thousands of *cafés* open in the major European urban centers and coffee appears for the first time on the wholesale list of imported commodities of some North American cities. By 1734 imports from the Caribbean exceed both those from the Levant and those from the Indian Ocean dependencies in Marseilles, then the turnstile of the Mediterranean French trade. By 1750 the locus of production has definitely moved from the Indian Ocean to the Caribbean, that is, to peripheries geopolitically more integrated within the world-economy *where control and access to the means of production are more tightly secured.*

Third Step (1750's to 1789)

From the middle of the eighteenth century onward, consumption spreads both quantitatively and socially within the core, and the use of coffee becomes effectively "popular" among the laboring classes of many European countries and in some North American urban centers. At this stage the ever-growing production of the Caribbean peripheries exceeds the demand of the core itself. This surplus production of the inner peripheries then impinges upon production in the external arenas and outer peripheries. *Moreover, it contributes to the increasing integration of these former leading producers into the world-economy.* Indeed, less than 150 years after Dutch

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merchants had started the massive distribution of Arabian coffee in the West, the direction of the trade between Europe and the Near East had changed and, by 1774, Marseilles alone was reexporting more than 2,000,000 pounds of Caribbean coffee a year to its former suppliers in the Levant!

To quote Marx, "The conclusion that we reach is not that production, distribution, exchange and consumption are identical, but that they all form the members of a totality, distinctions within a unity."[22] Coffee cultivation in eighteenth-century Saint-Domingue was but a moment of a particular movement which was to integrate the production, distribution, and consumption of a new commodity within the capitalist world-system. The working of that integration and the particular role played by Saint-Domingue as a French colony cannot be properly understood without references to the other colonial networks, and most especially Britain, that is—among other things—to the East India Company.

The lead taken by France in the coffee trade was indeed very much facilitated by the Company's policy and by British tea imports. Tea was introduced on the London market the very same year that saw the opening of the first coffeehouse.[23] As British colonial imports tended to be retained in great proportion for local use,[24] and also because of the lobbying of the East India Company, coffee production in the British Caribbean was retarded by excise duties "amounting to as much as 480% of its market value."[25] The tea trade thus held back from the market what might otherwise have been one of France's most powerful rivals.

Anglo-French rivalry in general contributed to the development of coffee production in Saint-Domingue. The Seven Years' War (1756-63), which confirmed and strengthened British naval superiority, had created a blockade of French

22. Marx (1973, 99).

23. See Ukers (1935, 70), Drummond & Wilbraham (1939, 205) and Sheridan (1974, 22-23).

24. Sheridan (1974, 25).

25. Williams (1975, 2).

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Caribbean possessions. So had, to a lesser extent, the two previous armed conflicts of 1702-13 (Queen Anne's War) and 1743-48 (King George's War). By the end of the 1760's, the *Exclusif*—that system which, through specific laws, controlled the commerce of the French colonies—had long been *de facto* modified by planters in Saint-Domingue, and for years coffee had been exported to the British North American colonies.[26] Anti-British and anti-tea sentiments which preceded, accompanied, and followed the North American Revolution provoked a preference for coffee in the emerging United States.[27] Thus the coffee planters of Saint-Domingue can be said to have been on the winning side of both the North American Revolutionary War and the Seven Years' War.

Dutch investors should have benefited from the demand at least as much as their French rivals. They had started cultivation in Java before other Europeans; they had introduced the drink to New York; and they were the first to have transferred large-scale production to the Caribbean.[28] But before the 1750's, no local protectionism covered Dutch manufacturers, and in the second half of the century, Dutch-controlled coffee production suffered from the general decline of the Netherlands.[29] Java was far away, the *traficken* had fewer ships on the high seas, and Surinam—the only Caribbean colony which, by reason of its size, looked as if it could produce as much coffee as Saint-Domingue—met a series of unexpected problems in the 1760's and 70's. According to van Lier, by 1773, after the crisis of the Amsterdam stock market, "the prosperity of Surinam was done for."[30]

26. See H. Trouillot (1965) and Frostin (1975). On the general decline of the *Exclusif* system, see the excellent work of Tarrade (1972).

27. See Sturtevant (1979) and Ukers (1935).

28. See Nassy et al. (1798, 2:90) and Price (1976, 17).

29. See Wilson (1941, 1954).

30. See Lier (1971) and Price (1976, 17). Coffee production continued in Surinam long after Saint-Domingue's "revolution", but a memo from Sartine to Turgot, dated 1775, suggests that French administrators were aware of the opportunity offered to them by Surinam's problems. See Tarrade (1972, 46).

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With the Dutch in trouble and the English busy with tea, French merchants had the opportunity to offer coffee from the Caribbean with little, if any, serious competition. Planters in Saint-Domingue had an even greater advantage. The Seven Years' War, as a result of which France lost vast and important dependencies, enhanced Saint-Domingue's position within the French network. The island remained an ideal dependency for Frenchmen to invest in or emigrate to, the largest colony in the Americas after Louisiana and French Guiana. The King himself emphasized its potential.[31]

But within the French network, Saint-Domingue had been "L'Isle à Sucre" and the tightness of its relationship with the metropolis does not fully account for the sudden development of coffee in the colony. As we move *down* within the system, more localized variables must be taken into account. Focusing on local climate and topography, I will now show how the natural environment presented some relative advantages to potential coffee growers, one of which was a limited need for capital. By affecting expenditures for land and water, climate and topography lowered the relative cost of coffee production and contributed to the fact that the sugar island became the Eldorado of coffee growers.

An ideal sugar plantation required a large portion of flat, unbroken, fertile land. Haiti's mountainous topography[32] thus imposed natural limits to the expansion of sugar, a fact at first concealed by the extraordinary fertility of the alluvial soils on which were raised the first great sugar plantations. As ideal lands became less available, planters tried to circumvent some of the problems linked to the environment, but the disposition of a sugar plantation to fit the topography of particular areas was at best a costly compromise.

In contrast, coffee could be productively planted in much smaller plots. Of course, accidents of topography did not necessarily help its production, but altitude did, and in many ways. The convergence of heavy rainfall and cool temperatures

31. See Tarrade (1972, 24).

32. See Moral (1955) and Anglade (1975).

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in the mountains facilitated the development of coffee there and enhanced the possibility of its cultivation in mid-altitude lands situated on their windward sides.[33] An analysis of production figures and climatological records shows a strong correlation between heavy rainfall and a high number of *caféteries* in many parishes.[34] The description of the parish of Port-Margot allows us to follow the change from sugar to coffee, as the altitude rises, on the very same side of a small mountain. At the bottom of the mountain, the canton of Bas-Quartier had six of the eight sugar plantations of the parish, and *no* coffee. Le Petit Bourg, on the slope just above, had one sugar plantation and fifteen *caféteries.* At the top of the mountain, Corail had twenty-four *caféteries and no sugar plantations.*[35]

The effects of the variations in rainfall on the relative costs of both crops appear clearly when one considers their respective need for water. The sugar planter needed an abundant water supply for slaves and livestock as well as for maintenance and cane processing. In the mountains, on the other hand, the coffee planter could be content with a large basin, a well, or a horsepond.[36] The absence of irrigation and/or running water increased the already significant differences between the prices of coffee and sugar lands, especially before the 1780's.[37] The

33. On the temperature and water requirements of coffee, see Ukers (1935, 134) and Wickizer (1943, 36). On the climatology of Haiti in the eighteenth century, the best sources remain Moreau de Saint-Méry (1797-98) and Talman (1906), based on Moreau's records. See also Laborie (1798), Anglade (1975, 12-19), and Moral (1955, 102-09).

34. See Talman (1906, 67-68), Moreau de Saint-Méry (1797-98, 271-73, 624, 634-35), and Debien (1943, 15).

35. Based on the description by Moreau de Saint-Méry (1797-98, 646-47).

36. See Laborie (1798, 11, 74).

37. Gabriel Debien indicates the possibility that irrigation could double the price of a *carreau* of land (see Debien, 1962, 95). Available figures also show that the estimated quality of the land—higher in the case of sugar—made surprising differences in the actual price of a piece. In the same parish of Jean-Rabel, the Collette family bought land at prices ranging from less than 100 *livres* (1777 currency) to 571 *livres* (1779) per *carreau.* Most of these lands were used for coffee, and it is thus significant that their prices never came close to the 1700 *livres* a *carreau* that Hilliard d'Auberteuil—by a conservative estimate—felt necessary to acquire land suitable to

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only major expenses in coffee cultivation that resulted from environmental conditions arose from the initial clearing of the land, especially when it involved wage-laborers.[38] But in general, because of the relation between altitude and temperature, only some 20% of the surface of the colony may have been unsuitable to coffee while accessible to sugar cane. Part of the remainder was compatible with both cultures, but *most of it was potential coffee territory*.[39] By their effect on the availability of land and water, climate and topography made it possible to start a *caféière* with considerably less initial and running capital than was necessary for a sugar plantation.

A complete estimate of the relative costs of coffee and sugar production should also take into account livestock, machinery, buildings, and the labor force. Although meaningful quantitative analysis of these factors is impossible at this stage due to the scarcity of *caféteries* figures, I will attempt a qualitative estimate of these requirements and show that they, too, were much higher for sugar than for coffee production, and thus deepened the already substantial difference in relative costs.

Livestock was used as a source of power in both enterprises. Where waterpower was insufficient, the sugar mills were usually driven by mules or oxen. Transportation had to be efficient and rapid in order to maintain the freshness of the raw sugar and molasses and to meet the merchants' schedules.[40] Thus, sugar planters tended to have more oxen and horses than

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sugar cane. See Chevalier (1938) and Hilliard d'Auberteuil (1779, 1:234-35). By 1789, Moreau de Saint-Méry observed that coffee land sometimes cost up to 1865 *livres* a *carreau*, but by then, sugar cane land had reached the 4000 *livres* mark. The *carreau* (one and one-third hectare) was the common land area unit in Saint-Domingue and is still widely used in Haiti. See Moreau de Saint-Méry (1797-98, 14), Debien (1962, 92), and Moral (1955).

38. Many planters used these teams of professionals just to clear an initial portion of land and, once installed, used their own slaves to clear the rest as required by expansion.

39. This gross approximation is based on data from Talman (1906), Moral (1955, 109-11), Moral (1961), Anglade (1975), and the climatological requirements noted by Wickizer (1943) and Ukers (1935).

40. On the requirements of sugar production in the colonial Caribbean, see Barrett (1965), Mintz (forthcoming), and Trouillot (forthcoming).

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they would actually use in one specific season.[41] In comparison, the coffee planter's investment in livestock seems to have been minimal. One mule was enough to turn the most commonly used type of grinding mill, and wagons were rarely used for transportation. Investments of the coffee planters in buildings, materials, and tools were also less than those of their sugar counterparts. A cistern, a basin, a storage room, living quarters, and a rudimentary mill—often made on location—constituted the most *expensive* materials.[42]

But the most striking difference between the requirements of the two products was in their respective labor forces. On this, fortunately, a nucleus of quantitative data allows a more precise estimate. Roseline Siguret's work based on public notaries' records from the Jacmel region of Saint-Domingue (1757-91), provides evidence of the relatively small labor force on the *caféteries*. From her eight lists, I have found an average of 28 slaves by coffee plot, with children accounting for about one-fifth of this average. Moreover, the two lists which considerably raised that average (one with 52 slaves, the other with 45) are both dated 1787. The next smaller number is 25. Likewise,

41. Some sold livestock to butchers as an extra source of cash. In 1779, the Foäche plantation counted 87 sheep in a total of 319 animals. But Foäche himself thought that he needed about 200 bovines and equines for sugar production. By 1784, the Cottineau plantation may have counted some 75 mules, 40 oxen, 26 cows and calves (worth 84,560 *livres*), plus 43 sheep and 22 pigs. The 1741 inventory of the Galbaud du Fort plantation lists 67 bovines and 32 horses worth 24,660 *livres*, but by 1788, even with a 30,000 *livres* annual spending, the transportation system was not totally efficient. Hilliard d'Auberteuil himself estimates 50,000 *livres* in 1775 currency for his "ideal" sugar plantation. See Debien (1962, 18, 103), Debien (1941, 44, 83), and Hilliard d'Auberteuil (1979, 1:235).

42. See Laborie (1798) and Hilliard d'Auberteuil (1779, 1:223). A few figures can help the comparison. A 1789 estimate of the Foäche sugar plantation evaluates buildings and materials at about 850,000 colonial *livres*. The Cottineau plantation—closer to average—had buildings, industrial materials, and tools totalling 356,296 *livres* in 1784. The 845,000 *livres* that Stanislas Foäche paid in 1772 for a 400-*carreau* sugar plantation *in need of renovation*, compared to the 30,000 *livres* that Pierre Collette paid in 1778 for a coffee plantation of 18 to 20 *carreaux* with a storage house and a masonry *basin* again suggest huge differences in material requirements. Hilliard and Malouet, respectively, estimate 330,000 and 200,000 *livres* on their model *sucreries*. See Debien (1962, 18, 90, 111), Chevalier (1938, 49), Hilliard d'Auberteuil (1779, 1:235), and Malouet (1802, 4:119).

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Debien has reproduced a few lists of slaves from 1757 to 1791 from all three provinces of the colony. By averaging those lists, I have found 47 slaves by *caféière* in the south (17 lists), 87 in the west (three lists) and 155 in the north (nine lists). But when the figures are viewed diachronically, it appears that significant growth occurred during the 1780's.[43] The average obtained is often raised by one or two ventures of extraordinary proportions, clearly outnumbered by the smaller enterprises. If one takes the Teuret (146) and Bodking (152) slaves out of the southern data, one is left with 389 slaves on thirteen *caféières;* the average goes down from 47 to 29 slaves.

Moreau de Saint-Méry's 1789 colony-wide description (which includes substantial data on many typical northern coffee parishes) shows how much the average obtained from Debien's lists has to be lowered. The Marmelade parish, for instance, had 7000 slaves on 160 *caféteries* and 30 provision grounds. Dondon, another coffee parish, counted 9000 slaves on one indigo plantation, six provision grounds, and 219 caféteries. The maximum possible average is 43 in one case and 41 in the other, and such a high figure is improbable since the indigo orchard and the provision grounds used some of the enslaved labor force. Yet in the very same year that Marmelade used those 7000 slaves on some 200 units of production, Quartier-Morin, a typical sugar parish, had its own 7000 working on only 32 plantations—an average of 218 slaves per plantation.[44]

I draw three conclusions from these limited, but consistent, figures. First, I suggest that, as late as 1790, the average number of slaves on a *caféterie* did not surpass 40 and that in the 1760's and 70's it was much closer to twenty, while most sugar plantations had counted at least 100 slaves since the middle of

43. See Siguret (1968) and Debien (1974, 56-66). The growth probably occurred on old *caféières* which were expanding and, by then, functioning at the same level of technical achievement and/or with the same concentration of labor as most sugar plantations, but not necessarily to the detriment of the smaller ones. The Theuret *caféterie* had 42 slaves in 1759 but 146 in 1787. Yet in that later year four smaller ventures on Debien's lists counted 17 to 65 slaves; and as late as 1788 one listed only 14 slaves.

44. Moreau de Saint-Méry (1797-98, 263-68, 273).

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the century.[45] Secondly, one can assume that these widely different averages inflected the social relations on these two units of production in very different modes—a point to which I shall return. Thirdly, and most importantly for now, the low labor requirements for coffee deepened the already huge differences in initial and operating capital between the two units so that a *caféterie* may have been able to function and prosper with possibly one-sixth or less the initial capital required for a sugar plantation.[46]

But to become reality, the possibilities offered by the low requirements for a labor force, the effects of climate and

45. Scattered quantitative data on other *cafétèries* support those figures. See Massio (1954) and Frostin (1970). As far as sugar plantations are concerned, we do find three on Debien's list with, respectively, 28, 34, and 42 slaves; but such small ventures probably produced low-grade sugar for local consumption. (I am grateful to Scott Parris for that suggestion.) Most other *sucreries* had at least 110 slaves.

46. There is little quantitative data to fully verify that suggestion, and the available figures present a great range of variations. Writing in 1774, Hilliard estimated the initial capital for an ideal sugar plantation at 1,800,000 *livres* (1779, 1:235). Malouet's ideal of 800,000 *livres* in 1775 currency comes closer to some actual plantation figures, though he himself acknowledged that many *sucreries* fell below his requirements (1802, 4:118). Still, unfortunately, neither Hilliard nor Malouet present comparable models for the initial investments required by coffee cultivation. A second source of quantitative estimates would be the indemnities paid to former planters after the Haitian Revolution. According to the reimbursement lists, the average *caféière* was worth 150,000 *livres* in 1789, while a *sucrerie* averaged 700,000 (Moral, 1961, 267). The accuracy of these figures remains doubtful since former colonists had an obvious interest in magnifying the value of their lost property. Also, the actual list presents wide variations. (See Thésée, 1972, 212-15.) Moreover, to the extent that freedmen owned a substantial number of *caféières*—most of them not included in the indemnity—the computed averages cannot be taken as even a relative representation of the differences between the two units of production around 1789. An anonymous 1771 estimate which recorded 636 sugar plantations worth an average of 300,000 *livres* and 3,503 *caféières* worth about 30,503 *livres* apiece seems more indicative of these differences, especially at the time of the boom. (See Tarrade, 1972, 33.) Indeed, these figures are generally consistent with the averages listed in the Statistical Tables of 1791, reportedly drawn for the French Legislative Assembly (Barskett, 1818, 389). The tables record 451 plantations capable of producing white sugar, of an average value of 230,000 colonial *livres*, 341 plantations producing only coarse sugar and valued at 180,000 *livres* each, and 2810 *caféteries* of an average value of 20,000 livres. These averages refer to the value of land, buildings, and materials only, and do not include the value of cattle and that of the labor force. They certainly underestimate the total number of *caféteries* in the colony. But they do tend to confirm that the suggested 6:1 ratio between the value of a sugar plantation and that of a *caféterie* is itself a conservative estimate.

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topography, the limited need for buildings and machinery, the dialectics of the world-system, and the growth of the market required local initiative, human beings acting, forcing the opportunities, and seizing their time. In eighteenth-century Saint-Domingue, who was willing to make that choice? And why?

Part Two: Local Initiative

Various subgroups of Saint-Domingue's population engaged in coffee cultivation, but not all were involved to the same extent, for the same reasons, or at the same moment. Three categories of coffee growers will concern me here: the whites of moderate resources who did not own sugar plantations but, up to the 1760's, lived off the socioeconomic complex of sugar; the freedmen "of color"; and the newcomers who reached the island after the Peace of Paris (1763).

Coffee experimentation started in Terrier-Rouge, on the eastern fringe of the lowlands of the north which were then being transformed into the major source of sugar of the western world. Yet Terrier-Rouge itself, so close to the source of such richness, attracted only a few inhabitants, among whom were some Jesuit priests. The production of coffee was perhaps pushed there in an attempt to attract enough planters to form a buffer for the sugar lands too near the Spanish border. A demographic policy of this sort was implemented in Dondon, where commercial cultivation started as early as 1738.[47] Chances are that it was the coffee from Terrier-Rouge and Dondon which spread to the highlands of L'Acul, Marmelade, and Plaisance. Likewise, in the west, coffee probably spread from Leogane, where it was introduced in 1726, to Grand-Goâve and sections of the Port-au-Prince parish. The important point is that figures for these parishes—most of which are located near important sugar lands—indicate that from the early days of coffee production and up to at least 1789, *whites* outnumbered freedmen in these areas by a

47. See Moreau de Saint-Méry (1797-98, 252-64).

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higher ratio than their colony-wide proportion. The population figures and the geographical position of these early coffee parishes suggest that coffee production was started in the highlands of the north and the west by whites of moderate resources living off the sugar industry—successful craftsmen, professionals, second-rank functionaries, and sugar plantations' junior managers.

The history of some coffee lands in the Matheux mountains, as presented by Debien, supports the hypothesis. At the very beginning of the coffee expansion, most pioneers in that mountain chain, located just above the sugar lands of Arcahaie and Croix-des-Bouquets, were whites of moderate resources—professionals, craftsmen who, before the 1760's, exclusively lived off the sugar complex in more or less direct ways. Yet these early colonists are rarely mentioned as beneficiaries of the boom. Moreover, records of the explosion note that it occurred most strikingly in parishes heavily dominated by freedmen of color (Torbeck, Anse, à Veau, in the south; Jacmel, in the west), or parishes officially erected after the Peace of Paris (Marmelade, Jean-Rabel in the north). This silence of the records about the first coffee growers is itself suggestive. These professionals, craftsmen, and public functionaries very easily sold what were, for most of them, secondary enterprises, especially when coffee prices declined steadily, from 1771 to 1775, at semiannual rates of 7% to 15%.[48] In light of the apparently blind faith of the freedmen in these marginal lands, the sudden desertion of the white professionals and their refusal to even consider diversification as an alternative reveal more than a spontaneous "economic" reaction to an admittedly sharp drop in prices. These were people strongly tied to a structure, dissatisfied with it, yet surviving because of it, and bound to survive if the structure was to survive. Their involvement with coffee was limited by that ambivalence vis-à-vis the sugar socioeconomic complex. They probably thought—and perhaps rightly—that they had a chance for mobility within that complex and refused to venture

48. See Debien (1956). On prices, see Tarrade (1972, 771-72).

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too far away from it. Thus, ironically, though they started the coffee expansion, they did not become its most obvious beneficiaries. Only people who did not have those ties and hopes could assume the new risks and the profits: on the one hand, the *gens de couleur;* on the other hand, the newcomers.[49] Describing the evolution of these early ventures in the Matheux mountains, Debien shows how quickly they changed hands. The first white owners sell. By 1775, "the *gens de couleur* are multiplying, [yet] you could count them on your fingers before 1755."[50]

The intrusion of *gens de couleur* in the mountains of Saint-Domingue should not come as a surprise. Colonial society was structured by poles of diverse kinds—economic, occupational, phenotypical, legal, and spatial. There were enslaved and free people, there were Blacks and Whites, there were towns and plantations. *Gens de couleur* never belonged. They were neither slave nor free, neither Black nor White and their mobility was limited in the towns as it was on the plantations. A sketch of the history of this intermediary group shows how its evolution happened to intersect with the development of coffee production and how *gens de couleur,* most probably conscious of their marginality, turned this very marginality into an asset.

Du Tertre provides us with one of the earliest indications of the growth in the French Antilles of a group of people who were neither "Black" nor "White", and neither slave nor free, at least not in any strictly dichotomous manner.[51] But unlike

49. Despite Moreau's famous taxonomy, which classified in 13 different cateories, resulting from 110 possible combinations, the children born of alliances between Africans and Europeans, we know—and from Moreau himself—that the words *sangs-mêlés, affranchis,* and *gens de couleur* were often used synonymously in Saint-Domingue to refer both to people who were neither "White" nor "Black" and those who were neither White nor *slaves.* See Moreau de Saint-Méry (1797-98, 83, 86-89). Yvan Debbash (1967) offers an often penetrating analysis of the workings of this ambiguity in the colonial codes.

50. Debien (1956, 37).

51. See du Tertre (1667). Various factors explain the development of that group in Saint-Domingue. During all the colony's history there were most often at least 4 to 5 White males for every White female. Also, White males, even when they married White

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many mulattoes in the Americas, those born in Saint-Domingue soon became, and remained, free in a surprising majority. One reason noted by many is the military asset that a free "colored" population, trained and residing in its most profitable colony, constituted for France in the Americas. The more *citoyens,* the more soldiers to defend the colors of France at a time when British control of the seas made the movement of troops from Europe to the Antilles a most problematic endeavor.[52]

But an unexpected consequence of that freedom was the peculiar economic strength that *gens de couleur* acquired in Saint-Domingue, a strength ironically related to their social marginality. One constant appears in the individual histories of many economically successful *gens de couleur:* the early ownership of small mountain plots, sometimes indigo *places,* but most often a *place à vivres* or provision grounds. Because of the racism which prevailed in the towns and on the plantations, *gens de couleur* seem to have used their freedom to acquire small mountain or mid-altitude lands untouched or unwanted by sugar planters and many *petits-blancs.*[53] Whether

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females, generally did so late in life, at least five years later than their contemporaries in France. Moreover, married or not, as masters many of them exerted considerable control over the sexual relations of African or Afro-American slave women. Also, for unknown reasons—one hestiates to suggest deliberate choice—mulatto women had a fecundity rate significantly higher than that of White females. See Houdaille (1963, 1973), de Vaissière (1909, 74), and du Tertre (1667, 428-32).

52. See Debbash (1967, 42), Terrade (1972, 47), and Hall (1972). While it is certain that many administrators and planters saw *gens de couleur* as a military asset (Moreau de Saint-Méry, 1797-98, 85; Malouet, 1802, 4:139-43; Tarrade, 1972, 150-51), others in France and in Saint-Domingue also felt that they represented a potentially serious political threat (Debien, 1956, 34; and also Trouillot, 1977; Petit, 1771, 1777).

53. Since colonial times, the term *petit-blanc* has been used to refer indifferently to all Whites who did not belong to the plantocracy, the elite of higher government officials, or to the merchant class. I use the term in such general way, but after the 1760's, because of the coffee revolution, a distinction between urban and rural *petit-blanc* might be useful.

On the proportion of *gens de couleur* in the countryside, some definite quantitative clues can be noted. In 1730, while there were about five Whites for every freedman in the colony, there were seventeen Whites for every freedman in Cap, the major town. For 1750, the ratio is about four to one in the colony, but ten to one in Cap. Even after 1775, when their numbers increased in the urban areas, the proportion of *gens de couleur* residing in the major towns (Cap, Port-au-Prince, Cayes, Port de Paix),

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they inherited those lands, bought them, or simply acquired them through the Axle Law (*La Loi de la Hâche*)—that early and controversial custom which allowed the use of undisputed and untitled mountain lands by the pioneers who first cleared them—they turned them into provision grounds.[54] Such holdings produced very profitable returns with the blockade created by King George's War (1743-48), the intensification of sugar production, and the droughts and famines of 1743, 1753, and 1754.[55]

Thus, the very social marginality of the freedmen of color prepared them in many ways for the coffee explosion. Pushed out of the towns and the big plantations, and looking for a place where their legal "freedom" could be experienced and exercised with the least restraint, away from the colonial mainstream, Saint-Domingue's *gens de couleur* occupied the hills and mountains where the provision grounds gave them a first chance at wealth. The beginnings of the coffee boom caught many of them in these secluded places. The majority probably did not shift immediately to the new crop. But it soon became clear to many that coffee was giving them their second, and best, opportunity. They had—or could obtain—the land and the modest capital or credit necessary to start a *caféterie.* They used the panic of the early 1770's to consolidate their control of the highlands and maintained coffee production during the crisis, or simply reverted to it when prices started to climb again in 1776. By 1775 their growth was already a cause of concern for the administrators. By 1778 that growth had become irreversible. What made the difference was coffee.

Analysis of the data on population and production available in Moreau de Saint-Méry's *Description de la Partie Française de l'Isle Saint-Domingue* show strong correlations between the proportion of *gens de couleur* and the importance of coffee in

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remained low compared to their countrywide ratios (figures based on Debbash, 1967, 81; Moreau de Saint-Méry, 1797-98, 479, 692, 1053, 1316; Frostin, 1945, 28). Debbash has also pointed out how, even if the same parish, the proportion of *gens de couleur* could increase as one moved away from the center.

54. On the acquisition of land in Saint-Domingue, see Vignols (1930).

55. See Talman (1906, 68).

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many parishes. First, *almost all the parishes where freedmen outnumbered whites were primarily coffee-producing parishes* or parishes where coffee production shared its importance only with indigo: Trou, Torbeck, Fonds des Nègres, Anse-à-Veau, in the south; Bainet, Cayes de Jacmel, Jacmel, in the west; Port-à-Piment and Sainte-Rose in the north.[56] Secondly, and most importantly, when the distribution of ethnic categories and the production figures are viewed diachronically, it appears that the extension of coffee production and the demographic "takeover" by *gens de couleur* occurred with the same rhythm and within the same time frame. The Cayes de Jacmel parish, for instance, counted, in 1730, 316 whites, 23 *gens de couleur,* and 550 coffee trees; in 1789 it had about 400 whites, more than 450 freedmen, and 150 *caféteries,* including some of the most productive ones of the colony. The whole Quartier de Jacmel—which included the parishes of Jacmel, Cayes de Jacmel, and Bainet—counted, in 1751, only 288 freedmen and 944 whites (the slaves then numbered 5,170). By 1789 it had become a leading coffee zone with at least 1,800 freedmen, 1,521 whites, and 21,264 slaves.[57] The pattern repeated itself in other regions. In late eighteenth-century Saint-Domingue, where there were freedmen, there was coffee.[58]

56. The ratios of *gens de couleur* to Whites as calculated from Moreau de Saint-Méry's original figures are: 1.30 in Anse à Veau (1775 figures), 1.31 in Port-à-Piment, 1.38 in Acquin, 1.41 in Petit Trou, 1.43 in Torbeck, 1.46 in Sainte Rose, 2.06 in Bainet, and 2.25 in Fond des Nègres (1789 figures). Note that even a one-to-one ratio must have been extremely significant in a racist society where the proportion for the general population was 1.46 Whites for every freedman. A parish where Whites were outnumbered by 1.30 to 1 was probably perceived in Saint-Domingue as an all-freedmen parish. The figures on which these ratios were calculated are from Moreau de Saint-Méry (1797-98, 225, 784, 1142, 1147, 1152, 1189, 1202, 1204, 1223, 1238, 1329). The figures and other references about the preeminence of coffee and/or indigo are from the same pages and/or pages 227, 783, 1141, 1201, 1212, 1238, and from Siguret (1968).

57. Moreau de Saint-Méry (1797-98, 1127-52).

58. A few exceptions to the rule seem to have been the parishes where *gens de couleur* outnumbered Whites and where coffee was *not* the leading crop, at least in 1789: Mirebalais (ratio 1.34:1), Verettes (1.35:1), and possibly Acquin (Moreau, 1797-98, 861, 912, 1238). In both Mirebalais and Verettes, the leading crop was indigo, probably since the 1740's; but Moreau counted nineteen *caféteries* in Mirebalais and 70

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The opportunities that coffee production offered must have been equally obvious to the wave of migrants of all kinds that the Peace of Paris had released to Saint-Domingue's shores with dreams of glory and fortune. The Seven Years' War—which was in its origins as well as in its most significant results a war and victory about the colonial question—did not affect Europe at the core.[59] But though not a single acre of European soil had changed hands, France had lost everything but her most valuable Caribbean colonies: Martinique, Guadeloupe, and above all, Saint-Domingue. In the gloomy aftermath of the war, migrants from Europe as well as from former French colonies came to the island in great numbers. There were most certainly many arrivals from Canada, but the fact is hard to substantiate in great detail, partly because studies of the desertion of subgroups of the Canadian elite after the annexation of Québec have been clouded, since the nineteenth century, by the polemical defense of diverse brands of nationalism.[60] Parish records in Saint-Domingue provide better indications on the Canadian migration, and it seems safe to suggest that some members of the military and landowning

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in Verettes in 1789. Many may have been owned by *gens de couleur*, especially in Mirebalais, where, we are told, they occupied "the elevated part of the parish" (p. 861). But the descriptions of the militia in both parishes help us understand why they were not transformed into overwhelmingly coffee-oriented parishes and corroborate the suggestion of a link between social marginality and coffee production. The militia in Mirebalais counted, in 1789, 940 *affranchis*, divided into regiments of *nègres libres*, *mulâtres*, and *quarterons* (free Blacks, mulattoes, quadroons). Non-White militiamen were likewise separated in Verettes where mulattoes and quadroons in arms outnumbered 350. Such divisions, and the presence of so many people classified as "quadroons" since the 1730's suggest that many *gens de couleur* descended from families which had economically prospered *before the coffee revolution* and had, by systematic alliances with Whites, moved "up" in the color continuum. They probably strove harder to differentiate themselves from the darker mulattoes and especially from the "free Blacks". Moreau (1797-98, 93) referred to similar people when he wrote in racist exasperation: "There are in Saint-Domingue persons of mixed blood who have reached their fourth level of miscegenation, always with whites, so that they really have in their veins only one five hundred and twelfth of African blood. . . . One needs extremely exercised eyes to distinguish [some of them] from the pure whites." In Saint-Domingue's complex and ambiguous terminology, Mirebalais and Verettes—and possibly Acquin—were more parishes of *mésalliés* than parishes of *gens de couleur* per se.

59. See Ropes (1889).

60. See Baby (1889), Roquebrune (1953), and Brunet (1968).

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elite moved to Saint-Domingue and participated in creating a small and peculiar group of enterprises—the great mountain coffee plantations. But the migration from North America also included—perhaps in greater numbers—people of lower status of Canadian (especially Acadian) origins. In September 1764 the Ministry of the Colonies approved a private project to transfer 3000 Acadians from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Boston to Saint-Domingue.[61] Whether this particular project was carried out remains uncertain, but Moreau noted the government-sponsored settlement of thousands of Acadians and Germans, in 1764-65, in the growing coffee parishes of Dondon and Sainte-Rose, most of whom did not survive the humid climate.[62] The probability also remains high that civilians as well as active or retired officers from Canada and other former French colonies found their way to Saint-Domingue after having gone back to France.[63]

The Treaty of Paris had also rendered many French officers and soldiers useless in France itself, and many of the retired probably went to Saint-Domingue.[64] Many others, still under arms, also went, supposedly to protect the colony,[65] but their migration well served the French government's demographic policies since population growth, unemployment, and other economic hardships in the French countryside made their return in the villages very problematic. In the Midi, for instance, natural disasters and competition had brought down grape and cereal cultures around the 1740's and famines occurred in 1752 and 1771 in the Biogorre region. Not surprisingly, many young males from that region migrated to Saint-Domingue in the 1760's.[66] If the Bigourdan case is to be generalized, it seems that most of these civilians did not have

61. See Tarrade (1972, 19). On Canadians in some parish records, see Houdaille (1973).

62. See Moreau de Saint-Méry (1797-98, 242-67).

63. See Saxe (1975).

64. See Debien (1943, 14).

65. See Houdaille (1973, 861).

66. See Massio (1954, 23-31).

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much more than their military travel companions. Many belonged to the petty nobility. Many more were low-paid rural functionaries, local retailers displaced by economic pressures. Finally, a fairly high number, because of their past experience in wine making and other agriculturally based industry, constituted a specialized labor force of obvious utility in Saint-Domingue. Soon after arriving, they started in the crafts, especially those related to the sugar industry, if only as a steppingstone. But for most of the newcomers, specialized workers as well as active or retired soldiers and provincial functionaries, the ideal soon became coffee.

Not only Whites came to Saint-Domingue in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War.[67] But for the purposes of this study, the non-White immigrants who reached (or returned to) Saint-Domingue after 1763 will be associated with the majority of *gens de couleur* and references to the newcomers will point mainly to the wave of poor White migrants. Indeed, *gens de couleur* and newcomers can be seen as the two most important groups of coffee growers. Available data suggest that their numbers exceeded other segments of the population engaged in coffee production. Moreover, the bulk of that production certainly came from the smaller enterprises they generally controlled.[68] Finally, their participation in that production

67. The 1/10 sample examined by Houdaille (1973, 868) reveals a surprisingly high number of free non-White females from Martinique who died in Saint-Domingue between 1770 and 1791. The migration of free colored males from the French Antilles also maintained a steady pace in that period. Moreover, the backward flow of educated non-White creoles should not be neglected. However limited their numbers, their political and social influence was certainly considerable. See James (1962, 39) and Hall (1972, 189).

68. Looking at the admittedly scarce data on the larger ventures, one has the impression that they did not much benefit from the greater influx of capital (see Frostin, 1970; and Debien, 1943). The cost of the reproduction of the labor force and—in the absence of irrigation and fertilization—the devaluation of the land before amortization of the capital may have contributed to those failures. Be that as it may, Moreau's description of Dondon indicates that, even in the second earliest coffee parish, the average number of slaves by *caféière* was about 40, as late as 1789, and that the contribution of the medium-range ventures to the total production of the parish still exceeded that of the larger ones. Dondon counted some 9,000 slaves on about 219 *caféteries*. Some 68.5% of these enterprises (150 *caféteries*) contributed to 62.8% of the parish production, each delivering from 10 to 35,000 pounds of coffee a year. Some 20

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oriented the sociopolitical effects of the boom. They had limited credit or capital. They could not start sugar plantations. Yet they could not be enslaved. From the point of view of those who ran the socioeconomic complex of sugar, both *gens de couleur* and newcomers were outsiders. They were treated as outsiders. They reacted as outsiders. For *gens de couleur,* the feeling was not new. Since the earliest days of the colony, they had been the anomalies of the system. The newcomers, on the other hand, did not carry the burden of such a heavy past, but their present activities depended very much on local past history and on the perception of that history by the diverse ethnic, economic, and status groups—including the first generation of coffee growers—which had been busily building their niches long before the Peace of Paris. However much the newcomers' presence was determined by turbulences within the world-system, however much their preference for the new crop was boosted by international market relations, they had to build their hopes, their lives, and their plantations by active engagement with the lives of others, creoles and metropolitan-born, free and enslaved, Black and White, who had—through decades, if not centuries, of love and hate, cooperation and contest, accommodation and resistance—founded *their* society and given it a momentum of its own.

I have already shown that while the economic growth of the *gens de couleur* began with provision and indigo plots, it received its greatest and most definitive impetus from coffee returns. These returns attracted some whites and excited the jealousy of others, and while these sentiments cannot be differentiated—inasmuch as they were probably felt *together* by many whites—their results produced contradictory effects. In the southern and western parishes, where *gens de couleur* had pioneered coffee cultivation (Jacmel, Cayes de Jacmel, Cayes, Saint-Louis, Verettes, Mirebalais, etc.), numerous alliances tied them to poorer Whites and even to some of the richer ones. Many of these alliances took the form of marriages, legally and socially sanctioned by local representa-

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larger enterprises contributed to only 28.5% of the parish production, the rest being shared by the very small ventures.

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tives of the state and by the community. Houdaille reports the case of a mulatto woman classified as *quarteronne* after her marriage to a White.[69] Similar procedures changed many *quarteronnes* into *Whites,* which may explain the low proportion of women *de couleur* in the official records. It is now impossible to verify how many light-skinned people of Afro-European descent crossed over the "racial" line and happily "returned" to France or took "refuge" in the United States during the Haitian Revolution. After all, since 1697, the final criterion for establishing the "race" of a *suspect* was to determine the militia regiment in which his next of kin served (*où son père avait monté*); and that itself was—in case of dispute—decided by the community. Moreover, in many cases, the community itself was largely made of *suspects* and *mésalliés.* As early as 1734, the Chevalier de la Rochalard wrote with indigation about the scarcity in Cayes of "whites of pure blood; they are all mulattoes or descended from them."[70] And after the late 1760's, that is, after coffee, some even showed their wealth, their education, and even their color with what some Whites—who had only the purity of their blood—regarded as insolence.

Long before that the sugar plantocracy and its allies had begun to react, as a more or less coherent group, to the social and economic rise that, as fathers and individual owners, many of its members had benevolently favored. But measures of control became more evident and systematic as the coffee revolution went its way.[71] As early as 1760, it became a common requirement to enter ethnic categories in parish records. In 1763 a side effect of the abolition of the militia was the transfer of the authority to clear a *suspect* from the community to the courts. In 1773 attempts were made to stop natural children of White males from using their fathers' names. In 1775 a major attack on the freedmen's civil rights eventuated in the creation of a new legal offense—based on a dubious interpretation of the 1685 *Code Noir*—disrespect!

69. See Houdaille (1963, 102).

70. Quoted by Debbash (1967, 48).

71. See Petit (1771, Vol. 1) and Petit (1771, 149-50).

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Mulatto political leaders of the eighteenth century, like Julien Raymond, twentieth-century historians, like Hall, referred to those measures to substantiate claims that, after 1760, *gens de couleur* were more harshly treated in Saint-Domingue than ever before. As a more subtle analyst—though still a historian of *laws*—Debbash sometimes writes of a systematization of racism—which is right—as if the Whites themselves were not socially, politically, and ethnically divided in Saint-Domingue—which is misleading.[72] The fact is that a systematization of racism, probably triggered by the demographic and economic growth of the *gens de couleur*, occurred in the 1760's but did not become manifest to the same extent in all areas. Such systematization was not equally supported and enforced by all sectors of the white population. The most important exception was the newcomers, that is, that segment of the White population in which we find the most coffee growers. Inasmuch as one can delimit the sources of that systematization, they were the Crown, the governor and his immediate subordinates, the aristocratic sugar plantocracy, and the urban *petits-blancs*. As early as 1755, the seigneur de Vaudreuil, then governor of the colony and planter at Torbeck, was writing to the metropolitan administration: "The *gens de couleur* are beginning to multiply; they are sometimes taking over the whites."[73]

Vaudreuil was as worried about this evolution, as, eleven years later, one of his successors, the Duke de Rohan. De Rohan had come to Saint-Domingue to replace d'Estaing, who was thought to be too favorable to freedmen. The instructions de Rohan had received from Choiseul, his cabinet minister and direct superior, were clear: to stop at all costs the rise of freedmen, especially by restraining their alliances with the Whites.

> If [wrote Choiseul] through these alliances, the whites achieve cohesion with the freedmen, the colony could easily escape from the

72. See Hall (1972) and Debbash (1967, especially 53-54).

73. Quoted in Brutus (n.d., 153). See also Frostin (1975, 303).

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> King's authority and France would lose one of the most powerful cells of its trade.[74]

This was the main concern of the administrators, both in France and in Saint-Domingue. This was the rationale behind most of the laws of 1760. But they coincided with the sugar plantocracy's deepest fears, for sugar planters had everything to lose in the rise of freedmen. They firmly believed—and they were right—that racism was necessary to contain the slave population and that the economic and demographic growth of the *gens de couleur* (if only indirectly) threatened their plantations. Hilliard d'Auberteuil, one of their most eloquent spokesmen, once more expressed their feelings in the clearest terms:

> In Saint-Domingue, interest and security require that we crush the black race under so much contempt that whoever descends from it should be covered with indelible scars until the sixth generation.[75]

Yet if for different reasons the administrations and the sugar plantocracy agreed on the direction official policy should take vis-à-vis the *gens de couleur,* not all Whites shared those views. Coffee growers (among others) could not react towards freedmen as did de Vaudreuil, de Rohan, or d'Auberteuil. They did not share their aristocratic origins nor did they have the same immediate concerns. The former had reigned over France or Canada, had been raised with fame and money, and were still enjoying the fortune of their birth in the islands or at the Court. The coffee growers, when rich, were nothing more than *nouveaux-riches* who could not leave the island as they wished—indeed, who could not even abandon their mountains, where they were surrounded by Black and Brown people, far away from the nearest White public official. Many of them had experienced the "shortage" of White females in most difficult conditions. They had colored children themselves, and only colored children. Despite the competition, and even for the

74. Instructions of January 1766, quoted by Frostin (1975, 303).

75. Hilliard d'Auberteuil (1779, 2:73).

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same reasons that could make the competition harsher, they had to learn to accommodate. The life history of Périgné-Lalanne, as reconstructed from Massio, can help us look at these people in a more concrete way, build a more precise picture of what they looked like in flesh and blood, and, through more attention to their hopes and concerns, perceive the aggregate factors which gradually set them apart from the sugar plantocracy and pulled them closer to the *gens de couleur* who shared their isolation in the secluded mountains of Saint-Domingue.

Périgné-LaLanne came from Labatut, a hamlet in the French Midi, after the Peace of Paris together with many male friends and distant relatives. But the harsh life of Saint-Domingue put miles of forest between members of the group. To make ends meet, Lalanne maintained three jobs: he supervised the coffee plot of Dumont and a business in Cap while at Marmelade he kept a *caféterie* bought from Lambert, a free colored neighbor. Of his 32 *carreaux,* only three were planted in coffee, one and one-half constituted a paddock, and three provided provisions. The rest were not cultivated, simply because Périgné-Lalanne did not have the means to do so. Of his thirteen slaves, only four really worked full time. In 1788 after many years of hard work, Lalanne, in desperation, bought two female slaves, one of whom was mute. Her physical condition did not disturb him much, for he lived amid infirmity and sickness. Three of the slaves on the Dumont plantation were invalids. The only sign of hope may have been the children running around. There were four of them among Dumont's few slaves. Périgné himself had a son from a Black freedwoman, Madeleine. In 1791, when the slave revolt which was to lead to the Haitian Revolution started, Périgné-Lalanne did not quit his mountains. Only the burning of Cap in 1793 forced him out of the colony. Périgné went back to France with Madeleine's son, whom he had legally recognized. Yet his hopes still lived, until his friend Hournet wrote from Cap, in 1796, of the "great poverty" in which they are all plunged. The record does not say when Lalanne died, or of what, but it can be certain that for all

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his life, on many questions, he did not espouse the views of Monsieur le Prince de Rohan.[76]

This is not to say that the White coffee planters did not share in the dominant racist ideology. This is not to forget that, as miserable as Lalanne could have been, *he* was the master and not the slave. But the thirty years or so that he spent around Marmelade illustrate how different the interaction between color groups there was from the relations most often experienced by the sugar planters and administrators. Despite the competition, despite the prevalent racism, coffee growers lived in a context which kept them aware of some basic similarities. And in eighteenth-century Saint-Domingue, one most obvious similarity was their common marginality—if not opposition—to the socioeconomic complex of sugar. The consequences of the coffee boom were deeply marked by the fact that the two major groups of coffee growers were, from the very beginning, outsiders.

Part Three: Local Response

It should be clear by now that the distinction between local initiative and local response comes *a posteriori* as an expository device. The processes loosely classified as "the consequences of the coffee explosion" revealed themselves during the period of expansion and in ways very much dependent on the racial, social, and economic composition of the groups involved. Most of these cultural and sociopolitical developments in turn affected production by affecting the behavior of coffee growers, their allies, or their opponents. With this in mind, I will now look at these developments. I will examine first the demographic changes which accompanied the coffee

76. Based on Massio (1954). Even some of the nobles often behaved in ways the local aristocracy surely disapproved of. The most famous example may be that of the middle-aged Marquis de la Pailleterie, who came to the mountains of the south after the Peace of Paris, bought himself a *caféterie*, and married his slave, Cessette. From this union of the Marquis and Madame Louise Cessette Dumas came the *first* Alexandre Dumas, father and grandfather of the writers (see David, 1972, 14-32).

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revolution and their political effects, especially the "White revolt" of 1769. Secondly, I will link these events to the deeper conflicts of which they were the violent expression. The more coffee production competed with that of sugar, the more the crops "solidified" as markers of more fundamental distinctions within colonial society. Coffee growers epitomized the opposition of otherwise divergent segments of free society to the sugar plantocracy and the socioeconomic complex that it stood for. Finally, moving down from the colonial and regional levels to the level of the unit of production, I will note some of the most striking sociocultural consequences of coffee cultivation for the slave sector.

The most obvious change which accompanied the coffee boom concerned the growth of the population and the spread of settlers in zones of the colony hitherto uninhabited. Between 1751 and 1771, about a hundred thousand people entered Saint-Domingue's social life. While most were slaves—in absolute numbers—the greatest relative gains were made by *gens de couleur* and Whites, a pattern which would repeat itself until the Revolution. The movement of these people toward previously unsettled mountain regions resulted in the demarcation of at least nine new parishes between 1763 and 1784.[77]

This demographic growth and the regional distribution that it involved disturbed the effectiveness of Saint-Domingue's political machinery. Since the early 1710's, Saint-Domingue's population had been heavily concentrated in the sugar plains surrounding the three major cities, Cap, Port-au-Prince, and Cayes (one in each *province*). Though quite elaborate routes linked the sugar fields to the nearest wharves, internal communication among the three provinces in which these towns were located was often difficult. Actually, contact must have been maintained more easily by sea than by land, especially among these three ports. The coffee boom disturbed these arrangements. In some cases, planters occupied lands of which the administrators did not know the existence or the limits.[78] Their highland settlements in the southeastern part of

77. See Debien (1943, 15).

78. See Vignols (1930).

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the western province and in the south reduced the overwhelming concentration of the population around the major cities and the social, economic, and political preeminence of the north. Parishes were officially named, and some military representative must have been dispatched to those faraway places to keep track of the pioneers' advances. But Saint-Domingue's political rulers did not expect the new distribution and were not equipped to face it. The probability remains strong that the power of the colonial state apparatus, already decentralized, was further eroded by the expansion. That weakness should be taken into account in analyses of the 1763-1770 "White revolts", especially that of 1769.

In that year, a wave of riots shook Saint-Domingue's political structure. In Croix des Bouquets, Mirebalais, Tiburon, and Jérémie, bands of armed rebels terrorized the countryside with the explicit objective of marching to Port-au-Prince, seizing the governor, and replacing him with a new elected chief.[79]

This chain of events has been classified by historians as the most important "White revolt" in Saint-Domingue's history. Yet as Frostin himself concedes in his *Révoltes Blanches,* "the new element [in 1769] was that mulattoes and free blacks constituted the mass of the rebel bands which, reinforced by petits-blancs, were marching about the country."[80] Demonstrators in Port-au-Prince were of all colors and came from the most remote areas. In Tiburon, two *petits-blancs* and two mulattoes led the rebel bands.[81] Most often, the white rebels are labeled *petits-blancs*; but what complex reality does the term hide in this context? "People of low birth, obscure individuals with no brilliance," says Vaissiere. Plantation owners who "do not hold any alliances in France," says the duc de Rohan.[82] But in 1761, the Maréchal Le Brasseur, writing to his chief in France, had already declared: "The accidental and

79. See Frostin (1975).

80. See Frostin (1975, 310).

81. See Frostin (1975, 311).

82. See Vaissière (1909, 146-147).

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precarious fortunes created by coffee have caused in Saint-Domingue the most unfortunate disasters and a mass of debts which will never be paid."[83] Le Brasseur did not know then that two years later, when colonists would protest against the restrictions of the system, "the coffee planters [would] figure in first line of the grumblers."[84]

To be sure, accounts and descriptions of the sedition point to participants from diverse social origins; and though the revolt was triggered by the governor's decision to reinstate the militia, the political disruption left room for all to raise particular and apparently unrelated issues. But though one cannot present the 1769 revolt as the exclusive undertaking of the coffee growers, nor even claim that all participated in the sedition, though many of the interlacing factors and even the names of the leaders may remain forever unknown due to an early and intriguing conspiracy of silence,[85] at a higher level of analysis, coffee production certainly skewed the revolt in particular directions. Its locus (the western and southern countryside), the social and phenotypical characteristics of many known participants, the ambiguity of some of the rebels toward the militia issue which triggered the disruption, and the extent of the revolt are best understood in the light of the unifying potential of the coffee growers' discontent in a more general opposition to France and the local administration.

Relations between France and its Caribbean colonies were structured around what is referred to as *le régime de l'exclusif* which severely limited the nature of commodities to be exchanged at their point of origin, the ports of entry in France and in the Caribbean, and, moreover, practically forbade all forms of trade between the islands and other nations.[86] Two complementary maritime movements typified the trade: the triangular *commerce circuiteux* (France-Africa-Antilles) and the *commerce en droiture*. The latter involved not only the

83. Quoted by Frostin (1975, 376).

84. See Frostin (1975, 376).

85. See Frostin (1975, 329).

86. See Tarrade (1972) and Julien (1977).

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direct exchange of commodities between France and the islands, but also the movement of ships carrying from the colonies the goods exchanged against previous deliveries of slaves. Though estimates referred to values in colonial *livres,* merchants and planters rarely exchanged cash, and at least three to four subsequent trips *en droiture* were needed to carry back the equivalent in colonial goods of the shipload of one *négrier.*[87] Time enters here and, with it, the dual necessity of credit and metropolitan political control which characterized the empirical realization of the French Caribbean design. The metropolitan merchants' willingness to extend such credit, especially in the form of advance sales of slaves, depended on the advantageous modalities of the trade in Africa,[88] as sustained on the Caribbean side by French political domination over a colonial citizenry limited in its bargaining power. Payments in kind, particularly in coffee, indigo, and cotton, lagged months and—most often—years behind the initial transaction.[89] The guarantee of payment was not so much the written or verbal dyadic engagements, sanctioned or not by law, but the planter's limitation to trade within the French network and the consequent loss of credit that default entailed. Malouet emphasized in his *Mémoires* the inherent insecurity of the system, yet the needs of both parties to maintain it—the planter to renew his labor force and market his produce, the merchant to sustain a production vital to the expansion of his European trade.[90] But plantations, even when properly mortgaged, were virtually out of the merchants' reach, due to a tradition upheld by local courts and the complications that the heavy circulation of *lettres de change* added to the procedures of seizure.[91] Most planters never faced foreclosures, fines, or imprisonments, and the system rested on the *Exclusif,* itself sustained by the metropolis's political prestige and sheer

87. See Tarrade (1972, 114-15) and Meyer (1969, 226-31).

88. See Martin (1948).

89. See Tarrade (1972), Meyer (1969), and Thésée (1972).

90. See Malouet (1802, 4:129-37).

91. See Malouet (1802), Carrière (1973), and Thésée (1972).

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military power, both of which had eroded in the 1760's when planters of all sorts, by choice or by necessity, were turning to smuggling in an unprecedented manner. Even after peace had been declared, it was clear, at least in Saint-Domingue, that a return to the prewar state of affairs would meet fierce local reaction. Coffee growers had much to gain in breaking the constraints of the *Exclusif*: the expansion of an international market where—unlike the sugar planters—they had few rivals incited them to trade directly with foreign buyers. From their point of view, the system presented only restrictions and no advantages.[92]

Thus, though the 1769 revolt duly belongs in the list of violent reactions started and enacted mostly by Whites against the *Exclusif,* its extent and the color composition of the rebel groups differentiate it from the other "White revolts", and it seems likely that the diverse links that free people of all colors established while engaged in coffee production nurtured, if not the revolt itself, then at least these characteristics. If so, ironically, coffee production, encouraged by the core to respond to the demand it had created, would have backfired at France. There is no doubt that French trading houses lost money and, more importantly, that French metropolitan authority, already eroded by the geographical expansion and the international war, further declined in the colony, creating conditions, which, twenty years later, would greatly influence the turn of events leading to the Haitian Revolution. Saint-Domingue's coffee growers, by allying across color lines, had shaken the colonial bureaucracy, disturbed the power structure and, in their own limited but ironic fashion, created new turbulence in the system.

The 1769 riots also widened the gap between coffee growers and influential sectors of the sugar plantocracy. The revolt was triggered by the local administration's decision to reinstate the militia, and while many important sugar planters may have

92. It may not be just coincidental that the most important planters' rebellion of the century occurred in 1769, that is, at the time that newcomers who started production soon after the Peace of Paris were about to see their first major coffee harvest.

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disapproved of an institution which sponged on their time and resources, Malouet states that the administration had consulted "the principal *habitants*" who approved the measure.[93] But Malouet also points to an often neglected aspect of the militia: the institution reinforced the social domination of the great sugar planters who exclusively occupied the high-ranking positions. The rejection of the militia entailed a rejection of the social control exercised by the upper layers of the sugar plantocracy. Moreover, inasmuch as the rebellion was essentially directed against France and the *Exclusif*, it was also aimed at absentee planters, of whom the vast majority owned only *sucreries*.[94] Most *caféterie* owners could not go back to France. Many of the Whites had just fled conditions in the metropolis. The mulatto Creoles felt—and rightly so—that they had better social and economic opportunities in the island. And the free Blacks had stayed in the first place because they never had a chance to leave. It is no wonder, then, that antiabsentee maneuvers were associated with coffee growers.

> In the direction of affairs [says Debien], the coffee planters want a share equal to their accomplishments. They have participated in the development of their neighborhood and claim that they are the true "*habitants*," the only ones capable of directing the politics of the colony.[95]

In short, what Saint-Domingue coffee planters were nurturing in the 1760's and 70's was a genuine form of American nationalism.

Prior to the coffee revolution, serious cultural obstacles had muted the expression of an insular national identity in Saint-Domingue—as elsewhere in the Caribbean. Whether creoles or metropolitan, most sugar planters thought of themselves as full-fledged French citizens whom fortune had sent adventuring upon a perilous, but often rewarding and always temporary,

93. Malouet (1802, 4:361; see also 359-75).

94. See Frostin (1975, 270-75).

95. Debien (1956, 42).

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episode of geographical exile. The sense of belonging to the island rarely, if ever, translated itself into direct political action against the metropolis, just as reactions against trade policies never much spurred inclinations for total independence. Secondly, even if freedom—and especially "colored" landowners—perceived themselves as natural allies of the sugar planters, the plantocracy always rejected those claims in an invariably brutal and humiliating manner. The Seven Years' War and the coffee revolution introduced rapid and important changes which weakened these obstacles and favored the rise of a new spirit. For the first time, an important sector of the population brought together people who (1) in general, had feeble emotional ties with the French past and an even more ambiguous commitment to the French present; (2) who perceived the possibility and the rewards—some of which they collected—of trading *permanently* outside of French control; and (3) showed their readiness to forge alliances across color lines. By bringing together two groups of planters with few metropolitan alliances, many of whom claimed sociopolitical rights not only by virtue of birthplace but also by virtue of their deeds—of their economic, social and physical involvement at the local level—for the first time across color lines, the coffee revolution, though it had originated in larger mechanisms of the world-economy and was sustained by metropolitan policy, favored the rise of a national insular identity and a spirit of independence. Such different forms of consciousness disturbed Saint-Domingue's social code, especially the perception of hierarchical differences. Indeed, besides the fact that it added to the ambiguity of divisions on the basis of color, the coffee revolution introduced new dimensions to the opposition between *creoles* and *metropolitains* and that between nobles and *roturiers*. Woodson has rightly noted that

> in addition to the generalized ideas of "beloning" or being "rooted" in Saint-Domingue by virtue of birth, the contrast between creole and non-creole concerned a person's relative familiarity with and engagement in various aspects of local social life.[96]

96. Woodson (1978, 37).

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But while for many sugar planters such familiarity and engagement meant especially a common taste in cuisine, dress, or architecture, which was not to cloud their identity as Frenchmen, the coffee planters' interventions enhanced the economic and political dimensions of the concept of "creoleness", and threatened to remove from it any trace of nativism. By so doing, they threatened the concept itself.

The coffee revolution also introduced new dimensions into the opposition between nobles and nonnobles in Saint-Domingue. There had always been frictions between the nobility and planters from nonaristocratic families. Epic memories have been transmitted of the brotherhood of the buccaneers, where status was supposedly measured by one's attitude under fire; but in reality, Saint-Domingue's first settlers were not all peers. Moreover, with the governorship of Bertrand d'Ogeron (1665), the Treaty of Ryswick (1697), and sugar cultivation (circa 1699), differentiation on the basis of origins grew rapidly. French natives from aristocratic or bourgeois families who had accumulated capital or acquired credit came in growing numbers. By the late 1740's, many colonists who did not inherit the particle, the first sign of nobility, had enough money to buy a Vicomte *de,* a Marquise *de* for themselves, or for their sons or daughters. The thirty years' peace which followed the Treaty of Utrecht, the surprising growth of French merchant capitalism, and the related sugar boom in Saint-Domingue which reinforced links between the island and specific areas of the metropolis had led many noble Frenchmen to move to the colony. King George's War very much reduced trans-Atlantic travel, but in the 1750's, while alliances were still developing between other Whites and the earliest noble migrants, a larger flow, which included members of the oldest aristocratic families, strengthened the presence of France's nobility in Saint-Domingue. At this time, many had good reasons to leave French soil. The nobility was losing both political authority and economic privileges, and was pressed into military ventures or, at best, into city life to which it was not accustomed. The "islands"—especially moneymaking Saint-Domingue—had become the place where French

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males bearing particles would reconquer (or dream of reconquering) their lost independence. After all, *there* was country life, social respect, administrative titles, and military ranks without attendant dangers. And, most of all, there was sugar. It is in reference to those migrants from *la grande noblesse*—names like de Brach, de Ségur, de Noailles, de Lévis, de La Rochefoucauld, de Rohan, Chabannes, Brancas-Céreste, Gouy d'Arcy—most of whom had by then quietly returned to France, that a protégé supposedly told Louis XVI in 1788: "Sire, all your court is Creole by alliance."

Sugar alliances had absorbed many of the differences between the nobility and nonaristocratic planters. The four major categories which had benefited from the earliest, and largest, land concessions—religious orders, high officials, ariscrats, and representative of French cartels—[97] had ended up thinking of themselves as the nobility of the nobility of the colony. Sugar was noble; sugar planters became noblemen. Sugar was not simply the major source of revenues. It had become the universal equivalent and had consequently acquired *a social character:* the socially drawn monopoly to subject to its refraction all other commodities and human beings themselves.[98] Socially selected, socially identified, it had become the principle around which human life was organized. Towns were built because of its proximity. Time was marked by its harvest. Status was linked to its possession. In Saint-Domingue, there was not only a "sugar socio-economic complex" as Moreno Fraginals says of Cuba, not only an "esprit sucrier" (Debien), but a ramified *sugar culture.*[99] And around the 1760's and 70's, this "sort of frenzy", which Hilliard d'Auberteuil says accompanied the coffee revolution, threatened the very principle of that culture. Hilliard's verbal attacks on the coffee planters do not simply convey the plantocracy's opinion, but set the tone of the debate.

97. See Vignols (1930, 115 *et seq*).

98. Marx (1967, 62-69; 1973, 149-65). On money in Saint-Domingue, see Richard (1954).

99. Moreno Fraginals (1976).

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> This crop [he says], suited especially these Europeans who will never be but foreigners to the colony, men that the desire to go back to their fatherland turn greedy of pleasure and reluctant to save: they all have been dazzled by prodigious harvests which were then sold at excessive prices. Since peace, they have used excellent soils and more than forty thousand Negroes, of whom most died. . . .
>
> O coffee, deadly gift of Arabia! How will you compensate the damages you have caused the colonists? The animals we maintained in the woods, the wild yet not ferocious ones of which those woods were filled, the materials they should have provided all along the centuries, the dew they harvested on the length of their leaves, the brooks which swelled under their shelter, the people who should have been employed to the most useful tasks, you have devoured them all, indeed destroyed them all.[100]

Obviously coffee cultivation posed economic threats to the plantocracy. As a consequence of expansion, land prices skyrocketed in Saint-Domingue from the late 1770's onward, and speculation became common practice for the first time. Likewise prices of African slaves went up, and those of creole slaves much higher. But an element of jealousy appears in Hilliard's attack. Successful coffee planters are "greedy for pleasure and reluctant to save"—an accusation not entirely consistent with "the desire to go back." The fact is that the very success of some coffee planters—parsimonious or conspicuous spenders—represented an unprecedented challenge to the sugar plantocracy. Ramsey's words about British Caribbean sugar planters also applied to those of Saint-Domingue: "They think and dream of nothing but sugar, sugar; to which, in consequence, every spot is condemned."[101] Many sugar planters could have advantageously diversified their production, but refused to do so. The decline in prices of the early 1770's (1771-75) in the island, 1772-76 in France) does not fully justify their continuous prediction of an imminent demise of coffee. Hilliard's invectives provide the social and cultural context of that "economic" rejection: Sugar is noble, coffee is *roturier*. Yet Hilliard's attacks also bring to light two important aspects

100. Hilliard d'Auberteuil (1779, 1:186-197).

101. Quoted by Goveia (1965, 117).

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of coffee production, namely, its ecological and human costs. I shall now turn to the latter, that is, to the effects of the boom on the most important segment of the society, the men and women who planted, harvested, and cleaned the crop, the slaves themselves. Did the coffee boom eventuate in changes in slavery as practiced in Saint-Domingue? This question requires that—without losing our world historical perspective—we move closer to our smallest unit of analysis, the unit of production.

Comparative studies of slavery have so far dealt with different colonial empires or different countries within the same network, but few have addressed themselves to the possibility that, within a relatively small area controlled by one European power, two different types of production could influence the character of slavery in different ways.[102] I will try to show that in Saint-Domingue coffee production introduced a qualitative difference in the practice of slavery, and, in so doing, influenced in new ways the emerging creole culture. Such a treatment of the coffee counterpoint requires a comparison of *caféières* and *sucreries* from two complementary angles: the place of the labor force within quantitatively and qualitatively differential cost-accounting measures, and the restricted sociocultural contexts of the two units of production.

As a form of labor organization in the Americas spurred by the expansion of capitalism, slavery presented a basic contradiction: slaves were intrinsically part of the planter's investment, yet they were also intrinsically human. The planter bought them for their labor, but that labor itself was not generally a commodity. Rather, the slaves *themselves* were commodities, and slavery entailed the purchase (the sale, the circulation, and the use) of the laborer *himself* who, in that regard, became property, part of the material, to be used for

102. Higman's work (1976) on Jamaica, which corroborates parts of the following analysis, and Ortiz's classic *Cuban Counterpoint* (1940) are two notable exceptions. The lack of more empirical observations on slave behavior imposes in the following passages a certain rigidity, a tilt more preferable—at this stage of our knowledge—to too far-reaching speculations on the coffee counterpoint.

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the ever-increasing profits of the master, just like the lands, the cows, and the mills. But—and there was the contradiction—slaves were not, and never could be, *just like* the lands, the cows, and the mills. They took orders, they *gave* orders, they loved and hated, they killed themselves as human beings with human attributes, including their individualities, regardless of the beliefs of the most racist masters who could not escape this reality. Under capitalistic slavery, "slaves *appear* to be a form of capital though they *are* human beings."[103] Both aspects of this basic contradiction always persisted, but, among and within colonial networks and—I suggest—*within the same colony,* the workings of that contradiction, the particular extent to which the slaves-as-capital aspect dominated the slaves-as-humans aspect, introduced substantial particularisms into the daily life of the slaves. The accumulation of such particularisms ultimately produced qualitative differences within the system, the colonial network, or the colony, depending on how much of an investment the slave *was* and *was thought* to be. Differentiation in treatment can thus initially be located on the scale of the operation in terms of capital.

> The more capitalistic the slavery situation, the more the businessman's view prevailed. . . . The very definitions of idleness, stupidity, and even humanity differed accordingly. On the capitalistic slave plantation, humanity was an obstacle to the maximization of profit. In other, less economically committed situations, this was not necessarily the case. The degree of social commitment to a capitalistic mode of production based on slavery is an essential determinant of the slaves' status.[104]

Drawing on this basic formula, I suggest that, in Saint-Domingue, important differences in the production requirements of coffee and sugar divergently inflected the treatment of the slaves, the relations between slaves and masters, and the relations between slaves themselves. Humanity was *always* an obstacle to profit, but it became more so as other obstacles accumulated, and the degree of social commitment to capital always—albeit not totally—hinged upon the particular pro-

103. See Mintz (1974, 64; 1978, 90) and Mintz & Price (1976).

104. Mintz (1974, 74).

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duction in which the master was engaged. The more time was needed for production, the less time the slave had on his or her own. The more physical and social space was attributed to production, the less the slave could exercise choice in his or her movements. The more numerous and complex the instruments of production, the less the slave could appropriate the natural environment.

Evaluation of both units of production in terms of time, space, and material—introduced here as exemplary parameters—points to the fact that the *caféterie* left more room for the expression of the slave's individuality. The economic scale that sugar involved, especially in land and labor, and the relative requirements of the two crops for instruments of production have already been discussed, and one need not dwell on the well-known constraints that time imposed on sugar production.[105] Long-term and short-term deadlines punctuated the process from the fields to the ships. The difference with the little that we know of the situation up the slopes is striking. Production was certainly timed by shipping deadlines, and the harvest marked the peak of the cycle. But from planting to shipping, coffee did not require the precise execution of different tasks at specific phases as sugar did, especially because of the plant's capability for remaining unspoiled for long periods between diverse stages of the process, except for drying and decorticating.

If the scale of the operation influenced the character of slavery by imposing constraints on the productive regime, the relative importance of the labor force within the total investment geared such influence in particular directions. On the *caféières,* the labor force represented a much greater share of the total investment than on the sugar plantations, and planters' attitudes as well as slaves' reactions consociated with the realization on both sides of the slaves' importance. The master's isolation certainly reinforced such realization. Indeed, most coffee planters resided on location in what Debien has called a *caféière-résidence,* sometimes with only one "accountant"

105. See Barrett (1965), Mintz (forthcoming), and Trouillot (forthcoming).

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as the only other White in sight. They had the time—one might even say the "need"—to engage in closer personal relations with the twenty or so slaves that they owned. P. J. Laborie, who had a total of about 50 slaves under his direct supervision, insisted, in his coffee "textbook," that the planter "personally (took) charge of his negroes."

> Let him [he says] lodge them under his eye, watch over their personal concerns in all respects, ascertain that their food is prepared and distributed regularly twice a day.[106]

And again, to prevent contagion, the planter should let "no negro in good health come near the [field] hospital unless to inform themselves of relatives."[107] The sense of a closer community is corroborated by Debien, though he insists—and rightly, I believe—on the fact that size, while creating more "humane" relations on the *caféteries,* also created more direct frictions. But even the number of considerations about slaves' welfare and treatment in the letters of coffee planters indicate a greater concern on their part.[108]

The organization of work—itself the combined product of botanical and other natural factors and cost-accounting preoccupations—also took a different form in the highlands. The prevalence of the task system—as is also evident elsewhere in the Caribbean—added to the flexibility of the units.[109] As in Jamaica and in Surinam, there is little record of specialization, but we know that at least in some cases, prizes offered by the master partly compensated for the limited possibilities of promotion.[110] The impact of the differences in the two productive regimes can be measured by the reactions of the sugar planters themselves, who claimed that coffee planters

106. Laborie (1798, 163).

107. Laborie (1798).

108. See Debien (1974, 141-42). See also Grimouard (1935).

109. See Higman (1976) and Malouet (1802).

110. See Debien (1974, 144) and Laborie (1798, 151).

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"did not know how to take advantage of their slaves who did whatever they wanted outside of harvest time."[111]

Indeed, when compared to that of the *caféteries*, the work regimen on sugar plantations seems very restrictive. Sugar entailed, as we have seen, a great number of slaves and a relatively complex chain of command. Interpersonal relations depended very much on one's position in that chain. Moreover, the division of labor created fairly tight categories of workers based on sex, skills, and age. A refiner's skill was by no means comparable with that of a simple field laborer, and his status (within the continuum of the enslaved) reflected that difference.[112] The maintenance of the instruments of production and the care of a large number of animals added to the already hard labor of the sugar slaves. On the *caféteries*, animals are referred to in very different terms. A very small number of horses, says Laborie, will be sufficient for the master's transportation.

> A great number of oxen and bulls are a needless incumbrance; but a good many cows are extremely useful for the hospital, the children and all those douceurs of milk, butter and cheese which are comfortable at the master's table, and also for rearing young fools.[113]

The two different work regimes also skewed the character of the slaves' physical and sociocultural reproduction in divergent directions. The available inventories of *caféteries* reveal a high proportion of children, mostly creoles. Most adults were African-born, identified as "Congos". In Jacmel, the Renard-Jales' *atelier* included twenty African adults of many different *nations* (> fifteen males) and six creoles, but five of the latter were children, including three under seven years of age. Guillaume Charron had five adult Congos and two creoles (both children) out of fourteen slaves, and in 1788 all the Africans still bore the names under which they had travelled. The Lehinas' *caféterie* had 21 Congos, 21 creoles (eighteen of them children) and nine other Africans.[114] Obviously coffee planters could not afford the very

111. Galbaud du Fort papers, quoted by Debien (1974, 144).

112. See Trouillot (forthcoming).

113. Laborie (1798, 192; see also 39).

114. See Siguret (1968).

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expensive creole adult slaves, and Congos dominated Saint-Domingue's imports in the second part of the eighteenth century. But this overwhelming presence of male adults of Congolese origins and the surprisingly high number of children certainly created major differences in the character of socialization in Saint-Domingue. One can guess, for instance, that this awkward combination in the relative isolation of the *caféteries* modified the hierarchical interpretation of the distinction between creoles and Possales (African-born). In the sugar industry, creoles usually reached the better positions, but most skilled slaves were purchased as such, and, in general, natural reproduction did not suffice to maintain the labor force.

Indeed, constraints of time and scale also contributed to the reduction of the slaves' individuality by reducing the reproduction rate on sugar plantations. It is hardly possible to quantify the role of each factor—hard labor, mistreatment, social tension—in the low rate of reproduction, but it is certain that many sugar planters systematically opposed slave breeding.[115] Hilliard d'Auberteuil makes a plea for good treatment and even for breeding, but his argument—especially for breeding—is explicitly and extremely economic, and/or cynical:

> Even though one would like to look at the Negroes only as physical beings useful to our enjoyment, one should not destroy them without necessity.[116]

Criticizing the planters who claim that that reproduction is bad economics, Hilliard computes:

> If the work of a Negro female during 18 months, that is the three last months of her pregnancy and the fifteen months she breast-feeds her baby is estimated at 600 livres and she does during this interval only half of her work, it is certain that the master will lose 300 livres.... On the other hand . . .

But the sugar planters probably did not care about the second half of the argument. Breeding *could* mean losing money, and

115. See Debien (1962) and Hilliard (1779, 2:64-65).

116. See Hilliard (1779, 2:64-65).

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that was enough. Moreover, slave breeding took time, and Hilliard's calculations did not take time into consideration. Contrast with Laborie:

> [Children are] bonds of love which bind the negroes to the soil and to the master. . . . It affords, in reality, a pleasing sensation, to be surrounded with a black brood of these infants lisping out the word "papa."[117]

This burst of sentimentality should not deceive us, and I should remind the reader and myself that *slavery was slavery even on Laborie's plantation,* even on that New Year's Day when the slaves roasted a cow, when the master declared general amnesty, and genuinely felt that "every mind [was] gay and every hart dilated." I should also add that one must keep in mind while reading Laborie's book the time at which he was writing, the public that he expected, and the fact that his personality probably influenced the final product very much. Many more detailed descriptions of this kind by contemporaries are needed to refine the picture, and among them there will surely be many more repulsive images. But the point is not—and never was—that slavery on a *caféterie* was a pleasant experience. It is not certain at all that any of Laborie's slaves perceived as "douceurs", "comfort", or "convenience" the many minute incidents or the general atmosphere which contributed to make their lives different from those of most slaves on sugar plantations. But one can assume that the accumulation of such minute incidents affected the way in which they built their institutions.

Mintz and Price have suggested that though Africans forcibly brought to the Americas did not share a culture, they did have in common "a certain number of underlying cultural understandings and assumptions," a shared heritage of "grammatical" principles.[118] The specific cultural materials and institutions in the New World were very much determined by those principles, yet very much also by the historical—

117. Laborie (1798, 169).

118. See Mintz & Price (1976, 1-7).

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economic, social, physical—limitations imposed by migration and slavery on the forms of their expression. "Thus the organizational task of enslaved Africans in the New World was that of creating institutions, institutions that would prove responsive to the needs of everyday life under the limiting conditions that slavery imposed on them."[119] Drawing on those assumptions, I suggest that the coffee situations in their aggregate results allowed more freedom of combination in the building of those institutions than did the sugar situations; that the qualitative difference within slavery, the diminution of "limiting conditions", entailed a qualitative difference in the building of creole culture; that there was a point when the number of children raised among so many Congos affected the process of socialization, a point when the number of personal marks of attention from the master eventuated in new patterns in master-slave relations, when the repetition of events like Laborie's New Year's party created differences, say, in the songs and dances of the hinterland.

I must again emphasize that the hypothesis does not concern any particular unit or any particular slave. I am treating these in a way very similar to the treatment that the concept of "mode of production" imposes on the reality of *a* society. In so doing, I am very much aware that I am not reflecting empirical "reality", but that is not my intention here. It may very well happen that in a particular *caféterie,* identifiable in time and place, extremely loose requirements of production coexisted with the most cruel violations of the individuality of a particular slave and of all the others for that matter. What I am suggesting is that the *aggregate* result of the constraints of production on the totality of similar units in the society can be seen in a decrease of the restrictions on slaves' individualities within the society, and that this decrease itself allowed for qualitatitively new patterns in the cultural sphere.

Available evidence does not allow one to surmise the direct impact of these new cultural patterns on the Haitian Revolution. The degree of socialization, the greater sense of commun-

119. Mintz & Price (1976, 101).

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ity, probably contributed to a greater sense of social identity among the slaves—itself a much needed ideological cement of the rebellion. One can also guess that the woods surrounding the *caféteries* provided ideal refuges for rebel or marooned slaves.[120] Suffice it to reaffirm that the data presented here suggest the need for a reassessment of the Revolution in light of the structural disturbance the coffee boom created in the social, political, and cultural life of the colony. I have already alluded to the weakening of the state apparatus, the rise of a rationalist spirit among planters, and have suggested elsewhere that fissions within what could have been thought to be—before coffee—"the planters' bloc, the White bloc, and the free bloc" greatly weakened the traditional forms of political control and thus improved the chances of the slaves.[121] Thus, even if additional data only confirm the impact of the coffee boom within the planters' camp, Saint-Domingue's coffee "revolution" will remain a vivid example of peripheral dynamics.

Conclusion

Dependency theory and world-system approaches have been rightly criticized for their neglect of events on the ground—their disdain, one might say, for the men and women who, in particular times and places, through their daily practice, affect the course of history. On the other hand, microsociological studies—especially in the anthropological tradition—by omitting what is perhaps the most important event of recent history, the shrinking of the globe during the expansion of capitalism, have tended to create as many worlds within the world as there have been social scientists willing to claim the right of their paternity. Passing references to "internal factors" on the one hand, or to "the modern world" and "society at large" on the other, do not erase the imbalance. I hope that this article has suggested the possibility of a solution by showing the rewards of a progression from the level

120. I am grateful to Jean Fouchard for this suggestion.

121. See Trouillot (1977).

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of the world-system down to the smallest level of analysis (in this case the *caféterie* in Saint-Domingue as a unit of production), though it must be clear to the reader that an all-inclusive treatment of these levels is beyond the scope of this work. The pleasure of assembling so many fragments of evidence does not alter the fact that they cannot take the place of more substantial data. I hope to be able, in the future, to refine this analysis by using archival material, especially the papers of the coffee planters themselves. But let me emphasize that I do not suggest a complete treatment of each and every inclusive level in which a particular object of study is embedded. My contention is that a look at particulars from the point of view of the world-system entails a progression—a "zoom effect", one might say—which restores perspective to the final image by including in the analysis the larger mechanisms which affect local initiative and local response, and the countereffect of these particulars on the system as a whole. Such a procedure seems to avoid the flat mechanism too often implicit in dependency studies as well as the impermanence and myopia of the empiricist course. The path between determinism and voluntarism is often a thin one, but it is in the ambiguity of their relationships, in the minute dysfunctions of the structure, that men and women seize their opportunities and create history, that is, motion in the system.

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ADDENUM

In *Review* V, 2, Fall 1981, a note was omitted from p. 311 of the article by Henryk Samsonowicz. It should read: *Translated by Ewa Kanska-Neumeier.

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