

Spring 2020

Fruit of the Spirit: An investigation of how French Colonialism trans-nationally created the creolized Black Dance in New Orleans, called Secondline, through the lens of an Original Treme babydoll.

Micah Theodore
Bard College, mt3775@bard.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2020



Part of the [African History Commons](#), [American Popular Culture Commons](#), [Caribbean Languages and Societies Commons](#), [Cultural History Commons](#), and the [Social History Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](#).

Recommended Citation

Theodore, Micah, "Fruit of the Spirit: An investigation of how French Colonialism trans-nationally created the creolized Black Dance in New Orleans, called Secondline, through the lens of an Original Treme babydoll." (2020). *Senior Projects Spring 2020*. 110.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2020/110

This Open Access work is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been provided to you by Bard College's Stevenson Library with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this work in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@bard.edu.

Fruit of the Spirit:

*An investigation of how French Colonialism transnationally created the creolized
Black Dance in New Orleans, called Secondline, through the lens of an Original
Treme babydoll.*

*Senior Project submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College*

by

Micah Raquel Theodore

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2020

Table of Contents

Introduction 5

Chapter One 7

Noirleans- New Orleans Colonial History

Chapter Two 21

New Orleans Creolized masking culture

Chapter Three 30

New Orleans black dance via Babydolls

Conclusion 32

Bibliography 33

Acknowledgements

I would like to give a big thank you to all of the professors that have taught, or advised me in any way. This experience at Bard has truly been a journey. I would also like to thank Jeremy Hall for extending himself and helping me find great resources. A huge shout-out goes to The Office of Equity & Access, specifically Kimberly Sargeant, my mentor and lifeline when in need. Thank you, so much.

Personal Statement

Dance has been the avenue in which I have been able to discover my African roots
Spiritual Dance; Dance is a spiritual connection between mind, body, and soul.

My very first memory of dancing was at the age of 6 six years old. My church had a dance team for young girls like myself. However, I chose not to dance with the church's ministry dance team because I was too shy and afraid of how I may be perceived. I was also afraid of embarrassing myself if I was to forget the routine. Because my mother was the minister of dance, I left feeling like I had disappointed her by not participating. Until recently, I had forgotten this moment; I believe I subconsciously buried this memory and swore off dancing until high school. This is what I believed was my first memory of dancing. During my sophomore year in high school, I auditioned for and became a member of the Starlettes dance team. Although I did not know it then, it marked the commencement of my dance experience and sparked my interest in the history of dance as I got older. Dance is an outward physical manifestation of communication, a global language. For many people like myself, dance is a method of expression. It is mostly attached to a culture and is an important element in the social structure of all human cultures throughout history. It tells a rhythmic story about what people feel, who they are and the way they think. Dance is used for many reasons including but not limited to simply pleasure, providing some form of therapy, protesting oppression, and preserving culture.

Introduction

New Orleans is filled with fantastic thrills and is the best city in the United States in my book. Many people worldwide love to travel to New Orleans to seek those thrills, however these very same thrills are at stake right now due to the epidemic of gentrification and potential erasure. As someone who has watched black business be bought out in the historically black neighborhoods, canvassed those neighborhoods for signatures to help advocate for rent control and have occasionally been notified of noise ordinances while away at school; it is more than important for me to acknowledge the power of our culture and to liberate my ancestors who planted the seed of dance in my feet many generations ago, and to share that knowledge with other natives.

Through this investigation, I am attempting to seek out the historical and contemporary roots of secondline, the relationship between spirituality in the culture and performances of New Orleans' second lines, and how it transnationally moved between West and Central Africa, Haiti, and New Orleans. This method contributes to the understanding of how the Circum-Caribbean region has influenced African American performance culture in the diaspora and adds an analysis of the historical spiritual connection between New Orleans and Haiti. By investigating the secondline, this permits me to dive into how African diasporic identities and dance traditions from Haiti and West and Central Africa were reinterpreted in New Orleans popular dance, music and religious ceremonies over time.

It honestly amazes me to see the resilience of my ancestors and the ways they were able to create their own agency in a system that didn't even consider them human.

Simultaneously New Orleans people have a multicultural African diasporic spiritual connection to secondline.

Directly after imagining this feeling of turning in my senior project and celebrating, I thought of the same feeling when I graduated high school. In my head, thinking, it would be nice to have an ending secondline from the graduation tent to either the Campus Center or the Chapel. This is a common New Orleans tradition to end celebrations with a secondline, in which we ended with a secondline for my high school graduation. This visceral reaction to end in a secondline shows my cultural identity rooted in New Orleans Secondline. It is a significant part of my identity and my way of life.

Chapter one presents an investigation of a pre-American Louisiana, I trace the origin and motivations of settlement in the Mississippi Watershed. The chapter also discusses the implications of settlement under French and Spanish rule, population, and legislation such as the code noir. I also try to examine what it was like in both French and Spanish colonial Louisiana society. Moving into Chapter two, I examine the New Orleans creolized masking culture and the ceremonies of social customs. I try to give a detailed account of what secondline is, its origins, and influences. By studying historical text, I breakdown the layers of secondline and the African diasporic links between the Carnival performance culture in New Orleans. For the third and final chapter, I take a personal approach to look at my own ancestry and formulate a historical

reflection of how the New Orleans Baby dolls and Mardi Gras Indians recreate Transatlantic remembrance of African spirituality in Carnival through performance culture.

Chapter One: Noirleans- New Orleans Colonial History

“Jacques Cartier claimed Canada as Nouvelle-France in 1536, but it was in 1608 with Samuel Champlain’s establishment of Quebec, that French Colonization of the New World began. - Ned Sublette

In 1682, Frenchmen Sieur Rene Robert De La Salle claimed the lush territory along the Mississippi river for France and named Louisiana in honor of the French King Louis the XIV.¹ He believed France needed to rapidly colonize Louisiana before rival nations beat them to it. France had an interest in colonizing Louisiana because whoever controlled the Mississippi river would further control the interior of North America and its richest it produced.

More than two thousand miles to the South, France established settlements in 1635 on the islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique. The Canadian explorer Louis Joliet and the French missionary Jacques Marquette traveled in 1678 down the great central river of North America but turned back less than five hundred miles before reaching the Gulf of Mexico.

¹ Sublette, Ned. World That Made New Orleans : From Spanish Silver to Congo Square. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2008. Accessed May 5, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.

New Orleans Founded 1717

“With control of Canada, St. Lawrence waterway, and the Mississippi Valley could dominate the continent”. -Gwendolyn Midlo Hall²

When thinking of the establishment of New Orleans, one must consider it through the context of the French Empire in the Americas. One must also understand that New Orleans emerged as a strategic colony, a primary pawn used in the game of empires between France and Britain. France wanted to assure the obstruction of English expansion, in fear that they would then become power and try to take France’s Caribbean colonies. French control was extremely delicate, as they were “ill equipped” to begin this ambitious endeavor of colonizing the Mississippi Valley, “outflanking and surrounding the British mainland colonies along the Atlantic coast.”³

Antoine Crozat turned Louisiana over to John Law’s company of the West in 1717, in which it was a private company that issued and sold shares. According to Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, it was granted a monopoly of Louisiana’s trade for 25 years and of the Canadian beaver trade, and was given ownership of lands and mines as well as the right to build fortifications and to nominate the company directors and colonial officials.⁴ She says that the company of the West

² Hall, Gwendolyn Midlo. *Africans In Colonial Louisiana: the Development of Afro-Creole Culture In the Eighteenth Century*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992.

<https://hdl-handle-net.ezprox.bard.edu/2027/heb.00534>. EPUB.

³See Source 2.

⁴See Source 2.

was expanded to include the company of Senegal in December, 1718, the Company of China and East Indian Company in 1719, and the Company of St, Domingue and the Company of Guinea in September, 1720. Furthermore Eberhard L. Faber says, the Company of the West, now renamed the Company of the Indies, was granted monopolies on colonial trade and taxation; Law sold over five billion livres worth of shares; colonists were recruited from France, Germany, and Switzerland with glowing (but false) reports of lush prosperity; and the first African slaves, 450 of them in 1719 alone, were brought to Louisiana.⁵ Then in 1720 the bubble burst. Share prices collapsed, Law fled to Belgium, and the embarrassed French Crown's brief fascination with Louisiana was definitively extinguished⁶.

There was great optimism for the expectation of the new colony, but it was difficult to find voluntary colonists in France due to its' immortal image of demise and decay. Nonetheless, in an effort to get Louisiana populated quickly, the French instituted a sort of penal colonization in New Orleans in which permanent settlers were brought from France to America, many being prisoners, prostitutes, and beggars. Hall says, "During 1717 and 1718, the sentences of prisoners who had been condemned to the galleries were commuted, and these prisoners were sent to Louisiana to work for three years. Thereafter, they were to be given part of the land they had cleared and cultivated"⁷

She continues by explaining that by 1719, deportation to Louisiana had become "a convenient way to get rid of troublesome neighbors or family members. This French ruling over

⁵ Faber, Eberhard L. "Mississippi Schemes: THE MAKING OF A COLONIAL ELITE, 1717–1803." In *Building the Land of Dreams: New Orleans and the Transformation of Early America*, 23-49.

PRINCETON; OXFORD: Princeton University Press, 2016. Accessed April 30, 2020.

doi:10.2307/j.ctt1wf4cjlw.5.

⁶See Source 5

⁷Hall, Gwendolyn. (1997). African Women in French and Spanish Louisiana Origins, Roles, Family, Work, Treatment. 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195112436.003.0017.

Louisiana was not smart because there was very little diversity. The settlers had one thing in common and that was, in some way, they went against the grain of French society; whether in committing more egregious acts like murderous crimes or just annoying a neighbor. The forced deportation system ended on May 9, 1720 after over fifty women and men at the prison of St.Martin-Des-Champs forced the doors, wounded two guards, and fled⁸. This is exemplified in the table 1 below, showing the different French colonists sent to Louisiana between 1719 and 1721.

From the perspective of Versailles, French Louisiana was a disappointment, marked by hardship, cruelty, and economic stagnation, matching neither the demographic strength of the British Atlantic colonies nor the mineral wealth of New Spain.

Throughout the decade, African slaves were brought to Louisiana— over 2,000 by 1723 and over 3,500 more by 1729. The paternalistic Code Noir of 1724 served as the legal basis for African slavery throughout the French period.

By 1731, the Company of the West gave the “unprofitable” colony of Louisiana back to France, after the Natchez Indians and their allies revolted against French settlers in November of 1729; in which killing “237 French men, women, and children at the Fort Rosalie outpost 180 miles upriver.”⁹ Many white settlers left due to the dangers of the Native frontier, treacherous slaves, tropical disease, poverty, famine, anarchy, and chaos reduced the population and inhibited new immigration. Louisiana had become burdensome and expensive to maintain.

⁸ Hall, Gwendolyn. (1997). African Women in French and Spanish Louisiana Origins, Roles, Family, Work, Treatment. 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195112436.003.0017.

⁹ Faber, Eberhard L. "Mississippi Schemes: THE MAKING OF A COLONIAL ELITE, 1717–1803." In *Building the Land of Dreams: New Orleans and the Transformation of Early America*, 23-49. PRINCETON; OXFORD: Princeton University Press, 2016. doi:10.2307/j.ctt1wf4cjw.5.

Importantly, there was a greater number of Africans than Frenchmen in Louisiana during the French colonization since other immigrants had very little desire to be there. Hall says that French Louisiana cannot be accurately described as a plantation society because it never developed a viable self-sustaining economy. Unlike French Caribbean colonies, Louisiana was not a prosperous slave plantation society producing large bulks of valuable export staples FN. Rice became the most reliable crop for local consumption while cotton was grown but not a cash crop. Planters and slaves in and around New Orleans cultivated cattle, tobacco, rice, and indigo and chopped lumber. Although these products generally could not compete on the world market, together with the Indian fur trade, they formed the basis of a “frontier exchange economy” FN This frontier exchange economy produced just enough to tolerate the second generation, who placed themselves at the head of an emerging social society based not on nobility or royal relations but on land and slaveholding.

When thinking about the establishment of New Orleans, it is needless to say that the first humans to occupy New Orleans soil were the Indigenous Americans,... That is, until the French and other European powers merely travelled to Africa for manpowered labor on the road to produce profitable commodities for the settlers, in which they inhumanely, immorally, and illegally burglarized coastal countries in Africa and abducted people from their homes, families and normal way of life. It is not only important but vital to acknowledge the origins of the enslaved people that inhibited and impacted the city of New Orleans. The Africans who arrived in Louisiana had a strong sense of identity and culture. They had their own beliefs and cultural practices originating from the Motherland and successfully bought it over to Louisiana. In

Africans in Colonial Louisiana, Gwendolyn Midlo Hall highlights special aspects of tribal culture from Bambara slaves brought to Louisiana. She focuses on their oral traditions, their religion, and their customs. It is no surprise that Louisiana continues to have strong ties to African culture due to their ancestral roots. These individuals tribes' strong connection to their ancestral roots, made them more prone to keep their culture and traditions alive despite their enslaved conditions, even if that meant masking it with Christianity.

Hall breaks down the historical and governmental relationship between Senegambia and Louisiana, which greatly impacted the number of incoming slaves from specific areas of Africa such as the Senegambia region. This ultimately contributed to the rather larger proportion of the enslaved in Louisiana to the rest of the Louisiana population. She says, "The slave trade to Louisiana was organized by the Company of the Indies, a private company licensed by the King of France that controlled, administered, and held an exclusive trade monopoly in both Senegal and Louisiana during the years of the African slave trade to the tatter colony"¹⁰

Here she is laying out how the Company of the Indies created a monopoly in Senegal and Louisiana simultaneously to further commute the enslaved safely.

She goes on to further explain how this monopoly operated within the Atlantic world. "The company of the Indies hoped to purchase all the slaves as they descended the Senegal, drying up the supply of slaves in the Gambia River, where rival European slave traders and interlopers operated"¹¹. This population of Enslaved Africans in Louisiana is so significant because the

¹⁰ Hall, Gwendolyn Midlo. *Africans In Colonial Louisiana: the Development of Afro-Creole Culture In the Eighteenth Century*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992. <https://hdl-handle-net.ezprox.bard.edu/2027/heb.00534>. EPUB.

¹¹See Source 10

ancestral ties and traditions are deeply spiritual which evokes the distant lineage of it to Louisiana and its culture.

Senegambia¹² became the “marginal” to the growing African slave trade as a whole during the eighteenth century, its role in providing slaves for Louisiana was an exception”¹³ Besides populations of settlers, both the Spanish and French colonial Louisiana encompassed a higher population of Africans than any other people. Louisiana has been a majority black and/or African colony and state. Under both colonial states, Louisiana’s Africans were from two different predominant regions of Africa. The Senegambia, the first wave of Africans to French Louisiana and while the second wave were Central African people from the Congo and Angola regions under Spanish Rule.

Population

The Bambara are a Mande people with a strong tradition of oral history. They trace their ancestry to the great thirteenth-century Malian empire in the region where the upper Niger River intersects Mali and Guinea. The modern Mande people include: Bambara, Mandinka, Mannika, Malinke, Mandinga, and Manya.

“French historians and Anthropologists have studied Bambara myths, cosmology, religion, and social organization. Although these studies were made during the twentieth century, they involve customs and beliefs that tend to be conservative and therefore likely to have existed far enough in the past to have influenced the world view of the Bambara brought to Louisiana.

¹² Prior to the Berlin Conference, Senegal and The Gambia was one country known as Senegambia.

¹³See Source 10

Because Bambara social organization was led by spirituality, justice, and social customs, this allowed for more cultural continuity when this translated in Louisiana. Hall says that “knowledge of, and capacity to perform, religious rites and rituals is universal. Religious knowledge and power is in the hands of the many. This knowledge was easily transportable.¹⁴ “Oral tradition plays a major role in preserving their cultural focus. The collective wisdom of the Bambara passed on by the frequent citing of proverbs in ordinary conversation.”

It is because of oral traditions that the African population was able to stay rooted and grounded in their identity. It was because of this that they were able to continue to pass information about their culture to the generations of Africans being born in Louisiana. Hall states that there is no separation between artisanship, artistic creation, and religious observance.”¹⁵

The manifestations of Louisiana in present day is evidence that there was in fact no separation as we continue to see all of the given entities present.

It is important to recognize the origins of the French Louisiana population, since there was little physical French dominance seen during this time. “French slave trade ships, L’Aurore and La Mutine, senegal to Louisiana

Code Noir

¹⁴ See Source 10.

¹⁵ See Source 10.

"The Negroes must be governed differently from the Europeans," reported Antoine Simon LePage DuPratz, "not because they are black, nor because they are slaves; but because they think differently from white men."¹⁶

It is unknown if King Louis XV agreed with DuPratz but when he issued the *Code Noir* to be enacted by his governor in Louisiana, Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, it was quite apparent that he possibly could have.

The Code Noir, the first complete and systematic slave law regulating the status of the enslaved and freed persons of color as well as the relationships between masters and slaves put in place by the French crown, was "enacted in the various colonies: the Lesser Antilles in 1685, Saint-Domingue in 1687, Guyana in 1704, the Mascarene Islands in 1723, and Louisiana in 1724"¹⁷

According to Donald Everett¹⁸ and Cecile Vidal¹⁹, the purpose of the original Code Noir was to control the increasing number of slaves in the colony. Harsh restrictions were imposed on this submissive group to prevent uprisings, yet the king's interest in the well-being of the slave population was evident in the more humane provisions which forbade the torture of slaves and the separation of children from their mothers. Religious instruction for the slaves in the Catholic faith was also required.

¹⁶ Sublette, Ned. *World That Made New Orleans : From Spanish Silver to Congo Square*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2008. Accessed May 5, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁷ VIDAL, CÉCILE. "A Port City of the French Empire and the Greater Caribbean." In *Caribbean New Orleans: Empire, Race, and the Making of a Slave Society*, 43-93. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019. Accessed April 19, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469645209_vidal.7

¹⁸ Everett, Donald E. "Free Persons of Color in Colonial Louisiana." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 7, no. 1 (1966): 21-50. Accessed April 15, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/4230881.

¹⁹ See Source 17.

That the relations-marital and extramarital-between white, free black, and slave were of concern to the Crown was reflected in the Code Noir. It forbade whites to marry blacks or to live in a state of concubinage with slaves²⁰. Further- more, the Code even outlawed concubinage between manumitted or free-born blacks and slaves. However, if a free Negro should marry his own slave concubine, she was thereby set free, and their children were also to become free and legitimate²¹. For all other circumstances, the law provided that the children of a free father and a slave mother should be slaves, following the condition of the mother; likewise, the offspring of a slave father and a free mother were born free, following the mother's status²² The Code Noir manifested more solicitude toward the emancipation of slaves than attention to placing restrictions upon them once they became free. Fearing that a slave might steal to obtain the price set for his freedom by a "mercenary master," the Code stated that permission for manumission could only be granted by the Superior Council. A slave nominally freed by any other method was to be confiscated and held as a bondsman of the India Company.

The Code placed only two restrictions upon the free Negro. He could not house fugitive slaves and would be sentenced to pay thirty livres per day to the master for each day he concealed a runaway slave²³. If the free colored man was unable to pay this fine, he would be reduced to slavery. The second restriction commanded a manumitted slave to show respect to his former master and the master's family.

²⁰See Source 18.

²¹See Source 17.

²²See Source 17.

²³See Source 10

Accusation of miscegenation²⁴, appeared quite frequently in contemporary descriptions of the Spanish regime. Several factors may be considered in an attempt to explain the increase of inter marriage. The New Orleans Frontier society lacked white women to promote European family life, so it was inevitable that white men would make mistresses of their enslaved women, many of whom were manumitted by their masters²⁵.

Louis XIV in 1685²⁶, incorporated people of African descent in St. Domingue and New Orleans into a common French Catholic colonial culture that allowed the space for the limiting African festival rituals of Congo Square. Various articles of the Code Noire required owners to baptize and bury their slaves according to the Catholic religion and to excuse them from work on Sundays and holy days, and for funerals.

The Code Noire's legal permission for African drumming in Congo Square was central to the establishment of New Orleans as the Vodou capital of the United States and to its attraction to Haitian immigrants who practiced Vodou²⁷.

His research sheds light on the importance of the drumming in Congo Square as the means by which the sacred rhythms invoked in the sacred dances.

²⁴See Source 10

²⁵See Source 10

²⁶ Guenin-Lelle, Dianne. *The Story of French New Orleans : History of a Creole City*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2016. Accessed April 19, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.

²⁷Turner, Richard Brent. *Jazz Religion, the Second Line, and Black New Orleans*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009. Accessed May 19, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.

ReAfricanization under the Spanish Crown

“I imagine that among all our colonies Saint-Domingue is the one from which Louisiana has borrowed most of its spirit and customs. Contacts between the two colonies were frequent. Today when negroes, who have become sovereign, are chasing us away from Haiti, its refugees prefer to seek asylum here. One can meet many former colonists who have been taken in by relatives or friends and who, in general, do not preach affection and kindness for blacks. There are also a small number of slaves who have followed the fortunes of their masters, reduced to debris, to earning their living by hard work, in a word, to a life of hardship.”

-Pierre-Clément de Laussat, Mémoires sur ma vie . . .

Growth and development in Louisiana progressed slowly during the first colonial phase of French colonial rule. The colony proved a discouraging failure to France because of their own domestic economic problems and later the Seven Years War, This was a tremendous turning point for New Orleans because everything East of the Mississippi River was given to Great Britain, while everything West of the Mississippi River would become a part of Spain’s Colonies via the Treaty of Fontainebleau (1762)²⁸

Under Spanish rule, the slave began again and new Orleans moved into a period of Re-Africanization between the years 1766 and 1785, the slave population of Louisiana had

²⁸ Faber, Eberhard L. *Building the Land of Dreams: New Orleans and the Transformation of Early America*. PRINCETON; OXFORD: Princeton University Press, 2016. Accessed May 19, 2020. doi:10.2307/j.ctt1wf4cjw.

tripled from about 5,600 to 15,000, and between 1788 and 1810 it doubled once more (from 18,700 to 34,700), with the greatest population increase taking place between 1766 and 1788²⁹. Despite the brutalities of slavery in Louisiana, and in the rest of the American South, black antebellum New Orleans, like Haiti, was predominantly Catholic and Creole with a fluid “three-caste racial system: whites, free persons of color, and slaves” that comprised a unique multicultural society.

Many areas of Louisiana society were influenced by the Haitian migrants, fore they found refuge in the Atlantic ports and harbors of the Americas and much more still ended up on the Gulf Coast and in Louisiana, especially in New Orleans. According to Nathalie Dessens’s *Creole City : A Chronicle of Early American New Orleans*, the enslaved influenced all aspects of the culture from cooking to oral knowledge, and from Voodoo to the Creole language³⁰. As for the free people of color, they produced a movement to the cultural expansion of nineteenth-century New Orleans..

Émigrés from St. Domingue arrived in New Orleans in two waves. The first and smaller group came to Louisiana in the 1790s. Most slaveowners from St. Domingue who arrived in the United States in the first wave decided to settle in Charleston, Philadelphia, or Baltimore because the Spanish officials who ruled Louisiana in the late 1700s were apprehensive about the

²⁹ See source 10

³⁰ Dessens, Nathalie. *Creole City : A Chronicle of Early American New Orleans*. Florida: University Press of Florida, 2015. Accessed April 29, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.

opportunity that slaves from St. Domingue (where a revolution had just occurred) might motivate new slave rebellions.³¹

The second and the most influential wave of 9,059 émigrés from Haiti came to New Orleans from Santiago de Cuba in 1809 and 1810³². In 1796, new arrivals from St. Domingue were initially welcomed by the Cuban government. But in 1809, nevertheless, conflict between France and Spain caused dangerous opposition between Spanish and French people in Santiago de Cuba, and the émigrés from St. Domingue were forced to leave Cuba. This led to the decision of former Gov. William C.C. Claiborne³³ to permit St. Domingue planters to bring their slaves to Louisiana, in which he also approved the emigration of free people of color from the island.

The influence of Haitians in New Orleans can also be recognized in the work of cabinetmakers, carpenters, ironworkers, and bricklayers who built Creole cottages and shotgun houses, as well as in the work of hairdressers, seamstresses, and tailors in the nineteenth century African-American community³⁴. This wave of immigrants had an enormous impact on the social fabric and culture of Louisiana, moreover theoretically this is the seed that was sown in Louisiana that would later bare fruit of this spirit.

³¹ Turner, Richard Brent. "The Gede in New Orleans: Vodou Ritual in Big Chief Allison Tootie Montana's Jazz Funeral." *Journal of Haitian Studies* 12, no. 1 (2006): 96-115. Accessed May 1, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/41716764.

³² See Source 31.

³³ See source 31.

³⁴ See Source 31.

Chapter Two: New Orleans Creolized masking culture

In eighteenth century Louisiana, the term *creole* referred to locally born people of at least partial African descent, slave and free, and was used to distinguish American-born slaves from African-born slaves when they were listed on slave inventories. They were identified simply as creoles if they were born locally, or as creoles of another region or colony they had been born elsewhere in America.

The secondline

Now that we understand the historical and cultural context of the population in Louisiana and how they arrived, this chapter will analyze what has become of the African, Caribbean and Creole people and the culture that reminds the world of their presence in New Orleans today. In New Orleans, like in African culture, dance is a means of marking experiences of life in which is commonly stamped with an emotion(s). The dance that is ingrained in New Orleans culture is second line dancing. New Orleans secondline was introduced to me yet again by my mother. The second line dance consists of people doing “traditional dance” , twirling, spinning, jumping, and some even walking. This dance style was brought to New Orleans by the enslaved in the early

19th century where they would perform in Congo Square on their day off, Sunday.³⁵ The dances were officially banned in 1817 because white slave owners felt they were threatening and ended with a city ordinance restricting the assemblage of the enslaved.³⁶

Nevertheless, these Congo Square dances were fused into processions such as funerals, which are now called Jazz funerals. These processions added to the meaning of what a secondline was. It was no longer simply a dance, but now an event; and specifically a jazz celebration of someone's life. At secondlines today, you will see swarms of people in the street from one side of the street to another following behind the brass bands. All that can be seen include: kicks, jumps, flips, chants, tambourine smacking, hand-clapping and loud shouts, "CUTUP!" "FOOTWORK!" "YEA!".

New Orleans secondline dance is traditionally done in a brass band parade, in which the first line is the actual club with the parade permit along with the band. The second line are the people following behind the band, (the dancers), a cause , or even enjoying the procession. New Orleans second lines are still practiced today, in which many African -American benevolent societies in New Orleans called *Social Aid & Pleasure groups* pay for a police escort and permit them to do these traditional congo square dance in the street on no special occasion. Social Aid & Pleasure groups are made up of friends, family, co-workers, and neighbors. The members pay dues to save up for the parade permit, police escort, and any other sudden expenses such as

³⁵ Berry, Jason. "African Cultural Memory in New Orleans Music." *Black Music Research Journal* 8, no. 1 (1988): 3-12. doi:10.2307/779500.

³⁶Evans, Freddi Williams, and Joseph Hanson Kwabena Nketia. *Congo Square: African Roots in New Orleans*. Lafayette (La.): University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2011.

funeral costs. At its basic level, it is a procession of first a purpose or person accompanied by a traditional brass band and second the people or attendees who follow behind (the Secondline). Most older people arrive after church and go to stay active, on the other hand, younger people go to display their expertise in fast footwork, monkey shine³⁷, and/or fashion sense.

Many people join S&P clubs to gain street credibility, mostly in part because it is a performance of neighborhood solidarity and celebration of where and who you come from. To many New Orleans natives, the secondline represents a time to shine and boast about which ward in the city that you are from. Wards are like clans or tribes that are packed with local knowledge about that specific section including the food they like to eat, the kinds of people that live there and what living means to them. For example, the 7th ward is known to be full of historically creole people of color, commonly said to be “light bright and almost white”. They cook creole dishes like crawfish etouffee and reside in or around old creole cottage style houses downtown. The 9th ward is known to be more southern and country, this is commonly known as ‘the village’. They cook dishes like red beans and rice and are dark-skinned. This separation of people by skin color dates back to interpretations of code noir that I referenced earlier. They want others to see how ‘clean’ or ‘pretty’ they are and to truly exemplify how good they are living. People flaunt their expensive gator shoes, custom Italian suits, Gucci bags and belts.

Moreover, Second lines are also a part of Carnival, an African-American adaptation of New Orleans Mardi gras. African-Americans created carnival to subvert the White dominated and segregated celebration of Mardi-gras. New Orleans secondline was generally used to

³⁷ Mischievous and athletic behaviors.

accentuate black solidarity and a collective identity in rebellion against slavery, segregation, and gender norms across the board among most African-American groups in New Orleans.

This secondline tradition comes from a long history of African gatherings in Congo Square of the French Quarter, formerly known as *Place des Negres*³⁸. Properly named by French settlers, Congo square was the place of community and black/creole solidarity on Sunday, where they were free to do whatever they felt compelled to.

Richard Brent Turner does the best job so far at explaining the interconnectivity of jazz and the power of “spirit”³⁹ in secondline. Joseph Roach goes deeper into this idea of circum-atlantic memory through diasporic performance with his theory of surrogation.

He writes, “Memories of some particular times and places have become embodied in and through performances. . . . To perform . . . means . . . often secretly to reinvent. This claim is especially relevant to the performances that flourish within the geohistorical matrix of the circum- Atlantic world. . . . The concept of the circum- Atlantic world (as opposed to a transatlantic one) insists on the centrality of the diasporic and genocidal histories of Africa and the Americas, North and South, in the creation of the culture of modernity. . . . This interculture may be discerned most vividly by means of the performance tradition and the representation of performance that it engendered . . . because performances so often carry within them the memory of otherwise forgotten

³⁸Sublette, Ned. *World That Made New Orleans : From Spanish Silver to Congo Square*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2008. Accessed May 5, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.

³⁹ TURNER, RICHARD BRENT. "INTRODUCTION: Follow the Second Line." In *Jazz Religion, the Second Line, and Black New Orleans, New Edition: After Hurricane Katrina*, 1-11. Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2017. Accessed May 17, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2005rqb.6.

substitutions—those that were rejected, and even invisibly, those that have succeeded. . . .

The pursuit of performance does not require historians to abandon the archive but it does encourage them to spend more time in the streets . . . reconstructing historic performances . . . [such as] second line parades in New Orleans . . . that have a continuous history since the eighteenth century in the celebrations of African- American social clubs and burial societies.”

- Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead*.

This participation produces a reconnection with a host of “social, familial, and spiritual” connections that had been abruptly detached as a result of the slave trade.⁴⁰ This focus performance and culture memory highlights New Orleans as the most significant American city of the dead. Here, in New Orleans, secondline has had continuous participation in sacred traditions in the secret societies such as those now distant Bambara tribes referred to in chapter 1. The bottomline is that Secondline allows Africanism to persist⁴¹.

Treme

The Faubourg Treme⁴² constituted antebellum New Orleans's largest and most important free-colored neighborhood. The number of free people of color in the city had jumped from an insignificant ninety-nine at the end of the French period to over thirteen hundred at the time of

⁴⁰ See source 38.

⁴¹ See Source 38.

⁴² Johnson, Jerah. "New Orleans's Congo Square: An Urban Setting for Early Afro-American Culture Formation." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 32, no. 2 (1991):

the Louisiana Purchase. And by the Civil War it had grown to nearly 19,000, far and away the largest concentration in the Deep South⁴³. The city's free people of color, remained overwhelmingly French-speaking, Catholic Creoles and of all different skin tones. Most made their livings as laborers, dock and construction workers, washerwomen, and servants; some as skilled masons,, carpenters, and metal workers: some as street vendors, caterers, nurses, midwives, seamstresses, hairdressers, barbers, and musicians; and a few as businessmen, money lenders, and planters.

In the Faubourg Treme most of the free-colored population not only lived but more importantly established the city's influential free-black schools, benevolent associations, social clubs, and literary and musical societies. Consequently, Congo Square's Sunday crowds came virtually entirely from the city's Creole community. Few came from the English-speaking black community, which lived well uptown from the square.⁴⁴

Congo Square

There, slaves recently from Africa were allowed to spend Sunday afternoons dancing and singing, and remembering their African heritage. The result is a glance at the music, dance, and other cultural traits of African slaves in that period as they attempted in vain to keep alive their African heritage.

⁴³See Source 41.

⁴⁴See Source 41.

Few of the white writers realized the cultural expression that was being exhibited at Congo Square, but it is obvious from many of the accounts that the slaves were engaged in important social activities beyond the obvious dancing and singing. For instance, a religion, Voodoo, was in common practice there, and even a crude economic system developed among those attending the activities. These and other factors place Congo Square at the focal point of a distinct subculture of New Orleans slave life, one that existed within the framework of the dominant white culture.

The situation in New Orleans was unique. Although subcultures of slaves certainly existed throughout the South (even among the smallest groups on plantations), only at Congo Square did slaves gather for social, cultural, economic and religious interaction in such large numbers and with such great intensity. New Orleans in the early nineteenth century was a wide open town, with a Spanish-French cultural influence that dictated an attitude toward slavery that was less stringent than the English way of slaveholding in that period. One of the prerogatives of New Orleans slaves was to attend the Sunday afternoon festivities at Congo Square, a parade ground outside the original city walls. Today the area is bounded by St. Ann, Rampart, and St Claude streets. The dances at Congo Square began sometime around the beginning of the nineteenth century and ended in 1862, with the height of the festivities occurring in t

Before Congo Square became the common meeting place for such dances, New Orleans slaves apparently congregated for dancing and singing in other parts of the city. As early as 1786, when New Orleans was a Spanish colony with a population of just over 3,000, dancing had

become widespread enough that the Spanish army outlawed the "nightly congregation," and the "dances of colored people" throughout the city

Second-line dancing at jazz funerals celebrates the spiritual interactions between the living and “ancestral realms of African derived humanity and represents an important rejuvenation”⁴⁵ of the entire black community in a dynamic rite of passage that exemplifies the connections between the performance traditions of Haiti and New Orleans and the global flow of historical memory from Congo Square⁴⁶.

The historical and religious continuities between New Orleanians and Haitians of African descent were most profoundly exemplified in the religion of Vodou in the nineteenth-century and the dances associated with its rituals. Furthermore, The spiritual philosophy and rituals of Vodou united African descended people of diverse backgrounds during the Haitian Revolution, and eventually Vodou became the primary religion of Haiti, a nation also deeply influenced by Roman Catholicism. In the early nineteenth century, Haitian émigrés also encountered a powerful synthesis of African religion and Catholicism in New Orleans.⁴⁷

Since the late 1750s, slaves and their descendents of Mandingo, Bambara, Fulbe, Wolof, Yoruba, and Fon origin, with some free people of color, and Native Americans met every

⁴⁵ Turner, Richard Brent. *Jazz Religion, the Second Line, and Black New Orleans: After Hurricane Katrina*. New edition. ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017.

⁴⁶ TURNER, RICHARD BRENT. "INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW EDITION." In *Jazz Religion, the Second Line, and Black New Orleans, New Edition: After Hurricane Katrina*, XIII-XXIV. Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2017. Accessed Feb 17, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2005rqb.4.

⁴⁷ Donaldson, Gary A. "A Window on Slave Culture: Dances at Congo Square in New Orleans, 1800-1862." *The Journal of Negro History* 69, no. 2 (1984): 63-72. Accessed March 15, 2020. doi:10.2307/2717598.

Sunday for communal dancing, music, and trading in La Place des Nègres, an open area behind the French Quarter on Rampart Street, which was later called Congo Square⁴⁸. Congo Square was the only urban site in the United States where the public performance of African music and dances related to Vodou happened on a weekly basis until the late 1860s⁴⁹. In this way Congo Square acts as the primary site of creolization, mixing interpretations between, African born, creoles, free people of color from St. Domingue and of Cuba. This history speaks to the cultural mix that is now New Orleans. Every moment of this history can be seen not only in the faces of the people who now inhabit New Orleans but in the rich culture that has strains of African, Native American and French element. It can be heard in the music, tasted in the food. My passion is the dance and how I can see the mix of cultures that contributed to the dances that we do today.

Additionally, secondlines can have any occasion including: weddings, baby showers, funerals, graduations, and birthdays. But, as I mentioned before, secondlines started as a jazz funeral, in which the family follows the body inside the hearse (inside a horse and carriage). It was accompanied by a brass band playing, slow and somber spirituals mourning the death. After the body is in the grave, the brass band plays uplifting music to celebrate the achievements in their life, and their return to Earth and ancestors.

⁴⁸ TURNER, RICHARD BRENT. "INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW EDITION." In *Jazz Religion, the Second Line, and Black New Orleans, New Edition: After Hurricane Katrina*, XIII-XXIV. Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2017. Accessed May 17, 2020.

⁴⁹ Sublette, Ned. *World That Made New Orleans : From Spanish Silver to Congo Square*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2008. Accessed May 5, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Chapter Three: New Orleans dance via Babydolls

New Orleans is the most Afro Caribbean city in the United States because of its African and Caribbean influences. Cultural preservation in New Orleans is rooted in tradition and oral history to maintain cultural heritage. As someone who considers themselves a culture bearer, I wish to study The New Orleans Baby Dolls in order to find to what extent does secondline allows agency in societal barriers. New Orleans Babydolls is a group of men and women carnival maskers in the Mardi Gras tradition.

This group is derived from African -American benevolent societies in New Orleans called Social Aid & Pleasure groups. The Babydolls costume as cabbage patch dolls with oversized hair bows, satin bonnets, satin dresses, ruffled bloomers, fishnets stockings, pacifiers, and umbrellas decorated with diaper pins, baby bottles, rattles, and lined with marabou and fringes. The babydolls were rebellious and domineering women in a male-dominated Mardi gras world filled with Mardi Gras Indians, skull & Bone men, jazz musicians, and other male only krewes. This rebellion through secondline grants them the ability to resist racial and gender roles of society.

The babydolls started as a small group of determined and independent-minded black women, who came together to rebel against the constraints of social segregation and gender discrimination in 1912. With the fight for freedom in their heart, groups of women and some men became the babydolls and would sing, dance and parade on Mardi gras day, while representing their independent free spirit. As a babydoll and culture barrier, it is vital to learn,

know, and write more about my culture, its origins, and influences. I want to look at to what extent does secondline lends agency to its participants, using the baby dolls as the lens of investigation.

Predicted Themes:

First, there is a literature review focused on New Orleans second line culture and the origins of Congo square. This category will recount the spirit of New Orleans society and culture, showing the African influence through the slave-trade migration.

Lastly, there is a literature review focused on Afro-Caribbean cultural influences on New Orleans drawing from Haitian Folkloric culture. This category will show the correspondence between both New Orleans culture alongside Haitian culture and the movement of African culture to both.

Next, there is a literature review focused on New Orleans Babydolls and Mardi Gras Masking. This category is invested in showing the ways in which African and Afro-Caribbean societies shape New Orleans cultural development of the Babydolls and other Mardi Gras maskers.

Conclusion

It is because of these strong connections, that it is possible to discuss and analyze the topic of Louisiana's cultural connection to the African Diaspora. Our dance is more than movement but a greater spiritual connector of sorts that allows us to rediscover our collective memory. Furthermore, the misuse of the Louisiana colony by the French crown mixed with France's wartime involvements resulted in a neglectful eye, in which improved the agency of the enslaved. This would further start a ripple effect most importantly, France's inability to supply a consistent population of Frenchmen to Louisiana led to a larger population of blacks compared to whites. This would eventually impact the financial stability of France and force them into giving Louisiana to Spain, in which once under Spanish rule would only bring more blacks from Haiti and Cuba alike. This where the collective culture of these groups and influences start to creolize and seep into each other, creating secondline and many of its associated institutions in New Orleans.

Bibliography

- Berry, Jason. "African Cultural Memory in New Orleans Music." *Black Music Research Journal* 8, no. 1 (1988): 3-12. doi:10.2307/779500.
- Carrico, Rachel. "On Thieves, Spiritless Bodies, and Creole Soul: Dancing through the Streets of New Orleans." *TDR (1988-)* 57, no. 1 (2013): 70-87. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23362795>.
- DANIEL, YVONNE. "Diaspora Dance: Courageous Performers." In *Caribbean and Atlantic Diaspora Dance: Igniting Citizenship*, 1-19. University of Illinois Press, 2011. Accessed January 16, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt1xcfh4.6.
- Dessens, Nathalie. *From Saint-Domingue to New Orleans: Migration and Influences*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007.
- Dessens-Hind, Nathalie. *Creole City: A Chronicle of Early American New Orleans*. Gainesville: University press of Florida, 2015.
- DEWULF, JEROEN. "From Moors to Indians: The Mardi Gras Indians and the Three Transformations of St. James." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 56, no. 1 (2015): 5-41. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24396493>.
- Dinerstein, Joel. "Second Lining Post-Katrina: Learning Community from the Prince of Wales Social Aid and Pleasure Club." *American Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (2009): 615-37. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27735010>.
- Donaldson, Gary A. "A Window on Slave Culture: Dances at Congo Square in New Orleans, 1800-1862." *The Journal of Negro History* 69, no. 2 (1984): 63-72. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2717598>.
- Evans, Freddi Williams, and Joseph Hanson Kwabena Nketia. *Congo Square: African Roots in New Orleans*. Lafayette (La.): University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2011.
- Everett, Donald E. "Free Persons of Color in Colonial Louisiana." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 7, no. 1 (1966): 21-50. Accessed May 2, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/4230881.
- Guenin-Lelle, Dianne. *The Story of French New Orleans : History of a Creole City*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2016. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Hall, Gwendolyn Midlo. *Africans In Colonial Louisiana: the Development of Afro-Creole Culture In the Eighteenth Century*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992. <https://hdl-handle-net.ezprox.bard.edu/2027/heb.00534>. EPUB.

Kastor, Peter J., Weil, François, Weil, Fran Ois, and Weil, Professor of History Francois, eds. *Empires of the Imagination : Transatlantic Histories of the Louisiana Purchase*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Munroe, Martin, and Walcott-Hackshaw, Elizabeth, eds. *Echoes of the Haitian Revolution, 1804-2004*. Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2009. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Ostendorf, Berndt, and Michael Smith. "Jazz Funerals and the Second Line: African American Celebration and Public Space in New Orleans." *European Contributions to American Studies* 44 (January 2000): 238–72. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=31h&AN=46882821&site=ehost-live>.

Regis, Helen A. "Second Lines, Minstrelsy, and the Contested Landscapes of New Orleans Afro-Creole Festivals." *Cultural Anthropology* 14, no. 4 (1999): 472-504. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/656542>.

Roach, Joseph. *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1996.

Smith, Michael P. "Behind the Lines: The Black Mardi Gras Indians and the New Orleans Second Line." *Black Music Research Journal* 14, no. 1 (1994): 43-73. <https://doi.org/10.2307/779458>.

Sublette, Ned. *The World That Made New Orleans: From Spanish Silver to Congo Square*. Chicago, Ill.: Lawrence Hill Books, 2009.

Turner, Richard Brent. *Jazz Religion, the Second Line, and Black New Orleans: After Hurricane Katrina*. New edition. ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017.

Turner, Richard Brent. "The Gede in New Orleans: Vodou Ritual in Big Chief Allison Tootie Montana's Jazz Funeral." *Journal of Haitian Studies* 12, no. 1 (2006): 96-115. Accessed May 1, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/41716764.

Vaz, Kim Marie. *The "Baby Dolls": Breaking the Race and Gender Barriers of the New Orleans Mardi Gras Tradition*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013.

Vaz, Kim Marie, and Karen Trahan Leathem. *Walking Raddy: The Baby Dolls of New Orleans*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2018.

