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### Fictional Histories: The Memory of Haiti in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Novel

In the United States, the abolition of slavery promised fulfillment of the principles of the American Revolution; however, in other Caribbean nations, like Cuba, abolitionism served to unite the nation and motivate independence from European empires. The modes of anti-slavery discourse used within these different historical contexts reflect the nature of national revolt through the representation of slave revolt. Prior to emancipation, the concept of slave revolt asserted itself only in the shadows in anti-slavery discourse, after emancipation, literary representations of slavery and abolition proliferated as did the narratives of slave insurrection. Aiding in the struggle for national independence and consolidation, these anti-slavery writings in the 20<sup>th</sup> century often removed their narratives to Haiti, the site of the only “successful” slave revolt, and a space where slave and colony became emancipated simultaneously. The haunting presence of Haiti allows 20<sup>th</sup> century novelists to experiment with historical representation through the temporal and generic dimensions of their narratives. Using the fictionalized accounts of the Haitian Revolution in Alejo Carpentier’s *The Kingdom of This World* and Madison Smartt Bell’s *All Souls’ Rising*, I will examine the ways these racial and national traditions of revolt are represented through new modes of historical discourse.

Writers addressing the New World plantation system gravitate to Haiti as a dispatching point from which the discourse of slave insurgency revolves. Haiti stands at the intersection of multiple emancipatory traditions; in addition to the revolutionary ideas coming from across the Atlantic after 1789, many Haitian slaves also served with French troops in the American revolt. The central contradiction that equality is claimed for all men, which clearly inspired generations of slaves in the U.S., was also transported to the Caribbean through these revolutionaries. Yet the idea of manhood, or personhood itself, as characterized by the racial hierarchy in Haiti refuses the simple binary structure of race in the U.S. Recognizing several levels of racial, cultural, and national affiliation within the population, the model of Haiti serves to illuminate the complex structure of race that still ruptures Carpentier’s Cuba. As the histories of these nations intersect within literature, they create a complex dialogue that challenges our definitions of identity, both racially and nationally.

Modes of historicity shift over the long course of anti-slavery discourse and the novels of Carpentier and Bell provide contemporary audiences with new ways of considering what stories have access to historical record. The principles of time are significant here, not only in how the past is organized, but because of the texts’ persistence in historicizing the present. These novels also experiment with multiple genres, legitimizing lo real maravilloso, sentimentality, and the pseudo-testimonial as 20<sup>th</sup> century modes of recapturing the history of slavery, but remain obsessed with retaining a level of facticity, from fictionalizing real historical figures to constructing a timeline that chronicles actual events. These manipulations of time and genre allow new possibilities for history writing, especially within the intersection of these asymmetrical yet mutually constitutive revolutionary traditions.