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The Devil's Marriage: Folk Horror and the *Merveilleux Louisianais*

Ryan Atticus Doherty

Department of Ancient & Modern Languages, Centenary College of Louisiana, Shreveport, LA 71104, USA; rdoherty@centenary.edu

Abstract: At the beginning of his Creole opus *The Grandissimes*, George Washington Cable refers to Louisiana as “A land hung in mourning, darkened by gigantic cypresses, submerged; a land of reptiles, silence, shadow, decay”. This anti-pastoral view of Louisiana as an ecosystem of horrific nature and the very human melancholy it breeds is one that has persisted in popular American culture to the present day. However, the literature of Louisiana itself is marked by its creativity in blending elements of folktales, fairy tales, and local color. This paper proposes to examine the transhuman, or the transcendence of the natural by means of supernatural transformation, in folk horror tales of Louisiana. As the locus where the fairy tale meets the burgeoning Southern Gothic, these tales revolve around a reworking of what Vladimir Propp refers to as transfiguration, the physical and metaphysical alteration of the human into something beyond the human. The focus of this paper will be on three recurring figures in Louisiana folk horror: yellow fever, voodoo, and the Devil. Drawing upon works including Alcée Fortier’s collection of Creole folktales *Louisiana Folktales* (1895), Dr. Alfred Mercier’s “1878”, and various newspaper tales of voodoo ceremonies from the ante- and post-bellum periods, this article brings together theorizations about the fairy tale from Vladimir Propp and Jack Zipes and historiological approaches to the Southern Gothic genre to demonstrate that Louisiana, in its multilingual literary traditions, serves as a nexus where both genres blend uncannily together to create tales that are both geographically specific and yet exist outside of the historical time of non-fantastic fiction. Each of these figures, yellow fever, voodoo, and the Devil, challenges the expectations of what limits the human. Thus, this paper seeks to examine what will be termed the “Louisiana gothic”, a particular blend of fairy-tale timelessness, local color, and the transfiguration of the human. Ultimately, the Louisiana gothic, as expressed in French, English, and Creole, tends toward a view of society in decay, mobilizing these elements of horror and of fairy tales to comment on a society that, after the revolution in Saint-Domingue, the Louisiana Purchase, and the Civil War, was seen as falling into inevitable decline. This commentary on societal decay, expressed through elements of folk horror, sets apart Louisiana gothic as a distinct subgenre that challenges conventions about the structures and functions of the fairy tale.

Keywords: Louisiana; voodoo; yellow fever; devil; horror; 19th century; French; Creole; fairy tales



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“Li couri dans so jardin, et dit fille la:—Resté avec mo moman. Quand djabe té bien parti, moman djabe dit fille la:—Ah, mo fille, to tombé mal marié. To marié djabe”.

—Alcée Fortier, “Mariaze Djabe (The Devil's Marriage)”, 1895¹



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Although the notion of unwittingly marrying the Devil can be found, in one form or another, in folklore around the world, the diversity of Louisiana’s history and culture—drawing upon French, English, African, Caribbean, and a host of immigrant populations’ traditions—represents a type of ‘devil’s marriage’, a *créolité* that is only now drawing much deserved attention from scholars. Creole folklorist Nathan Rabalais, in his recent book *Folklore Figures of French and Creole Louisiana*, draws attention to the ways in which Louisiana’s unique literary history, particularly in regard to its folklore, has been understudied and underrepresented: “Unfortunately, many American folklore scholars, unable or unwilling to confront the linguistic challenges posed by Louisiana’s French and Creole

language, have largely neglected the rich, creolized tapestry of Louisiana's oral tradition" (Rabalais 2021, p. 2). This neglect, however, extends beyond Louisiana's oral tale-telling tradition into its literature, one which has, due to historical circumstance, linguistic complexity, and critical neglect, suffered a similar fate. As Rabalais continues, "Or they have simply viewed Louisiana's folklore as a subcategory of 'southern' folklore, lumping South Louisiana in with other regions of the Deep South" (Rabalais 2021, p. 2). Thus, this article proposes to rectify, at least in part, these omissions by addressing the *merveilleux* as a literary phenomenon in Louisiana, both in oral tradition and in printed literature, by looking at three recurring horrific figures in tales: yellow fever and the specters it creates, voodoo and its various (mis)interpretations in literary recounting, and the Devil. In this sense, the *merveilleux* is understood in the sense which Jean de Palacio, in his analysis of the late 19th-century Decadent and Symbolist fairy tale entitled *Les Perversions du merveilleux*, gives it, a deliberate and conscious reaction of the 'unnatural' that defies positivist, empiricist, and ultimately, progressist philosophies of how the world functions. Particularly in the 19th century, a period when science and realism were in their ascendancy and, in an American context, Louisiana was the central locus of social and political upheavals, "L'importance du merveilleux et de ses élaborations au tournant du siècle est manifestement liée à un désir de réaction, à la fois contre l'hégémonie de la science et celle du réalisme" (de Palacio 1993, p. 17).² Thus, this article examines what may be termed the "Louisiana gothic", a particular blend of fairy-tale timelessness, local color, and the transfiguration of the human. Ultimately, the Louisiana gothic mobilizes elements of horror and of fairy tales to comment on a society that, after the revolution in Saint-Domingue, the Louisiana Purchase, and the Civil War, was seen as falling into inevitable decline. This commentary on societal decay, expressed through elements of folk horror, sets apart Louisiana gothic as a distinct subgenre that challenges conventions about the structures and functions of the fairy tale.

Outside of philosophical and scientific developments—Darwin, Taine, Claude Bernard, and Auguste Comte—Louisiana represents in many respects a metonymy for the making of contemporary America. Sold by French to America in 1803, the colony served as one of the most significant pushes in America's "manifest destiny" to reach its borders to the west coast. With New Orleans being the wealthiest city in the country on the eve of the Civil War, Louisiana's cultural and literary power have been eclipsed by the decade and a half of federal occupation and Radical Reconstruction of the state that occurred after the defeat of the Confederacy.³ This program of reassimilation, culminating in many ways with the banning of the teaching of French in the state in 1916, served to undermine its burgeoning francophone literary production, a loss from which the state continues to attempt to recover.

This problematic of the *merveilleux* as a means of escape from the realities of scientific positivism and political decay in Louisiana is intriguingly summarized by Henry Castellanos, a lawyer and writer who had served on the editorial board of the English staff of the *Courrier de la Louisiane*, the newspaper where what can be called the "dark Romanticism" period of Louisiana literature was founded in the late 1840s.⁴ Writing towards the end of his life in *New Orleans as It Was* (1895), he summarizes his chapter on voodoo with the pronouncement: "[W]ith the advances of our superior civilization it is to be hoped that the hour is not far distant when the last vestige of its degrading and dangerous influence will be forever wiped out of existence" (Castellanos 1895, p. 101). Drawing upon the language of positivist beliefs in social advancement, he writes about the practices of voodoo in order to position them as *outside* the order of a rational understanding of the world, to highlight the quality of the *merveilleux* that is inherent to the practice, and to denigrate what de Palacio analyses under the title of the "perversions du merveilleux", that is, "un autre merveilleux, un conte merveilleux pour adultes" (de Palacio 1993, p. 26).⁵ What de Palacio characterizes as the existential threat to fairy tales at the end of the 19th century, and the 'perversions' by which they seek their revenge, aptly applies to Louisiana's tale-telling tradition at this time, caught, as it was, between nostalgia for the antebellum era and Northern industrialization, the scientific progress of the city and a burgeoning recognition of rurality and the value of

folk-wisdom, and the postbellum fear of Louisiana's unique status as a francophone and creolophone former colony, as connected culturally with the Caribbean as it was with the continental United States. The disdain expressed by Castellanos, then, can be read in a new light, as a fear of the power of the folk and fairy tale to undermine a philosophy of progress, a fear that society has, by attempting to drag itself ever 'forward,' unwittingly married the Devil.

1. Enjeux de la Bizarrerie: A French and Southern Gothic

Because of its history, Louisiana holds a unique positionality; a former French colony sold to America, it draws not only on these literary traditions but also on Afro-Caribbean and Indigenous storytelling, and as a result, bore witness to a distinctive publication style. As Edward Laroque Tinker points out, "[L]ivres et brochures écrits en langue française étaient publiés à profusion; journaux, hebdomadaires et revues sortaient de terre comme des champignons, puis tombaient comme des mouches" (Tinker 1932, p. 5).⁶ In order to address this hybridity within Louisiana's literature, its complex relationship to language(s), and, most specifically, the ways in which it has historically employed horrific imagery, this paper will explore writing around three specific recurring figures: yellow fever, voodoo, and the Devil. These figures not only represent three common recurring themes in fairy and folk tales from Louisiana, but they also recall specific aspects of Louisiana's hybrid position. The specter of yellow fever grounds it as a tropical locus whose endemic diseases posed an existential threat for a population almost entirely derived from immigration, voodoo has become almost synonymous with occult religious practice in New Orleans, and finally the Devil, a stock figure both in the storytelling tradition of the South and its largely Protestant theology, connects Louisiana within a broader network of Southern folklore. As Jean de Palacio suggests, taking a serious and critical approach to folk and fairy tales opens up myriad possibilities for understanding how the marvelous is applied, particularly in places that have been left out of much of literary scholarship:

L'entrée des méthodes de l'exégèse renanienne dans le conte de fées est lourde de conséquence pour le merveilleux. L'application à un genre réputé léger, et de tradition orale, d'une critique textuelle jusque-là réservée aux textes de l'Antiquité sacrée ou profane, opère un double décalage. Traitant un texte ludique comme un texte sérieux, elle atteint à la fois l'un et l'autre. En remettant en question une tradition populaire que l'on croyait inébranlable depuis les *Contes de ma Mère l'Oye*, elle autorise toutes les variations, sur la lettre comme sur l'esprit. (de Palacio 1993, pp. 23–24)⁷

Likewise, in his seminal study *The Philosophy of Horror, or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, Noël Carroll provides a framework for inquiry into the field of horror, suggesting both that it is a temporally-bound genre, emerging in the 18th century, and that it is defined by the *intended* affect it seeks to arouse in its readership, questioning, "[W]hy, if horror is as it is described in the earlier chapters, anyone would subject themselves to it", and seeing in this affective response the titular "paradox of the heart" (Carroll 1990, p. 10). This understanding of horror, however, proves somewhat insufficient when placed in dialogue with the works of this corpus; given the mixed audience of Louisiana's folktales, the numerous languages in which they were written, and the span of time over which tales find new audiences, it becomes difficult to predict the expected affective response, and indeed, many of the tales under discussion in this corpus incorporate both didactic storytelling and humor, suggesting at the very least an emotionally mixed reader response.

Philip J. Nickel has suggested an expanded definition of horror that is based on philosophical skepticism, allowing the uncanny intrusion of the horrific into everyday life. He suggests, as a basis for this broader definition, the claim: "Consistent with what I can verify in my experience, it could be the case that everything that appears to me is the creation of an evil demon and that the world as I know it does not exist" (Nickel 2010, p. 17). This approach to horror, while still subjective, does allow for reading into works the particular fears of the people and societies that produced them. Seeing in the works

of this corpus a reflection of the existential fears of the people they represent provides one means of accessing how they functioned within the literary milieu of 19th-century Louisiana. Thomas Fahy, echoing the work of Noël Carroll in his work of the same name, *Philosophy of Horror*, suggests that repetition, as a fundamental part of horror, “creates a new space for elaborating on narrative and, in some cases, for finding the humor in it”, concluding that horror “is about play” (Fahy 2010, pp. 2, 3 respectively).⁸ By combining this approach to that of Nickel, one can see in these works both a means of expressing fear of existential threat and a way of coping with that fear through the creative act. Thus, Lewis P. Simpson has concluded that in the context of the Southern Gothic as a genre of the horrific: “But in detailing life in the South as a horror story all serious Southern writers have, like Flannery O’Connor, responded to the terror and pathos of the self’s difficult, maybe impossible, attempt to achieve a meaningful identity” (Simpson 1985, p. xiii).

Nathan Rabalais has explored the problematic nature of literary fairy tales as a genre in this context, lamenting that in scholarly investigations of Louisiana’s folklore, “less attention was paid to the fuller, more complex set repertoire that had developed in situ”, which involves folklore within “a more holistic perspective, exploring tales in addition to superstitions, proverbs, and vernacular medicine” (Rabalais 2021, p. 117). Rabalais cites Louisiana’s complex cultural and ethnic makeup, as well as its geography, as fundamental reasons why the folklore it produced defies more canonical, Eurocentric classification into taxonomic genres. Folklorist and ethnomusicologist Barry Jean Ancelet points to the tendency of scholars to see Louisiana as either a French or African literary outpost, rather than a source of original literature, and has suggested that early scholars from outside the state “found only what they were looking for” (Ancelet 1994, p. xxv). Thus, by attempting to follow the suggestions of Rabalais and Ancelet and not attempt to reinforce a preconceived notion of what folk horror might look like in Louisiana, I see it rather as responding to global and regional currents of literary production, including Romanticism, Decadence, and the folklore traditions of the American South, the Caribbean, and West Africa. Thus, rather than attempting to fit the complex and cosmopolitan literary heritage of Louisiana into pre-existing boxes, I propose a reading that takes into account the unique publishing traditions, folkways, and influences that caused Tinker, in his introduction to his encyclopedic work on the literature of Louisiana, to conclude: Tinker: “[L]a plupart de ces ouvrages sont bizarres” (Tinker 1932, p. 1).⁹

2. Le Fashionable D’outre-Tombe: Yellow Fever Ghosts

*Chaude terre du Sud, que tant de soleil dore,
Tombeau brodé de fleurs, pour que le Minotaure,
Le monstre, de la Mort horrible pourvoyeur,
Cesse de fatiguer les bras du fossoyeur,
On implore la glace et l’hiver et la bise. . .
La mort ! Ah ! c’est ailleurs un bravo de Venise,
Un spadassin de Dieu dans le monde embusqué,
Présent dans tous les lieux, invisible ou masqué,
Qui poignarde impassible, et qui, sans qu’on le paie,
Fait d’un homme un cadavre en ouvrant une plaie.*

“La Fièvre jaune”, Alexandre Barde, 1867¹⁰

In the summer of 1878, a yellow fever epidemic, perhaps originating from a more virulent strain of the disease found in Havana during the spring of that year, perhaps related to changes in sanitation procedures after the withdrawal of Union troops from New Orleans the previous year, or arising from an unknown cause, swept through the Lower Mississippi Valley, infecting 120,000 and killing over a sixth of these during the course of the summer (Carrigan 1963; Ellis 1992; White 2020; Willoughby 2017). Although this epidemic was the deadliest in decades, the presence of yellow fever itself, as Barde

indicates in the foregoing excerpt from his poem, is endemic to the tropic and subtropical South, the “tombeau brodé de fleurs”. The sudden upsurge in virulence of “yellow jack” must have, following the devastation of the Civil War and the corruption and privation of Radical Reconstruction, conveyed an invisible horror to the residents of Louisiana, as if nature itself were also in revolt. The precautions put in place by the New Orleans Board of Health, in addition to the funereal pall that settled on the city so famed for its joyous abandon, created an eeriness that was later evoked by authors as a horrific backdrop for events in the Crescent City.

In the francophone literature of 19th-century Louisiana, Alfred Mercier stands as one of its greatest luminaries, as well as its staunchest defenders.¹¹ His story “1878”, a fantastical and comedic retelling of that summer of yellow fever, approaches the subject from a narrative perspective. As de Palacio suggests, ambiguity between what constitutes the natural and supernatural functions as a hallmark of the late 19th-century Decadent fairy tale: “Mais le rapport de ce surnaturel à la nature est également ambigu. Il semblait, on l’a dit, incompatible avec le naturalisme et en réaction contre lui”, continuing that “On peut évidemment décider d’inverser les données du problème, et de voir le merveilleux à la place de la réalité, la réalité comme un merveilleux dégradé” (de Palacio 1993, p. 25).¹² From the first sentence, Mercier establishes the story within the ‘unreal’ world of the epidemic: “On était au plus fort de l’épidémie” (Mercier 2006, p. 119).¹³ This not only recalls the “Il était une fois” [Once upon a time] of the fairy tale, but it also makes use of an ambiguous subject pronoun. Mercier could be suggesting the impersonal “one”, a way of indicating kinship with the reader through the informal “we”, or indeed invoking a mysterious other if this is indeed a plural. The city becomes populated with the dead, such that death takes on the role of everyday life and subsequently has become banalized:

La ville était triste; on n’entendait parler que de malades, de mourants, de morts; on rencontrait plus de corbillards que de voitures de gens allant à leurs affaires ou à leurs plaisirs, et souvent dans les cabs et les carrosses qui passaient on voyait un cercueil d’enfant posé sur les genoux des parents. (Mercier 2006, p. 119)¹⁴

It is against this background that the unnamed protagonist, caught in a summer storm, takes refuge in the Opéra, shuttered due to the epidemic.¹⁵ Drenched and surrounded by the darkness of the abandoned theater, he falls asleep in the seat he frequented when the theater was open: “Le dormeur se retourna, et quelle ne fut pas sa surprise en voyant une foule énorme de squelettes, grands et petits, se précipitant dans la salle par toutes les entrées, et s’emparant des places” (Mercier 2006, p. 121).¹⁶ Among the skeletal crowd is one who sits next to the protagonist:

Il portait encore sa perruque; seulement de noire qu’elle était le jour des funérailles, elle était devenue rouge. C’était un vieux dilettante, gentilhomme accompli, admirateur passionné du beau sexe. Il avait conservé toutes ses dents; les trente-deux, bien comptées, montées sur *gutta percha* rose, ornaient ses maxillaires. Un gros diamant brillait à sa main gauche, retenu par un gonflement goutteux de la première phalange de l’annulaire. (Mercier 2006, p. 121)¹⁷

There is an uncanny mixture of the undead and the dandy in this figure. The decay of the flesh from the skeleton reveals what was already false in life: his wig, false teeth, and diamond ring, satirizing the ritual of high society appearing in its finery at the Opéra to be seen rather than to watch the spectacle. This satirical note, however, undermines the inherent uncanniness of the walking dead, rendering what should be horrific a means of laughing at reality.

Thus, when Mercier presents “le fashionable d’outre-tombe” [the fashionable gentleman from beyond the grave] in this manner, suggesting that, “[N]ous profitons de l’absence des vivants, pour jouer du théâtre. Nous avons trois représentations par semaine; les morts de chaque cimetière y assistent tour à tour”, he draws a parallel between the afterlife and life that is comedic in its similarity (Mercier 2006, p. 123).¹⁸ Pointing out the padding, falsity, and other deceptions that have been revealed in death, the protagonist’s deceased

interlocuter arrives, through satire, at a layer of uncanniness that is likewise deceptively concealed beneath the skeletal frame story. “Quand je vous dis que tout est rêve et apparence, ne suis-je pas dans le vrai ?” he queries, calling into question the relative reality of the protagonist’s ‘dream’ in the empty theater and the ‘life’ of which they had both been a part (Mercier 2006, p. 124).¹⁹ By suggesting that society itself is inherently hypocritical—“[O]n croit dissimuler ses propres infirmités morales ou physiques, en signalant celles d’autrui”—the dead man inverts not only reality and illusion, but life and death, suggesting that the afterlife is, after all, more alive than life: “[S]i les vivants savaient combien notre situation est enviable, chacun d’eux s’emparerait d’un pistolet, et, incontinent, se ferait sauter la cervelle” (Mercier 2006, pp. 126–27).²⁰ It is in this light, then, that Mercier has his interlocutor anthropomorphize the yellow fever epidemic as another fashionable lady, creating an equivalence between the society of the Opéra and the disease that takes their lives and making of yellow fever an uncannily incorporated figure:

Mais, *my dear*, la mort est une Héléna toujours sûre de vaincre. Elle s’est prise de belle passion pour votre métropole, cet été. Elle a revêtu un costume jaune qui lui sied à ravir. Elle ne se donne pas tant de peine que la belle danseuse chargée de séduire Robert; pour que quelqu’un soit à elle, il suffit qu’elle passe près de lui et le frôle du bout de sa robe. À peine vous a-t-elle effleuré, que l’on commence à prendre la couleur de son costume. (Mercier 2006, p. 131)²¹

The dividing line between death and life, a troubled dichotomy which is not resolved by the end of the tale, allows Mercier a final stroke of satire: “Quoi ! vous avez la prétention de croire que vous n’êtes pas mort, parce que vous respirez. Vous respirez, la belle affaire ! il y a tant de gens qui respirent, quoiqu’ils aient cessé depuis longtemps de compter parmi les vivants” (Mercier 2006, p. 131).²² The spectral figure of yellow fever, in this formulation, is actually no more spectral than the people of the city themselves: Mercier has transformed the mundane into the disturbing. Mercier, in other words, makes the denizens of the city themselves ghosts, and in a literature that is haunted by the specter of yellow fever, appearing as a prominent feature of Mollie E. Moore Davis’ *The Queen’s Garden* (1900) and *Under the Man-Fig* (1895), the end of Lafcadio Hearn’s novel *Chita* (1886), Baron von Reizenstein’s *Die Geheimnisse von New-Orleans* (1855), and numerous other works, Mercier’s tale brings the epidemic down to the level of another citizen of the city, making the endemic disease native to the Creole city and, in a sense, attributing more humanity to the disease than to the people she kills.

3. Lapé vini, Li Grand Zombi: Comedy, Color, and Social Critique

Zizi, Creole Zizi,
This, yo’sel’f in de coonjine
Lak a moccasin in de slime;
Kunjur de ole man wid yo’ eye
Fer de las’ endurin’ time!

Den cry an’ mo’n in de mawnin’,
In de midnight mo’an an cry,
Twel de debble has you, han’ an’ foot,
Den stretch yo’sel’f an’ die! —
Wanga! wanga!

Mollie E. Moore Davis
“Throwing the Wanga”
The Ouachita Telegraph, 27 July 1889 (Davis 1889)

By the end of the 19th century, voodoo was beginning to enter the broader American public imagination and become decoupled from religious practice. Henry Castellanos, a New Orleans judge and author, consecrated a chapter in his 1895 compendium *New*

Orleans as It Was: Episodes of Louisiana Life to "The Voudous", a chapter which opens with the statement:

Who has not heard, in connection with the local history of New Orleans, of that mysterious and religious sect of fanatics, imported from the jungles of Africa and implanted in our midst, so well known under the appellation of *Voudous*? (Castellanos 1895, p. 90)

With this, Castellanos offers a retrospective on a practice that had already been integrated into the mythology of the Crescent City for such a long time and to such an extent that he need not make any other preamble than to ask rhetorically who, indeed, had not heard of it. Indeed, in her analysis of this *fin-de-siècle* phenomenon, Violet Harrington Bryan points to (Lafcadio Hearn 1885) obituary for the infamous Marie Laveau, "The Last of the Voudous", as a watershed moment where voodoo became a subject of fascination for Northern publishers and a Northern readership (Bryan 1993, p. 106). Voodoo, with its multiple spellings (vaudou, voudou, vodou, voodoo, etc), reflects its fundamental, and indeed orthographical, uncanniness; it is both extremely foreign, and the variation in its spelling reflects this linguistic uneasiness, and fundamentally Caribbean, so familiar to the readers of the Louisiana newspapers that make references to it, be it in Louisiana or in Haiti, could be played for a laugh without the joke requiring any prerequisite information in order to be understood. The invocation of the concept, then, functions as a polyvalent signifier, attaching this linguistic uncanniness to whatever is coupled with it.²³

The uncanniness of the "joke" of voodoo does much, however, to undermine its humor and reveal the very real social anxieties behind the joke. Thus, I proceed chronologically, looking first at stories of voodoo in the antebellum period, secondly in the postbellum period, particularly under Radical Reconstruction, and thirdly, I will look at voodoo's treatment by authors of color at the time of the Civil War. The reasons for this approach are numerous: firstly, the concerns of the antebellum period, particularly with regard to socialization across the color line and the fear of insurrection, represent a set of priorities that differ from those brought with the massive societal shifts of the war and its aftermath. Secondly, Louisiana voodoo has been dominated in the course of the 20th century by a popularization that has spawned numerous books, films, and misrepresentations; by returning to its first appearances in print in the 19th century, a more nuanced understanding of how public perceptions of its practice have evolved can be gained. Lastly, perhaps even more than its cousin, Haitian voodoo, Louisiana voodoo has followed a complicated racial history, such that even the term itself has bifurcated, with anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston remarking in her 1935 study *Of Mules and Men* that she is studying "hoodoo, or voodoo, as pronounced by the whites" (Hurston 1990, p. 183). While the concept has not always followed the strict racial dichotomy Hurston describes, it is fundamentally intertwined with conceptions of race and has been seen as posing an existential threat to the social hierarchy of every era through which it has moved.

The works on voodoo that appeared in the Louisiana newspapers of the antebellum period established three particular characteristics that were to become hallmarks of this type of writing after the war. Firstly, the works almost always address the question of social mixing across the color line, making a particular point of remarking upon white members of voodoo congregations. Indeed, Bryan, in discussing this phenomenon before the war, quotes black folklorist Marcus Christian, who writes of the "morbid interest manifested in the voodoos" in the first half of the 19th century, going on to note, "Many newspaper descriptions of voodoo celebrations were also associated with Milneburg and with white underworld characters" (quoted in Bryan 1993, pp. 105–6). Secondly, the antebellum stories establish humor as an integral part of voodoo stories, a humor that seems to be in direct proportion to the horrific details provided in the narrative. Lastly, and perhaps most crucially for this paper addressing rewritings of fantastical literature, these stories deliberately maintain an ambiguity as to their veracity—it can rarely be determined with total accuracy whether or not the authors of these tales are recounting actual events, a blend of reality and fantasy, or whether these pieces are fiction. And this, I propose, is

precisely the point; these voodoo tales of the 19th century constitute a genre apart, one which heightens a sense of the uncanny by retaining this ambiguity and by juxtaposing elements of horror and humor in direct proximity.

For example, an article entitled “The Rites of Voudou” from *The Daily Crescent* on 31 July 1850 insists upon the racial striation of the assembly in question, focusing not just on the dichotomy of black and white with which the popular imagination imbued voodoo in the 20th century, but rather the complex and diverse racial profile of antebellum Louisiana:

The assemblage was composed of every grade of color, from the lightest tinge of the flat-nosed race to the brightest ebony that ever glowed in a cotton field. It is even said that a still whiter hue mingled with the daughters of Ham, but, if so, the fellow managed to save his bacon, with becoming alacrity. (Anonymous 1850, p. 1)

Beneath the humorous characterization of any white men present as having “saved their bacon”, there exists an undercurrent of anxiety around the ways in which voodoo as a religious practice subverts the complex racial hierarchies of society. As Bryan has noted, “[W]hites joined the cult in New Orleans almost from the beginning, and at the largest gatherings of voodoos on the St. John’s Eve celebrations there were always many whites who participated” (Bryan 1993, p. 106).²⁴ Nevertheless, the association within the article, and, it can be presumed, on the part of the readership, is that voodoo is fundamentally of African origin, and regardless of how syncretized it may have become in the New World, this heritage marks it as apart, a practice both eerily endemic to Louisiana and perpetually foreign: “Betsy Toledano, the chief priestess of the heathen temple, stoutly defended the ceremonies from any wrong construction; said that its signs and symbols were derived from the mother-land, and that the incantations were harmless” (Anonymous 1850, p. 1). While in this instance, if true at all, the suggestion by Mlle Toledano that voodoo was a benign religious practice serves as a protective factor, it does point to another existential fear called up by the notion of voodoo—that of the occult. While not an occult practice *sensu stricto*, the secrecy around voodoo practice, and the wide variety of practices that fall under its umbrella, is what ultimately gives voodoo so much of its power in the popular imaginary.

And this can lead to a fear of secret, magical practices operating under the surface of the modern, cosmopolitan city of New Orleans, or to, as we shall see throughout the course of the 19th century, uneasy laughter. As Hurston remarks about the visions of voodoo created for dramatic effect in the early 20th century, “That is why the ritualistic orgies of Broadway and popular fiction are so laughable. The profound silence of the initiated remains what it is. Hoodoo is not drum beating and dancing. There are no moon-worshippers among the Negroes in America” (Hurston 1990, p. 185).²⁵ In his essay on laughter, Baudelaire points to this unease in laughter, calling it the “satanic Idea” if ever there were one: “Le rire vient de l’idée de sa propre supériorité. Idée satanique s’il en fut jamais ! Orgueil et aberration !” (Baudelaire [1868] 1962, p. 367).²⁶ Baudelaire’s view of laughter is particularly prescient for these stories of voodoo, because they highlight the ways in which the society of 19th-century Louisiana grappled with the uncomfortable topics of racial relations, the supernatural, and its own reputation. During the antebellum period, voodoo, in spite of or because of the fears it mobilized as the threat of war loomed on the horizon, was a powerful tool for the “laughable”, a way to re-establish social order in the face of disorder.²⁷

Whereas sexual innuendo and politics have long been staples of satire, the voodoo stories of antebellum Louisiana also draw upon the macabre as a source of humor. Gallows humor, or *l’humour noir*, the French term for which captures both the uncanny and the racial elements of this type of writing in Louisiana, straddles the line of the uncanny that risks falling, on the one hand, into the ridiculous, and on the other, into the horrific. As André Breton puts it, “[L’humour noir] est par excellence l’ennemi mortel de la sentimentalité à l’air perpétuellement aux abois—la sentimentalité toujours sur fond bleu—et d’une certaine fantaisie à court terme” (Breton 1966, p. 16).²⁸ Diametrically opposed to the charming, the

picturesque, or the rosy-tinted, gallows humor destroys the illusion of a quiet, peaceful society by poking at its sorest spots.²⁹

This period also saw the rise of a new satirical form—the story told in Louisiana Creole, most often written by white authors for a white audience and lampooning the political situation by taking on the supposed perspective of Louisianians of color. One of the most explicit of these on the subject of voodoo is entitled “Michié *Ma Chik au Bec*” from 1867; signed “Pa Bambara”, it takes the form of the folktales associated with the recent slave society and draws on both the history of the slave trade in Africa and the revolution in Haiti to create a commentary on the current situation. The proposed speaker, Pa Bambara, muses on the word “Radical”, as in Radical Reconstruction, to suggest, by employing voodoo beliefs, an alternate etymology:

Ya pé palé Zadikal: nou zot ossite nou té gagnain kom ça dan Sin Doming et pi dan Guinain. Oulé mo di ous: Voudou cé Zaddik-kal—Gran Serpan dan Guinain ki sanzé la po tou lé moâ et ki santi pi et ki gonflai boucou,—yé pélé Zaddik-kal;—kal, ou ouâ, kom ma pé di ou, ça oulé di: pouli, ça ki santi pi, et Zaddik, ki choge kom Serpan, ki mâché en ho so vante, ki fouré dan trou kan li fé kler, ki gagnain pair di fé, et fé poutan ouâ di fé à tou mounne. Vré Voudou, so non cé Zaddik-kal.³⁰

Drawing on the imagery of “li Gran Serpan”, an actual incarnation of the supreme deity in Louisiana voodoo, Pa Bambara suggests that the “voodoo” of Federal Reconstruction is a stinking snake that, in a twist of irony, would not have merited much attention back in Africa. He even says explicitly: “Serpan Guinain pa samblai boucou cila yo péhi mélikin”.³¹ The machinations of the “Gran Serpan” are not only suspect to Pa Bambara, who has been by turns an African prince, a Haitian general, a slave, and now a freedman, but he flips the recent historical narrative on its head: “Tande com mo zonglé: si Rébail là yo te zamain bate, yé s’ré zamain gagnain la d’jière, et si yé té s’ré pa gagnain la d’jière, Linkorne té s’ré pa fé neg lib; ça fé mo di cé Rébail layo ki la koz nou zot yé lib. Vouzot zamé zonglé com ça?”³² Concluding this reiteration à rebours of the recent history of liberation from slavery, Pa Bambara summarizes his personal history and signs off, reiterating the relation to the personal folktale where personal and ancestral history are blended into what Jack Zipes calls the “timelessness of the tale”:

Moin cé neg Guinain. Dan Sin Doming yé té pélé moin Alcindor *LeBlanc* et dan péhi mo popa. . . na si tan lontan ké mo blié nette. Mé ça ké me pa blié sek ça fé kat foâ mo lib. Astère moin cé

Pa Bambara³³

Aside from the political implications of putting this critic of Reconstruction in the mouth of a former slave, Haitian soldier, and African prince, the invocation of voodoo draws a direct throughline among the loci in which he has lived. Intended or not, this article highlights the genealogy of Louisiana voodoo, tracing it as a shared cultural heritage with the Caribbean and Africa that, however unsettling that notion might be to the audience of this newspaper at the time, nevertheless points to the hybridity of culture and language at play.

The use of voodoo as a reference point for political criticism and satire was not limited to the white press. For example, in a Saturday edition from 1872 of *The Louisianian*, a newspaper whose tagline read: “Owned, edited and managed by colored men”, featured a story entitled “Pinchback on the Brain”.³⁴ Even here, humor plays a role, as, in the wake of the war, financial and societal upheaval affected all strata of the city’s literary scene. In this sense, one can read the humor in both the black and white press as a manifestation of Baudelaire’s analysis that: “Le comique ne peut être absolu que relativement à l’humanité déçue, et c’est ainsi que je l’entends” (Baudelaire [1868] 1962, p. 376).³⁵ One example of particular interest of this phenomenon occurs in the black paper *L’Union*, from August of 1862, shortly after Federal forces had captured the city of New Orleans.³⁶ Entitled “Tribulation des voudoux”, it details the potentially real, potentially fictitious police raid of a voodoo ceremony, employing both the tropes of racial mixing and sexual license:

[C]es nymphes blanches, brunes ou noires qui se trouvaient, à ce qu'il paraît, dans le costume assez commode du reste pour la saison de la mère Ève dans le paradis terrestre, moins la feuille de vigne, et qui, tout en se levant autour d'un vase rempli de substances ou d'ingrédients mystérieux, [se donnaient] à une sorte de danse macabre avec une ardeur, une prestesse et une vivacité de mouvements. (Anonyme 2019, p. 75)³⁷

Not only does the anonymous author employ a comedic poetic flourish for describing the women's nudity, he does not refrain from suggesting an element of horror in their actions by invoking the mysterious brew and the "danse macabre" of their ritual. However, he creates further ambiguity by suggesting that this ritual was "une invocation ardente de l'intervention puissante du grand Simbé en faveur de la Confédération qui, sans son aide, court grand risque d'arriver prochainement au terme de son existence" (Anonyme 2019, p. 75).³⁸ Remaining silent on the purported motives of these women, the author creates tension by subverting some expectations while reinforcing others. This tension, however, is mediated by a return to the comic:

[L]es braves polices se sont avancées sur le théâtre même des enchantements, en tenant toutefois, par précaution contre tant de charmes nus, leurs mains ou leurs mouchoirs devant leurs yeux et ont réussi à s'emparer de vingt de ces pauvres effarouchées parmi lesquelles se trouvent plusieurs femmes blanches—comme il faut, dit-on, ou plutôt peut-être comme il en faut. (Anonyme 2019, p. 76)³⁹

By impugning the character of the white women participating in this scene, the author levies a critique at the ruling class of the time, reiterating the collapse of the Confederate government under Union occupation. These women "comme il faut", or rather, "comme il en faut", are thus presented as Louisiana's ruling class resorting to the 'superstition' that was already present in their society but scorned until needed. The old guard of society, in an act of desperation, was making its own marriage with the devil.

4. The Devil Is Watching You

*You better be careful
'Bout what you do
I just wanna' mind
The devil is watching you.*

"The Devil is Watching You", Lightnin' Hopkins, 1962 (Hopkins 1962)

In May of 1879, New Orleans was graced by the presence of a prestigious visitor. According to Lafcadio Hearn's report "A Visit to New Orleans" on 10 May 1879 in the *The New Orleans Item*, the Devil himself came to the city to check on the progress of social decay in the city in the wake of Reconstruction. Hearn headed the *Item's* daily afternoon circulation from 1878 to 1881 (Hearn 1914, p. 9). He wrote short pieces called "fantastics", later posthumously bound in volumes as *Fantastics and Other Fancies* (Hearn 1914) and *Creole Sketches* (Hearn 1924), which bear witness not only to the early years of the bizarre writer that Hearn would become, but also testify to the innovative and uncanny nature of Louisiana's burgeoning literature in the 19th century.⁴⁰ Fortunately or unfortunately for readers of the *Item*, in Hearn's "A Visit to New Orleans" they were informed that the Devil was not pleased with how the social decay of the city had advanced:

[I]s this, indeed, the great City of Pleasure, the Sybaris of America, the fair capital which once seemed to slumber in enchanted sunlight, and to exhale a perfume of luxury even as the palaces of the old Cæsars? Her streets are surely gray with mould; and her glory is departed from her. And perhaps her good old sins have also departed with her glory; for riches are a snare, and gold is a temptation. (Hearn 1924, p. 39)

Where one might expect to find an American Babylon, one finds only a city in tatters, prey to corruption and segregation. Nevertheless, compared to the previous decade, things seemed

to be looking alarmingly good for the city. When he last visited during Reconstruction, which led him to leave the city, the Devil remarked “They have no need of me in the State of Louisiana”, and yet the New Orleans of 1879 offers too many sights of virtue for his liking (Hearn 1924, p. 40). Indeed, the Devil’s handkerchief, which he uses to avoid the potentially virtuous odor of poverty, “bear[s] a pattern border of green skeletons and red cupids intertwined upon a saffron ground”, reiterating the association between the color yellow and death, particularly as the previous year had seen the summer epidemic that inspired Mercier’s “1878” (Hearn 1924, p. 41). Although the Devil himself is disgusted with the air of virtue permeating the city in the wake of both Reconstruction and plague, his usual position in the folktales of Louisiana is less haughtily disdainful; rather, the Devil as a folklore figure is marked by his banality, his prosaic role in quotidian society, as well as by the relative ease with which his machinations are overcome. It is perhaps here that the fantastic literature of Louisiana is most explicitly able to reappropriate fairy tale tropes in order to challenge European genre conventions and expectations. It is the contention of this paper that Louisiana folktales subvert the Devil as a figure from the European fairy tale tradition and use him to create a means of both exploring the illicit desires that lie beneath human interactions, as well as to symbolically control the presence of evil in the world. In some respects, the Devil in Louisiana folklore—and perhaps in the South more broadly—is reduced to the level of a country denizen so that he can be manipulated, outwitted, and ultimately subsumed, all the while being used to entertain a flirtation with breaking social codes.

The timing of Hearn’s story is also indicative of a period of change for the Devil as a figure in American folklore, particularly the folklore of Louisiana. The Devil has a long history in folk and fairy tales, including the tales of the Grimm Brothers and, in the French tradition, Victor Hugo’s “Légende du beau Pécopin et de la belle Bauldour” and folktales collected by Achille Millien such as “La Belle Eulalie”. Maria Tatar has reiterated the Freudian connection between the Devil in these tales and the father-figure, suggesting that the Devil is a helpful surrogate for any type of villain while “incarnat[ing] forbidden desire” (Tatar 1987, p. 10). In another of her works, the second edition of *The Classic Fairy Tales*, Tatar includes one of the tales, “The Singing Bones”, that Alcée Fortier had collected in *Louisiana Folk-Tales in French Dialect and English Translation* (1895) (Tatar 2017, pp. 254–55). Characterizing the tale as a variant of the Grimms’ “The Juniper Tree” [Von dem Machandelboom], it is nevertheless also a direct reinterpretation of tale 28 from the definitive edition (1857) of *Kinder-un Hausmärchen*, “The Singing Bone” [Der singende Knochen]. However, Fortier’s version differs significantly from that of the Grimm brothers. Whereas the latter recounts the murder of a young man by his brother—recalling the original murder of Abel by Cain—Fortier’s version combines the titular suggestion of bones crying out for posthumous justice with the murder and cannibalism of children from “The Juniper Tree”. In the Grimms’ tale, the woman kills and cooks her stepson because she is, arguably, possessed by the Devil, “The devil seized hold of her so that she began to hate the little boy” (Tatar 2017, p. 246), but this figure becomes conspicuous by his absence in the Louisiana version of the tale. It is the wife who is evil and suffers the consequences for her moral failings: “They were very poor; the man was good, the woman was bad” (Tatar 2017, p. 254), suggesting a distancing between the evil practiced by people upon each other and the abstract concept symbolized by the devil.⁴¹

In America, the Devil has been recognized as a fundamental stock character since the inception of folklore studies as a field in the late 19th century. Louis Pendleton’s article “Notes on Negro Folk-Lore and Witchcraft in the South” (Pendleton 1890) and Arthur Huff Fauset’s “Negro Folk Tales from the South. (Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana)” (Fauset 1927) both highlight the central role played by the Devil in stories collected over the course of decades; even Fortier, who recorded the tale “Mariaze Djabe” in his *Louisiana Folk-Tales* (1895), also wrote of the importance of the figure of the Devil in “Bits of Louisiana Folk-Lore” (Fortier 1888a) and “Customs and Superstitions in Louisiana” (Fortier 1888b). Of note, however, is the predominance of black storytelling traditions for these early analyses

of the Devil. More recent scholars Rosan Augusta Jordan and Frank de Caro have noted that this trend highlights the tendency of white scholars in the post-Reconstruction era, a period of particularly virulent racial tension, to distance themselves from the subjects of their research by establishing “differential identity”:

The very act of ‘collecting folklore’ (indeed, their very literacy) set up the collectors as socially superior (a factor inherent in much folklore collecting, of course). But beyond that, the folk material itself could serve to reinforce identity by seeming to stress by its very nature the otherness of those who possessed it. The heavy dialect of the tales the members [of the American Folklore Society] published stressed that, as did the sense that the possessors of this lore, unlike its collectors, were superstitious—believing in ghosts and jack-o-lanterns and witches who shed their skin to become cats—or religious in any child-like way. (Jordan and de Caro 1996, p. 40)

The early 20th century saw a new effort at collecting the folktales of many parts of the American South, particularly through projects related to the Works Progress Administration. In Louisiana, the collection *Gumbo Ya-Ya* (1945) resulted from a large combined effort at collecting legends and folklore from, in particular, the Southern part of the state, although the resulting books from this effort have been criticized by Barry Jean Ancelet and others for being reductive.⁴² The Devil as a figure of folklore, rather than theology, features prominently in several of the stories, and, like in Lafcadio Hearn’s fantastic, he becomes a prosaic, if still horrific, player in the everyday lives of denizens of Acadiana. For example, in one story from that collection, a young woman who wanted a baby was picking flowers by the forest, a common locus of meeting between man and the supernatural in folk and fairy tales. The Devil appears to her:

[A]nd when she seen him her heart she turned like ice inside her, yes. ‘Cause that baby wasn’t no pink-and-white baby like before, no, but a thing what was all black and shiny and ugly. And that black thing began to grow and get bigger and bigger every minute. That womans got so scared she almost died, her! All she could think to do was to make the sign of the cross quick. And she done found herself the right thing, too, ‘cause the Devil he didn’t like that; when he seen that sign of the cross, he let loose a yell like somebody hit him and he run off into them woods and that Cajun lady don’t see him no more, never! (Saxon et al. 1945, p. 193)

While the making of the sign of the cross marks this story as distinct from much of the folklore of the largely Protestant South, the transmogrification of the Devil fits into a larger trend where the Devil is not only a shapeshifter, but appears in the most mundane of circumstances as a way of swaying people, through his very banality, to evil.⁴³ In this sense, the folklore of the Devil in the American South prefigures Hannah Arendt’s notion of the banality of evil by figuring evil incarnate not as a creature of horror and majesty, nor the Lucifer of Milton, but as walking amongst the mass of society.

In contrast, *Gumbo Ya-Ya* offers the story of an elegant mansion in New Orleans, the locus *par excellence* of cosmopolitan sophistication. Playing into the long-standing associations of New Orleans with sexual license, the tale suggests that: “The Devil was very fond of his girl friend, and very jealous. Nevertheless, while he was away six days of the week, attending to other duties, the coquette took another lover, a dashing young Creole of the city” (Saxon et al. 1945, p. 280). The image of the Devil’s mistress as a young coquette plays into a larger mythology around the loose morals of the city, and perhaps even offers a nod to the history of mixed-race extra-marital relationships in the city, what historian Kenneth Aslakson has called the “mythology of the quadroon” (Aslakson 2012, pp. 709–34). Broadly, then, the Devil serves as a figure that allows storytellers to explore illicit desires while maintaining—at least ostensibly—social mores around good and evil. The focus of this story, however, is not on the relationship between the Devil and his girlfriend, but on

the horror dénouement of her affair. After her Creole lover announces that he is leaving her because she is also in a relationship with the Devil, she murders him:

In a rage she rushed at her lover with a napkin, whipped it around his throat and strangled him to death. At that moment the Devil appeared, killed her and carried both the bodies to the roof, where he devoured them, all but the skins.

These he gave to the cats wandering on the housetop. (Saxon et al. 1945, p. 280)

This aspect of the story is remarkably graphic, particularly for this collection, but the abject horror of this scene not only aligns it with conventions of traditional fairy tale telling but also offers a contrast to the banality of the Devil's association with New Orleans society. After this double murder, a fantastic transmogrification occurs: "From that time on the Devil's head was fixed in the gable of that roof, bound there by the sticky flesh of the mortals he had eaten" (Saxon et al. 1945, p. 280). In spite of his intense power, the Devil finds himself bound to the physical building and transformed into stone by an infraction of a heretofore unknown rule: "You see, he had forgotten, in his jealous anger, that he must not work in the full of the moon, and was thus punished for his folly" (Saxon et al. 1945, p. 280). The Devil, bound by seemingly arbitrary rules to which the reader is not privy before the end of the tale, is ultimately defeated by his own mistake, rendering the presence of evil in this tale both horrific and incompetent—evil is rendered into a decorative feature, like the stone Devil on the gable of the mansion, to provide a *frisson* of fear but, ultimately, rendered relatively distant and harmless, fossilized in the city's folklore.

Similarly, the collection *Folk Tales from French Louisiana*, compiled three decades later by Corinne Saucier, presents several tales that show an equal fascination with the limits of the Devil's power in the material world. The tale "The Turkey Raiser" is, amongst these, perhaps the one that most explicitly follows the form of the European literary fairy tale. It begins with the formulation "once upon a time"—a tradition that is rarely part of the folk tales in either French, Creole, or English of the region—and features both helper characters and a young hero who goes on a hero's quest to escape the Devil. In a peculiar twist, a boy, who is searching for his godfather, is fooled by the Devil, who claims to be him. When the boy goes to live with the Devil and raise his livestock, the Devil introduces him to his house: "The devil opened the house and said: 'Since you are my godchild, I shall give you my keys. You may go into six rooms, but not into the seventh. If you open it, I shall know it and I will kill you'" (Saucier [1949] 1962, p. 33). In an echo of Perrault's fairy tale "La Barbe bleue", Bluebeard, the boy is forbidden one room in the house as a test of fidelity; unlike that tale, however, the rooms into which the boy is permitted contain body parts, suggesting not only a dismemberment of the original tale, but also displacing the horrific elements of Bluebeard. The tale also echoes the Grimms' "Des Teufels ruffiger Bruder" [The Devil's Sooty Brother] in that the Devil possesses an abode in the material world, rendering him less of a metaphorical figure and rather a part of the magical, if everyday, landscape. Whereas the horror of the dead wives came at the climax of the tale of Bluebeard, when the forbidden room is opened, the Devil in "The Turkey Raiser" makes no attempt to hide the horrific dismemberment inside his house. Rather, the seventh room contains a magic horse, who, together with the boy, effects an escape from the Devil. Much like the donors in European folktales who take the form of magical helper animals, the horse in "The Turkey Raiser" provides advice and magical powers that enable the boy to outwit the Devil. For example, in Perrault's "Chat botté", and perhaps most explicitly in Madame d'Aulnoy's "Belle-Belle, ou le Chevalier Fortuné", this intervention proves crucial to the hero or heroine by providing magical 'edge' to overcome his or her antagonists. In fact, a very direct parallel could be drawn between the magical horse in "The Turkey Raiser" and Camarade, the talking horse that aids the eponymous hero in d'Aulnoy's tale through his savvy and his magical interventions at crucial moments.⁴⁴ And as in the story of the Devil's mansion from *Gumbo Ya-Ya*, the Devil is defeated by an unarticulated limit on his power—in this case, the inability to cross running water (Saucier [1949] 1962, p. 34). Ultimately, the magic horse saves the boy, and, in a gesture reminiscent of the "liquidation" function of the traditional European fairy tale, the Devil's hold on the horse is broken: "The horse

appeared and neighed loudly. Suddenly, he turned into a man who had been enchanted by the devil" (Saucier [1949] 1962, p. 36). Through generosity, the boy unwittingly rescues the man who had been enchanted and turned into a horse, and with this moral, the tale suggests a similar theme to that of the Devil's mansion, i.e., that the Devil, limited by physical properties, can be defeated by a small boy, diminishing the power of evil to be effective in the physical world.

In keeping with the notion of the Devil as functioning as a minor member of South Louisianian society, the tale "The Man and His Son" from the same collection places him, once again, in direct opposition to a young boy:

The devil taught school about a mile from the home of this old man. The little boy attended this school. He was so bright that he could become anything he wanted. He had learned this art from the devil. The boy told his father that the devil wanted him because he realized how bright he was, even brighter than his teacher. (Saucier [1949] 1962, p. 39)

Once more figuring as a petty denizen of rural society, the Devil not only acts as a public servant, but he recognizes, before the action of the story begins, the superior ability of a young boy, doubly reducing his power. In a similar way to "The Turkey Raiser", the Devil of this story attempts the function of trickery as the first step towards reasserting his power over the boy, turning him into a horse. While this echoes the magical donor function seen in d'Aulnoy's "Belle-Belle", and is reminiscent of the horse in "The Turkey Raiser", this tale more broadly serves as a counterpoint to a Grimm fairy tale, "The Peasant and the Devil", in which a simple country farmer is able to outwit the Devil through his knowledge of farming practices. In Saucier's tale, however, the Devil is also a rural denizen, a schoolteacher who is not distinguishable from the other locals except by virtue of being the Devil. This creates a distinct dynamic in which it is not the wits of a peasant being pitted against those of the Devil, but rather the coming together of two characters of equal social standing, although one is imbued with magical powers. Because of this, the transformation of the boy into a horse functions merely as a prelude to the battle that is to ensue:

When the bridle was removed, the horse turned into a fish (patassa). He jumped into the river. The teacher turned into a larger fish (gar fish), and leaped after him. The little boy came out of the water and turned into a beautiful ring and dropped in front of a young lady, who was rocking in a rocking chair on the 'gallery'. The old devil turned into a hawk and kept going beyond the place where the ring was. Then he returned. (Saucier [1949] 1962, p. 40)

This ongoing contest of transmutation becomes almost comedic in its nonsensical sequencing of apparently unrelated objects and vignettes. This, however, serves almost as a distraction, leading the reader into searching for a throughline between these objects instead of seeing in them a material manifestation of the battle of wits between the Devil and the schoolboy. In the labyrinthine complexity of these transformations, the ending of the tale comes abruptly, undermining the power of the hero's victory while, at the same time, disrupting the world that frames the story at its outset: "It [the ring] turned into a grain of corn and the devil turned into a rooster, the little boy turned into a wild cat (pichou) and ate the devil. That is why there is no devil today" (Saucier [1949] 1962, p. 40). Because this final line creates a massive shift in the metaphysical order of the tale—shifting it from the presumably Christian backdrop of folktales about evil to one in which the Devil, the physical embodiment of evil, has ceased to exist—the tale is rendered disturbing in an uncanny sense.⁴⁵ The familiar milieu of the tale, especially within the context of Louisianian Devil tales, has been suddenly subverted to posit the cessation of the existence of the Devil, which, while presumably having massive philosophical implications, is left unaddressed.

Because the tale ends so abruptly, the disappearance of the Devil functions as being more frightening than his unexpected appearance; to a certain extent, characters are rarely surprised by the intrusion of the Devil into daily life in these tales, but his sudden exit, because it is so astounding and destabilizing, adds a layer of horror that would not oth-

erwise be part of this tale. In *The Uncanny*, Royle draws upon the narrative play between visibility and invisibility to destabilize narrative structure itself, finding in the pretense of objective omniscience a posture that is rife with uncanny gaps, and this, I would suggest, has particular application to our folktales of the Devil. Royle, for example, quotes Paul de Man saying “To make the invisible visible is uncanny”, and without casting this definition into doubt, I would suggest that, for our purposes it could be reversed: to make the visible invisible is uncanny (Royle 2003, p. 108). The Devil, who is accepted across these folktales as a mundane—in every sense—aspect of daily life, is more horrific by his absence than by his presence. Likewise, borrowing J. Hillis Miller’s concept of the “disappearance of God”—and Royle’s text is, deliberately, haunted by these spectral citations—he suggests that, from a narratological point of view, it “might be rephrased here as the disappearance of omniscience; ghostly, like any thinking of disappearance, it would perhaps be legible in this hyperbolic appropriation of the ‘omniscient’ (Royle 2003, p. 258). Thus, the death of the Devil in “The Man and His Son” echoes Nietzsche’s death of God, functioning less as a statement of theology than a provocative calling into question of omniscience, a calling into question that, for the fairy tale, undermines its very structure. In this sense, the disappearance of the Devil at the end of this tale brings into focus not only its own claims of knowledge—if it operates in a world where the Devil can be eradicated by a schoolboy, how can the tale be told with any sense of objectivity?—but it also calls into question the entire corpus of this study. To what extent is the sense of horror in any of these tales derived not from their content, but from the ways in which the risible or the invisible which they invoke leave uncanny gaps in our presumed knowledge?

5. The Devil’s Bride

After the Devil’s sudden demise at the end of “The Man and His Son”, let us return to Alcée Fortier’s Creole tale of the Devil’s marriage to see if, with his departure, he has become potentially a more marriageable prospect. While this might seem contradictory, let us suppose that the trend of Louisiana’s folk tales, which tends towards the comedic and the banalization of figures of fear, such as disease, the occult, and the Devil, is effecting a means of reducing the power these threats hold, by virtue of their mysteriousness, over society. Fortier’s tale offers a similar dénouement to “The Man and His Son”, whereby the Devil suddenly and unexpectedly—even violently—disappears from the tale and from the world:

Djabe oua magnière filla la té gagnin pou traverser, li dit; cocodrille la:—Traversé moin, cocodrille, traversé moin. Cocodrille dit:—Monté on mos dos, ma traversé toi. Rendi dans milié fléve li calé, li calé en bas dolo et li neyé djabe. (Fortier 1895, p. 72)⁴⁶

As previously argued, in Louisiana tales the Devil functions as a means of engaging with forbidden desires. Nevertheless, the Devil in “Mariaze Djabe” is summarily drowned, reestablishing the order of the world at the outset of the tale and dismissing this flirtation with forbidden desire that the text indulges. As with “The Man and His Son”, the Devil is not so formidable a foe as he is in Europe; whereas he may return to Hell enraged at the end of some of the Grimms’ tales, he is very much alive and retains his power. In Louisiana, however, the denizens of Acadiana seem to have comparatively little trouble disposing of the Devil for good. Perhaps one is to interpret this as a statement on the relative power of human evil versus supernatural evil. What is certain, however, is that the folk traditions of Louisiana provide a new means of both engaging with evil and restoring the social *status quo* in a way that transcends theological metaphysics. In the aftermath of the Devil’s uncanny disappearance in “Mariaze Djabe”, the tale offers an unusual glimpse into the girl’s fate. Far from her world being upended because of the metaphysical implications of the death of the Devil, the story, although resolved with a “happily ever after” for all parties, cleverly subverts function of the wedding in the European fairy tale tradition: “Fille la descende, li bo so choal et so moman, et resté avec so moman. Li té plis oulé marié encore, pasqué li té marié djabe” (Fortier 1895, p. 74).⁴⁷ The only effective change in this

post-tale life is that the girl no longer wishes to marry; while on the one hand this provides a nice complication on the traditional fairy tale ending of marriage, I would suggest that it also offers a broader reflection on the context of the stories of this corpus. When Fortier's book came out in 1895, both French and Louisiana Creole were in decline and would fall off precipitously after the state banned the teaching of French in 1916. The reluctance of the Devil's bride to remarry comes in the context of massive social upheaval changing the landscape for Louisiana's folklore.

In an article entitled "A Theory for American Folklore", Richard Dorson uses the example of the Devil to problematize scholarly approaches to American storytelling. "[N]o easy distinction", he suggests, "between verbal art and ethnography makes sense to the folklorist. Belief in the devil qualifies as a supernatural tradition, but the anthropologist would place this notion under Religion" (Dorson 1959, p. 199). The fact that Dorson uses the example of the Devil points to the complexity that has been demonstrated by the folktales of Louisiana; is the Devil an incarnation of some sort of forbidden desire, as Maria Tatar would suggest, or a stand-in for the homogenization of Louisiana into a standardized American culture? To some extent, the figure of the Devil suggests that both of these might be true. With the economic and social decline of the Civil War and Radical Reconstruction, increased emigration of non-French-speaking populations, and the balkanization of the state into ethnic and cultural pockets over the course of the 20th century, not to mention the pressures wrought by modern industrialization and a push towards a standardization of American cultural life throughout the past century, the reluctance of the Devil's bride can also be read as a skepticism towards change. Even though change may not be inherently destructive, its record for the Francophone and Creolophone populations of Louisiana has been decidedly negative, and in this respect, the tales of Fortier's collection, and indeed all the tales of this corpus, have taken on a new and chilling valence in the intervening years—to a certain extent, they are reflections of a thriving literary culture that has been all but annihilated since they appeared. There is, indeed, something ghostly about these folktales from Louisiana, not only because of the ghosts they describe, but because of the ghosts they evoke, cultural and societal ghosts that continue to haunt all efforts to exorcise them.

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Notes

- 1 "The Devil entered his garden, and said to his wife: 'Remain here with my mother'. As soon as he was gone the mother said to the young lady: 'Ah! My daughter, you have taken a bad husband; you have married the Devil'." Fortier's own translation, printed in the same volume. (Fortier 1895, pp. 70–71).
- 2 "The importance of the marvelous and its developments at the turn of the century is manifestly linked to a desire for a reaction against the hegemony of both science and realism". (Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the author's).
- 3 It is of note that, on the eve of the Civil War, not only was New Orleans a wealthier city than New York, but Louisiana was also home to some two thirds of America's millionaires. Furthermore, in spite of laws prohibiting the education of blacks, the free people of color of the city had the highest literacy rates and owned some 30% of the property. For further information see James Nagel's *Race and Culture in New Orleans Stories: Kate Chopin, Grace King, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, and George Washington Cable* (Nagel 2014, p. 13).
- 4 Although a periodizing literary history of Louisiana has yet to be written, with perhaps the exception of (Catherine Savage Brosman 2013) *Louisiana Creole Literature: A Historical Study*, this periodization is the author's. For more details about the "dark Romanticism" period in Louisiana, see the author's introduction to *Rodolphe de Branchelièvre* (Doherty 2023).
- 5 "Perversions of the marvelous"—"another marvelous, a marvelous tale for adults".
- 6 "[B]ooks and brochures written in the French language were published profusely; newspapers, weeklies, and reviews appeared out of the earth like mushrooms and fell like flies".
- 7 "The entrance of the methods of Renanian exegesis into the fairy is weighty with consequence for the marvelous. The application of a textual criticism previously reserved for texts of sacred or profane Antiquity to a supposedly lighthearted and traditionally oral genre creates a double shift. Treating a playful text like a serious text forces a reconsideration of both. By calling into question

a popular tradition that was thought to be unshakable ever since *Mother Goose*, it authorizes variations, both on the letter and the spirit of this ‘law’”.

8 For further discussion of the role of repetition in horror, Carroll suggests that people “desire that the same stories be told again and again”, all while enjoying variations on a theme (Carroll 1990, p. 98).

9 “Most of its works are bizarre”.

10 “Hot earth of the South, that the sun gilds so,
Grave embroidered with flowers, for which the Minotaur,
The monster, horrible purveyor of Death,
Ceases to tired his gravedigger’s arms,
One implores ice, winter, and draughts. . .
Death, O, elsewhere it is a Venetian bravo,
One of God’s swordsmen hidden in the world,
Present in all places, invisible or masked,
Who stabs impassibly, and who, without being paid,
Changes a man into a corpse by opening a wound”.

Kress, Dana, Margaret E. Mahoney, & Rebecca Skelton. 2010. *Anthologie de poésie louisianaise du XIX^e siècle*. Shreveport, Éditions Tintamarre, 148 (Barde 2010).

11 Alfred Mercier (1816–1894) was one of the luminaries of the francophone Louisiana literary scene, particularly in the post-bellum period. He founded the *Athénée louisianais* in 1876, as well as its literary journal, *Les Comptes-Rendus de l’Athénée louisianais*. Author of several novels, short stories, poems, and plays, he ranks not only among the staunchest defenders of French in Louisiana, but also as one of its most innovative writers.

12 “But the relationship between this supernatural and nature is equally ambiguous. It seemed, as has been stated, incompatible with Naturalism and a reaction against it. One can obviously decide to reverse the basis of the question and to see the marvelous in reality’s place, to see reality as a degraded marvelous”.

13 “We were in the worst of the epidemic”.

14 “The city was saddened; one only heard talk of sickness, the dying, the dead. One met more hearses than carriages of people going to work or to play, and often in the cabs and the coaches that passed one saw a child’s coffin laying on the parent’s laps”.

15 Mercier makes liberal use of the pathetic fallacy to establish weather as integral both to the local color of the city and to the ominous and uncontrollable nature of the plague. See for instance (Mercier 2006, p. 120).

16 “The sleeper turned around, and what to his surprise should he see but an enormous crowd of skeletons, large and small, filing into the room by all its entrances and taking seats”.

17 “He was still wearing his wig, only it had become red instead of the black that it was on the day of his funeral. He was an old dilettante, an accomplished gentleman and a passionate admirer of the fair sex. He had kept all his teeth, all thirty-two, precisely, mounted in pink *gutta percha*, ornamented his jaws. A large diamond shone on his left hand, held in place by a gouty swelling of the first knuckle of his ring finger”.

18 “We take advantage of the absence of the living to put on a little theater. We have three shows each week; the dead from every cemetery attend in turns”.

19 “When I tell you that all is dream and appearance, am I not right?”

20 “If the living knew how enviable our situation is, they would all grab a pistol and blow their brains out without hesitation”.

21 “But, my dear, death is a Helena always certain of success. She has taken a passion for your metropolis this summer. She has donned her yellow gown, which suits her beautifully. She does not take as much trouble as the beautiful dancer charged with seducing Robert; for someone to belong to her, all she has to do is pass closely by him and brush him with her gown. After the slightest of contacts, one begins to take on the color of her dress”.

22 “What! Do you have the pretention to believe that you are not dead just because you are breathing? Yes, you are breathing, for what that is worth! There are plenty of people who breathe although they ceased a long time ago to count among the living”.

23 According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word voodoo in English comes from the French Caribbean, and provides the following etymology: “French *vaudou*, *†vaudoux* (1797 denoting a powerful supernatural being and a dance apparently of a religious nature; 1846 or earlier denoting the religion and its practitioners) < Fon *vodun* (non-Christian) god, deity”. Noting the variation in spellings for the word, it also offers the following entry for the variant “vodun”: “Originally: a religion practised in parts of the Caribbean (esp. Haiti) and the southern United States, combining elements of Roman Catholic ritual with traditional West African magical and religious rites, and characterized by belief in sorcery and spirit possession. Later also: the West African religion of which this Caribbean religion is a development”. Thus, appearing first in French in 1797, its trajectory through the literature of Louisiana in the 19th century is of particular importance for understanding the role the concept of voodoo has come to play in both francophone and anglophone popular culture. The word voodoo—or one of its equivalent spellings—began to enter common American English parlance later in the 19th century. For example, chapter IV of (Charles Dudley Warner 1889) *Studies in the South and West* (1889) is entitled “A Voodoo Dance” and details his observations of voodoo practices in New Orleans

a few years previous. In terms of popular American culture, the first book to bring voodoo to the popular imagination was William Seabrook's *The Magic Island* (Seabrook 1929), and Robert Tallant, co-editor of *Gumbo Ya-Ya*, wrote the book *Voodoo in New Orleans* (1946), which went far in establishing voodoo as a popular association with the Crescent City.

24 For example, see the section "A Strange Mixture of Races" in Michelle Y. Gordon's article "'Midnight Scenes and Orgies': Public Narratives of Voodoo in New Orleans and Nineteenth-Century Discourses of White Supremacy" (Gordon 2012).

25 Carolyn Morrow Long's article (Long 2002) "Perceptions of New Orleans Voodoo: Sin, Fraud, Entertainment, and Religion" takes the opposite view of Hurston, seeing in popular views of voodoo a tool of white domination, whereas Hurston finds it comical because of its ignorance and misunderstanding.

26 "Laughter comes from the idea of one's own superiority. A satantic idea if ever there were one! Pride and aberration".

27 For example, a parodic article about King Faustin I of Haiti, published in *Le Patriote* of Saturday morning, 3 January 1857, (Anonymous 1857) projects the fears of racial violence of the Southern U.S. by means of voodoo, suggesting that the king had difficulty governing because it is, "Besogne assez difficile pour un nègre redoutant les zombis portant des gris-gris, croyant au Vaudoux et ne sachant ni lire ni écrire" [A rather difficult task for a Negro who fears zombis and wears gris-gris, and who believes in Voodooos and knows neither how to read nor write]. Lampooning the perceived ignorance of the Haitian government thus shows itself a powerful tool to employ laughter as a way to dissimulate existential threat; what is intriguing, however, is that this laughter is attached to the italicized paraphernalia of voodoo practice. This 'joke' about Haiti only functions if the readership of the article finds these words risible—caricatured superstition, rather than supernatural threats. The word "zombi" first appeared in a book printed in the French Antilles in 1697 called *Le Zombi du Grand-Pérou, ou la Comtesse de Cocagne* by Pierre de Corneille Blessebois to refer to the idea of an invisible, malicious spirit (see for instance de Corneille Blessebois 1862, p. 17).

28 [Gallows humor] is the ideal mortal enemy of that sentimentality which perpetually has a beleaguered air—sentimentality always set against a blue background—and of a certain short-term fantasy".

29 Thus, in another article, "Blessed are the faithful", from 1860, the superstition of voodoo is turned, via a misunderstanding, to a scene that would either be horrific or repulsive, if it were not for the pun at the heart of the tale. It is reprinted here in full: Blessed are the faithful!—Speaking of faith in matters of superstition, we are enabled to offer an admirable instance. A man named F. M. Audet, who keeps some sort of a stand in the Soraparu Market, Fourth District, was arrested on Wednesday night for cooking in the market, in violation of the market ordinances. He was boiling something very carefully in a pot; and the mess, it was discovered, consisted of a lot of young puppies, which he was boiling in sweet oil! Being arrested, he succeeded in explaining that he had been to a Voudou doctor to get a prescription for the rheumatism, and that he had been directed to use a decoction of poppies well boiled in sweet oil. Having faith in anything prescribed by the oracles of Voudouism, no matter how monstrous or absurd, and mistaking the word "poppies" for "puppies", he ran around till he succeeded in finding and purchasing a fresh and tender litter of baby dogs, which he proceeded to boil in sweet oil, as directed, when the police interfered with him. What ought or ought not to be done with such a man? Ought he not to be compelled to eat the puppies he was cooking so carefully? (The *New Orleans Daily Crescent* of 26 October 1860, Anonymous 1860, p. 1). The grotesqueness of the scene is lightened by the misunderstood instructions from the voodoo doctor, both subverting modern expectations about the nature of voodoo and the contemporary reader's potential outrage. The conversational tone of the story—employing phrases such as "speaking of matters in..." and the rhetorical questions that bring it to an end—calls into question its verisimilitude as a newspaper article but firmly inscribe it in the tradition of folktales.

30 "They're calling [it] Radical. We also had something like that in Saint-Domingue and even in Africa. Let me tell you: Voodoo is Raddic-cal—the Great Snake in Africa, whose skins changes every month and who smells bad (worse) and who swells up—is called Raddic-cal. Cal, you see, as I have said, means "rotten, what smells bad", and "Raddic", something like a snake, which crawls on its belly, which buries itself in a hole when it's light out, who is afraid of fire and yet makes people see fire. The name of the true voodoo is Raddic-cal". I wish in particular to thank Dr. Dana Kress and Jonathan Mayers for their assistance in translating this particularly difficult passage. From the article/story "Michié Ma Chik au Bec" in *Le Meschacébé* on 13 July 1867, (Bambara 1867), p. 1. The following quotes are from the same 'anonymous' article.

31 "The African Snake doesn't look much like this one in America". Author's translation.

32 "Listen to what I've been thinking: if the Rebels hadn't gone to fight, there would never have been a war. And if the war hadn't happened, Lincoln wouldn't have freed the black man; thus, I say that the Rebels are the reason we're free. Have any of you ever thought of that?" Author's translation.

33 In his article "The Changing Function of the Fairy Tale", Jack Zipes suggests a utopic quality to the timelessness of the wonder tale: "The tale begins 'once upon a time ago' or 'once there was' and never really ends when it ends. The ending is actually the true beginning. The once upon a time is not a past designation but futuristic: the timelessness of the tale and lack of geographical specificity endow it with the utopian connotations—utopia in its original meaning designated no place, a place that no one had ever envisaged" (Zipes 1988, p. 10). "I am a man from Africa. In Saint-Domingue, I was called Alcindor LeBlanc, and in my father's country... but it's been so long that I've completely forgotten. But I haven't forgotten that this makes the fourth time that I've been free. Now, I'm Pa Bambara". Author's translation.

34 *The Louisianian*, 6 July 1872, (Anonymous 1872), p. 1. P. B. S. Pinchback (1837–1921) was the second African-American to act as lieutenant governor (1871–1873) and later governor (1872–1873) of Louisiana.

- 35 “The comedic can only be absolute in relation to fallen humanity, and it is thus that I understand it”.
- 36 For further information about the black newspapers of New Orleans, see Clint Bruce’s *Afro-Creole Poetry in French from Louisiana’s Radical Civil War-Era Newspapers* (Bruce 2020).
- 37 Reprinted in *Contes et récits de la Louisiane créole* (2019). “These white, brown, and black nymphs who were found, so it appears, to be in the rather fitting costume of Eve in garden, but without the fig leaf, and who, standing around a vase filled with mysterious ingredients or substances, gave themselves over to a type of *danse macabre* with an ardor, agility, and vivacity of movement”. This insistence on social miscegenation is a running current in the voodoo stories throughout the 19th century. See for example the following, from the *Daily Picayune* of 26 June 1870 (Anonymous 1870): “It is said that in these secret conclaves they have practiced the horrible rite of human sacrifice. Whether or not it is true, no one knows, but there is little doubt they indulge in incantations that would make the blood curdle with horror. In the meantime the dancing and merriment is kept up on the outside. Groups of yellow females are surging through a parti-colored dance with white and colored men, as illiterate and almost as superstitious as themselves”.
- 38 “an ardent invocation for the powerful intervention of the great Simbé in favor of the Confederacy, which, without his aid, was running a serious risk of soon reaching the end of its existence”.
- 39 “The brave policemen moved into the very theater of enchantments, holding all the while their hand or their handkerchiefs in front of their eyes as a precaution against so many naked charms, and they succeeded in getting ahold of twenty of these poor frightened women, amongst whom were found many white women—women who are as they should be, so it is said, or rather maybe as they should appear to be”.
- 40 Interestingly, this recalls how Tzvetan Todorov defines the fantastic in his *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*. While scholars disagree on the exact relationship between Todorov’s fantastic and other definitions of the marvelous, or even of the horrific, it is intriguing that Todorov’s concept mirrors the word chosen by Hearn for his type of writing.
- 41 The Devil appears as a prominent figure in many of the tales collected by the Grimms in both volumes of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*: tale 29, “The Devil with the Three Golden Hairs” [Der Teufel mit der drei goldenen Haaren], and in volume II: tale 100, “The Devil’s Sooty Brother” [Des Teufels rußiger Bruder]; tale 125, “The Devil and His Grandmother” [Der Teufel und seine Großmutter]; tale 148, “The Lord’s Animals and the Devil’s” [Des Herrn und des Teufels Getier]; and tale 189, “The Peasant and the Devil” [Der Bauer und der Teufel], this last of which involves a simple country man outwitting the Devil. For further analysis of the figure of the Devil in the Grimms’ tales, see Henry Carsch’s “The Role of the Devil in Grimm’s Tales: An Exploration of the Content and Functions of Popular Tales” (Carsch 1968) and Maria Tatar’s 1987 study *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*.
- 42 Ancelet has suggested that many of these 20th-century studies show a particular bias because they are focused on searching for “the vestiges of French tradition” rather than seeing Creole Louisiana’s folktales as a distinct tradition (Ancelet 1994, p. xxv). As he suggests, “While it is true that interesting parallels can be drawn between the Old World and Louisiana, it would be a mistake to neglect the other quite active aspects of the Cajun and Creole cultural blend” (Ancelet 1994, p. xxv). In a similar vein, Violet Harrington Bryan discusses the work of the Louisiana Federal Writers’ Project of the 1930s and 1940s, particularly the work of Robert Tallant, author of *Voodoo in New Orleans* (Tallant 1946), in contrast to that of Marcus Bruce Christian and Zora Neale Hurston, African-American writers who offer different perspectives to the largely white WPA staff (Bryan 1993, p. 9).
- 43 For more on this, see (O’Connor 1970) essay “The Catholic Novelist in the Protestant South”, collected in the volume *Mystery and Manners* (1969). See also Thomas F. Haddox’s *Fears and Fascinations: Representing Catholicism in the American South* (Haddox 2005).
- 44 See the story in *Contes de fées* by Madame (d’Aulnoy 2020).
- 45 For a more detailed analysis of the literature that portrays the death of the Devil, see chapter XI, “The Devil’s Death”, in Maximilian Josef Rudwin’s *The Devil in Legend and Literature* (Rudwin 1931).
- 46 “The Devil saw in what way the girl had crossed the river, so he said to the crocodile: ‘Cross me over, crocodile; cross me over’. The crocodile replied: ‘Climb on my back; I shall cross you over’. When he reached the middle of the river, he dived under the water, and the Devil was drowned” (Fortier 1895, p. 73).
- 47 “The girl soon reached her mother’s house. She got down from the horse and kissed him, then she kissed her mother. She remained at home after that, and did not wish to marry again, after having had the Devil for her husband” (Fortier 1895, p. 75). Fortier’s translation, although often quite exact, is rather loose here. The first two sentences of the translation do not particularly appear in the original for some reason.

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