

GAUGUIN'S FORGOTTEN VOYAGE
REPRESENTATIONS OF LABOR AND LEISURE IN MARTINIQUE

by

Remi Poindexter

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Honors Degree in Art History with Distinction

Spring 2013

© 2013 Remi Poindexter
All Rights Reserved

GAUGUIN'S FORGOTTEN VOYAGE
REPRESENTATIONS OF LABOR AND LEISURE IN MARTINIQUE

by

Remi Poindexter

Approved: _____
Margaret Werth, Ph.D.
Professor in charge of thesis on behalf of the Advisory Committee

Approved: _____
Monica Domínguez Torres, Ph.D.
Committee member from the Department of Art History

Approved: _____
Leslie Reidel, M.F.A.
Committee member from the Board of Senior Thesis Readers

Approved: _____
Michael Arnold, Ph.D.
Director, University Honors Program

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special thanks to Margaret Werth for being an incredible advisor and for continuously encouraging me and keeping me on track, Monica Domínguez Torres for always inspiring me and providing me with new avenues to explore, and Leslie Reidel for giving me great comments and advice. Finally, I would like to thank my family, friends, and all of those who helped to alleviate my stress along the way.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....	v
ABSTRACT	vii
FIGURES	40
Endnotes	58

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Paul Gauguin, <i>Manao Tupapao</i> (The Spectre Watches Her), 1892, oil on canvas, 72.4 × 92.4 cm (28.5 × 36.4 in), Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York.	40
Figure 2	Paul Gauguin, <i>D'où venons-nous? Que sommes-nous? Où allons-nous?</i> (Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?), 1897, oil on canvas, 139.1 × 374.6 cm (54.8 × 147.5 in), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.	41
Figure 3	Location of Martinique, < http://www.eoearth.org/files/120101_120200/120174/330px-LocationMartinique.png >.	41
Figure 4	Map of Martinique, < http://www.umsl.edu/services/govdocs/wofact2003/geos/mb.html >.	42
Figure 5	Saint-Pierre before the 1902 eruption.	42
Figure 6	Lafcadio Hearn, <i>Market-Place, St. Saint-Pierre</i> , 1887 Place Bertin before the 1902 Eruption.	43
Figure 7	Jean-Baptiste, <i>Case de la Martinique</i> (Hut in Martinique), 1935, photograph, 6 x 9 cm, Archives Départementales de la Martinique (Fort-de-France), < http://www.histoire-image.org/site/oeuvre/analyse.php?i=826&d=1&a=622 >.	44
	Although taken in the 1930s, this style of construction was a typical dwelling for Blacks in Martinique even at the time of Gauguin	44
Figure 8	Paul Gauguin, <i>Negresses Causant or Conversation (Tropiques)</i> Negresses Chatting or Tropical Conversation, 1887, oil on canvas, 0.61 x 0.76 cm, Private Collection.	45
Figure 9	Lafcadio Hearn, <i>'Ti Marie</i> , 1887.	46
Figure 10	François Millet, <i>Harvesters Resting</i> , 1853, oil on canvas, 67 x 119 cm, Private Collection.	47
Figure 11	Camille Pissarro, <i>Peasants Resting</i> , 1881, oil on canvas, 81 x 65 cm, The Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo OH.	48
Figure 12	Pissarro, <i>Conversation</i> , 1881, oil on canvas, 65.3 x 54 cm, National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo.	49
Figure 13	Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, <i>Cider</i> (Study for <i>Ave Picardia Nutrix</i>), 1864, oil on paper, laid down on canvas, 129.5 x 252.1 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.	50
Figure 14	Paul Gauguin, <i>Comings and Goings</i> , 1887, oil on canvas, 0.725 x 0.920 cm, Private Collection.	51
Figure 15	Paul Gauguin, <i>Fruit Pickers at Anse Turin</i> , 1887, oil on canvas, 0.61 x 0.46, Private Collection.	52
Figure 16	Charles Laval, <i>Femmes au bord de la mer, esquisse</i> (Women by the Seaside, sketch), 1887, oil on canvas, 65 x 91.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.	53

Figure 17	Paul Gauguin, <i>Fruit Picking or Mangoes</i> , 1887, oil on canvas, 0.89 x 1.16 cm, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.	54
Figure 18	Lafcadio Hearn, <i>Market-Place, St. Pierre</i> , 1887.	55
Figure 19	Camille Pissarro, <i>Apple Pickers</i> , 1886, oil on canvas, 128 x 128 cm, Ohara Museum of Art, Kurashiki, Japan.	56
Figure 20	Paul Gauguin, <i>River under Trees, Martinique</i> , 1887, oil on canvas, 0.90 x 1.16 m, Munich, Neue Pinakothek.....	57

ABSTRACT

Paul Gauguin is largely known for his work in Brittany and Tahiti, however, in 1887, the artist travelled to Latin America where he spent six months in the French Caribbean island of Martinique. While on the island, he created a large number of paintings, many of which depict manual labor. In these scenes, Gauguin presents labor and leisure not as separate entities, but as existing together as one. Gauguin's figures are fragmented and appear to be experiencing their own individual notions of time and appear to be carrying out labor and leisure simultaneously. This view is a stark contrast to the rational and synchronized concept of time found in industrialized Europe, in which set periods of work and rest dictated the modern workplace. Gauguin's paintings of rural labor in Martinique follow the tradition of landscape painting in nineteenth century France. Influenced by depictions of peasants by Pissarro and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Gauguin's paints rural life as a harmonious experience between work, rest, man, and nature.

On an early summer day in June, in the year 1887, Paul Gauguin stepped off a boat and onto the shores of the Caribbean island of Martinique. Far from his native Paris, the French artist spent six months observing and painting the island's landscape and its inhabitants. Although Gauguin did not enjoy celebrity in his own lifetime, the self-taught artist is known today for his bold use of vibrant colors, flat spaces, and outlined forms, which would later influence the work of artists such as Henri Matisse. Much of his artistic career is marked by his repeated desire to escape Paris in order to seek a more simple existence in the French countryside and later in the French islands of the Pacific. Gauguin's short stay in Martinique often lies in the shadow of his voyages to Tahiti, for which he is most well known. However, while on the island he created a large number of paintings, many of which depict rural labor and leisure being carried out in a lush, tropical landscape. Rather than creating a clear separation between moments of work and moments of rest, Gauguin's paintings present labor and leisure as being unified and simultaneous acts. Building on the traditions of previous landscape painters and working in a new environment, Gauguin offers a new vision of labor and takes the discourse on labor and leisure beyond European subjects. In his depictions, there is no indication of a rational, unified

sense of time, rather, the rural figures work and rest according to their own individual sense of temporality.

Gauguin was born in Paris in 1848, to a French father and a mother with Peruvian origins. Between 1850 and 1854, Gauguin and his mother resided in Lima following the death of his father. It was during this four-year period that Gauguin is said to have first encountered art, notably the Inca pottery collected by his mother and traditional costumes of the city. After the family's return to France, Gauguin began his studies, and some years later, in 1865, he enlisted as an officer's candidate in the merchant marines at the age of seventeen.¹ With the marines, aboard the ship *Luzitano*, Gauguin sailed to Rio de Janeiro several times before officially joining the military and travelling around the world aboard the *Jérôme-Napoléon*.² After nearly three years of military service, Gauguin returned to Paris, where he was hired as a stockbroker at the Paris Stock Exchange in 1873.³

Although he was a successful businessman, Gauguin soon found a passion for the visual arts. His free time was spent as an amateur painter, often painting alongside the impressionist artist Camille Pissarro. After a few years, Gauguin exhibited his work for the first time, and began studying sculpture, while retaining his job in finance. Gauguin progressively spent more time in the circles of artists and critics of his day, and associated with Edouard Manet, Edgar Degas,

Pierre-Auguste Renoir, among others.⁴ Gauguin also collected their works, purchasing paintings by Pissarro and other emerging artists.

In 1886, Gauguin, who had asserted himself as an artist, travelled to Brittany in western France, where he lived and painted for three months in the town of Pont-Aven.⁵ There, he met Charles Laval, another painter with whom he would travel to the Caribbean the following year. After several more trips to Brittany, during which he is credited for having pioneered the style known as Synthetism, Gauguin travelled to French Polynesia in 1891. During this, and subsequent trips, Gauguin created numerous works, which drew from European as well as native traditions. Among the most famous of his Tahitian works are *Spirit of the Dead Watching* (Figure 1) and *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where are We Going?* (Figure 2).

It is for his depictions of Brittany and Tahiti that Gauguin is most celebrated. However, in the shadow of these major locations lies the small, sunny, French Caribbean island of Martinique, where Gauguin lived between June and November of 1887. Intrigued by the island's landscape, people, and culture, Gauguin created a many works during his stay. Similar in style to his earlier work in the countryside of Brittany, Gauguin's Martinique paintings depict the Caribbean landscape inhabited by laborers. However, Gauguin is selective in his representations of labor on the island. He focuses his attention on artisanal

work, omitting hard and semi-industrialized forms of labor, such as that found on sugar plantations. Through his depictions of fruit pickers, washerwomen, and fishermen, Gauguin creates an idealized world in which labor and leisure are intertwined and harmonized and where natives casually converse, relax, and enjoy the natural beauty of their surroundings.

Anyone who has spent time in Martinique might be able to understand why Gauguin would have viewed the island as a paradise. The island, which today is one of four French overseas departments, is situated between Dominica and Saint Lucia in the Lesser Antilles, a group of islands stretching from the Virgin Islands to Trinidad (Figures 3 and 4). Sometimes called *Madinina*, *l'île aux fleurs*, or "the island of flowers," the island features lush and colorful vegetation and in the countryside the air is often filled with the sweet smell of ripe fruit. In rural areas where the night sky is still free of the tainting glow of streetlights, one's gaze can drown in a sea of stars accompanied by a symphony of chirping frogs and insects.

Like most islands in the region, Martinique is volcanic in origin. Despite its seemingly small size of 1,128 square kilometers, or 436 square miles, it is the largest island in the Lesser Antilles, and features several distinct geographies.⁶ The southern portion of the island is relatively low-lying, dry in climate, and easy to traverse, with many beautiful beaches. In contrast, the northern two thirds of

the island are considered to be much more savage, with lush rainforests, nurtured by the rich soil and wet climate, and a mountainous terrain, made up of both extinct and dormant volcanoes.⁷ The volcanic nature of the northern region is the source of its rocky beaches and very fine sand mixed with black ash. The most famous of the island's volcanoes is Mount Pelée, whose 1902 eruption resulted in the death of 30,000 people and the complete annihilation of the city of Saint-Pierre, where Gauguin had stayed only 15 years before. The city of Saint-Pierre lies low by the sea, while its surrounding countryside, which Gauguin would have experienced, is a hilly territory leading up to the Mount Pelée's emerald slopes. In this countryside, Gauguin perceived a world in which labor and leisure existed as a harmonious entity and in which the industrial sense of time was nonexistent. On the eastern coast, one can watch and listen as powerful Atlantic waves batter the sharp sides of cliffs or enjoy the wild beauty of a deserted beach. The shores of the western coast, which Gauguin could likely see from his residence, are gently rocked by the calm Caribbean sea.

Martinique's history is just as rich as its landscape. By the time Christopher Columbus first encountered the island in 1493, the island had already been inhabited by various peoples for what is believed to be at least 2000 years.⁸ Martinique's earliest prehistoric settlers are thought to have arrived from Northern South America and Trinidad, although they were replaced over time by

groups such as the Arawaks and later the Caribs, who were present at the time of the European arrival.⁹ On the fifteenth of September 1535, Pierre Belain d'Esnambuc landed in the Bay of Saint Pierre, founding the first European settlement and claiming the island for France.

In the early days of French settlement on the island, planters experimented with a variety of cash crops, such as indigo, coffee, and tobacco, in an attempt to make their fortune from the new land.¹⁰ In time, the introduction of sugar cane to Martinique transformed the economy, demographics, and culture of the island by way of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. By the early eighteenth century, sugar cane and slavery became the two most important commercial activities on the island.¹¹ In a short time, enslaved Africans and their creole-born descendants made up the majority of the island's population. Slavery eventually led to intermixing between ethnic groups, and to the birth of the Martinican Creole language, a variation of Antillean Creole essentially identical to that spoken in the rest of the French Caribbean and several English-speaking islands. The language, which borrows most of its vocabulary and grammar from French and African languages was once the primary form of communication between slaves and is now spoken in addition to French. As in most of Latin America and the Caribbean, the slave society also left in place a system of social classes, which carried over into the time of Gauguin and well into the early twentieth century.

Historically, the island had two major cities: Fort-de-France, the island's political and administrative capital, and Saint-Pierre, which was the cultural capital before the 1902 eruption. Located on the Caribbean Sea, the port of Saint-Pierre was an important commercial area for import and export (Figures 5 and 6). In the nineteenth century, the city was a major port of transit for ships travelling to Panama for the construction of the original Panama Canal. It was also on the outskirts of this bustling city, dubbed "the Paris of the Caribbean," that Gauguin and his friend Charles Laval spent their months in Martinique, living in a hut and spending their days painting.

When Paul Gauguin made the decision to leave France for the Americas, his life was at a low point. In the preceding two years, he had failed as a tarpaulin salesman in Denmark, separated from his wife, Mette, and his family, and returned to his native Paris, where he was living in difficult conditions and had no money.¹² "Since my arrival in Paris the life I lead is far from gay," he wrote in a letter to Mette in December of 1886, "I confess I can find nothing to write about. I have been subsiding, God knows how, upon the 350 frs. from the sale of my little Jongkind." Gauguin's work as an artist was not enough to sustain him. To make matters worse, in the cold winter he contracted an illness, which forced him to spend nearly a month in the hospital.¹³ "Can you imagine how I spent the long nights in hospital brooding over the solitude which is my environment," he

continued in the letter, “I accumulated there so much bitterness that really if you were to come just now . . . I doubt whether I could receive you except spitefully.”¹⁴ From the tone of the letter, one can imagine that Gauguin was frustrated with a number of aspects of his life, however, the opportunity to go to the Americas would offer him a chance to leave it all behind.

Several months later, in March of 1887, he wrote to Mette announcing his decision to embark on a voyage to America. Although he did yet not indicate where he would be staying or what he planned on doing upon his arrival, it is evident that this was a crucial journey for him. He wrote in his letter, “I cannot go on any longer living this tedious and enervating life, and I want to put it all to the test, in order to have a clear conscience.”¹⁵ What Gauguin had in mind was a journey towards a more “primitive” existence, in which he could live simply as an artist and eat the fruits of the land.

Martinique was not Gauguin’s intended destination, and it seems that his primary concern was to escape Paris, which he called “a desert for a poor man.”¹⁶ His original plan was to travel to a small island by the name of Taboga, off of the coast of Panama. Upon his arrival in Panama in April of 1887, however, Gauguin was greatly disappointed by the conditions he found there, and immediately regretted not having stayed in Martinique, where they had made a brief stop. The eternal presence of rain, heat, and mosquitos, matched with the enormity of the

canal project, proved to be a challenge for the Parisian. "With the cutting of the Isthmus life has become impossible even in the most deserted places..." he wrote to his friend, "This won't do at all, we must repair our errors, and I intend (by working on the Canal two months) to save a little money to take us to Martinique."¹⁷ In the end, Gauguin only ended up working on the construction of the canal for two weeks instead of two months, yet his willingness to do so suggests that he desperately wanted to leave Panama and return to his perceived paradise.

Gauguin and Laval arrived in Martinique slightly before mid-June of 1887 and quickly found a place to live in the proximity of Saint-Pierre.¹⁸ "We are at present lodging in a Negro hut, and it is a paradise, [compared to] the Isthmus," wrote Gauguin in a letter, "Below us is the sea fringed with coco trees, above are all sorts of fruit trees and we are 25 minutes from the town."¹⁹ This "negro hut", or *case a Nègres* in French, would have been a typical habitation for a native of the island. Often single-room dwellings made of wood (Figure 7), the hut would have been the ultimate escape from modern life in Europe and a perfect place to encounter and paint "the savage."

Many of the paintings Gauguin created in Martinique are currently held in private collections, while most others reside outside of the United States. This factor combined with the notoriety of his other works and the rather unknown

nature of Martinique outside of France and the Caribbean, has made Gauguin's months on the island a relatively neglected aspect of his career. In Martinique, the artist's short stay is far from forgotten and for many years, a small museum, the now-closed Musée Paul Gauguin, provided information on Gauguin's residence on the island as well as reproductions of his works. Even today, one can still travel to the mountains and beaches around the city of Saint-Pierre, which are depicted in his works.

Gauguin's not-so-famous voyage to the island had previously been credited for his iconic use of bright colors, which are an important aspect of his signature style.²⁰ However, as Karen Pope points out in her dissertation on the subject, the works share a common style with the works he created in Brittany both before and after his stay.²¹ When comparing the works, one can note many similarities in style, which support Pope's argument. Gauguin paints his pictures using shorter, more visible strokes than in his work in Tahiti.

It is Gauguin's figures, which captivated my attention. Having spent most of my childhood summers in Martinique with my grandparents, I was immediately intrigued by the artist's portrayal of the figures in traditional clothing, which I had often seen in old photographs. At first, the works produced in Martinique offer a direct view onto daily life and activities on the island in the late nineteenth century. However, upon examining and comparing the paintings,

a pattern becomes evident in Gauguin's depictions. Although the majority of the works are scenes of labor, there is a certain stillness and sense of rest in the paintings. Rather than presenting us with images of hard labor, such as workers cutting cane under the hot sun, Gauguin's figures depict a much more leisurely experience. Barely engaging in any laborious tasks whatsoever, they appear restful and relaxed as they work in the natural beauty of their surroundings. In his paintings of labor in Martinique, Gauguin breaks down the divisions between work and rest and creates a world in which individuals work according to an individual, rather than collective, sense of time.

In *Conversation (Tropiques)* (Tropical Conversation), also called *Negresses Causant* (Negresses Chatting), Gauguin gives us a glimpse of this idealized labor (Figure 8). In the colorful landscape are two women, who are located in the left side of the painting. As the title suggests, the women are involved in a conversation, an idea emphasized by Gauguin's rendition of their gestures. The woman in red is shown from the back and has her hand out, as if explaining something, while in her other hand she holds a basket of fruit. Her two hands conduct both labor and leisure simultaneously, and reduce the separation between the two acts. Her hair is tied with a bandana in a traditional Martinican manner and she wears no shoes. She leans slightly towards her companion, which gives them a sense of intimacy. The other woman is shown from the front,

with her head in profile. Gauguin captures the shadows of her collarbone and the orange and red tones that reflect onto her brown skin. Her loose white shirt hangs low to expose her bare shoulders in a way that eroticizes the figure. She carries a rectangular basket of fruit wrapped in a red bandana.

To the women's right, slightly farther behind, is what appears to be a younger boy, wearing cut off khaki pants, a white shirt, and a brown hat. He is depicted from the side and appears to be absorbed in a task involving the small goat to his right. Behind him is a squatting woman washing clothes in a large vessel, whose un-idealized pose recalls that of Pissarro's laborers (Figure 19).

The space in the painting is flattened, and Gauguin depicts receding space as vertically ascending, as in the Japanese prints from which many post-impressionist artists drew their inspiration. The figures in the picture are outlined, which gives them an additional flatness that is slightly countered by the shading of the folds in their clothes. There is also no horizon in the painting; instead the space in the painting recedes towards a body of water, which replaces the sky.

Gauguin's setting appears to belong to a paradisiacal world where labor and leisure are one and in which there is no concept of time. We see absolutely no signs of technology or human construction. Instead, the two women are partially hidden by the leaves of a flowering shrub, which create an awkward and jutting

sense of space. This strange compositional decision is typical of Gauguin and in this context, the layering of space emphasizes the idea that the figures are completely immersed in their beautiful natural world. By overlapping parts of figures with landscape elements, man and nature are truly intertwined. Gauguin's inclusion of the goat and the kitten to the lower right further this notion of harmony between man and nature. Just as the animals in the scene are oblivious to the constraints of work and time, the people are also in a state in which they appear free of worry and responsibility. The way Gauguin fragments and layers humans and animals also gives the painting a sense of immediacy, and contingency. In this way, Gauguin effectively communicates a sense of freedom from constraint and complexity, which speaks to the idea of Martinique as a more natural alternative to the metropolis he left behind.

Although Martinique has the natural beauty of a paradise, we know from sources that labor on the island was far from idyllic. Following the abolition of slavery in 1848, the nature of labor hardly changed, nor did the social division of said labor according to the system of "castes," which were largely based on ethnicity. In 1890, three years following Gauguin's voyage, Martinique's population was made up of 100,000 *Nègres*, or Blacks, who were far less ethnically mixed than their other counterparts.²² These members of society were often considered to be lazy and insolent, though they worked some of the hardest

jobs, making up the bulk of the laborers on sugarcane plantations and sugar mills.²³ An additional 50,000 people of mixed origin largely made up the middle class, while the island's 20,000 whites, both creole born *békés* and others born in metropolitan France, found themselves at the upper end of society.²⁴

The title of *Negresses Chatting* immediately speaks to its subject. Negros and Negresses were most often the ones who carried out the bulk of physical labor and carrying fruit was no exception. According to Gauguin, the scene was a typical one. In his first letter to his wife from Martinique, Gauguin writes, “negroes and negresses are milling around all day murmuring their creole songs and perpetually chattering,” which seems to suggest that the painting was done from the observation of the world around him.²⁵ However, Lafcadio Hearn, an American journalist travelling to Martinique for Harper's Magazine offers further insight on the fruit-carrying Negresses, which indicates that they were doing much more than “milling around.” During his two-year stay in Martinique, which overlapped with Gauguin's voyage, Hearn wrote *Two Years in the French West Indies* and recorded a number of folk tales, songs, as well as creating literary “sketches” of different Martinican types.

The first chapter of Hearn's book is dedicated to describing the women whose job was to carry loads, such as fruit, to various parts of the island. “Nearly all the transportation of light merchandise, as well as of meats, fruits, vegetables,

and food stuffs—to and from the interior—is effected upon human heads,” writes Hearn, “the creole *porteuse*, or female carrier, is certainly one of the most remarkable physical types in the world.”²⁶ Gauguin seems to have chosen to depict these *porteuses* in his painting. An illustration included in Hearn’s book (Figure 9) reinforces this notion. Like Gauguin’s women, the woman depicted has bare feet and her head is tied with a cloth in a typical manner. She has darker skin and would likely be classified as a Negress, another parallel with Gauguin’s work. The shape of the basket on her head as well as the style of her dress both suggest that Gauguin’s depictions were accurate. Interestingly, the caption for the image also indicates that the woman depicted was travelling to Basse-Pointe, the northernmost town on the island, from Saint Pierre, which is where Gauguin resided. Thus, the artist would very likely have encountered the carriers daily. The process of transporting goods in such a pre-industrial manner, especially by women, would very likely have appealed to Gauguin’s fascination for a savage and more primitive way of life.

What makes Hearn’s literary portrait of the *porteuses* even more pertinent is his explanation of their labor and way of life. He describes the process by which the women learned their trade, reporting that “those who believe that great physical endurance and physical energy cannot exist in the tropics do not know the creole carrier-girl.”²⁷ As he writes,

At a very early age—perhaps at five years—she learns to carry small articles upon her head,—a bowl of rice,—a *dobanne*, or red earthen decanter, full of water,—even an orange on a plate; and before long she is able to balance these perfectly without using her hands to steady them. (I have often seen children actually run with cans of water upon their heads, and never spill a drop.) At nine or ten she is able to carry thus a tolerably heavy basket, or a *trait* (a wooden tray with deep outward sloping sides) containing a weight of from twenty to thirty pounds; and is able to accompany her mother, sister, or cousin on long peddling journeys,—walking barefoot twelve and fifteen miles a day.

Hearn's description shows us that the carrier girls are literally trained from childhood to become human equivalents to beasts of burden. His mention of the increasing mass of the load carried by the girls as they grow older, paired with the increasing distances they must travel, point to a life revolving around arduous outdoor labor, as would be found in any rural zone in Europe or the United States. Interestingly, Hearn challenges a contemporary notion that life in the tropics involved very little physical hardship and endurance. Instead, he compares the work of the *porteuse* to that of a work animal, saying "the girl invariably outlasts the horse—though carrying an equal weight."²⁸

Long before Gauguin's idyllic depictions of work in Martinique, artists, scientists, and philosophers in nineteenth century Europe had pondered the question of labor. Following the industrial revolution, labor and society in Europe underwent significant changes. Industrial capitalism, the mechanization of labor, and the birth of mass produced goods replaced more traditional artisanal forms

of work. Working in factories alongside machines and engaging in repetitive tasks, it could be said that the human laborer was transformed into a machine itself.

Anson Rabinbach suggests in his book, *The Human Motor*, that the rise of factory labor was paired with the emergence of more sophisticated ways of keeping time as well as a severe disregard for idleness.²⁹ “Time sense and time-keeping developed in tandem,” he writes, “by the end of the eighteenth-century ‘there was a general diffusion of clocks and watches occurring at the exact moment when the industrial revolution demanded a greater synchronization of labor.’ ”³⁰

There were many people at the time who viewed maximum industrial productivity as man’s ideal goal, and consequently, idleness was “a sin against industry.”³¹ French political writer Paul Lafargue, who was in fact the nephew of Karl Marx, wrote “the priests, the economists and the moralists have cast a sacred halo over work.”³² The long, monotonous shifts worked by factory workers, and the sheer compartmentalization of nearly every facet of daily life led many to consider alternate ways of living. In such a context, the idealized image of labor of the countryside appealed to many who wanted to escape the changing realities of modern life.

In the visual arts, there was a strong European tradition of artists depicting peasant life and labor in the countryside, which originated long before the nineteenth century. However, in a rapidly industrializing world, works depicting scenes of rural labor offered nostalgic images of another way of life. The image of the peasant at rest was a commonly repeated subject, perhaps because it appealed to the notion of a more balanced life in which hard, manual work was rewarded with a moment of rest.

Jean-François Millet, who is best known for having painted *The Gleaners*, depicted such a scene in *Harvesters Resting* (Figure 10). Created from 1850 to 1853, the painting depicts a large group of peasants resting beside several large grain stacks. Millet shows us the men and women, who are neither grotesque nor idealized, eating, drinking, and lying down, their sickles lying on the ground, showing us that their labor has come to a pause. On the left, a man gestures the women beside him, who carries a bundle of grain, to sit down and abandon her work in order to rest. Her face appears exhausted, as her head is tilted downwards and her eyes are closed. Behind the group of lounging peasants, and occupying nearly two-thirds of the background, are the immense golden stacks of grain, which indicate that these men and women have been hard at work. In showing us the fruits of their labor, Millet suggests to the viewer that the moment of rest we see has been well earned through hours of work.

Gauguin's *Negresses Chatting* borrows the idea of depicting rural laborers at rest. However, while Millet seems to highlight the vast amount of work carried out by peasants prior to their rest, Gauguin omits any clear signs of hard labor. His inclusion of the baskets of fruit suggests that the fruits themselves had to be picked, but this is a minor task compared to the kilometers of walking up and down mountains, which we see in Hearn's descriptions. If it were not for the account of the American journalist, it would be difficult to imagine that the women conversing had been involved in any type of arduous task at all.

Camille Pissarro, who painted slightly later than Millet, also created depictions of peasants at rest. Unlike Millet's worn out rural workers, Pissarro's peasants of the 1880s appear to be caught in a moment of simultaneous labor and leisure, going against the realist tradition of viewing rural labor as a backbreaking process with rare moments of rest.³³ Richard Brettell points out in *Pissarro's People* that "rather than peasants, they [Pissarro's figures] are more accurately rural workers whose labor in the fields is balanced both by plentiful leisure time and their participation in the small-scale capitalist economy of the French agricultural markets."³⁴ The smaller-scale economy depicted in rural works would certainly have contrasted with the large, industrial capitalism of urban centers. As in rural France, the fruit economy in Martinique was also a small-scale, local economy in which Negresses transported fruits to the city,

where middle class merchants sold them. Another interesting element of Pissarro's peasants of the 1880s is his choice in depicting primarily female subjects. "Pissarro in fact preferred to represent the work of women to that of men," writes Brettell, "Pissarro seems to have been searching for a completely new kind of rural beauty, and he found it easier to embody these aesthetic yearnings in female figures." "It is also distinctly possible," he continues, "that the rural workers in and around Pissarro's homes in L'Hermitage near Pointoise *were* mostly women, because an increasing number of men were employed in the local industries."³⁵ The female subjects add a new dimension to Pissarro's work, and their relaxed depictions create a sense that the work they carry out is enjoyable and restful.

Pissarro's work almost certainly had an impact on that of Gauguin, as they frequently painted together during the summer of 1881. Pissarro's *Peasants Resting* and *Conversation* (Figures 11 and 12), painted in 1881 and 1882 respectively, show peasants chatting and resting in a manner similar to the work of Gauguin. *Conversation* depicts two women leaning against a wooden barrier surrounded by lush greenery. As in Gauguin's *Negresses Chatting*, the women are the main subject of the painting and are fully immersed in their conversation, and there is no indication of labor being carried out. Instead, what we witness is a scene in which both work and time are suspended in favor of leisure and human

interaction. Rather than being depicted as sheer workers, Pissarro's women are experiencing their own individuality and humanness. In her book *Pissarro, Neo-Impressionism, and the Spaces of the Avant-Garde*, Martha Ward writes of Pissarro's paintings of the 1880s: "Pissarro's peasants often appear to be in a state of reverie or repose."³⁶ The mostly-female figures "are neither actors performing on the land nor subjects performing against its background but seem instead to be surrounded, protected, and even preserved by their environments."³⁷ Ward's descriptions also describe the way Gauguin presents labor in Martinique. Like his former teacher, Gauguin uses predominately female figures immersed in their natural landscape in a state that unifies work and rest. The idea of eliminating the division between work and life resonate in the works of both Pissarro and Gauguin. A similar theme is shown in *Peasants Resting*, in which Pissarro shows us a group of worn out peasants sitting on the side of a trail. These women are also enjoying a moment of leisure during a day of hard work, as they sit beneath the trees. As in Gauguin's painting, there is a sense that their world is free of any aspects of modernity, and that their existence is one that is much more connected to the natural world.

What we do not see in Pissarro's work is the fragmentation of activity, space, and time that we find in *Negresses Chatting*. In Gauguin's painting, the figures seem to be split into different groups, each oblivious of the other. The two

women talking seem to be unaware of the presence of the boy with his goat and the woman washing clothes. Each appears to be immersed in an individual moment in time, and there is no sense of a shared notion of when work ends and leisure begins. Rather, each appears to be doing their task at their own pace, disregarding the concept of collective and synchronized work. In Pissarro's works, as in the work of Millet before him, the figures, who are all partaking in a collective inactivity, seem to share a common moment of leisure, and one has the sense that at a certain time, work would resume for everyone. In contrast, Gauguin's work suggests that there is no distinction between the time to work and the time to rest. Each figure seems to be living by a different concept of time and work and the figures appear to be partaking in work and rest simultaneously.

The fragmentation and suspension of temporality seen in Gauguin can be seen, if not traced back, to the work of Pierre Puvis de Chavannes. Co-founder of the *Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts* artist group, Puvis is known for his timeless scenes and many murals, which had an influence on many later artists. His 1864 work entitled *Cider* (Figure 13) depicts a pastoral scene in which people are making cider from apples. The work was created as an oil study for a large mural entitled *Ave Picardia Nutrix* (Hail to Picardy, the Nourishing Mother), which celebrates the fertility of Picardy's regional agriculture.³⁸ Located in Northern France, Picardy is known for its large production of apples and its fisheries.³⁹

Stylistically, the work is similar to Gauguin's in its flattened space and use of outline around figures. From the clothing (or lack thereof) we can see that the scene is taking place in a much simpler time, a golden age. In the center, a group of women are helping to load apples into an enormous barrel. To their left, a group of nude men power a mill or a press while in the far right, elderly figures and a nursing woman are seated, exempt from the labor. In the background, we can make out a field of livestock, and men partaking in various tasks.

As in *Negresses Chatting*, there is a sense that the individuals in *Cider* are simultaneously partaking in labor and leisure side by side. Puvis' painting is not an image of peasants working, rather it is a pastoral scene in which certain individuals are laboring while others rest. In looking at the work, one gets a sense that there are different groups of people engaged in very different paces in terms of work. Men push and tug furiously at the handles of the mill while a man more casually receives and empties baskets of apples into a barrel. A woman on the left of the barrel appears to struggle to carry a load of apples, while one of her counterparts to her left is taking a break before carrying her load. The idea of each person working at his or her own pace and the combined state of labor and leisure appears to be a complete rejection of the modern notion of rationalized time, associated with factories and industrialization. Unlike the modern

workplace, Puvis depicts an older world in which there are no set periods of work and rest, but rather where work and rest are intertwined.

While Puvis de Chavannes was depicting the timelessness of a golden age, Gauguin depicts labor in Martinique in such a way that it suggests that paradise and timelessness still exist in modern times. For Gauguin, Martinique was a way of escaping modernity and the world he depicted may very well have been a product of his pre-existing notions of life outside of “civilization.” Before his departure, Gauguin’s letters indicate that he could no longer bear the “tedious and enervating life” that he lived in Paris.⁴⁰ Escaping from modern reality, Gauguin wanted to depict an environment completely unlike that of contemporary Europe.

Like Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Gauguin sought to depict an alternative to urban modernity in his paintings. Believing that he had found such a world overseas, he created works that contain similar notions of timelessness and harmonious labor and leisure. Stylistically, Gauguin takes the ideas of Puvis’ paintings to a new level through his extreme flattening of space and through his overlapping of figures and foliage. The figures in his compositions are also much less unified than those in the works of both Puvis and Pissarro. The two artists create compositions with more cohesive subjects, especially Puvis de Chavannes, whose murals have clear ideals in mind. While the different figures in Puvis’ *Cider*

appear fragmented as they partake in different tasks, they are unified through the artist's use of muted color as well as their associations with the greater theme of cider making. Gauguin's figures in *Negresses Chatting*, however, appear to share no common task. Instead, the fragmented figures appear to be experiencing their own individual notions of space and time.

Gauguin's fragmentation is unique and may be partially due to strange duality of his position as a European artist trying to live like a native. Surrounding himself by locals and inhabiting their spaces, Gauguin wanted to depict an alternative experience. However, Gauguin is distant from what the natives are living because he is not involved in their difficult labor. This strange duality was also felt by Camille Pissarro, who looked at himself as a worker, similar to the peasants he was painting. In 1883, Pissarro wrote to his son "I have the temperament of a peasant, I am melancholy, harsh and savage in my works."⁴¹ Indeed, Pissarro saw his work as manual labor, as he took his easel and paints into the field to paint beside peasants. Gauguin's experience is similar Pissarro's, because he considered himself to be a "savage" despite his being from Paris. The artist's situation creates a paradox in which he has no clear sense of belonging to either side. Despite his living with natives in a native setting, his awareness of the differences between Paris and Martinique stem from the fact that he is coming from Europe in search of an alternate way of life.

In *Comings and Goings* (Figure 14), Gauguin furthers his depictions of Martinique as a world with a different sense of space and time. The work shows a colorful and lush hilly landscape, with a small dirt path and several figures. The sky is visible in the top left as well as through a large tree, whose branches take up nearly the entire upper right quarter of the canvas. Beneath the tree are two seated figures and a small group of goats. The one further to the left is squatting and is similar to the figure washing in *Negresses Chatting*. She has a similar, bulky body and her head is covered with a cloth yet there is no clear suggestion as to what she is doing. The other figure sitting next to the tree is a new figure but is equally ambiguous. We do not get a sense of facial features, activity, and it is not even obvious whether the figure is a man or a woman, though it is most likely a woman. To the right of the seated figures, slightly further back in space, are two women walking along the path carrying baskets on their heads. These figures recall the fruit pickers depicted in *Negresss Chatting* as well as many other works by Gauguin of the island.

Once again, Gauguin seems to dissolve the boundaries between labor and leisure as well as the constraints of time. Aside from the women carrying their loads up the path at what appears to be a leisurely pace, there is no clear representation of labor. The figures appear immersed in their landscape in a similar way to the peasants in Pissarro's inhabited landscapes. There is a certain

silence and stillness to the image, and time itself appears to be frozen or non-existent. This is emphasized in the relaxed posture of the figures. The standing figures effortlessly carry their cargo of fruit, which we know from contemporary observers was no simple task, and the sitting figures seem to echo the goats in their serenity. In a way, the animals emphasize the notion of a more natural state of life, in which mankind is not regulated by the artificial constraints of modernity. Like the goats, the people in the scene seem to only be concerned with their individual activities or inactivity. There is no direct interaction shown between the different figures, however, one gets the sense that an encounter is imminent. The figures walking up the path towards the foreground will inevitably pass before the seated figure at the foot of the tree. By bringing the dirt path into the foreground, Gauguin also places the viewer into the scene where he or she can encounter, observe, and experience a world in which there is a natural and harmonious balance of labor and leisure.

Again, Gauguin borrows from Pissarro's depictions of peasants, yet reinvents their common subject. While Pissarro's inhabited landscapes sought to depict the honest labor of the country peasant, as Millet did before him, Gauguin celebrates the notion of an escape from Europe to a land where life is simple and more relaxed. In a letter written to his wife from Panama before his stay in Martinique, he described his first impressions of the island during a brief stop as

a “superb country where there is something to do for an artist and where life is cheap and easy.”⁴² In a later letter, Gauguin repeats the lines “cheap and easy” in his descriptions, suggesting that these were crucial characteristics for him in finding a land in which to settle.

It is, perhaps, this attitude that is visible in Gauguin’s works. In looking at *Comings and Goings*, the viewer gets a sense of exactly what Gauguin is describing. The landscape in the painting appears serene and devoid of any sense of hardship. Nature’s abundance dominates the presence of man in the scene, a notion emphasized by the depiction of the roof, which is mostly obscured by thick foliage and leaves. To Gauguin, such a landscape would have been a complete shift from Paris and even Panama, whose terrain was greatly affected by the construction of the Panama Canal. After having spent two weeks of his stay in Panama working with a pickaxe for twelve hours a day, Martinique certainly offered a sense of rest for Gauguin.⁴³ In contrast, his job in Martinique entailed very little physical work at all. Perhaps in his serene and leisurely depictions, Gauguin is capturing his own feelings of rest rather than those of his Martinican counterparts, whose labor appears to have been far more intense in reality.

Another interesting work is *Fruit Pickers at Anse Turin* (Figure 15). This painting. The work depicts a seaside scene with a number of figures carrying their loads of fruit. The space in the painting is separated into flat areas in a way

that recalls the work of Pierre Puvis de Chavannes as well as Japanese prints. Gauguin paints the rich blue sea behind which we can clearly see the other end of the bay of Saint Pierre, with its city and landmark mountains rising high above. The sky is a warm and luminous peach tone, which is echoed in the ground at the bottom left. The overall composition is nearly broken in half by the jutting presence of a seaside tree in the foreground. On the right, two figures are seated and apparently conversing, with their baskets of fruit posed on the ground beside them. As seen in Gauguin's other works, the costumes worn by the figures match the descriptions of contemporaries.

The figures themselves are painted in the same manner as the background. They are outlined, flattened, and made up of the same warm colorful tones as the land, sky, and trees. This allows them to blend into their surroundings, which conveys the idea of the people of the land being completely immersed in their natural landscape. Pissarro's landscapes immersed figures in a similar way, screening them with landscape elements such as trees and foliage. Once again, we can see a close stylistic and thematic link between the works of Gauguin and Pissarro.

In terms of temporality and labor, there is less ambiguity in this work than in previous works discussed. The standing women all appear to be performing the same task of carrying fruit up and down the same path. This notion is

emphasized by their repeated forms, which decrease in size with perspective. We can get a sense that they are carrying out the duties of their labor, although the idyllic setting of the scene provides a sense of relaxation and paradise different from Europe. The two seated figures are much more clearly taking a break from their labor than those in other works. Their interaction, made clear by their body language and orientation towards one another, suggests that they are consciously putting their work aside in order to rest. We can again, make a comparison to Pissarro's *Peasants Resting*, especially through the manner in which the figures are seated on the ground directly facing one another. This work could be seen as a continuation of the tradition of painting resting workers in a rural setting.

Gauguin's friend and travel partner Laval painted *Femmes au bord de la mer, esquisse* (Women by the Seaside, sketch in 1887 (Figure 16), which is a depiction of what appears to be the same scene. The work, which appears to be unfinished, depicts the same landscape of the Bay of Saint-Pierre, which we can recognize from the mountains in the distance. Compared to Gauguin's depiction, the colors are much more muted and less intensely bright. The landscape is much more generalized and is made up of visible vertical strokes. The figures are much more prominent, and take up nearly half the space of the canvas. They are not awkwardly cropped by landscape elements and Laval distinguishes them from the background by varying the direction of the strokes that portray them.

On the left, two women carry loads of fruit on their covered heads. Laval's figures appear much more expressive and animated than Gauguin's. The woman on the left makes an expressive gesture with her right arm. Her fingers are extended and her forearm juts out at an awkward angle. The fabric of her dress is painted with longer, flowing strokes, which give a sense of movement. Her counterpart to the right walks by her side, and holds up her dress. In the bottom left corner is the cropped figure of a woman, who faces the viewer and who may be either seated or standing. We can get a clear sense of her expression, like those of the other women, which Laval has included. The inclusion of individual physiognomy makes the carriers the main subject of the work. It appears that Laval's main goal was to create portraits of individuals, rather than depicting an idyllic setting in the manner of Gauguin. In his painting, Gauguin draws attention away from the individual, giving us a view of the entire landscape in which work is carried out at a more leisurely pace.

One of the most celebrated works from Martinique by Paul Gauguin is *Mangues* or *Mangoes* (Figure 17). The work, in the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, depicts a rural scene in which figures engage in the picking of fruit. As in many of his other works, the space in the image is flattened, and distance is expressed through vertical positioning on the picture plane. We barely get a sense of the horizon line, which is almost at the top edge of the canvas. Beneath it

is the dark blue ocean, in front of which is a grassy plain with several trees. We can identify the shape of coconut palms in the far center as well as a papaya tree on the left.

The figures depicted are engaged in a variety of tasks related to fruit picking. In the back, we see a figure with her arm extended, picking fruit from a tree, while another figure is hunched over, picking fallen fruit from the ground. In the bottom left is a seated woman with a pail filled with mangoes by her side. Her head is covered in a traditional multi-colored fabric and her feet are bare, as was the custom for fruit pickers.⁴⁴ Her figure is bulky and un-idealized, as she appears to be either eating a fruit or wiping her face with a cloth. In the foreground is a large figure with a basket on her head. Her positioning makes her the most noticeable of the group, and she draws the viewer into the scene. Like the other fruit pickers, she holds the fabric of her dress with her right hand, perhaps to prevent it from dragging it on the ground. Her left hand is kept on her head behind the basket, which recalls the descriptions given by Hearn. "They had a graceful way of walking under their trays, with hands clasped behind their heads," he writes, "An artist would have been wild with delight for the chance to sketch some of them."⁴⁵ In this case, the lucky artist was Paul Gauguin, who created many sketches of fruit pickers and carriers. There is evidence that Gauguin based at least two of the figures in the painting on sketches he made

from life. During his stay in Martinique, Gauguin worked on a fruit plantation, where he supervised the picking of fruit. Because his job did not involve hard, physical labor, Gauguin would have had time to create sketches of those who worked on fruit plantations, picking fruit that would have been sold in the market at Saint Pierre (Figure 18). It could be said that the central figure, who overlooks the scene parallels Gauguin's own perspective, being both participant as well as an onlooker.

Several elements of the painting recall the work of Camille Pissarro in Normandy. In *La Cueillette des pommes* (Apple-Picking) (Figure 19), Pissarro depicts a group of peasant women gathering apples in their rural landscape. The large, square painting contains many elements in common with the work of Gauguin. In the center of the painting, a woman uses a stick to knock ripe fruit from the tree. Her figure is partially screened by a small shrub in the foreground, a feature that is repeated in the work of Gauguin, notably in *Tropical Conversation*. In the bottom left, also partially screened by the foliage is a seated woman. Seated on the ground, she leans on a basket of fruit and bites from an apple, which she holds in her left hand. Though in a different pose, she recalls the seated woman in Gauguin's *Mangoes*. Also seated and possibly eating fruit, Gauguin's figure appears to be fully immersed in her moment of rest, appearing almost oblivious to her surroundings. A third figure, the furthest from the viewer,

is bent in an un-idealized manner as she puts fruit from the ground into a basket. A similar figure is found in the background of Gauguin's *Mangoes*. Also placing fruits into a basket, Gauguin's figure is also not idealized as her figure is bent on the ground. The use of short, visible strokes is also an element shared by both Gauguin and Pissarro in their depictions of both figures and landscape elements. Both artists' figures are also immersed in their landscape, especially because they are literally harvesting the fruits of the land.

The work also recalls Puvis' works in the separation of spaces as well as the different tasks being simultaneously performed by different people. Although we get a sense that labor is being carried out, no two people are performing the same task, which conveys the sense of a more individualized and less modern sense of labor.

Gauguin's *River Under the Trees* (Figure 20) offers a slightly different view of the countryside in Martinique, focusing much more on landscape than figural elements. The painting depicts a lush landscape, made up of mostly green tones. The composition of the work is not clearly organized, and the painting has no clear foreground, middle ground, or background. Instead, Gauguin creates a flattened scene in which elements of the landscape overlap. A river, painted in blue-grays, as well as greens and earth tones cuts through the lower half of the painting and curves into the bottom left quadrant of the canvas. Gauguin creates

his image using repeated, directional strokes, which appear to be done with a small brush. Using more horizontal strokes in the water, vertical strokes in the grass, and diagonal strokes in the foliage, the style of the work is very similar to that of his previous work in France.

Interspersed between trees and foliage, one can make out the forms of figures and animals. In the center of the canvas, beside a tree and the river, is a small goat, painted in brown, black, and white. To its left, in front of a patch of dark green foliage, one can barely make out the form of a black cow. Black with a white patch on its head, the cow almost entirely blends into its setting, and is practically invisible at first glance.

On the left edge of the painting, partially in the river in the “foreground,” is a cow with its legs in the water. Behind it, one can make out two figures and possibly the entrance of a small hut. The figures closely resemble the other fruit carriers of Gauguin’s other paintings, yet are done in a much smaller scale. The larger figure, to the right, is seen from the back and wears a light purple dress, a red headscarf, and holds a large container on her head with her arm. To her left and in front of her stands another woman in a yellow ochre dress. Arms akimbo, she also appears to be balancing a flat basket on her head.

The hut before which the two women stand is partially screened on the left by a large tree trunk and above by foliage. Once again, Gauguin’s use of

screening conveys the sense of an observed reality in which man and nature exist in harmony. Towards the center of the canvas, Gauguin paints the red roof of another hut, possibly similar to the one in which he resided. The bottom of the hut is hidden by a grassy hill, again pointing out Gauguin's fondness for screening elements of his landscape, as also seen in Pissarro's *Apple-Pickers*.

River under Trees, Martinique shows an alternative side of Gauguin's work in Martinique. The painting differs from *Tropical Conversation*, *Mangoes*, and other more figural works. In the latter works, Gauguin immediately presents the viewer with rural figures, whereas in *River under Trees, Martinique*, the emphasis is much more on depicting the landscape, which predominates the composition. The painting shows that there was a great deal of variation in Gauguin's depictions of his new setting. However, the painting is very similar to the others in its search for an alternative way of life in the tropical countryside. Although it is not primarily a depiction of rural labor, the idea of Gauguin as an artist escaping modern Europe in favor of a mythical, harmonious, and more primitive lifestyle is nonetheless communicated in the work.

Although Gauguin was painting these works in a new context, he was following almost directly in the footsteps of previous landscape painters in Europe. It is difficult to ignore the influence of Camille Pissarro, who took Gauguin under his wing and introduced him to the world of painting. The idea of

inhabited landscapes, in which the human subject is often merged with his natural surroundings, is one that Gauguin carries into his own work. Gauguin also borrows from Puvis de Chavannes in his depictions of an alternate temporality, in which man works at his own pace, as opposed to the mechanized factory labor of modern Europe.

What makes Gauguin's work in Martinique unique, however, is his position as an artist who is seeking a primitive existence within modernity, far from metropolitan France. Before he even arrived in Martinique, Gauguin had an idea of what he expected to find, and his perception of his surroundings is greatly affected by these preconceived ideas. Another important factor to consider is Gauguin's position as a Parisian artist in a French Caribbean colony. As an independent artist, Gauguin was already rejecting traditional forms of labor in exchange for an alternative means of making a living. In moving to the Caribbean, Gauguin continued his rejection of traditional labor. Although he depicted people carrying out manual tasks, Gauguin's experience was far removed from their hard work. Observing rather than participating in hard labor allowed Gauguin to create the harmony between labor and leisure, which are depicted in his art.

Gauguin's paintings are a blend of his previous artistic repertoire and his perception of Martinique, which was a deliberate escape from Paris. Although it can be said that in Martinique Gauguin did not do anything new stylistically, his

paintings of the island are both unique and fascinating because they depict Caribbean labor in a new way. Much of what Gauguin illustrates, notably in his paintings of the *porteuses*, is historically accurate, and can be confirmed by contemporary sources such as Hearn. His depictions of the fruit-carrying women are similar in subject matter to the works of his contemporaries, however, his style and interpretation of their labor is completely different.

Gauguin in Martinique not only presents the viewer with scenes of labor, but also conveys a sense of the differences between Martinique and modern Europe. Gauguin takes the idea of escaping modernity from peasant painters working in Europe. Paintings of rural life by Millet and Pissarro, among others, fed a desire in Europe for images of a simpler life. The idea of manual labor being carried out in harmony with the cycles of nature and a more individual sense of labor and leisure were appealing in a time in which mechanized labor, industrial capitalism, and rationalized time created an unnatural way of life. Not only were men and women working jobs in which they carried out repeated tasks without ever seeing a final product, but life was divided rationally into set periods of labor and leisure.

In Martinique, Gauguin sought out a world in which labor was not as arduous and where life was simpler and less mechanized. Taking from Pissarro's images of a leisurely labor in the French countryside, Gauguin creates similar

works in a new context. In depicting the rural women who picked and transported fruit, Gauguin found a subject that he perceived as idyllic. Using a colorful palette and by intertwining figures with their landscape, Gauguin creates scenes in which the viewer is taken out of the mechanized rigidity and constraint of modern life. The world Gauguin depicts is a new and exotic pastoral scene, in which labor and leisure, man and nature are intertwined under Martinique's bright skies.

Appendix A

FIGURES



Figure 1 Paul Gauguin, *Manao Tupapao* (The Spectre Watches Her), 1892, oil on canvas, 72.4 × 92.4 cm (28.5 × 36.4 in), Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York.

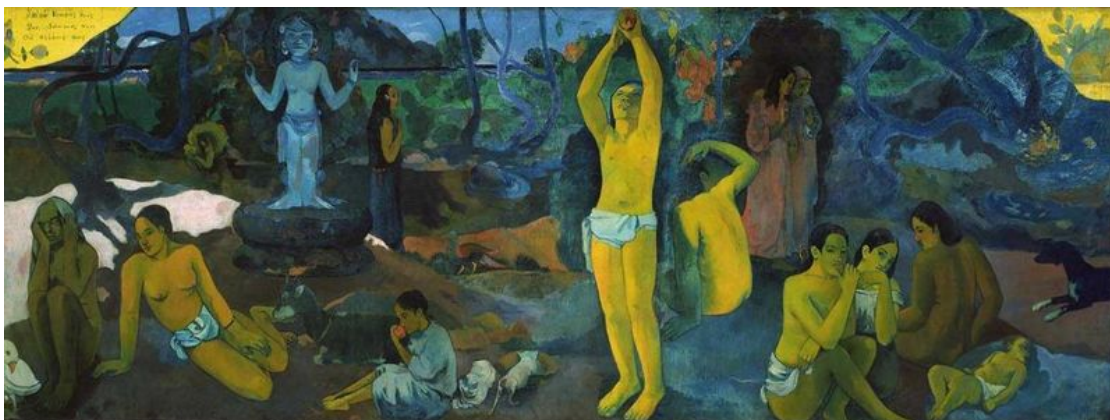


Figure 2 Paul Gauguin, *D'où venons-nous? Que sommes-nous? Où allons-nous?* (Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?), 1897, oil on canvas, 139.1 × 374.6 cm (54.8 × 147.5 in), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

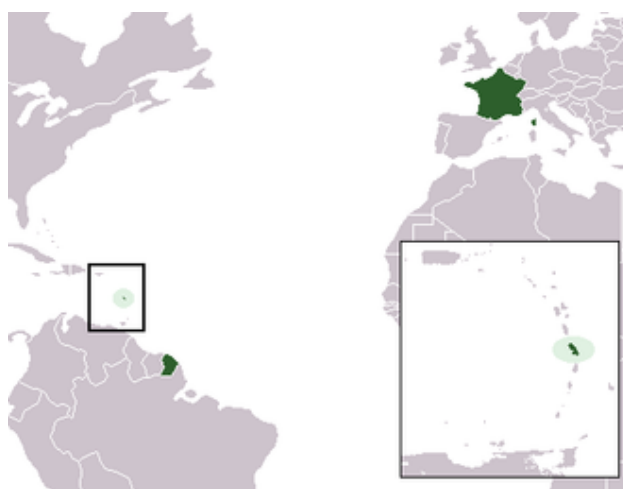


Figure 3 Location of Martinique, http://www.eoearth.org/files/120101_120200/120174/330px-LocationMartinique.png.



Figure 4 Map of Martinique,
<<http://www.umsl.edu/services/govdocs/wofact2003/geos/mb.html>>.



Figure 5 Saint-Pierre before the 1902 eruption.



Figure 6 Lafcadio Hearn, *Market-Place, St. Saint-Pierre*, 1887Place Bertin before the 1902 Eruption.



Figure 7 Jean-Baptiste, *Case de la Martinique* (Hut in Martinique), 1935, photograph, 6 x 9 cm, Archives Départementales de la Martinique (Fort-de-France), <<http://www.histoire-image.org/site/oeuvre/analyse.php?i=826&d=1&a=622>>.

Although taken in the 1930s, this style of construction was a typical dwelling for Blacks in Martinique even at the time of Gauguin



Figure 8 Paul Gauguin, *Negresses Causant* or *Conversation (Tropiques)*
Negresses Chatting or *Tropical Conversation*, 1887, oil on canvas, 0.61 x
0.76 cm, Private Collection.



'TI MARIE.

(On the Route from St. Pierre to Basse-Pointe.)

Figure 9 Lafcadio Hearn, *Ti Marie*, 1887.



Figure 10 François Millet, *Harvesters Resting*, 1853, oil on canvas, 67 x 119 cm, Private Collection.



Figure 11 Camille Pissarro, *Peasants Resting*, 1881, oil on canvas, 81 x 65 cm, The Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo OH.

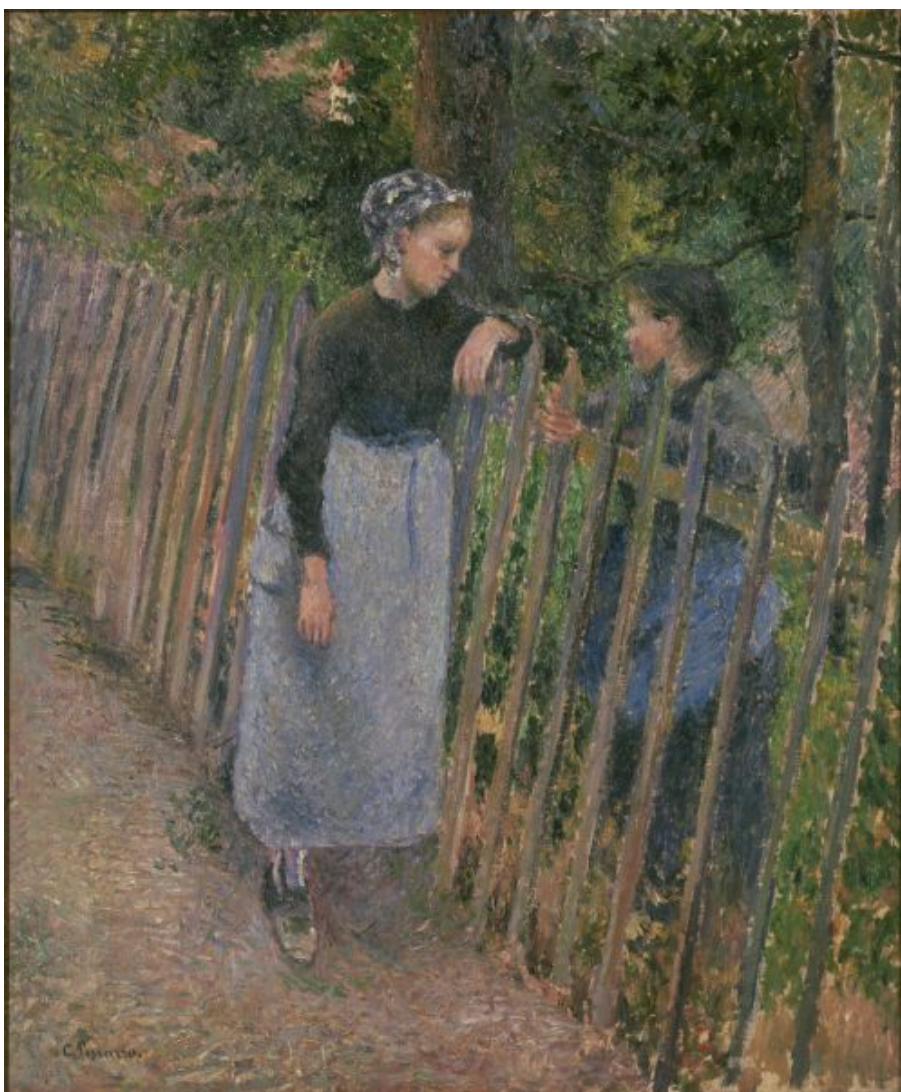


Figure 12 Pissarro, *Conversation*, 1881, oil on canvas, 65.3 x 54 cm, National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo.

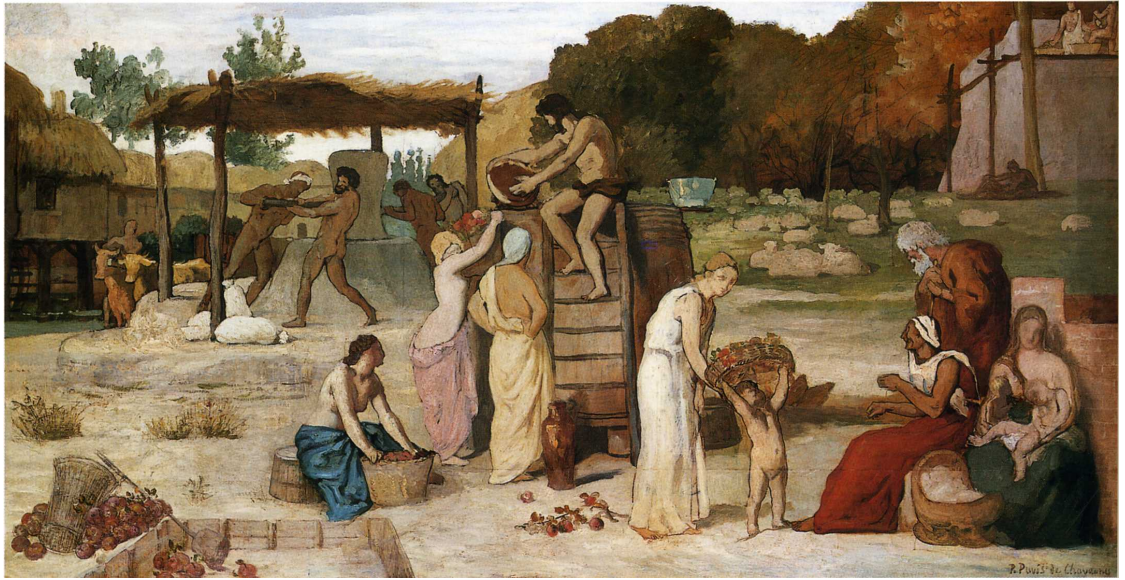


Figure 13 Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, *Cider* (Study for *Ave Picardia Nutrix*), 1864, oil on paper, laid down on canvas, 129.5 x 252.1 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 14 Paul Gauguin, *Comings and Goings*, 1887, oil on canvas, 0.725 x 0.920 cm, Private Collection.



Figure 15 Paul Gauguin, *Fruit Pickers at Anse Turin*, 1887, oil on canvas, 0.61 x 0.46, Private Collection.

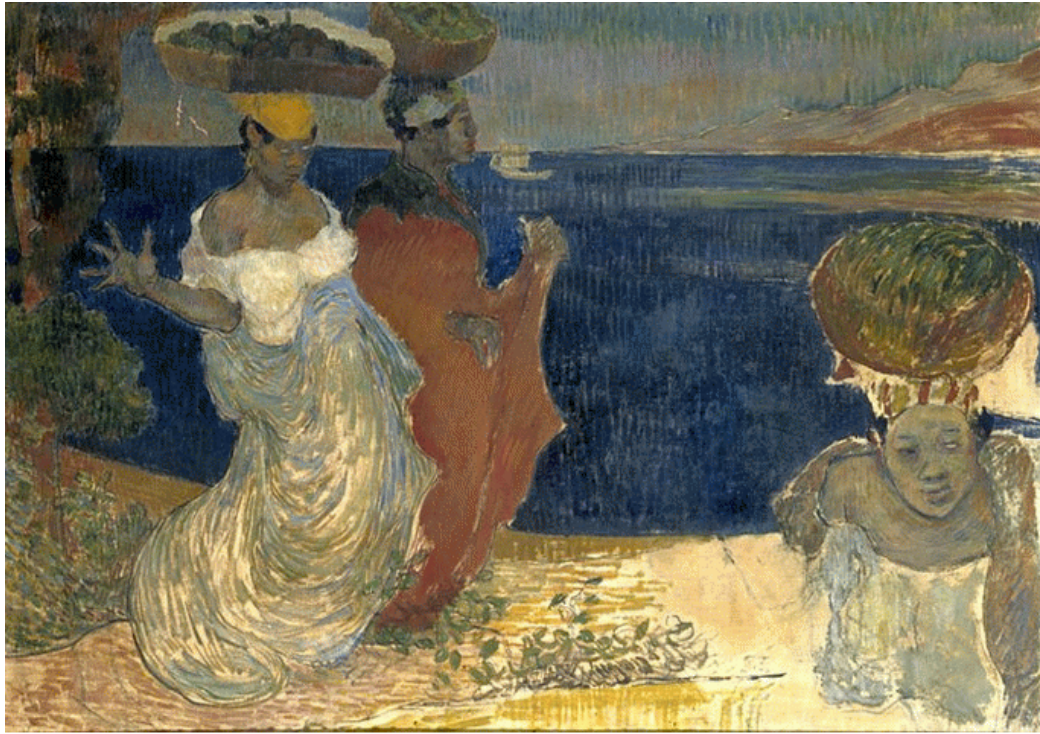


Figure 16 Charles Laval, *Femmes au bord de la mer, esquisse* (Women by the Seaside, sketch), 1887, oil on canvas, 65 x 91.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.



Figure 17 Paul Gauguin, *Fruit Picking or Mangoes*, 1887, oil on canvas, 0.89 x 1.16 cm, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.



Figure 18 Lafcadio Hearn, Market-Place, St. Pierre, 1887.



Figure 19 Camille Pissarro, *Apple Pickers*, 1886, oil on canvas, 128 x 128 cm, Ohara Museum of Art, Kurashiki, Japan.



Figure 20 Paul Gauguin, *River under Trees, Martinique*, 1887, oil on canvas, 0.90 x 1.16 m, Munich, Neue Pinakothek.

Endnotes

¹ Isabelle Cahn, "Chronology: July 1886-April 1891," Richard Brettel, Françoise Cachin, et al., *The Art of Paul Gauguin*, (New Haven: Eastern Press, 1988), 44.

² Isabelle Cahn, "Chronology: July 1886-April 1891," Richard Brettel, Françoise Cachin, et al., *The Art of Paul Gauguin*, (New Haven: Eastern Press, 1988), 44.

³ Isabelle Cahn, "Chronology: July 1886-April 1891," Richard Brettel, Françoise Cachin, et al., *The Art of Paul Gauguin*, (New Haven: Eastern Press, 1988), 44.

⁴ Isabelle Cahn, "Chronology: July 1886-April 1891," Richard Brettel, Françoise Cachin, et al., *The Art of Paul Gauguin*, (New Haven: Eastern Press, 1988), 44.

⁵ Isabelle Cahn, "Chronology: July 1886-April 1891," Richard Brettel, Françoise Cachin, et al., *The Art of Paul Gauguin*, (New Haven: Eastern Press, 1988), 44.

⁶ Janet Crane, comp., *Martinique* (Oxford: Clio Press, 1995), xvi.

⁷ Janet Crane, comp., *Martinique* (Oxford: Clio Press, 1995), xvii.

⁸ Janet Crane, comp., *Martinique* (Oxford: Clio Press, 1995), xx.

⁹ Janet Crane, comp., *Martinique* (Oxford: Clio Press, 1995), xxi.

¹⁰ Janet Crane, comp., *Martinique* (Oxford: Clio Press, 1995), xiii.

¹¹ Janet Crane, comp., *Martinique* (Oxford: Clio Press, 1995), xxiii.

¹² Daniel Wildenstein, Sylvie Crussard, and Martine Heudron, *Gauguin: A Savage in the Making: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings (1873-188)* (Milano: Skira, 2002), 317.

¹³ Paul Gauguin, *Letters to His Wife and Friends*, Ed. Maurice Malingue, Trans. Henry J. Stenning, (Boston: MFA Publications, 2003), 72.

¹⁴ Paul Gauguin, *Letters to His Wife and Friends*, Ed. Maurice Malingue, Trans. Henry J. Stenning, (Boston: MFA Publications, 2003), 72.

¹⁵ Paul Gauguin, *Letters to His Wife and Friends*, Ed. Maurice Malingue, Trans. Henry J. Stenning, (Boston: MFA Publications, 2003), 47.

¹⁶ Paul Gauguin, *Letters to His Wife and Friends*, Ed. Maurice Malingue, Trans. Henry J. Stenning, (Boston: MFA Publications, 2003), 75.

¹⁷ Paul Gauguin, *Letters to His Wife and Friends*, Ed. Maurice Malingue, Trans. Henry J. Stenning, (Boston: MFA Publications, 2003), 79.

¹⁸ Daniel Wildenstein, Sylvie Crussard, and Martine Heudron, *Gauguin: A Savage in the Making: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings (1873-188)* (Milano: Skira, 2002), 317

¹⁹ Paul Gauguin, *Letters to His Wife and Friends*, Ed. Maurice Malingue, Trans. Henry J. Stenning, (Boston: MFA Publications, 2003), 81.

²⁰ Pope, Karen Kristine Rechnitzer. *Gauguin and Martinique* (Doctoral dissertation) (1981), 3.
Pope, Karen Kristine Rechnitzer. *Gauguin and Martinique* (Doctoral dissertation) (1981), 3.

²² Pope, Karen Kristine Rechnitzer. *Gauguin and Martinique* (Doctoral dissertation) (1981), 83.

²³ Pope, Karen Kristine Rechnitzer. *Gauguin and Martinique* (Doctoral dissertation) (1981), 86.

²⁴ Pope, Karen Kristine Rechnitzer. *Gauguin and Martinique* (Doctoral dissertation) (1981), 83

²⁵ Paul Gauguin, *Letters to His Wife and Friends*, Ed. Maurice Malingue, Trans. Henry J. Stenning, (Boston: MFA Publications, 2003), 81.

²⁶ Hearn 3 Lafcadio Hearn, *Two Years in the French West Indies*, (New York: Harper, 1890), 3.

²⁷ Hearn 4 Lafcadio Hearn, *Two Years in the French West Indies*, (New York: Harper, 1890), 4.

²⁸ Hearn Lafcadio Hearn, *Two Years in the French West Indies*, (New York: Harper, 1890), 107.

²⁹ Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (Berkeley California: University of California Press, 1992), 29.

³⁰ E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present*, 38 (1967): 69) in Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*, Page 20.

³¹ Paul Lafargue, *The Right to be Lazy*, trans. Charles Kerr. (Chicago: Charles Kerr and Co., Co-operative, 1883), 29, accessed <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lafargue/1883/lazy/ch02.htm>.

³² Paul Lafargue, *The Right to be Lazy*, trans. Charles Kerr. (Chicago: Charles Kerr and Co., Co-operative, 1883), 29, accessed <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lafargue/1883/lazy/ch02.htm>.

³³ Richard Brettell, *Pissarro's People* (New York: Prestel Publishing, 2011), 172.

Brettell writes that "Pissarro's paintings are designed to counter the "realist" notion that rural labor was difficult, demanding, and without leisure."

³⁴ Richard Brettell, *Pissarro's People* (New York: Prestel Publishing, 2011), 171.

³⁵ Richard Brettell, *Pissarro's People* (New York: Prestel Publishing, 2011), 171.

³⁶ Martha Ward, *Pissarro, Neo-Impressionism, and the Spaces of the Avant-Garde*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 36.

³⁷ Martha Ward, *Pissarro, Neo-Impressionism, and the Spaces of the Avant-Garde*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 37.

³⁸ Aimée Brown Price, *Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Volume II: A Catalogue Raisonné of the Painted Work* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 101.

³⁹ Aimée Brown Price, *Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Volume II: A Catalogue Raisonné of the Painted Work*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 101.

⁴⁰ Paul Gauguin, *Letters to His Wife and Friends*, Ed. Maurice Malingue, Trans. Henry J. Stenning, (Boston, MA: MFA Publications, 2003), 74.

⁴¹ Camille Pissarro, *Letters to his son Lucien*, Ed. John Rewald, (Mamaroneck, NY: Paul P. Appel, 1972), 47.

⁴² Paul Gauguin, *Letters to His Wife and Friends*, Ed. Maurice Malingue, Trans. Henry J. Stenning, (Boston: MFA Publications, 2003), 80.

⁴³ Paul Gauguin, *Letters to His Wife and Friends*, Ed. Maurice Malingue, Trans. Henry J. Stenning, (Boston: MFA Publications, 2003), 79.

⁴⁴ Lafcadio Hearn, *Two Years in the French West Indies*, (New York: Harper, 1890).

⁴⁵ Lafcadio Hearn, *Two Years in the French West Indies*, (New York: Harper, 1890), 122.