

LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

Beyond the Narrative: An Intertextual Reading of Harry Franck's Travel Writing on Haiti, 1919-1938

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Abstract:

In response to popular demand for tropical island travelogues, The Century Company, a prominent New York City publisher, sent its star travel writer, Harry Franck, to the West Indies in 1919 to write a book and at least eight magazine articles. *Roaming Through the West Indies* was released in the fall of 1920, after selected chapters had been abridged and serialized in *The Century Magazine*. The book transformed Franck's reputation from that of a raconteur of entertaining travel tales to that of a contemporary critic of the United States' occupation of Haiti, guerilla warfare of so-called *cacos*, and the counterinsurgency campaign led by the US Marine Corps that effected the dramatic killing of cacos leader Charlemagne Peralte. I explore connections between Franck's charged criticisms of the occupation and civil administration of Haiti and the fiery rhetoric of National Association for the Advancements of Colored People (NAACP) officers James Weldon Johnson and Herbert Seligmann. The three men played decisive roles in the national debate over the morality of intervention by a United States experiencing its worst race relations in many years. The article closes with a discussion of the repurposing of travel writing in the 1930s as increased tourism to the West Indies demanded texts that showed readers how to comfortably experience the exotic. Franck's chapter on Haiti in *Sky Roaming Above Two Continents*, published in 1938, is compared to his earlier representation of the country.

Keywords: Harry Franck; travel writing; United States; Marine Corps; Haiti; race.

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Harry A. Franck (1881-1962), a restless man from small-town Munger, Michigan, became the premier US travel writer of the early twentieth century. After graduating in 1903 from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, with majors in sociology and modern languages, he pursued a career as a foreign language teacher while traveling and writing on the side. The publication of his first book, *A Vagabond Journey Around the World* (1910), based on his 1904-05 wanderyear escape from the classroom, was so well received that his publisher, The Century Co., prepared lecture circulars to advertise him as a speaker. By lecturing on weekends Franck was earning twice to thrice his teacher's salary at a high school in Springfield, Massachusetts, which gave him the confidence to leave teaching and take up travel and writing fulltime.

Franck's trip to Haiti in 1920 was serendipitous. In the summer of 1919 he married Philadelphian Rachel Latta, whom he had met in Paris during World War I. They wanted to explore Madagascar and Zanzibar, but Franck's publisher averred, 'Oh, go and spend a three months' honeymoon in the West Indies' (Franck 1939: 4). By 1919 Franck was well known to many Americans; in addition to *A Vagabond Journey*, he had published three books dealing with Latin America and one on Spain, not to mention articles in *The Century Magazine*, *Harper's Magazine*, *The New York Times*, and other newspapers and journals. The incredibly energetic Franck always seemed to be on the move and to have a knack for transforming his experiences into instructive yet popular texts of geography for the masses. With the announcement of his West Indies excursion, his readers eagerly awaited his new book. They would not be disappointed.

Since the chronicles of Columbus' expeditions to the West Indies, tropical islands have been commodified in literature as paradisaic. By the early twentieth century, the tropical island narrative whetted American readers' thirst for imagined escapes to idyllic settings removed from the demands of urbanization and industrialization (Meyer 2009; Safroni-Middleton 1920; Southey 2013: 10). At the same time, however, the expanding geography of commercialism presupposed an international order maintained by military force. Commercial interests called for direct US military intervention and peacekeeping in '*mare nostrum*' – the Caribbean (Schmidt 1987; Thomas 1921). These contradictory trends – the nostalgia for a lost paradise and the rise of an imperialist global order – found fertile ground in Haiti.

In 1904, soon after US construction of the Panama Canal began, President Theodore Roosevelt issued his Monroe Doctrine corollary, which called for the US to exercise an 'international police power' to correct 'chronic wrongdoing' in the Western Hemisphere ('Theodore Roosevelt ...' 1905). Roosevelt wanted to stop European intervention there to collect debts. By December 1914 the US made clear to Haiti that it wanted a customs receivership like that already imposed on the Dominican Republic. The government of President Jean Vilbrun Guillaume Sam refused to sign such a protocol. When an angry mob in Port-au-Prince killed him and dismembered his corpse on July 27, the US had the pretext needed for its Marines to invade Haiti the next day.

From the start of the 1915 American intervention, popular US journals such as the *National Geographic* portrayed Haiti as a fallen paradise, ruined by its self-seeking politicians but capable of being salvaged by US tutelage ('Wards of the United States' 1916). The main motives for American intervention in Haiti were protection of sea-lanes

to the Panama Canal, opened in 1914, and guarding of American financial interests (Corey 1921; McPherson 2014: 4-5). In 1933 President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced the Good Neighbor policy, which renounced US armed intervention in favor of trade and cooperation with Western Hemisphere countries, and the US Marines left Haiti in 1934 (U.S. Department of State 2016).

Harry A. Franck signed a contract on 15 August 1919 with The Century Company, a prominent New York publisher, to write a book and at least eight articles on the West Indies. As Century's premier travel writer, he was given enough funds to travel the West Indies extensively, a \$2,000 advance (equivalent to over \$27,900 in 2016), and promises that more money could be wired to him. Harry and Rachel left Philadelphia in September heading toward the West Indies, for which they had no fixed travel plan or route mapped in advance (Figure 1).

Franck published ten articles on the West Indies, including two dealing with Haiti (Franck 1920a, b) that appeared in the May and June issues of *The Century Magazine*. The articles are reduced and more edited versions of chapters in Franck's (1920c) *Roaming Through the West Indies*; their purpose was to whet the appetite of readers for the forthcoming book and earn Franck more income, \$3,000 (equivalent to over \$41,800 in 2016). Franck (1920d) wrote to William J. Latta, Jr., his brother-in-law, 'I do not know if they have begun running my junk in the Century [Magazine] yet, but even if they do, do not pay much attention to that, as it is rather the book than the articles that I hope to get the real stuff into.' The articles' contents and, especially, publication dates, however, are significant for assessing Franck's role in the United States' debate over Haiti.



Figure 1. Harry Franck's eight-month ad-lib itinerary around the West Indies. Source: Franck (1920c): opposite p. 48.

Franck was well prepared to write about occupied Haiti. As a 2nd/Lt. in the US Army, he had served in the Headquarters of the American Expeditionary Force in Paris as a translator, interpreter, and censor. After the armistice and without permission, he traveled incognito as a wandering German through war-torn Germany to write *Vagabonding Through Changing Germany* (Franck 1920e). Not only did that experience prepare him to be a perceptive observer of a defeated, conflict-torn nation, but also Franck's 1919 *Harper's Magazine* serial 'Through Germany on Foot' elevated his reputation from that of an entertaining travel writer to that of a serious critic of contemporary world events ('Afoot in Germany' 1919).

The National Debate Over Haiti

Franck's *Roaming Through the West Indies* was released in the fall of 1920. The *New York Tribune* hailed it as 'the best travel book of the year' (*A Winter Vacation* 1920), and *The Publishers' Weekly* heralded it as 'easily the best 'regular' travel book on the islands south and east of Florida we have seen' (Lynd 1920: 1198). Reviewers praised Franck's depictions of US Marines' combat with Haitian *cacos*, rebels named after an indigenous bird of prey, the Taco, that lived mainly off lizards or *zandolites* (the rebels' name for Haitian civil authorities). One reviewer enthused that Franck was a 'superb delineator of character and of the traits, bizarre or compelling, which differentiate all people to the trained observer' ('Looking Ahead with the Publishers' 1920: 177). A review in *The New York Times* summed it up best, 'This new Franck book is fired with an earnest desire to turn the cleansing light of publicity upon what seems to him a grave blunder made by the American government' ('Tramping Through the West Indies' 1920: 18). The same reviewer added that Franck's account of fighting between the Marines and the 'bandits' of Haiti is 'as dramatic a chronicle as he has run across in many a day. The story of Captain Hanneken's exploit in bringing an end to the nefarious career of Charlemagne Masena [sic] Péralte [a nationalist leader of over one-thousand cacos] is as thrilling as the most vivid account of any heroic deed performed on the battlefields of France' (18).¹ That comparison is high praise for over one hundred servicemen in World War I received Medals of Honor, the highest US military decoration for bravery.

Franck had inserted himself in an emerging national debate over the United States' role in Haiti. Due to rigorous press censorship imposed by American authorities in Haiti, until Franck's exposé, US public criticism of the Haitian situation had been limited largely to the black intellectual community, which used occupied Haiti to justify domestic anti-racism campaigns (Twa 2014).² In March 1920, after Franck had left Haiti for Santo Domingo (now the Dominican Republic) (Figure 2), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Board of Directors asked James Weldon Johnson, executive secretary of the NAACP, to investigate reported brutality in Haiti (Pamphile 2001: 201). He set sail for Port-au-Prince accompanied by Herbert Seligmann, a white man and the NAACP's publicity agent. Johnson spent three months in Haiti, but Seligmann returned to the States after several weeks due to illness. Both men published scathing criticisms of the US military occupation and domination of Haiti in summer issues of *The Nation*, a weekly journal of opinion. Johnson (1920a) also published another

indictment of the occupation in the September issue of *The Crisis*, the NAACP's official organ.



Figure 2. Rachel, Harry, and a Marine escort railroading in Santo Domingo. Source: Franck (1920c): opposite p. 192.

Both Johnson (1920b) and Seligmann (1920a) emphasize alleged torture and massacres and claim, as does Franck, that three thousand Haitians were gunned down while less than twenty Marines had been killed or wounded in action. They mainly blame the State Department, which had countenanced the armed invasion without an adequate plan for the island nation's administration. Seligmann (36) is not surprised, as the United States had 'signally failed in administering its own color problem.'³ Johnson (1920a, b: 224, 5) charges that most of the American administrative posts in Haiti were awarded to 'deserving democrats' mostly hailing from the US South who were sent there 'for their knowledge of 'handling niggers'.⁴ How could such politicians, who countenanced racial segregation, plan to govern effectively a black republic where the people would be treated respectfully? Seligmann (1920a: 36) blasts most Marines as having contempt for 'men of dark skins' and denounces most of the Marine corporals and sergeants, who as officers commanded units in the Gendarmerie, as 'ignorant and brutal.' Seligmann (36) further notes that the commanding officer during the alleged massacres had been court-martialed in the Philippines for 'brutality to natives.' However, that officer (Littleton W. T. Waller), court-martialed for murdering his unit's mutinous Philippine porters, was acquitted. Johnson (1920a: 223) shares anecdotes of Marines raping Haitian women, although he emphasizes that 'perhaps, the worst phase of American brutality in Haiti is, after all, not in the individual cases of cruelty, but in the American attitude [toward Haitians].'

The two NAACP leaders' essays touch on many of the same points raised by Franck in his writings and subsequent interviews with the press, but it is difficult to ascertain Franck's relationship, if any, with the other two men, one of whom was black.⁵ I have found no record of personal communication between them. Franck, however, was an omnivorous reader who likely would have been familiar with Johnson's and Seligmann's essays. Johnson (1920b: 14) read Franck's May article, 'Death of Charlemagne,' but pilloried it, remonstrating that Americans should read it because Franck 'attempts to glorify a black smirch on American arms and tradition.' Johnson's (14) indignation stemmed from Franck calling the 'assassination' of Charlemagne 'fit to rank with any of the stirring warrior tales.' Johnson was upset that Charlemagne, whom he regarded as a patriot akin to those of the American Revolution or Civil War, was shot in the dark by a Marine who had reached the rebel leader's camp by tricking or bribing other cacos. Johnson held the romantic notion that Charlemagne and Capt. Hanneken should have confronted each other in an open fight. As Franck details in his May essay, however, Hanneken, leading a small patrol, took great risks to get past guards and sentinels placed strategically to protect Charlemagne's mountain encampment.

Both Seligmann and Franck emphasize that the abuse of the *corvée* law drove many Haitians to support the cacos. The law, unenforced for many years prior to the United States' occupation, required three days of public labor each year on roads near a citizen's domicile. Under the Marine-controlled Gendarmerie, until the *corvée* was abolished on 1 October 1918, as many as six thousand Haitians, according to Franck rounded up in night raids, were forced to live for months in camps far from home while they worked on roads (Heinl et al. 1996: 431; Schmidt 1987: 92). Charlemagne escaped from a prisoner *corvée* on 3 September 1918 and as a caco general, self-designated 'Chief of the Revolutionary Forces against the American nation on the soil of Haiti,' he rallied thousands of Haitians to his side by accusing the Americans of trying to reinstate slavery (Franck 1920c: 136).

Charlemagne's reinvigoration of the cacos, who had roamed the Haitian interior for years, put so much pressure on the Gendarmerie that in March 1919 a Marine brigade was requested to help fight the cacos. At the end of March seven HS-2 seaplanes and six Curtiss JN-4 'Jenny' biplanes were committed to the counterinsurgency. The Jennies were pursuit land planes equipped with two to four machine guns, each of which could fire between 500 and 1,000 rounds per minute, effectively plowing the ground (Mitchell 1921). Franck (1920a, c: 25, 133-4) announces to a wide American audience in May that '[The Marines] have hunted [cacos] by every means available, including the use of aëroplanes. The *cacos* show a wholesome terror for the latter, which they call 'God's wicked angels'; they have suffered 'cruel' losses before the machine guns of the determined American youths....' In July Seligmann (1920a: 35) claims the Marines strangled prisoners to obtain information or let them escape so they could be shot while fleeing, and 'theft, arson, and murder were committed with impunity by white men wearing the uniform of the United States.... Machine guns have been turned into crowds of unarmed natives, and the United States marines have ... not troubled to investigate how many were killed or wounded.' In September Johnson (1920a: 223) complains of Marines indiscriminately machine gunning supposed cacos gathered at village cockfights.

Ultimate blame for seemingly out-of-control Marines had to be assigned. Ohio Senator and Republican presidential candidate Warren Harding attacked President Wilson for picking on little Latin American republics and usurping the constitutional powers reserved to Congress to declare war. Harding told crowds at campaign stops that US Marines had killed thousands of Haitians. He even promised to make a 'complete reversal' of the foreign policy of the Wilson Administration, which responded by trying to make Harding look irresponsible ('Senator Harding's Loose Talk' 1920). Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby, a Wilson loyalist with no prior foreign policy experience, called Harding's charges 'a complete disregard of the facts.... The work we are doing in Haiti and Santo Domingo is at the invitation of these people and the Haitians are deeply grateful' ('Daniels and Colby Retort Harding Charge' 1920). Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, a Democrat publisher and segregationist from North Carolina, responded by expressing his surprise

that a Senator of the United States should give currency to so unjust a reflection upon the brave and patriotic members of the Marine Corps on duty in Haiti. They have rendered a real service to the people of that country and with very few exceptions shown that they are worthy comrades of those Marines who won imperishable glory in France. They have served the best interests of peaceable Haitians ... menaced by bodies of bandits. ('Daniels Defends Marines in Haiti' 1920)

Johnson met with Harding in August, giving the Republican presidential candidate documents on the Haiti situation and urging him to call for an investigation; moreover, he met on several occasions with Harding after his election as president (Francis 2014: 83; Pamphile 2001: 113).

In mid-October the American public learned more about the accusations of Marines' undue force when a letter from Major General George Burnett, Commandant of the Marine Corps, to Colonel John H. Russell, Jr., Marine Brigade Commander in Haiti, was reprinted in newspapers across the United States. Burnett writes that the testimony in the Courts Martial of several Marines in Haiti

showed me that practically indiscriminate killing of natives has gone on for some time. Judging by the knowledge gained only from the cases that have been brought before me, I think that the Marine Corps has been lacking in right and justice.... I was shocked beyond expression to hear of such things and to know ... that duty could be so badly performed by marines of any class. (Associated Press 1920: 1)

The same newspaper exposé reported that Secretary Daniels had ordered Barnett to submit a special report of his own on the investigation Barnett had ordered. In his report, Barnett confirms the rumored casualty figures: 3,250 slain natives and an indeterminable number of wounded versus thirteen Marines killed in action and twenty-eight wounded (Associated Press 1920: 1). Barnett two weeks later lowered the number of slain natives to 2,250, explaining that the officer responsible for the original figure had

made an error in adding casualties between the onset of the invasion and 30 June 1920 (*Inquiry into Occupation and Administration of Haiti and Santo Domingo* 1922: 1596-1597). The higher number, usually rounded to three thousand, is often repeated, including by Franck (1920c: 133), in the literature on Haiti of that period.

The timing of that exposé almost coincided with the release of Franck's book, which was deemed to be 'written without prejudice and knowledge that an investigation would grow out of conditions in the black republic' (Forrest 1920). Franck (1920c: 117-8) claims that the American civilian advisors to the civil government of Haiti were chosen for their political standing, not experience, and that the US officers were mostly Southerners who

shun any but the most unavoidable intercourse with the natives... The Southerner is famed for his ability to keep the 'nigger' down, but he is less successful at lifting him up, and that is the task we have taken upon ourselves in Haiti.

In response to Franck's accusations of US mismanagement and war crimes, Daniels maintained that he was 'ignorant' of any allegations of 'indiscriminate killings' and insisted that no mercy would be shown to men who had disgraced the uniform. On 15 October he convened a Naval Court of Inquiry and ordered that Franck and Seligmann provide testimony ('Daniels Orders Haitian Inquiry and Punishment' 1920: 1).

On the very same day an article in *The New York Times*, quoting at length an interview with Franck, further aroused Americans' indignation toward the occupation. Franck claimed that most of the Marines in Haiti, as well as their officers, were Southerners who 'placed too small a value on the lives of black people' ('Lays Haiti Killings to Southern Men' 1920).⁶ He elaborated that Marines shot from airplanes into marketplaces and that there was a 'hoodlum element' among the young southern enlisted men who killed blacks for sport.⁷ Such a bald assertion went way beyond criticisms of the Marines in Franck's articles and book, where he blames much of the systematic killing of the cacos on the Gendarmerie. Acknowledging that he had not witnessed such events, Franck insisted that he had heard about them from reliable sources friendly to the Americans and that he was certain of their veracity. Although his criticism of Southerners was never raised in a later US Senate Select Committee inquiry into the occupation of Haiti and Santo Domingo, other writers have repeated it (Heinl and Heinl 2008: 98).⁸ In this seminal interview, Franck noted that the cacos, whom he called bandits, burned villages and ambushed whites and peaceful villagers alike on the roads, but the asymmetrical warfare – machine guns versus caco scythes and relic weapons – highlighted American cruelty. In the interview, Franck claimed that 'such atrocities ... are largely due to the failure of Secretary Daniels and President Wilson to control the situation there properly' ('Lays Haiti Killings to Southern Men' 1920).

The Naval Court of Inquiry did not turn out as Daniels, the American public, and Haitians had expected. Although Daniels ordered that Franck and Seligmann testify, there is no record of them in the extracts of testimony released. In November the Court of Inquiry released Marines' testimony about caco voodoo rites with dead Marines' body parts and caco killings of two thousand 'peaceful' Haitians, including the destruction of

entire settlements ('Tells of Outrages by Bandits' 1920). In January the release of more Marine testimony emphasized gruesome caco tortures and cannibalistic mutilation of dead Marines ('Natives in Haiti Ate Marine Officer' 1921). *The Nation* called the Inquiry a 'whitewash' and three Haitian dignitaries, who traveled to Washington, D.C. to present a memorial, labeled it a 'joke' and a 'comedy' because the investigation found abuses only in the lower ranks of the Marines (two Lieutenants) and concluded that 'considering the conditions of service in Haiti, it is remarkable that the offenses were so few' ('Haitian Delegates Want Us to Get Out' 1921; Heintz and Heintz 2008: 93; Sannon et al. 1921). The outcome of the Naval Court of Inquiry reflected three critical limitations placed on it. First, The Court issued a statement that it would examine only the killing or mistreatment of natives by US Marines, not other complaints ('Haitian Inquiry Limited' 1920). Second, no Haitian civilians other than Philippe Sudre Dartiguenave, the president installed by the US Marines, were allowed to testify, although many of them had filed written requests to appear before the court while it was in Haiti during November (Sannon et al. 1921). Third, the Commandant of the Gendarmerie, Lt. Col. Frederick M. Wise, was never called as a witness, probably because he had vowed to tell the truth if put on the stand under oath (Schmidt 1995: 106).

The Naval Court of Inquiry's cover-up led to wider questioning of US politicians and Marines in Haiti ('Bishop Hurst Calls for Haitian Inquiry' 1920; 'President of Haiti Criticizes Minister' 1920). The League of Free Nations Association, a New York City non-profit group founded to promote a union of liberal democracies, organized a 4 December 1920 luncheon discussion, at New York City's Hotel Commodore, of 'The United States' Policy in the Caribbean,' moderated by Columbia University Professor William R. Shepherd. Franck and Johnson were among five invited speakers. Franck defends the Marines in Haiti, maintaining that not more than ten to fifteen percent of the American forces of occupation were guilty of the charges of oppression or cruelty made in the recent investigation (a reference to the Barnett report). Franck endeavors to direct the public's ire toward the American administrators sent to Haiti and avers that the typical one 'seems to be a type of average American who seems to know extremely little outside of his own borders except in the direction of Europe or in the particular line in which he specializes' ('The United States Policy in the Caribbean' 1920: 7). He calls for a radical change in the civil administration of Haiti, concluding that 'I don't think as favorable a report can be given of the American authorities higher up, both in Hayti and in Washington, as can be given of the Marines. Several of the deserving Democrats who have been sent down to Hayti are generally agreed to be not of the very best type of men we could have sent ...' (7). In a final dig at southern Democrats, Franck repeats from a 'reliable source' that when the Admiral overseeing operations in Haiti and Santo Domingo learned of his orders to 'take charge of affairs' he sought clarification from Secretary Daniels, who replied "Oh, for God's sake don't bother me with little questions. I am busy with bigger ones. Go down there and sit on the lid" (7).

Although Franck criticizes the administration of Haiti, he opines that if the abuses could be eliminated, American control of Haiti would ultimately prove beneficial. Several other speakers support the American intervention on the grounds that Haiti was economically backward, unsanitary, and largely uncivilized, which inhibited the

advancement of self-rule. Johnson, however, excoriates the United States for acting on the premise that Haitians were unfit to govern themselves and that the United States had been angling to intervene in the island nation since 1914. He defends the *cacos*, declaring, 'The America of 1776 would not have called them bandits. It would have called them patriots' ('The United States' Policy in the Caribbean' 1920: 6).

One can infer that Franck's outspokenness met with pushback. Franck had agreed to present a lecture on the West Indies to the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C. on 10 December 1920. Before that date Franck (1920f) writes to his lecture manager, James B. Pond of the eponymous lecture bureau in New York City, that he will touch lightly on criticisms of United States' policy and will 'emphasize the scenic and the picturesque and amusing so as not to offend.' With that end in mind, Gilbert Grosvenor, the Society's President, made 100 colored slides for Franck's presentation. The lecture must have been well received for the Board of Managers elected Franck a member of the Society on 15 December.⁹ Further evidence that Franck made a favorable impression on the Society's doyens can be gleaned from a dustup between the editors of *The Nation* and the *National Geographic*. One of the readers of *The Nation*, a Dr. Hugo Miller, had forwarded to its editor a letter he had received after complaining to the *National Geographic* about its article 'Haiti and Its Regeneration by the United States' (1920). John Oliver La Gorce, Associate Editor of the *National Geographic*, in his reply to Dr. Miller, which is published with editorial commentary in *The Nation*, defends the article's chauvinistic tone by claiming incorrectly that the inquiries of the Naval Court and the US Senate Select Committee had resulted in entirely setting aside the charges against the Marine Corps and insists:

It was only after the most careful examination of the facts and in consultation with such men as Harry A. Franck, whose new book on the West Indies is considered an authority – for he had just returned from there – besides conferring with a half dozen other members of the National Geographic Society who have had an opportunity to study the conditions in that country, that the material was published. ('Our Imperialist Propaganda I: The National Geographic Anti-Haitian Campaign' 1921: 508)

The Nation's editor, Oswald Garrison Villard, expresses doubt that Franck is an authority on the West Indies; nevertheless, he uses *Roaming Through the West Indies* to deconstruct La Gorce's letter. Among the passages that Villard cites is this vivid account of the counterinsurgency in Santo Domingo, where the Marines did not have a constabulary of natives as in Haiti:

The great majority of the forces of occupation were well-meaning young fellows who often lack experience in distinguishing outlaws from honest citizens, with the result that painful injustices were sometimes committed. These ignorant, or movie-trained, young fellows were sent out into the hills to hunt bandits. They came upon a hut, found it unoccupied, and touched a match to the *nipe* thatch. They probably thought such a hovel was of no importance anyway, even if it were not a bandit

haunt, whereas it contained all the earthly possessions of a family. In their ignorance of local customs, they could not know that the entire household was out working in their jungle yuca-garden. Or they found only women and children at home, and burned the house because these could not explain where their man was.... In still other places they burned the houses of innocent accomplices, because bandits had commandeered food and lodging there. (Franck 1920c: 235)

As the 1916 Treaty between the United States and Haiti established the protectorate over Haiti for twenty years, Pond thought that Franck could continue to speak on that subject for many years; however, I have found no record in the two men's correspondence of his lecturing after 1922 on the West Indies. The contravention stems from Franck's traveling to East Asia for two and one-half years beginning in May 1922. During his absence from the United States, Franck had little domestic-press coverage. When he resumed his lectures at home his repertoire included five 'subjects' and four 'illustrated talks,' none of which focused on the West Indies (*Harry A. Franck: The Far East and Latin America* 1924). Even after the United States restored Haiti's freedom on 14 August 1934, however, *Roaming Through the West Indies* remained in demand thanks to its reprinting, starting in 1930 by Blue Ribbon Books, a 'dollar line' of non-fiction reprints, and in 1938 by Grosset & Dunlap.

Post-Occupation Haiti as Tourist Destination

The next and last Franck book dealing with the West Indies is *Sky Roaming Above Two Continents: An Aerial Cruise, with Many Landings in the Countries and Islands that Circle the Caribbean*, 1938. With the American reader-cum-tourist in mind, Franck travelled for 69 days, with a fixed itinerary of 27 stopovers on a roundtrip ticket from Newark, New Jersey. From Brownsville to Miami (Figure 3), Franck flew on Pan American Airways, which doubtlessly helped sponsor the excursion in return for his publicizing the ease of air travel throughout the region. In fact, Pan American had previously arranged for E. Alexander Powell (1936), another popular American travel writer, to fly on its clippers around the islands. Although the Caribbean in the 1930s was crisscrossed with steamship routes, a comprehensive tour of the region by sea was almost impossible due to limited connections. With Pan Am a grand tour of the region was feasible, but most people still thought that flying was foolhardy and thus travel writers like Franck were engaged to humanize and sanctify the act of flying. To show air travel's superiority over sailing, Franck shares with readers memorable in-flight experiences and statistics on the planes' capabilities and pilots' professionalism.

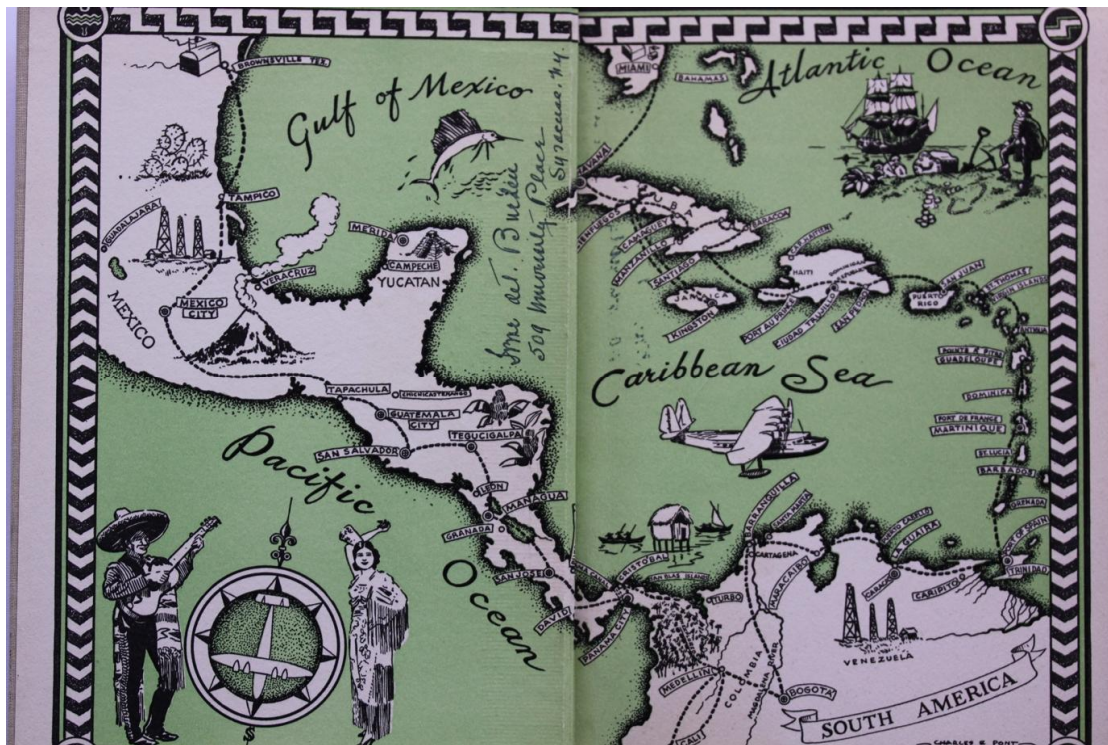


Figure 3. Map of Franck's itinerary around the Caribbean in 1937. Source: Franck (1938): frontispiece.

Written for the tourist, *Sky Roaming* lacks the drama infusing *Roaming Through the West Indies*, but Franck's (1938: 296-311) chapter on Haiti, entitled 'African Haiti,' is one of the best in the volume with its focus on the nation's unique path to independence and preservation of many quasi-African customs. Franck now, however, reassures the reader that there is nothing to fear in Haiti. Arriving at the airport on a flight from Santo Domingo, Franck is barely aware of having crossed an international frontier and takes an airline-provided limousine that whisks him to an up-slope hotel. Port-au-Prince now is a 'pretty city among trees' and the mulatto minority that rules Haiti 'socially, economically, and – now that our intervention is ended – politically, displays more cultural polish than is to be found in the average American city' (298). According to Franck (302) the blacks will not speak first to a white stranger, but they will mirror what you show them, 'from a scowl to a 'Bon jour' with a smile.' He closes the chapter by weaving together a discussion of Haiti's history and the many things a tourist can buy or see, especially Henri Christophe's citadel. Although Franck is writing for the casual tourist who might be reading up for a quick onshore excursion, he still captures the allure of Haiti with his well-drawn characterizations of the panorama of life along a Haitian road and the clamor and riot of sights of the Port-au-Prince marketplace.

Travel writers are always mediating between their individual experiences and what the reader may expect (Fussell 1992). The local must be put into words that frame the writer's unique encounters with the 'other' in a more universal context. In 1920 Franck's audience was receptive to his accounts of an US imperialist project in a Haiti considered as exotic and 'primitive' as Africa's Congo. Those publications were read in a context of American race relations that were at their lowest point in many years, as evidenced by the

1917 white race riot of East St. Louis, the 1921 white race riot of Tulsa, and the over twenty mostly white race riots during the red (bloody) summer of 1919, which wreaked widespread havoc (Benchley 1922; Du Bois 1920).¹⁰ In the South, the whites were afraid of rumored black insurrection. In the North, the Great Migration of blacks from the South to industrial cities such as Chicago created unprecedented tensions over which race would control various territories and employment in certain industries. Many whites were alarmed that the Soviet Union and the radical Industrial Workers of the World, which openly advocated class warfare, were attempting to stir black communities into open rebellion. A Haitian insurrection of black 'bandits' and the counterinsurgency led by largely white Marines, complete with alleged atrocities on both sides, was a story that readily fit in the racist narrative then ascendant in American culture.

By 1938 Americans were increasingly looking south of the border and wanted travel books that would inform their own itineraries. Although a minor tourist destination, Haiti received more than its share of attention in print. John W. Vandercook (1928) wrote a highly regarded biography of Christophe, the slave who became King Henri I. William Seabrook (1929) penned a lurid discussion of Haiti's voodoo rites and rituals as well as introduced American readers to the Haitian zombie. Richard Loederer (1935) revisited Christophe's story and also delved into voodoo rituals. The Literary Guild selected these three volumes for its book of the month club program, ensuring their wide distribution. Many less well-known works of the period, such as the monograph of anthropologist Melville Herskovits (1937), also focus on Haiti's unique customs and culture.

Americans' interest in Haiti remained keen through the 1930s, but now Franck's task is to reassure readers that the black republic is safe to visit and that much of what had been reported about cannibalism and voodoo is, if not a myth, grossly exaggerated. Here is an example of how Franck (1938: 303) frames the local superstitions into a broader context accessible to his readers:

To accuse an old woman peering out of her jungle shack of being a *maman-loi* [priestess of a voodoo ceremony] may be as silly as what we did in Salem three centuries ago But then, there are such doings even in Harlem; here it is merely more in the open ... voodoo is supposed to be taboo. But the native gendarmerie is not quite so strict and unsympathetic as our Marines were.

He further redirects reader's attention away from the impression many visiting writers created of Haiti as a land of barbarity and toward the pleasant climate and the delightful homes and high-culture atmosphere of the clubs in Port-au-Prince.

Conclusions

Franck intervened in the national debate on the morality of the United States' armed intervention in a small, black republic. A modern reader of *Roaming Through the West Indies* could interpret it as unpatriotically critical of Marines and as a racist critique of Haitian society. We should not, however, measure the worth of an almost-century-old book by

the yardstick of presentism. In 1920 Franck wrote for a national, albeit very white, audience that was racially intolerant, weary of foreign entanglements, and disillusioned with lame-duck, incapacitated President Wilson. Franck did not hesitate to portray the cacos as a symptom of American misadministration and military abuse. Because of the timing of the release of *Roaming Through the West Indies*, he was judged impartial and thus lent credibility to the arguments of the NAACP's Johnson and Seligmann, who lobbied passionately for the restoration of Haitian self-rule, knowing it would advance blacks' civil rights in the United States.

Franck's popularity and impact on American culture peaked in the early 1920s. Just in his lecture season of October 1921 through April 1922 he presented at least forty-one lectures across the United States for audiences as large as 1,200, and his lecture manager teases Franck that 'you are becoming too popular all of a sudden' (Pond 1921). Two of Franck's six lecture topics that season are on the West Indies; one may assume that in many venues he addressed the American occupation of Haiti as forthrightly as he had in 1920.

By 1938 racism in the United States had changed little. The lynching of blacks in the South continued, albeit at a slower pace, and through the late 1930s the NAACP's New York City headquarters flew a black banner with white letters proclaiming 'A Man Was Lynched Yesterday' (Eubanks 2015: C6). In *Sky Roaming* Franck's reassurance that Haiti is safe and pleasant, offering an accessible taste of Africa, reflects the repurposing of travel accounts to serve tourism. In the 1930s, readers wanted travel literature that would show them how they could journey in search of the exotic, but do so safely and comfortably. Travel writers then were seldom adventurers engaged in geographic discovery, but typically were skills retracing well-tread paths on behalf of tourist bureaus, travel agencies, traveler's check companies, cruise lines, hotels, or airlines. We should not overlook, however, that in 1938 Franck cast Haiti in a more favorable light also because, in his frequent interaction with the 'other' during his many travels since 1920, his 'self' had become more cosmopolitan and less moored to Americans' mores and worldview.

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Notes

¹ Herman H. Hanneken was a sergeant in the Marine Corps and a Captain in Haiti's Gendarmerie. Non-commissioned officers of the Marine Corps were sometimes also officers of the Gendarmerie. For killing Charlemagne on November 1, 1919 Hanneken received the Medal of Honor and a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant. He retired as a Brigadier General in 1948.

² No Haitian newspaper could criticize the occupation or the Haitian government. No dispatches critical of the occupation were allowed to reach US newspapers.

³ In the South blacks in 1920 suffered peonage, lynching, disenfranchisement, and limited educational opportunities. The northern migration of blacks, which started en masse during World War I, made race relations a national issue (Seligmann 1920b).

⁴ Many Americans then used the N-word slur in daily conversation. In publications, Franck occasionally used that word, but usually in quoting what others said.

⁵ Franck referred to African Americans, a term coined in the 1970s, usually as negroes, but also as blacks and, occasionally, as colored people. The term 'black' fits the period discussed and is respectful.

⁶ Ann Hurst, a Wellesley history student, wrote a paper 'Southerners to Handle Haitians?' in which she analyzed the U.S. Census data of every Marine officer assigned to Haiti from 1916 to 1932 and found that the proportion of Southern-born officers was lower than that of Southerners in the entire population. (Heinl and Heinl 2008: 98).

⁷ Although there was no effective defense against an armored attack airplane, in small numbers they could not stop an enemy's ground offensive. In October 1919 Charlemagne and several hundred cacos assaulted Port-au-Prince, then retreated.

⁸ The Senate Select Committee on Haiti and Santo Domingo, also called the McCormick Committee, started hearings in August 1921. It functioned for 11 months and compiled 1,842 pages of testimony. The Union Patriotique d'Haiti submitted its *Memoir of the Political, Economic, and Financial Condition Existing in the Republic of Haiti Under the American Occupation* to the Committee, which also heard testimony from many Haitian-Americans opposed to the occupation (*Inquiry into Occupation and Administration of Haiti and Santo Domingo* 1922).

⁹ The Council of the American Geographical Society elected Franck as a Fellow on 24 November 1931.

¹⁰ The race riots are referred to as 'white' because, although blacks also participated, the riots typically started after a black man's alleged transgression. Angry white mobs retaliated by attacking and sometimes lynching blacks.

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