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In Dawdy's historical monograph, *Building the Devil's Empire* (2008), the author goes into great detail about the environment, lifestyles, and mindsets of the French colonials that settled in New Orleans. Much of what Dawdy describes is the disorder of the colony; the structure of New Orleans was optimistic, but soon gave way to smuggling, underground slave trade, and other "back alley" operations that Dawdy collectively terms as "rogue colonialism." According to the book, New Orleans never should have succeeded; it's a feat that the city survived and transformed into one of the most important ports in the United States, as well as a vital resource for the American Revolution and Civil War. Overall, the book gives the reader insight to the disorder of the city as well as influential leaders that "controlled" and orchestrated that disorder.

The term "rogue colonialism" refers to the description of the collective acts of disorder that were going on in colonial New Orleans during the 1700s and contributed to the downfall of a structured colonial plan for the city. Dawdy elaborates on a main point, which states, "Colonialism is fundamentally experimental and usually poorly controlled," (p. 18) throughout her book by detailing examples of illegal trade, hunting, and smuggling, among other underground operations that went below the radar of the colony's leaders. Dawdy goes in depth into reasons why the colony of New Orleans and its regulations were poorly organized and enforced citing examples of *coureur de bois*, *forçats*, and *voyageurs* who engaged in illegal trade, hunting, and immoral ways of living that the colonial leaders attempted to change. "Rogue colonialism" explains the actions that in the

end turned New Orleans into a thriving port city for the United States that started out as a dud investment for the French.

The social and economic organizations of New Orleans were the main components that made up “rogue colonialism.” Louisiana, and specifically, New Orleans, at the time of its founding had the potential to rival successful British colonies, but quickly became what Dawdy called a “backwater entrepôt,” meaning that the city’s economy, which started as an experiment to serve a “colonial monopoly” turned into an economy that relied on illegal trade and unconventional economic practices. (p. 101) In addition, colonials weren’t the most moral, model citizens. Most colonial settlers of New Orleans were criminals, exiles, and poor, uneducated French peoples. After settling in the swampy rainforest that was New Orleans, Native Americans and Creoles began mixing with the French and created a new society of mixed cultures and ideas, which led to what Dawdy argues as a failed colonial experiment.

A society with no enforced regulations or adherence to the leaders’ attempts to outline a social hierarchy led to colonials pretty much doing whatever they pleased and leaders casually looking the other way as long as the economy didn’t totally tank. John Law and the Company’s attempts to recruit settlers to New Orleans and create a bustling economic system similar to Saint Domingue ultimately failed and gave way to a society that had no regard for trade or hunting regulations or socio-economic standards such as beliefs against mixed marriages, free people of color, and runaway slaves. Colonial settlers had their own idea of how New Orleans was to run and many of the settlers made their living and became extremely wealthy based on outlets that were by law illegal, but benefited many people, so the leaders simply ignored them.

Dawdy entertained the reader by starting each chapter describing a specific colonial of New Orleans. Going in detail about their livelihood gave the reader immense insight about the people living in colonial New Orleans and further personalized the history of the colony, rather than just listing facts and statistics.

Dawdy begins her book by introducing us to Father Le Maire, who was “one of Louisiana’s earliest intellectuals...and most interesting characters.” (p. 25) Father Le Maire was a spiritualist who but most of his writings and accomplishments leaned more towards the secular world, specifically the literary and scientific avenues. Dawdy explains that Father Le Maire was living in the colony during the initial founding, around 1717, and stayed well into the next few decades. During his stint in Louisiana, Father Le Maire wrote about the state of the colony and the leaders “governing” it. Mostly, his writings are criticisms of the Superior Council and the plans they had for an urban city, as well as criticizing them for not prioritizing to build a city based on educated and moral order. Father Le Maire’s contribution may not be totally “rogue” in the context of illegal economic operations, but Father Le Maire’s outright condemnation of the colonial leaders definitely contribute to the definition and explanation of “rogue colonialism” that Dawdy devotes to illustrating in *Building the Devil’s Empire*.

Dawdy continues to describe the colonial life with my personal favorite character, Madame Elizabeth Real Pascal Marin, “whose spans the experience of surviving and then thriving in French colonial New Orleans.” (p. 99) As Chapter 3 begins, Dawdy describes Madame Real rising in her successes as the colony itself began to expand, with the peak of her extravagant success being between the 1750s and 1770s. During that time, Madame Real became an influential colonial and successful businesswoman, due in

major part to taking over her late first husband's, Jean Pascal, ventures in illegal smuggling, an act that contributed to much of the backwater economic practices, or "rogue colonialism," that kept to New Orleans' thriving economy afloat. Madame Real's connections to top colonial leaders on the Superior Council as well as high-ranking military officers allowed her illegal practices to continue, as long as they were benefitting those leaders she called friends. Madame Real's successes are directly linked to practices known as rogue colonialism, but her contribution to the business and economy of New Orleans are notable as it gives insight to the contribution of women to their husbands' businesses and financial affairs while they were off travelling. Madame Real became a prominent figure in colonial New Orleans and her character is a memorable one when discussing the structure of rogue colonialism underneath the veneer of the Superior Council's structure of the colony.

Lastly, Dawdy illustrates the ironic life of Louis Congo, the colony's high executioner. A freed slave who was granted a small concession of land with his wife on the outskirts of New Orleans returned the colony's favor with his devotion to public service. (p. 189) Congo's activity in the colony is most ironic because it is a direct illustration of rogue colonialism in that a free man of color held the power of executing fellow Africans and subjects in the name of the king, and as Dawdy simply put, he "embodied the ultimate power of the state over its subjects." (p. 189) Congo served as the public executioner from 1725-1737 and was the victim of many assaults due to his job title and responsibilities. Further, the Superior Council protected their "agent of justice" and gave him the power to execute his attackers once they were caught and convicted. The irony of Louis Congo's life is astounding, as his rise to public service and protection

of colonial leaders is contradictory to the colonial leaders view of the emerging slave and Creole society that which Congo was a member. The insight to the social and political order of the colony during this time period is afforded to the records of Louis Congo, and further, the implications of his job title in terms of his race lead the reader to believe that the social order desired by the Superior Council was ignored by the Council themselves.

I was able to learn a lot through Dawdy's illustration of these three previous characters as well as her in-depth analysis of rogue colonialism. Personalizing the colony's history as well as dedicating a monograph to dense research and storytelling allowed me to really understand the structure and disorder of colonial New Orleans during its early years. According to the book, New Orleans struggled to adhere to French ideals and values, and ended up thriving on illegality that the crown condemned from the beginning. The settlers of New Orleans were not the most upstanding moral role models, and the leaders themselves were not, either. I believe that since the French crown essentially "pawned off" Louisiana to subpar leaders and did not invest much money or faith, Louisiana was doomed from the beginning. However, because people like the brothers Le Moyne and John Law devoted their time and efforts to make Louisiana "work" and basically let the settlers and influential leaders take control of the social and economic organization, New Orleans somehow pulled it off to create a thriving port city and resource that became vital to the Spanish and eventually the United States. It was extremely interesting to me to learn about the beginnings of such a lively city and to see that through the centuries, not much has changed. New Orleans is still characterized as a less than moral environment, and its culture and economy is defined by underground, backwater "wheelings and dealings," much of what created the colony in 1718.