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Canada and Slavery in Print, 1789-1889

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Abstract

The dominant national narrative for Canadians today is that Canada was an antislavery haven for formerly enslaved people from the United States in the nineteenth century. However, there were black and First Nations enslaved people in Canada, in New France before 1763 and then under the British until the early nineteenth century. George Elliott Clarke argues that the image of Canada in antebellum American slave narratives has obscured earlier narratives of slavery in Canada.

In this thesis I look at newspapers and slave narratives to explore textual representations of Canada and slavery in print. My research question is: given that Canada is popularly understood as an antislavery haven, how can we use printed texts to produce a more complicated account of Canada's relationship with slavery? I interrogate this in three case studies. In Chapter One I examine the textual presence of enslaved people in Canada in Canadian newspapers 1789-1793. In Chapter Two I explore how Canada appears in the classic American slave narrative after fugitive slaves cross the border into Canada. In Chapter Three I examine how slave narratives about American slavery were recirculated in Canada. In Chapter Four I suggest that *Broken Shackles*, a little-known slavery narrative published in 1889, most probably in Canada, can be best understood in the light of the three case studies.

Through the case studies I interrogate the idea of Canada as an antislavery space. I argue that Canada could think about itself as antislavery and also hold enslaved people; it could see itself as beneficent and be exploitative; and recirculated American slave narratives in Canada could give moral capital to Canadians and benefit the white

privileged reader. Collectively, the chapters show that the textual circulation of Canada and slavery presents a more nuanced account of Canada's relationship to slavery.

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The collaborative nature of this PhD has shaped my approach to the research. One of the aims of the research has been to develop a greater knowledge of the British Library's collections and to communicate this to staff and users of the Library. I have spent many months working with the Library collections, examining rare book and microfilm collection items and using the British Library catalogue to identify relevant materials. Through the case studies in this thesis I have developed knowledge of the British Library collections that were previously poorly understood; I have written a number of blog posts for the American collections blog and organised a showcase of collection materials.

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Contents

Abstract	p. 2
Acknowledgements	p. 4
Contents	p. 6
List of abbreviations	p. 7
List of figures	p. 8
Introduction	p. 9
1. Slavery and Anti-Slave-Trade Sentiment in Canada: A Case Study of Two Newspapers in Lower Canada 1789-1793	p. 70
2. Canada West in the Antebellum Slave Narrative	p. 148
3. The Recirculation of an American Slave Narrative in Canada: Thomas Jones's Slave Narrative, <i>The Experience of Thomas Jones</i> , and Two Religious Newspapers in Nova Scotia 1851-1853	p. 206
4. <i>Broken Shackles: A Century of Canada and Slavery in Print</i>	p. 266
Conclusion	p. 314
Appendix A.	p. 322
Bibliography	p. 324

List of abbreviations

MG - Montreal Gazette

PW - Presbyterian Witness

QG - Quebec Gazette

W - Wesleyan

List of figures

Figure 1.1: A Map Visualising the Places of Publication and Distribution of Slave Narratives and Contemporaneous Literature, Produced By or About Fugitive Slaves and Free Blacks in Canada

..... p. 56

Figure 2.1: The Title Page of the Second Edition of Austin Steward’s *Twenty-Two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Freeman*..... p. 162

Figure 2.2: The Title Page of Frederick Douglass’s *My Bondage and My Freedom*

..... p. 163

Figure 3.1: The Front Cover of Thomas Jones’s *The William Macintosh Experience of Thomas Jones, Who Was a Slave for Forty-Three Years*..... p. 246

Introduction

In the antebellum slave narrative the arrival of the American fugitive slave in Canada West is a climatic moment that represents the end of their ‘teleological journey from slavery to freedom’.¹ The fugitive slave frequently bursts into excited praise after they cross the United States-Canada border. This marks a distinct political boundary between the slaveholding United States and the free (British) Canadian colonies, by presenting the vastly contrasting experience the fugitive slave has of these two spaces. The former slave Josiah Henson describes arriving in Canada and kissing the ground in his 1849 slave narrative, *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada, as Narrated by Himself*. Henson relates, ‘When I got to the Canada side [...] my first impulse was to throw myself on the ground, and giving way to the riotous exultation of my feelings, to execute sundry antics which excited the astonishment of those who were looking on’.² Henson describes how he jumped up and informed a Canadian gentleman onlooker who appeared to be concerned by his behaviour that he was overjoyed because by stepping onto Canadian soil he had become a free man: ‘I jumped up and told him I was free’.³ Henson’s explanation reinforces the sense that for the fugitive slave Canada is the place where they are liberated from American slavery.

The image of Canada as an antislavery haven for the former American slave is satirised within anti-*Tom* literature. Anti-*Tom* novels, as Sarah Meer suggests, were ‘Proslavery’

¹ Julia Sun-Joo Lee, ‘The (Slave) Narrative of *Jane Eyre*’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 36.2 (2008), 317-29 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S10601503080194>> (p. 318). See also James Olney, “‘I Was Born’”: Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature’, in *The Slave’s Narrative*, ed. by Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 148-75 (p. 149).

² Josiah Henson, *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, now an Inhabitant of Canada, as Narrated by Himself* (Boston: A. D. Phelps, 1849), pp. 58-59.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

‘replies’ to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* that tapped into the commercial success of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s classic antislavery novel.⁴ In W. L. G. Smith’s *Life at the South*, published in 1852, the American runaway slave Tom is unable to recognise that he has arrived in Canada. This is reflected in his question to his black guide asking him to interpret his surroundings for him. “‘Whar we cum to, captin’?” he asks. Tom’s guide replies:

“You don’t know, do you? Don’t it look like Canady, you fool?” Tom looked around, after he stepped upon the beach, but as this was his first visit to that particular spot, he could not tell whether he was in the land of freedom or not.⁵

Tom’s arrival in Canada is an anti-climactic moment in the text, which refuses to mark Canada as intrinsically distinguishable from the United States. Henson experiences his arrival as a moment of liberation, but in Smith’s proslavery novel Tom does not. In this proslavery text, which wants to return Tom to slavery by his own choice, Canada appears as a place where the fugitive slave is exploited, beaten and treated inhospitably. Smith’s text probably parodies the flight of Eliza, George and Harry to Canada, and their crossing over Lake Erie, in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, but it also recalls Henson’s earlier arrival in Canada, published several years before Stowe’s novel. In Smith’s text, the narrator relates that Tom is unable to tell by looking around if ‘that particular spot’ of beach is Canada because he has never been there before. This moment functions as a nod towards the fact that Tom is not acting as he should upon his arrival in Canada, and

⁴ Sarah Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania: Slavery, Minstrelsy and Transatlantic Culture in the 1850s* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), p. 75.

⁵ W. L. G. Smith, *Life at the South, or “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” As It Is, Being Narratives, Scenes, and Incidents in the Real “Life of the Lowly”* (Buffalo: Geo. H. Derby, 1852), p. 455.

it suggests that presenting Canada as an antislavery space is little more than a well-worn literary convention.

As these extracts show, proslavery and antislavery writing in the nineteenth century competed over the meaning of Canada and its literary representation, and this was because it was bound up with debates about the institution of slavery in the United States. The dominant image of Canada today presents it as the end of the Underground Railroad, as an antislavery space morally superior to the slave-owning United States. As the extract from *Life at the South* suggests, anti-*Tom* literature undercut a genre expectation for how the fugitive slave would perform their moment of arrival in Canada in literary texts; nineteenth-century readers had an expectation that the Canadas would be imagined as a haven and a non-slaveholding space and that the fugitive slave's arrival in Canada would represent the endpoint of their exhausting journey and the moment in which they would become liberated. This image of Canada as an antislavery haven is remade today through a fixation on the Underground Railroad narrative.

This thesis explores slavery and Canada in print. Today, Canada has a strong antislavery identity that comes from its history as a haven for thousands of escaped slaves from the United States in the mid-nineteenth century, and this thesis examines how Canada's antislavery image has developed in printed texts, particularly given that there were also enslaved people in the colonies that would become Canada until the early nineteenth century. George Elliott Clarke suggests that colonial newspapers present an earlier textual history of slavery in Canada that has been 'obscured' by the image of Canada as a haven in the mid-nineteenth-century slave narrative, and this thesis explores how these

texts and others depict Canada and construct it as an antislavery space. A central aim of this thesis is to challenge Canada's antislavery image and to show that a more complicated relationship between Canada and slavery in Canada and the wider Americas emerges when we explore Canada and slavery in print between 1789 and 1889.

The first section of the introduction discusses an important context for exploring slavery and Canada in print. It explores how historians have interpreted the causes and effects of the British abolition of the slave trade (1807) and slavery (1833) and the apprenticeship system (1838), and it looks at how critics have explained the rhetoric of the slave-trade debates in eighteenth-century Britain. Then, it discusses how Canada has been handled in studies of slavery and abolition. It argues that Canada has been marginalised in slavery and abolition scholarship but there are some exceptions to this, particularly recent work on the black Canadian literary canon. The second section discusses the texts explored in this thesis and outlines the methodological approach that will be taken. The third section provides a historical context for slavery in colonial Canada. The fourth section looks at the recent discourse used by critics to describe slavery in colonial Canada as a national amnesia and a forgotten history. Next, the fifth section demonstrates that a transatlantic and black Atlantic frame is the most fitting through which to explore the texts examined in this thesis. It uses a map that visualises the places of publication of nineteenth-century slave narratives and texts with connections to Canada to show this. The sixth section situates Canada's print culture of slavery in the context of its commonalities and differences to print culture elsewhere in the Americas, and the final section presents an outline for this thesis.

The scholarship of abolition and literary histories

The British context

In order to explore Canadian discourses of slavery we need to look at this in the context of abolition studies. The causes and effects of the British abolition of the slave trade and slavery have been widely debated. Until the early twentieth century, the dominant interpretation of the British abolition of the slave trade and slavery was that it was part of a narrative of Christian progress and that British abolitionists were motivated by their Christian beliefs and disinterestedness. This was challenged in 1944 by Eric Williams, who, taking a critical view of the abolitionists, argued that rather than a moral or political issue, abolitionism was driven by economic developments and forces, that could later become cloaked in moral language and ideas.⁶ In *Capitalism and Slavery*, Williams suggests that industrial growth in Britain was enabled by the slave trade and slavery, but that as industrialisation developed in Britain and there was a decline in the profitability and importance of the West Indian colonies, abolitionism served the economic interests of the rising industrial classes in Britain who championed free trade and expanding markets.⁷ He argues that ‘the rise and fall of mercantilism is the rise and fall of slavery’.⁸ Williams’s thesis, since known as the ‘decline thesis’ of British abolitionism by historians, was challenged by Seymour Drescher in the 1970s. Drescher argued that the abolition of the slave trade and slavery was not in Britain’s economic interest, and it was a form of economic suicide. In *Econocide*, he shows that, rather than an economically declining and unprofitable system, the slave trade and slavery were flourishing at the moment of their extinction.⁹ Drescher argues that the abolitionists

⁶ Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (London: André Deutsch, 1964), p. 211.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 135, and see Chapter Eight especially.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁹ Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977), p. 16, p. 20, pp. 25-26.

were not part of an industrial capitalist pressure group in Parliament, and the slave trade and slavery had the potential to grow and develop at the moment of abolition.¹⁰ He notes that Britain had made new colonial acquisitions on the eve of abolition, and that this offered them the potential for expanding slavery.¹¹ In *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, published in 1966, David Brion Davis argues that slavery was widely sanctioned in Western Christian thought and philosophical doctrines until the mid-eighteenth century.¹² He claims that British abolitionism can be best explained not by economic causes but by looking at how an intellectual and moral shift came about that made it possible for people to see slavery as an ‘unmitigated evil’.¹³ Davis explores how the rise in the ‘man of feeling’ and the sentimental identification with the suffering of enslaved people was one part of this intellectual shift.¹⁴ More recently, Christopher Leslie Brown has modified our understanding of the ‘moral’ explanation for British abolitionism. He claims that in Britain, leading abolitionists and the wider public were attracted to the abolitionist campaign because it could provide them with a ‘source of moral capital’ and ‘prestige’.¹⁵ Brown contests the idea that antislavery campaigning was the result of an abrupt shift in moral attitudes in the mid-eighteenth century; he argues that there was a sustained antislavery sentiment in British texts in the eighteenth century that predated the organised movement, and that this tended towards ameliorationist impulses and a simultaneous desire to defend the economically vital institution of slavery.¹⁶ He suggests that it was the American Revolution that ‘shifted the

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 174.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 96-97.

¹² David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), p. ix.

¹³ Ibid., pp. vii-viii, p. 27, p. 488.

¹⁴ Ibid., Chapter Eleven.

¹⁵ Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), p. 457.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 48, and on antislavery before abolitionism in Britain, see Chapter One.

terms of the debate' and made abolitionist action possible.¹⁷ Brown explores British antislavery sentiment leading up to 1787, when the first formal abolition committee, the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade, was established in London. He claims that the two leading abolitionist groups in Britain before 1787, the Anglican Evangelicals of the 'Teston circle' (such as William Wilberforce and Hannah More) and the Quakers, used their adherence to abolitionist campaigning to lend (moral) authority and prestige to other causes.¹⁸ He argues that for the British public by the late 1780s abolitionism became something that was seen as patriotic and represented British liberty, and that in Britain abolitionism developed a positive image that it did not in other countries, such as France.¹⁹

Scholars have continued to explore how capitalism shaped antislavery campaigning beyond Williams. In *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, Davis argues that the British antislavery movement 'reflected the needs and values of the emerging capitalist order' and that it could serve as a space to displace class tensions and reinforce the status quo and the hegemony of the ruling classes.²⁰ Thomas L. Haskell modifies an aspect of Davis's work, suggesting that British abolitionism was not driven by the interests of the capitalist elite but that the rise in antislavery sentiment in the Anglo-American world from the mid-eighteenth century was part of a wider wave of humanitarian sentimental feeling that was made possible by capitalist developments and contact with the capitalist marketplace.²¹ According to Haskell, humanitarian sentiment

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁸ Ibid., for Brown's discussion of the Evangelical Anglicans and Quakers, see Chapters Six and Seven.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 450; for Brown's discussion of abolitionism and France, see pp. 461-62.

²⁰ David Brion Davis, 'Part 1: The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823', in *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation*, ed. by Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 17-103 (p. 71, p. 102).

²¹ Thomas L. Haskell, 'Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1 & Part 2', in *The Antislavery Debate*, ed. by Bender, pp. 107-35, pp. 136-160 (p. 111, p. 136, p. 156).

‘swept through the societies of Western Europe, England, and North America in the hundred years following 1750. Among the movements spawned by this new sensibility, the most spectacular was that to abolish slavery’.²² Seymour Drescher attributes British abolitionism to political shifts in Britain and highlights the popular nature of the movement, for example looking at the role that artisans outside the metropole in places such as Manchester played in the British abolition movement; in contrast to Christopher Leslie Brown, he does not see the American Revolution as a key turning point, precipitating the rise in popular abolitionism.²³

Other scholars have explained British abolitionism by showing that it came out of middle-class British culture. David Turley, highlighting that industrialisation alone cannot account for British antislavery culture, describes the culture of antislavery in Britain as ‘a series of changing *alliances*’ amongst a predominately middle-class British public that were drawn from three major religious-intellectual traditions: evangelicals, rational dissenters and Quakers who had ‘only partially congruent social worlds’.²⁴ He argues that antislavery was one aspect of a wider middle-class ‘reform mentality’ which also included causes such as temperance, and factory and prison reforms.²⁵ Clare Midgley has shown the central role that women across Britain played in the antislavery movement for example, through their role in establishing provincial antislavery societies that distributed print in their local communities. Midgley notes that women’s experience of campaigning was socially conservative, largely restricted to middle-class

²² Ibid. (p. 107).

²³ Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press Limited, 1986), especially pp. 128-34. For Drescher’s view on the American Revolution and British abolitionism, see Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 205-41.

²⁴ David Turley, *The Culture of English Antislavery, 1780-1860* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 227, p. 5.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 135, and see Chapter Five.

women and reinforced acceptable gender norms for women.²⁶ However, it also expanded their involvement in the political sphere, and it provided a framework for the later development of feminism.²⁷

Enslaved people throughout the black Atlantic world and the colonies played an important role in the abolition of slavery. C. L. R. James's *The Black Jacobins*, first published in 1938, was a pioneering look at how enslaved people in Saint-Domingue, led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, fought and secured their own liberation during the period of the French Revolution, becoming the first black republic, even if their freedom was only secured fleetingly at first.²⁸ More recently, Robin Blackburn argues that scholars need to look to the colonies and plantation zones when seeking explanations for British, French and North American antislavery movements. He argues they need to look at the way that plantation zones placed 'pressures' on the Old World, and he suggests politics and class struggle were an essential context for British abolitionism that take it beyond a reading focused on middle-class British abolitionists.²⁹ He suggests that 'Political events which opened a rift between slaveholders and government gave opportunities to slave resistance', and 'antislavery was often imposed on metropolitan decision-makers by external pressures'.³⁰ Scholars have interpreted the American Revolution from the perspective of the enslaved people who fought for their own freedom by fighting on the British side because they had been promised their own liberty in return for their

²⁶ Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870* (London: Routledge, 1992), Chapter Five.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 154-55, p. 177.

²⁸ C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 3rd edn (London: Allison and Busby, 1980).

²⁹ Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (London: Verso, 1988), p. 29, pp. 27-28.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 521, p. 29.

assistance.³¹ The model of the black Atlantic and working-class Atlantic has shown how revolutionary ideas could spread and inspire revolt amongst working-class and black people in the Atlantic world. Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker describe this as a ‘many-headed hydra’ to reflect the continuity of working-class revolt in the Atlantic world across space and time, in which the American Revolution and slave uprisings were part of a broader history.³² This approach searches for historical narratives from ‘below’ that contest dominant narratives of progressive modernity that are perpetuated by the dominant society.³³

Likely inspired by the scholarly turn to explore black Atlantic histories, a new approach to understanding British abolitionism challenges the national and celebratory narrative of a peculiar British abolitionism. This underscores that British abolitionism was, at least initially in the eighteenth century, part of a more international abolition movement. This approach builds to some extent on the earlier work of David Brion Davis that noted the links between British and American Quakers in the mid-eighteenth century and his description of them as the ‘Quaker International’.³⁴ J. R. Oldfield argues that the first organisations established from 1775 to campaign for the abolition of the slave trade in London, Paris, New York and Pennsylvania were linked and part of an ‘international movement’.³⁵ He explores how people and print travelled between these organisations,

³¹ For example, see Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves and the American Revolution* (London: BBC Books, 2005), p. 20, and Chapters Three and Four.

³² Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (London: Verso, 2000), especially pp. 4-7.

³³ For the argument that the black Atlantic presents a counter-narrative to dominant narratives of a progressive modernity, see, for example, Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 15, p. 48, p. 117.

³⁴ Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, p. 329.

³⁵ J. R. Oldfield, *Transatlantic Abolitionism in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 2.

arguing that abolition societies shared print along an ‘information highway’.³⁶ He describes the newspapers (that reprinted transatlantic anti-slave-trade print), and letters and other printed texts that circulated between societies, as ‘Atlantic spaces’; he suggests that it is in these ‘spaces’ that the networks underpinning the transatlantic abolition movement can best be discerned.³⁷ After 1838 British and American abolitionists collaborated on the campaign for the abolition of American slavery, as Howard Temperley’s earlier study shows.³⁸ In *Abolition*, Seymour Drescher explores abolition movements from a comparative perspective that highlights links between national abolition movements, but he also reveals the specificity of these movements in their local contexts.³⁹ He notes, for example, that the French anti-slave-trade campaign led by the La Société des Amis des Noirs, established in 1788, was a far less popular movement than the British antislavery movement.⁴⁰ The British abolitionist campaigns to abolish the slave trade and, later, slavery, raised huge popular protest as reflected in the high numbers of signatures on petitions sent to Parliament. Drescher notes that the Amis des Noirs was largely ineffectual, and it was enslaved people who steered French abolition (in 1794) in their revolt in Saint-Domingue, although slavery was later reestablished in the French Empire in May 1802, and was not finally abolished until 1848.⁴¹

³⁶ Ibid., p. 7.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 3.

³⁸ Howard Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870* (London: Macmillan, 1972), p. xiii.

³⁹ Drescher, *Abolition*, p. x.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 154; on abolitionism in Britain as a popular movement, see Chapter Eight, and p. 209, pp. 213-15 especially,

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 159. For an overview of the dates, see William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 412-13.

The rhetoric of the eighteenth-century British slave-trade debates has been explored by critics. Willie Sypher's early and important study of British antislavery writing and sentimental literature argued this presented an inauthentic view of the African and a 'pseudo-Africa' and 'antislavery poetry was often ethically as well as aesthetically hollow'.⁴² Brycchan Carey shows that sentimental rhetoric, which came from classical rhetoric and developments in new rhetorics in the mid-eighteenth century, provided abolitionists with a 'collection of distinct and recognisable rhetorical procedures' that they could use in the eighteenth-century slave-trade debates.⁴³ He notes that some proslavery campaigners also used sentimental rhetoric to craft their arguments supporting the slave trade.⁴⁴ Carey argues that sentimental rhetoric was used in other political causes in the eighteenth century, but it was used to its greatest extent in the slave-trade debates and especially in advocating the abolition of the slave trade.⁴⁵ Sentimental rhetoric required the reader to identify with the sufferings of another person. One of the six rhetorical strategies used by abolitionists that Carey identifies is the 'sentimental argument', a facet of which is the argument that 'all human beings experience pain and misery in the same way'.⁴⁶ As Carey notes, this was used to argue that an equal ability to feel was proof of the equality of mankind and could prove the shared humanity of enslaved people, and it was particularly important as a way to counter proslavery arguments that 'increasingly denied the humanity of Africans' in the eighteenth century.⁴⁷ Carey explores sentimental rhetoric in a range of abolitionist texts,

⁴² Willie Sypher, *Guinea's Captive Kings: British Anti-Slavery Literature of the Eighteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), p. 157.

⁴³ Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760-1807* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 17-18.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, for the use of sentimental rhetoric in proslavery writing, see especially Chapter Four.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2, p. 196.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38. For a discussion of the various sentimental rhetorical strategies, see especially Chapter One.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

including printed versions of William Wilberforce's 1789 speech made before the House of Commons, John Wesley's writing and William Cowper's poetry. As Stephen Ahern's description of the edited collection of essays in *Affect and Abolition in the Anglo-Atlantic, 1770-1830* attests, recent work on sentimental strategies explores how the 'sentimental ideal' of the sympathetic identification with the suffering slave can always be unpacked for the 'workings of power' that it presents.⁴⁸ Ahern highlights, for example, that excessive displays of emotion and distress can distance the reader and narrator from the suffering subject.⁴⁹ Srividhya Swaminathan has shown that the British slave-trade debates, both the anti- and pro-slave-trade sides, were about the formation of British national identity and not just abolition.⁵⁰ Debates about the slave trade were also debates about defining the national character and the nature of the 'Briton'.⁵¹ Swaminathan finds that both sides of the debate ultimately converged over a discursive terrain that constructed the view of the 'Briton' as commercial, moral and white, and Swaminathan argues that this underpinned an imperial agenda for Britain in the nineteenth century.⁵² A more focused study explores the rhetoric of the Somerset case (1772) in William Cowper's poetry. The legal ruling was widely interpreted as dictating that slavery could not exist in Britain itself. Looking beyond his abolitionist poetry, Anthony John Harding suggests that Cowper's poetry draws from this Somerset rhetoric to present a celebratory image of British free soil and liberty.⁵³ This justified British overseas expansion because it supported the view that Britain could spread liberty

⁴⁸ Stephen Ahern, 'Introduction', in *Affect and Abolition in the Anglo-Atlantic, 1770-1830*, ed. by Stephen Ahern (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 1-19 (p. 11).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Srividhya Swaminathan, *Debating the Slave Trade: Rhetoric of British National Identity, 1759-1815* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 3-4.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 215-16.

⁵³ Anthony John Harding, 'Commerce, Sentiment, and Free Air: Contradictions of Abolitionist Rhetoric', in *Affect and Abolition in the Anglo-Atlantic*, ed. by Ahern, pp. 71-88 (p. 73).

through its naturally liberty-loving people.⁵⁴ George Boulukos, like Carey (who shows sentimental rhetoric was also used in pro-slave-trade writing), explores how sentimental slavery writing could serve a wider set of purposes than abolitionism. Boulukos looks at a dominant trope in eighteenth-century British fiction: the grateful slave. He argues that this sentimental trope appears to have been sympathetic towards enslaved African people but supported the amelioration of slavery rather than its full abolition.⁵⁵

Boulukos argues the trope contributed to an emerging sense of racial difference in late eighteenth-century Britain in its different expectations around how gratitude is expected to be expressed in texts by fictional African slaves and Europeans.⁵⁶ He suggests this then informed the hardening of notions of racial difference into a more fixed racial essentialism in the nineteenth century, a period in which the trope circulated in a developed form in American literary contexts.⁵⁷ Antislavery rhetoric in the Atlantic world was also strongly influenced by the Quakers. In the century prior to the first abolition societies being established in Britain, France and America, Quakers in Pennsylvania, and to a lesser extent in the extended Quaker network in Barbados and Britain, developed and refined ‘a shared set of arguments against slavery’ in published texts and unpublished minutes of meetings, and this was the basis for ‘all later antislavery discourse, both in America and in Europe’.⁵⁸

Canada

Canada is overlooked in studies of slavery and abolition in two main ways. Firstly, the

⁵⁴ Ibid. (pp. 81-84).

⁵⁵ George Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave: The Emergence of Race in Eighteenth-Century British and American Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 14.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 20.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 234.

⁵⁸ Brycchan Carey, *From Peace to Freedom: Quaker Rhetoric and the Birth of American Antislavery, 1657-1761* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 3.

history of slavery and its abolition in Canada is only briefly discussed in general studies of slavery and abolition in the Atlantic world.⁵⁹ Secondly, the response of the provinces that would become Canada to the wider transatlantic abolition context is little-explored for both the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Canada's engagement with 'international' slave-trade debates and its connection to the broader transatlantic context during the eighteenth century is overlooked. Recent work has looked at the 'information highway' of abolitionist print that connected anti-slave-trade organisations and debates in France, Britain and America in the eighteenth century, but Canada has not been included as part of that highway.⁶⁰ British abolitionists who played an influential role in Canada in the eighteenth century such as John Graves Simcoe and John Clarkson have been little explored in their Canadian context, and this is despite the fact that their letter networks connected them to the wider British antislavery movement and better-known abolitionists such as William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, and also to those influential in shaping British abolitionist legislation, such as Henry Dundas. Abolition histories for Canada tend to focus on the period after the first third of the nineteenth century, concentrating on the period of the Underground Railroad and the period when the first organised antislavery societies were established in Canada; they focus on Canada's response to slavery in the United States, and consequently they miss out the eighteenth-century beginnings of abolitionism in Canada.⁶¹ Yet even studies of Canada and abolition for the nineteenth century are partial and do not thoroughly embed Canada within a transatlantic abolition context. This is reflected in the still under-studied area of black abolitionists in Canada and their transatlantic journeys, for example to Britain,

⁵⁹ A recent example is Drescher's *Abolition*.

⁶⁰ Oldfield, *Transatlantic Abolitionism*, p. 3, p. 7.

⁶¹ For example, see *The Black Abolitionist Papers: Volume II: Canada, 1830-1865*, ed. by Peter Ripley (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986) and Allen P. Stouffer, *The Light of Nature and the Law of God Antislavery in Ontario 1833-1877* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992).

and the tours that abolitionists from the United States, for example Frederick Douglass, made in Canada, as well as to Britain.⁶²

One of the reasons that Canada has been marginalised within the history of slavery in the Americas is because it was not directly involved in the Atlantic slave trade, and, as Gregory E. O' Malley notes, historians have tended to focus on the slave trade (and journeys directly from Africa) and overlook the journeys that enslaved people made within the Americas (sometimes following journeys on slave ships, or as separate journeys).⁶³ Although he does not explore Canada, O' Malley explores the journeys that enslaved people made within the Americas, showing that this was an extensive practice and a central part of the economic system of the slave trade and should be studied as a part of that broader history.⁶⁴

There are some exceptions to the marginalisation of Canada in studies of slavery and abolition. In recent years historians have explored slavery in Canada and situated it in the wider context of its interconnections to slavery in the Anglo-American and French Atlantic world.⁶⁵ In addition, the role that Nova Scotia played as the temporary destination for the resettlement of thousands of black Loyalists after the American Revolution, as part of the Loyalist exodus, and who later travelled to the British

⁶² For an example of a study of African Americans and the abolitionist campaign in Britain which almost entirely misses out the Canadian departure-points (and in some cases self-identities) of many black abolitionists in Britain, see Audrey A. Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England: Abolitionist Politics in Popular Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). The best study of black abolitionists and Canada is still *The Black Abolitionist Papers: Volume II: Canada*, ed. by Ripley.

⁶³ Gregory E. O' Malley, *Final Passages: The Intercolonial Slave Trade of British America, 1619-1807* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), p. 6.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-15.

⁶⁵ See for example Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Maureen G. Elgersman, *Unyielding Spirits: Black Women and Slavery in Early Canada and Jamaica* (London: Routledge, 1999); Harvey Amani Whitfield, *North to Bondage: Loyalist Slavery in the Maritimes* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016).

settlement of Sierra Leone, in addition to Loyalists and Loyalist-owned enslaved people after the American Revolution, has also been explored.⁶⁶ Although lightly touched on in studies of British abolitionism, it has been suggested that the black Loyalists in Nova Scotia were part of the production of a moral narrative and moral capital of abolitionism for Britain at the time of the American Revolution.⁶⁷ Scholars have begun to recover black Atlantic figures that are meaningful to Canada into a black Atlantic history that has traditionally taken greater account of other parts of the black Atlantic world, such as Britain and the United States. For example, historians have discussed the black Loyalist Thomas Peters, who travelled to London from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to present a petition to Governor Carleton. Peters's petition highlighted the poor conditions and issues with small or non-existent land grants that the black Loyalists had experienced after their arrival in Atlantic Canada after the end of the American Revolution.⁶⁸

An area that has received some critical attention is the representation of Canada and American slavery in the British Victorian context, particularly in the 1850s. Critics show that Canada could be represented as an antislavery haven in slave narratives and performances of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on the stage, and this provided a space for the expression of English nationalism and did the 'work of Empire'.⁶⁹ Sarah Meer describes one performance of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in a theatre in London, for example, in which the arrival of Eliza, George and Harry in Canada was accompanied by the music of

⁶⁶ Schama, *Rough Crossings*, for example, pp. 14-15, and Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: The First International Human Rights Movement* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2005), pp. 199-212.

⁶⁷ Brown, *Moral Capital*, pp. 312-13.

⁶⁸ Schama, *Rough Crossings*, pp. 20-21, pp. 296-313.

⁶⁹ Fisch, *American Slaves*, p. 63.

““Rule Britannia””.⁷⁰ Fisch notes that this representation of Canada was part of a wider context of criticising American society and nationalistic discourse in English abolitionism.⁷¹ In the Canadian literary context, Daniel Coleman argues that the representation of the Canadian ‘Loyalist brother’ in literature (c. 1840-1940) as sympathetic to the American fugitive slave and ‘Indians’ contrasts him to fictional English officers and Americans, and that ‘the Canadian indigenization sets him apart from British officers, whose ignorance of practical knowledge makes them indecisive in movements requiring action [...] Thus the Canadian brother is limned through his association with Native and African characters’.⁷² Coleman notes that this provided British Canadians with a way to justify and displace tensions about violence in Canadian narratives of its Loyalist past that were (and still are) central to Canada’s national identity formation and one of its foundational myths.⁷³ He explores the construction of the Canadian Loyalist as one of four male and white fictional types that have ‘gradually reified the privileged normative status of British whiteness in English Canada’.⁷⁴

I have been exploring how Canada is marginalised in slavery and abolition scholarship, and examining some exceptions to this. As I have been discussing, historians have begun to explore Canada as part of a broader transatlantic abolition history and to look at slavery in Canada, but this is still a relatively new and underdeveloped area, and although Coleman, Fisch and Meer explore examples of the representation of Canada

⁷⁰ Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania*, pp. 141-42.

⁷¹ Fisch, *American Slaves*, p. 63, p. 118 n. 17.

⁷² Daniel Coleman, *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), p. 75.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71, p. 75.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

and slavery in literary texts, they do not look more holistically at how Canada's antislavery image has developed across a range of texts. I now turn to examine a particularly rich and developing area of critical study that examines black Canadian literature, led by George Elliott Clarke and Winfried Siemerling. This research represents the most sustained attempt by scholars to explore Canada within a transatlantic slavery context in printed texts, and it is a key critical context for this thesis. I discuss how this work relates to the concerns of this thesis and highlight the gaps that this thesis will address.

George Elliott Clarke, Winfried Siemerling and black Canadian literature

A growing area of scholarship calls for the recovery of black Canadian literature into the canon, and this focuses on Victorian slave narratives, as well as black Loyalist narratives and unpublished materials, such as trial transcripts. George Elliott Clarke argues that slave narratives have been seen in Canada as 'an exotic species of Americana', but that they need to be reclaimed into the Canadian literary canon.⁷⁵ Clarke claims that the history of the slave narrative in Canada predates the antebellum slave narrative and stretches back to a printed history of slavery in Canada, in the form of runaway slave advertisements, as well as unpublished court trial records and letters.⁷⁶ Winfried Siemerling has developed some of Clarke's arguments. He argues that slave narratives can be best explored from the perspective of hemispheric studies, which examines slave narratives within a comparative Americas context rather than from a

⁷⁵ George Elliott Clarke, "'This is no hearsay': Reading the Canadian Slave Narratives', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada*, 43.1 (2005), 7-32 <<http://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/bsc/article/view/18415/15347>> [accessed 2 June 2016] (p. 7, p. 14).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* (pp. 17-18).

more isolated national literary perspective.⁷⁷ Siemerling sees a new discussion around Canada's relationship with the slave narrative, which has long been neglected, as part of developing a more complex account of a genre that developed across national borders and belongs to multiple literary traditions. He sees the 1850s as Canada's first black literary renaissance, preceding the second renaissance in the twentieth century. Many of the texts he explores are part of a cross-border abolitionism of American and Canadian black intellectuals such as Henry Bibb, and he sees their slave narratives and wider writing as 'transnational but written and rooted in Canada'.⁷⁸ Siemerling notes too that there are no literary prototypes for modern writers who wish to write narratives of Canada's slaveholding past, because there are no narratives of Canadian slaves.⁷⁹ More so than Clarke, Siemerling is interested in developing understandings around Canada and its black literature in order to open up new understandings of the black Atlantic world.⁸⁰

The scholarship on black Canadian literature overlaps in three important ways with my own research in this thesis, which focuses on the textual representation of slavery in Canada and explores Canada's developing self-image as an antislavery space in printed texts. This thesis explores some of the same texts that have been discussed by critics of black Canadian literature (Canadian slave advertisements in newspapers and slave narratives); it similarly positions Canada within a black Atlantic and transatlantic

⁷⁷ Winfried Siemerling, 'Slave Narratives and Hemispheric Studies', in *The Oxford Handbook of the African American Slave Narrative*, ed. by John Earnest (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 344-62 (p. 345).

⁷⁸ Winfried Siemerling, *The Black Atlantic Reconsidered: Black Canadian Writing, Cultural History, and the Presence of the Past* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), pp. 97-98.

⁷⁹ Ibid. For Siemerling's discussion of the lack of narrative antecedents, see p. 33, and on contemporary black Canadian writing, see pp. 155-349.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 30, pp. 358-59, p. 361.

literary frame, and it develops some of the specific arguments that Clarke and Siemerling have made about slave advertisements and slave narratives.

This thesis develops a different reading of the relationship between nineteenth-century slave narratives and eighteenth-century Canadian slave advertisements to those of Clarke and Siemerling. Clarke sees the Canadian slave advertisements as presenting earlier narratives of slavery in Canada that challenge the image of Canada as an antislavery haven presented in the antebellum slave narratives, from the point of view of formerly enslaved people from the United States. He argues that, ‘the latter [antebellum slave] narratives are so rich with almost bombastic praise for Canadian/British ‘liberty,’ that the more negative, earlier accounts of white settler racism are obscured to the point of erasure’.⁸¹ Siemerling’s slightly later study, *The Black Atlantic Reconsidered*, does not disrupt this assumed binary between the printed texts that represent Canadian slavery and Canadian antislavery respectively: the advertisements and slave narratives. In their reading of this material, Clarke and Siemerling suggest that earlier narratives of slavery in Canada can challenge the narrative of Canada as an antislavery haven that developed in the slave narrative in the mid-nineteenth century.

Clarke’s and Siemerling’s work has a number of gaps that need to be explored to unpack how Canada’s image as an antislavery haven has developed, in spite of an earlier history of slavery in Canada and the circulation of slave advertisements in Canadian newspapers. These gaps are understandable because Clarke and Siemerling are focused on exploring black Canadian literature and the presence of black narratives and culture in the national past, rather than attempting to study how Canada has been represented in

⁸¹ Clarke, “‘This is no hearsay’” (p. 18 n. 19).

relation to slavery in printed literary texts. By highlighting the gaps within their research I hope to identify how this thesis develops upon and relates to the existing research. Clarke and Siemerling do not explore the contexts in which slave narratives and slave advertisements were framed and their paratext, and this reflects that their interest is in recovering black literary voices and the presence of black people in early Canada. While their approach to the mid-nineteenth century slave narrative explores black Canadian literature within a transatlantic and black Atlantic context, their reading of the eighteenth-century newspapers is more restricted. This is reflected in the fact that they examine the Canadian runaway slave advertisements but do not look at texts that represent the broader black Atlantic world within the newspapers or examine reprinted texts from the international abolition movement. Moreover, Clarke and Siemerling miss the important paratext of newspapers in their exploration of slave narratives.

This thesis differs from Clarke's and Siemerling's work on black Canadian literature in a number of ways. The focus is not primarily on the black Atlantic and black Canadian literature. However, within its own scope, this thesis shares Clarke and Siemerling's expansion of the national boundaries that have been traditionally used to explore black Canadian literature, particularly evident in their reading of the nineteenth-century slave narratives. This thesis focuses on the production and circulation of Canada's image as an antislavery haven and how its history of slavery has become marginalised. The methodological approach taken to the material (including slave advertisements and slave narratives) in this thesis differs to that taken by critics of black literature. I look at slave advertisements and slave narratives and contextualise them within the specific local contexts of printed texts in Canadian newspapers. Rather than lift slave advertisements out of their wider textual context — and a multiplicity of voices — in

the Canadian newspaper, I explore them in this context, which reads them within a wider body of writing about slavery in the Americas. I also use newspapers to explore how readers were invited to read a slave narrative in Canada, and see this text in this context rather than in isolation. By looking at new texts discovered in Canadian newspapers (some of which are rare and were consulted in archives in Canada and London) and by exploring Canada and slavery in print from a perspective that examines this within Canada's response to slavery and abolition elsewhere, I come to a different reading of the relationship between the slave advertisements and the slave narrative, and hence, to a different understanding of how Canada's antislavery narrative has developed.

The wider critical discussion of abolition and literary histories that I have been discussing is a useful context for this thesis because many of the Canadian texts that will be explored are reprints that came from other 'national' contexts. Canada's reprint culture and how this has shaped its print culture of slavery will be explored more fully below in the sixth section, which situates Canada in the context of print culture more broadly across the Americas. It is a central premise of this thesis that these texts are also Canada's literature of slavery and that, because of their reprinted nature, the contexts in which they were reprinted in newspapers and as books needs to be explored in order to analyse how Canadian readers and writers related to these texts. These texts have been particularly marginalised within critical studies, and I suspect that this is because they are seen as copies rather than original texts. Despite the turn to explore slave narratives, critics of black Canadian literature do not look at the broader range of print and especially newspapers which provide a more contextual reading of Canada and its relationship to slavery. Given the transatlantic and Canadian context of abolitionist texts

that were reprinted in Canada, the wider critical discussion of British anti-slave-trade print is an important critical context for Chapter One. As I have discussed, scholars have explored how this literature could produce national celebratory narratives for Britain, and they have examined the rhetorical strategies that were most common in these texts, such as sentimental rhetoric. Scholars have also noted British anti-slave-trade literature was mobile and reprinted in other abolition contexts, for example, in Pennsylvania and New York. However, there has been less exploration of how the meaning of print could change when it was placed into the new context in a newspaper and how its original meaning and its new context played together. The nation-making aspect of this British anti-slave-trade discourse (that Swaminathan identifies) also seems to have been less well-considered when abolitionist print travelled across national borders, but critics assume the continuity of its antislavery message in its new context. For example, J. R. Oldfield suggests that in the late 1780s and early 1790s American newspapers reprinted British anti-slave-trade texts, as well as to a lesser extent anti-slave-trade texts from France, and he claims that reprinting these texts represents a ‘reliance on European texts to make the case against American slavery’, but he does not discuss how reprinting these texts may have circulated other discourses.⁸² Given the fact that abolitionist discourses could be about more than slavery, examining the context in which abolitionist texts and slave narratives were reprinted in Canada is essential to exploring which discourses were given emphasis within the Canadian context.

The texts and methodology

In this thesis I examine Canadian newspapers, slave narratives related or penned by formerly enslaved people from the United States and a late nineteenth-century narrative

⁸² Oldfield, *Transatlantic Abolitionism*, p. 58, and see also pp. 57-59.

about American slavery, written and perhaps published in Canada. The texts examined were published between 1789-1889, starting with the runaway slave advertisements and anti-slave-trade sentiment printed in newspapers in Lower Canada and in the final chapter looking at what may be the first book-length slavery narrative published in Canada in 1889. The texts explored in this study were published after the American Revolution (1775-1783) following the loss of the thirteen American colonies by Britain, which saw the birth of the United States.⁸³ They largely fall into a period before Canada was united into a single federal dominion by Confederation (1867). The slave narratives will be explored in two ways: by considering slave narratives that depict the lives of formerly enslaved people in Canada West, and how American slave narratives were recirculated in Canada.

There are three reasons why I focus on printed material in this thesis. Firstly, print circulates widely, and it is part of a broader literary transatlantic that I am interested in. Secondly, printed texts provide a way to explore the public consciousness of Canada and to examine how slavery in Canada has been recorded and constructed in the national mind. This provides a way in which to examine the seeming contradiction for Canada that it can think about itself today as having been an antislavery haven for American slaves despite an earlier history of slavery in Canada. In this thesis I examine how slavery in Canada is textually present in the 'imagined community' in Canada and how this later becomes obscured by the image of Canada as an antislavery haven.⁸⁴ I examine newspapers, since these construct what Benedict Anderson has referred to as

⁸³ Political tensions had erupted in the thirteen colonies in 1765, escalating into violent conflict in 1774. In 1776 Continental Congress voted that the thirteen colonies were 'free and independent states', and it issued the Declaration of Independence on July 4th 1776.

⁸⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 5-7.

‘imagined communities’, producing an image of the community for its readers, as I will explore more fully later in the introduction. Thirdly, my approach is that of a literature student. I explore textual representations of enslaved people, rather than the lived experience of enslaved people. Hence, I explore how their presence is constructed on the page, and examine the wider printed context in which enslaved people in Canada were represented.

There are some printed and manuscript materials that are not explored as part of this thesis. Three eighteenth-century black autobiographical narratives that will not be examined are the narrative of the black missionary John Marrant, and the black Loyalist narratives of Boston King, *The Life of Boston King* and the baptist minister David George, *An Account of the Life of Mr David George, from Sierra Leone in Africa; given by himself in a conversation with Brother Rippon of London and Brother Pearce of Birmingham*.

John Marrant was born a free black man in New York, and in 1785 he travelled to Nova Scotia to preach the gospel as a minister of the Countess of Huntingdon Connexion of Calvinist Methodism, remaining there until 1787. Marrant’s narrative is entitled *A Narrative of the Lord’s Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, a Black (Now Gone to Preach the Gospel in Nova-Scotia), Born in New York, in North-America*, and it was first published in London in 1785. Marrant’s narrative does not textually depict his life in Nova Scotia, and because it does not textually construct Canada it falls outside the remit of this thesis.

The narratives of Boston King and David George depict their experience in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick after the American Revolution. Boston King depicts his life in Nova Scotia in his narrative and relates his wife's experience of religious conversion and his own salvation. He describes his experience of labouring amongst the people in Birchtown, Nova Scotia to bring them to God, and later relates journeying to Sierra Leone to continue his efforts in helping to convert others to God.⁸⁵ As his narrative relates, King later spent 1794-1796 in Britain at Kingswood School, a Methodist school founded by John Wesley, before returning to Sierra Leone. His narrative was originally published in Britain in the *Methodist Magazine* in instalments between March-June 1798. David George describes his experience of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in his slave narrative. He describes preaching and performing baptisms in both places. As his narrative relates, David George later relocated to Sierra Leone and travelled to Britain, where his narrative was published.⁸⁶ The black Loyalist narratives of George and King will not be examined in this thesis because, although they depict the experience of formerly enslaved people (from the newly-formed United States) in the Canadian Maritimes as part of a broader black Atlantic world, there is no evidence from the materials that have been consulted that these narratives were written for a Canadian audience or circulated within a Canadian print context. The black Loyalist narratives were written in Britain, and they were produced in a British publication context.

Moreover, an examination of contemporary newspapers in Nova Scotia and Quebec has

⁸⁵ Boston King, 'Memoirs of the Life of Boston King, a Black Preacher: Written by Himself, during his Residence at Kingswood School', in *The Methodist Magazine, for the Year 1798: Being a Continuation of The Arminian Magazine, First Published by the Rev. John Wesley, A. M., Consisting Chiefly of Extracts and Original Treatises on General Redemption* (London: Printed for G. Whitfield, City-Road, and Sold at the Methodist Preaching-Houses in Town and Country, 1798), pp. 105-10; pp. 157-61; pp. 209-13; pp. 261-65 (p. 161, p. 209, p. 213, pp. 261-264).

⁸⁶ David George, 'An Account of the Life of Mr David George, from Sierra Leone in Africa; Given by Himself in a Conversation with Brother Rippon of London and Brother Pearce of Birmingham', in *Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English-Speaking World of the Eighteenth Century, Expanded Edition*, ed. by Vincent Carretta (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), pp. 333-50 (pp. 336-40).

not uncovered any evidence that these texts were being read or circulated in Canada in the eighteenth century. The focus in this thesis is on how the image of Canada as an antislavery haven has been developed and circulated and to engage with the argument that the antebellum slave narrative has presented an idealised image of Canada as an antislavery haven that has obscured a history of slavery in Canada textually circulated in its colonial newspapers. This is explored in Chapter One, which looks at the newspapers, and Chapter Two which explores the shift in the early 1850s to textually depict the experience of former American slaves living in Canada West in the slave narrative. As I explore in Chapter Two, the portrayal of Canada West in the slave narrative focused around depictions of clearing, developing and owning land. Canada West is not textually presented in the slave narrative before the 1850s, and whilst the black Loyalist narratives represent an earlier textual tradition for depicting black experience in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, the tradition of portraying Canada West as an antislavery haven has its origins in the mid-nineteenth century.

There are two types of unpublished materials that are relevant to the history of slavery and freedom in Canada that will not be explored in this thesis: the *Book of Negroes* and trial transcripts that record the mediated voices of enslaved African and First Nations people in Canada. The *Book of Negroes* refers to the inspection rolls recorded in unpublished ledger books, of which British and American copies survive, made by the British and American commissioners who, following the orders of Sir Guy Carleton, inspected the British ships leaving New York that carried the black Loyalists and Loyalist-owned enslaved people who travelled to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick after the end of the American Revolution in 1783. Sir Guy Carleton, the British Commander

in Chief, ordered that the British and American commissioners, whom he had appointed, oversee the embarkation of ships and that records be kept of all black people travelling on board these vessels leaving New York.⁸⁷ The British copy of the *Book of Negroes* consists of a ledger book containing the inspection lists of British ships, compiled by the commissioners and probably transcribed by a secretary on board the ship.⁸⁸ These ship inspection records provide a wealth of detail regarding the free black Loyalists and Loyalist-owned enslaved people who travelled to the Canadian Maritimes. For example, they list the names and ages of black Loyalists; and for slaves or indentured servants the names of their masters; and they also detail disputes about whether some black Loyalists were really free, and they discuss some claims made by those who claimed they were the rightful owners of some of those who embarked on board the ships. The inspection rolls read like deconstructed biographical accounts of the lives of black Loyalists and enslaved people entering Canada, and these texts are told in the voices of the British inspection officers who recorded these details. The *Book of Negroes* is an important historical document for exploring black lives and experience at the end of the war, and it captures how Canada became part of the struggle of African Americans who fought for their freedom by fighting on the British side during the war. In order to be allowed to board the ships bound for Canada, black Loyalists had to have ‘resided twelve months within the British Lines’ during the war and responded to Lord Dunmore’s 1775 proclamation, which stated that enslaved people who escaped and fought for the British would become free, or to the subsequent proclamations of liberty

⁸⁷ For an introduction to the *Book of Negroes*, see Ruth Holmes Whitehead, *Black Loyalists: Southern Settlers of Nova Scotia’s First Free Black Communities* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Limited, 2013), p. x, p. xiv, pp. 137-157.

⁸⁸ For the material context of the compilation of the inspection rolls, see Whitehead, *Black Loyalists*, p. 145.

made by British generals and officials.⁸⁹ While its importance as a document that details black experience in Canada and the wider Atlantic world is clear, the *Book of Negroes* is not examined in this thesis because there is no evidence that it was printed and circulated, and because of this it did not produce an image of Canada and slavery in print.

There are around a dozen unpublished trial transcripts that contain the mediated voices of enslaved people in Canada.⁹⁰ In particular, the trial transcripts from the hearing of the black slave woman Marie-Joseph Angélique, who was tried and executed for her alleged involvement in starting a fire in Montreal in 1734, have received recent critical attention, notably in Afua Cooper's *The Hanging of Angélique*.⁹¹ The trial records are important historical documents for exploring the history and experience of slavery in Canada, and they have been examined by historians. However, the trial transcripts were not printed and circulated, and they did not construct an image of slavery in Canada for its people and as such they will not be examined in this thesis, which is focused on the textual construction of Canada and on printed texts that circulated widely.

The methodology I adopt in this thesis is a combination of archival research, book history and close reading of the texts. I have worked at the British Library in its newspaper archive, examining Canadian newspapers published in the late eighteenth

⁸⁹ For a copy of this order, see the British copy of the *Book of Negroes*, London, National Archives, Sir Guy Carleton Papers, PRO30/50/100. An unpublished transcript of this document has been kindly supplied by Ruth Holmes Whitehead, former curator of the Nova Scotia Archives, 'The Black Loyalists of South Carolina 1775-1785: The *Book of Negroes*: A Contrast of the English, American and Published Versions' (unpublished manuscript, provided by the author).

⁹⁰ See Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, p. 393 and Whitfield, *North to Bondage*, p. 83, p. 95. For the original court documents relating to Nova Scotia, see for example: 'R. v. Andrews', *African Nova Scotians in the Age of Slavery and Abolition* <<https://novascotia.ca/archives/africanns/archives.asp?ID=61>> [accessed 23 January 2017].

⁹¹ Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angélique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montreal* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007).

century in Quebec. I began with examining the *Quebec Gazette*. I read entire issues of the newspaper, focusing on the late 1780s and early 1790s, as I had read that there were some abolitionist poems printed in the newspaper around this time.⁹² In addition, I suspected the newspaper could contain narratives of enslaved people in Canada, based on George Elliott Clarke's suggestion that the colonial newspapers likely held many such unknown narratives. I carefully recorded all texts about slavery and other items of interest within the newspaper for several years of its publication. Next, in order to examine how the presentation of slavery in the *QG* differed from other contemporary papers I examined the *Montreal Gazette*, and I handled it in the same way as the *QG*, reading complete issues of the newspaper and not just the texts about slavery in isolation. My methodology for examining the newspapers developed from closely reading both the newspapers and looking at their form. By looking at the newspapers, it became clear that texts about slavery in the Canadian newspapers were printed as part of a wider textual context, and that this context shaped the meanings of the reprinted slavery texts and this would need to be explored. I developed my knowledge of how the newspaper was constructed, and I traced some printed texts back to the foreign newspapers the Canadian editors scoured and selected items from for reprinting in their own newspapers. In carrying out the research for Chapter Two, I turned to the antebellum slave narratives by formerly enslaved people in the United States, which have portions set in Canada. I examined a wider body of American slave narratives, and I saw a pattern in the way the fugitive slave experience in Canada often revolved around narratives of developing and owning land. I chose to focus on two slave narratives that epitomised this. Chapter Three is based upon research undertaken with newspapers in

⁹² Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2nd edn (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), p. 100.

the Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia. I wanted to examine whether there were many newspaper-length slave narratives or texts within religious newspapers in the 1850s. This was the peak period in which the slave narrative portrayed the lives of formerly enslaved people in Canada and for the production and circulation of the American antebellum slave narrative in Canada.⁹³ I wanted to see how and how much the American antebellum slave narrative was in the preoccupations of the imagined community constructed in newspapers in Nova Scotia in Canada. I chose to focus on examining the *Provincial Wesleyan* and *Presbyterian Witness* because Greg Marquis identifies that these evangelical newspapers contain texts about American slavery, including some antislavery poetry, and because they were the most popular religious newspapers in Nova Scotia.⁹⁴ My interest in newspapers was sparked by the fact that they likely contained antislavery poetry, and I wanted to examine how this compared and contrasted to the antislavery poetry in the eighteenth-century newspapers I examined in Chapter One. I read issues of the newspapers in their entirety, covering 1850-1853. This approach examined texts about American slavery reprinted in Canadian newspapers, and it also took into account the context surrounding printed materials in the newspapers and how these may have shaped how the slavery texts were read. Then I turned to examine a little-studied slave narrative about a formerly enslaved man who experienced slavery in the United States and lived for many years in Owen Sound, Ontario, which may have been the first book-length slave narrative originally published in Canada. I explored how this text could be read at the end of a textual

⁹³ See Siemerling, *The Black Atlantic Reconsidered*, p. 98.

⁹⁴ Greg Marquis, 'Maritime Intellectuals and the Problem of Freedom', in *The Haliburton Bi-Centenary Chaplet: Papers Presented at the 1996 Thomas Raddall Symposium*, ed. by Richard A. Davies (Wolfville: Gaspereau Press, 1997), pp. 195-236 (pp. 213-19).

tradition explored in the previous chapters and situated it within the context of the book trade in Canada.

My experience as a PhD researcher with a collaborative doctoral award with the British Library has shaped this research. I have drawn from expertise at the Library, and I have examined many of the slave narratives I discuss in this thesis in rare book form. This has informed my reading of the texts and my sensitivity to how modern editions produce revisions of texts, which can shape how we read them. I have been sensitive to what Gerard Genette has termed ‘paratext’, the material surrounding a main text in a book including blank space and title pages, to see how such paratext functioned as ‘thresholds’ inviting contemporaries to approach the text in different ways.⁹⁵ This influence and interest is explored in Chapters Two, Three and Four where I examine original printed texts within the context of the thresholds through which contemporary readers approached them. In Chapter Three I take this to the fullest extent by reading a book-length slave narrative circulated in Canada in the context of two religious newspapers, reading them as textual thresholds to this text.

I approach the materials in this thesis from a literary perspective. I use close reading to unpack these texts and their effect and function. This involves a deep textual reading of the text that explores its many components, such as language, form, tone, tense and sound at a minute level. My literary approach to the texts enables me to analyse the recirculation of texts, attend to voice, free indirect discourse, speech representation and paratexts. Rather than searching for ‘authentic’ black Canadian voices, I am interested

⁹⁵ Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 2.

in how a range of voices are present in slavery narratives in Canada. This approach draws support from recent scholarly approaches to texts such as slave narratives, which caution against looking for authentic black voices in these texts, and explore how the presence of white editors and framing texts were part of narratives that do not present a stable and fixed black subject.⁹⁶

Slavery in colonial Canada

The enslavement of African and some First Nations people took place in the colonial colonies that later became Canada: in Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, New Brunswick, New France, in Lower Canada and, after 1791, in Upper Canada. Slavery in Canada was not plantation slavery. Maureen G. Elgersman's study of enslaved women in Canada, which reads them in a comparative context with enslaved women in Jamaica, suggests most enslaved people were engaged in domestic rather than field work 'in the absence of a staple or monocrop production system'.⁹⁷ As Frank Mackey has noted, there was '[no] single crop production' of sugar and tobacco, for example, which required a system of plantation labour.⁹⁸ According to Ira Berlin's definition, the Canadian colonies were 'societies with slaves' rather than 'slave societies'. Although Berlin does not look at Canada, he deploys the terms to describe the transformation of slavery from societies with slaves to slave societies in four regions in mainland North America following the 'plantation revolution'. Ira Berlin defines 'societies with slaves' as those in which there is no ruling planter class, in which slaveholders are 'just one portion of a propertied

⁹⁶ Sara Salih, 'The History of Mary Prince, the Black Subject, and the Black Canon', in *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and its Colonies, 1760-1838*, ed. by Brycchan Carey, Markman Ellis, and Sara Salih (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 123-135 (p. 125).

⁹⁷ Elgersman, *Unyielding Spirits*, p. xiii.

⁹⁸ Frank Mackey, *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal 1760-1840* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), p. 112.

elite’, and where ‘slavery was marginal to the central productive processes; slavery was one form of labour among many’.⁹⁹ By contrast, ‘slave societies’ had a strong ruling slaveholding class and slavery was ‘at the centre of economic production’.¹⁰⁰ As Ira Berlin notes, patterns of slaveholding in societies with slaves does not intimate that slavery was ‘milder’ than in slave societies. In fact, Berlin notes:

Slaveholders in such societies could act with extraordinary brutality precisely because their slaves were extraneous to their main business. They could limit their slaves’ access to freedom expressly because they desired to set themselves apart from their slaves.¹⁰¹

Brett Rushforth explores the enslavement of First Nations people in New France, and shows that this functioned as a form of gift-giving between French colonists and First Nations peoples to consolidate friendships and alliances. He argues the enslavement of some First Nations people in New France was characterised by ‘creative cultural adaptations’ between French Atlantic slavery and an earlier tradition of slavery and slaveholding practices rooted in the cultures of First Nations people in New France.¹⁰² Marcel Trudel’s survey of slavery in what is now Quebec from the mid-seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century finds that there are 1443 black enslaved people and 2742 First Nations people who were enslaved detailed in the available unpublished records.¹⁰³ In Cape Breton, Ken Donovan identifies that there were 418 enslaved people

⁹⁹ Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press of University of Harvard Press, 1998), p. 8.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, p. 10, p. 157.

¹⁰³ Marcel Trudel, *Canada’s Forgotten Slaves: Two Hundred Years of Bondage*, trans. by George Tombs (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 2013), p. 76.

living there between 1713-1815.¹⁰⁴ In Montreal, enslaved people tended to work as domestics or in semi-skilled professions, for example as printers.¹⁰⁵ In Nova Scotia, enslaved people largely worked in households, and Harvey Amani Whitfield describes the range of roles that enslaved people undertook: ‘They carved out roads, built houses, planted crops, washed clothes, cooked meals and provided childcare, and they moved easily between rural, urban, and seafaring work’.¹⁰⁶

Scholars suggest that in New France enslaved people likely lived in the household rather than in separate quarters.¹⁰⁷ Yet archaeological evidence indicates that in Nova Scotia there may have been a continuity in patterns of slaveholding with slavery in New England in the United States. Following the Loyalist exodus to Nova Scotia from the United States after the end of the American Revolution, Loyalists brought their enslaved people with them. Catherine M. A. Cottreau-Robins’s study of the Loyalist Timothy Ruggles suggests a ‘continuity’ of Loyalist slaveholding practices between New England and Nova Scotia, as he tried to reproduce the plantation he had ‘lost’.¹⁰⁸ She suggests that enslaved people in Nova Scotia may have lived in separate accommodation and have been looked down on by the main house, echoing the geography of the plantation in the United States.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Ken Donovan, ‘Forum: Slavery and Freedom in Atlantic Canada’s African Diaspora: Introduction’, *Acadiensis*, 43.1 (2014), 109-15 (p. 110).

¹⁰⁵ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, p. 117.

¹⁰⁶ Whitfield, *North to Bondage*, p. 113.

¹⁰⁷ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, p. 10.

¹⁰⁸ Catherine M.A. Cottreau-Robins, ‘A Loyalist Plantation in Nova Scotia, 1784-1800’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Dalhousie University, 2012), p. xiv, p. 15.

¹⁰⁹ Catherine M.A. Cottreau-Robins, ‘Searching for the Enslaved in Nova Scotia’s Loyalist Landscape’, *Acadiensis*, 43.1 (2014), 125-36 (p. 132, p. 135).

Frank Mackey argues that of the 390 black people enslaved at some point in Montreal between 1760 and 1800, over half of them, taken from cases where documentary evidence is available, came from the thirteen colonies or after 1776 from the United States, with a large proportion born in Quebec in addition to many coming from the West Indies and Saint-Domingue.¹¹⁰ He describes the flow of black enslaved people into Lower Canada as,

stragg[ling] in singly, in pairs, occasionally in a family or small group, as part of the baggage of military officers, ship captains landing at Quebec, Loyalists, and others who had spent time in the West Indies, the American colonies or other slave societies, as prisoners seized in raids in the American colonies, as purchases made by fur traders and other frontiersmen at various western ports, or as goods bought in New York or New England for personal use or as a speculation.¹¹¹

Whitfield notes that, prior to the end of the American Revolution, enslaved people in Nova Scotia came predominately from New England. The sale of some enslaved people can also be understood in the context of merchants who traded goods across the West Indies, the American colonies and Halifax; enslaved people were part of a broader commodity trade.¹¹²

Following the British loss of the thirteen colonies, 60,000 Loyalists left the new United States for remaining British dominions and approximately 30,000 Loyalists arrived in Canada. Maya Jasanoff estimates that approximately 2000 Loyalist-owned enslaved people entered British North America, primarily arriving in Nova Scotia.¹¹³ The report

¹¹⁰ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, p. 103, p. 106.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-17.

¹¹² Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border*, pp. 15-17.

¹¹³ Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: The Loss of America and the Remaking of the British Empire* (London: HarperPress, 2011), pp. 8-9.

by Robert Moore *A General Description of the Province of Nova Scotia* (1784) notes there were 1232 ‘servants’ taken there during the Loyalist exodus, and historians such as Jasanoff have interpreted these ‘servants’ to likely indicate black enslaved people.¹¹⁴ Around 3000 black Loyalists arrived in Nova Scotia following the American Revolution, and their poor treatment with regards to the small and unprofitable plots of land they were granted (if any at all) and the discrimination they faced has been well documented.¹¹⁵ John Clarkson’s notebook records the grievances of the black Loyalists. This contains their complaint that living on white men’s property and being given half the amount of money they are entitled to for their labour is equivalent to a ‘second slavery’ in Nova Scotia.¹¹⁶ During a six-week voyage between January and March 1792, John Clarkson helped convey approximately 1190 black Loyalists who were dissatisfied with their unfair treatment in Nova Scotia to Sierra Leone.¹¹⁷

To understand the textual presence of slavery in colonial Canada, it is important to understand the legal status of slavery there. Historians argue that slavery was effectively ended as an institution in Lower Canada and Nova Scotia by a series of court rulings in the late eighteenth century that did not order runaway slaves to return to their masters. Frank Mackey characterises abolition in Lower Canada as being precipitated by ‘a few Montreal slaves who, in seeking their freedom, put the courts on the spot’.¹¹⁸ These court rulings created ‘chaos’, according to Robin W. Winks.¹¹⁹ This is reflected in

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 358.

¹¹⁵ Two classic texts on the poor treatment of the black Loyalists in Nova Scotia are: James Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone* (London: Longman, 1976) and Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*. See also Schama, *Rough Crossings*.

¹¹⁶ London, British Library, Clarkson Papers, vol 2, Add MS 41262 B, p. 22.

¹¹⁷ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, p. 73 n. 27.

¹¹⁸ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, p. 78.

¹¹⁹ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, p. 40.

several printed documents in which Canadian slaveholders asserted their slaveholding rights and called for a clearer legal position on slavery in Canada such as the 1799 *Petition to the Legislative Assembly by Slaveholders in Montreal* and the *Petition of the Slave Proprietors in Annapolis County* (1807). Records for enslaved people in colonial Canada disappear in the printed records after the early nineteenth century. As Mackey notes, the last advertisement for a slave sale and the last runaway slave advertisement appeared in the *Montreal Gazette* in 1798, and the last court case in which a master tried to reclaim an absconded slave in Quebec was in 1800.¹²⁰ The last known sale of a slave in Nova Scotia was in 1807, according to Winks.¹²¹ In 1833 an act was passed by the British Parliament that abolished slavery in the British colonies, although it dictated that a system of apprenticeship should take its place until 1840 (this was later changed to 1838), and this included slavery in the provinces that would become Canada.

The only legislation regarding slavery passed in colonial Canada was passed in Upper Canada in 1793, entitled ‘An Act to Prevent the Further Introduction of Slaves and to Limit the Term of Contracts for Servitude within this Province’. The only exception to this is that an act was passed in Prince Edward Island in 1781 that stated that the baptism of enslaved people ‘shall not exempt them from BONDAGE’.¹²² The 1793 ruling in Upper Canada made it illegal to import slaves into the province. It dictated that the children of enslaved mothers must only remain enslaved until the age of twenty-five. As Robin W. Winks notes, the act to limit slavery in Upper Canada received ‘unanimous passage’ in the House of Assembly and the Legislative Council, having first being raised in the Executive Council, and it was ‘given the royal assent on July 9

¹²⁰ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, p. 40.

¹²¹ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, p. 105.

¹²² Whitfield, *North to Bondage*, p. 85.

[1793]'.¹²³ In the same year, an attempt to abolish slavery in the House of Assembly in Lower Canada was unsuccessful, reflecting a reluctance to end slavery elsewhere in colonial Canada.

An examination of the act passed in Upper Canada can reveal attitudes to slavery in colonial Canada and the groups and individuals keen to protect the existence of slavery in Canada. The act is carefully worded to include not just black enslaved people in Canada but any person 'subjected to the condition of a slave', and this may refer to First Nations enslaved people in Canada.¹²⁴ John Graves Simcoe, Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, notes the resistance by members of the legislature in Upper Canada to passing this act in a letter to the home secretary, Henry Dundas, dated the 16th September 1793. Simcoe sent Dundas a copy of the acts passed in the last session of the legislature in Upper Canada as well as a commentary on the relevant debates. He informs Dundas of the resistance to passing the 1793 'Act to Prevent the Further Introduction of Slaves':

The greatest resistance was to the Slave Bill, many plausible arguments of the dearness of labour and the difficulty of obtaining servants to cultivate lands were brought forward. Some possessed of Negroes knowing that it was very questionable whether any subsisting law did authorise slavery, and having purchased several taken in war by the indians at small prices asked to reject the bill entirely, others were desirous to supply themselves by allowing the importation for two years. The matter was finally settled by undertaking to secure the property already obtained upon condition that an immediate stop should be put to the importation and that slavery should be gradually abolished.¹²⁵

¹²³ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, p. 97, and see also p. 96.

¹²⁴ 'An Act to Prevent the Further Introduction of Slaves and to Limit the Terms of Contracts for Servitude Statutes of Upper Canada', *Archives of Ontario* <http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/explore/online/alvin_mccurdy/big/big_03_anti_slavery_act.aspx> [accessed 19 January 2017] (para. 1).

¹²⁵ *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe with Allied Documents*, ed. by E. A. Cruikshank, 2 vols (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1924), p. 53.

This shows that elected members of the House of Assembly sought to defend slavery in the province, and it gives a summary of the arguments given by them as to why the act should not be passed. The new colony of Upper Canada had been established in 1791 by the Constitutional Act which divided Quebec into two colonies of Upper and Lower Canada. The newly-created House of Assembly in Upper Canada was first called in September 1792 and sat again in May the following year, and it is following this second sitting that Simcoe wrote to Dundas. Simcoe implies a shared understanding with the anticipated recipient of his letter, Dundas, that the legal status of slavery in Upper Canada was ‘questionable’, noting that some of those with slaves, ‘knowing that it was very questionable whether any subsisting law did authorise slavery’ and asked for it to be rejected. Simcoe suggests that the act was passed in this context in which its legal foundations in the new province were contestable. The language he uses of ‘undertaking to secure the property already obtained’ speaks to a compromise and suggests that some could see this act as a chance to secure their property in an ambiguous legal context. Simcoe’s description of the black and perhaps First Nations enslaved people as ‘property’ adopts the point of view of the owners of enslaved people. Slavery in colonial Upper Canada appears to have offered individuals financial advantages that they were keen to protect. According to Simcoe, those protesting against the act wanted to keep their legal right to import and own enslaved people in Upper Canada because this could provide them with cheap and available labour that could be used to ‘cultivate lands’.

Despite this act to limit slavery in Upper Canada, Afua Cooper notes that advertisements selling enslaved people and runaway slave advertisements were printed in Ontario newspapers during the early nineteenth century, suggesting this act did not

represent an absolute end to slaveholding in the colony of Upper Canada.¹²⁶ This reflects the fact that the act stipulated that the children of enslaved mothers in Upper Canada could legally remain enslaved until they were twenty-five. The existence of runaway slave advertisements and advertisements selling enslaved people printed in the early nineteenth-century Ontario newspapers supports Frank Mackey's point that the act to limit the introduction of new slaves sought to protect rather than abolish slavery in Upper Canada, in a climate of the legal uncertainty of slavery in Canada. Mackey argues that 'At its heart, gradual abolition could have no purpose but to prolong slavery's existence to safeguard the property rights of slaveholders'.¹²⁷

A note on the terminology

In this thesis I use 'Canada' to refer to the colonies that were united as the single federal dominion of Canada, largely in 1867. In Chapter One I use the terms Quebec and Lower Canada interchangeably to refer to the province now known as Quebec. Likewise I use the contemporaneous term Upper Canada to refer to what is now the province of Ontario. Lower Canada, now known as Quebec, was focused around the three urban centres along the Saint Lawrence River, of Montreal, Quebec and Trois-Rivières. The colony was created in 1791 by the Constitutional Act, which divided the province of Quebec into two separate colonies of Lower Canada, now Quebec, and Upper Canada, now known as Ontario. Between 1841 and 1867 Upper Canada and Lower Canada were called Canada West and Canada East, and they were also united as one province called 'the Canadas' between these dates.¹²⁸ In Chapter Two, where the texts examined fall

¹²⁶ Cooper, *The Hanging of Angelique*, p. 87.

¹²⁷ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, pp. 68-70.

¹²⁸ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, p. xxi.

into this period, I use the terms Canada West (now Ontario) and Canada East (now Quebec).

I use the term abolitionist to refer to texts or discourses produced in the context of an active political campaign calling for the abolition of the slave trade or slavery. In Chapter One, I use the terms anti-slave trade and pro-slave trade to refer to the specific context of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century slave-trade debates in Britain, France and America. Throughout the thesis I use the term antislavery as a more fluid term to refer both to abolitionist texts and a broader range of texts that could be critical of slavery and call for its abolition, but which were not necessarily produced within an abolitionist context. For example, Chapter Four examines an antislavery narrative about American slavery, but this was not an abolitionist narrative because it was produced many years after the abolition of slavery in the United States. In Chapter Three, the term ‘amelioration’ is used to refer to a political stance on slavery which demanded that the abuses of power in slavery should be reformed, but which did not advocate the full abolition of slavery and the liberation of enslaved people.

Slavery in Canadian national memory

Scholars describe Canada’s history of slavery as a national ‘amnesia’ and a forgotten history, and this characterises slavery in Canada as something that was once known and that has been subsequently forgotten by the Canadian people.¹²⁹ The *OED* glosses amnesia as ‘the loss of memory’ and ‘forgotten’ as that ‘that has passed from the mind’.

¹²⁹ For example see Maureen Moynagh, “‘This History’s Only Good for Anger’”: Gender and Cultural Memory in Beatrice Chancy’, in *Africadian Atlantic: Essays on George Elliott Clarke*, ed. by Joseph Pivato (Toronto: Guernica Editions, 2012), pp. 91-133 (p. 100). See also Cooper, *The Hanging of Angelique*, p. 7.

It glosses to ‘forget’ as an action: to ‘lose remembrance of’. The eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century entries in the *OED* for amnesia present it as a physical disease of the body which produces the loss of memory.¹³⁰ The quotation provided for 1829 describes amnesia as ‘in medicine: the loss of memory; sometimes the consequence of febrile diseases, when it generally recedes as the patient gains strength’. Using the term amnesia to describe the forgotten history of slavery in Canada implies that this history has a trace and presence in the national mind and that at some point in time this memory has been lost. This idea involves the concept of time. It suggests at some point the history of slavery in Canada was known, and then at another point in time this history has not been (re)remembered and consequently became forgotten. Clarke’s sense that this memory is bound into Canada’s printed texts is significant because he sees the slave narrative as ‘obscuring’ earlier texts, including newspapers, which contain narratives of slavery in Canada. Clarke implicitly dates this period of forgetting and loss of the collective memory back to the mid-nineteenth century when the slave narrative which presents Canada as a haven was in its ‘commercial zenith’.¹³¹

Benedict Anderson’s notion of the ‘imagined community’ is a helpful way of understanding how printed texts may have shaped Canada’s self-image when it comes to slavery. Anderson suggests that print capitalism, especially newspapers, constructed imagined communities; Anderson is specifically interested in the imagined community of the nation. He suggests that print media creates an idea of a community for its

¹³⁰ ‘amnesia, n.’; ‘forgotten, adj.’; ‘forget, v.’: all *Oxford English Dictionary* [online] <<http://www.oed.com>> [accessed 23 January 2017]. See the historical quotations in the entry for amnesia in the *OED* for 1786 and 1829.

¹³¹ David A. Davis, ‘The Experience of Rev. Thomas H. Jones: Introduction’, in *North Carolina Slave Narratives: The Lives of Moses Roper, Lunsford Lane, Moses Grandy, and Thomas H. Jones*, ed. by William L. Andrews and others (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), pp. 188-202 (p. 190).

members, most of whom would ‘never know most of its fellow-members’.¹³² Anderson argues that the newspaper ‘implies the refraction of even world events into a specific imagined world of vernacular readers; and also how important to that imagined community is an idea of a steady, solid simultaneity through time’.¹³³ According to Anderson, newspapers and other print media produce the collective memory of the nation, and they construct the idea of a nation for its members, shaping the way citizens experience the nation itself.¹³⁴ Drawing on Anderson’s concept of the imagined community and his discussion of newspapers, I want to suggest that using the term amnesia to describe slavery in Canada implies that this history was once present in the textual circulation and construction of Canada and that it has since been obscured by more dominant printed forms or images of the Canadian nation. This reading is supported by Clarke’s attempt to unsettle this amnesia through calling for the discovery of texts which show slavery in Canada that can disrupt the fixation on the Underground Railroad narrative.

Maureen Moynagh’s reading of George Elliott Clarke’s imaginative work *Beatrice Chancy*, which depicts slave life in Nova Scotia, suggests that ‘Clarke engages in the process of what Toni Morrison in *Beloved* called “re-memory,” constructing a history of slavery in a nation actively invested in forgetting that slavery was ever practiced there’.¹³⁵ Daniel Francis’s view of Canadian national identity is that it has to be continually recreated. In *National Dreams*, Francis explores what he describes as ‘persistent images and stories in Canadian history’, and he argues ‘With repetition they

¹³² Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 6.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Moynagh, “‘This History’s Only Good for Anger’” (p. 93).

come to form the mainstream memory of the culture, our national dreams, the master narrative which explains the culture to itself and seems to express its overriding purpose'.¹³⁶ He notes Canada's 'civic ideology [...] has to be continually recreated and reinforced', and the sense of a shared national identity for Canadians is especially important since 'we lack a common religion, language or ethnicity because we are spread out so sparsely across such a huge piece of real estate'.¹³⁷ Reading Moynagh's contention through Francis's idea that national identity has to be continually recreated could suggest an alternative model, which sees this history of slavery in Canada as absent, not through denial, but neglect.

The case studies in this thesis suggest a more complex model for Canada's textual engagement with slavery than either seeing Canada as an antislavery haven for enslaved people from the United States or as a slaveholding space. Slavery in Canada has been marginalised from Canada's national narrative. However if Canada's history of slavery is recovered from its newspapers and taken out from the wider print context of the colonial newspaper, this recovers half a memory and this does not allow for the complexity of the fact that contemporaries could hold two seemingly contradictory positions of owning slaves and thinking about themselves as antislavery at the same time. There was a form of 'doublethink' taking place in the newspapers. The Orwellian concept of 'doublethink' describes how a human mind can 'simultaneously' hold together 'two contradictory beliefs [...] accepting both of them [...] as equally valid'.¹³⁸ If enslaved people in Canada have 'passed from the mind', they were once in the mind.

¹³⁶ Daniel Francis, *National Dreams: Myth, Memory, and Canadian History* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1997), p. 10.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Penguin Books, 1949), p. 223; 'Doublethink/doublethink, n.', *Oxford English Dictionary* [online] [accessed 2 January 2017].

Enslaved people in Canada were grafted onto the collective memory of the nation, constructed through its printed media and particularly the colonial newspaper. However, the Canadian reader could also imagine themselves as belonging to an antislavery community at the same time as owning enslaved people.

Canada, the transatlantic and the black Atlantic

Canada has been marginalised in studies of the black Atlantic, as I have been discussing. In this section, I provide evidence in the form of a map to support my methodological approach of situating Canada within the transatlantic and the black Atlantic. The map shows that in order to explore Canada and slavery in print it is not about searching for an isolated ‘national’ print culture but about looking at Canada as part of a literary tradition that transcended national boundaries; it highlights that a transatlantic and black Atlantic lens is the most fitting way to explore the texts in this thesis. Paul Gilroy pioneered the concept of the Atlantic as a ‘single [...] unit of analysis’ in his conception of the black Atlantic.¹³⁹ His work challenges the exclusive focus on national parameters when analysing black literature and culture. Gilroy notes: ‘In opposition to both of these nationalist or ethically absolute approaches, I want to develop the suggestion that cultural historians could take the Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis in their discussions of the modern world and to use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective’.¹⁴⁰ Gilroy sees this as a fitting lens for examining black aesthetics, arguing that ‘playful diasporic intimacy [...] has been a marked feature of transnational black Atlantic creativity’.¹⁴¹ His focus on journeys across the Atlantic Ocean is reflected in his use of the ship as ‘a central organising symbol’ of the black

¹³⁹ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. 15.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 16.

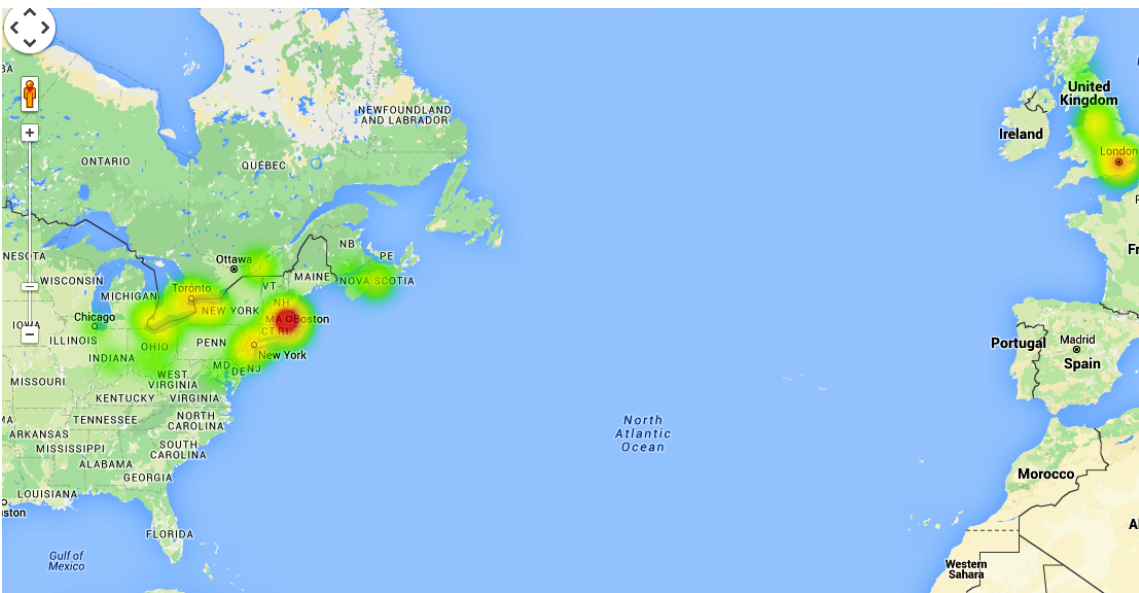
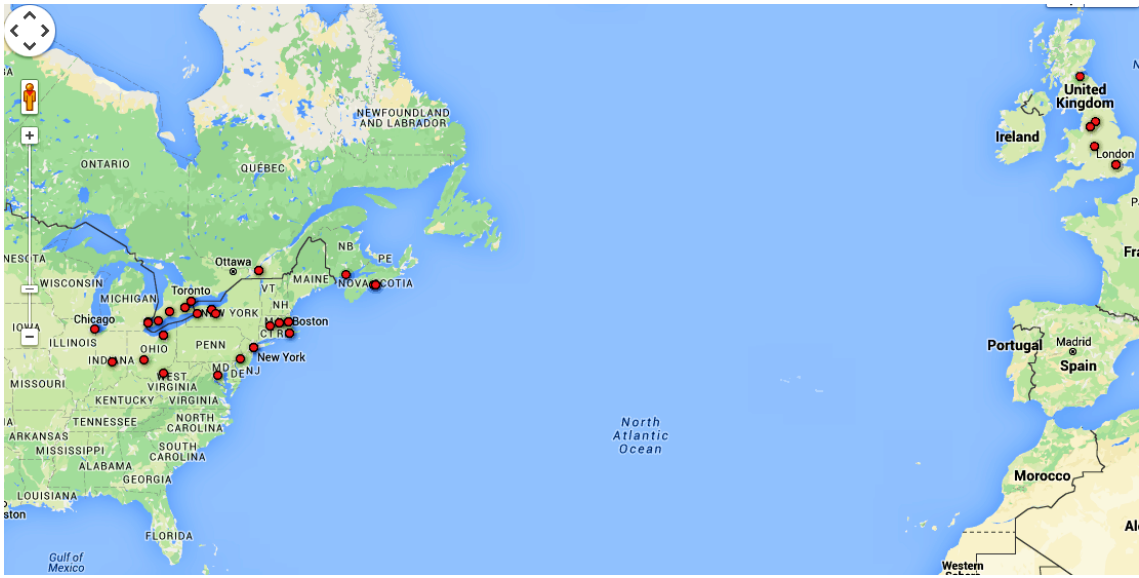


Figure 1.1: A Map Visualising the Places of Publication and Distribution of Slave Narratives and Contemporaneous Literature, Produced By or About Fugitive Slaves and Free Blacks in Canada, Presented as a Feature Map and as a Heat Map. (Images Produced Using Google Fusion Tables)

Atlantic, a symbol that reflects the comings and goings over the ocean and the ‘cultural exchanges’ between places, and this speaks too to Gilroy’s point that the black Atlantic has its origins in the Atlantic slave trade and plantation slavery.¹⁴² In this thesis I use the transatlantic model which sees the Atlantic as a site of ‘complex’ interchange between places such as Britain, the United States and the provinces that will become Canada, rather than viewing these countries as having impermeable cultural and textual borders. In recent years scholars have begun to include Canada as part of their examination of the literary transatlantic.¹⁴³ The model conceives of the flow between places as moving in two directions, suggesting ideas and texts can move from the colony to the metropole and from the metropole to the colony. These transatlantic texts, like people who migrated across and over and back over the Atlantic, could perform different national identities as their contexts required.¹⁴⁴ In order to trace these mutations and migrations, the case studies in this thesis read the texts as part of a transnational and local frame, paying attention to the ways in which paratext could package texts reanimated for new communities of readers in local contexts in Canada.

The map above (Figure 1.1), presented in two ways, shows the places of publication and distribution of nineteenth-century slave narratives and contemporaneous literature, according to the imprints of the texts’ title pages. The texts are visualised according to their known place(s) of publication and circulation on the map. To be included in this map, the texts had to be about slavery and have one or more edition printed or circulated

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 4 and pp. 15-17.

¹⁴³ For example, see *Transatlantic Romanticism: An Anthology of British, American and Canadian Literature, 1767-1867*, ed. by Lance Newman, Joel Page and Chris Koenig-Woodyard (New York: Longman, 2006).

¹⁴⁴ Kevin Hutchings and Julia M. Wright, ‘Introduction: Mobilizing Gender, Race and Nation’, in *Transatlantic Literary Exchanges, 1790-1870: Gender, Race, and Nation*, ed. by Kevin Hutchings and Julia M. Wright (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 1-17 (p. 7).

in Canada in the nineteenth century or relate the experiences of the fugitive slaves and free blacks in Canada; a full list of the texts represented on the map can be found in Appendix A.

The map demonstrates the transatlantic nature of nineteenth-century texts by and about enslaved African Americans and fugitive slaves in Canada. As a set, these were circulated and read in Britain, Canada and the United States. For example, a single slave narrative could be published and read in the United States, Britain and in the provinces that would become Canada. Josiah Henson's slave narrative, for example, was published in Boston, London, and London, Ontario. Thomas Jones's narrative, explored in Chapter Three of this thesis, was first published in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1849, and it went into numerous editions in the United States. Copies of the narrative were circulated in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1851, and in 1853 the narrative was reprinted in Saint John, New Brunswick. The map shows that nineteenth-century texts about enslaved African Americans and fugitive slaves in Canada were part of a transatlantic network. The map does not indicate the number of texts published in a particular location as it represents each location with the same sized dot regardless of how many texts were produced there. The map is displayed as a heat map using colour intensity to reflect the locations where a greater number of texts were published. The map shows that the texts are clustered around national borders and coastal areas, around spaces of transatlantic and transnational interchange and exchange. The map suggests it is appropriate to read these texts using the Atlantic as a frame.

This map does not show the countless numbers of poems, fictional writings and news reports about enslaved people that were reanimated through their careful selection and

recontextualisation in Canadian newspapers in the nineteenth century. The transatlantic nature of texts about slavery reanimated in Canada was not new; it was a defining feature of printed writing about slavery in the eighteenth-century colonial newspapers. The newspapers recycled anti-slave-trade and slavery print previously published elsewhere in the transatlantic, and newspaper editors in Canada carefully selected transatlantic print from a wealth of possible printed materials and reprinted it in their own newspapers in a new context that gave it new meanings.

The map suggests that in order to understand Canadian attitudes to slavery, we need to place the texts which construct Canada in relation to its own slavery and slavery in the Americas within a broader transatlantic context. They reflect the fact that Canada was part of the black Atlantic, and discussions about slavery and freedom in Canada were not taking place in Canada in isolation, but as part of a wider literary engagement with slavery and freedom in the Atlantic world. In this thesis I explore how a more nuanced understanding of Canada's relationship to slavery is drawn out when Canada is placed in the context of a broader literary transatlantic that complicates the dominant image today of Canada as an antislavery haven for American slaves.

Slavery in print: a specific Canadian identity

Canada's history of slavery in print was shaped by a print context that had both similarities to and differences from a broader print context in the Americas and Europe. The runaway slave advertisements printed in eighteenth-century Canadian newspapers, which will be explored in Chapter One of this thesis, are similar to those printed in newspapers across the Americas, for example, in Pennsylvania, South Carolina and

Jamaica.¹⁴⁵ Their language and structure is similar to those printed across the Americas. For example, they include long descriptions of the clothing that enslaved people were wearing and their appearance when they ran away. The advertisements focus heavily on the physical descriptions of enslaved people, but they also reveal some clues about the personalities and perspectives of enslaved people. They are written in the voice of the slave master wishing to retrieve what they saw as their property, and they reveal ‘their perceived reality of enslaved people’, but the advertisements also contain clues about how enslaved people ran away and the ‘interior lives of slaves’.¹⁴⁶

Scholars have noted that the runaway slave advertisements show the agency of enslaved people and their resistance to slavery, and this reading can be similarly applied to the Canadian advertisements. David Waldstreicher argues, looking at runaway slave advertisements printed in newspapers in the mid-Atlantic American colonies during the eighteenth century, that runaway slave advertisements show the self-fashioning of enslaved people when they ran away.¹⁴⁷ He notes that when they ran away enslaved people performed their identities as free men by using aspects such as clothing, voices and by developing stories.¹⁴⁸ He argues this was possible in a context of racial fluidity and a wider context of unfree labour in Pennsylvania and the mid-Atlantic colonies in America, and in a period before race had become the fixed and essentialist identity that

¹⁴⁵ Classic critical collections of runaway slave advertisements are: *Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisements for Runaways in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728-1790*, ed. by Billy G. Smith and Richard Wojtowicz (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989); *“Pretends to be Free”: Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey*, ed. by Graham Russell Hodges and Alan Edward Brown (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994); *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History from the 1730s to 1790 Vol. 3. South Carolina*, ed. by Lathan A. Windley, 4 vols (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983).

¹⁴⁶ *Blacks Who Stole Themselves*, ed. by Smith and Wojtowicz, p. 4; *“Pretends to be Free”*, ed. by Hodges and Brown, p. xv.

¹⁴⁷ David Waldstreicher, ‘Reading the Runaways: Self-fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 56.2 (1999), 243-72 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2674119>> (p. 244, pp. 247-48).

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* (p. 253).

it would become in the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁹ The similarity in language between the Canadian runaway advertisements and those in the Americas suggests that enslaved people in Canada also performed their free identities when they ran away. This is reflected in the description of the runaway slave performing an identity as a free man that appeared in runaway slave advertisements in Canada and the wider Americas. For example, in one advertisement printed in South Carolina the former slave master states: ‘I suppose he will endeavour to pass for a free man’.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, advertisements printed in Lower Canada hinted that the runaway slave would probably assume an identity as a free man.¹⁵¹ In eighteenth-century Canada and the wider Americas runaway slaves fashioned free identities and performed their free status as a way of aiding their escape. The similarities in language between the Canadian slave advertisements and those printed in the wider Americas also suggests that they were part of the same genre. The language in the Canadian advertisements was not unique to Canada, and this reflects that these texts were part of a wider print network.

Chapters One and Three explore the practice of reprinting texts from other newspapers and printed forms in the Canadian newspapers, first in the eighteenth and then in the nineteenth century. The editorial practice of reprinting materials from other publications within newspapers was common across the Americas and Europe, for example, in Britain. In the thirteen colonies prior to the American Revolution, its newspapers were primarily published from locations on the seaboard with access to Atlantic ocean, reflecting the need for news and print for compiling the newspapers; it was a shift that

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. (pp. 261-62).

¹⁵⁰ *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, ed. by Windley, p. 532.

¹⁵¹ *Quebec Gazette*, 3 June 1788, p. 5 and 26 June 1788, p. 2, British Library, reel BL. M.C.271.B. See Chapter One of this thesis for a discussion of this language in Canadian runaway slave advertisements.

would gradually decline after the revolution as the production of newspapers moved inland.¹⁵² Hannah Barker has shown that provincial presses in Britain did not just repeat the news when they reprinted texts; they crafted it through reprinting, and the content of newspapers was shaped by their local public audience.¹⁵³ Antislavery print circulated widely in the Atlantic world in newspapers, and it was similarly reprinted by editors in newspapers. For example, the antislavery poem ‘The Negro’s Complaint’, written by the British poet William Cowper, had wide circulation in newspapers across England ‘till it travelled almost over the whole island’, but it was also printed widely in the English-speaking world, for example in the United States and, as this thesis explores in Chapter One, in the province of Quebec.¹⁵⁴

Canadian newspapers circulated antislavery sentiment and slavery texts together, but this was not a contradiction unique to Canadian print culture. Benjamin Franklin printed Quaker antislavery tracts (anonymously) and slave advertisements in Pennsylvania in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, which he began printing in 1729. Franklin owned enslaved people, and they probably worked at his newspaper and in his home.¹⁵⁵ He was also the president of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society from 1787, and a correspondent of leading international antislavery figures such as Granville Sharp. His newspaper printed slave advertisements in a colony that had a strong Religious Society of Friends that were increasingly shaping a coherent antislavery identity, but he was still printing slave

¹⁵² David Copeland, ‘America, 1750-1820’, in *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America 1760-1820*, ed. by Hannah Barker and Simon Burrows (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 140-58 (p. 149).

¹⁵³ Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), see Chapter Four and especially p. 95, p. 97.

¹⁵⁴ Thomas Clarkson, *History*, II, quoted in J. R. Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery: The Mobilization of Public Opinion Against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 133. On the American print context, see Oldfield, *Transatlantic Abolitionism*, p. 58.

¹⁵⁵ David Waldstreicher, *Runaway America: Benjamin Franklin, Slavery and the American Revolution* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2004), p. 91, p. 218.

advertisements in this context and Quakers such as the abolitionist Benjamin Lay subscribed to his newspaper.¹⁵⁶

There are three trends in Canada's circulation of slavery in print that set it apart as having a specific identity compared to elsewhere in the Americas. Firstly, there were very few original publications about slavery produced in eighteenth-century Canada, and the reprint culture was more central as a space for Canadians to self-fashion abolition discourses. The newly-formed United States began a prolific original and reprint book trade after independence from Britain, but Canada's print culture was dominated by newspaper publishing and by recirculating books first published elsewhere until the late nineteenth century, when this study ends. By the mid-nineteenth century Canada was still reprinting and recirculating abolition print such as slave narratives and newspaper accounts of slavery. Editions of slave narratives that were recirculated in Canada tended to be written for either a British or an American audience, and hence they did not directly address or appeal to Canadian readers. By contrast British and American editions of the same slave narrative could differ substantially and addressed their specific national audience.¹⁵⁷ Secondly, the texts that circulated were very infrequently about Canadian slavery. In the eighteenth century Britain produced hundreds of texts, poems and debates about slavery in the British Empire (although not about slavery in Canada), but the Canadian newspapers very rarely mention slavery in Canada, and there are no poems and no narratives about slavery in Canada in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. An important exception to this, however, is the only

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁵⁷ For example, see C. L. Innes, 'Introduction: Francis Fedric's Story: Historical and Cultural Contexts', in *Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky: A Narrative of Francis Fedric, Escaped Slave*, ed. by C. L. Innes (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), pp. ix-xxxviii.

known printed slave narrative by a former Canadian slave, Sophia Pooley, contained in a collection of mid-nineteenth-century American slave narratives by Benjamin Drew entitled *A North-Side View of Slavery: The Refugee: Or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada*, published in Boston in 1856.¹⁵⁸ The texts reprinted in Canadian newspapers from Britain, France and the thirteen colonies did not focus on Canadian slavery either, so this reprinting produced a discourse about other slaveries. When space opened up for printed material on slavery in Canadian publications, it was reprinted poems about slavery in the Americas that appeared. The first Canadian-authored poems found as part of the research in this thesis show a continuity with an aesthetic and cultural interest in slavery elsewhere.¹⁵⁹ Perhaps the first book-length narrative about slavery to be originally published in Canada, *Broken Shackles* used inherited forms from American local colour writing to preserve the history of slavery in the United States and reproduce a narrative of Canadian antislavery after abolition. There are no book-length slave narratives, and there are no poems or fictional accounts of slavery in Canada. In general, when Canadians read about slavery, excepting the slave advertisements, they read about slavery outside the colonies that became Canada. Thirdly, through recirculating abolition print Canadians were able to share some of the moral capital of antislavery sentiment, but, because readers in Canada were not part of the political context of antislavery campaigns and they were rarely appealed to directly as a national audience, they stood apart from the national guilt that could be circulated in abolition discourses, for example in Britain, and at the same time they could perform their own antislavery identity.

¹⁵⁸ For another important exception, see the abolitionist pamphlet by Rev. James MacGregor: *Letter to a Clergyman Urging Him to Set Free a Black Girl He Held in Slavery* ([Halifax?]: [John Howe?], 1788).

¹⁵⁹ For an example of a mid-nineteenth-century Canadian-authored poem about slavery that focuses on a slave from Saint-Domingue, see *Wesleyan*, 16 December 1852, p. 1, Nova Scotia Archives, reel 8423.

Thesis outline

There are three case studies in this thesis. In Chapter One I explore eighteenth-century newspapers published in Lower Canada. The colonial newspaper is the key space where slavery in Canada was textually present in the printed record, and examining newspapers is a way to fruitfully unpack how slavery in Canada has been presented in printed texts. George Elliott Clarke suggests the newspapers contain narratives of slavery in colonial Canada which can complicate the image of it as an antislavery haven that is constructed in the mid-nineteenth-century slave narrative. I consider how slavery in Canada reads within the context of the colonial newspaper as a literary form. I explore a broader range of texts about slavery in the Americas and anti-slave-trade sentiment reprinted from the international debate on the Atlantic slave trade, published in the newspapers in Lower Canada. I argue that Clarke's call to discover narratives of Canadian enslavement in the newspapers to uncover the image of Canada as a slaveholding space can be useful, but this recovers only a partial memory and understanding of how Canadian texts presented slavery in Canada. I show that slavery in Canada was textually present in the context of a wider body of narratives about slavery in the Americas. I argue Canadian slavery appeared textually different from how slavery in the Americas was presented in the colonial newspaper. This enabled readers to keep slavery in Canada apart from the more horrific depictions of enslavement in the West Indies and the slave trade, and it meant that they were able to adopt an anti-slave-trade identity in reprinting foreign anti-slave-trade texts that had moral capital.

Chapter Two uses close reading to explore how Canada West is imagined within the antebellum slave narrative by former American slaves. Until the 1850s slave narratives tended to stop at the US-Canada border, and the literary convention for presenting

Canada in the slave narrative was as a bastion of liberty which the fugitive slave crossed into with an exclamation of joy and delight, instantly feeling their freedom and textually becoming free as they stepped into a land which ‘could know no footprint of the slave’. However, by the 1850s slave narratives increasingly presented the lives of former slaves living in Canada West after crossing the border. I examine two such narratives, produced and published as part of the abolitionist movement in the United States, and I explore how these narratives present life in Canada West. I examine how Canada West is presented in the classic slave narrative in texts that move beyond the US-Canada border and depict the lives of former slaves in Canada, and I look at which literary genres provided fugitive slaves with literary conventions for depicting their experience in Canada. Slave narratives have been examined in relation to American and British literary traditions but not to Canadian literary traditions. I argue that former American slaves utilised the conventions of the Canadian literary tradition of the female settler guide to construct their narratives of freedom in Canada. I argue Canada does not read as simply as an antislavery haven in these texts. Former slaves from the United States imagined Canada simultaneously as a haven for American slaves and as an exploitative capitalist space, which bound fugitives into experiences that they depicted as a kind of re-enslavement.

Chapter Three explores how antebellum slave narratives by former slaves from the United States that were read in Canada are contextualised within a wider body of little-known stories about slavery printed in Canada. Critics have recently argued that antebellum slave narratives by former American slaves are part of the Canadian literary canon, but they have not explored the connection of the slave narrative genre to the Canadian newspaper and other narratives about American slavery recirculated in

Canada in newspapers. In this chapter I use Gerard Genette's concept of paratext, functioning as a 'threshold' to a text, to place an antebellum slave narrative back into the threshold of the newspaper which framed it for its religious readers.¹⁶⁰ I argue that in Halifax, Nova Scotia the narrative of the former American slave Thomas Jones's *The Experience of Thomas Jones* was read within a context that gave priority to the evangelical imperatives in this text. The antebellum American slave narrative was advertised in a context where stories were functional moral tales that aimed to help white religious readers and keep them in moral health. Through examining a wider body of newspaper narratives that feature American slaves and function as moral tales for white evangelical readers, I provide a more contextual reading of Jones's slave narrative when it was circulated in Nova Scotia than we get if we look at the slave narrative in isolation; I suggest that when we place book-length slave narratives within a wider body of newspaper narratives, it problematises an over-simplified view of Canadian antislavery divorced from other imperatives and agendas.

In Chapter Four I examine *Broken Shackles*, a late nineteenth-century slave narrative, that is perhaps the first slave narrative to have been published in Canada. I use this as a vehicle to reflect on the issues raised in the previous three chapters. I argue that this narrative makes sense as the culmination of a little over a century of Canada's textual engagement with slavery. *Broken Shackles* engages with the topic of American slavery long after the abolition of slavery in the United States, reproducing an image of Canada as a haven, which has a moral currency for Canadians. Through an examination of the text's handling of the former enslaved person's voice in the context of the previous chapters, I argue this narrative departs in significant ways from the antebellum slave

¹⁶⁰ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 2.

narratives I explore in Chapter Two in its depiction of the former slave in Canada, especially in the way the text handles the voice of Jim Henson. I explore how the narrative at once seems to reproduce the antislavery Underground Railroad narrative and draws on the local colour tradition to reproduce an American slave narrative in a regional tradition, which collects and presents as ‘other’ the voice of a formerly enslaved man. I further argue that the modern reprint of this text, published in 2001, problematically standardises Henson’s dialect throughout the text, and this excises racist Canadian attitudes present in the original text alongside the antislavery stance of the text. I argue the modern reprint remembers only one half of the Canadian attitude to American former slaves — its antislavery stance — but not its simultaneously racist handling of the experience of enslaved people.

Collectively the case studies contest the idea of Canada as an antislavery and non-slaveholding space, and they examine what we may see as antislavery literature today within a frame that highlights its ‘moral capital’ for readers. George Elliott Clarke suggests we need to complicate Canada’s dominant national narrative that it was an antislavery space for former American slaves, produced in the mid-nineteenth-century slave narrative, by finding earlier narratives of Canadian slavery that can complicate this image; but, in contrast, I interrogate the image of Canada as an antislavery space by examining three groups of texts at different moments to see Canadian slaveholding and antislavery simultaneously present in each text. I argue that by placing these texts back into their transatlantic and black Atlantic context, a more complicated view of Canadian attitudes towards its own slavery and slavery in the Americas emerges; this presents a more complex image of Canada than when we focus on the Canadian slave

advertisements and the moment that the fugitive slave crosses the US-Canada border in the slave narrative.

Chapter One

Slavery and Anti-Slave-Trade Sentiment in Canada: A Case Study of Two Newspapers in Lower Canada 1789-1793

Newspapers are *the* key printed space in which to find texts about slavery in Canada that were circulated in colonial Canada. The dominance of newspapers in finding this printed history is in part a reflection and product of wider trends in Canadian publishing in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Until at least the early nineteenth century, the local printing presses in Canada were dominated by newspapers, government texts, sermons and almanacs, and most books were imported from Britain and ‘increasingly- from the United States’, as James N. Green notes.¹ Eli Maclaren’s study of the book trade in Canada prior to the First World War confirms that this pattern extended into the late nineteenth century and beyond.² In this chapter I examine the textual presence of slavery in Canada in two eighteenth-century Canadian newspapers published during a period when slavery was still legal in Canada and slave-trade debates were raging in Britain, France and in the newly-formed United States. I analyse the anti-slave-trade texts reprinted from this international movement in the newspapers and how this relates to the depiction of enslaved people in Canada.

In response to the marginalisation of slavery within Canada’s national narrative, scholars have described slavery in Canada as a lost history and the subject of national

¹ James N. Green, ‘The British Book in North America’, in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: Volume V: 1695-1830*, ed. by Michael F. Suarez, S. J. and Michael L. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 544-559 (p. 557).

² Eli Maclaren, *Dominion and Agency: Copyright and the Structure of the Canadian Book Trade 1867-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011). For a discussion of Canadian publishing as a context in which to understand the texts examined in this thesis and a fuller discussion of Maclaren, see Chapter Four of this thesis, and for a discussion of the focus on printed literature in this thesis, see the Introduction.

‘amnesia’.³ In this chapter I return to a moment when slavery in Canada was circulated in its printed texts, and I explore how slavery in Canada is constructed in the ‘imagined community’ produced in the colonial newspaper. As I discussed in the introduction to this thesis, George Elliott Clarke has argued that slave advertisements in eighteenth-century Canadian newspapers (that he variously calls ‘narratives’, ‘memoirs’ and ‘articles’) pre-date the antebellum slave narratives that produce Canada as a haven and should be looked at as presenting an earlier history that has been exiled from the national narrative.⁴ Winfried Siemerling’s more recent examination of the literature of Canada and the black Atlantic does not challenge this notion that the newspapers are the best printed source we have for exploring Canada and the black Atlantic world and its legacy of slavery.⁵ However, I want to suggest that the strategy used by Clarke and Siemerling responds to understandable yet modern historical and literary desires in handling the eighteenth-century newspapers in this way. This actually misreads the newspapers and overlooks the fact that slave advertisements were produced within a literary form — the colonial newspaper — and that they were printed in a more dominant context of reprinted texts about slavery in the wider Americas. Clarke, Siemerling and other black literary critics have overlooked these ‘foreign’ reprints about slavery outside colonial Canada, but I suggest in this chapter that they are central to understanding how Canada’s antislavery identity has developed in print.

In this chapter I analyse the anti-slave-trade texts reprinted from the international abolition movement in the newspapers and how this relates to the depiction of enslaved people in Canada. I explore how slavery in Lower Canada is constructed in the

³ On the amnesia discourse, see for example, Moynagh, ““This History’s Only Good for Anger”” (p. 100).

⁴ Clarke, ““This is no hearsay”” (p. 8, p. 18 n. 19).

⁵ Siemerling, *The Black Atlantic Reconsidered*, pp. 33-37.

‘imagined community’ produced in the colonial newspaper. I draw from archival research on two Canadian newspapers held in the British Library collections: the *Quebec Gazette (QG)* and the *Montreal Gazette (MG)*. The chapter is based on my examination of the newspapers for more than ten years of their publication, during slavery in Canada. The methodology I adopt is to treat the newspaper as a literary genre and to read it holistically.

In the first section I look at the newspapers and their form. In the second section I explore the textual presence of enslaved people in Lower Canada in runaway slave advertisements and advertisements selling enslaved people in the newspapers. I show that, outside of these advertisements, the newspapers remain largely silent on Canadian slavery. In the next section I look at foreign anti-slave-trade sentiment printed in the newspapers. I argue that the newspapers are far more concerned with giving space to texts about slavery elsewhere in the Americas than in Canada. The fourth section explores the contradiction that the newspapers print advertisements representing Canadian slavery and reprint anti-slave-trade sentiment. I argue that the antislavery poetry reprinted in the newspapers protests against the transatlantic slave trade and produces an image of West Indian slavery and the Atlantic slave trade that is exotic and ‘other’ to how slavery in Canada is presented in the newspapers. Overall, I argue that the newspapers provide a space in which to see Canadian slaveholding, and, as such, they contest the dominant narrative of Canada as an antislavery haven for American slaves in the nineteenth century; however, I suggest that pulling Canadian slave advertisements out of the newspaper and reading them in isolation, rather than in the context of the newspaper, does not reflect the more complex relationship between the printed memory of slavery in Canada and a multiplicity of voices about slavery in the

Americas that are also present in the newspapers. By reading the newspapers holistically, I show that this textual memory of Canadian slavery is printed in a context where slavery in the Americas dominates the popular understanding of slavery in Canada. Readers could accrue moral capital through reading about anti-slave-trade debates while simultaneously engaging with texts that presented enslaved people within their own community. I use Orwell's concept of 'doublethink' as a lens through which to examine this contradiction of holding together Canadian slaveholding and antislavery in the collective mind and imagined community in Lower Canada at the same time. Today critics use a discourse of amnesia to talk about slavery in Canada, and this implies the history was once known and has since fallen from the public mind. In this chapter, I suggest that the textual representation of slavery in Canada in the colonial Canadian newspapers was not later obscured by positive images of Canada as an antislavery haven in the mid-nineteenth century slave narrative; the slave advertisements are part of a layered textual context that obscures the history of slavery in Canada in the space where it is most textually present in the printed record.

The newspapers and their form

As has been identified by Marie Tremaine's *A Bibliography of Canadian Imprints, 1751-1800*, there was a thriving newspaper print trade in Canada between 1764 and 1800, and it is important to understand the findings in this chapter within this wider context.⁶ As has been noted, 'there were no newspapers [in New France]' (up to 1763), and this means the printed textual presence of enslaved First Nations people, which dominated slavery under the French, cannot be sought in newspapers.⁷ Tremaine counts

⁶ Marie Tremaine, *A Bibliography of Canadian Imprints, 1751-1800* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952), p. 594.

⁷ John Dickinson, and Brian Young, *A Short History of Quebec*, 4th edn (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), p. 92. Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, p. 291.

ten newspapers in Upper and Lower Canada by the turn of the century.⁸ However, these newspapers were often short-lived, and it was not unusual for them to be in publication for only a year or two. The holdings for the *MG* and the *QG* give a rare insight into this period of slavery and slaveholding in colonial Canada, particularly up to 1793. Upper Canada had no newspapers prior to 1793, and Lower Canada had just three additional papers throughout the whole period, two of which were very short-lived. In Lower Canada up to 1793 there was the *Courier de Quebec* (published in 1788 only and in French); the *Gazette de Commerce et Litteraire* (published between 1778-1779 and in French); the *Montreal Gazette* (published from 1785 to the present day, in English and French); the *Quebec Gazette* (published from 1764 to the nineteenth century and in English and French); and the *Quebec Herald* (published between 1788-1793, in English).⁹ Nova Scotia, like Lower Canada, was a thriving hub for the newspaper trade in the eighteenth-century colonies that would later become Canada.¹⁰

The *Montreal Gazette* and the *Quebec Gazette* are a key space in which to explore Canadian attitudes to slavery and to explore how enslaved people in Canada have been represented in print. Frank Mackey has found that these two newspapers contain the

⁸ Tremaine, *A Bibliography*, p. 594.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 594-659.

¹⁰ I have examined the *Royal Gazette*, published in Nova Scotia, in the Nova Scotia Archives in Halifax for the years 1788-1792. I have found a broadly similar picture of the construction of slavery in Canada and the Americas in that newspaper to that I explore in the Quebec newspapers in this chapter. The *Royal Gazette* printed runaway slave advertisements and advertisements for enslaved people, and some foreign antislavery literature was reprinted alongside these texts in Nova Scotia. However, British parliamentary debates and British-authored poetry about the abolition of the slave trade were not printed in the *Royal Gazette* but in the contemporaneous *Nova Scotia Magazine*, so British antislavery texts were not in quite such close proximity to the advertisements about Canadian slavery as they were in the Quebec newspapers. Another contrast is that there is little interest in French abolitionist debates in the *Royal Gazette* and the *Nova Scotia Magazine*. The *Royal Gazette* is available to view for these dates at the Nova Scotia Archives, reels 8163-64, and the *Nova Scotia Magazine* is on reels 8062-63. A good overview of some of the runaway slave advertisements, advertisements for enslaved people and antislavery texts printed in newspapers in Nova Scotia can be found in a survey of the newspapers held at the Nova Scotia Museum, Halifax. See Nova Scotia Museum, 'Black Newspaper Survey' (unpublished research, Black Cultural Heritage Data Management, c. 1991-1997), binders 8-10.

highest number of runaway slave advertisements and advertisements selling enslaved people of all the newspapers published in Lower Canada in the late eighteenth century. As such, they provide a key space in which to examine representations of enslaved people in Canada. Looking at the newspapers published in Quebec, Frank Mackey counts a total of one hundred advertisements selling enslaved people and runaway slave advertisements that were printed across five Lower Canadian newspapers between 1765 and 1810.¹¹ He identifies that the *QG* printed by far the most at a total of seventy-three, whereas the *MG* printed eighteen and the *Quebec Herald* published seven, while two other newspapers (the *Mercury* and the *Courant*) published one each.¹² The two newspapers I examine in this chapter represent a key textual space in which the presence of enslaved people in Canada is recorded in its printed literature.

The *Quebec Gazette* was the first newspaper established in Lower Canada. It was founded by William Brown and Thomas Gilmore between 1763-1764 and printed in Quebec. The first issue was published in June 1764, and Brown and Gilmore ran the newspaper together until Gilmore's death in 1773. William Brown was born in Scotland in 1737, and he lived in America with his mother's relatives from around the age of fifteen. Brown studied at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, and he had experience of running a bookshop in Philadelphia and setting up a printing shop in Barbados, where he lived for two years before being attracted to the prospects of establishing the first newspaper in Quebec. Samuel Neilson took charge of the *Quebec Gazette* on 22 March 1789 following his uncle William Brown's sudden death, and he ran the newspaper between 1789-1793 until his own death on 12 January 1793. Neilson

¹¹ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, p. 313.

¹² Ibid. For a brief discussion of the slave advertisements that were printed in the newspapers in Ontario, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick during this period, see Cooper, *The Hanging of Angelique*, p. 87.

was born in Scotland and had moved to Quebec in 1785. Following Samuel Neilson's death, Alexander Spark managed the newspaper on behalf of Samuel Neilson's younger brother John Neilson. Spark was a Presbyterian minister at the Scotch Church in Quebec, and Samuel Neilson had been a member of his congregation. Spark was in charge of the newspaper until 1796 when John Neilson took over the running of the *QG*.¹³

Enslaved people worked at the *QG* printing office 'at least from 1767', according to Marcel Trudel.¹⁴ William Brown owned an enslaved man called Joe, and runaway slave advertisements about him were frequently printed in that paper. Therese P. Lemay notes that many runaway slave advertisements feature Joe between 1777-1789, reflecting his repeated attempts to run away from the newspaper office where he worked.¹⁵ Robin W. Winks notes that William Brown and John Neilson were both slaveowners:

Already William Brown [...] and his nephew and successor, John Neilson, erstwhile slaveholders both, had begun to attack slavery. Brown appears to have held no slaves after 1789, and Neilson seems to have sold his by 1793; from 1790 on the *Quebec Gazette* printed antislavery poetry, English and French language versions of slave-ship atrocity stories and related material calculated to decrease support for slavery.¹⁶

¹³ The overview of the *QG* and its editors given in this paragraph is based on three biographical entries in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*: Jean-François Gervais, 'William Brown', *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/brown_william_4E.html> [accessed 21 November 2016] (para. 3-5 of 11), (para. 2 of 11); John E. Hare, 'Samuel Neilson', *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/neilson_samuel_1771_93_4E.html> [accessed 21 November 2016] (para. 1-2 of 6); James H. Lambert, 'Alexander Spark', *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/spark_alexander_5E.html> [accessed 21 November 2016] (para. 5 of 11). For a contemporary notice regarding Brown's death and Samuel Neilson's new role as editor, see *QG*, 26 March 1789, p. 3, British Library, reel BL. M.C.271.B. All subsequent references to the *QG* in this chapter will refer to this microfilm reel.

¹⁴ Trudel, *Canada's Forgotten Slaves*, p. 110.

¹⁵ Therese P. Lemay, 'Joe', *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/joe_4E.html> [accessed 20 December 2016] (para. 3 of 6).

¹⁶ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, p. 100.

However, Winks's analysis does not acknowledge that Samuel Neilson was the editor at the newspaper between March 1789-January 1793. He notes that William Brown held no enslaved people after 1789, and he suggests that this reflected his burgeoning antislavery views, but Brown died that same year, and his enslaved man Joe was a part of his 'property' when he died. Hence, Winks's suggestion he might have stopped purchasing enslaved people or even liberated them is incorrect. In the passage above, Winks suggests that the newspaper as a whole became more antislavery, but as I show below this peaked whilst Samuel Neilson was editor at the newspaper, and the antislavery stance of the newspaper did not continue after he died. It is unclear if Samuel Neilson owned enslaved people himself. Trudel does not identify Samuel Neilson as a slaveholder, but he mentions that his uncle William Brown and brother John Neilson owned enslaved people.¹⁷ Scholars offer different views on what may have happened to Joe upon Brown's death. Lemay claims that Brown died in 1789, and he left Joe to Samuel Neilson in his will, but Joe seems to have run away soon after and Samuel Neilson apparently made no attempt to reclaim him. Lemay suggests Samuel Neilson was driven by financial motives in not trying to recover Joe, 'profiting from his uncle's experience', which taught him that Joe would repeatedly run away.¹⁸ Mackey notes that following Brown's death Joe was possibly sold to Peter Stuart.¹⁹ The findings in this chapter suggest that Samuel Neilson's relationship with Joe should be considered further, given Samuel Neilson's antislavery attitudes that I explore more fully below.

The *MG* was owned and printed by Fleury Mesplet in Montreal. Mesplet was the 'first French printer in Canada' and 'the first printer in Montreal'.²⁰ He was born in France in

¹⁷ Trudel, *Canada's Forgotten Slaves*, p. 110.

¹⁸ Lemay, 'Joe' (para. 6 of 6).

¹⁹ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, pp. 534-35 n. 28.

²⁰ Green, 'The British Book in North America' (p. 549).

1734.²¹ He set up a printing shop in London in 1773 and travelled to Philadelphia the following year before setting out for the province of Quebec in 1775. Mesplet attempted to set up a newspaper in Montreal in French to aid the American revolutionary presence following the capture of Montreal in 1775 by Richard Montgomery. He received funds and support from the Continental Congress to establish his newspaper, but he was unable to carry out his plans before the revolutionary presence dissipated on 15 June 1775. Mesplet ran *La Gazettee*, a newspaper in French edited by Valentin Jautard, for a year before being imprisoned because of its content between 1779-1782. Mesplet established the *Montreal Gazette* in 1785, and he ran this until his death in January 1794. Marcel Trudel notes that Mesplet, like his contemporary William Brown at the *Quebec Gazette*, owned an enslaved person who worked at his newspaper.²² Claude Galarneau notes that it is unlikely that Mesplet was the editor of the *MG*, which was probably edited by Valentin Jautard until 1787.²³ However, Mesplet was a skilled printer, and it is likely that he was involved in fashioning the *MG* in this capacity, and as its owner, he would have taken overall responsibility for the content of the newspaper.

The *Quebec Gazette* was published weekly, and it was usually six pages in length, including a two-page supplement section largely filled with advertisements and notices. It was a bilingual newspaper with each page divided into two columns with English on the left and a translation in French appearing next to it in the right column. The newspaper tended to be dominated by news of foreign affairs in Britain, America and France, as well as those in European colonies like Saint-Domingue. This focus on

²¹ The biographical information on Fleury Mesplet in this paragraph is based on Claude Galarneau's description of him in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. See Claude Galarneau, 'Fleury Mesplet', *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mesplet_fleury_4E.html>[accessed 20 January 2016].

²² Trudel, *Canada's Forgotten Slaves*, p. 110.

²³ Galarneau, 'Fleury Mesplet' (para. 10 of 12).

international news is reflected in the founding proposals of the newspaper, printed in its first issue in 1764. The proposals state that the newspaper's 'design is to publish in English and French' knowledge that will benefit individuals and the community regarding,

foreign affairs, political transactions [...] of the several powers of Europe, occurrences of the Mother Country, also events, debates, etc of amusement and interest to people [...] [and] Material occurrences of the American colonies and West-Indian Islands.²⁴

The *QG* was heavily dependent on news from abroad in the form of letters and newspapers for its material, and it regularly summarised news from foreign newspapers from England, Europe and the Americas.²⁵ In a notice that appears in an issue of the *Quebec Gazette* dated 22 March 1792, Samuel Neilson describes his newspaper as filtering international events into 'the public mind'.²⁶ He conceptualises his newspaper as a shared space or consciousness for the community, and as the proposals above outline, international affairs and those of the 'Mother Country' were seen as key aspects to bring to the attention of the collective mind of his readers.²⁷ The founding proposals show that the printing office of the *Quebec Gazette* was 'two Doors above the office of the [Governor's] Secretary's Office, where subscriptions for this Paper are taken in'.²⁸ This office was likely the office of Hector Theophilus Cramahe who was Civil Secretary to the British Lieutenant Governor of Quebec, James Murray, between 1764-1766, and to Murray's successor Guy Carleton. The description of the close proximity of the

²⁴ Quoted by Tremaine, *A Bibliography*, p. 630.

²⁵ For example, see *QG*, 'London, November 2, to 14', 16 February 1792, p. 3; *QG*, 'London, December 10', 22 March 1792, p. 1; *QG*, 10 November 1791, p. 2.

²⁶ *QG*, 3 May 1792, p. 4.

²⁷ Tremaine, *A Bibliography*, p. 630.

²⁸ *Ibid.* The square brackets are reproduced from Tremaine.

printing office to an office of the colonial government highlights for readers that the newspaper was probably sanctioned by the colonial government. This is reinforced by the fact that this newspaper was the first published in Quebec and began publication in 1764, a year after the Treaty of Paris was signed. It is rare for local news to be printed in the newspaper, but an exception to this is the announcements made by the colonial government in Lower Canada that are regularly printed in the newspaper. As John E. Hare notes, the *QG* had ‘a privileged status since the government published all its official announcements in it at a yearly contract price’, but this changed under Samuel Neilson and the colonial government was charged for each item published, according to a list produced by Neilson.²⁹

The *Montreal Gazette* was a bilingual newspaper, and it was published weekly. Similarly to the *Quebec Gazette*, it was largely made up of international news items printed wholesale or summarised within the paper. In its founding proposals, printed in the second issue, the *MG* says it will be dominated by reports on European and American affairs as well as inviting readers to contribute their own letters and articles free of charge.³⁰ It informs its readers of the cost of inserting ‘informations or advertisements’ as costing one Spanish dollar for one, and two dollars for three. The *MG* gives regular updates on political affairs from a range of European cities, including London, Paris, Lisbon, Stockholm and Rome, but during the period under study here the newspaper is largely dominated by news from France, the West Indies, America and Britain. An advertisement printed in the *MG* addresses subscribers in Quebec, Trois-

²⁹ Hare, ‘Samuel Neilson’ (para. 3 of 6).

³⁰ *MG, Proposal for the Establishment of a New Gazette*, p. 4, British Library, BL. M.C.270. The proposal appears on the microfilm reel just before the first issue of the newspaper on that reel, dated 25 August 1785. All subsequent references to the *MG* in this chapter will refer to this microfilm reel.

Rivières and Montreal, and this identifies the residents of these three urban centres in Lower Canada as the likely readership.³¹

In this chapter I draw from my examination of the British Library's holdings of the *MG* and the *QG* available on microfilm at the Newspaper Library at Colindale, London.³²

The available material for the *MG* spans a vast period from its first issue, published on 25 August 1785, to 31 December 1998. The holdings of the *QG* similarly cover a long period from 21 June 1764 to 25 December 1817. I have examined the following years of the newspapers: The *MG*: August 1785-June 1786, March 1788-November 1788, 1 January 1789-January 1790, September 1790-10 February 1791, 1 July 1791-13 February 1794; the *QG*: 2 January 1777-24 June 1779, 3 January 1788-December 1790, November 1791-10 April 1794. I have read each issue of the newspaper for these years. I have chosen to focus on the period 1789-1793 because these years represent the most complex and most heterogeneous years of the newspapers' textual engagement with slavery. My study of the newspapers over a wider time period attests that 1789-1793 saw a peak in the number of abolitionist texts, which were largely reprints of debates and poetry elsewhere, entering the newspapers.

There is a peak in the number of foreign abolitionist debates and abolitionist poetry printed in the *QG* and the *MG* between 1789 and 1793. I have found no abolitionist texts in two earlier periods of the *Quebec Gazette* whilst William Brown was editor: January 1777- January 1779 and January 1788- March 1789. Between March 1789 when Samuel Neilson began as editor and January 1793 when he died, I have found

³¹ *MG*, 6 October 1785, p. 4.

³² Following the closure of the Newspaper Library at Colindale, these collections have moved to the main British Library site, St Pancras, London.

twenty-three antislavery texts printed in his newspaper, including three antislavery poems and an antislavery narrative. During his first nine months as the editor of the newspaper, Neilson printed six antislavery texts, marking a distinct shift from his predecessor. My examination of the *QG* during the first year that Alexander Spark was editor of the newspaper identifies that there are no abolitionist texts printed in the paper under Spark. My research suggests there were no abolitionist texts printed in the *Montreal Gazette* in its first year of issue in 1785 or in 1788. However, in 1788 Mesplet printed two proslavery texts his newspaper. The *MG* saw a rise in the number of abolitionist texts from 1789: six abolitionist texts and two proslavery texts were printed in the newspaper that year. In the early 1790s this trend continued, but to a lesser extent: there were five abolitionist texts, two proslavery texts and five texts about the prospect of giving equal rights and the status of citizens to free blacks in the French West Indian colonies printed in the newspaper. The period 1789-1793 roughly corresponds to trends in the British newspapers, from which the *QG* derived much of its material, but these years also mark the years that Samuel Neilson was editor of the newspaper, and in part the anti-slave-trade sentiment layered in the newspaper can be seen as developing under him. My examination of the years immediately preceding and following his proprietorship reinforces the sense that Samuel Neilson was driving the emphasis given to abolitionist discourses in the *QG*, and, as I explore later, his presentation of these foreign abolitionist debates crafts a newspaper itself in sympathy with these ideals. As others have noticed, Samuel Neilson's proprietorship of the paper represents a more creative and literary phase in the newspaper's content, and his focus on antislavery sentiment could also be understood in this wider context. One of the changes made by Neilson was to print poems that were more international and seen to be of a higher

quality by contemporaries, and his decision to reprint popular and esteemed antislavery poetry from the British context could reflect this wider shift.³³

The rise in the number of abolitionist texts printed in the newspapers in Lower Canada between 1789 and 1793 correlates with the peak moment in the eighteenth-century slave-trade debates in Britain, which were part of a wider international movement also taking place in cosmopolitan centres in France and the United States. This reflects the fact that the newspaper editors in Lower Canada drew heavily from British and French anti-slave-trade material and reprinted it in their newspapers. It might also reflect that to some extent the editors attempted to interpret the public mood in the European metropolises and to represent this in their own newspapers. Seymour Drescher shows that between 1787-1788 there was a peak in the number of references to the slave trade in British newspapers.³⁴ The data he has gathered from analysing the newspapers suggests that references to the slave trade remained numerous in 1789, declining slightly in the earlier 1790s, although not falling as low as the pre-1787 numbers, to peak again in 1793.³⁵ Drescher argues that abolitionism did not flourish in Britain in the immediate aftermath of the American Revolution in response to this defeat; rather, it blossomed in the context of a mood of optimism about the British Empire and in the peace and prosperity of 1787 and 1788, at a time in which France and the American colonies were seen to be in decline and France ‘ceased to seem a menace’.³⁶ He suggests that abolitionist campaigning and sentiment flourished in Britain in ‘moments of relative calm’, such as in 1787-1788, because the British people and the ruling elite in Britain,

³³ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, p. 35.

³⁴ Seymour Drescher, ‘The Shocking Birth of British Abolitionism’, *Slavery and Abolition*, 33.4 (2012), 571-593 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0144039X.2011.644070>> (p. 576).

³⁵ *Ibid.* (p. 577).

³⁶ *Ibid.* (p. 586).

‘wanted to sustain their momentum in a situation where they already felt themselves to be leaders in coalescing international movements for human amelioration’.³⁷ The rise in abolitionist texts in the newspapers in Lower Canada started in 1789 and not 1787-1788; this could reflect the three-month delay between the news leaving London and arriving in Quebec, since the first few months of news related in the *MG* and *QG* in 1789 reported on events in Britain in late 1788. However, the peak period of interest in abolitionism in the *QG* and *MG* begins more clearly in August 1789 after Wilberforce’s first speech to the House of Commons was printed in the *QG*, and this suggests that the increasing interest in British and French abolitionism in Quebec was stimulated by the growing momentum of the political campaign to abolish the slave trade in Britain.

There were various pressures on the newspapers in terms of appealing to and staying within the expectations of various audiences. In this section I will examine three audiences the newspapers had to cater for: the colonial government, the general readership and the advertisers. In compiling their newspapers, the editors must have been aware of the scrutinising eye of the colonial government. Fleury Mesplet had previously been imprisoned over the content of his newspaper.³⁸ During the American Revolution both newspapers had to censor their reports of the revolutionary colonies.³⁹ The editors would have been sensitive to the close scrutiny of the colonial government when compiling their newspapers. The abolitionist discourse that filters into the newspapers and its inclusion in issues printed over several years reflects that it was not deemed to threaten the political stability in colonial Lower Canada. Indeed, the close relationship between abolitionist and pro-British patriotic discourse may have meant

³⁷ Ibid. (p. 588).

³⁸ Galarneau, ‘Fleury Mesplet’ (para. 5 of 12).

³⁹ Gervais, ‘William Brown’ (paras. 6-7, of 11).

that such texts were seen as welcome by the colonial government, and that reprinting antislavery texts was also a way to produce a pro-British sentiment that reinforced the political status quo.⁴⁰

The general readership had to be appealed to in order to maintain the number of paying subscriptions to the *MG* and the *QG*, which ensured their financial survival. Both newspapers were able to stay in print during a challenging period in newspaper publishing when many other newspapers in the province went out of business.⁴¹ This suggests the content of the newspapers was well-received by its general readership and that they saw it as delivering a significant benefit to make it worth the money they paid in annual subscription costs. The *MG* cost three Spanish dollars a year, and the *QG* cost three American dollars per annum until 1800.⁴² It has been estimated that there were 300 subscribers to the *MG* and between 400-500 people who read the *QG*.⁴³ The coffee shops and clubs mentioned in both newspapers suggest that the newspapers were circulated to multiple readers and that they were available to view by non-subscribers. Given this, it seems likely that the actual number of readers would have been much greater than the number of subscribers implies. Internal evidence from within the newspapers suggests a socially privileged readership of merchant families, seigneurs and members of the colonial elite who held government offices and had particularly strong ties to England. Gerard Laurence describes newspaper readership in eighteenth-

⁴⁰ For a discussion of British abolitionism and its links to patriotism, see, for example, Brown's discussion of the popularity of Cowper's 'The Negro's Complaint', in *Moral Capital*, p. 449 and Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, 2nd edn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 354.

⁴¹ Tremaine, *A Bibliography*, pp. 594-659.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 630.

⁴³ Gerard Laurence, 'The Newspaper Press in Quebec', in *History of the Book in Canada, Volume One, Beginnings to 1840*, ed. by Patricia Lockhart Fleming, Gilles Gallichan and Yvan Lamonde (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 233-37 (pp. 234-35).

century Quebec as follows: ‘Newspaper customers were [...] mainly an elite, half of them anglophone, wealthier, better educated, and more concerned with the news because of their positions and activities’, and he notes that ‘the other half were francophones, a modest professional and merchant class numbering several thousand’.⁴⁴

Advertisers were also an important audience for the newspaper. The *MG* and *QG* were probably the most widely read newspapers published in Lower Canada during the years covered by this study, and because of this they were an important and convenient public space in which advertisers could reach people in the local community. Subscribers had to pay to place advertisements in the *QG*, and it is likely the person placing the advertisement did so because they saw it as offering a considerable financial return on their investment. Subscribers to the *MG* could print three advertisements a year for free, and this may have worked as an incentive to get people to pay for subscriptions to the paper.⁴⁵ Placing an advertisement or notice in the *QG* or the *MG* represents an interpretation from the advertiser that this is an appropriate space in which to find the audience they are wishing to reach and that the language and form of their advertisement would appeal to their audience.⁴⁶ The advertisements pages in both newspapers reinforce the sense that everybody in the community was expected to read the newspapers, and this would have supported the idea that this was a key space in which to advertise. This is reflected in notices about lost possessions, individuals requesting a specific person to return a borrowed book and notaries’ notices that informed the public that certain individuals needed to come forward to make claims on

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 235.

⁴⁵ *MG*, 15 June 1786, p. 4.

⁴⁶ Tom O’Malley, ‘The Elusive Reader: UK Newspapers and their Readers during World War II’ (conference paper, University of Sheffield, 12 September 2014).

a will. The advertisements create the impression that members of the community are expected to keep an eye on the notices and advertisements in the newspapers, looking out for those that might specifically require their attention.

Subscribers who advertised enslaved people for sale or placed runaway slave advertisements in the newspapers were not deterred by the antislavery sentiment and poetry reprinted in the newspapers. The number of runaway slave advertisements and those selling enslaved people did not diminish during 1789-1793 even though this was a period which saw a prioritising by both editors of the reprinting of foreign anti-slave-trade texts. This suggests the advertisers were not dissuaded from placing advertisements for runaway slaves and advertisements selling enslaved people in the newspapers by the sympathy for enslaved people that was voiced by both newspapers. There is no evidence that the advertisers saw these advertisements as being in conflict with the anti-slave-trade texts published in the newspapers. These advertisements appeared in a section of the newspapers where human relationships were transacted in business and monetary terms. This comforting sense that the advertisements section was about property and business provided a context that may have helped make these advertisements appear to be legitimate business transactions. Additionally, a sort of blindness could have pervaded the advertisers' minds, given the fact that the antislavery texts reprinted in the newspapers focused on anti-slave-trade measures and imagery that would have appeared exotic and foreign to the way slavery in colonial Canada was presented, as I will explore later in this chapter. We might expect that in this context advertisers would have been uncomfortable in using the newspaper to reclaim absconded enslaved people and to sell enslaved people, but the evidence does not suggest this. This reflects that slavery in Canada was not seen as similar to the abuses of

the slave trade that were critiqued through poetry and political texts reprinted in the newspapers.

One reason that may account for why advertisers continued to print advertisements selling enslaved people in colonial Canada and runaway slave advertisements alongside anti-slave-trade polemic is the contemporary expectation that the newspaper was a form that could comfortably hold together contradictory points of view. The heterogeneous nature of the newspaper was seen by contemporaries as its defining generic characteristic. The newspaper was seen as a form which drew together different types of languages, registers, genres and material, both foreign and local. This is reflected in an article entitled ‘Thoughts on a News — paper’, printed in the *MG* by Mesplet on 16 March 1786 and probably reprinted from another newspaper.⁴⁷ The article describes the uniqueness of the newspaper as a form that is compiled of a medley of texts and viewpoints and that appeals to readers with a broad range of tastes and perspectives. The article notes that the newspaper does not have to consistently put forward one point of view, noting that there is a ‘ludicrous contrast’ between, for example, ‘the contradictory substance of foreign and domestic paragraphs, [and] the opposite opinion of contending essayists’. The text describes newspapers as a ‘heterogeneous’ form: ‘It has been observed that there is not so inconsistent, so incoherent, so heterogeneous, although so useful and agreeable a thing, as a News-Paper’. The *OED* glosses the term ‘heterogeneous’ as ‘Of a body in respect to its elements composed of diverse elements or constituents, consisting of different parts, not homogeneous’, and it describes homogeneous as a thing in which all its elements are ‘Uniform’ and ‘all of the same

⁴⁷ *MG*, 16 March 1786, p. 2.

kind'.⁴⁸ The description of the newspaper as a 'heterogeneous' form depicts it as 'a body' that mixes together elements that are diverse and different. 'Thoughts on a News — paper' makes it clear that the current fashion for newspapers is for them to be largely composed of politics and poetry, describing politics as 'Now the roast beef of our times' and poetry as the 'plum pudding'. The newspaper is described as a heterogeneous form because of its variety of registers, voices and types of text and not because of its thematic content, which was quite limited and largely focused on politics and poetry.

The form of the colonial newspaper may have been heterogeneous, but, looking at the *MG* and *QG* as examples, it is clear that the newspapers' content was carefully constructed and policed. The description of the form of the newspaper printed in the *MG* presents the genre of the newspaper as an 'inconsistent' combination of 'incoherent', 'heterogeneous' material, but my research shows that the newspapers were carefully compiled from largely reprinted texts. There is evidence that newspaper editors were the most avid readers of their own newspapers and that they read issues of their newspaper, checking for inconsistencies and apologising for them.⁴⁹ In addition, newspaper editors were highly selective about which materials they reprinted. For example, Samuel Neilson carefully selects and reprints anti-slave-trade texts, but he does not let pro-slave-trade arguments into his newspaper.

⁴⁸ 'Heterogeneous, adj.' and 'Homogenous', *Oxford English Dictionary* [online] [accessed 2 January 2017].

⁴⁹ For example, a small notice apologises for printing a poem the previous week 'during the Printer's absence', see *RG*, 8 March 1791, p. 3.

Contemporary accounts of how readers in the eighteenth century experienced reading newspapers are rare, unlike the more prolific record for experiences of reading books.⁵⁰ The article about newspapers printed in the *MG* offers one view that the newspaper needs to cater for different readers within a society, and that each text can be read differently by multiple readers according to their points of view and interests.⁵¹ It states that readers' 'affections lie' with different aspects of the newspaper: some may prefer anecdotes, but others are on the look out for the price of stock and arrival of East or West India fleets and others may enjoy reading accounts of dreadful battles taking place elsewhere since they are able to feel safe by comparison, 'free from such dangers'. The text notes the 'various effects' a single text can have on different readers, for example, that the notice of a marriage will 'mortify an old maid' and 'give consolation to a poor dejected husband'. Although the old maid and the dejected husband are two types rather than complex individuals, the underlying point is that a single text in a newspaper could be read in multiple ways depending upon the worldview and approach of the reader. Seen from the perspective of contemporary understandings of the newspaper as a heterogeneous form, it makes sense that runaway slave advertisements may have been seen as available for those who wished to read them and open to more than one type of interpretation by readers with different perspectives. The familiar structure of the *QG* and the *MG* may have encouraged 'discontinuous reading' with readers dipping in to find only the information they were interested in.⁵² This would have been possible for

⁵⁰ See the discussion of an unusual exception in the example of the eighteenth-century farmer William Coe in Stephen Colcough, *Consuming Texts: Readers and Reading Communities, 1695-1860* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. ix.

⁵¹ *MG*, 16 March 1786, p. 2; *MG*, 'Reflections on Different Professions in Life', 27 October 1785, p. 1.

⁵² Tom O'Malley, 'The Elusive Reader', and see also Roger Chartier, 'Languages, Books, and Printing from the Printed Word to the Digital Text', trans. by Teresa Lavender Fagan, *Critical Inquiry*, 31.1 (2004), 133-152 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/427305>> (p. 142, p. 151).

readers of the *QG* and *MG*, as both had a regular repetitive structure that placed items in the same place in each issue.

The editors of the *Montreal Gazette* and the *Quebec Gazette* crafted newspapers in sympathy with anti-slave-trade sentiment. They did this through reprinting international anti-slave-trade texts in the form of foreign political dates and abolitionist poetry.

Bakhtin's theory of dialogised heteroglossia in the novel is a useful frame through which to read the recontextualisation of international news carefully selected for reprinting in the *MG* and *QG* by its editors. I argue that through this lens we must see the newspaper editor Samuel Neilson as one of Canada's first abolitionists against the British slave trade. The reprinting of these foreign texts gave members of the community in Lower Canada the space in which to view themselves as holding anti-slave-trade sensibilities that generated moral capital for them. I will now explore Bakhtin's theory of the novel, and I will argue the *MG* and *QG* highlighted their double-voiced nature and their construction from recycled print. I use this as a frame to explore the anti-slave-trade texts reprinted in both newspapers between 1789 and 1793. Then, I consider the apparent contradiction of the fact that the textual presence of enslaved people in Lower Canada was printed alongside texts that called for the abolition of the slave trade and underscored the humanity of slaves.

Between 1789 and 1793 Mesplet and Neilson reprinted foreign abolitionist texts in the *QG* and *MG*, including abolitionist poetry, fictional narratives, reports on slavery in the

West Indies and political debates about abolition in France and Britain.⁵³ Both newspapers print abolitionist debates which took place in France and Britain, for example Wilberforce's 1789 anti-slave-trade speech to the House of Commons. The *Quebec Gazette* reports on popular abolitionism taking place in Manchester. The newspapers report on the passage of acts (in some cases, the partial passage of acts, or those that were later revoked) to abolish the slave trade and (in some cases) slavery in Europe: in France (1793), Denmark (1792) and Britain (1792).⁵⁴ In addition, texts about the debate on whether to grant citizens' rights to free blacks in the French colonies and to grant them the right to sit in the colonial assemblies were selected from foreign publications and reprinted in the *MG*.

Bakhtin conceptualises the novel as a 'dialogue' in which different voices, registers, genres, foreign languages and points of view of different consciousnesses are presented as equal to one another ('a plurality of fully valid voices') and in constant 'dialogue' (or 'quarrel') with one another.⁵⁵ By contrast Bakhtin suggests that poetry as a genre tends to be monologic (single-voiced), as when varieties of language enter the poem they are always depicted and not equal to the language of the poet who depicts, although more

⁵³ For example, see William Cowper's antislavery poem 'The Negro's Complaint' that is printed in the *QG* on 21 January 1791, p. 3 and in the *MG* on 11 June 1789, p. 4. In addition, a short narrative about a French enslaved woman who commits suicide by jumping overboard from a ship is printed in the *QG* on 21 June 1792, p. 2.

⁵⁴ The dates provided in brackets reflect the years when these bills were passed (at least partially or temporarily) and not when they were implemented. See *MG*, 12 December 1793, p. 3; *QG*, 30 August 1792 p. 3; *QG*, 14 June 1792, p. 2. In 1792 the *Quebec Gazette* prints a text about the passage of the slave trade abolition bill in the House of Commons, 7 June 1792, p. 2, but the bill was later thrown out by the House of Lords.

⁵⁵ See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 92 and Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination, Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 34, p. 72, p. 91.

recently this argument has received much criticism.⁵⁶ According to Bakhtin heteroglossia in the novel is double-voiced: ‘In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions. And all the while these two voices are dialogically interrelated’. Bakhtin explains that there are several techniques for inviting dialogised heteroglossia into the novel. One of these, by way of example, is ‘hybrid construction’ a term for the way the narrator’s voice can include the unmarked speech of another in what appears to be the voice of a single speaker and in which ‘one and the same word often figures both as the speech of the author and as the speech of another — and at the same time’.⁵⁷ In the hybrid construction of free indirect speech, or quasi-direct speech as Bakhtin terms it, the boundary between the character’s and narrator’s speech is blurred and one word can hold layers of meaning, speaking both voices at the same time. Rather than squash the natural tendency of language towards variety and varieties of meaning, novelists embrace this quality of language and invite the past contexts of words into the novel. Bakhtin argues that ‘The prose writer makes use of words that are already populated with the social intentions of others and compels them to serve his own new intentions, to serve a second master’.⁵⁸

Bakhtin does not suggest that the newspaper is a genre that contains varieties of language and dialogised heteroglossia, but his theory of the novel can be fruitfully applied to the newspapers. My reading of the colonial newspaper sees it a genre that

⁵⁶ See for example Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 286-87, p. 297, p. 320. For examples of critics who have taken issue with the view that poetry is monologic, see David Morris, ‘Burns and Heteroglossia’, *The Eighteenth Century*, 28.1 (1987), 3-27 <<http://www.jstor.org/sheffield.idm.oclc.org/stable/41467403>> [accessed 24 January 2017] (p. 18, p. 16) and Carol McGuirk, ‘Bakhtin, and the Opposition of Poetic and Novelistic Discourse: A Response to David Morris’, *The Eighteenth Century*, 32.1 (1991), 58-72 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41467507>> [accessed 24 January 2017] (p. 58). For a wider discussion of the criticism, see Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 74-78.

⁵⁷ Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 308.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 299-300, p. 308, p. 324.

contains heteroglossia, that is varieties of language, different registers, points of view and languages, and that these are dialogised. Although he does not examine the newspaper as a genre at length, Bakhtin discusses journalistic writing in its relation to the novel. He argues that journalistic writing is a monologic genre; he suggests that critics cannot search for the monologic viewpoint of Dostoevsky in his novels, but that this can be found in his journalistic writing:

Thus the ideas of Dostoevsky himself, uttered by him in monologic form outside the artistic context of his work (in articles, letters, oral conversations) are merely prototypes for several of the idea-images in his novels. For this reason it is absolutely impermissible to substitute a critique of these monologic idea-prototypes for genuine analysis of Dostoevsky's polyphonic artistic thought.⁵⁹

Bakhtin argues here that Dostoevsky's monologic viewpoint cannot be found in the novel because his monologic perspective is part of the dialogue of the novel. By contrast, he suggests that Dostoevsky's '[journalistic] articles' are monologic expressions of his ideas. He does not see Dostoevsky's journalistic articles and other writings as 'artistic' forms. Bakhtin suggests that while Dostoevsky thought in voices in the novel, in his journalistic columns he thought in a single voice — his own.

Bakhtin's theory of the novel can be used to explore the newspapers, expanding on his reading of the newspaper to consider it too as containing a multiplicity of voices that are dialogically related. Mesplet and Neilson speak through previously printed texts, and the texts they reprint contain the voice of both the original context of the publication and the voice of the newspaper editor: they are double-voiced. Bakhtin cautions against lifting Dostoevsky's point of view out of the wider context of the novel since its generic

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 92-93.

specialness is its multi-voiced nature. Borrowing from Bakhtin's idea, I suggest that to remove the textual presence of enslaved people in colonial Canada from the form of the colonial newspaper is to misinterpret the newspaper as a heterogeneous form containing a range of registers and voices. Bakhtin states that we 'cannot detach[...] [voices] from the dialogic fabric [...] [of the novel] without distorting their nature'.⁶⁰ Bakhtin's point can be applied to the newspapers examined in this chapter. This suggests that individual texts should not be drawn from the newspapers and read as isolated voices, but read within the context of the clashing points of view and the multiplicity of voices contained in the newspaper, which were both central aspects of its generic form.

The *MG* and the *QG* highlight that they are compiled largely from reprinted materials. The newspapers reprint political debates and poetry, and each issue of the newspapers contain news summaries that provide a synopsis of reports from foreign newspapers. The news summaries are structured under headings that state the place where the news was originally published. For example, under the headings 'London' or 'New York' appears a sentence or two summarising the news stories that have been gleaned from the newspapers published in these places. News summaries do not group together news about specific places under location headings; instead, they are organised by location headings that summarise the newspaper reports printed in newspapers in these places, and these can relate news from around the world.⁶¹ Under the heading 'LONDON, December 10.', for example, a short column contains news about a variety of places including Denmark and Poland.⁶² Some headings make it explicit that the date given refers to the date of the published papers from which the news has been extracted, and,

⁶⁰ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 96.

⁶¹ A representative example of a news summary is *MG*, 'London, January 15', 11 June 1789, p. 1.

⁶² *QG*, 'London, December 10.', 22 March 1792, p. 1.

for example, one states ‘From London papers to 10th. December’.⁶³ Sometimes an editorial voice identifies the exact issue of a publication that an individual item of news reprinted in its newspaper has come from. For example, in a news summary that appears in the *QG*, it is stated that ‘The Baltimore Daily Repository, of the 16th. contains the following’.⁶⁴ By highlighting the provenance of their news, the *MG* and the *QG* refer to the fact that their newspapers are composed by selecting and reprinting news from other newspapers.

The newspapers also draw attention to the logistics of transporting the foreign newspapers when they comment on where they have extracted the content for their news summaries from. For example, under the news summary entitled ‘Quebec, November 10’ it is stated that ‘Yesterday’s Montreal Post brings New York and Philadelphia papers to the 8th. October, from which the foregoing accounts of St. Domingo are extracted’.⁶⁵ This draws attention to the logistics of transporting the news and the temporal element involved in constructing the news from other newspapers. It communicates that there was a gap of one month between the news originally being printed in the newspapers in New York and Philadelphia and the arrival of these newspapers into Montreal by post. The use of ‘Yesterday’s Montreal Post’ indicates the recent arrival of this news and conveys its hasty insertion into the news summary. It is less clear whether some items which appear in the newspapers were extracted from printed materials or were in original manuscript form before being printed in the newspapers. In the *Montreal Gazette* letters are introduced, for example, as ‘Extract of a letter, dated 9th June, from London, to a gentleman of this city’. This letter is likely to

⁶³ *QG*, 19 April 1792, p. 1.

⁶⁴ *QG*, 15 March 1792, p. 3.

⁶⁵ *QG*, 10 November 1791, p. 2.

have been a manuscript letter selected in part or in its entirety for printing in the *MG*.⁶⁶ Some letters contain clues signalling that they have been reprinted.

My point in discussing the way that newspapers in colonial Canada draw attention to their compilation from reprinted parts is not that these editorial practices were unique, but that, rather than disregard ‘foreign’ reprinted texts as not part of Canada’s literature of slavery, scholars should explore how readers were invited to see abolitionist print as double-voiced and containing the intention of both the original editor and the editor in Canada. From this perspective, it is harder to dismiss these texts as ‘reprints’ or foreign texts and therefore less ‘original’ and worthy of study. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of examining context and paratext when exploring how individual texts are refashioned when they are reprinted, and it underscores the value of exploring the newspapers as a literary whole. This is an especially important point to make in the case of newspapers; given that more than other literary forms, they are often looked at for their isolated components rather than holistically as a literary genre.

Slavery in Canada in the newspapers: the Canadian slave advertisements

In this section I explore the textual presence of enslaved people in colonial Canada in the *MG* and *QG*. I have found no newspaper narratives or memoirs written by or relating the experiences of enslaved people in Lower Canada and no imaginative literature that constructs the first-person voice of an enslaved person in colonial Canada in the nineteen years of the newspapers I have examined. I have not discovered the ‘mass of memoirs treating African slavery in pre-Victorian Canada’ and ‘articles’ about enslaved people in Canada in the colonial newspapers that George Elliott Clarke

⁶⁶ *MG*, 2 September 1790, p. 1.

suggests are there.⁶⁷ In addition, I have found only two political articles that mention slavery in Canada, and this is indirectly and in passing. These are: ‘An Act for Encouraging New Settlers to His Majesty’s Colonies and Plantations in America’ and a report on an abolition bill not passed by the House of Assembly in Lower Canada.

Runaway slave advertisements and advertisements selling enslaved people are the key space in which enslaved people in Canada are represented in the newspapers. There are a number of runaway slave advertisements and advertisements selling enslaved people scattered through the *QG* and *MG* between 1789-1793, and these offer a partial look at the existence and experience of slavery in Lower Canada. I have found seven advertisements selling enslaved people and eleven runaway slave advertisements about enslaved people or black apprentices in the newspapers. These runaway slave advertisements are often reprinted two or more times, appearing across several issues of the newspapers for a number of weeks. This means that the printed presence of slavery was more than the number of individual advertisements would suggest. The advertisements would have been instantly recognisable to contemporary readers, as they were printed with a image of a generic runaway slave, and there were not many images included in the newspapers. At a cost of nine shillings for one week for the advert to appear in French and English in the *QG* and with rewards ranging from unspecified amounts up to eight pounds, advertisements for runaway slaves and those selling enslaved people were not cheap, and this represents the fact that the owners of enslaved people made a significant financial investment to retrieve their ‘property’.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Clarke, “‘This is no hearsay’” (p. 17).

⁶⁸ Tremaine, *A Bibliography*, p. 630.

The runaway slave advertisements have a repetitive structure. They provide the same information: the name of the enslaved person, their age, a physical description of them (including descriptions of their clothing), the types of labour they undertook, in addition to information about when he or she ran away, a statement of a reward for anyone who will help aid their recapture, and often a threat to people warning them against giving shelter or employment to the enslaved person. The advertisements provide lengthy descriptions of the runaway person, giving details of their clothing and physical appearance, and this is designed to be as comprehensive as possible so as to help aid their identification and recapture.

The description of the clothing of the enslaved person who has ran away can also be a space for the slaveowner to express their frustrations and construct their identity as slaveowners. In a runaway slave advertisement placed in the *Quebec Gazette* by its proprietor William Brown on 22 November 1777 in English and French, repeated on 24 December 1777, a detailed description of Joe's clothes are given: 'an old green fur-cap, an old skyblue broad-cloth coat, an old grey [...] jacket'. This description is typical of those contained in the advertisements. The runaway advertisement informing the public that Joe has run away from the printing office reads:

Saturday 22 November 1777

Ranaway from the printing-office in Quebec, on Saturday evening the twenty-second instant, A negro lad named JOE, born in Africa, about twenty years of age, about five feet and a half high, full round fac'd, a little marked with the small-pox, speaks English and French tolerably; he had on when he went away an old green fur-cap, an old sky-blue broad cloth coat, an old grey

ratteen jacket, leather breeches, brown leggings and Canadian [*sic.*] macassins. All persons are hereby forewarned from harbouring or aiding him to escape, as they may depend on being prosecuted to the utmost vigour of the law, and whoever will give information where he is harboured, or bring him back, shall have FOUR DOLLARS reward from
THE PRINTER.⁶⁹

Then, the following month in January 1778, a second advertisement is printed in the *QG* notifying readers about Joe's escape, but it now describes him as wearing a new set of clothes: 'new green fur-cap, a blue suit of clothes', indicating that since the first advertisement was printed Joe probably returned to his master briefly and made another runaway attempt, and this time with a new suit of clothes:

Ranaway from the printing-office in Quebec, on Sunday night of the twenty-fifth instant, A negro lad named JOE, born in Africa, about twenty years of age, about five feet and a half high, full round fac'd, a little marked with the small-pox, speaks English and French tolerably; he had on when he went away a new green fur-cap, a blue suit of cloaths, a pair of grey worsted stockings and Canadian [*sic.*] macassins. All persons are hereby forewarned from harbouring or aiding him to escape, as they may depend on being prosecuted to the utmost vigour of the law, and whoever will give information where he is harboured, or bring him back, shall have EIGHT DOLLARS reward from
THE PRINTER.⁷⁰

In this advertisement William Brown offers an eight dollar reward rather than the previous four-dollar reward for recapturing Joe. This succession of runaway slave

⁶⁹ *QG*, 27 November 1777, p. 3.

⁷⁰ *QG*, 29 January 1788, p. 2.

advertisements tells a story of Joe repeatedly running away during a short period. These advertisements represent a sample of a wider period in which advertisements for Joe appeared in the *QG*. Therese P. Lemay notes that between 1777 and 1789 the newspaper prints many advertisements about Joe which reflect his repeated attempts to run away from his owner William Brown.⁷¹ Brown's reference to Joe's new clothes is part of his attempt to provide a full description of his appearance so as to aid his recapture, but it also provides Brown with a space to present himself as a fair and friendly slaveowner whose enslaved person is given new clothes and immediately runs away again. The advertisement rings with the tone of Brown's indignant frustration. This is reflected in the additional description of the clothes as 'new' in the January advertisement which reads slightly differently to the repetition of the adjective 'old' punctuating the list of Joe's clothes in the advertisement printed in November and December, where this description functions simply as part of a full description of his appearance to aid his discovery. In the January advertisement, Brown inserts the description of Joe's clothes as 'new' and increases the reward offered for his recapture. The increase in the reward offered for Joe suggests that Brown now sees his escape as more of a financial loss, including the new clothes as part of his investment in Joe. Brown also draws attention to the gift of clothing to suggest the injustice that has been done to him as a master who has lost what he values as four-dollars worth of clothing. Brown's decision to highlight the new clothes he has given to Joe suggests he seeks to present his ownership of Joe favourably and to imply ingratitude on Joe's part. Giving an outfit was viewed favourably by contemporaries, and great value was attached to receiving new clothes. This is reflected in the fact that clothes could be stipulated in contracts for indentured

⁷¹ Lemay, 'Joe' (para. 3 of 6).

service in Lower Canada as an added benefit for indentured servants when they reached the end of an agreed period of service.⁷²

The runaway slave advertisements are heavily mediated accounts that also show the resistance and rebellion of enslaved people in Lower Canada. Enslaved men who had run away are often described as being well educated, sometimes bi- or trilingual, and some are described as working for merchants or on ships. Piecing together the background of these enslaved peoples' lives and the types of experience they had from these advertisements for runaway slaves is almost impossible because they are written from the master's perspective and stick to a rigid format. Pascal ran away from his slaveowner in June 1788. The advertisement printed in the *Quebec Gazette* describes his abilities and noticeable scar, and in amongst this, that he 'calls himself a free man':

RUN AWAY from the Schooner Lucy,
A Mulatto fellow named PASCAL PURO, the property of JOHN
SARGENT; he is about eighteen years of age, a stout strong lad, about
five feet six or seven inches high, talks good English, writes and reads,
has a scar under one of his ears, calls himself a free man, is supposed to
be concealed in some house in this town.
Any person harbouring or taking away the said fellow, will be dealt with
agreeable to law. F O U R D O L L A R S Reward will be
given to any person giving information, so that he may be secured, by ap-
plying to CONSTANT FREEMAN.
Quebec, June 3rd, 1788.⁷³

The description of Pascal calling himself a free man is language that was common in runaway slave advertisements across the Americas in the eighteenth century; it reflects

⁷² Dickinson and Young, *A Short History of Quebec*, p. 101.

⁷³ *QG*, 5 June 1788, p. 5.

his owner's assumption that Pascal will adopt a disguise as a free man to evade recapture.⁷⁴ This language was common to the genre of the runaway slave advertisement in the wider Americas, and, as I discussed in the Introduction, a typical description in the slave advertisements (in this case printed in a newspaper in South Carolina) reads: 'I suppose he will endeavour to pass for a free man'.⁷⁵ However, the way that this is reported in the advertisement for Pascal could either mean that his former owner anticipates that he will adopt a free identity as a disguise, or it could reflect that the former owner has heard Pascal asserting his free status before he ran away. This is suggested in the way that Pascal's assertion is presented in a way that comes close to reported speech. This hints at Pascal's possible use of language as a form of resistance and rebellion to resist slavery before he ran away. It reads very closely to some of the language of anti-slave-trade documents and texts about free black colonial rights circulated in the newspapers that I examine later in this chapter; however, these begin the following year while Samuel Neilson was the editor of the *QG*, a year following the publication of the advertisements, and, therefore, it is not likely readers would have interpreted this runaway slave advertisement in this context. The view of Pascal's right to claim such a free status for himself as an enslaved black man is not endorsed more widely through the paper by 1789, although it would be more sympathetically presented under Samuel Neilson. Pascal's assertion of his free status reads as an 'indirect' recording of his voice spoken through the white male establishment that seeks to maintain his enslaved status.⁷⁶ It operates as Pascal's claim

⁷⁴ On the performance of free identities and the runaway slave advertisements, see Waldstreicher, 'Reading the Runaways', especially pp. 247-49, and on the broader unfree labour context during the eighteenth century, see for example, p. 247, p. 286.

⁷⁵ *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, ed. by Windley, p. 532.

⁷⁶ On the runaway slave advertisements as 'indirectly' recording the voices of enslaved African people in Canada, see Siemerling, *The Black Atlantic Reconsidered*, p. 10.

of his own free status and it reads as part of the description aiming to assist his recapture.

Advertisements selling enslaved people have their own form, and this is different to that used in the runaway slave advertisements. The advertisements selling enslaved people tend to stress the physical capacities and robustness of enslaved people rather than drawing attention to their intellectual capacities or language skills. The ability to speak more than one language or read and write are mentioned in the runaway slave advertisements as part of the fuller detail seen as necessary to best aid the detection and recapture of the runaway person, and the absence of these skills within the advertisements could suggest that educated literate enslaved people might be viewed with an air of suspicion by potential buyers. The advertisements selling enslaved people draw attention to their good health. They often use words such as ‘healthy’ and ‘stout’, and they stress the adaptability of enslaved people by suggesting that they are able to undertake a wide range of generic rural and domestic tasks.⁷⁷ We can see the advertisements as a space in which the master is trying to market an enslaved person as a sound investment and appeal to a range of audiences through highlighting their varied skills and adaptability. For example, in one advertisement the master tries to widen his net of potential purchasers using various techniques, suggesting that initially he struggled to sell his enslaved person. In the first week he is described simply as ‘an excellent good cook’ and then the following week as also suitable for ‘outdoors work’ and ‘very fit for working on a farm’.⁷⁸ The owner also pays more to make his advertisement address the French-speaking audience of the newspaper and thereby

⁷⁷ Some examples are: *QG*, 12 February 1778, p. 3; *QG*, 22 April 1790, p. 4; and *MG*, 9 April 1789, p. 4.

⁷⁸ *MG*, 9 April 1789, p. 4.

expanding his pool of potential purchasers, by including a version of the advertisement in French for two weeks after it appears in English. One female enslaved person is described as being able to wash and cook and undertake all ‘the business appertaining to a female servant’, and this is suggestive of the slippage between the terms servant and slave during this period, but it also reflects that chattel slaves, although uniquely traded as property, were in this case expected to undertake the same tasks as a white female servant.⁷⁹ However, as Ira Berlin notes, even in ‘societies with slaves’ the status of the chattel slave is something unique and in these societies enslaved people could experience a particular brutality.⁸⁰

The supplement pages of the *QG* and *MG* also contain advertisements in which skilled labourers advertise their services and abilities in the hope of stimulating custom. This raises an interesting question about how labour was viewed in general as something to be traded in Lower Canada. I want to examine the format and tone of some of these advertisements in which people appealed for business and sold their skills and to compare these to the advertisements selling enslaved people. Most of the advertisements placed by skilled labourers are used by men and women who are selling their specific expertise and skills (for example, dentists, milliners and footmen), and they can be explicit about the type of position they are looking for. This is in contrast to the slave advertisements, which suggest generic abilities and try to present enslaved people as flexible investments. One such advert placed by a young man in 1779 states that he ‘wants a place’ as a footman to a single man with designs of going to England or the West Indies, and this suggests that labour could be the passport to new opportunities

⁷⁹ *MG*, 10 November 1791, p. 4.

⁸⁰ Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, p. 8.

and climates.⁸¹ He is the one that chooses the type of appointment he would like, preferring a single man, presumably without the wider range of duties and requirements of looking after a full household. Often these advertisements can also work as a polite introduction of skilled migrants who are newly arrived in the province and trying to stimulate business.⁸² The tone of these advertisements is one in which the seller (the skilled labourer) sets up his or her services as being of potential benefit and interest to the readers. Rather than stressing generic and adaptable skills, they are pushing a particular set of talents and set boundaries about the types of labour and working relationships they will accept.

The runaway slave advertisements appear in the supplement pages of the newspapers alongside advertisements for missing possessions and advertisements selling commodities, such as household goods, houses, and plantation foodstuffs. Less frequently the pages contain advertisements for possessions that have gone missing, for example a silver watch or a jacket, and these echo the runaway slave advertisements in that they often try to reconstruct what the item looks like and the place and time at which the former owner lost it.⁸³ It is tempting to see the advertisements for runaway enslaved people as aligning them with other goods gone missing, which fits into contemporary notions of enslaved people as property. However, this is complicated by the fact that the supplement pages of the newspaper were the space where all advertisements and subscriber-generated elements of the paper were printed.

⁸¹ *QG*, 24 June 1779, p. 3.

⁸² *MG*, 24 November 1791, p. 4.

⁸³ *QG*, March 22 1792, p. 4.

The advertisements for runaway slaves and those selling enslaved people typically appear in both English and French. Examining these texts, it is clear that they read slightly differently within the English and French languages, and they show that slightly different choices are made in the translation of these texts. For example, it is usual for the French advertisements to stipulate that the enslaved Canadian person ran away ‘de chez le soussigné’ (from the home of the undersigned), and this phrasing reads without this connotation in the English advertisements simply as the fugitive slave running away from the individual, without the connotation of running from the presence, place or possession of the owner.⁸⁴ The description in French has the more general meaning of the enslaved person running away and escaping from the possession of the slaveowner.⁸⁵ In the English language runaway slave advertisements, it is usual for the text to start with the words ‘run away’ or ‘ran away’.⁸⁶ The French language advertisements use a wider array of terms to describe the flight of the runaway slave, as reflected in the following three examples. The first advertisement uses ‘Epouffe’ (stole away) in the French version, but the advertisement in English uses ‘Run away’:

EPOUFFE’ Dimanche dernier 13 courant de chez
les soussignés, un négre nommé CALEB, âgé d’environ 26 à 27 ans, 5 pieds 8
pouces de haut, portoit quand il s’enfuit une redingote blue foncée, un habit et
veste grises, des culotes blues foncées, bas blancs et un chapeau rond. Toutes
personnes sont prises de ne le point asiler ni de l’employer, car autrement elles
seront poursuivies en loi; et quicon-que l’amènera et le livrera à Québec sera
remboursé de tous les frais raisonnables qu’il aura fait, et récompensé par
MATHÉW & JOHN MACNIDERS.

Québec, 16 Avril, 1788.

⁸⁴ *QG*, 17 April 1788, p. 2.

⁸⁵ I am grateful to Richard Finley, a fellow postgraduate student in the School of English at the University of Sheffield, for his advice on the French translations in this section of the chapter and to Dr Lucy Jones, Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Alternative Technology, Wales, who transcribed the runaway slave advertisements in French that appear in this chapter.

⁸⁶ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, pp. 314-44.

R U N away on Sunday last the 13th inst.
from the Subscribers, a NEGRO MAN named CALEB, aged about
twenty-six or twenty-seven years, five feet eight inches high, had on
when he went off a dark blue great coat, drab coat and vest, dark
blue breeches, white stockings and a round hat: All persons are re-
quired not to harbour or employ the said Negro slave, or they will be
prosecuted according to law. Any person who will bring and deliver
him up at Quebec, shall have all reasonable expenses paid,
and be rewarded by MATHEW & JOHN MACNIDERS.
Quebec, 16th April, 1788.⁸⁷

Advertisements in French could also use ‘Il s’enfuit’ (he fled):

Il s’enfuit de Québec Lundi dernier matin,
un NÉGRE nommé JOE ou CUFF, âgé d’environ 35 ans, environ
5 pieds 10 pouces de haut. Il avait quand il partit un capot rouge, une
paire de grandes culottes de Cotton rayé. Il a aussi l’œil droit couvert de
blanc, parle Français et Anglais. Les Capitaines et Officiers de Milice
sont priés de l’arrêter et en donner avis à l’IMPRIMEUR, ou à Mr. BELLE
COUR chez le Sieur *Jo. Delisle*, au Cul-de-Sac à Québec, et ils seront rai-
sonnablement récompensés; et toutes personnes qui le cacheront ou lui
donneront asile seront poursuivies selon la rigueur de la loi à cet égard.
QUÉBEC 3, Septembre, 1789.

In a different example, the runaway slave advertisement for Ishmael printed on 26 June
1788 in the *Quebec Gazette* uses another way to describe the flight of a slave in French:
‘Il s’est enfuit’ (he ran away).⁸⁸ In one advertisement, these words appear in large type
above the advertisement. The three words stand alone, without the usual addition of ‘de
chez le soussigné’ (from the home of the undersigned):

⁸⁷ *QG*, 17 April 1788, p. 2.

⁸⁸ *QG*, 3 September 1789, p. 3; *QG*, 26 June 1788, p. 2.

IL S'EST ENFUIT,

De chez le Soussigné un NEGRE nommé Richard, d'environ cinq pieds sept pouces de haut, âgé de 28 ans, louche un peu d'un œil, portoit quand il s'est enfuit une Rougrine d'en Brun noir des grandes culottes. Quiconque l'arrêtera et le amènera au Soussigne recevra DEUX GUINEES le récompensé, et tous frais raisonnables seront payés. ROSSETER HOYLE.
MONTRÉAL, 20 Octobre, 1790.⁸⁹

R U N A W A Y,

From the subscriber, a Negro Man, named RICHARD about five foot seven inches high, twenty-seven years of age, and had a cast in one eye; had on when he went away, a dark brown jacket and long trousers, whoever apprehend and return him to the Subscriber shall receive TWO GUINEAS Reward, and all reasonable expenses paid.
MONTREAL, 20TH Oct. 1790.⁹⁰

In the English version of this advertisement, printed on the same page of the *QG* as the French language version on 28 October, the title reads simply 'RUN AWAY'. The intrusion of the French for 'he' ('il') means that this reads as 'He ran away' rather than 'run away'.

The advertisements were written in two languages, and the translation of the text from one language to another represented a rewriting of the text. The appearance of the advertisements in English and French represented two texts that were produced in two

⁸⁹ *QG*, 28 October 1790, p. 6.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

separate and distinct languages and that were in dialogue with one another. In one advertisement, printed in English and French, which appears first in French, a large title set above the advertisement in smaller type reads ‘HUIT PIASTRES A GAGNER’, and in its English translation this appears as ‘EIGHT DOLLARS REWARD’. The French title translates as eight Spanish dollars to earn or to be gained.⁹¹ The advertisement about the flight of the runaway slave Ishmael is produced in English and French:

HUIT PIASTRES A GAGNER.

Il s’est enfui de chez le soussigné, Samedi matin,
un négre nommé ISHMAEL, âgé aux environs de 35 ans; ayant cinq pieds huit
pouces de haut; les cheveux noirs, courts et frisés; il est marqué de la picoter; il
lui manque quel-ques dents, et un joint au petit doigt de sa main gauche. Il parle
Anglais, un peu Français et Allemand; quand il est parti il avait un chapeau rond,
un gillet bleu de matelot, une veste blanche, une grande culotte bleue, et point de
souliers, &c. On suppose qu’il se dira Negre libre.

Quiconque arrêtera le dit Negre, et l’amènera à son maître, recevra la
récompensé promise, ainsi que les frais raisonnables qu’on aura sait.

Montréal, 7 Juin, 1788.

JOHN TURNER, Senior

E I G H T D O L L A R S R E W A R D .

RUN away from the Subscriber on Saturday
morning, a Negro man named ISHMAEL, aged about
thirty-five years, five feet eight inches high, black short curled hair,
marked with the small pox, wants some teeth, and a joint to his left
hand little finger; speaks English, a little French and Dutch; had on
when he ran away a round hat a sailor’s blue jacket, a white waistcoat,
blue trousers and no shoes, &c. It is supposed he will call himself a free
Negro.

Whoever apprehends said Negro, and brings him to his Master,

⁹¹ James Powell, *A History of the Canadian Dollar* ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], 2015), p. 4. Bank of Canada ebook.

shall receive the promised Reward, and all reasonable charges,
Montreal, 7th June 1788.

JOHN TURNER, Senior⁹²

Reading the advertisement in the context of the page in the newspaper where it was printed shows the title of the advertisement is given heavy emphasis by its size and stands out on the page because it is the largest type on that page, and this is reinforced by the stock image of a runaway slave printed with the two advertisements, which was designed to be eye-catching. This aspect of the advertisement is lost in Mackey's transcriptions of runaway slave advertisements and slave sale advertisements in his appendix; Mackey removes the headings 'Huit piastres a gagner' and 'eight dollars reward'.⁹³ The title has different connotations in the French by using 'a gagner' which suggests eight piastres to be earned or gained by helping to recapture the runaway person (in French 'gagnant' is winner (n) and winning (adj)).⁹⁴ The use of *gagner* reflects that the French and English advertisements had their own set of vocabulary and conventions for describing enslaved people who ran away. It reflects that the advertisements that were printed in English and French were also translations of each other, and that in producing this translation the newspaper editor and his staff had to recreate or rewrite the text. The phrase 'a gagner' in the French advertisement more strongly foregrounds the financial prize being offered to anyone who helps in the successful capture and recovery of the runaway person. The effect of framing the advertisement with this text is that the information contained in the runaway advertisement is presented as if it is going to be of interest to readers from the point of view of them being able to achieve a potential profit. This advertisement was printed in

⁹² *QG*, 26 June 1788, p. 2.

⁹³ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, p. 331.

⁹⁴ 'gagner', *Oxford Dictionaries Premium* <<https://premium.oxforddictionaries.com>> [accessed 20 January 2018].

the *QG* in French and English whilst William Brown was its printer in 1788. As I explored above, Brown was a slaveowner, and he expressed a sense of entitlement and indignation in response to the repeated escapes of his enslaved man Joe. In this context it is less surprising that the language around this advertisement presents the escape of the enslaved man Ishmael from the perspective of a potential financial prize to be won by the reader. The body of the text of the advertisement uses the language ‘It is supposed he will call himself a free negro’, and although this reflects Ishmael’s self-fashioning of a free identity and speaks of his resistance to slavery in running away, it also contains the indignant tone of his former master speaking to the reader, and this second voice is more clearly present when looked at within the framing text.

The advertisements for runaway slaves in French and English conform to their own set of conventions, and there are differences in the way these runaway slave advertisements read in the two languages. The title of a runaway slave advertisement in French, in large type and set above the body of the advertisement, reads differently to all the English language advertisements I have examined. The title of the advertisement in French reads: ‘Epouffee Le 24 du courant un garçon Negre, nomme Ben (roughly translating as ‘stole away on the 24 last a boy negro, named Ben’):

EPOUFFE’ le 24 du courant un garçon Nègre
nommé BEN, âgé d’environ 13 ans, haut de 5 pieds 4 à 5 pouces, a les cheveux
noirs, et de stature droite, portoit lors de la fuite une bougrine et des grandes
culottes bleues, et un chapeau rond. Quiconque prendra le susdit négre et le
remettra entre les mains de Mr. Levy Solomons, son maître, sera bien
récompensée, et tous frais payés. Il est déter du à qui que ce soit de lui donner
asile ni de l’employer, tous peine d’être poursuivre sui-vant la loi.

M. MICHAELS

Montréal, 28 Avril 1788.

The advertisement in English does not refer to Ben as a boy and draw attention to his status as a human being and child, which is highlighted in the French advertisement.

The title of the advertisement in English reads ‘Run away on the 24th instant, a Negro’, and the description of Ben as a boy falls onto the following line, underneath the title ‘Boy named Ben’:

Run away on the 24th instant, a Negro
Boy named BEN, about thirteen years of age, five feet four
or five inches high, black hair, and very streight; had on when he
went off a blue round jacket and trowsers, and a round hat. Who
ever will apprehend the said boy and return him to his master at Mr.
Levy Solomons’, shall be well rewarded and all expenses paid. All per
sons are forewarned to harbour or employ said Negro, under pain of
being prosecuted as the law directs.

M. MICHAELS

Montreal, 28th April, 1788.⁹⁵

Based on my examination of the advertisements across the two newspapers printed during the period of this study, I can see that the runaway advertisements in English never contain the description of the enslaved person’s age or gender in the title of the advertisements, which appears in larger type over the body of the advertisement. The conventions of the English advertisements do not admit descriptions of the enslaved person’s age or gender into the enlarged type of their titles. This is reflected in the English version of this advertisement. The description of Ben as a boy is placed below the larger type of the title in the body of the text, reducing the title to eight rather than nine words. The construction of the English language advertisements exclude this type of information about the age or humanity of the enslaved person from the title of

⁹⁵ *QG*, 12 June 1788, p. 6.

advertisements. It is my feeling that the French and English language advertisements are perhaps coming out of different textual traditions. The French language advertisements differ from their English language counterparts in several ways: they use a broader range of terms to describe the escape of the enslaved person, they use the pronoun ‘He’ and appear to be more comfortable in drawing attention to the humanity of the enslaved person in the title of advertisements, including references to the age and gender of the enslaved person.

With the exception of the runaway slave advertisements and advertisements selling enslaved people in Canada, there is little mention of enslaved people in Lower Canada in other kinds of texts printed in the newspapers. This reflects that more space and attention is given to reporting on slavery in the Americas in the newspapers, and there seems to be a lack of thought about Canadian slavery or any sense that this is an issue that needs to be brought to the attention of the ‘public mind’ of readers. I have found no local commentary regarding slavery in Quebec in the newspapers in the years examined, and slavery in Canada rarely filters into the political texts printed in the newspapers. An exception is that enslaved African people in Canada are mentioned in ‘An Act for Encouraging New Settlers to His Majesty’s Colonies and Plantations in America’, printed in both newspapers.⁹⁶ In this act ‘negroes’ are listed alongside inanimate possessions such as furniture (‘negroes, household furniture’) that settlers could bring into the British colonies. This presents ‘negroes’ as one of the items which can legally be imported as settlers chose to emigrate to British colonial possessions, including colonial Canada. The act specifies that only white people over the age of fourteen must

⁹⁶ *MG*, 28 July 1791, p. 1. The text is described as being reprinted from the *QG*, but I have been unable to locate the original copy.

present themselves for the Oath of Allegiance, suggesting that black people entering these colonial possessions are not considered potential citizens but the property of those citizens.

Legislation relating to slavery in Lower and Upper Canada is rarely mentioned in either newspaper. The *QG* mentions in passing, as part of a wider report on the acts passed and not passed by the House of Assembly in Lower Canada, that the unsuccessful bill ‘tending to abolish slavery in the province of Lower Canada’ was ordered to ‘[i]e] upon the table’ after its second reading.⁹⁷ I have found no mention of the antislavery legislation passed in Upper Canada (‘An Act to Prevent the Further Introduction of Slaves and to Limit the Term of Contracts for Servitude within this Province’, passed in Upper Canada in 1793) in either the *MG* or the *QG*. This legislation was printed on 11 July 1793 in the *Upper Canada Gazette*, the first newspaper established in the new colony of Upper Canada.⁹⁸

The lack of mention or elaboration on the antislavery legislation in Upper and Lower Canada in the two newspapers published in Lower Canada reflects a wider pattern in the newspapers of interest in slavery in the Americas and a lack of printed space given to slavery in Canada. Far more space is given in both papers to abolitionist debates in France and Britain. The *QG* only briefly mentions the failure of the Lower Canada Assembly to pass abolition legislation in 1793, but in 1792 it contains local commentary on the likely abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. This local commentary suggests that the abolition of the slave trade could play a role in stimulating the internal sugar

⁹⁷ *QG*, 25 April 1793, p. 3.

⁹⁸ Elgersman, *Unyielding Spirits*, p. 40.

industry amongst peasants in Quebec.⁹⁹ In what may be the voice of the editor Samuel Neilson, the text suggests that growing maple sugar trees is an important matter for the upcoming legislatures to discuss, given ‘its almost certain advancement by the discontinuance of the African slave trade’. This is the only local reaction to the anticipated abolition of the slave trade (that was passed in the House of Commons in 1792 but rejected in the House of Lords and ultimately not passed in Britain until 1807) I have found in the *QG* or the *MG* in the years I have examined. In this text the abolition of the slave trade is primarily thought about in terms of the effect that it will have in stimulating the local economy, rather than a humanitarian success. It is not discussed in terms of its potential effect on Lower Canada’s enslaved population, and this is what we would expect, given that Lower Canada was not part of the Atlantic slave trade routes. The abolition of the slave trade is seen as likely to stimulate the desire for maple sugar produced locally, since abolition could make access to sugar from the West Indies coming into Quebec less plentiful and more expensive. It identifies the anticipated decline in the availability of slave-grown sugar with the likely abolition of the slave trade as an opportunity for poor labourers to compete within a market dominated by sugar grown by enslaved people in the West Indies. The text anticipates that the local industrious poor rather than enslaved people would grow and tend the sugar maple trees along the Saint Lawrence River. This local commentary takes the abolition of the slave trade by the British Parliament for granted. This represents an interpretation on the part of Samuel Neilson of the foreign reports on abolition he has printed in his newspaper.

Anti-slave-trade sentiment in the newspapers

I have traced some of the international texts about slavery reprinted by Neilson and

⁹⁹ *QG*, 19 April 1792, p. 2.

Mesplet back to the newspapers in which they were first printed. This shows that the editors selected scraps of printed material from vast amounts of foreign printed material for reprinting in their newspapers; they carefully selected one or two items about slavery from an entire international newspaper for reprinting in their own. For example, Mesplet selected just two letters from an entire issue of the *St James's Chronicle, or the British Evening-Post*, dated 27-29 August 1789, reprinting them in his newspaper on 10 December 1789. In one of these letters the writer voices proslavery views and implicitly suggests that airing abolitionist ideas in the newspapers will incite slave rebellions.¹⁰⁰

The technique of sifting for and selecting scraps of printed textual material and placing it together into a new compilation has echoes of the black trope of 'signifying', a trope that has been extensively discussed by Henry Louis Gates Jr. as a formal feature of the black tradition that finds expression in myriad art forms. Gates describes signifying as 'revision through recontextualisation'.¹⁰¹ These texts were double-voiced in that in them we hear both the voice of the original text and the voice of the editor in Lower Canada who has chosen to re-voice the text by reprinting it in his newspaper. Mesplet carefully selected international print about slavery for reprinting in his newspaper from a much broader array of available materials, purposefully placing particular texts and points of view regarding slavery into his own paper.

The international anti-slave-trade texts published in the newspapers flaunt the fact that they are texts first published elsewhere. For example, Neilson reprints Wilberforce's first speech to the British House of Commons calling for the abolition of the slave trade

¹⁰⁰ *St. James's Chronicle, or the British Evening-Post*, 27-29 August 1789, p. 2, *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers* <www.gale.cengage.co.uk> [accessed 26 January 2017].

¹⁰¹ See Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. xxxi.

on 12 May 1789 from the British newspaper *The Diary or Woodfall's Register* in its entirety in the *QG* on Thursday 13 August 1789.¹⁰² This was the anti-slave-trade campaigner's first speech before the Commons in an eighteen-year campaign to push the abolition of the slave trade through Parliament.¹⁰³ It dominates this edition of the *QG*, filling both the left and right columns of pages two, three and half of page four, appearing in English only and in much smaller print than usual. The following week contains a copy of the document Wilberforce laid before the House of Commons to support his speech, in addition to an apparently shortened version of Wilberforce's speech translated into French. There is a three-month gap between the speech being given in May and when this version of the speech was printed in the *QG*, which is in line with the three months it usually took for newspapers from London to arrive in the newspaper's printing office in Lower Canada. Neilson's decision to print the speech in English and follow with the French translation the following week might reflect the time it took to translate a document of this size into French, and this would suggest that the speech was transplanted in its entirety and in haste as soon as it arrived. It is not unusual for topical issues that the editor saw as being of interest to his readers to dominate the paper at length in this way, in smaller print and spanning several issues. For example, this reflects how the origins of the French Revolution and American Revolution are reported in 1789 and 1777 respectively. The report of Wilberforce's antislavery speech dominates the paper for two weeks running, and because of this it is quite likely that readers would have at least skimmed the content and picked up the fact that it was an issue being challenged and debated back in England. Tom O'Malley

¹⁰² *QG*, 13 August 1789, pp. 2-4. The speech was originally printed in the *Diary or Woodfall's Register* on the 13 May 1789, pp. 2-4.

¹⁰³ John Wolfe, 'William Wilberforce', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29386>> [accessed 18 January 2013] (para. 12 of 52).

argues the newspaper lends itself to ‘discontinuous reading’ because it is laid out in a structure which repeats each issue, and this makes it easy for the reader to locate and read content of interest to them.¹⁰⁴ Given that Wilberforce’s speech was spread out over multiple pages across two issues of the newspaper it would have been hard for readers to miss it. This suggests a confidence on the part of the editor that his readership would receive such content well and his readers would continue to see the newspaper as one that they wished to subscribe to. The reprinted nature of this speech is underscored by the way it is introduced in the *QG*. It is described as being ‘From Woodfall’s Register, London, May 13. HOUSE OF COMMONS, Tuesday May 12. The Slave Trade’.¹⁰⁵ This identifies that this speech was taking place in a British political context. It also highlights the origins of this printed text, giving both the date the speech was delivered and the date the speech was printed in *Woodfall’s Register*. At the same time the priority given to this text in terms of space and the haste with which it entered the paper shows Neilson’s eagerness to reprint it and for these anti-slave-trade debates to be brought before the ‘public mind’ of his readers. The re-voicing of these anti-slave-trade ideals suggests Neilson wanted them to become part of the textual fabric of his own newspaper.

Neilson does not reprint any foreign proslavery texts during the years covered by this study. I have examined issues of the *Diary or Woodfall’s Register* around the time that Wilberforce’s speech to the House of Commons was published in it, and I have found that there are texts with pro-slave-trade ideas printed in *Woodfall’s Register* that are not selected for reprinting in the *Quebec Gazette* by Samuel Neilson. In addition to drawing

¹⁰⁴ Tom O’Malley, ‘The Elusive Reader’.

¹⁰⁵ *QG*, 13 August 1789, p. 2.

his version of Wilberforce's speech from *Woodfall's Register*, Neilson reprinted another antislavery text that may have originally come from this newspaper: 'Wilberforce's Twelve Propositions on the Slave Trade presented to the House of Commons', and this seems to suggest that Neilson was reading issues of the British newspaper around this time, perhaps specifically looking for anti-slave-trade material.¹⁰⁶ It seems fair to assume, given the texts that Neilson was reprinting from *Woodfall's Register*, that Neilson had access to this newspaper more widely, and he was scanning its pages regularly for content for his own newspaper, perhaps drawn to its accurate and timely printings of debates in Parliament. The overall tone of *Woodfall's Register* is sympathetic to anti-slave-trade feeling and legislation in Parliament, but it does print both antislavery and proslavery texts. For example, in a letter to the printer of the newspaper, Justinian states his objections to the abolition of the slave trade, seeing it as 'the old publick and patriotick cry of "Liberty and Property" that seems at present to have changed to that of "Liberty *against* property"'.¹⁰⁷ At the close of the letter Justinian states his intention to produce 'unanswerable objections to the abolition of the slave trade' and his confidence that they will be printed ('readily insert[ed]') in *Woodfall's Register* given the 'avowed impartiality' of that paper. A later letter printed in the paper, signed off by Terentius, adopts an anti-slave-trade stance. The letter challenges Justinian to state his objections against abolition clearly, implying that his letter has not made these obvious.¹⁰⁸ *Woodfall's Register* also prints petitions to the House of Commons from planters in the British West Indies stating their anxieties and desire for the slave

¹⁰⁶ *Diary or Woodfall's Register*, 14 May 1789, p. 2, *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers* <www.gale.cengage.co.uk> [accessed 26 January 2017]; *QG*, 20 August 1789, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷ 'To the Printer of *The Diary*: Slave Trade: Letter I', *Woodfall's Register*, 16 May 1789, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ 'Slave Trade, A Card', *Woodfall's Register*, 18 May 1789, p. 3.

trade to continue.¹⁰⁹ In addition, some antislavery texts that could be selected for reprinting by Neilson from *Woodfall's Register* are not, for example the poems of the African American poet Phillis Wheatley, which are framed as antislavery poems in *Woodfall's Register*.¹¹⁰ An examination of *Woodfall's Register* suggests that Samuel Neilson was reading and carefully selecting a couple of texts about the slave-trade debates from the newspaper to reprint in his own newspaper, and that he chose not to reprint a wider range of texts about these debates, and particularly texts that presented pro-slave-trade arguments from the British newspaper within the *QG*. This reflects that Neilson was probably reading through a large quantity of print about slavery and the British slave trade debate and only selecting certain items for reprinting in his own newspaper.

I want to draw a key difference between the *Woodfall's Register's* presentation of the British slave-trade debate and Neilson's presentation of it in his own newspaper. Christopher Leslie Brown notes that the image of abolitionist campaigning and sentiment in the public mind was essential to its popularity by the late 1780s in Britain.¹¹¹ Srividhya Swaminathan argues that the eighteenth-century slave-trade debate in Britain was characterised by a shared conversation and discursive terrain between anti-slave-trade and pro-slave-trade advocates.¹¹² Neilson crafts a particular image of the campaign to abolish the slave trade in Britain in his newspaper. In *Woodfall's Register* anti-slave-trade opinion in Britain and its colonies is presented as a series of debates and conflicting opinions, and the slave-trade debate is presented as an issue that

¹⁰⁹ 'Slave Trade: The Following Petition has been Presented to the House of Commons on Behalf of the Planters and Owners of Property in the Island of St. Christopher', *Woodfall's Register*, 18 May 1789, pp. 3-4.

¹¹⁰ *Woodfall's Register*, 16 May 1789, p. 3, 14 May 1789, p. 2.

¹¹¹ Brown, *Moral Capital*, p. 387.

¹¹² Swaminathan, *Debating the Slave Trade*, pp. 5-6, p. 13.

could potentially threaten colonists' sense of their rights in the West Indies. The anti-slave-trade letter by Terentius reacts to the anti-abolition sentiments expressed by Justinian in his letter, and this presents abolitionist arguments against the slave trade as part of a debate with conflicting perspectives. Neilson's newspaper presents the anti-slave-trade stance as calm and non-contentious; he does not present it as part of a lively debate, and he does not introduce the discourse of property rights or colonial rights into the abolitionist rhetoric that he reprints. I think this could be because this would have been deemed too contentious and unsettling politically, and, hence, Neilson presents arguments for the abolition of the slave trade as something that have achieved a broad consensus amongst the British people, and as part of a growing wave of abolitionist feeling. The British abolitionist campaign is not presented as part of a slave-trade debate with competing proslavery arguments clashing with abolitionist views, and the British slave-trade debate is not presented as creating political tensions in the West Indian colonies that could threaten the political stability of the British Empire.

Neilson crafts an anti-slave-trade identity for his newspaper by layering international anti-slave-trade texts together in his newspaper. He reprints Wilberforce's anti-slave-trade speech to the House of Commons in 1789 and abolitionist poems. For example, William Cowper's 'The Negro's Complaint', originally published in 1788, is printed in the poet's corner section of the *QG* on the 21 January 1790, and 'The Negro's Recital' is reprinted by Neilson in the poet's corner section of his paper on 16 December 1790.

Neilson frequently includes short reports about abolitionist successes in the news summaries in the *QG*, suggesting this is a topic he deemed important for readers in Lower Canada to know about. For example, the *QG* notes that people in England are abstaining from sugar and rum as part of their anti-slave-trade efforts in its summary of

London news printed on 15 March 1792. One item that appears in the London news summary in November 1791 is the account of the loss of a slave ship on the middle passage. The middle passage refers to the journey across the Atlantic that took enslaved African people from the coast of Africa on ships to the Americas. It was part of the triangular trade that characterised the transatlantic slave trade. An editorial voice, which could belong Neilson (it is unclear), re-voices the printed news of a slave ship being lost and goes on to criticise the accounts which do not mention the loss of the lives of hundreds of enslaved African people:

An African slave ship was lately lost on the middle passage:- the accounts say “that the men were saved but the ship and cargo lost” — Lest the reader should mistake the nature of the cargo, he must know that it consisted of 230 of our fellow creatures:- found guilty of being born on the coast of Guinea, of black parents.¹¹³

The re-voicing of the original text creates a shock for the reader, which fixates on the words ‘cargo’ and ‘men’. In the original text ‘cargo’ is used to refer to the enslaved people, defining them as property, and the assumption in the ‘accounts’ is that the ‘men’ were saved, but this is narrowly defined as the crew of sailors. The editorial commentary invites the reader to feel disgust at this attempt to erase and categorise 230 enslaved African people (‘fellow creatures’) as ‘cargo’. The lack of boundary between the news summary and the editorial voice of Neilson here produces the sense that Neilson himself could be speaking the framing commentary, and that he is inviting his readers in Lower Canada to feel abolitionist disgust at the definition of enslaved African people as property, not people.

¹¹³ *QG*, 24 November 1791, p. 2.

Samuel Neilson continues to reprint anti-slave-trade sentiment from Britain during 1792, and this reflects his desire to bring this into the public mind of his readers. Neilson also prints accounts of slave uprisings in the British and French Caribbean, but these do not dampen a continued commitment to highlighting abolitionist successes and excluding pro-slave-trade voices from his newspaper. He reports on the passage of the slave trade Abolition Bill by the British House of Commons in 1792 (this was later rejected by the House of Lords), the move towards abolition of the slave trade in the French National Assembly and the abolition of the slave trade by Denmark, which he reports on 14 June 1792. He also continues, in 1792, to print imaginative texts depicting the experiences enslaved people had of the Atlantic slave trade and slavery in the British and French West Indian colonies.¹¹⁴ However, there is a subtle shift in tone in the imaginative texts representing enslaved people in the Americas reprinted by Neilson in 1792. They tend to present a softer, feminised image of enslaved people, and Neilson also prints a text that voices the concern that the increasingly violent slave rebellions of the West Indies will dampen abolitionist fervour. This text supported antislavery sentiment but also voiced the fear that this could not be sustained in a context of increasingly frequent and violent accounts of slave insurrection. My examination of the newspaper in 1793, following the death of Samuel Neilson and during the first year that Alexander Spark was editor on behalf of Samuel's brother John Neilson, suggests that under Spark the interest in the transatlantic abolitionist debate declined. This could be because of timing and the treatment of the issue in the foreign newspapers, but I also think the personality of Samuel Neilson was important in crafting such a strong anti-slave-trade identity for his newspaper.

¹¹⁴ *QG*, 21 June 1792, p. 2.

Fleury Mesplet similarly crafts an anti-slave-trade point of view in the *Montreal Gazette* through reprinting foreign abolitionist texts, but Mesplet crafts a slightly different voice. In the *MG* anti-slave-trade arguments are more firmly embedded in French Revolutionary debates, and are printed as part of the extensive coverage of the debates taking place in the French National Assembly. Between August and October 1789, Mesplet reprints anti-slave-trade texts originally printed in British and French newspapers during May 1789, spreading these across the *MG* for a longer period of three months. This has the effect of presenting these texts as part of an unfolding anti-slave-trade debate taking place in France and Britain, and it shows that Mesplet provides a heavy coverage of the topic in his newspaper, suggesting that he saw it as an important one to cover. These texts are printed in both English and French, as was usual for political texts in the *MG*. Mesplet achieves a balance between French and British calls to abolish the slave trade by alternating each week between French and British abolitionist texts. The effect of placing these debates under dated headings, indicating when these printed texts were originally published in the foreign newspapers, is that it produces the sense that these slave-trade debates are taking place simultaneously in France and Britain. For example, on 20 August 1789 Mesplet prints a letter written by La Société des Amis des Noirs in Paris, and on the 27 August 1789, in the London news section under the date 'May 13', Mesplet prints 'pieces' sent by 'one of the opponents of slavery' in Britain 'in favor of that misfortunate portion of the human species'. The following week under the title 'Paris May 11 to 25' Mesplet prints texts about the opening of the States General at Versailles on the 5 May 1789, including Necker's speech in which he laments the cruelties of the French slave trade and indicates the need to pass 'modifications' that will 'mitigate it'. On 10 September 1789, a text in which the Third Estate state their sympathy for the motion of abolishing the French slave trade is

printed under the heading ‘Paris 25 May’. Then, on 1 October, Wilberforce’s Twelve Propositions, laid before the privy council, are printed in the *MG* by Mesplet in English and French in the London news section, headed with the date ‘May 16’.¹¹⁵ The letter from La Société des Amis des Noirs in Paris, addressed to those who send deputies to the States General, ‘established in France for the abolition of the Slave Trade’ is printed in a London news summary.¹¹⁶ This text appears in French to the right-hand side, under the heading ‘Londres, de 9 Mai [...] Commerce Des Noirs’. The introductory text printed before this letter appears to be written in a voice that comes from a London newspaper. The letter suggests that it is likely this issue will be taken up by the National Assembly and ‘seek to destroy the report which has been spread of the French having the intention to carry on the slave trade to a greater extent as soon as the British legislature will annihilate it’. The commentary suggests the letter is ‘proof’ that the French will not multiply ‘that shameful traffic’. The letter contains the perspective of the French abolitionist group, who feel it is hypocritical to proclaim their rights as Frenchmen but exclude enslaved people, who are also ‘men’, and to not extend the same rights to enslaved people in the French Empire. They exclaim: ‘How dare we pronounce the word of rights, if we prove by our conduct that we do not look upon them as the same to all men’, and they highlight the inconsistency of slavery in the French colonies given that ‘we say that one man cannot become the property of another’. The language printed in the Amis des Noirs’ letter reads as potentially radical in its presentation of the specialness of French liberty. However, Mesplet prints this under a London news heading and with the original framing text that describes the letter’s French antislavery sentiment as useful and reassuring for a British audience. This places the text within a

¹¹⁵ *MG*, 27 August 1789, p. 1; *MG*, 3 September 1789, pp. 1-2; *MG*, 10 September 1789, p. 1; *MG*, 1 October 1789, pp. 1-2.

¹¹⁶ *MG*, 20 August 1789, p. 1.

more politically sensitive context, while also enabling Mesplet to print anti-slave-trade sentiment that presents the specialness of French liberty.

The week after reprinting material ‘in favour of that misfortunate portion of the human species’ on 27 August 1789, Mesplet prints texts about the opening of the States General at Versailles, which took place on 5 May 1789.¹¹⁷ He prints the speeches of Louis XVI and of his finance minister Jacques Necker. Necker mentions ‘modifications’ to the slave trade as part of two changes that will make the Assembly ‘immortal’. After mentioning that the first is the abolition of the Corvée, which required the lower classes to labour on public roads, Necker identifies that ‘Some modifications were likewise proposed to be adopted in favour of the Slaves in the West Indies’.¹¹⁸ In the same issue of the newspaper, Mesplet also prints an ‘Extract at large from Mr Necker’s Speech which concerns the slave trade’. There are silences and omissions in the speeches being reported in this issue of the *MG*. For example, the text does not report on the Keeper of the Seals’s speech (‘The Keeper of the Seals spoke next, and after him Mr. Necker’), but we are presented with Necker’s speech about the slave trade. In this way, Mesplet gives an air of importance to Necker’s abolitionist speech, by choosing to reprint it. Necker’s speech depicts enslaved African people as humans and as ‘an unhappy race of men’ that have been ‘coolly considered only as the objects of a barbarous traffic’. He places the responsibility for this inhumane treatment of enslaved people not with the slaveholder or slave trader, but with the French nation and the men of the National Assembly: ‘Men, nevertheless, whom deaf to their lamentations, we crowd, we heap in the holds of vessels, in order to convey them to a bondage that awaits them in our islands’. Necker

¹¹⁷ *MG*, 27 August 1789, p. 1.

¹¹⁸ *MG*, 3 September 1789, p. 1.

closes his speech about the slave trade with two pieces of flattery. First, he appears to praise the British abolition effort ('A distinguished nation has already given the signal'), and then he ties the possibilities for modifications to the slave trade to treating enslaved people as men in the French colonies with the renewed and enlightened sitting of the Assembly, capturing the mood of the States General. Necker implies that the Assembly will bestow 'honor' on itself and promote a positive legacy for themselves 'in the midst of an Enlightened age' by appearing favourable to anti-slave-trade measures. He suggests that this is especially the case within the context of the Assembly meeting at an important moment in which its chief aims (as Necker presents them) were to tackle the abuses of the King and to be seen as reforming and liberating the French government.

In the *Montreal Gazette* anti-slave-trade sentiment and the textual presence of enslaved people in Canada are part of a wider discourse around people's rights and liberties. This discussion is reflected in a text that discusses how men champion liberty as an abstract concept, but their seeming love of liberty is hypocritical because underpinning this is a desire for liberty for themselves, rather than a 'public liberty' for which they have 'little relish': 'We do not wish to be slaves ourselves, but are fond of making others so'.¹¹⁹ This echoes the ideas presented in the Amis des Noirs' letter explored above, which argues that the logical progression of French assertions of liberty and 'the natural and imprescriptible rights of man' is to extend this more widely to include enslaved people in the French West Indies.¹²⁰ The *MG* prints texts about women calling for greater rights. One example is in the Paris news section in 27 October 1791, which is described as coming from French literature. It draws on the language of slavery to describe

¹¹⁹ *MG*, 31 December 1789, p. 2.

¹²⁰ *MG*, 20 August 1789, p. 1.

women in France as being in a state of ‘domestic captivity’ and ‘sold like dolls’, and it presents England, in contrast, as having the Divorce Law, which means that the British people can ‘no longer traffic with innocence’.¹²¹ This call for better rights for women in France can be read as part of the revolutionary government debates taking place there. This text has a pro-British slant that suggests that women in France are less liberated and given less rights than their English counterparts. Mesplet prints debates about the status of free blacks in the French colonies in his newspaper, such as reports from the French Assembly’s discussion of whether free black citizens in the West Indies ‘should, or should not, be admitted to a full exercise of the rights of active citizens’.¹²² The account printed by Mesplet presents both sides of the argument. On the one hand, the piece represents the view that granting citizens’ rights to the free blacks would reflect the French government extending the idea of liberty too far (‘exaggerated notions of liberty’), and that this would likely result in disaster in the colonies, with the blood of the white colonists and landed proprietors being spilt. By contrast, the piece also contains the view of M. de la Fayette, who argues that the free blacks are ‘citizens of color’ and ‘cultivators’ in the colonies and contribute to the state, and are free men, not rebels. The passage of a decree in May 1792 ‘in favour of the people of color’ is described as provoking anxiety amongst the ‘commercial interest’ who are pushing for the ‘repeal of this humane decree’. The anxiety of the colonists in Saint-Domingue is presented in the form of a letter from the provincial assembly of Saint-Domingue to Louis XVI.¹²³ In it the colonists complain about the plan to allow free blacks in the colonies to sit in colonial assemblies. They express the view that keeping a line between blacks and whites in the French colonies helps to maintain the order of the West Indies:

¹²¹ 27 October 1791, p. 2.

¹²² *MG*, 6 October 1791, p. 1.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

‘the constant line marked out which separates the whites from the colored people shall be broken through, and both placed on the same line of equality’. They resist the extension of greater rights to the free blacks in Saint-Domingue and argue for the maintenance of a ‘line’ of racial inequality.

Anti-slave-trade discourses circulate in the *MG* in the context of texts that celebrate French, British and Lower Canadian liberty and which present them as part of a uniquely enlightened and liberating moment politically. The *MG* presents France as experiencing a liberating moment in its national history, and it also prints texts that celebrate what is presented as the liberty of British rule in Quebec. For example, the *MG* prints the Constitutional Act of 1791 that made Quebec into two provinces of Upper Canada and Lower Canada and gave them both elected assemblies.¹²⁴ In one text the Act is described as ‘the Magna Charta of these colonies’, and the citizens in Quebec are described as having the benefit of British laws ‘which have made the British Empire for upwards of a century the admiration of mankind’.¹²⁵ In addition, the *MG* prints a pro-British patriotic poem that presents Britain as a blazing star in the world in the last issue of the paper in 1791.¹²⁶ The last poem of the year had a symbolic significance as it reflected upon and interpreted the important events of the past year. Hence, printing this poem that celebrates British liberty as the final poem of the year lends more significance to its theme of Britain’s greatness, as it suggests that this was a significant aspect of 1791.

¹²⁴ Margaret Conrad, *A Concise History of Canada* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 95-96.

¹²⁵ *MG*, 22 December 1791, p. 3.

¹²⁶ *MG*, 29 December 1791, p. 3.

William Cowper's poem 'The Negro's Complaint' reads as less clearly antislavery in the *MG*, given its context. It was printed in the *MG* in June 1789, some months before the anti-slave-trade sentiment drawn from the British and French campaigns was reprinted in the newspaper.¹²⁷ In the *MG* it is less clearly an anti-slave-trade poem and appears outside a wider antislavery context within the newspaper. In the *QG*, Cowper's poem was printed on the 21 January 1790, following heavy coverage of the abolitionist sentiment drawn from the British slave-trade debate. By contrast, the presentation of the poem in the *MG* is a bit of an oddity, appearing several months before the French and British abolitionist debates are presented in earnest in the paper. Hence, it reads less as a piece of evidence contributing and reinforcing the political debates and more as a thought-provoking and entertaining poem. In this case it might be more apt to read it as one of the numerous poems that present the voices of lower social status people, printed more broadly in the *MG*, and to see it as a light-hearted entertainment piece in the context of a wider set of poems in the newspaper. There are poems, for example, that present, in the first-person, an apology from a drunkard and a happy peasant; and the poem in which an enslaved person calls for the end of the British slave trade could have been perceived to fit within this mode.

My survey of the *QG* has not found any proslavery discourses within the paper, but by contrast Mesplet reprints some texts that present these arguments. For example, on 10 December 1789 he prints a letter with the heading 'NEGROES', which originally appeared in the British newspaper the *St. James's Chronicle*, published in London.¹²⁸ This newspaper frequently printed letters, ostensibly from its readers, that functioned as

¹²⁷ *MG*, 11 June 1789, p. 4.

¹²⁸ *St. James's Chronicle*, 27-29 August 1789, p. 2.

literary satires on the cultural practices on the times. It is interesting that Mesplet reprints this letter within a few months of it originally being printed, as this implies he was searching for material on the slave trade to reprint in his newspaper. One reason that this letter may have been included is because he uses another letter from the same issue that criticises the enlightened changes instigated in the French government and French protests advocating liberty. The letter functions primarily as an update that informs the readers of the *MG* that the issue of the slave trade had been adjourned during the sitting of the House of Commons. It also goes on to offer a disparaging view of British abolitionist arguments:

I am glad to find that the Slave Trade is put off till the next Sessions of Parliament. Nothing of that national importance was ever yet agitated in that House; and I tremble for the fatal consequences which I fear will now arise, whichever way it is terminated by law. It was the height of imprudence in the advocates for the abolition of slavery, to have exposed their ideas, however humane their intentions were, in the publick papers. I wish some of the advocates for working the sugar islands were exposed for two hours without action to the scorching sun beams at noon tide in Jamaica and then they would not say that field work could be done by any man but such to whom the MAKER of all things gave a covering, such as no art can contrive, nor any other mens' heads be able to endure. This does not, it is true, prove that Slavery is allowable, but it proves that black men only can bear a vertical West-Indian sun, without danger, for many hours, upon their heads; and that they were designed by their maker to live in those, not these climates.¹²⁹

This letter presents an alternative viewpoint to the abolitionist texts reprinted in the *MG* by suggesting that slavery is a natural and desirable outcome of a natural and God-given difference between Africans and Europeans which means that Africans are better able to labour in 'field-work' in the 'vertical West-Indian sun' of the British sugar colonies. The concern underpinning the unnamed writer's words in this letter is the economic

¹²⁹ *MG*, 10 December 1789, p. 3.

upheaval and threat to the sugar colonies' productivity caused by abolitionist debates appearing in the press as a result of debates about the slave trade taking place in Parliament. The anonymous writer describes their fear in light of the public nature of the abolitionist debates: 'I tremble for the fatal consequences which I fear will now arise'. Although the writer does not state exactly what they fear the outcome will be, they imply these abolitionist debates will encourage enslaved people to rebel against their masters and threaten the colonists' position in places such as Jamaica and the production of West Indian sugar, which was of huge economic value to Britain. The writer does not take on the debate about whether slavery is 'allowable', and he characterises the abolitionists as having 'humane [...] intentions'. His suggestion that God has created Africans to labour seems to implicitly acknowledge that enslaved Africans are men and part of God's family. However, the writer suggests that 'humane discourses' and debates do not change a need to use African enslaved labour in the British Caribbean to produce its sugar. The picture of slavery the unnamed writer sees as important to Britain is that of 'field work' in the West Indies, and in Jamaica specifically.

The newspapers can be understood as broadly antislavery, but they also contain a range of viewpoints, registers and types of texts about slavery. An example of this is that the newspapers simultaneously present the idea that black enslaved people are 'property' and the counter-argument that they are human beings. Two reasons for the range of viewpoints that are printed in the newspapers could be that the newspaper editors crafted their newspapers largely from previously printed texts, and this meant that not all the varieties of language could be controlled by the editor; and, secondly, that it was a formal quality of the newspaper to contain a variety of viewpoints, registers and

voices. Although the newspapers crafted an abolitionist sentiment through reprinting foreign texts which were anti-slave-trade, they also printed government proclamations and legislation and runaway slave advertisements, which introduced a wider variety of points of view. As I explored earlier in this chapter, the advertisement asking for readers to help John Sargent recapture Pascal ‘indirectly’ records Pascal’s voice. The advertisement describes Pascal as attesting his own free status and contesting his status as property: ‘[he] calls himself a free man’.¹³⁰ It also describes Pascal from John Sargent’s perspective and within a legal register as being ‘the property of John Sargent’. The abolitionist poetry reprinted in the newspapers imaginatively constructs the first-person enslaved voice. The collective theme of these poems is that enslaved people are people (not property), and they call for the abolition of the slave trade in Britain. As mentioned above, in the colonial government’s ‘Act for Encouraging New Settlers’, printed in both the newspapers, ‘negroes’ are listed alongside the inanimate possessions such as furniture (‘negroes, household furniture’) that settlers could bring into the British colonies. In a set of tables printed in the *MG*, enslaved people in Jamaica are listed by number in the context of the productivity of Jamaica, in terms of the sugar cultivated there.¹³¹ The letter preceding these tables invites the reader to see them as evidence of Jamaica’s ‘importance’ to Britain. In another example in the same issue, an update in the London news section presented the arrival of sugar into London from St Kitts as a positive moment of which ‘favourable accounts’ had been received about the sugar crop, without taking issue with the fact this was produced by enslaved people: ‘The Arden Capt. Wilson is arrived in Margate roads from St Kitts, and is the first ship at the London market with new sugars this season. She brings favourable accounts of

¹³⁰ *QG*, 5 June 1788, p. 2.

¹³¹ *MG*, 30 October 1788, p. 2.

the crops of that island'.¹³² Mesplet's inclusion of this snippet of news reflects his anticipation that it is important to inform his readers about it. It carries with it a positive account of sugar production through the lens of imperial and colonial trade and the perspective of financial interest, and it celebrates the productivity of enslaved people uncritically. The newspapers are also crowded with advertisements selling commodities produced by enslaved people in the West Indies, such as sugar and rum, and these never raise any comment in the newspapers.

Doublethink in the newspapers

Four poems calling for the abolition of the British slave trade are printed in the newspapers between 1789 and 1793. These poems are significant because at present they are the first known imaginative depictions of enslaved people in the Atlantic world that were published in Lower Canada. These poems were reprinted during the peak of sentimental rhetoric being used in anti-slave-trade and some pro-slave-trade texts in Britain.¹³³ They came from a British context in which the slave-trade debates were part of the formation of British identity and were part of a discursive production of nationalistic narratives for Britain from those on both sides of the argument.¹³⁴ These texts are about the slave trade and reprinted from the international movement. They do not take issue with slavery in Canada, and they do not depict slavery in Canada. By reprinting texts Neilson and Mesplet were able to show their support for anti-slave-trade arguments and demonstrate their sympathy for enslaved African people in the wider Atlantic world, but it is far more ambiguous as to how far Lower Canadians would have

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ For 1789-1793 as the peak moment in sentimental rhetoric in the British slave-trade debates, see for example Carey, *British Abolitionism*, p. 196.

¹³⁴ Swaminathan, *Debating the Slave Trade*, pp. 4-5.

seen this sentiment as being in contradiction with slavery in Canada. It seems likely that they both embraced anti-slave-trade rhetoric and largely did not challenge slavery in Canada. The previous sections have explored the textual presence of enslaved people in Canada and the printing and layering of an anti-slave-trade identity in the *QG* and *MG*. I suggest a form of ‘doublethink’ takes place, and readers in Quebec were able to see themselves as slaveholding and as supporting an anti-slave-trade sentiment at the same time. In this section I will explore one reason this doublethink could have been possible. I suggest slavery in the West Indies and the discourse around the transatlantic slave trade was presented as exotic and semantically removed from how slavery in Canada was textually constructed in the newspapers.

Slavery is presented as exotic in the abolitionist poems about slavery printed in the *MG* and *QG*. The four British abolitionist poems reprinted in the newspapers depict slavery as being experienced in an exotic West Indian landscape and other foreign spaces, and they construct an image of slavery that is characterised by cramped slave ships, sugar cane, boiling hot conditions and toiling the field, and this keeps an imaginative distance from the way slavery in colonial Canada is textually constructed in the newspapers. The landscapes in Cowper’s ‘The Negro’s Complaint’ and Frank Sayers’s poem ‘The Dying Negro’ locate slavery in the British West Indies. Sayers’s poem, written around 1789-1790, was first published in Norwich, Britain and later reprinted under the title ‘The Dying African’, and it is not to be confused with Thomas Day’s and John Bicknell’s famous poem, *The Dying Negro*, first published in London in 1773.¹³⁵ William Cowper’s anti-slave-trade poem ‘The Negro’s Complaint’ presents the persona

¹³⁵ For a modern reproduction of Sayers’s poem, see *Amazing Grace: An Anthology of Poems about Slavery, 1660-1810*, ed. by James G. Basker (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 401.

of an enslaved person who has been ‘bought and sold’ by British men and transported on a slave ship from the African coast to labour in the sugar cane fields of the West Indies. In the poem, the enslaved persona calls upon the British men involved in the slave trade and slaveowners in the West Indies to acknowledge the inhumanity of the slave trade. The enslaved persona challenges the belief of these men that enslaved African people were property without human feelings and that this justifies their enslavement.¹³⁶ References to Cowper’s poem in the *English Short Title Catalogue* suggest that this was first published in 1788.¹³⁷ In 1789 it was circulated in ballad form, by the commission of the Abolition Society in London, and it was reprinted widely in British provincial newspapers and throughout the Atlantic world.¹³⁸ Scholars have not explored Cowper’s poem in a Canadian context, but it has received much critical attention, particularly within a British abolition context. Srividhya Swaminathan sees it as part of the wider rhetorical battle over defining British national identity and the ‘Briton’ in pro- and anti-slave-trade arguments, arguing that it presents a tone of ‘national recrimination’ for the British sin of the slave trade.¹³⁹ Brycchan Carey has explored how Cowper uses sentimental strategies to craft his antislavery message, which were used widely in other antislavery poems and print. For example, he argues that one of the sentimental rhetorical strategies used by Cowper (as well as many other sentimental and antislavery writers) is ‘the equality of feeling’ argument, which stressed that the equal capacity of Africans and Europeans to feel (specifically their ability to feel sympathy, but also pain), and which reflected Africans’ equality with Europeans.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ William Cowper, ‘A Negro’s Complaint’, *QG*, 21 Jan 1790, p. 3.

¹³⁷ *English Short Title Catalogue*, British Library <<http://estc.bl.uk/>>.

¹³⁸ For a discussion of the circulation of the poem in ballad form in 1789, see Carey, *British Abolitionism*, pp. 100-01. For the wide reprinting of this poem across Britain and the Atlantic world, see Thomas Clarkson quoted in Oldfield, *Popular Politics*, p. 133, and Oldfield, *Transatlantic Abolitionism*, p. 58.

¹³⁹ Swaminathan, *Debating the Slave Trade*, p. 184.

¹⁴⁰ On the sentimental ‘equality of feeling’ argument, see Carey, *British Abolitionism*, pp. 37-38.

Carey argues that Cowper's poem closes with what he terms the rhetorical strategy of 'the rejection of false sensibility' that could criticise sentimental responses that were perceived as improper or disingenuous, such as expressions of artificial or passive sensibility, and that his poem appeals to an 'active sensibility' of political action from the reader, common in antislavery poetry.¹⁴¹ He suggests that the poem's ending forces the reader inward and avoids implicating the reader in voyeurism of the slave's suffering that critics have found in other antislavery texts.¹⁴² The enslaved persona of the poem produces an image of West Indian slavery with its 'plantations' and 'sugar canes' that is alien and 'other' to how slavery in colonial Canada is textually recorded in the newspapers. He directly addresses the slave-trader/slave owner in his poem asking 'Think how many backs have smarted/ For the sweet your cane affords', indicating that he is talking about plantation slavery and the cultivation of sugar. He goes on to identify toiling the sugar fields as his experience of slavery: 'Why did all-creating Nature/ Make the plant for which we toil?' The *QG* glosses the 'whirlwinds' of the West Indies mentioned in Cowper's poem (where they are presented as one of a catalogue of punishments that God inflicts upon the West Indies because of his distaste for the slave trade) as 'Alluding to the hurricanes common in the West Indies'. This makes it explicit that the imagined landscape where the persecution of enslaved people takes place and the destination of the slave ship in the world of the poem is the West Indies; it identifies the reader as needing to have the term 'Whirlwinds' and the topographic qualities of that environment interpreted for them, crafting the sense that this place with its shipwrecks, whirlwinds and tornadoes is a dangerous 'other' place. This 'otherness' is further emphasised by the enslaved persona's suggestion that these abnormal weather systems

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁴² Ibid.

are due to God's anger and the description of the West Indies as 'the Tyrant's habitation'. This conveys the sense that the West Indies is a place that subverts Christian virtues and that the islands are beyond the reach of God.

The descriptions of the landscape in 'The Dying Negro' of the 'hot breezes' and 'deep scorching air', combined with the enslaved persona's description of being torn from his home and his 'toil-wither'd limbs' and 'lashes' on his body, implicitly constructs an image of the enslaved person captured in Africa and brought via the slave trade to the West Indies thus implying that this was the universal experience and destination of all enslaved Africans at this time.¹⁴³

In 'A Negro Love Elegy', printed in the *MG* in 1793, the blackness of the female persona who mourns the absence of her lover is constructed through her non-standard English, which is a novelty of the poem:

And so sometime me tink me die
My heart so sick it grieve me:
But in a lilly time me cry
Good deal and that relieve me.¹⁴⁴

It is revealing that this poem presents a feminized, passive and romanticised image of the slave woman at a time when the newspapers were increasingly filled with reports of bloody and violent slave rebellions. The female persona may have been interpreted by readers as an enslaved woman since the word 'negro' frequently stood for an enslaved person during this period.

¹⁴³ 'Song: The Dying Negro', *QG*, 21 June 1792, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ 'A Negro Love Elegy', *MG*, 10 January 1793, p. 4.

The wider array of texts about slavery reprinted in the newspapers focus on calling for the abolition of the slave trade. They construct an image of cramped slave ships engaged in the Atlantic slave trade and of the dangerous journey through the middle passage, and they list locations in the West Indies as the likely destinations of enslaved African people. For example, Wilberforce's 'Twelve Propositions', reprinted in the *MG* on Thursday 10 October 1789, describe British involvement in the slave trade as based on 'transporting the slaves from Africa to the West Indies'. The 'Twelve Propositions' list a number of locations in the slaveholding British West Indies (Jamaica, Barbados, the Leeward Islands, Grenada, Dominica and Saint Vincent), but they do not mention the enslaved people in colonial Canada or those who journeyed 'singly [or] ... in small groups' on from the West Indies and into colonial Canada, where they remained enslaved.¹⁴⁵

'The Negro's Recital', printed in the *QG* on the 16 December 1790, is perhaps the first text printed in Lower Canada in which the reader can envisage themselves as part of an imagined community that is expected to be more sympathetic to the suffering of enslaved African people in the British West Indies. This predates the construction of Canada West as a British land of liberty in the mid-nineteenth-century slave narrative. The text was first published in London, Britain in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1787 as an epilogue to Isaac Bickerstaffe's 1768 comic opera, *The Padlock*, which had music by Samuel Didben, where it was entitled an 'Epilogue to 'The Padlock''. In the 'Epilogue' the black slave character, Mungo, from Bickerstaffe's play is imagined as stepping back out in front of the audience at the end of the play and addressing them. Brycchan Carey notes that the 'Epilogue' is clearly abolitionist and draws on 'emerging discourses about

¹⁴⁵ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, p. 116.

the rights of man' but that it also contains ameliorationist undertones.¹⁴⁶ He questions how this text would have been read within the context of the wider performance of *The Padlock* given that the play is not an antislavery text, and he notes that there is no evidence that this epilogue was ever performed as part of the wider play.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, according to Carey's survey of plays, the abolitionist thrust of the 'Epilogue' sets it apart from contemporaneous plays; Carey notes that plays tended to overstate their sentimental rhetoric and damage their antislavery power, and that they did not play a central role in supporting the political anti-slave-trade campaign, or play a key role in the development of antislavery rhetoric in eighteenth-century Britain.¹⁴⁸ In the *QG* the theatrical context of the text is lost because the title describing it as an epilogue to Bickerstaffe's play is not reproduced.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, the description of the text as the speech of Bickerstaffe's character Mungo ('MUNGO speaks:') is removed, and the *QG* presents the opening line in standard English rather than non-standard English as it was in the original text. In the *QG* the 'Epilogue', divorced from these theatrical references, reads as a piece of verse; it is set out in stanzas and a new line is introduced as a title to the text: 'A Black is supposed to be introduced to an English Audience after an Entertainment'.¹⁵⁰ The 'Epilogue' is different to the poems and political texts reprinted by Neilson that imagine enslaved people calling for abolitionist sympathy from a foreign and exotic setting. Readers in Lower Canada could have imagined that the setting of this poem, in which an unnamed enslaved black persona addresses a British audience and appeals for the abolition of the slave trade, was Lower

¹⁴⁶ Brycchan Carey, 'To Force a Tear: British Abolitionism and the Eighteenth-Century London Stage', in *Affect and Abolition in the Anglo-Atlantic*, ed. by Ahern, pp. 109-28 (p. 122).

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. (p. 120, p. 122).

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. (p. 128).

¹⁴⁹ 'Epilogue to "The Padlock"', *Brycchan Carey* <<http://www.brycchancarey.com/slavery/padlock1.htm>> [accessed 1 November 2017].

¹⁵⁰ 'The Negro's Recital', *QG*, 16 December 1790, p. 4.

Canada, given that they may have identified themselves as belonging to the ‘Free born British lands’ that the enslaved person addresses. This invites the readers in Lower Canada to imagine that they are listening in on an abolitionist speech that an enslaved man is making in front of a small community of English listeners. This group of imagined listeners could represent the British public, Parliament or nation, but the terms used throughout are generic such as ‘English audience’ and ‘Free born British lands’, and they could equally refer to any British colonial possession, including Lower Canada. The direct address ‘I speak to BRITONS — BRITONS, then, behold’ merges the audience in the poem with the role of the reader who also occupies the role of audience. In a more general sense the poem flatters the British national character, and it appeals to a sense of British specialness in suggesting British people are more susceptible to abolitionist sympathies because of their own love of liberty. The description of the ‘British lands’ could equally refer to the British American colonies. The enslaved persona suggests his ‘English audience’ should feel more abolitionist sympathy for enslaved Africans because they are British:

My tale, in any place would force a tear
But calls for stronger, deeper feelings here!¹⁵¹

The ‘here’ referred to in ‘The Negro’s Recital’ printed in the *QG* (the reprinted and edited ‘Epilogue’ text) is the audience in the British theatre (the ‘English Audience’) and more broadly Britain and its citizens, who are appealed to in the appeal ‘I speak to BRITONS’. The enslaved person appeals to a sense that the British are especially able to feel sentimental sympathy for the enslaved man and the sufferings he relates, or that

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

they should be demonstrating this sympathy, given their love of liberty and sentimental natures. Readers of the *Quebec Gazette* who were part of the British Atlantic world may have identified themselves as part of a broader British audience for the poem, and they may have seen themselves as an intended audience for the slave's appeal. This is suggested in two ways: by the more general appeal to those 'Britons' in 'British lands' outside Britain itself, and in the fact that this poem was reprinted within Neilson's newspaper within a wider context of anti-slave-trade sentiment and sympathy for enslaved African people, and in the context of the argument that enslaved African people are wrongly categorised as 'chattel' rather than 'men'. This reading is reinforced by the sense that through layering foreign and particularly British anti-slave-trade texts together in his newspaper Neilson crafted an anti-slave-trade sentiment for local readers.

Conclusion

In the eighteenth-century newspapers published in Lower Canada the textual presence of enslaved people in colonial Canada was printed in the context of reprinted foreign anti-slave-trade texts that produced a local anti-slave-trade sentiment. Christopher Leslie Brown's concept of the 'moral capital' that British abolitionism accrued after the loss of the thirteen colonies, which I discussed in the Introduction, is a useful lens for thinking about how editors reprinting abolitionist debates in Lower Canadian newspapers at this time situated Canada within wider networks of circulation and power. Brown explores the wider meanings that antislavery discourse could have beyond the slave trade itself, for example in the political prestige of antislavery for Britain. This provides a pertinent context in which to think about how presenting these debates situates colonial Canada in relation to the European powers of France, Britain

and their colonial possessions. Brown argues abolitionist debates helped Britain craft an idea of the specialness of Britain and its colonies during this period, but this may not have been the case for France where more negative associations quickly attached themselves to antislavery ideals. Brown argues that the abolition of the slave trade came to mean this for the British largely because of the context of the loss of the American colonies, but abolitionism did not acquire the same moral capital for Americans or the French at this historic moment, suggesting that ‘the new association of abolitionism with Jacobinism would mean that antislavery would be linked with turmoil and violence in France and Haiti after the restoration of the French monarchy’.¹⁵² Brown does not discuss the Canadian context of the ‘moral capital’ of anti-slave-trade discourse during this period, or examine Canada as a place for British antislavery discourses to play out. As I have shown, newspaper editors in Lower Canada reprinted transatlantic anti-slave-trade sentiment, and this was self-consciously double-voiced. They created a local Canadian anti-slave-trade sentiment through reprinting foreign abolitionist texts.

Brown’s concept is useful in terms of focusing attention on the significance of the image of abolitionism crafted in the newspapers, particularly his view that abolitionism has to accrue a positive image and associations for it to be a source of ‘moral prestige’. The *Montreal Gazette* presents a balance between French and British abolitionist debates, depicting both countries as simultaneously exploring options of abolishing the slave trade. The newspapers present British and French abolitionist debates within the context of a wider European movement towards the abolition of the slave trade. Both newspapers reprint texts that present the argument that enslaved Africans are people with feelings rather than property. However, there are contradictions; for example, the

¹⁵² Brown, *Moral Capital*, p. 459.

newspapers take for granted the value of British West Indian colonies founded on slavery and present ‘negroes’ as possessions rather than people in a proclamation encouraging settlers to relocate to colonial Canada and other places in the British Empire.

The textual presence of slavery in colonial Canada was in close proximity to foreign anti-slave-trade debates and a wider message that called for enslaved people to be conceptualised as people not property. These anti-slave-trade arguments were placed in the public mind where slavery in colonial Canada was most textually present in the printed record in the form of slave advertisements. By closing reading the slave advertisements, I have suggested ways in which advertisers ameliorated the fact that they held enslaved people (for example, not saying ‘boy’ in the headline, and by emphasising the new clothes given to Joe) while showing the ‘otherness’ of slavery in the abolition debates. I have shown that in the business and community sections of the newspaper, advertisements for enslaved people were part of everyday business, but in the more outward looking and discursive sections, the editors aligned their community with anti-slave-trade arguments. The way slavery was textually imagined in these anti-slave-trade texts was semantically removed from the way enslavement in Canada was imagined in print. The international texts fixate on describing the horrific conditions of slave ships, and they present slavery against the backdrop of a textually constructed West Indies. They are concerned specifically with the transatlantic slave trade. These international texts were introduced to readers as taking place ‘in London’ or having been written by a man in London, and they were seen as being produced elsewhere. In this chapter I have suggested that a form of doublethink takes place in the newspapers as its readers are able to hold two images of themselves at once. They can see

themselves as a group that enjoys reading anti-slave-trade poetry and that feel sympathy for enslaved people, but at the same time they witness the textualisation of slavery in colonial Canada. The lack of space given to local abolitionist efforts, for example, of the successful passing of the 1793 legislation to limit slavery in Upper Canada and the failure of this act to pass in Lower Canada reflects how local legislative acts were typically recorded in the newspapers, briefly and as part of an update section. The colonial newspaper drew more heavily on international material for its content. In this light it is not surprising that anti-slave-trade materials were far more textually present in the newspapers than advertisements about enslaved people in colonial Canada. My reading of the newspapers suggests that the collective mind or consciousness of the community was more preoccupied with slavery elsewhere in the Americas and debates in France and Britain, and that these texts about slavery in the Americas were more textually present than slavery in Canada in the newspapers. This reflects the reality that slavery was not central to the economic system in colonial Canada. The news that was presented would have been more relevant to the French Canadian and British seigneurs, colonial officials and merchants likely to have been reading the newspapers. Lower Canada in this period was economically intertwined with Britain, America and France and their colonial possessions in the West Indies, so unsurprisingly slavery comes into view when it relates to these concerns. In many ways this reflects the pull that these countries had over the society and economy of Lower Canada until well into the nineteenth century.¹⁵³ One strand that unites these texts is their focus on the rebelliousness of enslaved Africans and free black people who fought for their liberty and rights across the Atlantic world. Collectively these texts craft an image of the agency of free and enslaved black people in the Atlantic, both individually and

¹⁵³ Dickinson and Young, *A Short History of Quebec*, p. 65.

collectively. The images of rebellious blacks were to become excessively violent and increasingly seen as threatening to the political status quo in the frequent reports of the slave rebellion in Saint-Domingue (1791-1804) printed in the newspapers in the early 1790s. Between 1792-1793, the *MG* and the *QG* would present a far more cautious response to abolitionism in their reprinting of poetry and political debates.

The discourse today stresses that the history of slavery in Canada has been lost. It describes slavery in Canada as subject to a national amnesia, implying that at some point this knowledge was in the collective consciousness and later it fell from the public mind. George Elliott Clarke argues that narratives of slavery in colonial Canada are partially recoverable by examining the colonial newspapers for runaway slave advertisements. He suggests that the mid-nineteenth-century slave narrative presents an idealised image of Canada as an antislavery haven from the point of view of the former American slave and that this has ‘obscured’ the image of slavery in Canada present in an earlier body of texts. This chapter has shown that by examining the slave advertisements in Lower Canada in the wider textual context of the colonial newspaper, a different understanding of Canada’s relationship to slavery in Canada emerges. It shows that slavery in Canada was present in ‘the public mind’ alongside anti-slave-trade texts and print about slavery in the Americas. Reprinted anti-slave-trade texts produced a local anti-slave-trade sentiment and crafted an image of the community in Lower Canada that was tolerant and friendly towards enslaved African people in the West Indies. Newspapers are *the* space where the textual presence of enslaved people in colonial Canada is most present in printed texts, and yet even here slavery in Canada is obscured at its point of entry into the printed textual record.

Chapter Two

Canada West in the Antebellum Slave Narrative

In the Introduction I showed that there was a textual expectation in nineteenth-century literature that the fugitive slave's arrival in Canada West would be imagined as a moment of liberation, as he crossed the border and became a free man. In this chapter I explore what happens in the slave narrative beyond the fugitive slave's moment of arrival in Canada. In the 1850s a new way of depicting Canada as part of the former slave's experience developed, and several slave narratives from the 1850s present the lives of formerly enslaved people in Canada West. There is a recurring pattern in how former slaves depict their lives in freedom in slave narratives; they focus on their experience of clearing, cultivating and owning land. In this chapter I look at two narratives that epitomise this focus on Canadian land. I argue that these texts problematise George Elliott Clarke's claim that the antebellum slave narrative presents an idealised image of Canada as an antislavery haven and that this has 'obscured' an earlier history of slaveholding in Canada.¹ I show that these narratives present a far more complex depiction of Canada in the slave narrative when it circulated in an American context that adds to the one-dimensional image of Canada that critics have identified in the British context; this develops Fisch's and Meer's finding that the representation of Canada in American slavery narratives that were circulated in Britain produced a nationalistic English discourse.² I suggest that this image was produced within a transatlantic context in which the representation of Canada was more varied

¹ Clarke, "This is no hearsay" (p. 18 n. 19).

² Fisch, *American Slaves*, p. 63; Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania*, pp. 141-42.

and could criticise capitalist exploitation and English elites, while at the same time presenting an idealised image of Canada as an antislavery haven, as slaves crossed the border. I argue that the Canadian wilderness in these narratives is presented as both a place where former slaves and free blacks could forge new lives in freedom and an exploitative space that could bind former slaves into what they depicted as re-enslavement. These narratives unsettle the rigid border of slavery and freedom and the United States and Canada. They suggest a more porous boundary and a continuity of an experience of economic exploitation in North America, as it is textually constructed in the narratives. This complicates the image of Canada as an antislavery haven that we get if we focus exclusively on moments of arrival of the fugitive slave in Canada in the slave narrative.

This chapter is in part an attempt to explore how canonical Canadian literature shaped and was shaped by the slave narrative, which is something scholars have explored for other national literary genres. Scholars have explored how American and British literature was drawn on by authors of slave narratives to write into print their experiences of slavery and shaped by the slave narrative genre in turn, and this is a developing area of critical study.³ For example, critics have shown that the British Victorian novel was a key literary influence on the slave narrative and that the slave narrative shaped the form of some British Victorian novels.⁴ Sentimental nineteenth-century American fiction has also been shown to have been a key literary influence on slave narratives.⁵ However, scholars have not explored how Canadian literary traditions

³ Audrey Fisch, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*, ed. by Audrey Fisch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 1-7 (pp. 3-4).

⁴ Julia Sun-Joo Lee, *The American Slave Narrative and the Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁵ For example, see Cindy Weinstein, 'The Slave Narrative and Sentimental Literature', in *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*, ed. by Fisch, pp. 115-34.

and ways of writing Canada into print influenced the slave narrative genre and were shaped by it. This chapter explores how Canadian literary genres have shaped the slave narrative, as well as British and American literary traditions, and it explores one way that Canada has left its generic influence on the slave narrative by looking at the connections between slave narratives and Canadian female settler guides.

There are three sections in this chapter. In the first section I look at what happens in the slave narrative and its representation of Canada up to the 1850s, arguing that before the 1850s Canada West does not exist as a narrative space within the slave narrative. In Section Two I examine two texts that deal with former slaves' experiences of life in Canada. One is a collection of narratives transcribed and edited by Benjamin Drew and published in 1856 in which free blacks and former slaves living in Canada West relate their experiences of slavery and freedom, entitled *A North-Side View of Slavery: The Refugee: Or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada*. The other is a book-length slave narrative *Twenty-Two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Freeman*, first published in 1857 and penned by Austin Steward. Steward was a former slave, who had lived for many years as a free man in the United States and Canada West when he came to write his experiences of slavery and freedom. I argue that the Canadian wilderness is presented in these two texts as both offering opportunities for former slaves to own land and to recreate themselves as free black emigrants beyond slavery, but the Canadian wilderness is also imagined as a space where fugitives could be 'obliged to lose all their labour' and where they could be bound into new exploitative relationships through labouring in the wilderness.⁶ I show that Austin Steward crafts a different narrative of

⁶ Austin Steward, *Twenty-Two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Freeman: With an Introduction by Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2004), p. 166. All subsequent citations refer to this edition and will be referenced in parenthesis in the text.

his experience of the Canadian wilderness: his is not a story of black emigrant success or of his own exploitation through land. I argue that in his narrative Steward crafts a middle-class narrative of thriving in the Canadian bush itself as unachievable, and he appropriates Susanna Moodie's successful narrative of failed middle-class settlement, *Roughing It in the Bush*, first published in the United States and Britain in 1852 and as a Canadian edition in 1871, in order to tell this story of his experience. In the third section I use Isaac Mason's slave narrative, published in 1893, to look back on the tradition of presenting Canada as an exploitative space and to show that presenting Canada as an anti-haven was a trope in the slave narrative genre.

Canada in the slave narrative before the 1850s

In this section I discuss how Canada is depicted in the slave narrative up to 1850, when slave narratives frequently ended with the fugitive slave's moment of arrival in Canada West. I demonstrate that writing post-slavery life in general after 1850 and writing experiences of life in Canada posed a textual challenge for former slaves. When they began to present their lives in Canada after 1850, fugitive slaves had to find new ways to narrate their experiences beyond the end of the slave narrative and the moment of arrival in Canada.

John Stauffer argues that in the early 1850s the authors of slave narratives faced an aesthetic challenge when it came to representing their lives as free men in the genre.⁷

Stauffer focuses his study on Frederick Douglass's second autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, published in 1855. He argues that Douglass faced a 'crisis of

⁷ John Stauffer, 'Frederick Douglass and the Aesthetics of Freedom', *Raritan: A Quarterly Review*, 25.1 (2005), 114-36 <<https://literature-proquest-com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/pageImage.do?ftnum=898489441&fmt=page&queryid=3022890388894>> [accessed 23 November 2017] (p. 115).

language and aesthetics' when he came to represent his life as a free man in *My Bondage and My Freedom*.⁸ Stauffer provides a summary of the shift taking place in the aesthetics of the slave narrative genre in the mid-1850s:

[prior to 1855 slave narrative] Narrators focused on their life in bondage and described the horrors of slavery in the hope of converting readers to abolitionism. The teleology of slave narratives centred around the moment of freedom. But narratives of freedom had not been developed.⁹

In this extract Stauffer highlights the newness of Douglass's attempts in 1855 to craft a narrative of his life after slavery. He explains that, 'in writing *My Bondage [and My Freedom]*, he created a new genre that describes a life in freedom, rather than ending at the moment of freedom, as all previous slave narratives had done'.¹⁰ Stauffer makes a useful distinction between 'the moment of freedom', the textual moment in which a fugitive slave becomes free which typically signals the end of slave narratives prior to the mid-1850s and 'narratives of freedom', in which an enslaved person attempts to construct a narrative of their life as a free person in the slave narrative genre. Stauffer does not specifically consider the implications of this 'crisis in aesthetics' for the presentation of Canada in the slave narrative. However, the shift Stauffer sees in the aesthetics of the slave narrative genre in the mid-1850s provides a useful context in which to understand the imaginative depiction of Canada in the genre up until and during the 1850s, as Canada is used for the first time as a narrative space in which to explore the lives of former slaves living in freedom.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid. (p. 127).

¹⁰ John Stauffer, 'Frederick Douglass's Self-Fashioning and the Making of a Representative American Man', in *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*, ed. by Fisch, pp. 201-17 (p. 212).

Although Stauffer does not give attention to the earlier context of eighteenth-century slave narratives that represent the lives of former slaves in freedom, he notices an aesthetic struggle in the mid-nineteenth century to represent freedom in the slave narrative. In terms of representing life as a freeman in Canada West in the slave narrative genre, his wider observation about representing life in freedom reflects the handling of Canada West in the slave narrative. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century there are no precedents for representing Canada West in the slave narrative genre, and before the 1850s the slave narrative stops as the fugitive slave crosses the border. However, there are earlier precedents for representing the lives of former slaves in Atlantic Canada in eighteenth-century black autobiographical narratives. For example, there are two black Loyalist narratives, as I have briefly discussed in the Introduction, and, additionally, Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*, first published in 1789, which depicts his experience in Atlantic Canada. While still an enslaved man to an officer in the British Navy, Equiano describes being on board a boat with General James Wolfe in 1758 as part of the British seizure of the French port of Louisbourg, Cape Breton, which was tactically placed as a defence of the Saint Lawrence, and his wider narrative represents his life after he gains his freedom in 1766.¹¹

The *Narrative of the Life of Henry Bibb*, published in 1849, provides a typical example of the way that Canada is imaginatively constructed in the slave narrative genre prior to the 1850s. Henry Bibb moved to Canada West in November 1850, and after his arrival he continued to work for the American abolition movement. In Canada he helped to

¹¹ For Equiano's experience on a British ship during the seizure of Louisbourg from the French, see Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*, ed. by Vincent Carretta (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), pp. 72-76.

establish two antislavery societies and set up his newspaper, *The Voice of the Fugitive*, before he died in Windsor in Canada in 1854.¹² Canada West does not feature as a narrative space in the *Narrative of the Life of Henry Bibb*, but it does occupy a dominant space in the narrative; it is mentioned thirty-three times by Bibb, and it provides a place of imagined safety and refuge for the fugitive slave in the text.¹³ Throughout the narrative, Canada generates a lot of suspense and frustration in the narrative as it functions as a goal and catalyst for action, inspiring Bibb to run away from slavery in the United States and providing him with a place to which he can escape to. Bibb offers a humorous nod to this narrative back and forth after recounting his many thwarted attempts to reach Canada by the use of the word ‘yet’ in ‘by which I might yet run away and go to Canada’ (74). His dream of reaching Canada is figured as a quest akin to Homer’s *Odyssey*. He encounters delays and obstacles; he has to stop and earn money to get to Canada, and he returns for his wife and child when it looks as if he is just about to become free.

Canada West is presented as a political refuge for the fugitive slave in Bibb’s slave narrative. In the preface to his narrative Bibb defines freedom as being legally defined as a ‘human being’ and not as ‘chattel’ (12). In his narrative proper Bibb presents Canada West as an ideal refuge for the American fugitive slave because it fulfils the qualification for freedom that is set out in his preface: in Canada West former slaves are legally recognised as men and not chattel under British law. Bibb produces an image of Canada as a safe haven for fugitive slaves, patriotically celebrating Canada West as a

¹² Afua Ava Pamela Cooper, “‘Doing Battle in Freedom’s Cause’: Henry Bibb, Abolitionism, Race Uplift and Black Manhood, 1842-1854’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 2000), pp. 1-3.

¹³ Henry Bibb, ‘Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, An American Slave, Written by Himself, with an Introduction by Lucius C. Matlack’, in *I was Born a Slave: An Anthology of Classic Slave Narratives: Volume Two: 1849-1866*, ed. by Yuval Taylor (Edinburgh: Payback Press, 1999), pp. 4-98. All subsequent citations refer to this edition and will be referenced in parenthesis in the text.

space of British liberty. In his narrative, Bibb is told to make his way to Canada by a free black man called Mr Dundy. Dundy describes Canada as a land ‘over which waved freedom’s flag, defended by a British government, upon whose soil there cannot be the footprint of a slave’ (29). In this description of Canada the flag represents the protection of a political border that does not recognise men as chattel, and it signifies an absolute boundary with the United States. Moreover, Bibb shows the tenuous status of the runaway slaves as a free person (rather than property) in the United States, and this reinforces a sense that Canada is special in its promise of a legal definition of ‘human being’ for the runaway slave. Bibb describes his attempts to run away with his wife and child as ‘striving to make our way from slavery’ (63). This suggests a literal journey away from the plantation, but it also conveys the sense that as runaway slaves they are still to some extent experiencing slavery. He describes his recapture in Cincinnati, Ohio as having potential to ‘change me back into property’, suggesting that even in the free states the fugitive slave can be returned to his definition as property (34). The image of Canada as political refuge for the fugitive slave, without the ‘footprint’ of a slave, in Bibb’s narrative reproduces an image of Canada as a non-slaveholding space (29). When viewed through the eyes of the fugitive slave in the mid-nineteenth century, Canada appears to be a political refuge where the identity of the fugitive slave cannot exist. His identity as an enslaved person is imagined as melting into nothingness as he crosses the US-Canada border, as he becomes a free man rather than a chattel.

Bibb’s narrative expresses some tension that the longed-for antislavery haven of Canada may be in part a literary convention rather than a lived reality. Throughout his narrative Bibb depicts Canada as the only place where he can imagine obtaining his liberty and living as a free man. Yet at the end of his narrative Bibb signs off from New York City

(98). In the preface to his narrative Bibb establishes himself as a former slave and free man. Hence, finishing his narrative in New York City locates him as a free man in the United States rather than Canada, even though this has generated such a strong imaginative pull as the place of freedom throughout his narrative.

After 1850 slave narratives contained fuller accounts of the lives of some former slaves in Canada, and the next section will explore how post-slavery life in Canada is textually produced in the slave narrative. For example, Austin Steward's 1857 slave narrative, *Twenty-Two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Freeman*, develops a fuller account of his life and the lives of other fugitive slaves in Canada after the 'moment of freedom' and moment of arrival in Canada, than previous slave narratives had done.¹⁴ The first third of Steward's narrative presents his experiences of slavery in the United States, and, as Jane Pease and William Pease have noted, the majority of the narrative focuses on his life post-slavery: '[Steward] devoted two-thirds of it to his life as a freeman'.¹⁵ Indeed, Steward depicts his life living in freedom in Canada in Chapters Nineteen to Thirty-Four of his narrative. In these chapters, Steward recalls his time living in Canada between 1831-1837 during which time he was the president of a black settlement called the Wilberforce Settlement. This was a settlement of several hundred free blacks and fugitive slaves who fled from Cincinnati, Ohio to Canada West in the early 1830s. Steward expands the generic constraints he inherited in his fuller representation of life in Canada after crossing the border, but he includes a story-within-a-story in his slave narrative of two fugitive slaves (Rosa and Joe), who escaped persecution in Cincinnati, Ohio and relocated to Canada West. This embedded narrative looks back to the

¹⁴ Stauffer, 'Frederick Douglass and the Aesthetics of Freedom' (p. 127).

¹⁵ Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, 'Introduction', in Austin Steward, *Twenty-Two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Freeman: With an Introduction by Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease*, pp. ix-xv (p. x).

conventions of the pre-1850s narrative that I have been exploring in Bibb's narrative.

The narrative of Rosa and Joe extends over several pages and takes up half of Chapter Twenty-Three. It focuses almost entirely on their experience of slavery and escaping it and ends upon the former slaves' arrival in Canada:

They settled in Cincinnati, where they lived happily, until the mob drove them with others, to the Wilberforce settlement, where they are in no danger of the auction block, or of a Southern market; and are as devoted to each other as ever. (127-28)

In this passage Canada is presented as offering a solid boundary and real freedom from the South. Steward's inclusion of this story that stops at the fugitives' arrival in Canada is relevant, given its context in a narrative that attempts to represent the lives of fugitive slaves in Canada after they have crossed the border. As the quotation above indicates, no space is given to an account of the fugitive slaves in Canada after their arrival.

Canada is described only in terms of what it is not: the South. This constructs Canada as a non-slaveholding and idealised space of liberty. In this account, that represents the textual handling of Canada in the slave narrative prior to the 1850s, there is silence around the fugitives' experience of Canada after their arrival. In a similar way to Henry Bibb who presents the free state of Cincinnati, Ohio as a place where he is still in danger of being made back into slave property, Steward suggests the influence of slavery bleeds into the free states through a porous boundary. He claims that it is slavery and the slaveholders in neighbouring Kentucky that are causing the persecution of free blacks in Ohio, and he suggests the flight of the free blacks from Cincinnati is because the free state cannot offer sufficient refuge from slavery. Steward reprints the

resolutions of a meeting in Rochester, suggesting that the angry white mob was ‘probably led on by the slaveholders’ (106, 108).

The story of Rosa and Joe can be read, in part, as Steward’s demonstration of the conventional structures for representing post-slavery life in Canada that he inherited in the slave narrative genre. These conventions made it possible for Steward to relate experiences of slavery and flight to Canada, but they did not provide a tradition for representing the lives of former slaves after slavery. In the story-within-a-story, Steward conforms to the pre-1850s conventions for ending the slave narrative at the ‘moment of freedom’ as Rosa and Joe arrive in Canada, rather than crafting a narrative of the fugitive slaves’ lives in Canada after their arrival. This is suggestive of both the attractiveness and persistence of this mode of writing about Canada within slave narratives before 1850. The story-within-a-story of Rosa and Joe is presented as a representation of the slave narrative genre, and Steward invites his readers to see it as a symbol of the slave narrative. The title of Chapter Twenty-Three, where the story appears, ‘Narrative of Two Fugitives from Virginia’ echoes the titles of printed slave narratives, and this suggests that Steward wants us to read this chapter as a representation of the genre of the slave narrative. This is also suggested by the references to the material culture of the slave narrative in printed book form. For example, Steward’s description of the narrative as a ‘thrilling tale’ echoes the language of the white-authored letters and statements that were commonly printed before and after the narrative proper in slave narratives. John Sekora has described these white texts as ‘authenticating’ the ‘black messages’ in slave narratives, as part of his wider argument that nineteenth-century slave narratives were produced in the context of a

white ‘institutional purpose’.¹⁶ ‘Thrilling’ was an adjective commonly used in advertisements to describe slave narratives, and it is used, for example, in newspaper reviews of Henry Bibb’s narrative.¹⁷ Steward’s account of collecting the oral narrative from the lips of the fugitives Joe and Rosa reflects the role of the white amanuensis in transcribing slave narratives, and it would not be out of place in the preface to Drew’s collection of narratives in which he relates acting as a mouthpiece for the fugitives’ stories. Steward’s image of the slave narrative genre presents it in a conventional way that misses out the Canadian aspect that is developed in his own text. The story of Rosa and Joe could suggest that Steward did not see depictions of the lives of former slaves in Canada as an element of the slave narrative genre, even though he challenged these conventions elsewhere in his narrative. However, the story of Rose and Joe is placed within the fifteen chapters of his book where Steward expands the genre and portrays the experiences of formerly enslaved people in Canada. Appearing in this context, it highlights the newness of Steward’s textual project to represent the experience of fugitive slaves and free blacks living in freedom in Canada West in *Twenty-Two Years A Slave*. Steward uses it to highlight his knowledge of the slave narrative genre for his readers and to demonstrate that he is flouting these restrictive conventions. The narrative of Rosa and Joe reflects the tradition in the slave narrative up the 1850s that ended at the moment fugitive slaves arrived in Canada. Steward’s placement of the story of Rosa and Joe in the chapters of his text that attempt to write beyond this gap and to represent the lives of former slaves in Canada reflects the transitional nature of

¹⁶ John Sekora, ‘Black Message/White Envelope: Genre, Authenticity and Authority in the Antebellum Slave Narrative’, *Callaloo*, 32.3 (1987), 482-515 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2930465>> (p. 497), and see also (p. 510, p. 502).

¹⁷ For examples of the use of ‘Thrilling’ as a common adjective for describing slave narratives, see three newspaper reviews of Henry Bibb’s 1849 narrative in Henry Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, An American Slave, Written by Himself, with an Introduction by Lucius C. Matlack* (New York: Published by the Author, 1849), pp. 205-07.

Steward's literary project and his knowledge of the generic restraints he worked within and subverted elsewhere in his narrative.

Canada in the slave narrative in the 1850s: liberation and exploitation in the wilderness

In this section I will explore how slave narratives published in the 1850s represent the lives of former slaves and free blacks in Canada and how Canada reads in the slave narrative beyond the fugitive's moment of arrival. To do this I will focus on how Canada is textually constructed in Austin Steward's slave narrative and the collection of narratives edited by Benjamin Drew, *A North-Side View of Slavery: The Refugee: Or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada*. This is a collection of a little over one hundred first-person narratives of free blacks and former slaves living in Canada West. The narratives were collected and edited by Benjamin Drew as he toured the region in 1855, with the assistance of the Canadian Anti-Slavery Society. The narratives are arranged into fourteen sections, each representing the locations in Canada West that Drew visited such as Toronto, London and Queen's Bush. In the introduction to the narratives Drew states that there are two reasons why he has transcribed and published oral interviews with the fugitive slaves in Canada: firstly, 'to collect, with a view to placing their testimony on record, their experiences of the actual workings of slavery'; and, secondly, to collect and publish 'what experience they have had of the condition of liberty'.¹⁸

Modern readers could overlook the fact that accounts of post-slavery life in Canada West are a key part of the slave narrative genre in the 1850s. However, contemporaries

¹⁸ Benjamin Drew, *The Refugee: Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2008), p. 28, p. 39. Unless otherwise stated, all further references are to this edition and will be given in the text in parenthesis.

may have been more sensitive to this aspect of the narratives. Contemporary title pages of slave narratives published in the 1850s indicate that authors and publishers of these texts invited readers to approach them as narratives of post-slavery lives in freedom as much as (or perhaps more than) narratives of slavery. This is reflected in contemporary title pages, which used larger size type to draw attention to the aspect of the narratives that related the life of the former slave after the moment of liberation. In this way authors and publishers invited readers to approach slave narratives not predominately as accounts of bondage and escape but as narratives of freedom after slavery. For example, the title page of Austin Steward's slave narrative gives a greater focus to the text as an account of Steward's post-slavery life than in slavery. This is reflected in the larger type of 'FORTY YEARS A FREEMAN' compared to that of 'TWENTY-TWO YEARS A SLAVE' on the original title page (Figure 2.1). Similarly, on the title page of Frederick Douglass's second slave narrative, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, an instant bestseller that sold fifteen thousand copies when published in New York in 1855, the words 'My Freedom' appear in much larger type than the words 'My Bondage' (Figure 2.2). The balance this text attempts to achieve between these two parts of Douglass's life is reflected further in the description of the text as in two balanced parts: 'Part I-Life as a Slave' and 'Part II-Life as a Freeman'. Advertisements for Douglass's book, printed in his newspaper *Frederick Douglass's Paper*, also replicate this larger type being used for the words 'My Freedom', and this shows the wider circulation of the idea that the narrative's relation of Douglass's life as a free man is the most important part of this text.¹⁹

¹⁹ For an example of how the narrative is advertised, see *Frederick Douglass's Paper*, 18 January 1856, p. 4.

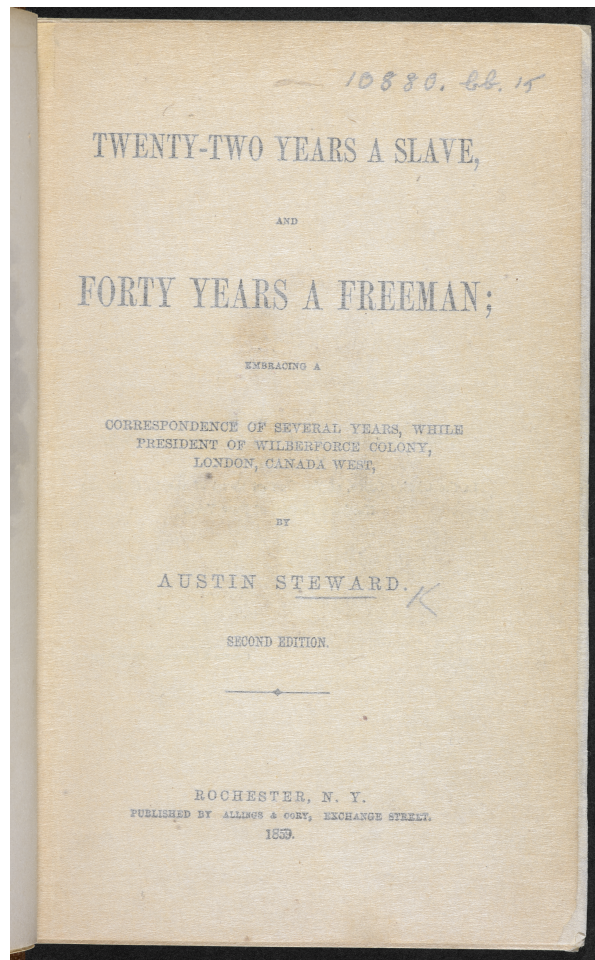


Figure 2.1: The Title Page of the Second Edition of Austin Steward's *Twenty-Two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Freeman*, British Library, shelf mark 10880.bb.15

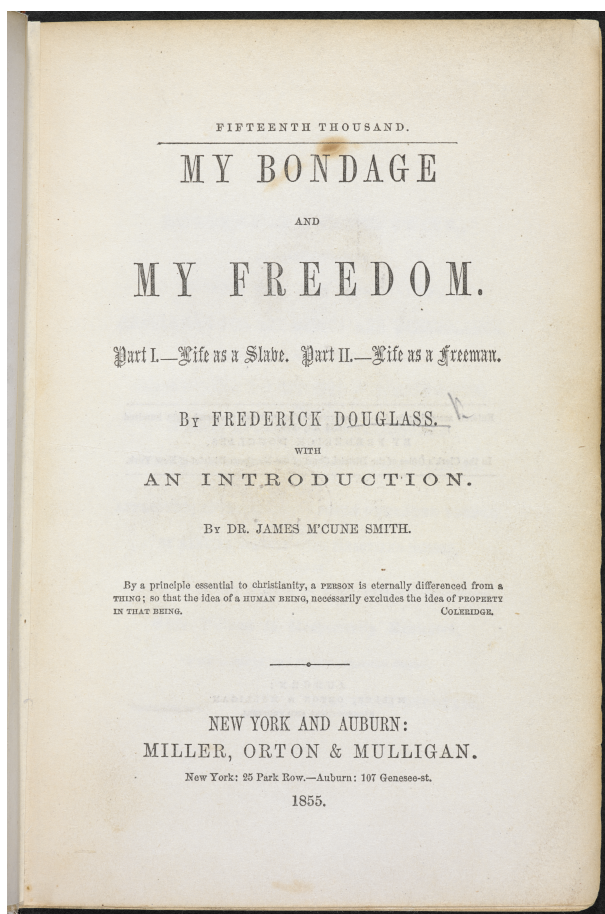


Figure 2.2: The Title Page of Frederick Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom*, British Library, shelf mark 10880.bb.9

The narratives contained in Drew's edited collection, *The Refugee*, vary in their textual treatment of Canada. The focus in this chapter will be to examine the narratives contained in Drew that tell longer narratives of life in Canada. Most of the narratives in the collection focus on narratives of slavery in the United States, and some of the narratives do not mention life in Canada at all. Charles Henry Green's narrative is several lines long and focuses on describing his experience of the violence of plantation life in Delaware, where he was a slave for twenty-three years. The narrative does not mention his experiences during the one year he has been a free man in Canada (106). In other narratives formerly enslaved people give short accounts of their arrival and life in Canada. For example, David West's narrative is mainly formed of his recollections of slavery and his antislavery polemic. In the first few paragraphs West explains his decision to escape slavery after his master died and he was suspicious he would be sent to Alabama. West recollects, 'My master died [...] I concluded to come away', and he describes how he effected his escape: 'When I left, I told my purpose to no one. I studied a plan by which I might get away and I succeeded' (99). In the next sentence he switches to the present tense to describe his arrival in Canada:

I am now in Canada doing well at my trade, and I expect to do yet better. My only trouble is about my wife and family. I never should have come away but for being forced away. (99)

This is the only comment David West makes about his life in Canada, and after this he turns to reflect on the institution of slavery in the United States. For example, he notes that southerners lie about treatment of slaves and fear likely prevents slaves from saying they want to be free. David West's narrative reads in part as abolitionist polemic as he asks: 'I want to ask the Southern people if their own consciences do not tell them it is

wrong to hold slaves, knowing that it is against the laws of God?’ (101). The emotional impetus underpinning David West’s narrative is his attack on slavery in the United States. David West is firmly presented as living in Canada within his narrative, but his experience of Canada is not prioritised in his account. In another example, Robert Belt recollects his experiences of slavery and his escape from slavery using the past tense such as, ‘I travelled’ and ‘In one place I was concealed’ (119). Belt briefly describes his experiences in Canada since his arrival: ‘I got work soon after my arrival here, which was quite recent: since I have been here, I have prospered well’.

Drew’s collection of texts also contains some stories that relate the experience of former slaves and free blacks who have accumulated property in urban environments in Canada West, but these tend to be shorter than narratives about life in the wilderness in Canada West (which I discuss below), and they focus on describing the property accumulated rather than relating the experience and process of accumulating that property. A representative example of this is the narrative of Alexander Hamilton who reached Canada in 1834. In his narrative Hamilton relates that since his arrival in Canada he ‘has made a good living’, and he has become the owner of ‘real estate in London’:

I reached Canada in 1834. I had only a dollar and a half. I had no need to beg, for I found work at once. I have done well since I came here: have made a good living and something more. I own real estate in London — three houses and several lots of land. It is a healthy country — Canada. (172)

Hamilton uses his personal success story to suggest that Canada itself is a ‘healthy country’ for the entrepreneurial and enterprising and to suggest that Canada offers prospects for black settlers to accumulate property and wealth. He gives a short

narrative account of his rags-to-riches experience of Canada after his arrival. The text emphasises Hamilton's wealth at the moment of the composition of the narrative. After the three short sentences describing his arrival as a poor man and his reflection that he has 'done well' financially in Canada, Hamilton lists the property he owns in London, which includes a number of houses and land. Hamilton's account focuses on describing the possessions he now has and not relating the process of obtaining them. In another example, Drew adds editorial commentary to the end of Aby B. Jones's narrative, describing Jones's house as having a 'well-ordered kitchen garden' and 'flowers'. He notes it is worth \$4000 and that Jones owns other property in London, Ontario and rents two stores for \$708 dollars per annum (151). Drew adds to Jones's narrative, in which Jones says he has prospered and believes that 'any colored man coming to Canada can' also 'accumulate property', with additional descriptions of his property and in particular its worth in monetary value (150). Drew's final comment that 'Mr. J. is of unmixed African blood' invites his reader to see Jones as an example of a successful black man who counters racist stereotypes of blacks' fitness for slavery (151).

Of the narratives in Drew's collection that represent the experiences of former slaves and free blacks since their arrival in Canada West, the fullest narratives are those that relate fugitive slaves' and free blacks' experiences of clearing and settling land and their experiences of living as black settlers. There are thirty narratives in Drew's collection in which fugitive slaves and free blacks depict their experiences of settling the wilderness land in Canada or in which the former slave has settled in a region in Canada West where land is the basis of their livelihood.

The process of acquiring land is given narrative space and especial focus in Drew's collection of narratives, for example, in the two narratives of Mr and Mrs John Little whose rags-to-riches story is enabled through taming the Canadian wilderness and rising the social ranks to become a middling status emigrant family. John Little's narrative is over nine thousand words and it stretches across twenty-seven pages in the 1856 edition of Drew's text.²⁰ Little's narrative opens with him recounting his experience of slavery in North Carolina, where he had multiple masters, and his escape from slavery with his wife. He describes an incident when he was denied a pass giving him permission to leave the plantation, and he details a scene in which he was whipped with the lash as a punishment and as an example to other slaves (202). Little describes his and his wife's experience of identifying, clearing, settling and reaping benefits from the land in Canada West. He recollects: 'we marched right into the wilderness, where there were thousands of acres of woods which the chain had never run round since Adam', depicting the place as ancient, spacious, remote and untouched by man (204). This conveys a sense of the Littles' energy and forcefulness through the description of them 'march[ing]' through the forest, and it draws on militaristic language to depict them as claiming the land as their own possession. Through his narrative of the development of the land, John Little describes the transformation that contact with the wilderness has on the skills and personal qualities of him and his wife. He depicts himself and his wife as brave people who do not fear wolves, as resourceful in selling their labour at first to buy seeds, and as hardworking, spending all their time clearing the land: 'We went to chopping, day and night; there was no delay' (205). The repetition

²⁰ Benjamin Drew, *A North-Side View of Slavery: The Refugee: Or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada, Related by Themselves with an Account of the History and Conditions of the Coloured Population of Upper Canada* (Boston: J. P. Jewett, 1856), pp. 198-224, and for John Little's experience in the Canadian wilderness, see especially pp. 216-219.

of 'we' and 'our hands' shows that it was a collective effort of Mr Little and his wife (205).

The two narratives by Mr and Mrs Little present an image of the opportunities for former slaves to thrive as settlers in the Canadian bush. The inclusion of both John Little's narrative and his wife's possibly reflects the popularity of Susanna Moodie's account of settling the Upper Canadian bush in the 1830s, *Roughing It in the Bush; Or, Life in Canada*. This narrative focuses on Susanna Moodie's account of living in the bush, but it also contains several chapters in which her husband John Moodie gives an account of settling in the Canadian wilds. John Little presents their experience of Canada as that of a successful settler. He gives a detailed account of the few possessions they took with them into the unsettled wilderness of Canada West and provides a dizzying list of items that they have accumulated at the time of him telling his story in 1851:

I have one hundred and fifty acres of land: one hundred and ten of it cleared, and under good cultivation: two span of horses, a yoke of oxen, ten milch cows and young cattle, twenty head of hogs, forty heads of sheep; I have two wagons, two ploughs and two drags. (206)

This is in stark contrast to their lack of possessions when they arrived in the woods fourteen years before. John Little describes the gruelling task of clearing and cultivating the land and relates that they had no cattle or horses and he bought seeds using his own labour (205). He tells his reader that he longs to encourage others in Canada West to settle in the bush:

I would like to show it to those stout, able men, who, while they may be independent here, remain in the towns as waiters, blacking boots, cleaning houses and driving coaches for men, who scarcely allow them enough for a living. To them I say, go into the backwoods of Queen Victoria's dominions, and you can secure an independent support. (206)

Little describes the men working in urban spaces as 'independent', but he also implies their dependence on others for their meagre wages. His patriotic outburst, and second-person address to black labourers working in towns in Canada West to go and settle the land, labels the Canadian 'backwoods' as British, and this creates an impression of national British/Canadian superiority. On the surface, this seems to bolster Clarke's reading that Drew's text generates a pro-British/Canadianist discourse. However, as I will explore later in this chapter, this positive view of the wilderness in Canada West appears alongside other voices that challenge this image of the Canadian wilderness as a fruitful haven for the fugitive slave.

Drew's collection of narratives draw upon the rhetoric of a white settler American dream in their depiction of the wilderness in Canada West. They collectively depict the wilderness as a space where former slaves and free blacks are able to transform themselves into independent black emigrants. They produce an image of the potential of the former slave to become an independent black yeoman farmer, and this image was one with an antislavery currency. The introduction to the Buxton section explains the origins of a black settlement founded in Buxton by Rev. William King in 1850. William King freed his own slaves and gave them land to settle in Canada. Drew notes that:

Mr King was satisfied, that, when placed in favourable circumstances, they could support themselves as well as the emigrants from Europe and would be capable of making the same progress in education. (266-67)

Drew's summary of William King's view in this passage invites a comparison between the fugitive slaves in Canada and European emigrants. It presents the former slaves in Canada as free black emigrants. Drew suggests that King compares the black formerly enslaved emigrants to white European emigrants favourably and that he sees them as equal. Throughout Drew's text, the former slaves and free blacks in Canada are labelled in a variety of ways that draw attention to their status as displaced emigrants; they are called: 'refugees', 'emigrants', 'oppressed labourers', 'exiled men', 'colored Canadians' and 'those Americans' (39, 38, 28). King's view of the former slaves echoes an American ideal of the land as an equalising space for lowly European emigrants; it suggests that the former slaves can similarly achieve wealth and improvement through the development of land.

Drew's *The Refugee* contains success stories of black fugitives settling the wilderness. Rev. William Ruth describes the land he has settled and owns. He states that he has 'fifty acres of land under fence, and had it all cleared and improved years ago' (337). Ruth makes it clear that he has 'improved' his land, and that he has cleared and settled it so it is ready for cultivation. William Ruth stresses the value of his property by underscoring that it is productive land. He emphasises the labours required to realise this valuable asset by referring to the process of clearing it of trees, placing fences around it, improving it and getting it ready for cultivation. He describes an additional seventy acres he has in New Canaan: 'It is covered with heavy timber, and has a first-rate soil', drawing from the language of contemporary land company adverts and emigration journals to position his land as brimming with potential commodities.

Nancy Kang suggests that the narratives contained in *The Refugee* do not present the familiar imagery of fugitive slaves crossing the border into Canada. She argues the narratives ‘make it difficult to register in time and place the shift from American to Canadian territory (and by extension, consciousness)’.²¹ She identifies for example the lack of bureaucracy around borders presented in the narratives.²² Although her observation about the lack of bureaucracy around the border in the narratives is correct, I do not fully agree with Kang’s thesis, however, that this reflects a ‘borderlessness’ in the texts between the US and Canada.²³ The narratives as a whole do not present imagery of crossing over into Canada, but their narration makes a border between Canada and the United States. A notable exception to the lack of focus on the border-crossing is John Little’s narrative, which describes his moment of arrival as one of liberation: ‘I took passage for Detroit, and then crossed to Windsor, in Canada. That was the first time I set my foot on free soil’ (216). Even putting this aside, fugitive slaves repeatedly mark Canada West out as something special and antithetical to the United States through exclaiming they have arrived, and this reinforces a sense of difference between life in Canada and the United States. The language used by David West, for example, to locate himself in Canada (‘I am now in Canada’) creates a sense of difference and crafts its own border through reinforcing the idea of Canada as a destination or endpoint (99). Many narratives focus heavily on accounts of enslavement and life in the United States, but then switch in tone to describe their life in Canada. Kang’s arguments reflect the North American flavour of the narratives, and her claim

²¹ Nancy Kang, “‘As if I had entered a Paradise’: Fugitive Slave Narratives and Cross-Border Literary History”, *African American Review*, 39.3 (2005), 431-57 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40033673>> [accessed 23 December 2016] (p. 445).

²² *Ibid.* (p. 444).

²³ *Ibid.*

that the narratives do not present imagery of fugitive slaves crossing the border is correct. However, the narratives also construct a strong sense of the US-Canada border.

Austin Steward's representation of the fugitive slaves and free blacks who settled at the Wilberforce colony in Canada presents them as able settlers and valuable black emigrants in their new societies. Steward argues 'the Wilberforce colony proves that the colored man can not only take care of himself, but is capable of improvement; as industrious and intelligent as themselves, when the yoke is taken off from their necks and a chance given them to exercise their abilities' (124). He presents an image of Canada as a special haven that transformed the free blacks from the United States into strong, capable emigrants: 'the air of freedom so invigorated and put new life into their weary bodies, that the white people cannot deny soon became intelligent and thrifty' (124). He uses the language of transformation to suggest that the very air and environment of Canada invigorated and improved the American black man, physically and intellectually strengthening him.

Throughout his narrative Steward presents the wilderness in Canada West and the United States as a place in which black slaves and former slaves are able to be adept emigrants. In an early part of his narrative, he presents his experience as a slave in the northern frontier land outside New York. The violent overseer is depicted as unable to survive in the frontier land. This is reflected in his return to Virginia after his authority is tested in a scene in which his violent threats are turned back on him, as he is violently beaten by one of his slaves, who is assisted by his fellow slaves. In this scene, described by Steward, an enslaved man called Williams gives the overseer 'such a flogging as slaves seldom get', grabbing the cowhide from the overseer and beating him with it,

explicitly drawing attention to the subversion of power roles taking place as he is beaten (38). This scene underscores a kind of black solidarity possible in the wilderness as the other slaves do not come to the overseers's aid despite his 'begging', and Williams is able to make his escape on a boat. Steward makes it clear that the excessive violence of the overseer will not be tolerated by the enslaved people now they are in the northern wilderness. He comments that Williams 'thought as he was no longer in Virginia, he would not submit himself to such chastisement', and the overseer returns to Virginia, 'where he could beat slaves without himself receiving a cowhiding' (ibid.) There is another instance of black solidarity and energy in the wilderness land in New York State when Steward and two other blacks jump into a boat to cross a river and slay a bear:

One day, two others and myself thought we saw some animal swimming across the bay. We got a boat and went to see what it was. After rowing for some time we came near enough to perceive it was a large bear. Those who watched us from the shore expected to see our boat upset, and all on board drowned, but it was not so to be; the bear was struck on the nose with a blow that killed him instantly, and he was hauled ashore in great triumph. (37)

The impressiveness of the slaves' success in slaying a bear 'instantly', by striking him on the nose, is exaggerated by the description of the disbelieving onlookers who watch the scene unfold from the safety of the shore, and their expectations that the slaves will not be able to slay the bear. The communal honour and bravery of the enslaved men in facing such a danger is conveyed through the simple matter of fact tone of the language 'we got a boat', and 'the bear was struck on the nose' and its contrast to the fearful and catastrophizing perspective of the onlookers. Their relaxed tone also conveys a sense of their agility and confidence. The blacks' adeptness at surviving in the wilderness and mining it for resources is in contrast to their master Mr Helm. This is reflected in the

fact that the expedition he leads to find food and supplies for his slaves ends in shipwreck and without securing provisions and that eventually a strong black has to take the helm of the ship they are travelling in and lead the mission to safety (35). This suggests that the slave master, like the overseer, cannot survive or fulfil his basic role in sustaining his workforce in the wilderness.

In Steward's narrative Mr Helm's plantation in Virginia is presented as a suffocating domestic space with a surfeit of luxury goods, such as mahogany bedsteads, silk, and damask curtains, and this creates the impression that the plantation is as a place where there is a claustrophobic overload of wealth, luxury and physical inactivity. This image of the plantation portrays Mr Helm and his family as effeminate consumers rather than as active and virile producers. This is also conveyed through the pleasurable pursuits of gambling, drinking and duelling that take place on the plantation; these dominate extended portions of the narrative and the portrayal of the southern way of life generally in the text. Mr Helm's wealth and authority are not based on his own efforts or labour but on his willingness to profit from his slaves, and this is underscored in the text when Mr Helm is low on money and his first response is to sell his slaves and to consider capturing some more. Steward associates the domestic interior of the plantation house with physical restraint by describing his still and rigid body while he was an errand boy, noting that: 'it was my duty to stand behind my master's chair, which was sometimes the whole day' (18).

The depiction of the wilderness outside New York in Steward's narrative reflects what was common in many mid-nineteenth-century narratives: the northern states of America are imagined as a place of freedom, and this is in contrast to the southern states, which

are presented as morally defunct, violent and oppressive. However, Steward's narrative goes further in its presentation of the thickly-wooded wilderness in Canada West as a space for fugitive slaves to become independent. Steward presents himself as a calm and adept settler who is able to use his physical strength, enterprise and ingenuity to protect the Wilberforce settlement from the threat of wild beasts. He shows how he is able to turn his encounters with the natural world into entrepreneurial successes. Steward relates how he caught and skinned two wolves in the wilderness of Canada West, in a chapter entitled 'Roughing it in the Wilds of Canada'. The title of this chapter is evocative of a wider genre of contemporary settler and emigration literature set in Canada about taming and surviving in the wilderness. Steward describes using his only bullet to kill a wolf and then ingeniously making a ball of wood for his rifle from a tree. This enabled him to develop an improvised shot which he could use to kill a second wolf (118-19). His detailed account describes preparing and selling the skins of the wolves for nine dollars, and this suggests the profits to be made from the resources of the natural world and underscores his entrepreneurial spirit. Steward describes how, as part of a group of several settlers, he killed a bear that was roaming the Wilberforce settlement. In the scene, Steward generates tension through exaggerating the physical threat of the bear, for example, describing his 'powerful paw' as sending his greyhound dog flying through the air (129). He demonstrates his masculine prowess and abilities as a settler by describing the skilfulness of his aim: 'the second shot killed him on the spot' and through presenting himself, out of all the other unnamed 'half a dozen' settlers who were with him, as the one to fire the shot that kills the bear.

The collection of narratives contained in Drew's *The Refugee* and Steward's slave narrative borrow from an idea intrinsic to the making of white male settler identity in

American culture in their presentation of the fugitive slaves in Canada: that the lowly emigrant can, through their own efforts in taming the wilderness, raise themselves up and become 'better Britons'. The transformative power of the wilderness to improve the emigrant has had a long tradition in emigration literature and culture. I borrow the phrase 'better Britons' from Belich's examination of the white settler society in New Zealand, during what he describes as a period of 'recolonization' in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Belich explains that the term 'better Britons' describes a facet of white settler identity: 'Recolonisation consisted partly in the conviction that Australians, Canadians and New Zealanders were Britons too - indeed, in some respects better Britons than those of the homelands'.²⁴ The idea that land is a great equaliser and a space of meritocracy has deep roots in the American psyche. In J. Hector St John Crevecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1752) a fictional farmer 'John' writes a series of twelve letters discussing the characteristics of the American people and landscape. In the third letter, J. Hector St John De Crevecoeur depicts the land as an equalising space for the new emigrant from Europe and a space for them to forge their liberty and independence. Crevecoeur's text is a foundational piece of emigration literature and an important intertext that provided a model for crafting the narratives of former slaves in Canada. Central to Crevecoeur's vision of America is that it is a space that the lowly and oppressed European emigrant can come to without money or status and have the opportunity through their own efforts to build up their social status and wealth through land ownership. Crevecoeur is careful to stipulate that the successful European emigrant must demonstrate a set of qualities: they must be 'sober [...] honest, and industrious'.²⁵ The European immigrant is described as being

²⁴ James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders, from the 1880s to the Year 2000* (Albany: Penguin Books, 2001), p. 11.

²⁵ J. Hector St John De Crevecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (London: Thomas Davis, 1782), p. 89. All subsequent references are to this edition and are given in parenthesis in the text.

‘naturalised’ and being forged as an American (‘he is now an American’) through successfully owning his own land and becoming a freeholder with a deed to his own land (78). John imagines American freeholders as experiencing a liberty that is unknown in Europe, and he imagines them saying that ‘for the first time in their lives’: “‘This is our “own grain, raised from American soil — on it we shall feed and grow fat, and convert the rest into gold and silver”” (94). American land is presented as a vehicle through which newcomers can achieve independence and a better life unencumbered by the lords, masters and princes, and their associated taxes and tithes, in Europe. The lowly European emigrant is described as having a heavy spirit and as kept in a ‘mantle’ by oppressive laws in Europe because of the system of levying rent and taxation on land. By contrast, he is depicted as being elevated and experiencing a liberation in America where he can purchase his own land. Owning land in America is presented as a way to become a free man and experience liberty: ‘From nothing to start into being; from a servant to the rank of a master; from being the slave of some despotic prince, to become a free man, invested with lands, to which every municipal blessing is annexed!’ (79-80). In the story of the European settler, Andrew, he is presented as being fearful that his rented land will be claimed by the King or the governor and he will be forced to quit it. John reassures him that this will not happen and it is all his ‘own’ (112). Andrew’s farm is depicted as an abundant utopia. This point is underscored in the text in a table of all the property he has acquired over four years of labour and its value in dollars, provided by Farmer John (118). The narratives contained in *The Refugee* and Steward’s slave narrative insert themselves into the existing discourse of white settler identity and European emigration rhetoric, and they do this to present the development and ownership of land as a uniquely liberating experience that provides a space to craft independent lives after slavery.

Yolanda Pierce provides a model for thinking through the effect of black emigrants using a discourse of white male settler identity in the slave narrative. Focusing on the slave narratives of Venture Smith and George White, Pierce examines how two genres that traditionally make white male American settler identity intersect with the slave narrative: the captivity narrative and the spiritual autobiography. Pierce argues that both black American authors use and adapt these genres to craft an African American identity, ‘revising and transforming conventional narrative forms’.²⁶ Pierce argues that such borrowing can ‘restore honour and worth to the status of “African” in early American culture’.²⁷ Drawing from Pierce’s observation, I want to suggest that, as I have been exploring in this chapter so far, Drew and Steward adopt an idea intrinsic to the making of white settler identity in American culture: that the lowly emigrant can come and through their own efforts in taming the wilderness raise themselves up and become better Americans.²⁸ They present the black fugitive slaves’ experience in Canada West through this lens, and this confers ‘honour’ and ‘worth’ on the African American subject, which fulfils an antislavery agenda.

Canada is also imagined as an exploitative space by former American slaves in the slave narrative, and I now want to turn to explore this in more detail. Drew’s *The Refugee* and Steward’s *Twenty-Two Years a Slave* do not simply offer a pro-Canadian and pro-British version of the Underground Railroad story. Drew’s collection of narratives contains Mr Little’s imperative to enjoy the riches of the Canadian wilderness, presenting Canada as a site of English liberty, but it also gives space to voices of protest that present Canada

²⁶ Yolanda Pierce, ‘Redeeming Bondage: The Captivity Narrative and the Spiritual Autobiography in the African American Slave Narrative Tradition’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*, ed. by Fisch, pp. 83-98 (p. 97).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Here, of course, I evoke Belich’s term ‘better Britons’; see Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, p. 11.

West as an exploitative space for the fugitive slave. In his introduction to the reprinted edition of Drew's *The Refugee* in 2008, George Elliott Clarke claims that many of the stories contained in Drew's collection of narratives idealise Canada as a space of liberty: 'While Drew's interlocutors detail the savagery of slavery in the Great Republic, their ancillary effect is to paint [...] Victorian Ontario, as Paradise'.²⁹ Clarke teases out depictions of Canada as an antislavery haven from Drew's collection of narratives. He reads Grose's narrative, for example, as presenting Canada as 'Eden' in his depiction of black people in Quebec and Ontario: 'keeping stores, farming etc, and doing well', and he uses a quotation from Henry Gowen's narrative that underscores his experience of racial equality in Canada: 'I am placed on an equality with him [with the white people legally]'.³⁰ Clarke suggests that Gowen's account of Canada supports a view of 'the superiority of British North America'.³¹ He draws the conclusion that the poverty and racism experienced by ex-slaves and free blacks in Canada are 'little mentioned' by the narratives.³² However, he concedes that 'there are a few records herein of anti-black or other racism in Canada West' pointing to Sophia Pooley's narrative and to some narratives that present the failure of fugitives and communities to prosper, but where this failure is blamed on the fugitives themselves.³³ In contrast, my reading of these narratives and my focus upon how narratives of settling the Canadian land present the fugitive slave experience in Canada sees them as more balanced in their depiction of Canada West. These narratives acknowledge that the fugitive slave experience in Canada West was also characterised by frustrations over land, exploitation and racial prejudice. Drew's collection of narratives and Steward's narrative include the view that

²⁹ Clarke, 'Introduction: Let Us Now Consider' (p. 10).

³⁰ *Ibid.* (p. 15).

³¹ *Ibid.* (p. 16).

³² *Ibid.* (p. 12).

³³ *Ibid.* (p. 17).

Canada and particularly the Canadian wilderness is a place of liberty for the fugitive slave, but they also present Canada West as an anti-haven and the wilderness as a site of exploitation, and this is overlooked by Clarke.

In the introduction to the Colchester section, one of the fourteen locations in Drew's collection of narratives, the Town Reeve, Peter Wright, notes that much of the cultivation of the area was done by fugitive slaves, but that 'by the time they had made a good clearing, they were obliged to go somewhere else' (330). The use of the word 'obliged' is deeply ambiguous; it implies a potential for choice on the part of the settlers, but it also suggests an unequal relationship in which they have to leave their land, and it frustrates the real explanation of the power relationships taking place on the clearings. The introduction to the Colchester section in the 1856 edition of Drew's text hints that one reason that the fugitive slaves have lost their land is because of their own ignorance about the economic contract they have bound themselves into. Drew remarks:

He pays \$12 a year interest for ten years, supposing meanwhile that he is paying up the principal. *He don't understand it*- and when the ten years have come round he has not got the \$200 and must leave his clearing.³⁴

In this original edition, '*He don't understand it*' appears in italics, but this is edited out of the modern reprint by Dundurn Press in the Voyageur Classics series, where it appears as 'He doesn't understand it' (332). The dialogized heteroglossia of the free indirect speech in the 1856 edition '*He don't understand it*' blurs Drew's voice with that of the black settler. The non-standard verb formation of 'he don't' in the 1856 edition produces a racist image of the black settler by implying a stupid, uneducated and baffled

³⁴ Benjamin Drew, *A North-Side View of Slavery: The Refugee: Or Narratives of the Fugitive Slaves in Canada* (Boston MA: J. P. Jewett & Co., 1856), British Library, shelf mark 8156.c.33, p. 369.

reaction to the loss of the land that he has been clearing and paying interest on. The original version of the text produces the image of a confused black settler who cannot understand the ‘complicated’ economic agreement he has bound himself into. However, David Grier, who describes himself as being born free but leaving the United States to remove himself from the oppressive laws in the North, is given the space to contradict the framing white narrative. He claims that black settlers were ‘obliged’ to leave the land they had cleared because whites deliberately ‘took advantage of it to get the land cleared’. Moreover, he relates his own experience that he had cleared around seventy to eighty acres and ‘got no benefit’ (335). Philip Gould has found that ‘the ‘loss’ of the fruits of one’s labour’ is what constitutes slavery in wider body of narratives so that ‘enslavement [is] understood in terms of the power one exerts over one’s labour’, although he does not consider this in the Canadian context.³⁵ Gould’s observation is helpful because it invites us to explore texts which represent gradations of the lack of power over one’s own body and the labouring body, specifically, rather than fixating on a dichotomy of slavery and freedom; this wider perspective opens up the critical categories to explore narratives like Grier’s alongside more traditional slave narratives, and this also opens up an exploration of Canada within a wider culture of the economic exploitation of people. John Francis’s narrative explains that it has been a struggle to retain his own land and that other fugitive slaves have lost their land (187-89). He describes how exploitative land agents asking for high payments forced some to sell their land cheaply, and he explains that the high repayments on loans are prohibitive and cause some settlers to lose their land. Robert Nelson, a fugitive writing from a farming

³⁵ Philip Gould, ‘The Economies of the Slave Narrative’, in *A Companion to African American Literature*, ed. by Gene Andrew Jarrett (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 90-102 (p. 98).

region in Canada West, describes the fragile hold black settlers had over their land in the role of clearers rather than owners of land:

By the time they had got it cleared and removed some of the stumps, the lease was out. Then the white man said “You can’t have that piece anymore — you must go back in the bush.” They found they must do different from this. They began to work on the land for themselves, and to get farms of their own. (334)

Nelson presents black settlers as improving the land by pouring their labour into clearing it and removing the stumps of trees, which are characterised as stubbornly being removed and then being compelled to lose the fruits of this labour by being forced off the land. This presents an image of Canadian land as a repository of one’s labour and physical exertions, and the development of land as part of a cycle of exploitation, in which fugitive slaves are kept in the low status role as clearers of the land. Nelson presents the land as a site of racial inequality and tension, as the white disembodied voice sends the black labourer off his cleared land and back into the bush (‘you must go back in the bush’). Nelson relates how the black settlers removed themselves from this pattern of exploitation by beginning to ‘work on the land for themselves’. Mary Ann Shadd’s *A Plea to Emigration to Canada West*, published in 1852, attempts to encourage black emigrants to move to Canada. In it uncleared land full of trees is described in terms of the dollars these trees will be worth once they are sold: ‘Wood land will average seventy cords to the acre, every cord of which can be readily disposed of two and two and a half dollars, cash, in the towns’.³⁶ Shadd’s text idealises Canada and presents an image of the wilderness land as yielding profits to settlers easily and with little effort, and it is silent on the exploitation and racial tension experienced in the

³⁶ Mary A. Shadd, *A Plea for Emigration: Or, Notes of Canada West, Edited, Annotated, and with an Introduction by Richard Almonte*, ed. by Richard Almonte (Toronto: Mercury Press, 1998), pp. 51-52.

wilderness land in Canada explored in some of the narratives in Drew's edited collection.

Austin Steward imaginatively links the exploitation of fugitive slaves in Canada West with slavery in the United States in his narrative. He presents the begging agents who sought funds in Britain and the United States on behalf of the black settlers of the Wilberforce colony and squandered them as being like the slaveholders who live in oppressive luxury, profiting from their exploitation of their slaves. Steward links Mrs N. Paul (the wife of the agent Nathaniel Paul, who raised funds for the Wilberforce colony in England but consumed most of the charity money raised through his expenses and pay) to Mr Helm's slave plantation in Virginia, and its oppressive luxury and exploitation. Mrs N. Paul is described as benefiting financially from the charitable donations that have been collected for the fugitive slaves in Canada. She is described as sitting in one of the land agent's homes 'sparkling', with 'a gold chain encircling her neck' and in a sumptuous interior (160). This echoes the depiction of the 'sparkling' and 'glittering' interior of the plantation, and it evokes the idea of a domestic, feminised and sedentary interior; it creates the sense that, like Steward's former masters, Mrs N. Paul grows rich from the labour of other people. Steward describes the wedding of the daughter of his former plantation master, Mr Helm, to her Virginian cousin in a scene crowded with 'glittering [...] diamonds', 'large mirrors' and 'sparkling wine', and Mrs Helm is described as 'sparkling with jewels' (39-40, 53). The slaveholders and begging agents are linked through their role as a sedentary class who grow rich from exploiting the labour of others. Steward's narrative functions partly as a personal defence and vendetta; Steward was bound up in legal proceedings with Israel Lewis (one of the land colonists involved in the Wilberforce colony) who he kills off within his narrative in a

way not dissimilar to his relation of the demise of his former owner. Steward also frames himself as a good benefactor to the blacks through recounting his own personal losses in Canada West. This is most powerfully underscored in the contrast he creates between the great number of items he brings to Canada from his home in Rochester, New York to the very few items he leaves with. His settler experience reads as an anti-settler success story, as the Canadian landscape literally consumes him and his possessions. His depiction of his loss of his possessions also functions to present him as the exact opposite of the self-interested exploiters of the fugitives. His Canadian experience is one characterised by financial loss and physical and mental exertion rather than one of profit. By presenting his experience as the president of the Wilberforce colony as a settler-narrative, Steward avoids associating himself with the controversies of misspent monies and corruption that blighted the reputation of the other organisers of the Wilberforce settlement.

Steward describes the exploitation of the fugitive slaves in Upper Canada in his narrative. He relates that Israel Lewis sold land to the black settlers and refused to give deeds or 'renumeration for their improvements'; Steward explains that the fugitive settlers 'could get no deed and were obliged to lose all their labour' (166). He details that the land agents promised to pay 'the squatter for his improvements if they would leave their farms'. In a fictionalised fantasy story-within-a-story told by Steward, a displaced black settler, William Smith, confronts a land agent, Mr Longworth, and gets his money back. In this narrative Steward presents an individual black settler as having his victory over an oppressive land agent. In this comedic scene that dominates the first half of Chapter Thirty-Two, the fugitive William Smith (for whom sympathy is elicited through a description of his poor family) confronts a land agent and demands payment

from him. Smith waits for his money from the land agent but keeps being evaded by him, and so he follows the land agents to a hotel where Mr Longworth, one of the land agents, comes out. Mr Longworth tells the ‘squatter’/settler Smith that he cannot have money for ‘his improvements’ to the land ‘of course not, —he really could not expect; certainly not, &c.’ in a pompous and evasive voice. The land agent is described as being physically fat with a large “bread basket!” and an English gentleman and a ‘lordly agent’ (167). Smith shames the agent in an act of public humiliation when he charges at his over-stuffed stomach. He is described as charging into the land agent, ‘[he] stepped back, threw down his woolly head, and in goat fashion, let it drive into the Englishman’s “bread basket!”’, and following this he is paid in full for the labour he has put into developing his land. The scene takes place in a hotel and the hotel landlord, servants and boarders are described as ‘spectators’. Steward suggests that class frictions stir the land agent to pay the ‘squatter’ and hints that the land agent feels threatened by the prospect of a rowdy mob of lower status characters. The English ‘lordly agent’ is described as wanting to ‘avoid’ the jeers of the spectators, and it is suggested that the land agent only pays the ‘squatter’ because he is frightened by the public nature of the confrontation. In the scene, it is hinted that class tensions fuel the anger of the crowd that surround the land agent. This highlights the cowardly nature of the land colonist and also underscores that it is fear for his safety that motivates him to pay William Smith and not an attachment to higher moral values and a sense of decency. Steward’s enjoyment in telling this story is communicated through his exclamatory tone, and this invites the reader to find the story amusing. He invites the reader to take pleasure in the reimbursement Smith receives and the manner in which he secures this. This is reflected in his closing lines of the chapter: ‘That was the way the land agent paid the squatter’ (168), which invites the reader to read this as the moral of the story. Like Mrs

N. Paul, Mr Longworth is depicted as English. The narrative contains several exploitative characters that are English and middle class and purportedly genteel. These characters exploit the less fortunate for their own financial benefit. This unsettles any sense of an 'anti-American' tone in Steward's narrative and implies a link between the slaveholders and some of the English elite. Clarke suggests Drew's narrative 'is as much anti-American as it is anti-slavery', but this argument does not stand up well if we apply it here when examining these exploitative English characters.³⁷ The semantic links Steward crafts between the two spaces of Canada West and the South present a broader geography of exploitation not so easily confined to national borders.

Steward describes his experiences in Upper Canada in the 1830s in similar terms to those of the black settlers who have been exploited, but he uses the wilderness land to craft a very different narrative for himself than that of the wider black community of settlers he depicts. Steward uses his loss of land and experience of exploitation as a metaphor for his failed charitable efforts to help the black settlers of the Wilberforce settlement. His account is primarily a middle-class narrative about the failure of his charitable efforts to help the free blacks in Upper Canada, and he presents his experience of loss in Upper Canada (of money and his reputation) as because he has been betrayed by his social equal Israel Lewis. Steward constructs a middle-class narrative that does not present him as being exploited in Canada through a desire to own land, but presents his philanthropic efforts to support black former slaves in Canada as a failed settler dream that presents thriving in the Canadian bush itself as unachievable. Steward gives an account of the loss of his own land, but this reads less as an account of his exploitation by a land agent than by the underhand dealings of his colleague and

³⁷ Clarke, 'Introduction: Let Us Now Consider' (p. 13).

friend Israel Lewis. Steward relates the cost of removing trees from his land to clear it, and he explains his assumption that he legally owned the land, in a way that is reminiscent of the exploited settlers in Drew and his own text:

I commenced laboring on the wild land I had purchased, cleared some ten acres, which in consequence of it being so heavily timbered cost me at least twenty — five dollars per acre; built a house and a barn — supposing myself its legal possessor. (188)

This contrasts with Shadd's description of wooded land and trees in Canada West as a financial boon. In contrast to the emigration tract, Steward details the hard labour required to make profit from the land rather than 'carefully concealing the toil and hardship to be endured in order to secure these advantages', a criticism Susanna Moodie made of contemporary emigrant guides.³⁸ Steward relates how Lewis sold him the land but then did not inform Steward when he received the money back from the original owner, Mr Ingersoll, who had sold the land to somebody else. Steward's description of his loss of land is part of a wider discussion of the betrayal of his supposed friend and colleague. Steward describes facing trial because Lewis has accused him of stealing a promissory note. Steward's description of his friends' encouragement to leave Canada whilst he was awaiting trial describes his philanthropic labours in terms of land that he has exerted his energies into and received no benefit from in return:

I was advised by different persons to flee from the country, which I had laboured so hard and so conscientiously to benefit, and received in return nothing but distraction and slander. (144)

³⁸ Susanna Moodie, *Roughing It in the Bush*, ed. by Michael A. Peterman (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), p. 10. All subsequent citations refer to this edition and will be referenced in parenthesis in the text.

In the extract Steward imagines this loss in terms of receiving no benefit from his efforts and as something that has wasted his time and exposed his reputation to disrepute. In the narrative, Steward is betrayed by his social equals, including Nathaniel Paul who squanders the money he helps raise for the free black settlers in England and Israel Lewis; Steward is betrayed by the same men that he depicts as the sedentary class of exploitative men and women that profit from the labour of others. Steward's description of Canada West as a hard wilderness unwilling to offer up its fruits posits it as a space for the failure of a middle-class code of Christian brotherhood.

Steward draws upon the conventions of the white female settler narrative to tell his story of losing his wealth in Canada West and his return to Rochester in the United States. More specifically, Steward appropriates Susanna Moodie's narrative of her experience of failed settlements in the Upper Canadian bush in the 1830s, *Roughing It in the Bush; Or, Life in Canada*, to tell his story of failed middle-class philanthropy on behalf of these black settlers. The evidence for her influence is that, firstly, the title of her bestselling work is appropriated in Chapter Twenty-One entitled 'Roughing It in the Wilds of Canada'. Secondly, the structural form of the portion of his narrative set in Canada (Chapters Nineteen to Thirty-Four) closely resembles Moodie's narrative. These chapters are made up of short sketches of exciting incidents, such as meeting First Nations people and encountering dangerous wild beasts, and Steward embeds the narratives of those he meets into his narrative, in a third-person voice, both of which have been identified as the structural basis of Moodie's own narrative.³⁹

³⁹ Michael A. Peterman, 'Introduction', in Susanna Moodie, *Roughing It in the Bush*, ed. by Michael A. Peterman (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), pp.vii-xvii (p. xiii).

Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* was an instant 'best seller in Britain and the United States' when it was first published in 1852.⁴⁰ Her narrative is part of the oeuvre of Canadian female settler guides. As Carole Gerson notes, there was a gendered bias in such accounts of Canada, and whereas immigration tracts and accounts of exploration tended to be authored by men, the published 'literature of settlement' tended to be written by women.⁴¹ Moodie's narrative had a different tone to that of contemporaneous female settler guides. As Gerson notes, the narrator of Susanna's sister Catherine Parr Traill's *The Backwoods of Canada*, published in 1836, has a 'sunny temperament', and this 'contrasts sharply with the often regretful and emotional narrative of Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush*'.⁴² Gerson explains that Catherine Parr Traill writes from the perspective of a woman still living in the bush at the close of her narrative, whilst in contrast Susanna Moodie speaks 'through the sagacity of hindsight' as one who has left the bush twenty years before when she came to pen her narrative.⁴³ The ultimate message of Moodie's narrative, as others have noted, is that the middle-class emigrant cannot survive in the Canadian bush from labouring the land, and the Canadian wilderness is better suited to working-class labourers.⁴⁴ This can be seen in the closing lines of the second volume where Moodie presents the thesis underpinning her whole narrative and attempts to deter genteel families from emigration to the Canadian wilderness:

⁴⁰ Ibid. (p. vii).

⁴¹ Carole Gerson, 'Literature of Settlement', in *The Cambridge History of Canadian Literature*, ed. by Coral Ann Howells and Eva-Marie Kroller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 87-103 (p. 87).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid. (p. 94, p. 103).

⁴⁴ As others have noted, for example D. M. R. Bentley, 'Breaking the "Cake of Custom": The Atlantic Crossing as a Rubicon for Female Emigrants to Canada?', in Susanna Moodie, *Roughing It in the Bush*, ed. by Michael A. Peterman (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), pp. 442-72 (p. 466).

If these sketches should prove the means of deterring one family from sinking their property, and shipwrecking all their hopes by going to reside in the backwoods of Canada, I shall consider myself amply repaid for revealing the secrets of the prison-house; and feel that I have not toiled and suffered in the wilderness in vain. (330)

In her narrative, Moodie shows that even with an approach of middle-class thrift, industry and godliness her family are unable to live as successful settlers in the Canadian wilderness. Bush life is presented as consuming the resources they have brought with them to Upper Canada as emigrants from Britain. Her crockery is broken on the journey to their second bush farm (180). They are forced to sell the clothes they have brought with them across the Atlantic to survive (243). The second farm at the Douro township is presented as ‘scarcely fe[e]d[ing]’ Moodie and her young family, and they rely on John Moodie’s wages from the militia to pay for their experience of the bush (285-86). Susanna makes this explicit in her assertion that without his wages they would ‘plunge [...] into poverty’. Despite Susanna’s ‘Crusoe-like’ efforts sowing and reaping a wealth of foodstuffs from her garden, making small paintings of ‘birds and butterflies’ on large mushrooms that she sells back in Britain, and acquiring a commission to write and sitting up late into the night with her pen, she is unable to make her bush experience sustain the life of the Moodie family (283, 281).⁴⁵

The internal evidence of Moodie’s narrative suggests that the generic intertextuality and influence between it and the slave narrative does not just move one way. The Canadian female settler narrative was also shaped by the slave narrative. George Elliott Clarke has suggested that Moodie’s narrative can be read ‘as a displaced ‘slave narrative’ of a

⁴⁵ The term ‘Crusoe-like’ is used by David Stouck; see “‘Secrets of the Prison-House’: Mrs Moodie and the Canadian Imagination”, in Susanna Moodie, *Roughing It in the Bush*, ed. by Michael A. Peterman (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), pp. 425-33 (p. 425).

genteel, pioneer English woman, toiling in the bush country of Upper Canada'.⁴⁶ The internal evidence from Moodie's narrative suggests she borrows from the conventions of the slave narrative to construct her account of her experience of the Canadian wilds. This is suggested in her description of the Upper Canadian wilderness as a 'prison-house' and her narrative as revealing its 'secrets', which evokes the convention within the slave narrative genre for giving first-hand insights into slavery in the South (330). Moodie had already transcribed two slave narratives by Ashton Warner and Mary Prince by the time she penned *Roughing It*, prior to her marriage and under her maiden name Susanna Strickland. Moira Ferguson describes Moodie as the transcriber of Mary Prince's narrative, and she notes that Moodie transcribed the text whilst she was a guest in the house of the Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society in London, Thomas Pringle, between 1829-1830, whilst Prince was his domestic servant.⁴⁷ The term prison-house was used to describe the slaveholding South. For example, the description is used in the introduction to Drew's collection of narratives 'Many, in spite of opposition, in the face of torture and death, will seek asylum in foreign lands, and reveal to the ears of pitying indignation, the secrets of the prisonhouse' (29). Moodie positions herself using the rhetoric of a fugitive slave whose place of suffering is the Canadian wilderness rather than southern slavery. It reflects a bleeding of intertextual discourse between the genres of Canadian female settler literature and the slave narrative and that this influence could move both ways.

The key thematic similarity between Moodie's *Roughing It* and Austin Steward's narrative of his post-slavery life in Canada is that both tell a story of failed settlement of

⁴⁶ Clarke, "'This is no hearsay'" (p. 13).

⁴⁷ Moira Ferguson, 'Introduction', in *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave, Related By Herself*, ed. by Moira Ferguson (London: Pandora, 1987), pp. 1-33 (p. 10).

the Upper Canadian bush from a middle-class emigrant perspective. Through writing his experience of bush life in Canada by appropriating and revising Moodie, Steward is able to write his own experiences into print and produce a narrative of the experiences of fugitive slaves in Canada within a genre which had no precedents for representing the life of former slaves in Canada West before the 1850s. Steward appropriates Moodie's narrative of not thriving in the bush and of the inability for a genteel family to survive there to tell the story of the failure of the Wilberforce settlement and his philanthropic efforts to help the fugitive slaves in Canada. He frames his experience of Canada not as ineptness, idleness or drunkenness but as the failure of a genteel family to survive in the bush. Steward uses this to craft his personal defence of himself. He describes the return of his family to Rochester in the United States following the 'disappointments' and 'difficulties' they have met with in Canada. He depicts his family 'rejoic[ing]' at the prospect of returning home. Steward explains that they 'had experienced little less than care, labour and sorrow' in Canada (162). He contrasts the possessions they had with them while travelling to Canada and when leaving Canada, five years later:

I made preparation to take my family to Port Stanley, forty miles distant. But what a contrast was there between our leaving Rochester, five years before, and our removing from the colony! Then, we had five two-horse wagon loads of goods and furniture, and seven in family; now, our possessions were only a few articles, in a *one-horse wagon*, with an addition of two members to our household! (163-64)

Steward's narrative does not end like Moodie's with her leaving the wilderness and moving to the town of Belleville in Upper Canada, where she experiences a more comfortable life, and her husband earns money from a colonial office. Steward revises the conventions of Moodie's settler narrative by presenting his family's, and later in the narrative his own, return to the United States. Steward does not just leave the

backwoods: he leaves Upper Canada altogether and returns to the United States. The return of Steward's wife and family in a wagon to Rochester in the United States reproduces the image of the unsuccessful gentleman/gentlewoman settler of Moodie's female settler narrative. Steward presents his attempts to help the black emigrants, who made up the population of the free black colony of Wilberforce, as making him financially indebted and leading to his incarceration on account of a debt for a grist mill in clearing land and developing the colony. Steward depicts himself as having to borrow money from his Rochester bank account to pay for his duties on behalf of the Wilberforce colony.

Steward adopts and expands on Moodie's narrative of life in the Canadian wilderness. He pushes the boundaries of her account in several ways to write his own story of the exploited black emigrants in Canada and his attempts to help them. In *Roughing It* Moodie depicts the decision to emigrate to Canada as made by her husband after he attended a talk about the 'advantages' of emigrating to Canada, delivered by William Cattermole, the author of the emigration tract *Emigration: The Advantages of Emigration to Canada in Britain*, published in 1831 (48). They are drawn by financial motives and economic need. In Steward's narrative his motivation is different. Steward is similarly in charge, as the male head of his family, of the decision to take his family to Canada. However, he is not drawn by descriptions of its financial advantages but by Israel Lewis's account of the destitute nature of two thousand free blacks from the United States living in poverty in Canada. Steward recalls that he was 'affected deeply' by Israel Lewis's description of the persecuted black people in Cincinnati, Ohio who settled in Upper Canada: 'eleven hundred persons were then in the dense woods of Canada in a state of actual starvation' (109). Like the emigrant guides that artificially

inflated the profits settlers could expect to obtain from wilderness land in Canada, Lewis's description of the black settlers exaggerates the number of black settlers living in Canada, as the actual figure was a few hundred persons (109, editorial note). Steward makes plans to travel to Upper Canada to help the black settlers and perform his Christian duty to God. This is reflected in his description that he decides to travel to Canada to 'try to do some good; to be of some little service in the great cause of humanity' (110). If Moodie's thesis is that the middle-class emigrant cannot survive in the Canadian bush and that it is more suited to the labouring classes, Steward's is a story of his personal disillusionment with Canada and a vindication of his personal attempt to help the 'destitute' black emigrants in Canada. It also suggests that he leaves because he cannot be a successful middle-class philanthropist for the blacks in Canada.

Moodie's narrative presents American squatters and Canadian land jobbers as dangerously exploiting and 'robbing' the genteel British emigrant of their imported resources. Steward plays with these national stereotypes to present the fugitive slaves and free blacks in Canada and his own genteel person as in danger of being exploited by English land colonists and exploitative American benefactors. By contrast he generates sympathy for the figure of the squatter in his text. In Moodie's narrative, she depicts the Yankee squatters as repeatedly borrowing her domestic items, such as rum, tea and a bake-kettle for baking bread without returning them. For example, Moodie describes the frequent visits from her American 'neighbour' Betty Fye: 'She borrowed everything that she could think of, without once dreaming of restitution' (68). Moodie describes Betty Fye as treating her house like a town store placing 'a very large order upon my goods and chattels' on each visit. Moodie describes her neighbours' excessive borrowing as a 'system of robbery' and tells Betty Fye that it is causing her family 'ruinous

expense' (67). John Moodie depicts Canadian land jobbers as preying on British emigrants and tricking them out of their imported money by getting them to purchase cheap and worthless land. In the chapter 'The Land Jobber' John Moodie describes wealthy immigrants in Canada as being viewed by 'the North Americans' as 'a well-fledged goose who has come to America to be plucked' (160). In his narrative, Steward alters this presentation of the genteel British emigrant being tricked out of their money by the 'North Americans'. The Yankee squatters and Canadian land jobbers of Moodie's narrative are replaced in Steward's narrative by exploitative American benefactors who squander the charity money they raise on behalf of the fugitive slave and black settlers living at the Wilberforce colony and by British land agents who trick the yankee 'squatters' out of the money they are entitled to in payment for their labours, which have improved the land and made it more valuable. Steward's use of the term 'squatter' to refer to the fugitive slaves like William Smith who were forced to leave their land differs markedly from Moodie's. For Moodie the 'squatter' epitomises the dangers of American habits of borrowing from the wealth of others, but Steward presents his fugitive 'Yankee' squatter, William Smith, as a working-class hero who has been labeled a 'squatter' by an exploitative system that denies him payment for his labours.⁴⁸

The juxtaposition of Steward as a failed settler leaving Upper Canada with fewer goods than he arrived with and the image of him as demonstrating his masculine prowess as an able settler elsewhere in his narrative reinforces the sense that Steward's decision to leave Canada is not based on his own failings or his inability to thrive outside of a system of enslavement, but in the man-made corruption he has encountered in Canada. Mary Ann Shadd links the success of black emigrants to their own efforts and energies

⁴⁸ For a discussion of the use of squatting in American Anti-Rent movements, see Barbara Foley, 'From Wall Street to Astor Place: Historicizing Melville's "Bartleby"', *American Literature*, 72.1 (2000), 87-116 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1215/00029831-72-1-87>> (p. 95).

in her suggestion that Canada is a fertile haven and that black emigrants are able to thrive in the wilderness if they deploy a little skill and energy: ‘I firmly believe that with an axe and a little energy, an independent position would result in a short period’.⁴⁹ Steward appropriates Moodie to craft an alternative narrative of a middle-class black man who chooses to leave Canada because he does not thrive in his philanthropic labours rather than because of his own personal failings or lack of energy and effort in Upper Canada.

The Life of Isaac Mason

In the third section of this chapter I want to look back on the tradition of presenting Canada as an exploitative space and anti-haven within the slave narrative genre. In order to do this I turn to examine the way Canada West is presented in Isaac Mason’s slave narrative, the *Life of Isaac Mason as a Slave*, published in Worcester in the United States in 1893. I argue that the imaginative construction of Canada West as an exploitative anti-haven in Isaac Mason’s slave narrative does not represent an anomaly in the slave narrative genre but the culmination of a tradition in the slave narrative that begins in Drew’s and Steward’s narratives of the mid-1850s. I argue this reflects the simultaneous tradition in the slave narrative for presenting Canada as an idealised antislavery haven and as a less idealised space that bound fugitives into new kinds of exploitation and enslavement. This narrative’s depiction of Canada as consuming the resources of the fugitive slave (both his possessions and his labour) and providing him no wages in return reflects that Mason was drawing on a tradition in the slave narrative for presenting Canada as not living up to the Canadian dream of an antislavery haven.

⁴⁹ Shadd, *A Plea for Emigration*, p. 52.

Mason describes his experience in Canada West and Canada East in 1851 as part of his wider narrative that relates his experiences as a slave, his escape from slavery and his life as a free man. Mason depicts his time in Canada negatively, presenting it as a place he arrives in because he is warned that Worcester in the United States was no longer safe (after the passage of the second fugitive slave law in 1850, which made it far easier to recapture fugitives in the free North) but later leaves to return to the United States. Mason presents his brief experience in Canada in 1851 using the imagery of a failed settler whose financial resources are sucked out of him. Like the images in Moodie and Steward that present the settler experience as consuming the monetary reserves of the new emigrant in the bush, Mason relates how misfortune and treachery require him to spend money in Canada West rather than accumulate it. Mason describes his experience of trying to create wealth in Canada through taking on several paid positions as a spiralling descent into poverty that results each time in him losing some of the resources he brought into Canada. Initially Mason presents the struggle to find labour in Montreal, Kingston on the Lake, and Toronto. He depicts the cities as akin to the stubborn trees in Moodie's narrative refusing to give up their wealth. Mason describes arriving in Montreal by train from Worcester and its streets filled with snow: 'The snow was packed up so high in the streets that pedestrians could not see each other from opposite sidewalks'.⁵⁰ He describes his frustration of finding work in Montreal: 'Montreal was not the place to welcome the laboring man when a stranger' and, next, his fruitless attempt to find work in Kingston where the 'prospects of work [...] were] far worse than Montreal'. This description of travelling from place to place and not being able to find

⁵⁰ Isaac Mason, 'Life of Isaac Mason As A Slave', in *From Bondage to Belonging: The Worcester Slave Narratives*, ed. by B. Eugene McCarthy and Thomas L. Doughton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), pp. 245-85 (p. 274). All further references are to this edition and are given in parenthesis after quotations in the text.

work is presented through Mason's description as a sort of failure of Christian charity in Canada as he seeks succour, but each time is denied it. Mason finds his first employment in Canada in Toronto, helping to move a house. He describes how the house they were transporting strained on the ropes holding it and fell down a hill and 'collapsed into pieces' and how the contractor employing Mason was sued for damages by the house's owner and unable to pay his labourers: 'we unfortunates got nothing for our work and were in debt for board to the amount of six dollars, and nothing to pay for it' (275). The image of his clothes, including his 'wedding suit', which cost fifty dollars, and a 'valuable pair of boots' being taken as insurance on his debt to the inn, reflect the imagery of the genteel settler in Canada West having to pay for their experience in Canada from resources they have brought into the country (275). Mason describes his second role in Canada as a labourer chopping down trees in Queen's Bush. Mason depicts his labours as an entrepreneurial effort to make money. As he relates in his narrative, he was offered fifty cents a cord (275). He describes how, 'we went into the woods, cut down some logs and put up a log house', and this reads very differently to John Little's depiction of marching into the wilderness, which is associated with crafting an independent living. Mason's energies are depicted not as being used not to develop land of his own, but in working for another and trying to raise enough money to buy back his clothes. His depiction of labouring in the woods does not contain the optimism of the Littles' narratives. Mason depicts the wilderness as a place in which he experiences exploitation and is not paid what he is promised. As he relates, he should have been paid thirty-five dollars at the end of the first week, but each labourer, including Mason, was only paid fifty cents per person: 'But instead of receiving that amount we only got fifty cents a piece; yes that was all we got' (276). Mason's tone here reads as quite colloquial, with the insertion of 'yes' in the second clause of the sentence.

The effect of placing ‘yes’ before his last few words is that it communicates Mason’s frustration, but it also presents him anticipating an imagined reader whose reaction will be one of shock or disgust. Mason is tricked into working for an additional week and paid nothing for his labour. Mason underscores the physical exertions he made during this week, alongside his fellow labourers: ‘On went the days and up and down went our toiling hands cutting, splitting and stacking’ (276). This emphasises the injustice and loss of his not being paid for these repetitive and hard exertions. Mason finds out that the man employing him was not the owner of the land, but had been ‘hired’ by the owner to cut down the wood and deliver it. Mason approaches the owner of the land, but the owner absolves himself of responsibility for paying him saying that he will not be able to pay them what he has already paid the agent who hired them: ‘He told me if my companions and myself would go back to work chopping wood, he himself would see us paid, but we would have to be the losers of what he had already paid the agent’. Here the owner asks the labourers to go back to the woods and labour for him but not receive the money they are due and to trust that he will pay for the next lot of work done. The text does not make it absolutely clear if the owner will exploit the labourers, but Mason refuses to labour for him again: ‘Disgust and discouragement prevented me from labouring for a man who cheated me out of my just due’ (276). The man Mason blames could be either the owner of the land or the agent he hired to clear it of wood, but it is not made clear. Through the presentation of the untrustworthy figures of the land owner and the agent and Mason’s account of his experience of labouring for wages which are significantly less than those agreed upon, Mason presents his experience of labouring in the wilderness as theft that has ‘rob[ed]’ him of ‘strength and labor’ (276).

Mason writes to a friend in Worcester to ask for money so he can return to the United States. He is sent six dollars from Worcester, and he uses this to pay off his debt to the inn that was caused by not being paid for first job moving the house, and he gets his clothes back. Like the depiction of the Moodies having their clothes imported as gifts from the mother country, it is the charity and friendship of a friend in Worcester that pays for Mason's experience of Canada by sending him six dollars. Mason uses this to buy back his clothes and pay for his trip home. Like the image of Steward's family returning homeward to the United States, the image of Mason conjured for the reader is a black fugitive slave returning to Worcester, Massachusetts depleted, without wages, 'rob[bed] of strength and labour' and just able to buy back his possessions with borrowed money. The image of Mason only just recouping the possessions he had on his arrival in Canada at the time of his departure and being indebted by six dollars presents him as paying financially for his experience of Canada. It presents Canada as a place where it is hard to find work and where taking up this work leaves labourers vulnerable and open to exploitation. Mason's depiction of Canada West is the culmination of a tradition within the slave narrative genre of presenting it as an exploitative space for the fugitive slave, which begins with Steward and to a lesser degree Drew's collection of narratives in the 1850s.

In the *Life of Isaac Mason* Isaac Mason 'locate[s]' himself in multiple locations. He tells the story of his life, which began with his enslavement in Kent County, Maryland and sees him escape as a fugitive slave to Pennsylvania and Worcester, Massachusetts and later to Canada West. Mason relates that he went to Haiti to experience the life of a black emigrant there, but chose to return to Worcester, Massachusetts. The theme of migration is strong in his narrative as he recounts his experience of bush life in Canada

West and emigration in Haiti. Rhondda Robinson Thomas suggests it is fruitful to pay attention to the multiple locales ‘in which authors locate themselves’ in slave narratives. She draws attention to the theme of migration in the slave narrative genre:

Locating them within a specific geographic space draws attention to the distinct experiences associated with a particular place but may diminish the importance of multiple spaces within the narratives in which authors locate themselves.⁵¹

Mason presents his emigrations to Canada and Haiti unfavourably, and he presents a negative image of the prospects of migration to these places. He depicts Worcester as the home he keeps returning to. His narrative, first published in 1893, ends in 1860 with Mason’s return to Worcester from Haiti. The narrative opens situating Mason in Worcester, as reflected by the fact that the white framing letter is signed off from Worcester. This produces the sense that Mason lives for thirty-three years between the last part of his life documented in the narrative and the time of penning his narrative in Worcester. This is reinforced by Mason’s claim that at the time of writing he has lived for forty-three years in Worcester (280). His narrative ends with Mason telling the reader he will probably live in Worcester until he dies. Mason creates a greater sense of the continuity of place within his narrative by presenting Worcester as his adopted ‘home’ and the locale he repeatedly returns to. He depicts the many locales that are a part of his life story and produces a sense of stability in the face of these migrations in his presentation of Worcester.

⁵¹ Rhondda Robinson Thomas, ‘Locating Slave Narratives’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the African American Slave Narrative*, ed. by Ernest, pp. 328-43 (pp. 328-29).

Mason locates his experience of the transition from slavery to freedom at the moment he crosses the state border between Wilmington, Delaware and Pennsylvania. This replaces Canada West with a free state in the United States as the north star for the fugitive slave. He depicts the moment he steps into Pennsylvania as a moment of liberation reminiscent of the literary portrayal of the moment of arrival in Canada:

No words can depict the joy and gratitude that filled the bosom of one who had, as it were — not rather as it actually was — stepped from bondage into liberty, and from darkness into light. (267)

The presentation of Pennsylvania in this way unsettles the notion that Canada is presented as a uniquely liberating space in the slave narrative at the moment that the fugitive slave crosses the US-Canada border. It challenges George Elliott Clarke's claim that slave narratives produce an exceptional patriotic pro-British discourse as slaves cross into Canada by showing that this celebratory discourse was not uniquely associated with Canada in the slave narrative. It suggests that the idealised portrayal of Canada West as the fugitive slave crosses over the border from the United States into Canada West needs to be interpreted within a broader context of the representation of other liberating spaces for the slave in the slave narrative genre, such as the free northern states of America.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the cover of a recent edition of Austin Steward's 1857 slave narrative, published in 2004, reverses the emphasis given on the original title page upon the text being about Steward's life as a freeman by placing 'Twenty-Two Years a Slave' in the largest type and making 'Forty Years a Free Man' much smaller. This invites the modern

reader to approach this text as a narrative of Steward's experiences of slavery rather than see his narrative as an attempt to present his life as a freeman. This has implications for how modern readers may approach the narrative in which Steward recounts his life in Canada because it suggests that these parts of the narrative are less important than the chapters that depict Steward's life in slavery. It gives less emphasis to what I have been exploring in this chapter, which is how slave narratives in the 1850s began to craft 'narratives of freedom' for former slaves in Canada West, whereas previously they had presented Canada as a point of arrival in 'moments of freedom'. Canada reads differently in these narratives after fugitive slaves cross the border as a less idealised space. In Steward's narrative and in many of the narratives contained in Drew's text, Canada is presented as a more problematic space than its popular image as an antislavery haven today suggests; it has exploitative land agents and the corrupt benefactors of the Wilberforce settlement who grew rich from the proceeds of others. Steward clearly suggests a link between Canada West and the United States in his presentation of men and women prepared to exploit the labouring classes and grow rich from the labour of others in both places. His narrative shows that there are narrative precedents from the antebellum period for writing a very different and personal experience of Canada, and these could contest a one-dimensional image of Canada as a haven for the American fugitive slave. While Steward penned his own narrative, Drew's text is a collection of narratives presented through his mediating presence as the amanuensis and editor of the stories. His collection is a middle-class text that enshrines middle-class values. Drew's intrusions in the text only reflect the editorial role he wants his readers to see, and this leaves Drew's far greater role in shaping the texts as an interviewer and editor unseen. However, Drew's text does capture a range of voices and types of experience, and he does not excise unflattering imagery of Canada or the angry

accounts of fugitives who felt they had been exploited. His text contains very positive statements describing Canada as a place of liberty and criticising slavery in the United States, but overall it does not amount to Clarke's claim that it is a piece of 'anti-American [...] propaganda'.⁵² In fact, the text attempts to place the United States and Canada West under the microscope. Canada West is presented in the collection of narratives edited by Drew as both a place of refuge and as a challenging new abode. Drawing on emigration rhetoric, slave narratives depict wilderness land in Canada West as a place for former slaves to forge their freedom and independence from slavery, especially through settling the land, but they also present Canada as part of a exploitation narrative that challenges the idea of a strong US-Canada border. The experiences of exploited black emigrant labourers in Canada and accounts of life in slavery in the United States were linked textually in slave narratives by both being depicted as losing one's labour at the hands of an exploitative class of landed gentry of slaveowners and land agents. Mason's depiction of Canada as an exploitative capitalist space draws from earlier textual traditions; his text shows that, rather than the slave narrative producing a celebratory image of Canada as an antislavery haven for the American fugitive slave, there was an alternative tradition of presenting Canada as an anti-haven in the slave narrative. Mason's repetition of the representation of Canada as an anti-haven narrative in the late nineteenth century reflects that contemporaries recognised this aspect of earlier slave narratives. This chapter has shown that looking at what happens to enslaved people after their arrival in Canada in slave narratives offers a more complicated account of Canada as an idealised antislavery haven than when the focus is placed on the moment that they cross the border, and it has argued that the

⁵² Clarke, 'Introduction: Let Us Now Consider' (p. 14).

presentation of Canada West in the slave narrative after 1850 challenges the idea of a strong US-Canada border.

Chapter Three

The Recirculation of an American Slave Narrative in Canada: Thomas Jones's Slave Narrative, *The Experience of Thomas Jones*, and Two Religious Newspapers in Nova Scotia 1851-1853

In Chapter One I examined how slavery in Canada and the wider Americas is depicted in Canadian newspapers, and in Chapter Two I discussed how Canada is textually depicted in slave narratives by former slaves from the United States. In this chapter I examine what evidence there is for how Canadian readers were directed to read slave narratives by former American slaves in Canada. Critics have recently argued that slave narratives are part of the Canadian literary canon, including them in anthologies and surveys of Canadian literature.¹ George Elliott Clarke identifies Canadian slave narratives as slave narratives by former American slaves ‘written or spoken and transcribed — and sometimes published — in Canada’.² There is a tendency in these studies, however, for scholars to produce bibliographic lists and surveys of slave narratives that pull these texts out of context and to focus on book-length slave narratives rather than narratives in newspapers.³ In this chapter I am going to put a single slave narrative written by Thomas H. Jones that was printed and circulated in Canada back into its original context by examining the ‘threshold’ of the newspaper where readers first approached this text.⁴ In particular I am going to examine the

¹ Clarke, “‘This is no hearsay’” (p. 11); Siemerling, *The Black Atlantic Reconsidered*, p. 63, p. 66. For an earlier anthology that includes slave narratives, see *Fire on the Water: An Anthology of Black Nova Scotia Writing*, ed. by George Elliott Clarke, 2 vols (Halifax: Pottersfield Press, 1992).

² Clarke, “‘This is no hearsay’” (p. 14).

³ Two examples are: Clarke’s bibliographic list of nineteenth-century Canadian slave narratives in “‘This is no hearsay’” (pp. 16-17) and Siemerling’s survey of Canadian slave narratives in ‘Slave Narratives and Hemispheric Studies’, which both only look at book-length narratives.

⁴ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 2.

religious context of the narrative. Through contextualising it, I show that when slave narratives were reprinted and recirculated in Canada they were not particularly concerned with the experience of the slave and could be more about saving white souls than furthering an abolitionist agenda. I argue that different newspapers framed slave narratives differently for their readers. In Nova Scotia, Jones's slave narrative circulated in two newspapers: one that can be seen as antislavery and one that was ameliorationist in its response to American slavery.

The chapter will examine the circulation of Thomas H. Jones's slave narrative, *The Experience of Thomas Jones*, in Atlantic Canada. Thomas H. Jones (1806-1887) was born near Wilmington in North Carolina to enslaved parents in 1806.⁵ Whilst he was enslaved, Jones preached to slave congregations in the area of Wilmington, with the permission of his owner Owen Holmes. After he bought his second wife's freedom, she travelled with their children to New York, and Jones joined them there in August 1849. After securing his freedom in 1849, he lectured as part of the antislavery movement in Connecticut and western Massachusetts and then settled in Salem where he preached at the local Wesleyan church. Jones toured the Maritimes between May 1851 and August 1853, giving lectures that were reportedly well attended. As David A. Davis notes, the first edition of Jones's slave narrative, *The Experience of Thomas Jones*, published in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1849, was transcribed and edited by an amanuensis, but the character of 'Jones' the narrator, in the text, is best understood as a joint creation between Jones and his amanuensis.⁶

⁵ The information about Jones in this paragraph is based on his slave narrative and letters that were sent by Jones that are reprinted in *The Black Abolitionist Papers: Volume II: Canada*, ed. by Ripley, pp. 133-34, pp. 212-14.

⁶ Davis, 'The Experience of Rev. Thomas H Jones: Introduction' (p. 200, p. 194).

Critics have typically seen Jones's narrative as a purely abolitionist and American text. For example, Davis situates Jones's narrative in the abolitionist context of the 1840s when the fugitive slave narrative was 'at its commercial zenith' in the United States and narratives such as Frederick Douglass's 1845 narrative were leading the genre.⁷ He argues 'The antebellum publication of *The Experience of Rev. Thomas H. Jones* had an overt political agenda: to publicise the inhumane treatment of slaves in order to arouse support for the abolitionist movement', and he sees it as 'almost a textbook example' of the fugitive slave narratives of the period.⁸ Others have noted there are some sentimental elements in Jones's narrative, and it has a heavy focus on the family.⁹ Jones's narrative continued to sell well after the abolition of slavery in the United States, and this speaks to a wider appeal of his narrative than can be explained by an antislavery context. William L. Andrews notes that the narrative had a long appeal, even after abolition, and that it was one of the most enduring slave narratives of the nineteenth century:

Selling well through the Civil War years, Jones's autobiography remained popular even after slavery was abolished in the United States, as attested by reprintings in 1868, 1871, 1880 and 1885. Few antebellum slave narratives remained in print after the downfall of slavery. That Jones's autobiography continued to thrive makes it one of the most long-lived of all the slave narratives published in the nineteenth century.¹⁰

The enduring popularity of Jones's narrative before and after abolition suggests that this

⁷ Ibid. (p. 190).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *From Bondage to Belonging: The Worcester Slave Narratives*, ed. by Eugene B. McCarthy and Thomas L. Doughton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), pp. 122-23.

¹⁰ William L. Andrews 'General Introduction', in *North Carolina Slave Narratives: The Lives of Moses Roper, Lunsford Lane, Moses Grandy, and Thomas H. Jones*, ed. by Andrews and others, pp. 1-15 (p. 12).

was not only valued as an abolitionist text by readers, and especially since it was altered little before the expanded edition published in 1885.

Two recent collections of antebellum slave narratives that contain Jones's narrative do not discuss the Canadian copy of Jones's text printed in New Brunswick or explore the circulation of his narrative in Atlantic Canada.¹¹ Jones's narrative was reprinted in Saint John, New Brunswick in 1853, and my study of the religious newspapers in Halifax, Nova Scotia identified that his narrative was also sold there in 1851. There is no known surviving copy of Jones's narrative with a Nova Scotia imprint, and it seems most likely that Jones recirculated copies of his narrative printed in pamphlet form in the United States in Halifax, Nova Scotia without a Canadian imprint.¹² The advertisements printed in the newspapers in Nova Scotia describe Jones's narrative as a pamphlet that costs one shilling.¹³ What follows in this chapter is an attempt to respond to the critical silence around Jones's slave narrative in Atlantic Canada and to read Jones's narrative within the particular context of two religious newspapers in Nova Scotia.

There are three sections in this chapter. In the first section I look at two evangelical newspapers that advertised Jones's slave narrative in 1851: the *Wesleyan (W)* and the *Presbyterian Witness (PW)*. I show that the primary aim of both newspapers is to

¹¹ *From Bondage to Belonging*, ed. by McCarthy and Doughton and *North Carolina Slave Narratives*, ed. by Andrews and others.

¹² In this chapter I use the 1853 edition of the narrative that was printed by J & A McMillan in Saint John, New Brunswick in 1853: Thomas Jones, *The William Macintosh Experience of Thomas Jones, Who Was a Slave for Forty-Three Years, Written by a Friend as Given by Brother Jones* (Saint John, N. B. [New Brunswick]: J. & A. McMillan, 1853). All further references are to this edition and will be referenced in parenthesis in the text.

¹³ On the form of the narrative as a pamphlet, see the original advertisements for Jones's text printed in Halifax, Nova Scotia: *Wesleyan*, 21 June 1851, p. 5 and *Presbyterian Witness*, 21 June 1851, p. 3. The *Wesleyan* and the *Presbyterian Witness* are available to view on microfilm at the Nova Scotia Archives: reel 8423 and reels 8393-94, respectively. All subsequent references to the newspapers in this chapter refer to these reels.

maintain the religious health of their middle-class readers. Then, I explore how both newspapers represent slavery in the United States. I argue that the *PW* is antislavery and presents an abolitionist message, but the *W* is ameliorationist, and that while it is critical of the abuses of slavery, it cannot be understood as abolitionist. In the second section I examine the notices printed in these newspapers that advertised Thomas Jones's slave narrative for sale. I use Gerard Genette's conception of 'paratext': the material that surrounds a text such as prefaces, title pages and illustrations that function as 'threshold[s]' to texts and a 'zone between text and off-text' that invite readers to approach texts in a certain way.¹⁴ I read the newspapers as paratext and 'threshold[s]', which shaped how readers of the religious newspapers approached Jones's narrative. In the third section I offer a close reading of Jones's narrative. By approaching this narrative through the context of the newspapers that framed his text for readers in Halifax, Nova Scotia, I provide a more contextual reading of his narrative than simply seeing it as a purely abolitionist text. I show that Jones's narrative can be read as either a spiritual autobiography or a slave narrative. I read Jones's narrative through the worldview of the religious newspapers to bring a fresh perspective to a slave narrative that has predominately been seen as an abolitionist text rather than a religious narrative. The overall argument in this chapter is that although Jones's slave narrative has been seen as a classic abolitionist slave narrative in its American context, when it is placed back into the paratext and textual context in which readers in Nova Scotia first approached this narrative, this complicates how its antislavery message reads and shows that the religious context was central to its meaning in Canada. This reading discourages automatically importing an American critical frame and scholarship to examine slave narratives in Canada. It suggests that in order to unpack the cultural meanings of slave

¹⁴ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 2, p. 11, p. 94.

narratives in Canada, they need to be explored in their specific context, and this requires an examination of how readers in Canada were invited to approach these texts, particularly in newspapers.

The religious newspapers and American slavery

The *PW*, published between 1848-1921, was published in Halifax by James Barnes between 1848-1883.¹⁵ Barnes edited the newspaper for the first few years, whilst publisher of the newspaper, before Rev. Robert Murray took over as the editor of the paper in January 1856.¹⁶ The newspaper was a Free Church Presbyterian paper, but it became ‘more generally Presbyterian’.¹⁷ The Wesleyan Methodist newspaper, the *W*, published between 1838-1925, was published in Halifax by William Cunnabell and edited by the Rev. Alex W. Macleod between 1849-1852, and Rev. Matthew Richey between 1854-1860.¹⁸ Both newspapers were family denominational newspapers. The full title of the *Wesleyan: A Family Paper Devoted to Religion, Literature, General and Domestic News, etc* identifies the family as a key audience of the paper. The *W* presents itself as suitable for Wesleyan Methodist readers, stating that it was produced with a view to being circulated ‘generally among kind friends who bear the same distinguishing name’.¹⁹ The *PW* identifies its readers as Presbyterian families. In an article penned by its editors, Presbyterian ministers are asked to encourage every Presbyterian family in their congregation to subscribe to the newspaper.²⁰ Both

¹⁵ Gertrude E. N. Tratt, *A Survey and Listing of Nova Scotia Newspapers, 1752-1957: With Particular Reference to the Period Before 1867* (Halifax: Dalhousie University, 1979), p. 93, p. 107, p. 238.

¹⁶ Joan M. Payzant, ‘Murray, Robert’, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/murray_robert_1832_1910_13E.html> [accessed 6 December 2016] (para. 3 of 13).

¹⁷ Tratt, *A Survey*, p. 93.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* (quoted by Tratt).

²⁰ *PW*, 1 January 1853, p. 2.

newspapers print items ostensibly aimed at child readers, although these may also anticipate an audience of parent readers. The idea that the whole family is being appealed to is reinforced by printing texts for boys and girls. For example, the short fictional piece ‘I Got a-Going and Couldn’t Stop’ directly addresses boys as the implied reader (‘beware then boys, how you get a going’), and the title of a story ‘Boys Read This’ identifies boys as the implied reader of another moral tale. ‘The Happy Girl’ states girls should be ‘kind’, ‘pleasant’, always occupied and not concerned with their physical appearance.²¹ As these examples illustrate, the newspapers advocated gender-specific morals for their child readers, and the newspapers were presented as suitable reading material for the entire family.

There are broad similarities between the two newspapers in terms of their content and thematic focus. This reflects their shared evangelical attack on moral vices such as dancing, fancy clothes and gambling. The *W* and the *PW* both print generic stories that do not seem to have been denomination-specific, advising readers to reject worldly pursuits and concerns and look to God. They also both report on the success of overseas missions to spread the gospel amongst irreligious ‘heathens’. Some stories printed in the *PW* and *W* could be from either newspaper, since they handle generic topics such as giving money and attending services.²²

The newspapers also champion their denominational uniqueness and could construct a sense of the specialness of their specific denominational identity. For example, the *Wesleyan* identifies itself as part of a global ‘family’ of Wesleyan Methodists belonging

²¹ ‘I Got a-Going and Couldn’t Stop’, *W*, 27 March 1852, p. 2; ‘Boys Read This’, *PW*, 15 November 1853, p. 5; *W*, 8 February, 1851, p. 2.

²² For two representative examples, see *W*, 1 February 1851, p. 2 and *PW*, 15 November, 1851, p. 5.

to the Methodist Episcopal Church. It reinforces this by reprinting items from other Wesleyan Methodist newspapers, suggesting a connection to and interest in the church in other places. In an editorial printed in the *Wesleyan* the editors directly address their readers and argue for the specialness of the Wesleyan church, suggesting that the Wesleyan church is the church best placed to spread the gospel ‘truth’ and convert souls across the world.²³

The textual evidence from the *PW* and the *W* suggests that both newspapers saw themselves as performing a vital role in maintaining the religious health of their denominational members and readers. This impression is produced through the cumulative layering of narratives and short texts in the newspapers that aim to reinforce Christian teachings and inspire appropriate Christian behaviour. Both newspapers imagine readers who need constant reminders to keep them in religious health. The editorial the ‘Commencement of the New Year’, printed in the *PW* on 1 January 1853, for example, directly addresses the readers of the newspaper and notes that the New Year is a perfect time to reflect on the past year. It anticipates that over the year the readers of the newspaper would have likely been preoccupied with worldly things, such as what to eat or wear, rather than the ‘spiritual and eternal wellbeing’ of themselves and others, ‘that which should occupy their minds’.²⁴ The editorial uses the collective noun ‘we’ throughout. This creates the sense that this predisposition to fixate on the worldly is a natural human condition and that individuals need to be reminded to turn their attention to the internal and the spiritual. A different example that reinforces the idea that the newspaper can keep its readers in religious health is the text ‘Excuses for not

²³ ‘Wesleyana’, *W*, 8 February 1851, p. 4; ‘Wesleyan Methodism’, *W*, 14 June 1851, p. 4.

²⁴ *PW*, 1 January 1851, p. 2.

attending public worship'. This relates a long list of excuses opening with 'overslept myself-could not dress in time. Too hot — too cold — too windy'.²⁵ The comic list uses the repetition of excuses to humorous effect to underscore that they are just that, excuses. The piece does not explicitly state the benefits of public worship, implying that the reader of the newspaper will already know that they should be attending worship. The piece does not imagine a specific person who is missing public worship but could stand in for every believer reading the newspaper, inviting them to identify with the struggle to attend public worship. It also works as a positive reinforcement for those attending worship by showing the way that excuses can roll off the tongue easily. This suggests an image of the Presbyterian believer who needs encouragement and willpower to stay in religious health. It also reflects the image constructed by the newspaper that its content could assist in helping its readers to stay focused on their 'eternal wellbeing' rather than on worldly pursuits.

Internal references in both newspapers suggest that religious newspapers and especially the stories within them were seen as a powerful way to teach their Christian readers how to be better Christians and live according to the teachings of the Bible. The religious newspaper is seen as a central aid to religious instruction for ministers of the gospel in a text reprinted in the *Wesleyan* from the *Central Christian Herald*, entitled 'Religious newspapers a help to Pastors'. This argues that a religious newspaper can aid Wesleyan ministers in carrying out their duties amongst their congregations. It suggests that narratives in newspapers can be a powerful religious aid and more effective than sermons in delivering religious 'truth' and having an effect on and touching the heart of the Christian believer:

²⁵ *PW*, 15 November 1851, p. 5.

First they are the means of communicating a large amount of religious information and instruction, which could not with propriety be presented from the pulpit; truth often arrests the attention, and reaches the heart, when presented in the shape of a narrative, which has failed to produce an effect from the pulpit.²⁶

Religious newspapers are also described in this text as bringing the heathen into the mind of the Christian believer. They are seen as able to inspire sympathetic feelings towards the needy, again with the implication that newspapers have a special power to do this:

Second they are the means of giving enlarged and benevolent views and feelings, by disclosing weekly the spiritual condition of the world, bringing home to the fireside of every reader the perishing condition of the heathen, and making a personal application to him, as did the man of Macedonia, in a vision to Paul “Come over and help us!”²⁷

The idea that newspapers can shrink geographic distances and bring the ‘perishing condition of the heathen’ into a personal application before the reader implicitly presents the reader of the newspaper as a person of higher social and Christian status and suggests that these potential benefactors can use newspapers as a way to gain access to those with unconverted souls. The newspaper is presented as a distinct printed form in its ability to regularly and repeatedly bring needy and unconverted heathens in the wider world to the attention of the local Christian believer. This piece suggests that newspapers aimed to stimulate sympathetic feelings for needy heathens and missionary pursuits in general rather than encourage readers to support specific heathen individuals or groups.

²⁶ *W*, 8 February 1851, p. 1.

²⁷ *Ibid*.

In summary, the two newspapers had three key and linked objectives: to keep white Christian readers in religious health by reinforcing religious teachings and encouraging worship, to maintain a commitment to the specific denominational affiliation of the newspaper, and to further the general objectives of evangelical protestant philanthropy, primarily through encouraging missions and efforts to spread the gospel amongst unconverted souls.

I will now examine how these newspapers handle the topic of American slavery and whether we can see them as antislavery. I show both newspapers give priority to their evangelical thrust when it comes to slavery. I argue that the *PW* is antislavery, but the *W* is not; the *W* prints a number of texts critical of the abuses of slavery, but these are ameliorationist in tone. The *W* also printed narratives with fictional American slave characters, and I will look at these stories and how they represent the American slave and slavery. I argue that when they are read in context these texts were more about saving white souls than antislavery texts.

The Presbyterian Church and the Wesleyan Methodist church in Canada were both evangelical protestant churches. In general, the evangelical protestant denominations in Canada were antislavery. Slavery was one of the “worldly amusements” targeted by middle class ‘moral crusades’ active amongst evangelical churches, as Marguerite Van Die suggests in her study of religion in Canada to Confederation in 1867.²⁸ However, the Presbyterian Free Church, which was a specific branch of Presbyterianism, and the Wesleyan Methodist church in Canada responded differently to American slavery. As

²⁸ Marguerite Van Die, ‘Religion and Law in British North America, 1800-1867’, in *The Cambridge History of Religions in America: Volume II: 1790 to 1945*, ed. by Stephen J. Stein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 46-65 (p. 55).

Marguerite Van Die notes, the Presbyterian Free Church in Canada was particularly active in the Anti-Slavery Society in Canada.²⁹ Allen P. Stouffer's study of the Free Presbyterian church in Canada West (now Ontario), which was one of the three branches of the Presbyterian church in the province, shows that it was 'strongly antislavery virtually from its inception [in the 1840s]'.³⁰ Indeed, the Free Church in Canada West expressed the view that slavery was not compatible with the Christian experience. Michael Willis, a member of the Free Church's committee (and the president of the first abolition society established in Ontario, in the 1840s), stated that American slavery cannot be tolerated because it brings man's conscience into the hands of the slaveholder, and the conscience of each man is 'responsible to God'.³¹

The Wesleyan Methodist church in Canada was in principle against slavery, but they fell short of supporting the abolition of slavery in the United States according to Stouffer's examination of the Wesleyan Methodist church in Ontario. Stouffer's study of the church and antislavery ideas in nineteenth-century Ontario examines the views of the Wesleyan Methodists in Ontario, and, in particular, it examines their newspaper the *Christian Guardian* to search for their views on American slavery. He finds that, although the Wesleyan Methodists in Ontario were initially supportive of abolition in the 1830s and sometimes made it clear in their newspaper that they did not in principle agree with slavery, they opposed immediate emancipation, known as "modern abolition", and in the late 1830s they took up a position of 'neutrality' on American slavery.³² Stouffer explains that this was due to politics after the Upper Canada rebellion

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Stouffer, *The Light of Nature and the Law of God*, p. 152.

³¹ Ibid., p. 153.

³² Ibid., p. 219, and see also pp. 155-59.

(1837) ‘when the establishment needed scapegoats to blame for the outbreak’ and the Wesleyan Methodists wanted to protect their relationship with Tory constitutionalists who were opposed to abolitionism in America, and because the Wesleyan Methodists in Ontario wanted to maintain a good relationship with the American Episcopal Methodists.³³ Stouffer notes that ‘Since many American Methodists were opposed to abolitionism, association with the movement held considerable potential for disrupting the fraternal tie’.³⁴ My examination of the two newspapers shows that the position the *PW* and *W* newspapers take on the topic of American slavery fits in with the broad responses of the churches to slavery in Canada that I have outlined.

The *Wesleyan* prints texts that could be read as antislavery, but contextual readings of them show that they are more animated by a missionary agenda. For example, on 24 January 1852 it prints a short account about a woman who is convicted in Virginia for teaching an enslaved person to read the Bible, where this was illegal according to state laws. This text seems to be antislavery, but on closer inspection what is more at issue is that a person has been prevented from carrying out their missionary activities, and it is not much concerned with slavery. The text relates:

A woman has been tried and convicted in Virginia for teaching a slave to read the Bible, and sentenced to two years imprisonment in the penitentiary. According to the indictment “she not having the fear of God before her eyes, but moved and instigated by the devil, wickedly, maliciously, and feloniously, did teach a negro woman to read the Bible, to the great displeasure of Almighty God.”³⁵

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *W*, 24 January 1852, p. 5.

The newspaper is filled with reports of the successes of religious missions, and this underscores that the central imperative of Wesleyan Methodism is to spread the truth of the gospel and to ‘effect the world’s deliverance’.³⁶ Reading this news item in this context suggests that the image of the incarceration of a woman for spreading the truth of the gospel anticipates a reaction of indignation and disgust from the reader. This is an example of dialogised heteroglossia because it relies on re-voicing one voice within a new context that invites the reader to read a new voice being layered over the old.³⁷ The shock factor of the dialogised heteroglossia relies on repeating the voice of the legal indictment as direct speech. In the indictment, the woman in Virginia is seen from the perspective of the legal court in Virginia as working for the devil and ‘wickedly’ teaching a slave woman to read the Bible ‘to the great displeasure of Almighty God’. The shock revolves around the fact that teaching an unconverted soul to read the Bible is interpreted from the worldview of the Virginian legal establishment as against the wishes of God. The dialogised heteroglossia contains the voice of the legal discourse, and by reprinting it in his newspaper the editor revoices it in a context that asks this ruling and worldview to be critiqued. While the text itself is short and does not explicitly tell the reader what message to draw from this small snippet of news, its inclusion in the *Wesleyan* invites the reader to see it as a piece of news with meaning for them. The view that teaching anyone to read the Bible is against God’s wishes would have promoted a disdainful and even outraged reaction from the religious reader, given the prominence of preaching the gospel within Methodist Wesleyan culture and in the newspaper. The harsh contrast between this attitude and that anticipated to be held by the Wesleyan Methodist reader who prioritised missionary activities with all heathens

³⁶ ‘Wesleyan Methodism’, *W*, 14 June 1851, p. 4.

³⁷ See my earlier discussion of Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of dialogised heteroglossia in the novel in Chapter One of this thesis.

could have generated a certain amount of dislike for Southern slavery, but it does not amount to an attack on the entire system, especially given that only Virginia is singled out in this text. The shock element of the text lies in the revoicing of the wording that presents teaching the slave to read the Bible as somehow against God's wishes, rather than in the fact that it is a ruling against a slave being taught the Bible. This text could have been read as more about a general shared assertion of the importance of missionary activities of the Wesleyan Methodists than about slavery.

The *Wesleyan* reprints fictional stories first published in American newspapers that feature enslaved African American characters and use American slavery as a backdrop for religious stories, selected from other papers by the editor. The editor would have had a large choice and selected these stories from a much wider range of potential narratives. The newspapers where the stories were originally published is provided by the editor when he reprints them, reinforcing the fact that these texts have been taken from different newspapers and reprinted in his own for his readers' benefit. This would have suggested to readers that these stories contain valuable moral messages. Appearing in the context of the newspaper that was designed to aid the religious practice of readers by delivering the truth of the gospel, encouraging missionary activity and keeping the souls of the *Wesleyan* readers healthy, we can imagine readers approached the stories with an eye on how they could help them in their Christian faith.

I will now analyse three fictional narratives that feature American slaves printed in the *Wesleyan*. I argue that these stories are primarily about saving white souls and that they take an ameliorative approach to American slavery and are ambiguous about abolition.

The narratives also circulated some negative stereotypes about enslaved American

Americans through imagining hyper-religious religious slaves. The stories were first printed in American publications, and they were selected by the editor of the *Wesleyan* for his readers. The three stories are: 'Old Jeddy there's rest at home', 'The Old Oak Tree' and 'Old Moses'. They all feature hyper-religious slaves whose religious enthusiasm is shown to fit within the institution of slavery in the world of the narrative. I suggest that the concept of the 'magical negro' is a useful frame for interpreting these stories as a group. The magical negro, which has roots in nineteenth-century fiction, can be described as a black side-kick character whose powers (often spiritual or magical) work to reform, teach and help the central white protagonist. The magical negro performs seemingly empowering roles, for example helping to reform the sinful or wayward white central protagonist, but this usually functions to disguise problematic exploitative (racial) relations and reinforce rather than subvert the patriarchal status quo.³⁸ The concept is used in the analysis of contemporary cinema, and the director Spike Lee has commented on the prevalence of magical negro types in twenty-first century films.³⁹ I will also explore how the narratives reprinted in the newspaper contain fictional grateful slaves. These texts could appear to be antislavery if read outside of the context of the religious newspaper. These stories printed in the *W* do not contain guidance to the reader asking them to read these as antislavery texts. We need to read these texts about American slavery within the context of the *Wesleyan* newspaper in order to see that they are not antislavery texts.

³⁸ See Matthew W. Hughey, 'Cinethetic Racism: White Redemption and Black Stereotypes in "Magical Negro" Films', *Social Problems*, 56.3 (2009), 543-77 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1525/sp.2009.56.3.543>> (p. 544, p. 553).

³⁹ Susan Gonzalez, 'Director Spike Lee Slams "Same Old" Black Stereotypes in Today's Films', *Yale Bulletin and Calendar* <<http://www.yale.edu/poa/arc-ybc/v29.n21/story3.html>> [date accessed 3 November 2014].

‘Old Moses’ tells the story of a religious slave who is sold by his irreligious slave master because he cannot bear to hear him praying. The text demonstrates the gratitude and obedience that Old Moses expresses towards his new master who lets him practice his Christian worship and says he will also buy Old Moses’s family so they will not be separated:

While Mr. B. was dealing out these privileges to Moses, the negro’s eyes danced in his sockets, and his full heart laughed outright for gladness, exposing two rows of as even, clear ivories as any African can boast: and his heart’s response was, ‘Bress God, bress God all de time, and bress you too massa.’⁴⁰

At the end of the narrative the text reveals that the example of Old Moses has converted his old, irreligious master to Christianity. The text as a whole remains ambiguous on the morality of slavery. It models a form of acceptable slaveholding by removing the unchristian elements of separating the family and preventing the religious instruction of the slave.

‘The Old Oak Tree’ suggests that religion can be compatible with slavery. The old slave narrator remembers with fondness how his master and mistress gave him permission to hold a prayer meeting in the plantation kitchen. With a burst of gratitude, he describes his feelings of joy and his gratitude for this act of ‘kindness’, which reverberates with a fondness and gratitude that he still feels: ‘Then I praised the Lord softly; and when I had thanked the mistress for her kindness, I went and told the boys the good news’.⁴¹ He relates that overhearing the slaves praying for their irreligious master and mistress precipitates the slaveholding family’s conversion and path to heaven. As the slave

⁴⁰ ‘Old Moses’, *W*, 20 September 1851, p. 1.

⁴¹ ‘The Old Oak Tree’, *W*, 24 February 1853, p. 1.

narrator looks back on his former life on the plantation and meditates on his own death, he imagines with happiness his reunion with his family in heaven, and, remarkably, the family he imagines is that of his white master, mistress and their daughters: ““I shall see my old master and my old mistress there, and we will sing and shout together, as we did long ago down on the old plantation””. Like ‘Old Moses’, the black enslaved man in ‘The Old Oak Tree’ provides a religious example to his irreligious slaveowners that precipitates their ‘deliverance’ to God. The image of the middle-class slave-owning daughter lying converted on her death bed, which appears in ‘The Old Oak Tree’, reproduces an image of the converted child very popular within evangelical stories.⁴²

‘Old Jeddy There’s Rest at Home’ tells the story of a loyal slave who cares greatly for the religious health of his master. A white preacher is sustained by the enslaved character Jeddy on their journey to bring the preacher to the plantation belonging to Jeddy’s master, where they have not been visited by a minister for a long time. Jeddy insists on the journey, which is long, across bogs and quicksand, and at night, and this implicitly underscores his loyalty to his master and his concern for his master’s soul. He also sustains the preacher’s resilience and steadfastness throughout the journey through the biblical truism ‘there’s rest at home’.⁴³ At the end of the narrative there is an abrupt switch in tone as the unnamed narrator directly addresses the implied reader and calls on them to learn from the example of Jeddy: ‘Minister of God, wandering to and fro without a resting place do you long for a home and repose? Do thy little ones die in thy absence, and are these graves scattered in the land?’⁴⁴ This recalls the story of Jeddy

⁴² Jane P. Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 138.

⁴³ ‘Old Jeddy There’s Rest at Home’, *W*, 20 October 1853, p. 1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

that the preacher hears as they travel together to his master's plantation ('I led him into a recital of his whole history, particularly of his Christian experiences') in which Jeddy describes the separation of his family in slavery. Old Jeddy demonstrates that the slave narrative of a Christian slave could be seen as evoking feelings of shame in the Christian reader as it puts their own suffering into perspective. It encourages the reader to endure their earthly trials like Jeddy, and it points towards the fact that hearing the Christian experience of the American slave had a wider set of cultural applications than that of abolitionism.

The *Wesleyan* prints texts that could be read as critical of the abuses of slavery, as we have seen, especially of individual masters who refuse to let their slaves practice Christian worship, but it remains silent on the prospect of abolition. It does not print items by the Anti-Slavery Society in Canada, based in Toronto, and it cannot be considered an antislavery paper. Its stance is to be critical of slavery, but in the years of the paper I have studied (1851-1853) it does not produce editorials or reprint texts calling for abolition.

The fictional stories printed in the *Wesleyan* seem to condone slavery and present it as peaceful, supporting the religious health of the slave and characterised by peaceable black/white relations. They present an idealised image of the Southern plantation. These tales are not really about slavery, and they are not attempting to prompt their readers to antislavery action. Slavery is a vehicle for delivering a religious message. These stories are about saving white souls, and they present the reader with images of irreligious whites that exemplify the opposite of the missionary ideal of helping bring others to God, in attempting to restrict the Christian practice of their slaves.

All three stories show faithful and grateful slaves. The fictional grateful slaves in the narratives in the *Wesleyan* seem to be in the tradition that George Boulukos explores as developing in the context of eighteenth-century British fiction, which I have discussed in the introduction to this thesis. Boulukos shows how the trope, that was seemingly sympathetic towards enslaved people, supported the amelioration rather than the abolition of slavery and produced an emerging sense of racial difference, noting that the trope ‘always contained two central elements: an ameliorative view of slavery, and [the] suggestion of racial difference’.⁴⁵ Boulukos explains that grateful slaves in eighteenth-century fiction were presented as grateful to their masters for a specific act of kindness, but that by the nineteenth century the trope had hardened and presented fictional slaves as by nature grateful, happy and loyal.⁴⁶ In its presentation of contented and grateful slaves, the nineteenth-century version of the trope reflected a racially-essentialist and polygenesis-based view of racial difference between Africans and Europeans.⁴⁷ The fictional slaves that appeared in the *Wesleyan* newspaper are presented as grateful for their master’s willingness to let them worship as Christians. Hence they seem to echo their earlier eighteenth-century origins rather than the nineteenth-century afterlife of this trope. In the newspapers the gratitude of the slaves is racialised, however, and this is reflected in the portrayal of the gratitude of slaves such as Moses as a physical and bodily act that focuses on his wide smile and eyes expressing his surprise and delight, and by the fact that white working-class characters who are grateful in contemporaneous newspaper-narratives are not depicted in this way.⁴⁸ The grateful slaves in the *Wesleyan* are part of narratives that support the amelioration of slavery, and this represents a

⁴⁵ Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave*, p. 14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ ‘Martin’s Rose’, *PW*, 20 November 1852, pp. 1-2.

continuation of the circulation of the grateful slave in ameliorationist discourses in eighteenth-century British fiction. The depiction of grateful Christian slaves in the *Wesleyan* undermines the popular abolitionist argument that slavery and Christianity were incompatible, and a potentially persuasive abolitionist argument that slavery was not compatible with a missionary agenda.

The *Wesleyan* prints some texts that can be read as antislavery. A key example of this is that on 3 February 1853 the *Wesleyan* prints Harriet Beecher Stowe's short story protesting against the second Fugitive Slave Law passed in 1850: 'The Freeman's Dream- A Parable'. The short story calls on Christians in the United States to ignore the dictates of the Fugitive Slave Law and to assist fugitive slaves in their escape. The narrative relates the experience of a man who listens to the dictates of human law and lets his heart harden against two fugitive slaves and turns them away from his doorstep. The text characterises the fugitive slaves as needy Christians begging for 'food and shelter'.⁴⁹ The story shows God's anger at the Christian man in a dream as he banishes him from heaven, stating 'Depart from me ye accursed! for I was [...] hungered, and ye gave me no meat'. The text argues that God sets the highest standard of right and wrong and that this usurps 'human laws'. This story directly addresses members of the United States ('this nation'), telling them their duties as Christians demand that they do not follow the dictates of the Fugitive Slave Law, which prohibited people from any state in the United States (including the free northern states) from helping or harbouring fugitive slaves. The text is both a political message to flout the dictates of a man-made law of congress, and it is clearly antislavery, but the meaning of this narrative outside of a US context and within the Methodist context of newspaper is ambiguous, especially

⁴⁹ *W*, 3 February 1853, p. 4.

given that readers in Halifax were not within the political parameters of the law. The stories in the *W* would have been seen as designed to teach Christian messages to keep its readers in religious health, and, given this, readers may have approached this text looking for the moral message for themselves. Readers could have interpreted it more broadly as a parable about helping needy Christians and as a didactic tale reaffirming the Christian message that they must not turn away the needy, or they could have seen in it the Christian tenet that God is in every man.

The *Presbyterian Witness* is outspokenly antislavery. For example, in 1852 the editor James Barnes reprints a text that he entitles ‘A Real Uncle Tom’. This tells the story of a woman who attends a Methodist sermon in Kentucky and hears a sermon about a slave martyr who is whipped to death because he will not renounce his Christian faith. The embedded narrative of the enslaved Christian man forms the bulk of this text. The textual history of this story before it reaches Barnes is revealing. The text was first published in antislavery newspapers in the United States, in Jane Grey Cannon Swisshelm’s *Pittsburgh Saturday Visiter* and William Lloyd Garrison’s *Liberator*, and Barnes makes some adjustments to the text when he reprints it. Barnes reprints this text in his newspaper with the opening paratextual sentence inviting his readers to see the text as an antislavery one: ‘The *Pittsburgh Saturday Visiter* gives the following horrible illustration of slavery as it exists in some of the States’.⁵⁰ This guides the reader to interpret this story as an antislavery text that will illustrate the ‘horrors’ of slavery for its readers. The slave who dies because he refuses to denounce his Christian faith is described in the text as a ‘martyr’ and ‘old disciple’, underscoring that his death and his

⁵⁰ *PW*, 30 October 1852, p. 5.

refusal to give up his faith is celebrated in the worldview of the religious Methodist sermon.

Barnes cuts a key part of the ‘Uncle Tom’ narrative as it appeared in the antislavery newspaper the *Liberator*. In the *Liberator* the narrative criticises the way the story of the slave martyr is ‘read’ by the Methodist congregation, but Barnes does not reproduce this. The version printed in the *PW* ends with the description of the slave (‘the old disciple dies under the lash’), but the *Liberator* reprints over three hundred more words, including a description of the Methodist minister and his congregation’s response to the story of the slave martyr:

The preacher gave his recital with many tears, and before he was done, we do not think there was a dry eye, except our own, in the house. Our pulses all stood still with horror, but the speaker did not appear to dream that his story had any bearing against the institution with which he was surrounded. We cannot remember how he said the particulars came to his knowledge, but think the martyr had been under his pastoral care, and that he got the minutiae from slave witnesses in a ‘love-feast’. He gave us the story simply to show what a good thing religion was. Of those who heard it, and the many persons there to whom we related it, we found not one who appeared to doubt it. Any indignation felt and expressed was against the individual actors in the tragedy.⁵¹

The criticism of the narrative being read as a story that could ‘show what a good thing religion was’ is excised from the version printed in the *PW*. Barnes does not include this criticism of the story being used to stimulate joyful religious feelings as a narrative of a religious believer remaining steadfast to their faith in God. In doing so, he also removes the image of the Christian congregation responding to the story, and he does not model a joyful reaction to the story of the slave martyr for his readers. These additional lines

⁵¹ The copy printed in the *Liberator* can be found online: ‘Uncle Tom’, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin & American Culture* <<http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/notices/noar02qt.html>> [accessed 25 June 2016].

draw attention to the fact that the figure of the slave martyr could be interpreted from an antislavery perspective or from a Christian point of view. In these lines, the female narrator remarks on the effect that the narrative of the slave martyr has on the Methodist minister and his congregation. She relates that the preacher delivered the narrative of the slave 'with many tears', and that his congregation cried in response to the story. Their tears signify the joyful reaction of the congregation to hearing about one man's steadfastness to his faith, and they interpret the story as one of Christian faithfulness to God and the strength of a slave's religious faith. Their tears can be seen as a 'sign of redemption' within a Christian worldview, as Jane P. Tompkins has noted in a different context.⁵² The female narrator notes the stark contrast of her response and those of her friends to the reaction of the congregation upon hearing the story of the slave being whipped to death. The reaction of the narrator and her friends was 'horror' because it spoke to them of the institution of slavery; they heard it as an antislavery narrative. She makes this explicit by noting that this reading of the story of the persecuted slave was lost on the preacher and his congregation: 'Our pulses all stood still with horror, but the speaker did not appear to dream that his story had any bearing against the institution with which he was surrounded'. The two contrasting reactions to this story (horror and joy) reflect two binary opposite reactions to the same narrative when approached from a different perspective. The narrator implies that the congregation are led in their reaction by the minister, who delivers the narrative of the Christian slave martyr within the context of a sermon, in which believers sought to find meaning for their own lives and Christian experience. In contrast, the female narrator and her companions are able to look beyond this framing context and read the narrative differently. Barnes cuts these lines, but his insertion of the framing paratext calling on the reader to see this as an

⁵² Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, p. 131.

antislavery text performs a similar function, layering the original discourse with a secular antislavery frame that invites his readers, implicitly, to approach the story with horror rather than joy. The title he gives his narrative ('A Real Uncle Tom') and the additional line introducing the text stating it shows the horrors of slavery reflect the ideas expressed in the lengthier text. The version printed in the *Liberator* argues that there are 'thousands of real Uncle Toms' in America, and Barnes attempts to pick up on this in his title 'A Real Uncle Tom'.

The original version printed in antislavery publications in the United States goes beyond that printed by Barnes in its social commentary and language. This is reflected in the conclusion to the story that describes the death of the Christian slave as reflecting an unequal social system that gives one set of men domination over others: 'What then could be expected when one class holds irresponsible power over the lives of another? Just, that some of them will be very ready to use it'.⁵³ This language makes sense in the wider context of social and cultural reform pushed by Jane Swisshelm, the editor of the *Pittsburgh Saturday Visiter*, in her newspaper, for example of the newspaper's promotion of women's rights. Swisshelm later divorced her husband and protested for better property rights for women. Here we could hear the view that men holding 'irresponsible power' over women are ready to 'use it'. It portrays slavery as one category of abuse and an example of a wider truth within wider imbalances of power and its disastrous effects. Barnes refrains from making this more generalised point, and he does not make the abuse of slavery mean some greater social truth.

⁵³ 'Uncle Tom', *Uncle Tom's Cabin & American Culture*.

It may have been possible for readers to read against the grain of Barnes's instruction to read this as an antislavery text. Gerard Genette argues that readers did not have to follow the suggestions given in paratext, such as title pages and in prefaces, by authors and publishers for how to approach and see the text. However, their response was always shaped by this presence even if they chose to disregard it.⁵⁴ This text could still have been read as a spiritual narrative, given the wider context of the religious newspaper in which it was published and the focus upon one's belief and the rejection of the worldly and physical in the newspaper. The description of the slave master and his friends drinking and gambling presents them as enjoying vices that were frequently discussed as improper in the newspaper. Readers may have chosen to read this as a spiritual narrative of one man's religious faith despite worldly obstacles. However, there is some distancing from this potential reading in the fact that this is a Methodist sermon rather than a Presbyterian one, and, despite the broad similarities between the denominations and the shared evangelical attack on moral vices, the fact that the religious framing of the narrative places it in the context of a Methodist sermon may have had the effect of suggesting to readers that this was not a religious story. If the narrative had been embedded in a Presbyterian service, readers of the newspaper may have felt more inclined to look for the religious messages and what this story could be trying to teach them.

There are other examples of antislavery material being printed by James Barnes in his newspaper. A review for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which was likely written by Barnes, is printed in the *PW* on 14 August 1852. This advertises the antislavery novel as exposing

⁵⁴ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 94.

the ‘anti-Christian system of slavery’.⁵⁵ Robin W. Winks notes that there is no evidence that there was an edition of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* published or printed in Halifax, Nova Scotia, but this advertisement proves that the novel, published by J. P. Jewett in Boston, was imported and sold in Halifax by E. G. Fuller, the proprietor of the American Book Store, in 1852.⁵⁶ The review advocates equality between black and white Americans in the eyes of God, stating that in the ‘eyes of the maker’ black people are ‘upon a level with the more favoured white man’.⁵⁷ The review praises *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as ‘the very best book we could recommend for becoming acquainted with an unvarnished picture of the moral, social, and physical evils resulting from [slavery]’.⁵⁸ The *PW* provides summaries of the activities of the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada, based in Toronto, and it reports on antislavery legislation in the United States, for example on the Pennsylvania senate bill that made it illegal to detain fugitive slaves in gaol, described as an opposition to the Fugitive Slave Bill in the *PW*. The *PW* includes reports about the fugitive slaves in Canada as part of its reprinting of newspapers’ reports on global Presbyterian missions. Barnes summarises the reports of Christian missions printed in *The Home and Foreign Record of the Free Church of Scotland*.⁵⁹ His framing editorial comment notes that the Free Church in Nova Scotia is described as doing well in the newspaper.

⁵⁵ ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’, *PW*, 14 August 1852, p. 3. I believe that these reviews are original and that they were written by Barnes. A comment from the editor of the *PW* to his readers on 18 September 1852, p. 3 shows that he was writing original reviews for the books received from Mr E. G. Fuller. He says ‘we beg to acknowledge receipt from Mr E. G. Fuller of two educational works which we shall take occasion to notice more at length next week’ and he provides a one-sentence sketch of each book, before providing a full review of each work the following week.

⁵⁶ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, p. 185 n. 15. However, he notes that there were editions in Montreal and Toronto ‘based upon the Boston printing’, p. 185.

⁵⁷ ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’, *PW*, 14 August 1852, p. 3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *PW*, 30 October 1852, p. 5.

The *PW* was broadly antislavery, but it also used the the magical negro trope to teach and reform white fictional characters. For example, ‘The Slave’s Reproof’, printed on the 22 January 1853, uses the stock magical negro type of an extra-religious slave who admonishes a mother who is grieving over the loss of her child for displaying a lack of faith in God and for not handling her loss with hope and piety. The text is narrated by the mother who has lost her child. She describes her grief prior to the ‘teachings’ of a black slave woman she meets in the graveyard in a way that underscores its inappropriateness.⁶⁰ She recollects that she threw herself onto her son’s grave and leaves with a ‘sorrowful adieu’.⁶¹ Her confession to the black woman that ‘the little body that I almost worshipped lies in that cold dark grave’ holds two perspectives. The perspective of the grieving mother explaining her sense of loss is overlaid with the repentant voice of the mother who at the end of the text asks God for his forgiveness for her unchristian grief, reflected by the phrase ‘almost worshipped’. This suggests her love for her child verged on idolatry, and took the place of God in her mind. The mother recalls that the black slave woman reproved her for ‘fret[ting]’, saying ‘don’t you know it wicked’ since her son is in heaven. She invites the mother to ‘look up’ and see her son in heaven. She calls for the mother’s acceptance of her son’s death, stating ‘We all got to go!’. The unnamed black woman tells the narrator that it is God’s decision when it is time for each of us to die: ‘We must just wait until our master calls us’. The narrator reflects on the impact this conversation has had in bringing about a transformation in her thinking and behaviour. She describes the shame she experiences in having to be reminded how to be a good Christian by the ‘pious old slave’:

⁶⁰ ‘The Slave’s Reproof’, *PW*, 22 January 1853, p. 5.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

I was filled with shame for my sinful grief and lack of faith, when I listened to the language of this pious old slave. There I stood with all my religious education and knowledge of the Scripture, learning lessons of piety, resignation, hope and faith, from the lips of this poor old woman, who did not know the first three letters of the alphabet. I trust I may not soon forget those teachings.⁶²

The ‘teachings’ are both the advice the black woman gives her, which makes her recognise her own ‘sinful’ behaviour, but more specifically it is the ‘shame’ she experiences in recognising the ‘piety’ of the uneducated ‘old slave’ in contrast to her own ‘sinful grief’ and ‘lack of faith’, and that she has needed teaching at all by one she describes as her social inferior. For the reader it is this imagined sense of embarrassment and shame that they could feel being admonished by a social inferior, as imagined in the worldview of the narrative, that works to motivate them to religious piety and faith.

The newspaper notices advertising Thomas Jones’s slave narrative

I have been looking at how the *PW* and the *W* handle the topic of American slavery and the ways in which this intersects with their missionary agenda to spread the gospel. I will now turn to examine Thomas Jones’s slave narrative, which was advertised for readers in the *PW* and *W* in June 1851 in two notices, probably written by the newspapers’ editors. The religious newspapers in Halifax, Nova Scotia provided a space for the advertisement of Jones’s slave narrative, whereas contemporaneous secular newspapers did not. The narrative was not mentioned in a leading secular paper in the Halifax area that month, the *Acadian Recorder*, suggesting that the religious context produced a ready audience for Jones’s text.⁶³ The inclusion of the advertisements for Jones’s narrative in the two religious newspapers suggests that the newspapers’ editors

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ *Acadian Recorder, Nova Scotia Historical Newspapers* <<https://novascotia.ca/archives/newspapers/results.asp?nTitle=Acadian+Recorder>> [accessed 9 February 2018].

identified the narrative as something likely to interest, appeal to and benefit their readers.

The newspaper notices are a key space in which readers in Atlantic Canada were addressed and told how to approach Jones's narrative, something that probably reflects a wider trend in how slave narratives were circulated in Canada. Looking at the only surviving Canadian edition of Jones's narrative (a copy printed in New Brunswick in 1853), it appears that when his narrative was recirculated in Canada, Jones made no alterations to his narrative for a Canadian audience. He did not insert, for example, an additional preface to address readers in Atlantic Canada more specifically. The narrative, reprinted in an unchanged state from earlier American editions, addresses an imagined audience of readers in Massachusetts. For example, Jones himself speaks as if residing in Massachusetts: 'Oh that these happy, merry boys and girls, whom I have seen in Massachusetts since my escape from slavery, whom I have so often met rejoicing in their mercies since I came here, only knew the deep wretchedness of the poor slave child!' (8). The final place of arrival mentioned in the text is Boston, Massachusetts: 'I came on to Springfield, and from thence to Boston, where I arrived penniless and friendless, the 7th of October' (75). The letters of introduction printed before the narrative in the 1853 text printed in New Brunswick text are the same as those in earlier American editions: they all come from people in New England (sig. A3r). The letters of recommendation imply a larger geographical reach of New England readers than the implied audience constructed in the narrative itself. They are signed from Exeter, New Hampshire; North Danvers, Essex County, Massachusetts; and Boston, Massachusetts. The copy that circulated in the Maritimes follows the exact text

of editions published in the United States.⁶⁴ The only reference to the fact that the narrative was printed and circulated in New Brunswick is the imprint on the title page of the narrative reprinted in 1853, which lists the printers as J. & A. McMillan and locates the firm in ‘Saint John, N. B [New Brunswick]’.⁶⁵ In this context the notices printed in the *PW* and *W* and written in the voice of the newspapers’ editors represent a key space for religious readers in Atlantic Canada to be addressed directly, and the notices represent a unique space in which readers in Halifax, Nova Scotia were invited to read the narrative in specific ways.

The notices were not simply advertisements placed by the author or their publisher to generate sales for their books: they were part of a regular literature review section in both newspapers. Both newspapers regularly printed original reviews about literature that appear to have been written by the newspaper editor in each newspaper. The internal evidence of the newspapers’ book review sections, printed in each issue between 1851-1853, suggests that the editors read these texts themselves and then penned reviews. Reviews were occasionally printed that detail the editor lamenting that they have not been able to finish reading the text and saying that they will give a short review that week and a fuller one the following week.⁶⁶ The newspaper editors were both pastors and their newspapers were seen as assisting in the readers’ religious health, and, in this light, it seems likely that the books reviewed in the newspapers would have

⁶⁴ Of the existing known editions, the narrative most closely resembles the 1857 edition published in the United States; it contains the scenes of his sister being violently beaten that were added in to the American text at this date, but it does not contain a line that was added to a later edition about Jones going to Canada. With the exception of a few changes made between editions, the narrative changed very little before a new section was added to the narrative in 1885.

⁶⁵ This likely reflects that the text was reprinted and distributed by the printers in Saint John rather than published by them. See Chapter Four of this thesis for a discussion of the Canadian book trade.

⁶⁶ *PW*, 11 September 1852, p. 3.

been seen as recommended reading for the evangelical Christian readers of the newspapers.

The notice in the *Wesleyan* informing readers in Halifax, Nova Scotia about Jones's narrative reads as follows:

Narrative of a Refugee Slave

Being a faithful account of the experience of THOMAS H. JONES, who was a slave for forty-three years, and who effected his escape from Wilmington, N.C., in the fall of the year 1849 — comprising also, an account of the providential escape of his family, a wife with three children, whom he succeeded in aiding away previously.

“The writer would affectionately present his simple story of deep personal wrongs to the earnest friends of humanity. He humbly asks you to buy and read it for in doing so you will help one who needs your sympathy and aid, believing you will receive in the perusal of this simple narrative a more fervent conviction of the necessity and blessedness of toiling for the desolate members of the one great brotherhood.”

Mr Jones, who arrived in this city a few days since, has recently been a pastor of a Coloured Church in Salem, Mass., from which he was obliged to flee, or expose himself to the risk of being dragged away to his former bondage. He comes highly recommended by Ministers and others “as a worthy man and a Christian, every way deserving of our sympathy and aid.” He purposes shortly to visit Great Britain, and seeks during his stay here, to enlist the benevolent sympathies of the citizens of Halifax. His pamphlet of 48 pages of thrilling narrative he offers for sale at 1s., by the proceeds of which, and by public meetings, supplemented by the generous aid of those who feel interested in the wrongs to which the African portion of our race has been and continues to be subjected, — he hopes to be furthered in the objects of his mission. We wish him every success.⁶⁷

The notice presents Jones's ‘mission’ as a Christian one, and it does not explicitly present Jones's cause as antislavery. For example, the notice does not clearly state that

⁶⁷ *W*, 21 June 1851, p. 5.

Jones's aim is to abolish slavery in either his visit to Halifax or in selling his narrative. The notice introduces Jones as both a former slave and as a pastor of a black church in Salem. His status as a pastor of a coloured church in America is mingled in the closing lines of the advert with the missionary potential of his financial aid ('he hopes to be furthered in the object of his mission'). The notice states that Jones deserves the 'benevolent sympathies' of those in Halifax. It suggests that by reading and buying the narrative they can help, 'one who needs your sympathy and aid'. The notice suggests that readers will get a 'more fervent conviction of the necessity and blessedness of toiling for the desolate members of the one great brotherhood' by reading the slave narrative. The notice mentions Jones's plans to go to Britain, but it does not make it clear why he plans to go to Britain, and this leaves some ambiguity about whether Jones is motivated by a religious mission or an abolitionist purpose.

The notice uses some language that highlights the narrative as a classic abolitionist text, but there is a greater emphasis on the narrative as an account of Jones's religious experience and a story about him and his family. The narrative is sold as a slave narrative as is reflected in the title 'Narrative of a Refugee slave' that heads the advertisement and is designed to grab the readers' attention. In addition, the description of the text as 'thrilling', a term commonly used to describe slave narratives, suggests that the reviewer has some awareness of the genre. However, Jones's flight is also described as an act of divine intervention, reflected in the description of the 'providential escape' of his family. The review prioritises the religious aspect of Jones's narrative. This is reflected in the use of the term 'experience' in the opening line, which prioritises the spiritual experience related in his narrative. The notice also deliberately draws attention to the family element of the narrative by highlighting the story of the

escape of Jones's wife and children. This is not a major part of the narrative, and it probably reflects that the writer of the review, who was most likely the editor, wanted to focus on this aspect of the narrative, as he saw it as likely to appeal to the audience of his newspaper.

The second paragraph of the notice printed in the *W* adapts an address Jones makes to the reader in his slave narrative, where it is printed before the narrative proper. I will look at the differences in language between the two versions, and I will argue that by comparing the two texts it is clear that the notice in the *W* adjusts this text to downplay the antislavery nature of the original. The version in Jones's narrative reads:

A suffering brother would affectionally present this simple story of deep personal wrongs to the earnest friends of the Slave. He asks you to buy and read it, for, in so doing, you will help one who needs your sympathy and aid, and you will receive, in the perusal of this simple narrative, a more fervent conviction of the necessity and blessedness of toiling for the desolate members of the one great brotherhood who now suffer and lie, ignorant and despairing, in the vast prison land of the South. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them."

THOMAS JONES (sig. A3v)

In this text printed in Jones's narrative, Jones uses religious language such as 'friends' and 'desolate members of the one great brotherhood' and emotive words such as 'despairing' and 'desolate' to describe the suffering of the slaves as a Christian crisis. He uses a variety of theological concepts and discourses in this passage to deliver his antislavery polemic, such as eschatological language, the Golden Rule and the Jeremiad. Jones uses the theological tenant of the Golden Rule that Christians should treat others as they wish to be treated ("Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them"), and this is removed from the version printed in the *W*. This argument

was made repeatedly within Quaker antislavery discourse, in Pennsylvania from the mid-seventeenth century to the mid-eighteenth century and beyond.⁶⁸ The Golden Rule would have been familiar to other Christians (not just Quakers) and to those of other religions. The Golden Rule is used in this passage to focus attention on slaves in the American South who are unconverted and are ‘despairing’ and ‘ignorant’. The treatment that the reader is imagined as not wanting for themselves is to be left in a despairing state and in slavery. The passage also has echoes of eschatological language that is concerned with the destiny of individual’s souls and God’s judgement. This is evident in its imagery of the suffering and despairing slave brotherhood. It contains echoes of a jeremiad lamentation about the irreligious ‘despairing’ brothers and the need to assist them in its didactic and urgent tone that the suffering slaves in the South must be toiled for. The combined effect of the passage is an uncompromising tone that appeals to as well as chastises the audience for not doing enough to assist the slaves in America, and it has echoes of the tone of the religious newspapers with their appeals to their readers to be constantly concerned with the state of others’ souls. Jones makes it clear in his direct appeal to the reader that the focus of his narrative is to help enslaved people in the United States, and he suggests that through buying and reading the narrative the reader too is complicit in this antislavery ‘mission’. He does this through stating that his narrative will appeal to the ‘friends of the Slave’, and he makes it explicit that the members of the Christian brotherhood being helped by purchasing this narrative are those enslaved in the ‘prison land’ in the American South.

⁶⁸ For a discussion of the Golden Rule in Quaker writing and debate, see the numerous references in Carey, *From Peace to Freedom*, for example, p. 30, pp. 50-51, pp. 55-57, pp. 74-78, pp. 124-25, pp. 185-88.

The *Wesleyan* excises parts of this text to make Jones's narrative and its philanthropic aim less clearly antislavery. The Golden Rule, a powerful piece of antislavery discourse, is removed from the text, as it appears in the newspaper. Paragraph two of the notice takes out all the direct references to the narrative being an antislavery text. It cuts the words from Jones's original text that identify readers of his narrative as reading the narrative out of concern for enslaved people: ('to the earnest friends of the Slave'), and the *W* replaces this instead with a more general charitable purpose that is less clearly antislavery: 'to the earnest friends of humanity'.⁶⁹ The *W* notice removes the description of the one great brotherhood as being the slaves who lie desolate 'in the vast prison land of the South'. These two adjustments take away the context of Jones's narrative being predominately about helping enslaved people in the United States. The closest the notice printed in the *W* comes to identifying Jones's mission as an antislavery one is the description in the third paragraph, which describes Jones's mission as aiming to aid those of the African portion of the race who have been subjected to 'wrongs'. However, this does not explicitly identify slavery as the 'wrongs' suffered, and it could also invite a reading that it is their lack of access to the gospel that is the biggest wrong. In the version of the text printed in Jones's narrative, he describes himself as needing the sympathy and aid of the reader within the context of him wanting to make a difference to the experience of enslaved people in the United States. The *W* reproduces this ('one who needs your sympathy and aid'), but by removing the slavery context the *W* suggests to the reader that the purpose of buying the narrative is to help Jones himself, positioning him as a needy Christian believer. This reads differently in the narrative in the context of Jones being concerned for the slaves, and by implication helping him is helping them. The *W* text positions him as a needy black Christian, rather than a man

⁶⁹ *W*, 21 June 1851, p. 5.

invested in a political cause. The cumulative effect of these subtle changes between the wording of the *W* notice and the text from Jones's narrative that it adapted is that the *W* version removes the abolitionist thrust of the original text. There is ambiguity in the *W* about 'toiling for one great brotherhood'; as it reads in the *Wesleyan* version, it has religious connotations and is less clearly abolitionist.

The notice in the *Presbyterian Witness* reads:

The Rev. Thomas Jones, of the Wesleyan Methodist connection, and a refugee slave, is at present in Halifax, on his way to Britain. We have examined his testimonials, and, from these, as well as from other sources of information, we have every reason to believe him to be deserving of encouragement and support. Mr. Jones has published a narrative of his condition as a slave, and the circumstances connected with his escape. This pamphlet is to be had at Mr Charles Morris', Barrington Street, and is well worthy of a perusal.⁷⁰

The notice that appears in the *PW* is far shorter and differs in its focus from that from the *W*. Rather than position Thomas Jones as a charitable subject, it highlights conventional aspects of the slave narrative genre in Jones's text and suggests that these might be an aspect of the text that makes it of interest to its readers. Unlike the *Wesleyan* notice, it is not suffused with the language of Jones as a needy Christian recipient of the benevolent men and women of Halifax. The narrative is about 'his condition as a slave and the circumstances of his escape', showing the reviewer's knowledge of the conventions of the genre. The narrative too is depicted as of value and interest in its own right as reading material, rather than demonstrating the Christian piety of the reader. This foreshadows the treatment of the narrative in the United States.

⁷⁰ *PW*, 21 June 1851, p. 3.

When one picture is inserted into the narrative in the late 1850s as a frontispiece, produced by Boston engravers Taylor and Adams, it imagines the scene in which Jones flees on board a raft during his escape, to New York. This moment gets short textual treatment in the narrative, consisting of just a few paragraphs, compared to the eight pages charting his process of learning to read, but its representation as an image shows an attempt to underscore the excitement and appeal in Jones's narrative. Its focus on the dramatic escape from slavery to freedom, a conventional element in slave narratives alluded to in the narrator's description of this section of the text as 'a narrative of my escape', is emphasised through this frontispiece. This invites the reader to approach the text along more traditional slave narrative lines. The *PW* positions Jones's text more as an antislavery narrative than the *W*, but its notice also sells Jones's narrative as a thrilling story. This was not the first time the sensational aspect of the narrative of a fugitive slave was emphasised in the newspaper. In what appears to be an original review for *Life in the South- A Companion to Uncle Tom's Cabin* by C. H. Wiley, the story of the runaway slave Wild Bill is described as an exciting adventure story, with 'startling adventures', including 'wild beasts, attacks by pirates, [and] tragical murders [...] common in the Southern States'.⁷¹

As I have been exploring, the two notices printed in the *PW* and *W* framed Jones's narrative differently. In the *W* Jones's narrative is framed less as an abolitionist text and more as a narrative that can teach its readers religious messages about the need to toil for their 'desolate brethren'. The notice suggests that by purchasing the narrative the readers can help further religious missions amongst the heathen. In contrast, the notice in the *PW* focuses more on reading the slave narrative in ways that indicate an interest

⁷¹ *PW*, 21 August 1852, p. 3.

in the conventional aspects of the slave narrative genre, for example its narrative of the escape of a fugitive slave and his ‘condition as a slave’. This notice focuses more on Jones’s text as an abolitionist narrative by encouraging readers to see the narrative as evidence of one man’s experience of slavery. Readers of the newspapers did not need to approach Jones’s narrative as the notices invited them to, and they could have read against the grain of these ‘threshold[s]’. However, the notices had authority because they were likely received as written by the newspaper’s editor-pastor and given the fact that these notices were a key, perhaps unique, Canadian threshold for Jones’s narrative. When Jones’s narrative was reprinted and circulated in Atlantic Canada, its Canadian readers were invited to approach a narrative that still addressed readers in the United States. The newspaper notices addressed local religious readers in Halifax in a way that the recirculated slave narrative did not, and hence the notices were a central space for readers to think about how they could approach Jones’s narrative and the meaning that the editor-pastor wanted them to get from this text.

Thomas Jones’s slave narrative

In the introduction to this chapter, I discussed how critics have seen Thomas Jones’s narrative as a classic abolitionist African American slave narrative. I also noted that scholars have identified the longevity of the appeal of Jones’s narrative after the abolition of slavery. In this section, I will offer a more contextualised reading of Jones’s narrative. I suggest that the evangelical religious reading available in Jones’s narrative provides an explanation for its continued appeal during the nineteenth century and after the abolition of slavery in the United States, which has not been considered. By approaching Jones’s narrative through the religious newspapers and treating them as paratexts or ‘threshold[s]’ to his text, in this chapter I aim to re-contextualise his

narrative in a way that more closely reflects how contemporary readers in Canada were invited to approach it.⁷²

The religious newspapers provide a way to examine the worldview and beliefs underpinning Jones's narrative. Jane P. Tompkins noted in the 1980s that literary critics were devaluing and misreading American sentimental fiction such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as 'trashy' sensationalised fiction.⁷³ In *Sensational Designs* she argues that its cultural 'power' can only be appreciated by placing it in the context of 'the system of beliefs that undergirds the patterns of sentimental fiction'.⁷⁴ Tompkins argues that sentimental literature in the nineteenth century 'represents a monumental effort to reorganise culture from the woman's point of view'.⁷⁵ She notes that sentimental literature can be best understood if we 'situate [authors such as] Harriet Beecher Stowe in a context of evangelical Christianity'.⁷⁶ She argues that the 'popular elements' of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 'the religious stereotypes of "Sunday-School fiction"' and its "'pathos"' and "'melodrama"' are the 'only terms in which the book's success can be explained'.⁷⁷ The religious elements of Jones's narrative are still being undervalued today by critics that seek to read it primarily in a political abolitionist context. William L. Andrews suggests one reason for the longevity of the appeal of Jones's narrative throughout the nineteenth century and after abolition could be the very long focus in the narrative on Jones learning to read.⁷⁸ Although he goes on to state that through 'learning to read Jones is converted to Christianity', Andrews does not develop the link between the religious

⁷² Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 2.

⁷³ Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, p. 125.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 126, p. 127.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁷⁸ Andrews, 'General Introduction', in *North Carolina Slave Narratives* (p. 12).

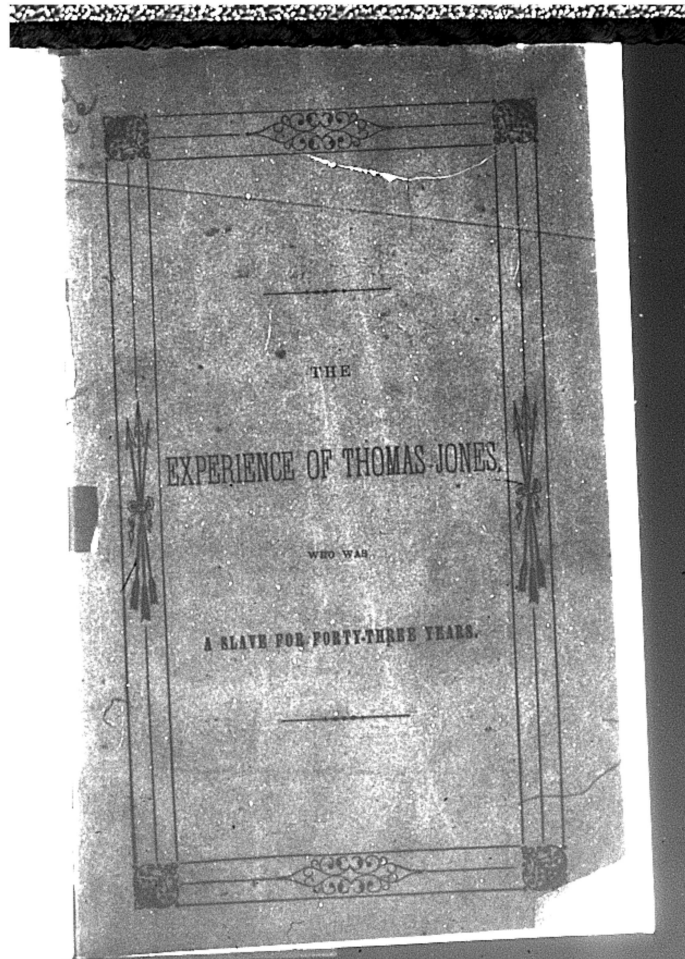


Figure 3.1: The Front Cover of Thomas Jones's *The William Macintosh Experience of Thomas Jones, Who Was a Slave for Forty-Three Years, Written by a Friend as Given by Brother Jones* (Saint John, N. B. [New Brunswick]: J. & A. McMillan, 1853), British Library, mic. F. 232 no. 35352

significance of this textual moment and the narrative's long appeal, choosing rather to read its popularity in a secular light.⁷⁹

The title of Jones's slave narrative, *The Experience of Thomas Jones, Who was a Slave for Forty-Three Years*, invites the reader to read the narrative as primarily about the religious 'Experience' of Jones.⁸⁰ The *OED* glosses 'experience' as 'A state of mind or feeling forming part of the inner religious life' and as the experiences Methodists shared at meetings.⁸¹ Today we can miss the religious meaning of 'Experience' in the title of Jones's narrative. On the front cover of the 1853 copy of Jones's narrative, printed in New Brunswick, the way the title is arranged places an exaggerated focus on Jones's text as an account of his religious experience (Figure 3.1). 'The' appears on its own line and after a blank space in large capital letters 'Experience of Thomas Jones' appears. Laid out further down the page in much smaller type appears 'who was', and below this, following a space, again in small type, there appears 'a slave for forty-three years'. This is echoed to less dramatic effect on the title page of the 1853 copy of the narrative. The insertion of the words 'William Macintosh' interrupts the blank space, which makes the 'Experience of Thomas Jones' a clear focal point for the reader:

THE
WILLIAM MACINTOSH
EXPERIENCE OF THOMAS JONES

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁸⁰ On this concept see Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 11.

⁸¹ 'experience, n, 4. b.', *Oxford English Dictionary* [online] [accessed 26 January 2017].

WHO WAS
A SLAVE FOR FORTY-THREE YEARS
WRITTEN BY A FRIEND
AS GIVEN TO HIM BY BROTHER JONES (sig. A2r)

As the title page and front cover suggest, in his narrative Jones blends together the conventions of the slave narrative genre and the Methodist spiritual autobiography.

Thomas Jones's slave narrative closely resembles the structural form of the (Wesleyan) Methodist spiritual autobiography. Ted A. Campbell argues that the genre was largely used to tell the lives of prominent Methodists, and it was 'a powerful means to disseminate Wesleyan and Methodist understandings of the Christian faith' and 'of Christian life'. Campbell identifies that the autobiographies have a 'recognizable structure' and cover 'the following five aspects of spiritual experience':

1. They all begin with an account of the pre-conversion life of the narrator [...]
2. They all have an account of the narrator's conversion [...]
3. They all continue with stories of the struggle of the soul after conversion [...]
4. [They] include a testimony to the experience of entire sanctification.
5. [They] include a narrative of the person's calling to be a preacher.⁸²

Jones's narrative follows the structure of the Methodist spiritual autobiography. It begins with an account of his pre-conversion life, then relates his conversion to Christianity, describes the struggles of his soul after his conversion and ends with him answering his calling to be a preacher. Jones's slave narrative relates his conversion to

⁸² Ted A. Campbell, 'Spiritual Biography and Autobiography', in *The Cambridge Companion to American Methodism*, ed. by Jason E. Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 243-60 (p. 257, p. 243, p. 249).

Christianity and his experience of first attending a meeting at a Methodist church and later a Quaker meeting. Jones describes his journey towards God as beginning with learning to read. He recollects that he learns to read, then begins to pray, reads the Bible and attends religious meetings, where he is guided to confess his sins to God. Jones relates how he then goes through a cycle of facing up to his own sins and asking for forgiveness from God. His Christian status in the text demands his faith and his forgiveness of his cruel slave master. Jones is first called a Christian by Binney Pennison who states “Well the Brother Jones, I believe that you are a Christian” after asking him what he will do if his master whips him and tells him not to attend religious meetings (25). Jones demonstrates his Christian fortitude by insisting he will still attend religious meetings and will ask God’s forgiveness for his master. Binney Pennison’s response suggests that it is Jones’s willingness to endure physical pain and stand strong with his faith and his attitude of Christian forgiveness towards his master that defines him as a Christian in the world of the narrative.

Thomas Jones was not the first autobiographer to draw from the conventions of the spiritual autobiography to craft an antislavery narrative. The theme of spiritual conversion that animates Jones’s narrative has a long tradition in the literature of the black Atlantic. In his survey of ‘major works’ published in the eighteenth century and written or dictated by those of African birth or descent, written in English, Vincent Carretta summarises that ‘Virtually all the African-British publications in prose took the form of spiritual autobiographies’ and underscores that the writers were largely ‘beneficiaries and/or agents’ of the evangelical Christian movement headed by Methodist or Baptist missionaries in the British Atlantic world.⁸³

⁸³ *Unchained Voices*, ed. by Carretta, p. 9.

Yolanda Pierce examines the narrative of the former slave and Methodist minister George White: *A Brief Account of the Life, Experiences, Travels and Gospel Labours of George White* (1810). Pierce notes that George White uses ‘the spiritual autobiography form to narrate the story both of his religious conversion and his life in slavery [...] reworking a conventional literary form, to tell an unconventional story’.⁸⁴ Pierce argues that the readers largely decide whether to read this text as a spiritual narrative or an antislavery narrative: it ‘depends on the reader [...] which of these aspects takes precedent in the imagination’.⁸⁵ However, she suggests that the ‘careful reader’ cannot mistake the antislavery polemic of White’s text.⁸⁶ Pierce’s argument highlights the agency of the reader, but it also prioritises the abolitionist message of slave narratives by suggesting this is something the reader cannot overlook. Although she gives more priority to the abolitionist message of slave narratives, Pierce’s interpretation could equally be applied to suggest that the reader could have been primed to focus on White’s narrative as a spiritual narrative.

Jones’s focus on his spiritual life enables him to mount a Christian attack on slavery. His narrative presents slavery as precipitating feelings of despair in Jones, which endangers his religious health. In his narrative this loss of faith is presented as a personal experience of religious crisis. Two aspects of slavery bring about Jones’s loss of faith in the text. Firstly, his despair comes from seeing that people are not obeying the Golden Rule and, secondly, the loss of his family and home is described as freezing his heart and bringing about a crisis in his faith (27). After his first wife and three children are sold into slavery Jones describes his struggles with his soul as ‘A deep despair was in

⁸⁴ Pierce, ‘Redeeming Bondage’ (p. 93).

⁸⁵ Ibid. (p. 92).

⁸⁶ Ibid. (p. 97).

my heart, such as no one is asked to bear in such cruel crushing power as the poor slave severed forever from the objects of his love, by the capacity of his brother' (31). The loss of his first wife and children is described as precipitating a crisis in faith for Jones. Jones describes his home as becoming 'darker' (33). He describes his house as having empty chairs and beds and remarks that he avoided his home for four years because it was darker than the holds on ships where he worked, evoking the space of the transatlantic slave ship. Jones's despair after being separated from his wife and children recalls the first time Jones experienced despair and had thoughts of suicide in the text when he was first parted from his mother and the family home, separated from his family aged nine and taken from Mr Hawes's plantation to Mr Jones's plantation in Wilmington. This is the first time in the narrative that Jones describes someone as a friend, describing his mother as loving him 'as no other friend could do', and it is the first time he describes his 'wretched' 'frozen heart'. Although Jones is not a Christian at this moment in the text, his declaration that he wishes to die as he is walking to the plantation in Wilmington anticipates a Christian despair: 'Oh, I thought how cruel and hopeless my lot! Would that I could fall down here and die' (8, 10). He describes the moment he left Mr Hawes's plantation in a way that underscores it as a loss of the figure of the mother. Jones describes being taken away from his home as clutching onto his mother ('holding on to my mother's clothes') (8). It is symbolic that he physically will not let go of her skirts, and it is her that he clings on to. Jones does not depict this as a family scene with his father and brothers and sisters: only his mother appears to be present in the house, and this further underscores that this moment is about the severing of the mother-child bond. A few pages later Jones jumps abruptly forward thirteen years to recall his return to his family home at the age of twenty-two. He describes the home as 'all desolate', and the only person still there is his mother, who is old and dying (8).

The abrupt movement forward in time suggests the primacy of the loss of Jones's original separation with his mother, replaying its loss for a second time. This is also underscored by Jones's remark on the effect that departing from his mother's presence for a second time had on him: 'I went back to my chains with a deeper woe in my heart than ever before'. The imagery of Jones returning to his chains conveys a sense that departing from his mother for a second time in the text was a form of re-enslavement.

Thomas Jones recalls the struggle of his soul and the challenge of sustaining his faith while in slavery after his conversion to Christianity. He describes how the slavery he saw around him appalled him as it deviated so far from the Golden Rule and vision that Jesus had of the duty of men to 'Each to treat his brother as he would be treated' and 'the command given to the followers of the loving saviour, to teach all nations to obey the blessed precepts of the Gospel' (27). He describes how the impression in his mind of thousands of Christian slaves being whipped and chained precipitated his feelings of despair and his disbelief in God:

then I thought that I, and thousands of my brothers and sisters, loving the Lord and pressing on to a blessed and endless home in His presence, were slaves, — branded, whipped, chained; deeply, hopelessly degraded,—thus degraded and outraged, too, in a land of Bibles and Sabbaths and Churches, and by professed followers of the Lord of Love. And often such thoughts were too much for me. In an agony of despair, I have at times given up prayer and hope together, believing that my master's words were true, that "religion is a cursed mockery, and the Bible a lie." (27-28)

In this extract Jones relates his point of view as an enslaved man reflecting on the treatment of slaves who 'lov[e]...the Lord'. He describes being moved to despair because Christ's work to encourage souls to heaven is not been carried on by Christians

in the United States. Jones describes how such reflections caused a crisis in his faith: ‘such thoughts were too much for me. In an agony of despair, I have at times given up prayer and hope together’. Jones remembers that at these times he doubted God’s ‘justice and love’ and saw the Bible as a ‘lie’. The narrative presents the threat to Jones’s religious health as coming from his Christian feeling: it comes from his sympathy for others, and his feelings of despair are roused by a sort of mental torture that he experiences as he pictures the irreligiousness of people professing to be Christians in the United States and their cruel treatment of enslaved people.

In *The Experience of Thomas Jones* Jones presents his loss of faith and Christian despair in terms that readers of the religious newspapers would have understood. Throughout the newspapers the idea that readers can quickly lose their religious faith if not committed to its maintenance is reinforced through the need for the repetitive reading of narratives that encourage their religious health. The short story ‘Martin’s Rose’ demonstrates the wider view that absence of the mother-figure and the family home can precipitate despair in Christian believers. It tells the story of a young woman who is distracted by worldly pursuits when sent away to school and loses her religious faith. The girl is presented as rekindling her religious enthusiasm upon her return home because of the Christian teachings of her mother’s male servant.⁸⁷

Jones’s narrative functions, in part, as a conduct book for Christian whites. Throughout the text, stock characters of helpful, friendly whites contrast markedly with irreligious ones. The title page ‘written by a friend, as given to him by brother Jones’ inscribes a power relationship between Jones and his amanuensis (sig. A2r). The terms ‘friend’ and

⁸⁷ ‘Martin’s Rose’, *PW*, 20 November 1852, pp. 1-2.

‘brother’ depict a relationship between the amanuensis and Jones of Christian benevolence, and in which William Macintosh is a ‘friend’, and this holds meanings beyond that indicating a close relationship. The language speaks to its Christian connotations as a ‘person who wishes another, a cause etc, well, a sympathiser, helper, patron or supporter’.⁸⁸ The term was often used in the context of a middle class person feeling sympathy and concern for another person presented as of a lower social status than them. The reader is invited to see Jones as a brother by the title page, and this is used in the sense of one belonging to the Christian fellowship before Christ. This language also inscribes a power relationship between Jones and his amanuensis that positions the amanuensis as a white sympathiser and in which Jones’s status as a brother is recognised by the latter.

The narrative reads as a litany of thanks to friends and acts of kindness. The semantic field throughout the text is words of ‘brother’, ‘friend’, ‘heart’ and ‘kind’, and Jones first becomes inspired to learn to read because he yearns to have more ‘friends’. There are over twenty-five instances of thanking others for their kindness or noting the kindness of others in this text and of describing people and objects, such as his beloved spelling book, as ‘friends’. Some friends help Jones in practical ways, helping him learn to read, escape slavery and raise funds, and there are those who touch his heart and bring him back from the brink of despair through their acts of kindness. David Cogdell is described as a ‘noble friend’ whose ‘little acts of kindness’ lift his ‘desolate heart’ and bring him back from ‘dark despair’ (12). Each white character Jones meets is categorised as either a helpful friend or an ironically labelled unkind ‘brother’. This takes place before Jones’s conversion to Christianity in the text, but the danger his soul

⁸⁸ ‘Friend: 4a.’, *Oxford English Dictionary* [online] [accessed 27 January 2017].

is in at these moments of gloom and hopelessness is reflected in the terms ‘despair’ and ‘desolate’. These descriptions echo his first protestations of such feelings when he is separated from his family and home of his birth, and, dragged along the road, he describes how he wishes to die (10).

In the closing moments of the text, Jones offers a prayer of gratitude to God for the ‘kindness’ of his friends who have met his suffering with their ‘sympathy, love and generous aid’. He thanks his friends who have saved him and his family from ‘pinching want’, and he implicitly presents them as model Christians bestowing charity upon him. As elsewhere in the narrative, Jones calls upon God as the audience of such kindness and hopes that those who have been generous to him will receive blessings from heaven:

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving Day. God will know, and He alone can know, the deep and fervent gratitude and joy with which I shall keep it, as I gather my friends, my dear family, around me to celebrate the unspeakable goodness of God to me, and to speak, with swelling hearts, of the kindness of the dear friends who have poured upon our sadness and fears the sunlight of sympathy, love and generous aid. May the blessing of Heaven rest down now and forever upon them, is the prayer of their grateful brother, and of his dear family, by their kindness saved from pinching want. (48)

This has superficial similarities with the language and tone of the notice printed in the *Wesleyan*, which characterised Jones as a needy individual who would welcome the charitable giving of Christian sympathisers. However, in this extract Jones also reaches beyond the conventions of the grateful slave trope, explored earlier in relation to the newspaper narratives. Similarly to earlier authors of slave narratives, Jones presents God as the only audience and true recipient of his gratitude, rather than presenting his

slave master as the recipient of his gratitude.⁸⁹ He suggests that recollecting the kindness of others to him in his past allows his heart to swell in gratitude, an evangelical sign for strengthening one's faith and relationship with God. Jones does not include his former master in his litany of thanks in his narrative. He does not thank him for letting him pray or live as a Christian or when he stops whipping him. In this way he refuses to conform to the trope for presenting slave gratitude to masters in contemporaneous texts such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or the religious newspapers that reinforced ameliorative positions on American slavery and circulated tropes that produced racial difference.

Critics have argued that Thomas Jones is not presented as an 'idealised [Christian] slave martyr' or Uncle Tom figure in his slave narrative. This responds to the fact that in 1855 Thomas Jones was presented as the eponymous hero of Harriet Beecher Stowe's antislavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in the frontispiece of his narrative. The frontispiece presents an image of a black man smoking a pipe and dressed as a gentleman and underneath him the image of a log cabin, and the words 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' are displayed around this image. William L. Andrews claims that 'readers would have found few affinities between Thomas H. Jones [...] and Stowe's idealised negro'.⁹⁰ David A. Davis claims 'Jones's story diverges markedly from the tale of Uncle Tom', noting that Jones 'found a way to preserve his religious faith and his human dignity while protecting his family, emancipating his parents and escaping slavery'.⁹¹ Thomas Jones's fate differs markedly from Tom's in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In Chapter Forty-One

⁸⁹ On the resistance to the grateful slave trope in eighteenth-century black British writing including slave narratives, for example in Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative*, see Chapter Five in Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave*, and for a discussion of how black Atlantic writers subverted the trope by showing that gratitude could only be expressed towards God and its use as an antislavery strategy, see especially p. 182.

⁹⁰ Andrews, 'General Introduction' (p. 12).

⁹¹ Davis, 'The Experience of Rev. Thomas H. Jones: Introduction' (p. 189, p. 200).

of Stowe's novel, Tom peacefully, and some have argued passively, submits to being whipped to death at the hands of the slave owner Legree, while refusing to give up the whereabouts of the runaway slaves Cassy and Emmeline and avowing his Christian love and acceptance of his fate. He dies in slavery in Stowe's novel. As Davis notes, Thomas Jones's narrative departs markedly from that of Tom; it presents him as a complex individual who goes on to escape slavery and becomes a preacher, and he is not an idealised Uncle Tom figure overall.

There is a scene in Jones's narrative, however, in which he is presented as a Christian slave martyr, and which evokes the imagery of Tom's death scene in Stowe's novel. Andrews and Davis overlook this moment in the text and this part of the narrative is problematic for their argument that Thomas Jones is not presented as an Uncle Tom figure in the text because strong parallels are drawn in this passage between Jones and Stowe's eponymous hero. In an extended scene, Thomas Jones comes remarkably close to an Uncle Tom figure and is even called 'Tom' by his master who threatens to whip him to death (24). In this scene Jones is whipped by his master and his master threatens to murder him if he does not promise to give up praying. Jones refuses to give up praying and accepts his own death in the light of his master's threats, demonstrating his Christian steadfastness. We have already seen earlier in this chapter how this scene of a Christian slave remaining steadfast to their faith despite being threatened with death could be read as a Methodist narrative, designed to stimulate a joyful reaction, or as a tale designed to evoke antislavery horror. Jones is presented as a Christian martyr prepared to die for his Christian beliefs. The scene is given a gravity and sense of foreboding. This reinforces the sense that the reader is invited to see this scene in which

Jones is whipped as different from the other violent episodes in the narrative, and that it is a near-death experience for Jones. Jones relates how in the early morning after returning from a Methodist meeting his master asked to see him. He describes stripping off his clothes, and the narrative slows down to focus on the whip: 'He ordered me to strip off my clothes, and, as I did so, he took down a cow-hide, heavy and stiff with blood' (24). Jones describes being whipped, and he makes it clear to the reader that he felt so much pain that he believed he was near to death: 'My suffering was so great, that it seemed to me I should die'. He relates how his master says he will whip him to death if he will not stop praying, and he responded with an acceptance of his own death with Christian fortitude and a reassertion of his faith: 'I told him [...] *I must pray while I lived*'.⁹² In the context of Christian joyful tears at such narratives, reflected in the Uncle Tom story explored below, we can anticipate that this scene may have been expected to stimulate both an antislavery horror and a Christian joy. In Jones's narrative he is able to be both the Christian slave martyr and, later in the narrative, a runaway slave. The text shows that Jones is able to perform the role of a true Christian martyr. It is his master's decision to stop whipping him that means Jones can later rebel and runaway from slavery. All the tension in the scene is resolved in one long sentence: 'He then began to whip me the second time, but soon stopped, threw down the bloody cow hide, and told me to go wash myself, and if I was determined to be a fool, why, I must be one'. The portrayal of the slaveowner in this scene is revealing in the narrative's fixation on his irreligiousness. He is described as saying that religion is a 'mockery', and he says he 'does not want slaves praying and whining round about their souls'. This reinforces the fact that this whipping scene is not about antislavery anxieties or securing freedom for slaves as such, but it taps into an anxiety about heathens and forbidding slaves to

⁹² Italics are reproduced from the original.

practice religion. Davis makes the point that Jones goes on to escape slavery and help his family to freedom. However, what Davis does not note is that this moment also presents him as a Christian slave martyr prepared to die for his beliefs.⁹³

The narrative goes on to suggest that slavery can be on one level compatible with Christianity. After waiting for six months to get a paper from his master so he can join the church, Jones performs the role of a faithful Christian slave to try to convince his master to write him the paper: ‘my master at last acknowledged that he could not find any fault with my conduct, and that it was impossible to find a more faithful slave than I was to him’, and he notes that ‘And so, at last he gave me a paper’ (26). Jones describes how his master let him attend Methodist meetings and pray: ‘[I could] pray and go to [...] meetings without molestation’ (29). The text makes it clear that Jones is acting as the faithful slave to further his own wishes, but this image of the faithful Christian slave also presents a fantasy of compatibility between slavery and Christianity in the text that some readers, particularly the readers of the religious newspapers, may have seen as comforting. This may have appealed to the readers’ missionary sensibilities and desire to spread the gospel. This is only a short period in the text, but it models the possibility of Christianity and slavery coexisting together, and it shows a slaveowner being taught to let his slave be a Christian and coming to see the value of it, which comes closer to an ameliorationist view of American slavery. This feels closer to some of the stories in the *Wesleyan* that focus on presenting irreligious white slaveowners that need to be reformed and that prioritise the religious health of slaves over their liberation from slavery. Like these wider narratives, Jones’s text also tells the story of a slaveowner who

⁹³ Davis, ‘The Experience of Rev. Thomas H. Jones: Introduction’ (p. 189).

once forbade the Christian practice of his slaves and then allowed them to attend Christian meetings and to pray.

Jones's narrative ultimately presents slavery as incompatible with Christianity. Although Jones is eventually able to practice Christianity as a slave in the text, the narrative depicts Jones choosing to run away from slavery, and his freedom from slavery is presented as essential to maintaining his Christian faith. The resistance of slave masters to their slaves practicing Christianity is not presented as the main reason why slavery and Christianity cannot co-exist in the world of the text. Slavery is presented as incompatible with Christianity because it breaks down the home, family and the mother-child bond that are shown to be essential to the maintenance of evangelical Christian life. In Jones's narrative the family is presented as unable to exist in slavery, and it is the breakdown of family life that leads to his spiritual despair, and ultimately catalyses his escape from slavery and desire for freedom. Jones's narrative presents slavery as ultimately incompatible with Christianity and dangerous to the individual soul. It is in the disintegration of the family and especially the removal of the individual from the family home and the figure of the mother that the sin of slavery is located in Jones's narrative. This is a stance that spoke to an evangelical Christian worldview and may have inspired some religious readers to develop antislavery views.

In this section I have shown that Thomas Jones uses the structure of the Wesleyan spiritual autobiography to craft his antislavery polemic. Jones presents slavery as a sin because it breaks down the essential components for sustaining Christian faith and the evangelical warming of the heart that were essential to the Christian experience. These essential components are presented in Jones's narrative as being the proximity to and

deep connections with one's home, family and mother. In Jones's narrative all aspects of family life are presented as incompatible with the slave experience. Yolanda Pierce has argued that the careful reader can see abolitionist messages in slave narratives that use the structure of spiritual autobiographies.⁹⁴ However, I suggest it would have also been possible for readers to focus on the spiritual narrative and favour this over the abolitionist content of such narratives. In the previous section I discussed a wider range of applications for stories of slave experience. 'Old Jeddy' demonstrates that the stories of fictional enslaved people in the newspapers were used as a way to teach readers about Christian resilience in their own life and to inspire dedication to the missionary cause. In this example, the story of the enslaved man is not about expressing his individual experience as a slave but a morality tale about Christian steadfastness in the face of obstacles. The *PW* reprint of 'A Real Uncle Tom' prioritises the antislavery reading of this narrative, but it also reveals the vulnerability of the text about a Christian slave martyr to be read as a joyful story about the faith and steadfastness of a Christian believer. As these reflect, the framing context of narratives of slavery in Canada could invite readers to see a range of meanings in these narratives that went beyond the experience of the slave and which could present an ameliorationist or abolitionist standpoint on American slavery. In the *Wesleyan* notice, the references to Jones's antislavery agenda are taken out, and readers were primed to read what may appear to be antislavery narratives as primarily being about despair regarding the failure of a missionary agenda. In this section I have explored how Jones's narrative offers moments that could have been read as antislavery but that could also have been enjoyed by readers independent of the narrative's abolitionist thrust. Readers of the newspapers were primed to approach Jones's narrative not just as readers, but as potential buyers

⁹⁴ Pierce, 'Redeeming Bondage' (p. 97).

that could help a needy Christian believer in his missionary agenda. In this light, it is not the textual content of the narrative but buying the pamphlet itself as a material object that mattered. In Canada, Thomas Jones's slave narrative provided readers with a way to reinforce their status as Christians committed to an agenda of saving souls. It is probable, given the context of the religious newspapers, that readers buying and reading Jones's narrative in Nova Scotia were less concerned with the abolitionist message of his narrative than Jones himself would have wished. It is clear that they were invited to approach his text from the position of a variety of responses to American slavery that went beyond a purely political and abolitionist context and drew in evangelical and spiritual meanings as well as ameliorationist responses to American slavery.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that pulling slave narratives out of the context of the newspapers that advertised them for sale in Canada does not replicate the experience of reading them at the time. By approaching Thomas Jones's slave narrative through a holistic reading of the newspapers in Halifax, Nova Scotia I have placed it back into the worldview and textual space where readers first encountered it. Scholars have seen Thomas Jones's slave narrative as a classic abolitionist narrative, but I have shown that when slavery narratives were reprinted and circulated in Canada, they could be more about religion and the Christian experience than about the slave's experience. Although both newspapers prioritised an evangelical agenda, they provided slightly different thresholds to Jones's narrative. The newspapers took different stances on American slavery. The *Presbyterian Witness* was supportive of antislavery sentiment, but the *Wesleyan* did not adopt an antislavery stance, although it was critical of the abuses of slavery, and took an ameliorationist position. Readers were 'primed' to look for the

Christian teachings in stories and to see these newspapers as aids to their religious health. As the story 'A Real Uncle Tom' reprinted in the *Presbyterian Witness* suggests, the figure of the Christian slave dying in slavery at the hands of an abusive master demanding he give up his religious faith had two audiences in the mid-nineteenth century: a Christian and an antislavery one. The 'cultural power' of these narratives was two-fold: they could be read as stories designed to elicit religious joy and antislavery horror, depending on their audience and how they were framed for consumption.⁹⁵ The way these narratives were framed could invite readers to see these stories variously as didactic Christian tales of faithful believers and as antislavery literature and evidence of the horrors of slavery. The magical negro and grateful slave stories printed in the *Wesleyan* reflect that fictional American slaves were part of stories that prioritised evangelical Christian meanings rather than antislavery agendas. They could idealise plantation life and present it as an institution that could be compatible with Christianity.

Today scholars of the African American slave narrative have a tendency to categorise autobiographical slave narratives as 'authentic' and to see them as separate and distinct from fictionalised narratives of enslavement.⁹⁶ For example, William L. Andrews's online bibliographic database of slave narratives, part of the website *Documenting the American South*, subdivides its digitised slave narratives into three distinct sections: 'autobiographical, biographical, and fictionalized'.⁹⁷ These categories are useful for scholars because they distinguish between novelistic accounts of enslavement about fictitious slaves and autobiographical slave narratives that relate the first-person

⁹⁵ Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, p. 126.

⁹⁶ Meredith Malburne, 'Autobiography of a Female Slave: Summary', *Documenting the American South* <<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/browne/summary.html>> [accessed 26 January 2017].

⁹⁷ William L. Andrews, 'Introduction to the Scholarly Bibliography of Slave and Ex-Slave Narratives', *Documenting the American South* <<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/biblintro.html>> [accessed 26 January 2017].

experiences of enslaved people. This distinction is especially important in light of the status of the African American slave narrative as a foundational genre in the African American literary tradition. However, when we examine the recirculation of a slave narrative in Canada in the context of its newspapers, we read them within textual spaces where the categories were more porous between autobiographical and fictional narratives of slavery than critics would recognise today. As I have shown in this chapter, fictionalised newspaper narratives of slavery, slave narratives and novels about slavery were circulated together within religious newspapers in Canada, with little clear distinction made between these texts. As such, it makes sense to read these texts together in order to understand slavery in print in Canada and to explore book-length Canadian slave narratives in this context.

Reading book-length slave narratives alongside lesser known newspaper narratives and fictionalised stories gives a more complex account of Canadian attitudes to slavery. It shows how antislavery narratives could circulate alongside notions about the class and racial inferiority of American slaves, as I have indicated in exploring the magical negro and grateful slave tropes in narratives reprinted in the newspapers. This complicates seeing these narratives as part of a purely abolitionist slave narrative tradition, and it suggests that newspapers and paratextual materials, perhaps especially in the context of the strong newspaper and reprint book trade in Canada rather than a strong trade in original book publications, are key for exploring how contemporary readers were invited to read book-length slave narratives. It might be tempting to assume that Canadian readers selflessly consumed antislavery narratives and readers felt morally outraged by the peculiar institution. However, the way Jones's narrative was framed for readers suggests that when they were circulated in Canada narratives of the experiences

of enslaved people could be primarily consumed for Christian purposes and newspapers could frame them variously in ways that supported an abolitionist or ameliorationist stance on American slavery.

Chapter Four

Broken Shackles: A Century of Canada and Slavery in Print

When *Broken Shackles* was published in 1889, under the imprint of William Briggs, the book steward of the Methodist Book and Publishing House in Toronto, it may have been the first book-length slave narrative to have been originally published in Canada.

Broken Shackles is an American slavery narrative written in Ontario by John Frost. In part, the narrative provides a history of American slavery, containing chapters that give a basic history of American slavery and its abolition, but at the core of the text is the story of the former American slave Jim Henson. The narrator Glenelg, living in Owen Sound, Ontario in 1888-1889, collects and transcribes the oral stories of Henson, who has lived for many years in Canada after fleeing from the United States in 1850. This text poses some challenges in its interpretation. On the one hand *Broken Shackles* is not an abolitionist text as it was published many years after the abolition of slavery in the United States. However, on the other it is an antislavery narrative. The narrative reads in part as a history of slavery and abolition in the United States. It is clear that the stance taken in the narrative is that slavery is a Christian sin and morally reprehensible, and the narrative celebrates the abolition of slavery in the United States. Given that *Broken Shackles* is an antislavery narrative published many years after the abolition of American slavery, its antislavery purpose cannot be explained as part of a political campaign for the abolition of slavery, unlike the texts examined so far in this thesis, and in this context I want to explore the perceived value of such a narrative for its readers. I want to explore what this narrative can suggest about Canadian antislavery, given the publication of this text outside of an abolitionist context, and to examine the way that

Canada is represented in relation to American slavery. *Broken Shackles* sits at the end of a textual tradition stretching across a century, as explored in the previous three chapters. In this chapter, I explore how this narrative can be seen as coming out of and revising the tradition that came before it. I use *Broken Shackles* as a way to both reflect back on the thesis as a whole and to look at Canadian attitudes to slavery in the late nineteenth century. I situate the narrative within the American colourism and the slave narrative genres. I argue that the author John Frost was an astute reader of previous textualisations of slavery and Canada examined in the previous three chapters, and I reflect on how he draws from and revises this tradition in *Broken Shackles*.

John Frost was a lawyer and mayor of Owen Sound, Ontario. As Peter Meyler notes in his modern reprint of *Broken Shackles*, ‘it is said that the Frosts helped to provide shelter to a number of African Americans’, and it has been suggested that he had antislavery sympathies and met Harriet Beecher Stowe. *Broken Shackles* was ‘[Frost’s] only book’.¹ *Broken Shackles* has a frame narrative; it opens in Sydenham (now Owen Sound, Ontario) in the year 1888, and it closes in the same location in 1889. In the first chapter the reader is introduced to the figure of Glenelg, who is a constructed author/narrator and amanuensis of the text and a Canadian living in Owen Sound. The narrator Glenelg is separate from the author John Frost who appears in a Hitchcock-style cameo in Chapter Thirty-Six. In this chapter, Frost (‘Mister-ah-Frost the merchant’) informs Daddy Hall a new black settler is arriving.² Glenelg describes meeting a former

¹ Peter Meyler, ‘Introduction’, in *Broken Shackles: Old Man Henson From Slavery to Freedom*, ed. by Peter Meyler (Toronto: Natural Heritage, 2001), pp. xiii-xviii (p. xvi).

² John Frost, *Broken Shackles: Old Man Henson From Slavery to Freedom*, ed. by Peter Meyler (Toronto: Natural Heritage, 2001), p. 193. In this chapter I will refer to this edition and to the first edition of the text: John Frost, *Broken Shackles* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1889). All subsequent references are to these editions and will be given after quotations in the text. The year of the edition will be provided after quotations where the edition referred to is not already clear in the text.

American slave, Jim Henson, in the streets of Owen Sound, and he recounts that he read out a letter to him from his estranged family living in the United States (1889, 9).

Glenelg explains that this inspires Henson to begin to recollect his 'former slave life', and he describes how he copied this down into the present volume: 'The letter set him thinking and talking of his long-lost home, and of stirring incidents of former slave life, as given in the following pages' (1889, 15). Glenelg describes writing Henson's recollections of slavery in the United States into a publishable narrative as a seamless process, imagining his pen as a conduit for Henson's stories. From the second chapter, the narrative is largely composed of Glenelg's third-person narration of Henson's stories of plantation life. In the final chapter the narrative focus returns to Glenelg in Owen Sound in 1889. A year has passed from when Glenelg started writing down Henson's experiences of slavery, and Glenelg describes completing the book, *Broken Shackles*.

As *Broken Shackles* relates, Henson was born a slave in Maryland. Chapters two to twenty-five focus on Henson's experiences as an enslaved man, including his conversion to Christianity. Chapter Twenty-Six relates his decision to escape from slavery, and in Chapter Twenty-Seven, entitled 'The Escape', Henson travels to Pennsylvania. After becoming a free man in Colombia, Pennsylvania, he subsequently flees to New Jersey to evade recapture. Henson later returns to Philadelphia, where he marries and becomes 'comfortable and contented' (1889, 263). In 1850 Henson moves to Canada after the passage of the second Fugitive Slave Law. He moves to Owen Sound in Ontario in 1854, and is still living there when the narrative opens in 1888. The final chapter of *Broken Shackles* describes Henson's life in Canada and brings the narrative back to the present day in the year 1889. *Broken Shackles* is in part a history of slavery and abolition in the United States, and throughout the text Glenelg goes on

narrative diversions in which he sketches out the history of American slavery and abolition. For example, in Chapter Three, entitled ‘Scars and Stripes’, Glenelg provides a historical account of the origins of slavery in the United States and shows that this was enshrined in the Declaration of Independence. Glenelg takes an antislavery stance in depicting the failure of the United States to abolish slavery in the Declaration of Independence and the fact that the nation was founded on slavery. He informs his reader ‘the new flag of stars and stripes was flung to the breeze as an emblem of national freedom, and yet it floated over hundreds of thousands of slaves, and was destined yet to float over them until increased to some millions in number’ (1889, 25).

Until recently *Broken Shackles* has been little explored by Canadian literary critics. As George Elliott Clarke notes, like other Canadian slave narratives, it is ‘absent from most anthologies and guides of Canadian literature’.³ The narrative has recently received greater critical attention. For example, Clarke includes *Broken Shackles* in his bibliography of nineteenth-century Canadian slave narratives.⁴ In 2001 the narrative was reprinted in a modern edition edited by Peter Meyler for the first time since its original publication. However, scholars have yet to offer a sustained textual analysis of this narrative or to successfully read it within a context of the literary tradition that preceded it. The blurb on the back cover of the modern edition edited by Meyler argues *Broken Shackles* is a ‘very unique [sic.] book’ (back cover). It describes Henson’s narrative as, ‘one of the very few books that documented the journey to Canada from the perspective of a person of African descent’. Chapter Two of this thesis shows that this is not the case and that, in fact, *Broken Shackles* comes out of a long tradition of

³ Clarke, ““This is no hearsay”” (p. 12).

⁴ Ibid. (p. 16).

portraying in literature the African American ex-slaves' experience of their flight to Canada and their experiences after these moments of arrival in Canada. Although he misses the prior context, Meyler's point reflects that the portions of slave narratives that represent the lives of fugitive American slaves after crossing the border into Canada have long been ignored, and his interpretation reflects that African American slave narratives have not been seen as Canadian literature. Afua Cooper briefly mentions *Broken Shackles* in the *Hanging of Angelique*, in her examination of the life and trial of the Canadian enslaved woman Marie-Joseph Angelique. Cooper situates *Broken Shackles* in the Canadian slave narrative tradition that she suggests stretches back to the unpublished trial transcripts of Angelique. She notes: 'Another Canadian writer was Jim Henson, who had also fled Maryland. Henson made it all the way down to Grey County, Ontario, where he put down roots. In 1889 he published his life story, *Broken Shackles*'.⁵ Cooper does not mention the character of the amanuensis Glenelg or his role and presence in the narrative. She claims that Jim Henson rather than John Frost is the author who penned and initiated the publication of his memoir. Similarly, in his bibliography of Canadian slave narratives, Clarke lists Henson as the author of *Broken Shackles* and describes John Frost as its editor.⁶

Clarke's and Cooper's desire to read *Broken Shackles* as a black Canadian autobiography rather than explore its interplay of voices is an approach that finds some parallels more broadly within the critical treatment of slave narratives. This is identified by Sara Salih who, exploring the slave narrative of the West Indian slave Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*, explains that a narrow focus that looks for a stable black

⁵ Cooper, *The Hanging of Angelique*, p. 302.

⁶ Clarke, "'This is no hearsay'" (p. 16).

subject misreads the genre; she suggests that in order to mediate against this, scholars should look for the interplay of voices in the slave narrative, such as the presence of editors, and even look at how newspapers can challenge the ‘textual integrity’ of the slave narrative.⁷ Salih’s reading of *The History* reflects a general shift in the critical treatment of the slave narrative, away from earlier readings that tried to recover Prince’s West Indian female voice. More recently, scholars have explored the narrative as a ‘composite text’, examining the the role of the amanuensis Susanna Moodie and the editor Thomas Pringle as well as Prince in shaping the narrative, and seeing these voices as unable to be disentangled from each other.⁸ My methodological approach in this thesis shares some similarities with Salih’s approach in its focus on paratext, exploring the multi-vocal nature of slavery in print and looking at how context and a wider array of less canonical texts (such as newspapers) shift our reading of slavery print including slave narratives. The broader approach to reading slave narratives that Salih advocates seems particularly pertinent in relation to *Broken Shackles*, given that the presence of the amanuensis in the text is so dominant.

In this chapter I offer a reading of *Broken Shackles* that sees Glenelg as a strong presence in the narrative and indivisible from Henson’s voice and John Frost’s artistic project. I see *Broken Shackles* as coming out of John Frost’s blending of two genres: the

⁷ Salih, ‘The History of Mary Prince, the Black Subject, and the Black Canon’ (p. 125, p. 130, p. 134).

⁸ For key examples of the earlier critical treatment of *The History*, see Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670-1834* (London: Routledge, 1992), especially pp. 281-298 and pp. 305-307 and Sandra Pouchet Paquet, ‘The Heartbeat of the West Indian Slave: The History of Mary Prince’, *African American Review*, 26.1 (1992), 131-46 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3042083>> [accessed 3 January 2018]. Examples of the more recent critical approach to *The History* are: Gillian Whitlock, *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women’s Autobiography* (London: Cassell, 2000); K. Merinda Simmons, ‘Beyond “Authenticity”’: Migration and the Epistemology of “Voice” in Mary Prince’s “History of Mary Prince” and Maryse Condé’s “I, Tituba”’, *College Literature*, 36.4 (2009), 75-79 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20642057>> [accessed 5 January 2018]. On the narrative as a ‘composite text’, see Sara Salih, ‘Introduction’, in *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave*, ed. by Sara Salih, rev. edn (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. vii-xxxiv (p. xiii).

slave narrative and American local colour writing. I argue *Broken Shackles* was developing from and transforming the genres and traditions that came before it. In Section One I situate *Broken Shackles* in the context of a stunted book publishing industry in Canada in the nineteenth century. I do this to read it as the endpoint in a tradition that I have been exploring in the previous chapters of this thesis. Next, in Section Two, I explore how we can make sense of *Broken Shackles* as an antislavery narrative that was produced many years after the abolition of American slavery. I situate the narrative within two literary traditions: the slave narrative and American colour or regional writing which was in vogue when Frost penned this narrative, and I read *Broken Shackles* in the context of the texts I have examined in the previous three chapters.⁹ I argue John Frost carefully developed his narrative out of what had gone before and revised these literary archetypes in new ways. In the third section I examine the modern reprinting of *Broken Shackles* in 2001, and I explore the effect of removing Henson's dialect speech from the text by drawing on passages from the 1889 and 2001 editions. I argue that removing the dialect changes how Canadian antislavery attitudes in the narrative read and takes Henson's voice out the doublethink of Canadian antislavery sentiment and racism in which it was originally presented.

***Broken Shackles* and the Canadian publishing trade**

In this section I place *Broken Shackles* in a nineteenth-century Canadian book history publication context to show that what I have been looking at in this thesis is partly a story of Canadian publishing. This situates it at the end of a tradition that looks back on the newspapers and slave narratives I have been examining in this thesis, and it provides

⁹ Richard H. Brodhead, 'The American Literary Field, 1860-1890', in *The Cambridge History of American Literature: Volume Three, Prose Writing, 1860-1910*, ed. by Sacvan Bercovitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 9-62 (pp. 47-48).

an explanation for what we have and have not seen before in textualisations of slavery and Canada in print.

Broken Shackles carries the imprint of the Methodist Book and Publishing House based in Toronto, where William Briggs was the book steward between 1879-1919. In the front cover of the 1889 edition, it is listed as being entered for copyright protection by William Briggs (5). This copyright could indicate that *Broken Shackles* was originally published by Briggs in Canada, but equally it could disguise the fact the narrative was first published and registered for copyright in the United States or Britain, and then Briggs applied for permission to distribute the text and register it for Canadian copyright in Canada. The imprint on the title page shows that the narrative was also distributed by a Methodist reading room in Montreal and a Methodist publishing house in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and that these were both linked to the Methodist Book and Publishing House in Toronto. *Broken Shackles* may have been the first book-length slave narrative published in Canada. However, it is more likely, drawing on Eli Maclaren's reassessment of William Briggs's book stewardship at the Methodist Book and Publishing House, that its Canadian imprint reflects the fact that it was distributed rather than published in Canada.¹⁰ Eli Maclaren argues that although William Briggs is widely championed as Canada's first major literary publisher, Briggs was really a distributor of American and British editions of books.¹¹ Maclaren defines a publisher as someone who 'cultivat[es] a relationship with the author and initiates, organises, and finances the transformation of a manuscript into an edition' as well as 'wholesaling it in one or more markets', whereas a distributor or wholesaler 'does not create an edition'

¹⁰ See Maclaren, *Dominion and Agency*, Chapter Four.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-04.

but sells a book published elsewhere by a foreign publisher.¹² According to Maclaren, scholars have misinterpreted Briggs's role as a literary publisher because they have taken title pages that list Briggs as the publisher as evidence that he was the original publisher.¹³ However, as Maclaren shows, in fact, this imprint usually represented that Briggs was producing a Canadian issue of a foreign edition of a book, with the permission of the foreign publisher.¹⁴ The publication context of *Broken Shackles* reflects that, even by the late nineteenth century, what appears to be perhaps the first book-length slave narrative published in Canada was more likely an American edition of a book reprinted with a Canadian imprint and distributed in Canada. It reflects that the newspapers and slave narratives I have examined in the previous chapters of this thesis were part of a stunted book publishing industry in Canada. Original Canadian printing was restricted until the early twentieth century to newspapers, religious periodicals, and government and local printing.¹⁵ Canada largely consumed books published elsewhere and imported and 'reanimated' them within a Canadian context.

The publishing context of *Broken Shackles* as perhaps an American book written and distributed in Canada reflects a model of Canada and the United States as part of an indivisible publishing space. Eli Maclaren has characterised nineteenth-century North America as single space that cannot be divided in the context of book publishing, explaining that, 'when it came to general literature, anglophone North America was essentially one book market'.¹⁶ An illustration of how contemporaries could think about Canada and America as a single publishing space is found in the slave narrative of the

¹² Ibid., p. 5.

¹³ Ibid., p. 103, and on imprints more broadly, see pp. 12-13.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 103-04, p. 107.

¹⁵ Green, 'The British Book in North America' (p. 557).

¹⁶ Maclaren, *Dominion and Agency*, p. 21.

former slave and Canadian resident Samuel Ringgold Ward. Ward characterises the United States and Canada as having a porous border that allowed the traffic of bodies, goods and ideas to freely circulate.¹⁷ Samuel Ringgold Ward's depiction of Canada as vulnerable to the proliferation of proslavery ideas from the United States because of Canada's porous border could be taken as an analogy of Canada as part of a wider North American land mass when it came to nineteenth-century publishing:

there is a vast amount of intercourse with the adjoining States, and a great deal of traffic, and Canadians travel extensively in the States, as do the people of the States in Canada. Thus the spread of slaveholding predilections is both favoured and facilitated; and, what is more, there is abundant evidence that some Americans industriously use these opportunities for the purpose of giving currency to their own notions. Moreover, in various parts of Canada Yankees have settled, and for miles around them the poison of their pro-slavery influence is felt.¹⁸

The 'traffic' Ward describes could easily be the huge number of American reprints dominating the Canadian book market, as well as people and the goods that were being freely traded between Canada and the United States following the passage of the free trade agreement, the Reciprocity Treaty, which lifted import duties between Canada and the United States (1854-1866).¹⁹ Of course, Britain was also a part of this flow and cross-border relationship, in enshrining the imperial laws that encoded it and in the very real sense that many of these books were imperial works reprinted in the United States, with the 'royalties' upon importation of these American reprints of British Copyright works sent back to Britain.

¹⁷ Samuel Ringgold Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro: His Anti-Slavery Labours in the United States, Canada, & England*, By Samuel Ringgold Ward, Toronto (London: John Snow, 1855), p. 138.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ For Ward's discussion of the Reciprocity Treaty and the fugitive slaves, see p. 208.

Maclaren shows how Canada's role in this single book market was an unequal one. He highlights how nineteenth-century Canadian book publishing was shaped by Canada's proximity to the United States and its relationship with Britain.²⁰ Canada consumed books rather than producing them; Canadian book 'publishers' distributed foreign books rather than financing and coordinating the production of original books. Maclaren highlights the failings of the 1875 Copyright Act to establish a reprint trade of imperial books in Canada. It is beyond my purposes to do little more than point towards his rich study here, and a brief summary will suffice. He states the Canadian book trade was shaped by two key facets: imperial copyright law (as part of the British Empire) and Canada's geographical proximity to the United States and the North American copyright divide, by which the United States could reprint British texts and import them into Canada, but firms in Canada were not legally able to reprint unauthorised Canadian editions of British copyright texts.²¹ Maclaren describes how this led to the proliferation of American editions of books in nineteenth-century Canada and created a context that was 'more or less incompatible with original literary publishing'.²² For Maclaren this has had a devastating impact on the formation of a national literature for Canada and denied Canadian authors the mechanisms to be able to write and produce books for a Canadian audience and public, since this necessitated the capital and creative influence for such productions to come from American middlemen: the American book publishers.²³ Maclaren illustrates the impact that copyright law had upon book production in Canada, and how this was undergirded by legal, institutional and fiscal contexts that reflected the fledgling Dominion's place in an artistic hierarchy of empire:

²⁰ Maclaren, *Dominion and Agency*, p. 16.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6, pp. 10-11.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 12, pp.13-14.

‘copyright law can impel capital, labour, and creativity to flow into brilliant centres of cultural production, which tower over the vast peripheral expanses that must pay them tribute’.²⁴ Maclaren’s assessment that Canada’s book trade was a product of power and the circulation of knowledge and empire shows the broader metastructure in which texts about slavery and Canada circulated. It is also a reminder that, as Maclaren notes, ‘important literary questions sometimes have non-literary answers’.²⁵

The recirculation of foreign books and the ‘exodus’ of authors to the United States where they were protected by copyright laws has obscured the Canadian dimension of slave narratives.²⁶ It has shaped the fact that we have been looking at Canada as a place of re-circulation for slave narratives published in the United States and the way Canada is imagined in African American slave narratives. To some extent this is one answer to Clarke’s cry that Canadian slave narratives have been exiled from the Canadian literary canon. It suggests that the publishing context may have disguised Canada’s impact on slave narratives, especially as scholars tend to focus on place of publication and book-length narratives when assigning national labels to texts. Rhondda Robinson Thomas questions the validity of seeing slave narratives within a Canadian literary tradition. She argues the lack of slave narratives published in Canada is compelling evidence that challenges a call to see them as Canadian texts. She suggests: ‘Clarke’s claim for a distinct Afro-Canadian tradition becomes more problematic through his choice of slave narratives by authors who lived in Canada temporarily but resettled and published their narratives in America’.²⁷ Thomas’s skepticism of George Elliott Clarke’s claim for the

²⁴ Ibid., p. 101.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

²⁶ On the ‘exodus’ of Canadian authors in general, see Maclaren, *Dominion and Agency*, p. 3.

²⁷ Thomas, ‘Locating Slave Narratives’ (pp. 337-38).

distinctiveness of slave narratives is understandable, but her reasoning is not. Her suggestion that slave narratives should not be seen as Canadian because many were published in the United States does not take into account the ‘exodus’ of huge numbers of Canadian authors to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century because of the uncertain publishing climate. This interpretation does not acknowledge that Canada was part of a wider North American publishing space and that this may have obscured some of Canada’s literary history, given that places of original publication are more readily taken as reflecting the national identity of texts.

It could be argued that John Frost crafts a frame narrative situating the production of *Broken Shackles* by the fictional character Glenelg in Owen Sound, Ontario between 1888-1889 as a response to this uncertain climate for original Canadian book publishing. To some extent the frame narrative inscribes the Canadian production of the narrative into the textual fabric of his text, regardless of its place of publication. This had a precedent too in narratives from the 1850s, such as Drew’s *The Refugee*. John Frost also complicates this by not mentioning that the location of Glenelg is Owen Sound in Chapter One (the reader is left to find this out in the final chapter) and by naming his character Glenelg, as his name speaks to a US-Canadian hybridity. The name Glenelg comes from American and Canadian geographical place names: ‘Glenelg is the name of a nearby township (in Ontario); it is also a town near Baltimore, Maryland’, as Meyler notes.²⁸

Reading *Broken Shackles* in context

In this section I read *Broken Shackles* in the context of its literary antecedents. I first

²⁸ Meyler, ‘Introduction’ (p. xiv).

situate *Broken Shackles* in terms of the genres that influenced it, and then I bring *Broken Shackles* into conversation with the three chapters of my thesis in turn. I argue that the narrative reads as a revision of what has preceded it. *Broken Shackles* is an antislavery narrative about American slavery published many years after the abolition of slavery in the United States. This suggests that the value of this antislavery stance is something other than political liberation for slaves. The previous chapter explored Thomas Jones's slave narrative which had a life beyond the end of the American abolition movement and showed that the evangelical and missionary aspect of the narrative may have contributed to its lasting success during and after the abolition movement. In this section I explore the perceived value of *Broken Shackles* many years after the abolition of slavery in the United States, and I look at some explanations that account for why such a narrative was produced in the late nineteenth century and circulated in Canada.

Broken Shackles and genre: colourism and the slave narrative

Broken Shackles makes most sense when we read it within the slave narrative and local colour tradition. *Broken Shackles* contains two key devices found in American colourism: the frame narrative and 'dialect speech'.²⁹ The key place where *Broken Shackles* signals that it draws on the slave narrative tradition is in its second chapter, which opens with the amanuensis reporting that Henson relates where he was born a slave:

“I wuz bo'n,” he continued, “on ole Dick Crocksell's plantation, Garrison Forest, neah de City of Baltimo’, in de wery midst of slavery.” (1889, 16)

²⁹ Richard H. Brodhead, 'The American Literary Field, 1860-1890' (p. 56); Kathryn B. Mckee, 'Region, Genre and the Nineteenth-Century South', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the American South*, ed. by Sharon Monteith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 11-25 (p. 23).

This textual moment evokes the classic conventional opening of the slave narrative genre that begins with ‘I was born a slave’.³⁰ The way Henson’s speech is presented anticipates a reader who knows the tradition of the slave narrative genre. Glenelg interrupts Henson’s speech and signals his own presence with ‘he continued’. This breaks up the flow of Henson’s speech and the classic opening line of the slave narrative, and signals Glenelg’s role in the text as the amanuensis who records Henson’s dialect speech. Glenelg’s interruption functions as a shared joke between Glenelg and the reader. By disrupting the conventional opening of the slave narrative, this operates as a moment of generic awareness, in which the reader and Glenelg are able to share a moment of recognition that the text revises an already existing genre that the reader has encountered many times before. Glenelg’s presence reads as something unexpected and alien within the conventional opening of the slave narrative. The interruption of an amanuensis into the opening line of a slave narrative and first-person voice of the former slave does not find narrative precedent in slave narratives from the 1850s, although these texts were often heavily edited and shaped by amanuenses and editors. For example, Henry Bibb’s slave narrative opens ‘I was born May 1815, of a slave mother, in Shelby County, Kentucky, and was claimed as the property of David White Esq’ (13). Similarly, the opening line of James W. C. Pennington’s slave narrative reads ‘I was born in the state of Maryland, which is one of the smallest and most northern of the slave-holding states; the products of this state are wheat, rye, Indian corn, tobacco and some hemp, flax, &c’.³¹ In *Broken Shackles*, the opening of Chapter Two represents

³⁰ For the use of ‘I was born’ as a conventional opening to the slave narrative, see James Olney, ‘“I Was Born”: Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature’ (p. 153).

³¹ James W. C. Pennington, ‘The Fugitive Blacksmith; Or Events in the History of James W. C. Pennington, Pastor of a Presbyterian Church, New York’, in *I was Born a Slave: An Anthology of Classic Slave Narratives: Volume Two: 1849-1866*, ed. by Yuval Taylor, pp. 107-56 (p. 114).

a blend of the slave narrative and local colour genres, and signals this generic choice to the reader.

Broken Shackles has a different tone from the slave narratives published in the 1850s.

This conforms to some extent to what we might expect since slave narratives after 1865 differed in tone and thematic focus to pre-Civil War slave narratives, as William L.

Andrews has noted.³² Andrews highlights a range of differences in the later slave narratives. He notes they tend to focus less on slave's individual acts of assertion or individualisation, such as running away or violent acts, and they more typically focus instead on presenting the importance of individuals serving the black community, engaging in collective uplift and showing 'manliness achieved through the gospel'.³³

These post-slavery narratives could portray slavery less negatively than their predecessors and present it as a 'training ground' for pride, endurance and a spiritual life.³⁴

If *Broken Shackles* can be understood as part of the slave narrative genre that shifted after the Civil War, it is also indebted to the genre of American colourism. American colourism is a genre of American literature that became very popular after the American Civil War. Two key conventions of the genre are the use of a frame narrative and dialect speech. Richard H. Brodhead argues 'dialect speech is the major requirement of this form', and Mckee sees the frame narrative as a common component of the colourism genre.³⁵ The local colour tradition took a group of people or a location that was

³² William L. Andrews, 'Introduction', in *Slave Narratives After Slavery*, ed. by William Andrews (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. vii-xxxii.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. xv.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xvi.

³⁵ Richard H. Brodhead, 'The American Literary Field, 1860-1890' (p. 56); Mckee, 'Region, Genre and the Nineteenth-Century South' (p. 23).

anticipated to be unfamiliar to readers and presented it before its readers. Brodhead notes that the local voices presented in colourism had to be ‘unfamiliar’ in order to fulfil the promise of such writing to present ‘knowledge of some yet-unrecorded indigenous culture’.³⁶ Early local colour writing seen as important antecedents of the genre are the short stories of Bret Harte, for example ‘The Luck of the Roaring Camp’ (1868) and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The Pearl of Orr’s Island* (1862).³⁷ Notable regional authors and texts include Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn* (1885), Sarah Orne Jewett, *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896) and George Washington Cable, *Old Creole Days* (1879). However, to this we could also add Southern regional writers, for example Joel Chandler Harris, *Uncle Remus*, Kate Chopin, *Bayou Folk*, and Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Conjure Woman*.

The asides of the narrator Glenelg in *Broken Shackles* present the voice of the former US slave Henson as ‘authentic’. Throughout the narrative Glenelg comments on how Henson’s voice sounds and its tone, and he draws attention to its orality. For example, he describes Henson as speaking as if to himself (‘was information contributed in a half-soliloquising manner by [Henson]’) (1889, 89). The asides of the narrator function as reminders that the reader is invited to see the narrative as based on the oral outpouring of Henson’s stories that have been collected by Glenelg. This is given emphasis in Chapter Two when Glenelg relates, ‘The question, “Do you know anything about your ancestry?” elicited the reply, “Suteny, I know suthin’ ‘bout my ancestry,” and brought out the following feature of African life. His mother’s mother [...]’ (1889,

³⁶ Richard H. Brodhead, ‘The American Literary Field, 1860-1890’ (p. 47).

³⁷ Anne E. Rowe, ‘Regionalism and Local Color’, in *Encyclopaedia of Southern Culture*, ed. by Charles Reagan Wilson and others (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), pp. 867-68, p. 867 and Richard H. Brodhead, ‘The American Literary Field, 1860-1890’ (p. 47).

16). This suggests to the reader that the third-person narration, told from the point of view of Henson, is based upon a conversation that is taking place in the present between Henson and Glenelg and which Glenelg is conducting like an oral interview. Later in the narrative, occasional asides describe the narrative as coming out of the mouth of Henson: “‘I wuz soon seated at de table,’” Charley relates’ (1889, 232). The term ‘Charley relates’ draws the reader’s attention back to the sense that the narrative is based on an ongoing conversation taking place in the present between Glenelg and Henson, and that his authentic voice is being recorded in print. On several occasions Glenelg steps back and allows Henson to relate his experiences in a first-person voice. For example, before a first-person account given by Henson about his experience of his wedding ceremony, Glenelg states ‘as to the rest, Charley must give the account in his own words’ (1889, 214). This presents Henson’s account of his wedding ceremony as ‘in his own words’, and it also implicitly presents Glenelg as the gatekeeper to Henson’s authentic voice. The slippage to Charley (the slave name of Henson) suggests that what Glenelg invites the reader to see as being captured in the first-person account of the wedding is the voice of Charley, rather than the voice of the older Henson looking back and relating his former slave experience. The handling of Henson’s voice and the narratorial attempts to present it as something that has been authentically collected corresponds to how the dialect voice is depicted within American local colour writing. Richard H. Brodhead argues that in local colour writing a key skill of the author is to ‘produce authoritative transcriptions of vernacular speech’, and he then qualifies this with ‘Authoritative sounding ones, at least: since the whole point is that this speech is not known to its readers otherwise than through the regionalist’s transcription’.³⁸ He suggests that the dialect voice has to pass for authentic rather than be authentic. In

³⁸ Richard H. Brodhead, ‘The American Literary Field, 1860-1890’ (p. 56).

Broken Shackles Glenelg's asides are narratorial energies that attempt to make Henson's voice pass for an authentic voice.

The narrator-amanuensis, Glenelg, reveals a fascination with fixing history into objects. This is reflected in the images of a stuffed horse on the top floor of Girard College in Philadelphia and a bronze statue of a slave exhibited in an art gallery. In Chapter Twenty-Nine Glenelg's third-person narration relates Henson's experience of labouring on the farm of Stephen Girard while hired out by his slave owner. Stephen Girard is depicted as riding on his horse and commanding him through a gate held open by Jim Henson: "'Get up, Dick,'" Mr. Girard would say as he touched his favourite horse with the whip, and off they started toward the dairy' while Henson held 'open [...] the gate wide to let Dick and his gig [...] pass through' (2001, 163). In the next paragraph there is an abrupt movement forward in time as Glenelg describes Stephen Girard's horse and gig in the present day as now in an upper room of Girard college, describing it as 'the selfsame for which Henson used to open the farm gate wide', and where it is now a visitor attraction for thousands of people each year. Glenelg enjoys the swift transformation of Stephen Girard's horse into a stuffed creature. Glenelg transforms Girard, commanding his horse Dick by touching him with his whip "'Get up Dick"' and him obeying, into a piece of history through jumping forward in the next paragraph to describe how 'there stands a stuffed grey horse, clad in an old harness and hitched to a gig, which has been shown to thousands of visitors as a curiosity'. Glenelg creates a sense of the passage of time by describing it as the same horse and gig that Henson used to 'open the farm gate wide' for. The past is presented as perfectly preservable. The messiness and energy of the American Civil War is conveyed through the description of its 'rattle of rifles, boom of cannon, bursting of bombs'. A contrast is developed

between the sensory overload of this description and the collection of this history into an exhibit for members of the public to view at an art gallery in the present day. This is presented when the narrator abruptly shifts forward in time in the middle of providing a short history of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation ('Noble Lincoln! Grand proclamation, and wonderful deliverance of downtrodden people') and describes how this historical moment has been fixed into an object at an art gallery in Philadelphia:

There stood in the Art Gallery, at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, a bronze slave, with a broken shackle in one hand, and in the other hand a scroll, on which was inscribed this celebrated proclamation of freedom by President Lincoln. Visitors, as they looked upon that bronze statue with its inscribed proclamation and broken shackles, wondered that so gigantic a traffic in human flesh could have flourished at so recent a period in a civilised, great and prosperous country. (2001, 187)

The fascination with preserving and showcasing historical artefacts of American slavery hints at the temporariness of the power of the abuser Girard and reduces him to the position of a ridiculous object with his technologies of power and control no longer vital and able to wield power. But, more significantly, it conveys an idea of time and history as collectable and fixable, and it presents an argument for the importance of preserving the history of the past. In the opening and closing chapters, Gleneig focuses on Henson's physicality, describing his aged, wizened and slow-moving body; for example, in the final chapter Gleneig describes watching Henson from his window:

The writer on looking out of an office window today—the hottest so far this summer—saw [...] the same bent, broad figure [...] old man Henson, with his axe in one hand and his bucksaw in the other—using both to aid him in his locomotion — stopped and leaned his axe against one leg and his saw against the other, took off his hat, pulled out of his pocket a large red handkerchief and wiped the great drops of perspiration from his forehead, and then passed on with the crowd out of sight. (2001, 196-97)

The slowness of Henson's movements and the effort it takes him to walk a short distance is conveyed in this extract through the use of several verbs crammed together that convey his laboured movement and depict him as frequently stopping and using his axe and bucksaw to help him walk. Glenelg's observations of Henson's physical body, represented in this example, and his role in recording his speech throughout the text reflect that Glenelg is positioned as performing the role of a curator or collector of history in the text. Glenelg treats Henson as a historical relic, and through his descriptions of Henson he exhibits his desire to carefully preserve Henson by writing down his story into a narrative. Henson is figured as a symbolic last ex-slave in the world of the text he inhabits. This is presented through the heavy emphasis placed upon Henson's age throughout the text. For example, he is referred to as 'one of the oldest men in town', as almost impossibly old and perhaps near to death: 'This man, now linked to two centuries and rapidly nearing a third' (2001, 196). In the final chapter the narrator/author Glenelg addresses the reader to give them their last 'glimpse' of Henson in the text, a moment which prepares the reader for the fourth and last moment of Henson's first-person speech:

This too is the last glimpse of him save one for the reader. It would be unfair to the man if, in conclusion, a peep were not given into the little brick church on the bank of the Sydenham River, in which he worships from Sabbath to Sabbath. Here in a recent fellowship meeting, he spoke as follows "Brethren, the lord has spared me many years. I've for a long time past put my trust in Him."
(2001, 197)

The final 'glimpse' we get is aural not visual, and it implies that hearing the 'unmediated' voice of Henson is the best way to see him and for the reader to secure a final image of the former slave in their mind. The power and control Glenelg exhibits in

allowing this moment of connection between the reader and Henson depicts Glenelg as a museum curator carefully unveiling and displaying his object for the imagined rapt attention and delight of his viewer/reader.

Broken Shackles in the context of the previous three chapters

Broken Shackles makes most sense when we place it at the end of the textual tradition I have explored in the previous chapters of this thesis. In this section I bring it into conversation with the previous chapters of my thesis to explore how it develops out of and revises the textual traditions that came before it. *Broken Shackles* is, in part, a history of slavery and abolition in the United States. In Chapter Three Glenelg explains how slavery became enshrined in the American Declaration of Independence, and he acknowledges in passing the existence of slavery (and its abolition) in Upper Canada:

early in the present century, “Negro sale advertisements” were not uncommon in this Province. Among these is one by Governor Russell, in 1806, for the sale of Peggy, aged forty, a cook, for \$150, and her son Jupiter, aged fifteen, for \$200, which promised a discount for cash. (1889, 27)

Slavery in Canada is not denied absolutely, but it is placed within a context of America’s worse historical record when it comes to slavery. The narrative focus of *Broken Shackles* is American slavery, as is reflected by the inclusion of Jim Henson’s experiences of slavery in the United States; it is the history of American slavery that is shown as worthy and needing to be collected and preserved in the memory. Scholars today characterise slavery in Canada as subject to a national amnesia, as discussed in Chapter One and the Introduction, but this does not reflect what is going on in this extract. The history of Canadian slaveholding is remembered here within *Broken*

Shackles as we can see in the above extract. Canadian slavery is part of the national memory for Canadians, but it is remembered within a context in which the Canadian antislavery narrative is prioritised. The artistic thrust of *Broken Shackles* is to capture and tell a narrative of an American former slave. This reflects a continuity with what took place in the Canadian newspapers I examined in Chapter One, where slavery in Canada is present, but within a context of Canadian antislavery that is given a greater focus and textual space.

Glenelg turns in this extract to newspaper advertisements for evidence of slavery in colonial Canada. In Chapter One of this thesis I suggested that enslaved people in Canada are most textually present in printed texts in the colonial Canadian newspaper. Glenelg turns to printed texts rather than manuscript sources as evidence of the existence of slavery in Canada. Glenelg, as a reader of these printed advertisements, uses the advertisements as historical evidence to show that slavery existed in Canada. His prioritising of printed materials speaks, I suggest, to the particular prominence he gives to printed texts in finding this history. Glenelg's description of slavery in Canada takes the structural form of the colonial advertisement that I examined in Chapter One. This advertisement, reproduced by Glenelg, outlines the gender, age and occupation of the person being sold, in the third-person voice of the printer who acts as an 'intermediary' to the sale on behalf of the owner.³⁹ For example, an advertisement printed in the *Montreal Gazette* in April 1789 reads:

TO BE SOLD

A stout healthy NEGRO MAN, about 28 years of age, is an excellent cook.

³⁹ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, p. 308.

Enquire of the printer. L⁴⁰

Glenelg echoes the structural form of the earlier colonial advertisement in his description of Canadian slavery. He squashes into a single sentence information concerning the gender, age and skills of Peggy and Jupiter. Glenelg's description of Peggy and Jupiter has two differences to the late eighteenth-century slave advertisements. Glenelg does not describe the physical robustness and health of the two enslaved people, dropping some of the language of the colonial advertisement, and he describes Peggy as a cook rather than listing cooking as one of her skills. Glenelg borrows from the structural form of the colonial slave advertisement, but in his hands the form is used to provide biographical information about the enslaved people Jupiter and Peggy. He uses the form to present historical evidence of slavery in Canada, rather than as an advertisement.

Broken Shackles does not exhibit amnesia about slavery in colonial Canada. The reference to slavery in Canada in *Broken Shackles*, a narrative that relates the experience of a former slave in the United States and depicts Canada as an antislavery haven for Henson, reflects the fact that Frost feels these two seemingly contradictory positions can go together side by side without damaging the view of Canada as a haven for American slaves. This functions as a form of doublethink, reflecting that Canadians could be aware of their own legacy of slavery and see themselves as antislavery at the same time. It represents a continuity with the doublethink I found in colonial newspapers in Chapter One.

⁴⁰ *MG*, 2 April 1789, p. 4.

Broken Shackles writes beyond the moment of the fugitive slave's arrival in Canada, like the slave narratives we have seen in Chapter Two. In comparing *Broken Shackles* to the texts examined in chapter two, I look at three things: firstly, the way the moment of arrival in Canada is presented; secondly, the trope of land as an exploitative space; and, thirdly, the representation of the national identities of the fugitive slaves in Canada.

Broken Shackles presents Pennsylvania as the promised space of liberation for the runaway slave, Henson, both in prospect and when Henson crosses into Pennsylvania. In this way, it anticipates the representation of crossing the border into Pennsylvania as a moment of liberation a few years later in Isaac Mason's slave narrative, published in 1893, which I explored in Chapter Two. When Henson looks over a free land in the text, it is the city of Colombia in the free northern state of Pennsylvania. This representation can be seen as conventional given that Pennsylvania was the birthplace of the American antislavery movement. This textual moment contains within it an idealised vision of the idea of America as a free land in the eyes of the fugitive slave:

Charley went up the mountainside and, like Moses on the Mount Pisgah, feasted his eyes on the promised land. He looked over the Susquehanna River at the city of Colombia, whose tall church spires glistened in the sun, and whose streets he soon hoped to walk without fear or molestation. He saw, too, from his commanding position, a large area of country stretched out enchantingly before him, and his hopes grew with the wondrous view in borderland. (2001, 149-50)

This moment is given status within the text by its elegance and the scenic quality of Henson's elevated stance on a mountain, in a slave state, overlooking Colombia, before crossing over to freedom in Pennsylvania. He sees beautiful steeples and his eye picks out the qualities he hopes to find in this new landscape. This impression of Colombia is

produced using the expectations of the fugitive slave, and this is underscored in the text as the land is figured as a space for the pre-liberated Henson's imagination. He sees streets that he 'hopes to walk without fear or molestation', seeing in the urban landscape an end to the violence and intimidation he has experienced as a slave. Henson's joyful outburst after crossing into the free northern state of Pennsylvania recalls the moment of crossing into Canada that I discussed earlier:

“Certainly,” said John, ‘you’re a slave no more, but you spoke so sudden like, you frightened me [...] “John,” said Charley, “I can’t wait; I feel as I must holler or bust.” And he shouted again, “Hurrah! I’m free; I’m a beast of burden nor more; at last I’m a man!” (2001, 154)

Despite the excitement of reaching freedom in the text, Henson then makes a third escape to Canada West (after establishing himself as a free man in Philadelphia, and later relocating to Cape May), but there is not the same excitement on his arrival here in the text. Henson's moment of arrival in Canada (where he relocates after the passage of the second fugitive slave law in 1850) is glossed over. The journey between Lockport in New York and Toronto is contained in one sentence: ‘In due time Toronto was reached’ (1889, 292). The text does not picture Henson crossing the US-Canada border or describe his joy upon his arrival. No imaginative rendering of Canada comes close to Henson's imaginative vision of the free land of Colombia or the poignant narrative moment of his crossing into Pennsylvania.

Broken Shackles and Isaac Mason's slave narrative represent the moment of arrival of the fugitive slave in Pennsylvania in a way that recalls the moment of crossing into Canada that I have been exploring. As I discussed in Chapter Two, in Mason's slave narrative, the *Life of Isaac Mason as a Slave*, he similarly presents crossing the border

into Pennsylvania as a moment of liberty as he ‘stepped from bondage into liberty’, and he presents his later removal to Canada West and East after the passage of the second fugitive slave law in far more muted terms (267). Mason’s text and *Broken Shackles* both suggest that there is some difference between Pennsylvania and Canada West. In both texts, it is the second fugitive slave law that transforms Canada into a refuge for the fugitive slave, after they have already become ‘free’ men. This is emphasised in *Broken Shackles* by the description of Henson as becoming ‘comfortable and contented’ as a free man and getting married and earning a wage, before the necessity of relocating to Canada (2001, 169). In fact, it is his removal to Canada that breaks up his family life, since his wife refuses to travel with him to Canada. George Elliott Clarke sees the slave narrative as ‘rich with almost bombastic praise for Canadian/British ‘liberty’’ in its depiction of the arrival of the fugitive slave in Canada, as previously discussed.⁴¹ *Broken Shackles* and Isaac Mason’s slave narrative complicate Clarke’s reading of the crossing into Canada as a moment that creates a patriotic pro-British narrative and a narrative of abolitionist specialness for Canada, by showing that the representation of Canada West as a liberating space as the fugitive slave crossed the border was not unique to the representation of Canada in the slave narrative. The revision of this moment in *Broken Shackles* and Mason’s narrative suggests that the narrative of abolitionist specialness for the representation of Canada as an antislavery haven does not always hold when examining moments of border-crossing, and it indicates Canada’s relational construction as a site of liberty in its comparison and connection to other free northern spaces needs to be further unpacked.

⁴¹ Clarke, “‘This is no hearsay’” (p. 18 n. 19).

The slave narratives I examined in Chapter Two and *Broken Shackles* both present the exploitation of fugitive slaves in wilderness land in Canada. However, *Broken Shackles* alters the context of this narrative of exploitation so that it reads differently. In Chapter Two I showed these narratives present a continuity of exploitation between the slavery experienced in the South and the experiences of former slaves in the wilderness in Canada. They are both presented as spaces that can exploit labourers and rob them of the profits of their labour. In *Broken Shackles* Jim Henson is depicted as experiencing exploitation in the wilderness land in Canada. Henson experiences exploitation in the Artemesia township where he is unable to get the land that has been promised by the Queen because the last of the land has been given away. The unavailability of land is framed in the text as a ‘failure of the Queen’s bounty’ (2001, 191). Henson is ‘thrown on his own resources’ and works for Brother Oxsby, who tricks him, asking him to reap wheat that has already been partly harvested (191-92). *Broken Shackles* presents emigration tracts ‘selling Canada’ to black settlers as presenting exaggerated accounts of the fruitfulness and profitability of wilderness land. It depicts emigration rhetoric, that presents Canada as fertile and as an eden, as fictitious and misleading for the black settler. This is suggested when a black man, Chauncey Simons, who is the head of a ‘band of black immigrants’ at a black settlement in Artemesia, gives Henson an idealised description of Canada as having ‘pebbly streams’ that ‘swarm with speckled trout’, soil that ‘yield[s] fine wheat’ and as being ‘full of pheasants’ (2001, 190). Simons tells Henson that it is like the garden of Eden: “[it] reminds me of what the paradise of our first parents must have been”. Simons’s praise of the productivity of the Canadian wilderness land is presented as false and his words as fictitious. This is suggested in the narrative by the description of his account of the fertile wilderness in Canada as a

‘story’ (190). In addition, the description of Simons’s ‘eloquence’ implies that he is skilful with rhetoric and his words are artificial constructions (190).

In Chapter Two I showed the possibilities of Canada as a place to develop the formerly enslaved self and as a space for narratives of self-creation and liberty. The slave narratives presented an egalitarian vision of Canada as a space without rigidly bounded class divisions. Land was imagined as a social passport for fugitive slaves that could be a source of ‘independent support’. In *Broken Shackles* the depiction of the exploitation of fugitive slaves through land is no longer presented in the context of the antislavery potency of black emigrants who are able to forge new lives in Canada. There are more rigid class boundaries and no longer the opportunities for this freedom. Jim Henson is presented as a labouring working class figure, whereas the earlier narratives presented developing wilderness land as a social passport to a middling social status and independence. He is presented in the opening scene doing manual labour on the dusty streets, ‘breaking stones’ and ‘bowed low at his work’; he is presented as an uneducated man ‘who can neither read nor write’ and who asks Glenelg to read his letter from his family for him (1889, 9-10, 15, 12). The antislavery ideal of former slaves ‘finding an independent support’ from the land is gone from *Broken Shackles*. *Broken Shackles* does not adopt a middle-class black settler voice as is developed by Austin Steward in his narrative of his experience in the Canadian wilderness that echoes and expands on Susanna Moodie’s emigration narrative. The egalitarian vision of Canada as a space without class divisions that was hoped for in the antebellum slave narratives has shifted to a more rigid, class-bounded society that situates Henson at the bottom of a racially inscribed power hierarchy, without questioning or offering alternatives to this world.

Broken Shackles is less patriotic in its portrayal of Canada as an antislavery haven than earlier antebellum narratives. As I discussed in Chapter Two, George Elliott Clarke argues that the antebellum slave narratives produce idealised depictions of the bountiful nature of Canada for fugitive American slaves, and that when fugitive slaves cross the border into Canada they present Canada in a way that celebrates British/Canadian liberty.⁴² He sees this as problematic as it presents Canada as an antislavery haven that obscures an earlier history of slaveholding in Canada. Clarke's reading that the slave narratives celebrate Canada as a place of liberty for former American slaves and that these sometimes read as patriotic pro-British sentiment is correct, at least partially, as I have explored in Chapter Two. However, *Broken Shackles* does not fit with the pro-British and patriotic reading of the earlier slave narratives. This shift is illustrated by the contrast between two ways of seeing the wilderness land in Canada, presented in the earlier narratives and Frost's text. Coming from the hopeful patriotic cry of John Little in Benjamin Drew's *The Refugee*, which called on former slaves working for others in towns and cities to 'go into the backwoods of Queen Victoria's dominions', *Broken Shackles* in 1889 presents Henson's experience of exploitation in the Canadian wilderness as coming about because of a failure of monarchical bounty. Henson's unpatriotic way of describing his disappointment, as the 'failure of the Queen's bounty', places the British Queen (rather than self-interested land agents and corrupt benefactors of the narratives published in the 1850s) at the heart of the trick played on Henson (206). In part, this reflects the fact that this narrative was written after Confederation and reads as less supportive of British political systems. However, the absence of this is also a part of the less progressive nature of *Broken Shackles*. As I have been discussing, *Broken Shackles* presents a more conservative, class-conscious vision of the fugitive

⁴² Clarke, "'This is no hearsay'" (p. 18 n. 19).

slave as a labouring figure. The narrative reads with less optimism and potential for the self-creation of former slaves in Canada. We have to surmise, then, that the patriotic celebration of Canada in the slave narrative is not the problem and could actually be part of a more progressive narrative for Canada and the place of former slaves in Canada.

In the 1850s slave narratives presented the national identities of the fugitive slaves in Canada as fluid and in flux, but *Broken Shackles* presents fugitive slaves who have lived for many years in Canada as displaced Americans. This reflects an ambiguity in the text about whether to see the former American slaves living in Canada as citizens of Canada. The image of the fugitive slaves in Canada in one of eleven illustrations produced in the original edition of the text entitled 'Off to Canada' presents them as a male and non-regenerative community (1889, 291). The image depicts a group of fugitive slaves travelling to Canada as an all male group, and represents them resting with their horses part way through their journey. For example, the first chapter fixates on presenting Jim Henson as a very old man 'greatly advanced in years' (1889, 10). It draws attention to his physical frailty, using his tools as a cane 'to aid him in his locomotion' and his body is bent with his lower limbs at 'an angle of about forty-five degrees' (10). Henson states that his family are all in the United States. The illustration of the fugitive slaves travelling to Canada presents the fugitive slaves as an all-male, non-reproductive group rather than as family units. In the 1850s the slave narratives reflected uncertainty and fluidity when it came to the national identities of the fugitive slaves. In *The Refugee* they are described as 'colored Canadians' and 'those Americans' (28, 39). In *Broken Shackles*, the fugitive slaves are presented as a finite group of black settlers and not part of regenerative communities in Canada. The text expresses ambiguity about Henson's

place in Canada, describing him as a settler and a stranger. Henson describes himself as a stranger living in Canada: ‘I’m on’y a strangah in a strange lan’, fer you know I haven’t a single relashun this side deah ole Jersey”” (13).

Bringing *Broken Shackles* into conversation with Thomas Jones’s slave narrative examined in Chapter Three shows there is a continuity between the two narratives in terms of their evangelical Christian and specifically Methodist context. One explanation for the perceived value of *Broken Shackles* as an antislavery narrative published many years after the abolition of slavery in the United States is the religious imperatives of the narrative. *Broken Shackles* shares its Christian context with Thomas Jones’s narrative explored in Chapter Three. When Thomas Jones’s slave narrative was reprinted and recirculated in Canada it was framed by religious newspapers in Nova Scotia in a way that prioritised the evangelical Christian religious experience and value of the narrative over its antislavery impetus. Both narratives show the Methodist context of stories about slavery in Canada means they could be more about religion and religious teachings than about slavery.

Broken Shackles was published by a Methodist publishing house when a key part of its remit was to circulate religious texts; it was published during a period when the publishing house was still predominately publishing religious tracts and narratives and before it began to publish secular titles.⁴³ We can see this Methodist context in *Broken Shackles*. This is reflected in the fact that the structure of the Methodist autobiography

⁴³ Janet B. Friskney, ‘Beyond the Shadow of William Briggs Part II: Canadian-Authored Titles and the Commitment to Canadian Writing’, *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada*, 35.2 (1997), 161-207 <<http://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/bsc/issue/view/1354>> [accessed 26 January 2017] (p. 163, p. 169).

underpins aspects of the narrative. There are four parts of the narrative in which Henson speaks directly in the first-person, and these are: his conversion to Christianity, his marriage, his first meal after escaping slavery and his experience at a Methodist meeting in Canada. In these parts of the narrative the narrator steps back and lets Henson speak ‘in his own words’, in the first person (1889, 214). This reveals the wider middle-class religious bias as Glenelg includes the first-person account of Henson’s experience of his spiritual conversion from a heathen to a Christian. *Broken Shackles* contains the conventions of Methodist autobiography to present ‘exciting’ ‘accounts of pre-conversion life’ that can be entertaining and present the experience of the religious conversion of Jim Henson.⁴⁴ The religious imperatives of *Broken Shackles* and the Methodist publication context provide one answer to the question I posed earlier as to why this narrative was circulated and perhaps published in Canada when original book publishing was rare.

Broken Shackles celebrates the end of slavery in the United States, and it counters stereotypes about black people not wanting freedom. However, it also contains minstrel humour and frolics, including casual violence against animals, drinking and gambling on the Sabbath and romanticised scenes of corn-shucking and feasting. Henson’s nostalgia for life on the plantation poses a problem of interpretation for a modern reader. These elements are not unusual in contemporaneous postbellum slave narratives. In *My Southern Home*, published in Boston in 1880, for example, William Wells Brown spouts racist views of blacks as natural “‘hewers of wood, and drawers of water’” and presents

⁴⁴ Campbell, ‘Spiritual Biography and Autobiography’ (p. 249, p. 252).

scenes of minstrel humour.⁴⁵ However, as William Andrews points out, the text also critiques and exposes the narratives of white southern power as constructed fictions.⁴⁶ In part, this reading of *My Southern Home* is reinforced by a knowledge of Brown's literary competence, as the author of an earlier slave narrative and other texts, including the novel *Clotel*, and his role as a black abolitionist, and it reflects that he is able to represent, construct and control his own text. Brown's depiction of plantation life as corrupting for society may have intended to highlight the challenges for racial equality and justice in the Reconstruction period. His temporal frame reaches above and beyond the antebellum period into the Reconstruction era (1865-1877) and its aftermath, and his attempt to bring these periods into conversation with one another underscores his aim of addressing the new challenges African Americans faced after the Reconstruction era. Hence his text uses fictionalised nostalgia to look forward. Bringing this text into conversation with *Broken Shackles* elucidates a number of differences, which opens up what is troubling about this text; the voice of Jim Henson is edited, cropped and represented for him, and he does not have authorial control over his own representation. The dominance of the white amanuensis and narrator intrudes into the text and shapes the way the reader relates to Henson.

Broken Shackles invites its religious readers to be disgusted and disapproving of the plantation frolics it displays. It shows enslaved characters engaging in irreligious activities; they attend public houses and drink alcohol, harm small animals, play cards and ignore the Sabbath. This contrasts with antebellum slave narratives, which tend to

⁴⁵ William Wells Brown, *My Southern Home, or the South and Its People*, ed. by John Earnest (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), p. 71. For an example of minstrel humour, see the teeth-pulling anecdote in Chapter Three.

⁴⁶ For example, see William L. Andrews, 'Mark Twain, William Wells Brown and the Problem of Authority in New South Writing', in *Southern Literature and Literary Theory*, ed. by Jefferson Humphries (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), pp. 1-21 (p. 11).

associate irreligious activities with the enslavers rather than enslaved people. Glenelg, adopts a carefree tone of the irreligious slave who does not know better than to enjoy these ‘amusements’. The uncritical way Charley, the name given to Jim Henson as a boy in the text, decides to spend his earnings on amusements and alcohol that are already linked with Sabbath-breaking suggests Charley’s and the adult Henson’s lack of religious awareness:

Charley, for his first ten days’ work, carried home ten dollars to his master, who said “Good boy, Charley.” This was his only reward on that or any other occasion when he brought home his earnings. Mr Raven was more generous, and paid him for his leadership, and for his own use a shilling a day. This he was glad to get to spend in the Bull’s Head. (2001, 68)

This reads as a list of vices, and the focus on presenting the Bull’s Head as a place the slaves visit on the Sabbath reinforces the irreligious nature of what they term harmless ‘amusements’. The reader is invited to look down on Henson for his ignorance and lack of awareness of his own sin and irreligiousness.

In Thomas Jones’s slave narrative, he uses ‘two distinct voices’; he relates his experience as an irreligious slave from the point of view of the redeemed Christian. Henry Louis Gates Jr. argues that using ‘two distinct voices’ that are in a ‘dialogue’ is a black trope in the slave narrative, dating back to Equiano’s *The Interesting Narrative* (1789).⁴⁷ According to Gates, the trope combines the voices of the enslaved child with limited knowledge and experience and the voice of the former slave looking back on their life from a position of knowledge.⁴⁸ The reformed person looking backwards in fiction at their life and the experiences of their unconverted self is a tradition going back

⁴⁷ Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, p. 166.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

to *Moll Flanders* and, even further, into the classical period. Critics have noted, for example, that there are ‘two Molls’ in *Moll Flanders*: ‘the young sinner and the old penitent’.⁴⁹ When Thomas Jones relates his experience of his former enslaved self on the brink of despair, he does so from the position of one who has reaffirmed his faith in God and Christian identity. Jones describes experiencing a crisis of faith after his religious conversion. He relates how his experiences as an enslaved person made him question his Christian beliefs and shook his faith in God: ‘In an agony of despair, I have at times given up prayer and hope together, believing that my master’s words were true, that “religion is a cursed mockery, and the Bible a lie” (28). In the next sentence Jones reflects on the feelings of despair that he used to have and asks for forgiveness from God: ‘May God forgive me for doubting, at such times His justice and love’, and in doing this he reaffirms his religious faith and its overall endurance. However, in *Broken Shackles*, although Jim Henson is a reformed Christian at the time his narrative was penned by Glenelg, it is Glenelg who plays the role of the second voice of the reformed Christian; Jim Henson does not have ‘two distinct voices’. Henson does not present his experience before his Christian conversion and his engagement in irreligious activities such as brawling and drinking from the voice of a reformed Christian man. Henson is not able to look back on his irreligious life from the position of a reformed man. This shifts the moral judgement onto Henson, presenting him as morally reprehensible. Brodhead notes that in local colour writing the reader accesses a regional culture and what passes for an authentic voice ‘through another outlook that makes it appear barbaric and grotesque’. He suggests the genre appears to contest the cultural hegemonic ‘centre’ but in reality it does its bidding and serves the cultural needs of an

⁴⁹ David Blewett, ‘Introduction’, in Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, ed. by David Blewett (London: Penguin Classics, 1989), pp. 1-24 (p. 19).

urban elite in the United States.⁵⁰ Viewing Henson through the implicit lens of a Methodist Christian worldview of ‘the [cultural] centre’ and through the eyes of Glenelg produces an image of Henson that contains a racial-and class-based disgust. It is Glenelg who contains the voice of the wayward unreformed Christian Jim Henson, or Charley. The effect of this is for Jim Henson to lose the second voice, which could enable him to recoup his moral status. He is unable to frame his past irreligious experiences from the position of one who feels abhorrence at his past irreligious life, and this is essential in the world of the text if he is to secure his position as an upright Christian penitent in the eyes of the reader. The reformed Moll, or more specifically Moll when she performs her identity as a reformed penitent, sees her old life through a lens of ‘abhorrence’ in *Moll Flanders*, and she identifies this as a key mark of her repentance in the text: ‘I now began to look back upon my past life with abhorrence’.⁵¹ Similarly, Defoe’s preface also sees Moll’s attitude of ‘abhorrence’ towards her former life as proof of her penitent identity.⁵² Thomas Jones takes a tone of abhorrence when reflecting on his former slave life in his narrative. In this context Henson’s irreligious behaviour on the slave plantation bolsters and reaffirms Glenelg’s moral and social status and leaves Jim Henson open to moral reprehension in spite of his Christian status at the time the narrative was compiled. When the narrator-amanuensis Glenelg gives the reader an image of Henson’s reaction to his former days in slavery, he presents us with an image of Henson’s nostalgia for the richness of the food he used to enjoy and not the voice of a redeemed penitent looking back on his irreligious life on the plantation with abhorrence. Glenelg describes Henson’s manner in delivering his description of the food he ate whilst enslaved as wistful and nostalgic. He states that Henson ‘contributed’ this

⁵⁰ Brodhead, ‘The American Literary Field, 1860-1890’ (p. 55, p. 57).

⁵¹ Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, ed. by David Blewett (London: Penguin Classics, 1989), p. 364.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

‘information’ ‘in a half-soliloquising manner [...] as if he were again in imagination feasting on thick milk, brown bread, “a pone o’ co’n cake,” and salt herrings’ (1889, 89). This interpretation by Glenelg of Henson’s current feelings towards his life on the slave plantation does not present him as regretting his irreligious behaviour during his experiences as a enslaved person; it does not show that Henson has become more enlightened and able to reflect from a distanced Christian position of knowledge when relating events that he experienced as an enslaved child. Glenelg suggests that there is a continuity in Henson’s attitudes towards the decadent luxuries of plantation life, at the time and years later when the narrative is compiled.

In this section, we have seen that by mixing together the generic traditions of local colour and the slave narrative, *Broken Shackles* reads as a less progressive narrative than the slave narratives in the 1850s that were its literary predecessors. As Brodhead attests, local colour writing may appear to challenge hegemonic power structures, but it actually reaffirmed the culture of the cultural elite. We have seen that *Broken Shackles* presents a less patriotic and British reading of Canada as an antislavery haven, but this was not part of a more powerful position for the fugitive slave. George Elliott Clarke is critical of the pro-British discourse in the antebellum slave narratives, but the absence of this in *Broken Shackles* does not result in a text that is less problematic in terms of the production of a Canadian antislavery identity.

The modern reprinting of *Broken Shackles*

In this section I examine how the modern reprinting of *Broken Shackles* changes how the antislavery element of the narrative reads by removing the dialect and ‘racism’ that surrounds its antislavery stance. I suggest that this reflects a remaking of the narrative as

a more straightforwardly antislavery text, removing the seeming contradiction of Canadian racism that contemporaries consumed together. The term ‘racism’ is used in this section to refer to how Jim Henson is represented at various moments in the narrative in ways that perpetuate notions about the ‘natural’ stereotypical characteristics of black people and in the context of an assumption of black inferiority. Two examples of the racist elements in the text are the way that the text displays Jim Henson’s black skin as part of a joke for the reader and the racialised presentation of former slaves enjoying plantation life in the manner of blackface minstrel shows. In a broad sense, the term ‘racism’ relates to the shift by the mid-nineteenth century to a fixed racial essentialism and a scientific racism when black physical features and characteristics were seen as biologically determined and ‘natural’ reflections of the innate difference between races. This reflected a departure from the more mutable conception of racial difference in the eighteenth century, which recognised a wider variety of markers of human difference than skin colour, and when the view of monogenesis explaining human creation as coming from the same shared origins dominated.⁵³ In the text’s more specific historical and geographical context, racial segregation and racial exclusion were part of the context in which the antislavery movement operated in the United States in the nineteenth century.⁵⁴ The use of the term ‘racism’ to describe the narrative is contextual. It relates too to a bigger picture than the examples of isolated racist imagery and scenes. Scholars have shown that black dialect, for example, could be racist and support a proslavery agenda, but it could also be used in subversive ways, and, hence, it is important to explore whether *Broken Shackles* presents ostensibly racist elements in

⁵³ For a discussion of the fluidity around notions of racial difference in eighteenth-century British literature and on monogenesis as a widely held belief, see Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), especially p. 7.

⁵⁴ Drescher, *Abolition*, p. 300.

ways that speak of Henson's agency and his subversion of racist tropes.⁵⁵ A wider reading of the narrative suggests that this is not the case. In addition to the scenes that ridicule Henson or draw out stereotypes about black people, there is a broader power dynamic at play in the text that makes Henson into a curiosity and an object rather than the craftsmen of his own story. This power dynamic relates to the way that the literary mode of colourism positions Henson and how this posits the relationship between the narrator and the reader, as well as Henson's relationship with the narrator and the reader. This combines with the other more obvious moments in the text where racist ideas, images or stereotypes are voiced and not challenged in the worldview of the narrative. The use of term 'racism' relates to seeing the overall power structures of the text and how Henson is represented and how the racist elements (that will be more fully explored in this section) sit within this wider context.

In the original edition of *Broken Shackles*, antislavery arguments and racist attitudes sit together. The modern edition removes racist Canadian assumptions in the text, which sat alongside its antislavery polemic. This crafts a more palatable version of the Canadian antislavery narrative for modern readers. The modern reprint of the text, published in 2001 and edited by Peter Meyler, takes out Canadian racist attitudes in the text. In the 1889 edition of the text, Henson's speech is presented in the 'dialect tradition'. John Edgar Wideman notes:

from the drama of the colonial period through the late nineteenth century [...] [black] dialect in drama, fiction and poetry was a way of pointing to the difference between blacks and whites; the form and function Black speech as it was represented was to indicate black inferiority [...] Black speech in the form

⁵⁵ For example, see Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania*, p. 11.

of negro dialect entered American literature as a curiosity, a comic interlude, a short hand for perpetuating myths and prejudices about black people.⁵⁶

The modern edition of the text standardises Henson's dialect throughout, excising racist Canadian attitudes present in the original text. The modern reprint removes the racist dialect from the narrative, which was part of the antislavery narrative in its original form. This makes the Canadian antislavery in the narrative more acceptable, presumably for its modern-day Canadian readers. Meyler removes a narratorial comment from the 1889 edition of the text that expresses a derogatory view of Henson's dialect: '[he] us[es] language much in advance of the ordinary negro patois of the South, pronouncing "this" and "that" - now as plainly as any one' (1889, 10). Glenelg's assumption that Henson's dialect is deficient and that it has been improved by his adoption of some standardised English whilst living in Canada reflects the view that Henson's dialect is taken as a badge of his racial 'inferiority'. The matter-of-fact tone the amanuensis takes in making a comment on Henson's speech assumes that the audience reading the text will share his opinions. Henson's voice is represented in dialect form by his amanuensis throughout the 1889 edition of the text. An example of this is a moment in the text when Henson replies to the grocer who will only sell him a whole watermelon:

"Wal, I'se got my 'spectashun up fer a watahmillion," said Henson, "an' as it peahs to be 'hul hog or nun, I s'pose I must buy a 'hul million." (1889, 11)

"Well, I've got my expectations up for a watermelon," said Henson, "and it appears to [be a] whole hog or none, I suppose I must buy a whole melon." (2001, 4)

⁵⁶ John Edgar Wideman, 'Charles Chesnutt and the WPA Narratives: The Oral and Literate Roots of Afro-American Literature', in *The Slave's Narrative*, ed. by Davis and Gates, pp. 59-78 (p. 60).

It is clear reading these passages side by side that in the 1889 edition it is less what is being said here than the messy representation of Henson's speech in dialect form, given by the amanuensis, which is the feature of this text. His black speech is represented as comedic. The text in the 1889 edition creates a very different set of sounds. A joke is being made with the cramming together of so many 'h' and 's' sounds, and this makes Henson's speech into a sort of verbal tongue twister; this suggests this textual moment provides a space for the reader to enjoy his speech as a 'curiosity [and] a comic interlude [...] perpetuating myths and prejudices about black people'.⁵⁷

The standardization of Henson's speech also alters how other parts of the narrative read and downplays their racist undertones. An example of this is the description of Henson eating a watermelon in the text, which directly follows his conversation with the grocer that I have just examined. In both editions this reads the same: '[he] commenced to partake of his highly prized refreshment'. However, while it is just possible to read this in the modern edition as reflecting Henson's own voice (and view of the melon) as delicious and welcome refreshment, in the 1889 edition because of the context of the non standardised speech that comes before it, this reads differently. These adjectives chime with two voices: Henson and Glenelg. In the 1889 edition it is more meant as a joke as the amanuensis comments on the prized nature of the melon in Henson's eyes, which he sees as faintly ridiculous.

Dialect speech is not the only racist element that is removed from the 1889 edition of *Broken Shackles* in Meyler's modern reprint. Meyler removes racist epithets and makes minor editorial changes to punctuation that places Glenelg in a position where he seems

⁵⁷ Ibid. (p. 60).

to disagree with the racist attitudes of some of the characters in the text. In the 1889 edition *Glenelg* is less clearly separate from the racist attitudes voiced by these characters. For example, in Chapter Six, which relates Jim Henson's experiences as a boy when he was called Charley being trained by the miller Jack Owens in a mill that produces flour, the modern reprint makes two adjustments that alter how the reader is invited to read this textual moment. Meyler handles the racist views of the miller Jack Owens differently in the modern reprint of *Broken Shackles*. Owens is reluctant to teach Charley his trade as a miller because he harbours racist views:

At this, the miller Jack Owens, rebelled, and declared, "He would never teach a [...] [black person] a trade, and take the bread out of a white man's mouth;" as if a black man had not as much right to earn a living and eat the fruit of his labour as a white man. (2001, 28)

At this the miller, Jack Owens, rebelled and declared, "He would never teach a [...] [black person] a trade, and take bread out of a white man's mouth." As if a black man had not as much right to earn a living and eat the fruit of his labor as a white man. (1889, 45)

In this example Meyler does not change any of the words from the 1889 edition but he changes the punctuation, and this means it reads differently. The effect of making this into one long sentence in the modern reprint with a semicolon joining Owens's racist point of view, reported as direct speech, with what reads as an editorial voice ironically debunking Owens's racist stance, 'as if a black man...', is that it seems to challenge Owens's view in the same breathe as voicing it. In the 1889 original edition where it is presented as two sentences, the text reads differently. The sentence starting 'As if a black man' reads as a gentle criticism of Owens's racist sentiment, but it is also possible to read it as a statement paraphrasing his point of view. There seems to be less criticism of Owens's racist perspective. The second sentence reads less as an editorial comment

containing two voices and attitudes than it does in the modern edition. Meyler makes a second alteration to this textual moment. The description of Henson getting covered in flour is more clearly a racist joke in the 1889 edition of the text. Meyler's reprints this as: 'With his head and face all powdered white with flour, the young miller was quite a sight at times'. In the 1889 edition, this reads: 'With his black wooly head and face all powdered white with flour the young miller was quite a sight at times'. In the 1889 edition, the description of Henson as 'quite a sight' more clearly holds up his black skin and the contrast to the white flour for ridicule by the addition of racist epithets describing his 'black wooly hair'. The way this racist joke is presented alters how we read the passage examined above. In the 1889 edition it is clear that Glenelg himself is participating in mocking Henson as 'the young miller' and taking pleasure in a racist image of him covered in flour. In the 1889 edition, it is *just* possible to read the sentence describing Owens's racist perspective 'As if a black man...' as also containing the voice of the narrator who criticises this viewpoint. However, it could also read simply as Owens's point of view and especially so in the context of the racist image of Henson covered in flour, which the narrator describes a few lines afterwards when he participates in a racist belittling of Henson. Taken together, the two changes made by Meyler remove some of the racist elements from the 1889 edition of the text and distance the Canadian narrator from these views, even placing him in a position where the narrator seems to disagree with the racist attitudes of some of the characters in his text.

Although Meyler removes some Canadian attitudes, he does not take the Canadian slave advertisements out of *Broken Shackles* when he reprints it. Meyler removes some of the Canadian racist attitudes from *Broken Shackles* that sat together with its antislavery

polemic and the image of Canada as a refuge at the end of the Underground Railroad. The modern edition removes the racist class-based superiority assumed in the text, editing out these Canadian attitudes, but this is problematic because it removes Canadian antislavery from its context and reflects how we want to re-package this narrative today.

Today, *Broken Shackles* has an afterlife. Modern copies of this text now outweigh the old. There are four or so copies of the 1889 edition in Canadian rare book and archive collections, and the text means something now for a new generation of readers.⁵⁸ *Broken Shackles* is treasured by members of the local community in Owen Sound, Ontario as a rare narrative that records a black presence and perspective in nineteenth-century Canada.⁵⁹ Admittedly, one reason for Meyler's editorial decision to remove the dialect speech from the narrative could be an attempt to remove some of the surrounding racism in this narrative and make it more palatable and appropriate for a modern audience. However, the importance of retaining the darker side of racism in the narrative is clear. It shows Canadian antislavery was mixed with racism and class superiority, and it provides a more complex account of a narrative that cannot be categorised as containing a stable black unmediated voice.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *Broken Shackles*, published in 1889, represents the culmination of more than a century of the textual engagement with slavery in Canada. This narrative engages

⁵⁸ A search of Library and Archives Canada's online catalogue AMICUS and WorldCat shows at least four copies of the 1889 edition survive in rare book form in Canadian libraries. See *Library and Archives Canada* <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/lac-bac/search/lib_adv> [accessed June 2015].

⁵⁹ Meyler, 'Introduction' (p. xiii).

with the then familiar figure of the former US slave fleeing slavery and finding refuge on Canadian soil. The narrative was written by a Canadian, John Frost, and set within its frame narrative in Canada, and it collects what has to pass for the authentic voice of an American slave now living in Canada and not the narrative of a Canadian slave. This reflects the fact that American slavery was in the cultural zeitgeist for Canadians. It reflects, of course, the historical fact that Canada was a haven for many thousands of former slaves from the United States in the nineteenth century, but it speaks more importantly (for my concerns in this thesis) to the literary tradition for recording the arrival of the fugitive slave in Canada. The fact that this narrative is repeated again in the late nineteenth century and the revisions that John Frost makes in his depiction of the life of a former slave in Canada reflect that the literary figure of the fugitive slave on Canadian soil has become ingrained textually by the late nineteenth century. Based on my analysis in this chapter, I suggest that *Broken Shackles* can be understood as a hybrid of three literary genres: American local colour writing, the slave narrative and Methodist autobiography. *Broken Shackles* reads very differently from the slave narratives of the 1850s in its handling of the voice of a formerly enslaved person, and this reflects the influence of the mode of collecting the dialect voice popular in the colourism genre. The effect of Henson having a single voice of the unconverted slave rather than two voices and occupying the role of the reformed Christian slave looking back on his pre-conversion sins and experience, like his literary predecessor Thomas Jones, is that some of the racist imagery of the Southern plantation remains associated with him. It is the white, male, 'genteel' Canadian narrator Glenelg who accrues moral capital by assuming the position of an enlightened antislavery Christian man and performing the role of the second reformed voice in the narrative. This effect is lost partly in Meyler's modern edition of the text, which removes the dialect and alters some

of the punctuation in the text. The modern edition removes the racist dialect to produce an image of Canadian antislavery and not of Canadian antislavery and racism. This, in part, works to present the Canadian amanuensis Glenelg more favourably and distance him from the racist sentiments in the text.

George Elliott Clarke argues that the antebellum slave narrative presents an idealised image of Canada as an antislavery haven. However, *Broken Shackles* does not present ‘an almost bombastic praise for Canadian/British liberty’.⁶⁰ There is no textual moment in which Henson experiences his journey into Canada as a moment of liberation in which he praises ‘Canadian/British liberty’. As I argue in this chapter, the narrative presents a far more sombre view of Canada as an antislavery haven and imagines the fugitive slaves not as emigrant families in Canada that can regenerate and become a part of Canada, but as isolated male figures who are near death. The narrative produces moral capital for Canadians by reproducing a narrative of the horrors of American slavery, and through the figure of the Canadian Glenelg, who leads the reader through a scathing look at the history of slavery in the United States, rather than by presenting Canada as an idealised haven for fugitive American slaves. The emotional current of this text is a critique of the idea of the United States as a free space of liberty that lives up to its founding principles. The text celebrates Canada as a space of liberty, but not specifically in its presentation as a celebrated refuge for the former slave. More so than the antebellum narratives, the image of Canada as a haven for the fugitive slave in *Broken Shackles* is undercut with an implicit position of genteel Canadian superiority being taken over the figure of the former slave. The form of the narrative suggests that

⁶⁰ Clarke, “This is no hearsay” (p. 18 n. 19).

the former slaves in Canada are a ‘regional peculiarity’.⁶¹ By reading *Broken Shackles* in the light of the previous chapters, I have underscored continuities and revisions in the way that John Frost developed the genres he inherited. John Frost was aware of the genres he was operating in, and his narrative did not come out of a vacuum, but from an informed response to previous literary texts. This reading of *Broken Shackles* is possible when we explore all the texts in this thesis in a way that looks at their antislavery within their wider context, and when they are read holistically and in the broader context in which contemporaries would have approached them.

⁶¹ Brodhead, ‘The American Literary Field, 1860-1890’ (p. 47).

Conclusion

Canada and Slavery in Print, 1789-1889

This thesis has examined depictions of Canada and slavery in print between 1789 and 1889, starting with the circulation of slavery in Canada in print in late eighteenth-century newspapers, and then covering a period after slavery in Canada and, with the final text, the period after slavery had been abolished in the United States. It has explored Canada's relationship to slavery in Canada and slavery in the wider Americas in print. Collectively, the chapters have problematised the image of Canada as an antislavery haven for former American slaves; they have explored a more complicated account of Canada and slavery that moves beyond the idealised image of Canada as an antislavery haven that is produced in the slave narrative as the American fugitive slave crosses over the US-Canada border and proclaims his liberty. In this conclusion, I draw out some key recurrent themes that have emerged across the chapters.

This thesis has explored how we have come to the idea of Canada as an antislavery environment, despite the textual presence of slavery in Canada in its newspapers. It has focused on printed texts that circulated widely and constructed the 'imagined community' in the provinces that would become Canada. It has found that the textual presence of slavery in Canada in the eighteenth-century newspapers was not obscured by the mid-nineteenth-century portrayal of Canada as a haven in the antebellum slave narrative. This is a different reading than that of George Elliott Clarke, who argues that earlier narratives of slavery in colonial Canada have been 'obscured' by mid-nineteenth-century slave narratives. Clarke's reading implies a binary thinking (of slaveholding and

antislavery in the newspapers and slave narratives respectively) that oversimplifies the material. The chapters have suggested there was continuity in the depiction of Canadian antislavery and Canadian slavery simultaneously in printed texts between 1789-1889. Chapter One showed that the colonial newspapers present Canadian slavery in the context of anti-slave-trade sentiment. Chapter Two suggested that slave narratives published in the 1850s present patriotic and celebratory accounts of British liberty as slaves crossed the border into Canada, but the narratives of life in Canada after crossing the border depict Canada as part of a broader North American space, and as part of a narrative of exploitation that transcends the border. Chapter Four argued that in *Broken Shackles* there is a lingering knowledge of slavery in Canada, but it is presented in the context of a more dominant narrative of American slavery and Canada's place as an antislavery haven; this reflects a continuity with how slavery in Canada is presented in the colonial newspapers, where it is represented in the context of Canada's relationship to slavery in the wider Americas. The texts explored in this thesis, from the slave advertisements and anti-slave-trade print to *Broken Shackles*, similarly present the history of slavery in Canada as part of a more dominant narrative of Canadian freedom.

The chapters have shown that Canada was textually part of the transatlantic and the black Atlantic in terms of the production and circulation of print about slavery and freedom. They have demonstrated that Canada was also part of the textual geography constructed in transatlantic slavery and abolition print. Today, Canada is presented as special and separate from slavery elsewhere in the Americas, as an antislavery haven for former slaves; however, this thesis has explored how Canada's relationship to slavery in the Americas is more complex. It was part of the black Atlantic and a transatlantic exchange of texts written by and about enslaved and free black people. By examining

the textual rendering of slavery and Canada in the context of a transatlantic web, a more complicated version of Canada has emerged. Each chapter has benefited from this lens. Chapter One explored the advertisements selling enslaved people and runaway slave advertisements printed in Lower Canada in the context of texts about slavery in the wider Americas first printed in Britain, France and the United States, particularly abolitionist texts. Chapter Two looked at the narratives of former slaves living in Canada after crossing the US-Canada border and argued that such narratives are a key part of the American slave narrative genre, which has more often been explored for representations of American slavery. Chapter Three examined Thomas Jones's slave narrative, which had its origins in the United States and was about American slavery, in its unique Canadian context. In chapter Four, I explored how, by the late nineteenth century, Canadians had constructed their antislavery identity around the narrative of American slavery. They reproduced an antislavery narrative long after the abolition of American slavery to create a positive national narrative of Canada as a haven for former American slaves.

This thesis has explored the centrality of reprinted materials when exploring Canada's textual engagement with slavery, both in Canada and in the wider Americas. The texts that have been explored were most often recontextualisations of previously printed materials that were selected and reprinted within a new context. Hence, they were double-voiced and their context and paratext altered the way these texts were read. They spoke again in their new context, but they retained a frisson or memory of their original printing. The editorial practice of reprinting materials in newspapers was not unique to Canada, but, as discussed in the Introduction and Chapter Four, Canada's print culture was dominated by the newspaper press and reprinted books until the late nineteenth

century in a way that set it apart from other places, such as the thirteen colonies that would later become the United States. Whereas France, Britain and the United States have been explored in terms of their engagement with the wider transatlantic slave-trade and slavery debates from the mid-eighteenth century, Canada is still neglected in studies of slavery and abolition. Its role in engaging with these wider debates about slavery in the Americas is far less well known and its impact in constructing its own identity less well acknowledged. My examination of transatlantic texts and their reframing in a Canadian context in Chapters One and Three in particular shows that a model of reanimation that acknowledges the previous contexts and examines the new context is a valuable critical approach to take when examining the material. In Chapter One and Chapter Three I drew attention to how the newspapers exaggerate the double-voiced nature of their printed texts by recording the original context and their reprinted nature within the newspaper genre. Bakhtin's theory of dialogized heteroglossia in the novel has provided a way to unpack the meaning and effect of these recontextualisations. Gerard Genette's exploration of 'paratext' as 'thresholds', inviting readers to approach texts in specific ways, has been useful as a way of interpreting how reprinted texts were framed uniquely in their Canadian contexts.¹ This approach has underscored the importance of examining the context of reprinted materials in newspapers to explore their meaning.

Canadian antislavery identity had moral capital. As Christopher Leslie Brown's discussion of this within the British antislavery context (outlined earlier) has shown, once it had earned a 'moral capital', antislavery sentiment and campaigning could create a sense of 'moral distinction' and 'prestige' for nations, groups and individuals, and

¹ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 2.

could ‘bring credit to other projects that lacked the same moral prestige’.² Antislavery arguments could be a source of power; they were not always just about slavery, and they could be used for other agendas and purposes. Brown points to the importance of the image that antislavery sentiment accrues in securing its moral capital, noting that this has to be positive in order to galvanise support. Across the materials I have examined there is a continuity of the moral capital of Canada’s antislavery image. The colonial newspapers presented a positive image of antislavery sentiment in 1789 and during the early 1790s. This continued until 1793, but after this there were anxieties about antislavery sentiments as dangerous, and comments that slave rebellions were damaging abolitionist hopes suggested the image of antislavery arguments and campaigning had become more negative, which finds parallels with how antislavery arguments and politics were viewed in Britain after 1793. Published during slavery in Canada, newspaper editors selected and reprinted anti-slave-trade sentiment that could be enjoyed with the comforting sense that readers in Lower Canada were part of a benevolent empire, in which France and Britain, within a context of European improvement, were calling for the abolition of the human atrocities of the slave trade. The image of transatlantic slavery critiqued in these texts retains a semantic distance from the textual presence of Canadian slavery in the newspapers. This created a context in which Canadians could feel morally superior at the same time as witnessing themselves as a society with slaves. Some of the moral capital in these narratives reprinted in the colonial newspapers remained with the European countries and their colonies that were presented as especially susceptible to feeling sympathy for enslaved people. It created a benevolent view of Britain and, perhaps to a lesser extent, France in the eyes of the readers. In the 1850s the image of US slaveholding within an anti-

² Brown, *Moral Capital*, p. 457.

Christian discourse in the slave narratives created opportunities for Canada West to earn moral capital from being unlike the southern states in the US. However, some slave narratives challenge the idea of a solid border between Canada West and the US, presenting a more mixed account of life in Canada. Of all the texts examined in this thesis, the retrospective history of American slavery told in *Broken Shackles* is the most fervent in the construction of a moral capital of Canada's role as an antislavery haven for former American slaves and of Canadians as holding antislavery views, even after the abolition of American slavery. It achieves this by presenting the horrors of plantation life within a Methodist worldview that criticises it for its readers and constructs this history as something that is being remembered and disproved of by the Canadian amanuensis Glenelg. In examining *Broken Shackles* it is important to bear the benefits of developing an antislavery identity in mind. This helped Canadians to construct a sense of themselves in the world, as different to Americans, even after the abolition of slavery in the United States, and it continues to be used today as a way of crafting a 'moral border'. Chapter Four shows that the narrative of Canadian antislavery could function at the expense of the former slave Jim Henson's standing in the eyes of the reader. The narrative places Jim Henson in a morally culpable position. He is presented as an unreformed Christian unable to redeem his past irreligious life by adopting a position of a man looking back on his life in slavery with a feeling of abhorrence.

A theme that has developed throughout this thesis is that modern narratives are revisions and rewritings of historical narratives. Throughout this thesis, I have examined original title pages, pictures and newspapers to examine how narratives were shaped by the ways in which they were originally presented and framed by paratextual elements. These narratives serve different purposes at different historical moments. Reading runaway

slave advertisements in Canada in the context of the colonial newspapers recreates as far as possible a historicised reading of them within the context that readers first approached them. A comparison between the original title pages of slave narratives and the front covers of modern editions reveals our different priorities and refashioning of the debates today. For example, the title pages of slave narratives published in the 1850s gave prominence to their narratives of freedom and invited readers to read them as experiences of Canada, but modern editions de-emphasise this feature of the original texts. This may reflect why until recently the critical frame used to examine slave narratives has downplayed the importance of Canada as a geography in the genre. The original title page of Thomas Jones's slave narrative situates it in a Christian worldview, but modern criticism has tended to approach his narrative within a secular worldview that misses the religious experience his narrative presents as complementary to its antislavery narrative. In the 2001 edition of *Broken Shackles*, we get a modern rewriting of the Canadian slavery narrative. In this edition, the racist dialect speech of Jim Henson is edited out. On the one hand, we can see why Meyler makes this editorial decision as it removes the racism for a modern audience, but, on the other hand, because of this it reads less clearly in the context of the American colourism tradition. The more holistic reading I have done looks at both editions, although it acknowledges that Meyler's editorial choices reflect his decision to make the text work in a new context for new audiences.

Overall, the model I hold out is that the textual presence of slavery in Canada is best understood when we examine it from a perspective that takes into account its paratext, context, reprinted nature and its transatlantic contexts. To understand how Canada's antislavery image has developed requires holistic readings of texts that allows for their

contradictions and explores what is textually present. The construction of Canada as sympathetic towards enslaved African people and as an antislavery haven evolves in the texts between 1789 and 1889, and it is not the only way that Canada is presented in print. In this light, it seems to me to be more fitting to see the loss of the memory of slavery in Canada as a repeated practice today that reflects a choice being made not to consciously remember the narrative of Canadian slavery. The idealised narrative of Canada as an antislavery haven for former American slaves that dominates today does not fully reflect the textual tradition of presenting Canada, which is more mixed. However, the ‘amnesia’ narrative that critics have used understandably to intervene in this marginalisation of Canada’s history of slavery also oversimplifies the complexity and the contextual nature of Canada’s construction of its identity in relation to slavery, both in Canada and the wider Americas. In the texts examined in this thesis, Canada is depicted variously as a slaveholding space, as a place sympathetic to the plight of the West Indian slave, as a less than ideal refuge, a land that expels the former slave and free black man, and as an exploitative capitalist space. The memory of slavery in Canada has been marginalised from the national narrative, but another aspect of Canada’s print history has also been forgotten: that Canada could see itself as antislavery and slaveholding at the same time.

Appendix A: A List of the Texts that are Plotted on the Google Fusion Tables Map (including date of first publication)

Anon, 'The Weems Family', in *Frederick Douglass's Paper*, ed. by Frederick Douglass (1856)

Anderson, John, *The Story of the Life of John Anderson: The Fugitive Slave* (1863)

The Voice of the Fugitive, ed. by Henry Bibb (6 fugitive slave stories) (1851-1853)¹

Brown, Paola, *Address Intended to be Delivered in the City Hall Hamilton, February 7 1851* (1851)

Brown, William Wells, 'The Colored People of Canada', in *Pine and Palm* (1861)

Drew, Benjamin, *A North-Side View of Slavery: The Refugee: Or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada Related by Themselves with an Account of the History and Condition of the Colored Population of Upper Canada* (1856)

Frost, John, *Broken Shackles* (1889)

Jones, Thomas H., *The Experience of Thomas H. Jones, Who Was a Slave for Forty-Three Years* (1849)

Henson, Josiah, *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada, As Narrated by Himself* (1849)

Howe, Samuel Gridley, *The Refugees from Slavery in Canada West: Report to the Freedman's Inquiry Commission* (1864)

Mason, Isaac, *Life of Isaac Mason As a Slave* (1893)

Mitchell, Rev W. M., *The Underground Railroad: From Slavery to Freedom. By the Rev. W. M. Mitchell of Toronto, C.W* (1860)

[Robertson, John William], *The Book of the Bible Against Slavery* (c. 1854)

The Provincial Freeman, ed. by Mary Ann Shadd (1853)

Smallwood, Thomas, *A Narrative of Thomas Smallwood (Coloured Man) Giving an Account of His Birth, the Period He Was Held in Slavery-His Release and Removal to Canada etc, Together with an Account of the Underground Railroad, Written by Himself* (1851)

¹ These stories are reprinted in *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews and Autobiographies*, ed. by John W. Blassingame (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), pp. 274-355.

Smith, W. L. G., *Life at the South: Or Uncle Tom's Cabin As It Is, Being Narratives, Scenes and Incidents in the Real 'Life of the Lowly'* (1852)

Steward, Austin, *Twenty-Two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Freeman; Embracing a Correspondence of Several Years, While President of the Wilberforce Colony, London, Canada West* (1857)

Stowe, Harriet Beecher, *Uncle Tom's Cabin: Or Life Among the Lowly* (1851-2)

The Directors of the Elgin Association, *Fifth Annual Report of the Directors of the Elgin Association: Presented at the Annual Meeting Held on the Seventh Day of September, 1854* (1854)

Troy, William, *Hairbreadth Escapes from Slavery to Freedom. By Rev. William Troy, of Windsor, Canada West* (1861)

Ward, Samuel Ringgold, *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro: His Anti-Slavery Labours in the United States, Canada and England, By Samuel Ringgold Ward, Toronto* (1855)

Warren, Richard, *Narrative of the Life and Sufferings of Rev. Richard Warren (a Fugitive Slave) Written by Himself* (1856)

West London Branch of the Colonial Church and School Society, *Mission to the Fugitive Slaves in Canada, Colonial School Society and West London Branch* (1856)

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