“It is Time for the Slaves to Speak:” Transatlantic Abolitionism and African American Activism in Britain 1835-1895

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Word Count: 119, 905

Thesis Submitted to the

Department of American and Canadian Studies

University of Nottingham

January 2018

Abstract of Thesis

During their transatlantic journeys to Britain throughout the nineteenth century, African Americans engaged in what I term "adaptive resistance," a multi-faceted interventionist strategy by which they challenged white supremacy and won support for abolition. Alongside my recovery of this mode of self-presentation in sources I have excavated from Victorian newspapers, I use an interdisciplinary methodology that draws on literary studies, cultural history, memory studies, African American studies and the visual culture of antislavery iconography to (re)discover black performative strategies on the Victorian stage from the late 1830s to the mid 1890s. Performance was only one strand in the black activist arsenal, however. The successful employment of adaptive resistance relied on a triad of performance, abolitionist networks and exploitation of print culture. For the first time, I have identified and unified these themes as central to black abolitionist transatlantic visits, and conclude that if an individual ensured an even balance between all three, it was likely their sojourn was successful. This changes our previous knowledge of black abolitionist missions, as we can use this analysis to explain why some activist visits were *more* successful than others.

To share their testimony of slavery, black men and women such as Moses Roper, Frederick Douglass, William and Ellen Craft, Henry 'Box' Brown, J. Sella Martin, Josiah Henson and Ida B. Wells "adapted" to the location and the climate in which they spoke in. Intervening in white public spaces, they subverted white power and refused to exploit themselves as

spectacles or objects for white consumption. To maximize their message, they exploited the connections made available through Victorian print culture to foster favourable coverage of their lectures, befriended newspaper editors and organized the printing of narratives or pamphlets recording their speeches. Synonymous with this was their utilization of as many white abolitionist networks as possible.

Through the exploitation of performance, print culture and abolitionist networks, black men and women forged a black American protest tradition in Britain. Their acts of resistance infused this tradition with a spirit of independence that could be deployed against paternalistic white antislavery reformers as well as white racists, both on an abolitionist and non-abolitionist stage. An essential part of this African American protest tradition was the creation and celebration of black testimony. Black men and women sought to make their voices heard in a climate dominated by white supremacy; they refused to capitulate and educated thousands of people on slavery and its legacies through physically and mentally demanding tours organized across Britain. This protest tradition continues to this day, with #BlackLivesMatter activists travelling to Britain to campaign against transatlantic state violence.

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Acknowledgements

I have incurred many debts while writing this thesis. First and foremost, I have been extremely fortunate to work with three brilliant supervisors: Matthew Pethers, Celeste-Marie Bernier and Zoe Trodd. Your unfailing support, wonderful advice and invaluable criticism have shaped not only this thesis, but my academic career as a whole. A million thanks from the bottom of my heart.

I extend my thanks to my fellow PhD students at the Department of American and Canadian Studies at the University of Nottingham, and in particular Hannah Jeffery, Timo Schrader, Rosemary Pierce, Hannah Lauren Murray, Alex Bryne, Lorenzo Costaguta, Scott Weightman, Olivia Wright, Patrick Henderson, Mark Eastwood, James Brooks, and Tomos Hughes for excellent comments and reading suggestions.

I also thank the staff at the University, including in particular Robin Vandome, Graham Thompson, Bevan Sewell, and Susanne Seymour for helpful suggestions and advice. Mike Gardner's invaluable help with my digital resource dramatically improved my website.

I have also benefitted from the good fortune of conversing with academics outside of Nottingham. First and foremost, Alan Rice, your extensive knowledge on Frederick Douglass and the Black Atlantic in general was instrumental for my thesis, and my eternal thanks for pointing me in this direction in the first place. David Blight, John Stauffer, John McKivigan,

Richard Blackett, Manisha Sinha, Lisa Merrill, John Oldfield, Jeff Green, and Alasdair Pettinger all talked through my thesis and suggested ideas.
Thanks also go to some wonderful independent historians, archivists and researchers. I'm grateful to Nick Moore for the wonderful postcards of Uncle Tom's Cabin in Blackpool; Kelvin Wilson's unrivalled knowledge of Frederick Douglass' connection with Cullercoats in Northumberland (and your beautiful drawings of the coastline); and David Stokes and the Reverend Jim Brasier for digging up information on a church in my village of Botley, Hampshire, where Moses Roper lectured. Thanks also to Joe Williams (Heritage Corner) – it was a pleasure to work with you and watch you bring William and Ellen Craft's story to life in your wonderful play, 'Meet the Crafts.' Thanks also to Jak Beula for bringing me on late in the game to honor Frederick Douglass with a Nubian Jak Heritage Plaque in London.

Numerous transatlantic archives have proved instrumental: firstly, the British Library has been exceedingly helpful, particularly the BL Newspaper database. I'm grateful to the Labs Team in particular for working with me during the Labs Competition of 2016 – thanks to Mahendra Mahey, Ben O'Steen and Hana Lewis for being so supportive and patient with me, especially in regard to machine learning and pretty much everything technical. Thank you to the staff at Preston Library, Manchester Library, Nottingham Archives, and the Bristol Archives in Britain, and in America, the staff at Boston Public Library, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston Athenaeum, and the Weiner Library. The website www.archive.org was also instrumental in allowing me access to hundreds of abolitionist letters and pamphlets.

I was unfunded for the first year of my PhD, which led to serious debt, working several jobs and living away from my partner. Thank you to the Sir John Plumb Charitable Trust and the Royal Historical Society for financial support, and to Zoe Trodd, whose indefatigable advice and sourcing of grants really came in handy – I wouldn't have been able to finish without your help. Thank you to Midlands3Cities for funding the remaining two and a half years of my PhD, together with grants from the Eccles Centre, Adam Matthew Digital and the British Association for American Studies.

Even without funding, I recognize the privileged position I am in as a white academic, and hope to create numerous public engagement events to work with and learn from my local community. I have been very lucky in pursuing such opportunities while writing my PhD. Thank you to Matt Chesney (BACKLIT) for sharing my passion about Josiah Henson, and working with me to create an exhibition and a play based on Henson's friendship with Samuel Morley. Thanks also go to Jim Findley and Melvyn Rawlinson who brought Henson and Morley to life. My gratitude also extends to James Lawrence and Tok Stephen, two more brilliant actors, who came on late in the day to perform as George Thompson and Frederick Douglass for a play I wrote at the British Library. You were all fantastic. Thank you also to some wonderful Nottingham institutions where events always ran smoothly – the New Art Exchange, Nottingham Contemporary, BACKLIT, and Nottingham Writers' Studio. Thanks also to Lisa Robinson at Bright Ideas.

I am extremely lucky to benefit from supportive friends and family. In particular, thank you to Jen and Mick Monks for setting up a little ‘office’ for me while I was writing up my thesis in the summer. Your generosity and kindness was amazing.

Overall, my thesis is dedicated to my wonderful parents, Steve and Jacqui, for their constant and unwavering love. You taught me from an early age the value of hard work, perseverance, and motivation, and I would not be here without your support and encouragement. Thanks mum for proofreading my entire thesis at the last minute!

Lastly but by no means least, thank you to Alexandra. I could not ask for a better partner in life and thank you for being with me every step of the way. You encouraged me when I thought I could not finish this in time, and gave countless hours (usually in car journeys) to my monologues about black activism. Frederick Douglass’ expression that “we should count time by heartthrobs” is a very good motto to live by.

Introduction: "To Tell His Own Story:" African American Activism and Adaptive Resistance in Britain 1835-1895

Prior to his departure to the United States in the spring of 1847, formerly enslaved African American Frederick Douglass addressed an "overflowing" audience in Leicester. In a well-rehearsed opening, he claimed he "had nothing in the way of learning" to entice the crowd's interest apart from "A LONG EXPERIENCE OF SLAVERY, and a heart devoted to the redress of the wrongs of his brethren" a point that was heavily emphasized by the correspondent of the *Leicestershire Mercury*. Douglass went on to say:

> A slave was looked upon in that free country [the U.S.] as a piece of property, to be bought and sold, and to be hunted down by blood-hounds if he made his escape. – I have myself (said the speaker, after a momentary pause,) experienced the anxiety and trepidation consequent on this state of things; for I am, as I believe most of you are aware, A RUNAWAY SLAVE.[1]

While many of his speeches in Britain were extemporaneous, Douglass relied on distinct performative techniques to convince his audiences of southern brutality. He ensured his audiences awaited his every word with bated breath: his sonorous voice and command of the lecturing platform, together with his

[1] *Leicestershire Mercury*. 6 March 1847, 2. Emphasis in original.

blistering rhetoric, painted a picture of slavery like no other. His testimony as a fugitive slave added weight to his words, and he combined such techniques with a flair for the dramatic, adding – as we see here – a "momentary pause" to infuse his words with impact and anticipation. Despite his protestations, Douglass was far from being uneducated or an amateur public speaker; even if his oratorical career had begun in Britain when he arrived in 1845, by 1847 he had lectured roughly three hundred times. Douglass' sojourn increased his confidence, independence and celebrity within transatlantic abolitionist circles, and it became a stepping stone for future success in the United States. He was the most successful black transatlantic activist of the nineteenth century and contemporaries lavishly described him as an eloquent orator, a modern Demosthenes.[2] While the subject or language may have varied between each speech, the common thread between them was Douglass' desire to expose American slavery to a British audience.

In one of abolitionism's most extraordinary chapters, scores of black activists like Douglass travelled to England, Ireland, Scotland and even parts of rural Wales to educate the British public on slavery. Many individuals sought temporary reprieve from American soil, others permanent; some raised money to free themselves or enslaved family members, and others sought work with varying degrees of success. Black men and women lectured in large cities and tiny fishing villages, wrote and published narratives, stayed with influential reformers and ensured millions of words were written about them in the newspapers. They appealed to different classes, races, and genders, with

[2] *Dundee, Perth and Cupar Advertiser*. 3 February 1860, 2.

no discrimination against profession, religion, or age. Whatever their reasons for visiting, black abolitionists exhibited whips and chains (and sometimes even their scars); read runaway slave advertisements from southern newspapers; created visual Panoramas, and used fiery rhetoric to tell their stories.[3] As Richard Blackett notes, black activists "brought an authenticity, a legitimacy to the international movement that their white co-workers could never claim." They did not encourage armed conflict or political interference, as some of their opponents alleged, but instead "aimed to inform the British public about the nature of American slavery."[4] It is therefore unsurprising that British newspaper editors littered their reportage with accounts of formerly enslaved individuals as well as their speeches, adverts for their narratives, and their letters to editors. From the *John O'Groat Journal* to the *Royal Cornwall Gazette,* Victorian Britons followed the movements of black Americans from the 1830s until decades after the American Civil War, often cramming into tiny churches or town halls to curb an insatiable appetite for details about American slavery. By employing innovative methods in their quest for equality, black abolitionists made an indelible mark on British society.

The constant movement and exchange of black peoples across the Atlantic famously led Paul Gilroy to conclude that scholars must study the "Black Atlantic" as a separate hybrid entity and that they should acknowledge its role in influencing black self-fashioning strategies.[5] While historians have pointed out his neglect of gender and women, Gilroy sought "to explore the

[3] Audrey Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England: Abolitionist Politics in Popular Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1-10.
[4] R.J.M Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 195-7.
[5] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

special relationships between 'race,' culture, nationality and ethnicity which have a bearing on the histories and political cultures of Britain's black citizens."[6] He argued that historians should interpret the Atlantic "as one single, complex unit of analysis…and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective." The Black Atlantic was "continually crisscrossed by the movements of black people – not only as commodities but [they] engaged in various struggles toward emancipation, autonomy, and citizenship" – and afforded "a means to re-examine the problems of nationality, location, identity, and historical memory." Black activists visited Europe "and had their perceptions of America and racial domination shifted as a result of their experiences there" which "has important consequences for their understanding of racial identities."[7] As Alasdair Pettinger summarizes, the Black Atlantic is "a collective noun embracing the intercontinental movements of Black Africans and their descendants since the late eighteenth century." It "encourages us to think of the diaspora not as a river, gathering its tributaries in a relentless voyage to a final destination, but as a vast ocean that touches many shores."[8] While this thesis concentrates only on the movement of African Americans to Britain and their experiences in the British Isles, many individuals used the nation as a base to visit France, Italy, Greece, Egypt, and other parts of Africa to campaign against slavery or reconnect with their ancestral land.

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[6] *Ibid*, 2-3.
[7] *Ibid*, 15-19.
[8] Alasdair Pettinger, *Always Elsewhere: Travels of the Black Atlantic* (London: Cassell, 1998), ix-xiii. See also Lucy Evans, "The Black Atlantic: Exploring Gilroy's Legacy," *Atlantic Studies* 6:2, (2009), 255-268; Steve Garner, "Atlantic Crossing," *Atlantic Studies* 4:1, (2007), 117-118; Dave Gunning and Abigail Ward, "Tracing Black America in Black British Culture," *Atlantic Studies* 6:2, (2009), 149-158.

During their transatlantic journeys to Britain throughout the nineteenth century, African Americans engaged in what I term "adaptive resistance," a multi-faceted interventionist strategy by which they challenged white supremacy and won support for abolition. Alongside my recovery of this mode of self-presentation in sources I have excavated from Victorian newspapers, I use an interdisciplinary methodology that draws on literary studies, cultural history, memory studies, African American studies and the visual culture of antislavery iconography to (re)discover black performative strategies on the Victorian stage from the late 1830s to the mid 1890s. By using fiery rhetoric, violent descriptions of slavery, Panoramas, plays or props, individuals such as Moses Roper, Frederick Douglass, William and Ellen Craft, Henry 'Box' Brown, J. Sella Martin, Josiah Henson and Ida B. Wells countered racial stereotypes that people of African descent were inferior to whites.[9] However, in analyzing such strategies, it is abundantly clear that performance was only one strand in the black activist arsenal. The successful employment of adaptive resistance relied on a triad of:

1. **Adaptive Performance Techniques (including assimilationist and dissonant strategies)**
2. **Utilization of Abolitionist Networks**
3. **Exploitation of Victorian Print Culture**

[9] See Peter Ripley, *The Black Abolitionist Papers: Vol 1: The British Isles 1830-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); David Turley, *The Culture of English Antislavery 1780-1860* (London: Routledge, 1991); R.J.M Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall* (Baton Rouge: University of Louisiana Press 1983); Clare Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists: An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974); Elisa Tamarkin, *Anglophilia: Deference, Devotion and Antebellum America* (Chicago: Illinois University Press, 2008); Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid Nineteenth Century* (Leicester: Holmes and Meier Publishers Inc., 1978); Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

For the first time, this thesis identifies and unifies these themes as central to black abolitionist transatlantic visits, and it concludes that if an individual ensured an even balance between all three, it was likely their sojourn was successful. To share their testimony of slavery, black men and women "adapted" to the location and the socio-political climate in which they spoke in. Intervening in these white public spaces, they used their **performances** to subvert white dominance and refused to exploit themselves as spectacles or objects for white consumption. To maximize their message, they manipulated connections with Victorian **print culture** to enable favourable coverage of their lectures, befriended newspaper editors and organized the printing of narratives or pamphlets recording their speeches. They wrote letters to influential newspapers and thanked publications in their speeches for supporting the antislavery cause. Synonymous with this, they utilized as many white abolitionist **networks** as they could: American abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison's British supporters were often friendly with local newspaper editors, and activists relied on these men and women to publish their stories, print advertisements for their meetings, and accommodate them whenever they visited urban centers. White abolitionists introduced formerly enslaved individuals to their families and friends, and arranged transportation, dinners and social events. Most prominently, they ensured that interested audiences packed out lecture halls. While these abolitionist networks or links to print culture could not be exploited by every activist (indeed, some white networks deliberately sabotaged certain missions), black men and women used or created every opportunity to maintain antislavery momentum and encourage

support for abolition. While elements of this resistance strategy could be used in other locations, adaptive resistance was a specifically British approach not only because of the nature of British abolitionist groups but also because of the narratives in which black abolitionists exploited in order to win support. Britain's history of abolition and its intertwined narrative of moral superiority allowed black men and women to simultaneously praise Britons for their abolitionist efforts (a distinct form of anglophilia) as well as challenge what further action the nation should take in regard to American slavery.

It can be very difficult to measure black abolitionist success. Some individuals visited Britain purely to sell narratives or raise money to free enslaved family members, and once their mission was completed they returned to the United States. Richard Blackett defines success by the scale and number of black abolitionist lecture tours, "for they were concerned not only to win financial support for specific projects at home but more importantly to inform international opinion about the nature of American slavery." Blackett believes we cannot "measure the success of these efforts, except to say that at the outbreak of the Civil War the British public was knowledgeable about the nature of American slavery and that each belligerent in the conflict desperately sought to influence British opinion in its favor."[10] Blackett is correct to say that black abolitionists were successful in their missions to mobilize public opinion. However, *adaptive resistance* as an interventionist strategy was most effective when abolitionists exploited the three elements of the triad in equal measure. By doing so, they were more likely to utilize contacts and maximize

[10] Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall,* (1983), xi; 16-17.

the spread of their message beyond their immediate radical circle. By creating unique performances, establishing connections with influential people, and manipulating forms of print culture, abolitionists could advance the antislavery cause as well as establishing fame on the British circuit. For example, Frederick Douglass was the most successful activist to employ adaptive resistance because he received extensive press coverage throughout the country, correspondents waxed lyrical about his oratorical ability and his words reached locations where he had not even visited.

Through my analysis of black abolitionist performative techniques, I build upon the ground-breaking work by Audrey Fisch in *American Slaves in Victorian England* (2000); Alan Rice's *Radical Narratives of the Black Atlantic* (2003); Richard Blackett's *Building An Antislavery Wall* (1983) and Peter Ripley's *The Black Abolitionist Papers* (1985).[11] Fisch's study concentrates mainly on the 1840s and 1850s, where black abolitionists exploited the commercialization of abolition and the popularity of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to raise awareness of American slavery. Black abolitionist lectures also stimulated debates surrounding English nationalism, and her work focuses on activists such as Frederick Douglass, Sarah Parker Remond and Henry 'Box' Brown and the impact they had on British abolition. At its heart, Fisch's book is concerned with "the dissemination of texts" and "the reception of these texts, about what they

[11] Audrey Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England: Abolitionist Politics in Popular Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); R.J.M Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983); Peter Ripley, *The Black Abolitionist Papers, The British Isles, 1830-1865 Vol. 1* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985). See also Fionnghuala Sweeney, *Frederick Douglass and the Atlantic World* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007); Alan J. Rice and Martin Crawford, *Liberating Sojourn: Frederick Douglass and Transatlantic Reform* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999).

mean…and about what they might have meant to others" and in particular she identifies an "African-American campaign" between 1850 and 1861.[12] Alan Rice's interdisciplinary study interacts with Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* to include an analysis of cultural genres such as dance, folklore, art, music and material culture. He deftly weaves together the narratives of – to name a few – Mary Prince, Frederick Douglass, Paul Robeson, Toni Morrison, and Lubaina Himid to highlight the significance of Black Atlantic cultures in the formation of transatlantic society.

Blackett and Ripley's monographs focus on black abolitionist travels to Britain from the 1830s to 1865, including famous individuals such as Charles Remond, Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, William and Ellen Craft and Martin Delany. Blackett and Ripley's books reveal immense archival efforts to discover the black abolitionist experience in Britain: Blackett in particular questions why black men and women visited Britain, where they visited and how their British experience shaped their lectures and future campaigns. As Blackett states, most histories of abolition focus on either organized antislavery activity (i.e. societies) or white networks. This hampers our understanding of the black abolitionist contribution to transatlantic abolition, particularly as such organized activity dwindled in the years before the Civil War. Blackett argues that black abolitionists created a "moral cordon" around America to shame the nation into ending slavery, and that this "trend" of black abolitionist visits began with Nathanial Paul in the early 1830s and grew in stature until the 1860s. The "thirty years of black

[12] Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England,* (2000), 4-6.

involvement were the foundation and the precedent for black activism in the twentieth century."[13]

As part of my intervention into this scholarship, I uncover new evidence surrounding black abolitionist missions and their performative techniques. I shed new light on their rhetoric and actions both on and outside an abolitionist stage, which contributes to an understanding of the ways in which black performers intervened and challenged the white racial schema. Unlike Fisch, Blackett and Ripley, for example, I argue Moses Roper contributed and nurtured a black American protest tradition in Britain before Charles Remond and Frederick Douglass, and I reveal the numerous self-reflexive strategies he employed to combat white supremacy. By starting my focus in the late 1830s, I compare the success of Roper's visit to Douglass' a decade later, and highlight the necessity of white abolitionist networks to black abolitionist success. Using original and previously undiscussed material, I analyze the performative strategies of black men and women in greater detail than Blackett, Fisch and Ripley, and extend my study to focus on black abolitionist visits to Britain beyond the American Civil War. While scholars such as Fisch and Blackett in particular have recognized the importance of abolitionist rhetoric and white abolitionist networks, I theorize for the first time that black activists relied on a combined **triad** of performance, abolitionist networks, and an exploitation of print culture. By employing adaptive resistance, black activists maintained a growing abolitionist momentum and refused to let the British public forget that slavery continued to exist as a result of their nation's

[13] Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall,* (1983), 195-208.

involvement with the slave trade. My unique contribution brings this triptych together to argue that if an abolitionist managed to exploit all three aspects, their visit would most likely be a success. More often than not, black abolitionists exploited one or two strands of adaptive resistance to achieve moderate success on the stage and in the press. For example, by studying the often-ignored Moses Roper and his radical dissonance, we can understand why Frederick Douglass was so successful. Douglass was a skillful performer who could answer criticisms or compromise his graphic language with relative ease. When he was maligned in the press, Douglass could employ the white friends he had cultivated through Garrisonian networks and his links to the press to ensure any form of sabotage was met with indignation. Roper could not exploit print culture or abolitionist networks to the same capacity as Douglass. He refused to downplay his brutal descriptions of slavery to satisfy white expectations and as a result upset Victorian standards of gentility and racial dynamics. He also suffered after prominent British aristocrats slandered his reputation and disowned him in the newspapers, which no doubt discredited his stories. He was apparently unable to gain the support of other prominent individuals or publications to defend him, highlighting how important these abolitionist networks were to success on the Victorian stage.[14]

Taking their resistance efforts together, black activists visited nearly every corner of Britain. They transformed transatlantic abolitionism and emphasized the importance of black testimony in every speech, letter or action. Psychologist Erik Erikson argues that "identity is the meeting point

[14] *Manchester Daily Mirror*. 23 January 1852, 2. White sabotage will be discussed in more detail in chapter one.

between who a person wants to be and what the world allows him to be."[15] By employing adaptive resistance, black abolitionists fought hard to protest against what the world allowed *them* to be and tried to create their own legacy in Britain. African Americans intervened in white spaces that were commonly denied to them, and shifted a traditional power balance that was based on white supremacy. Written and portrayed in popular culture as subservient or passive figures, activists transformed their black bodies into sites of protest. Layering such protests upon their physical selves, they became self-reflexive agents in order to disrupt racial norms and protest against attempts to render black voices unheard. These activists were architects of subversion, challenging misconceptions of slavery and white obsession with the black corporeal. They played on preconceived notions and spoke eloquently and powerfully to win their audience to the cause of abolition. Their reactive and proactive agency rejected racial stereotypes and constantly pushed at the boundaries of identity.

During their performances, I argue that activists employed both **assimilationist** and **dissonant** strategies to win support. As John Blassingame has described, formerly enslaved individuals practiced a "doubleness" of thought and consciousness in order to survive on plantations. These individuals adopted a persona to protect their humanity and hide resistance, and the "slave narrator (or the slave orator) bore evidence of that behavior and often illustrated the complex construction of a new self in a new world."[16]

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[15] Erik Erikson, quoted in Richard Sennett, "Man As Actor," in P. David Marshall, *The Celebrity Culture Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 21-35.
[16] John Blassingame, quoted in "Introduction," in Eric J. Sundquist, *Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 2-3.

Once free, those who gave lectures participated in this "doubleness" on the British stage: by appealing to Victorian norms and using rhetoric with which British audiences were familiar (including the celebration of British abolition), activists were likely to be successful. All activists invoked assimilationist techniques at some stage in their careers to gain a hearing and few were deliberately controversial, as this would have left them with no contacts and a controversy they could not control. They incorporated mimicry, minstrelsy, exhibited whips and chains, and anglophilia into their performances to create a memorable appeal to British audiences. For example, Frederick Douglass used mimicry to regale his Exeter audience in 1846 when he pretended to be a southern preacher, "with a most imitable tone of voice and a genuine Yankee twang." His "sermon" caused "shouts of laughter" and resulted in a very successful meeting.[17]

Many activists also relied on dissonant language. A musical term, dissonance refers to a "clashing" or unexpected beat against the mainstream. In his theory of cognitive dissonance, Leon Festinger argues that dissonance occurs because of a conflict with "new information…existing knowledge, opinion, or cognition concerning behaviour." The "existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance" and the individual will "actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance."[18] I argue that activists used such language to shock their audiences and sing a discordant tune against the audience's expectations.

[17] *Western Times*. 5 September 1846, 6.
[18] Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Illinois: Row, Peterson and Company, 1957), 2-5; 21-27.

Some activists made white Britons *deliberately* uncomfortable to enhance a feeling of dissonance and shock them into changing their misconceptions about slavery. Black men and women used their bodies and/or rhetoric to defy audience expectations and criticize these misconceptions about slavery and other racial stereotypes. Black people or blackness was, in the Victorian public's eyes, inextricably linked to slavery and this influenced how they portrayed and interpreted black people on stage.[19] In response, activists rejected racial stereotypes and racial science, asserted black masculinity and refused to downplay the violence of slavery. Britain had never been a haven for black people and numerous American abolitionists were not afraid of chastising the British for their self-aggrandized claims of liberty. Almost all activists criticized the notion that slavery did not exist on British soil, and as formerly enslaved men and women, they used their own experiences to highlight the difference between rhetoric and reality.[20] Navigating the tension between assimilationist and dissonant strategies on stage was often a difficult task and the ways in which abolitionists approached this challenge changes our understanding of abolitionism.

In doing so, I build on the concept of a black radical tradition espoused by Gilroy, Rice and Blackett to argue that through harnessing the aforementioned triad, black men and women were forging a black American protest tradition in Britain. They wanted, in Moses Roper's words, to "tell the truth" about the violence of slavery and champion African American

[19] Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America 1780-1865* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 144.
[20] Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 340-351.

humanity.[21] Roper's declaration was a foundation upon which future African Americans would build on, nurturing a tradition that was based on formerly enslaved testimony and the employment of a specifically *British* resistance strategy: all of the individuals I discuss in this thesis made reference to, praised or criticized British society in an attempt to advance the cause of abolition. In 1847, Douglass contributed to Roper's testimony and declared that the slaveholder could no longer hide what slavery truly was, for "the slave now broke loose from his chains and went forth to tell his own story, and to make known the wrongs of his brethren."[22] In 1850, William Wells Brown argued it was right and "proper that some one should speak in favour of the slave," and, instead of relying on slaveholder's testimony, he decided "to send his own representative, one who had himself worn the chains of slavery."[23] In 1863, an African American woman known to us only as Mrs. Jackson declared it was her right "to make a few remarks on slavery" as she herself had witnessed it.[24] Black men and women sought to make their voices and actions heard in a climate dominated by white supremacy; they refused to capitulate and educated thousands of people on slavery and its legacies, organizing physically and mentally demanding tours across Britain. All were united in their desire to tell their own stories, and exploit the symbiotic relationship between performance, print culture and abolitionist networks to challenge the white racist schema on both sides of the Atlantic.

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[21] Paul Walker, "Moses Roper: African American Baptist, Anti-Slavery Lecturer and Birmingham Nonconformity," *Baptist Quarterly* 44 (April 2011), 102-106.
[22] Frederick Douglass, 25 March 1847, in John Blassingame, *Frederick Douglass Papers, Speeches, Debates and Interviews, Vol.2 1847-54* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 8-19.
[23] *The Leeds Mercury.* 19 January 1850, 7.
[24] *Western Times*. 30 January 1863, 5.

African Americans created a legacy of resistance that numerous abolitionists would build on throughout the century. They infused this tradition with a spirit of defiance against racists as well as white antislavery reformers, both on an abolitionist and non-abolitionist stage. Before proceeding to analyze the individuals who contributed to this tradition, it is necessary to outline the three strands of adaptive resistance (performance, print culture and abolitionist networks) in more detail.

Adaptive Resistance: Performance

Within the performance strand of adaptive resistance as stated above, activists employed assimilationist and dissonant language, sometimes in the same lecture, to win support for abolition and challenge British misconceptions about American slavery. In her definition of performance in *Performing Authorship in the Nineteenth Century Transatlantic Tour*, Amanda Adams argues it is "creative, suggesting a distance between the individual and the performed self." Performance "allows identity to be realized – as an action, not a state of being" and "contains potential for artificiality or put more positively, creativity and invention." Transatlantic lecture tours were "inescapably embodied" experiences since "an author stood on the stage, rather than the page, displaying much of his or her physical self through voice, accent, hand gestures and stature."[25] Corporeality is central in her definition, as it "is the central tool and prop in the performance" and refuses to be static. Adams also argues that "while performance was a site of agency, the effect of

[25] Amanda Adams, *Performing Authorship in the Nineteenth Century Transatlantic Lecture Tour* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 11-12.

it – the commodification of the author's persona – was disempowering, placing authors in a passive relationship to a public on which they were trying to assert themselves."[26] Adams states that a performance can encompass the entirety of a lecturing tour, as any form of lecture or action, whether at a private gathering or a large meeting of six thousand people requires a performative response, a belief that aligns with the argument in this thesis. In relation to black abolitionists, a performance could be any action in front of a white audience where racial identities meet: while Adams is right that the black body was often viewed with a white spectatorial gaze, the relationship between body and audience was not always disempowering. As we saw in the opening extract of Douglass' speech, I argue in this thesis that black activists actively created assertive relationships with their listeners, either through de-emphasizing their body and focusing attention on their voice, or by using their body as a "voice" to highlight the sin of slavery. This relationship was often an empowering act between audience and body because the speaker was captivating the audience with their presence; they were in control of how and what the audience saw, since they were dictating the content and shape of the message. In doing so, they sought to look beyond the commodification of their racialized bodies.

In her book *Bodies in Dissent* (2006), Daphne Brooks discusses black performance techniques and argues that black activists "invoked multiple performance strategies, performative ideologies, and new popular cultural technologies to counterintuitively articulate and redeploy the discourse of

[26] *Ibid*, 2-13.

socio-political alienation." She interrogates how black men and women used W.E.B. Du Bois' feeling of "double-consciousness" to "forge discursive as well as embodied insurgency," and states they "channelled varying forms of alienation and dissonant identity politics into his or her performances and in doing so stylized alternative forms of cultural expression that cut against the grain of conventional social and political ideologies." Brooks calls this Black Atlantic performance tactic "Afro-Alienation Acts."[27] She does not make clear, however, that performers *actively adapted* to their environment using improvisational techniques both on and outside the antislavery stage; for example, 'Box' Brown constantly changed his repertoire and even starred in a play based on his own life. This flexibility did not just mean a variety of approach but a means of reacting to circumstances on the spot. Black men and women intervened in traditional white spaces by using dissonant *and* assimilationist techniques, constantly reworking and reframing performative strategies to ensure constant support. Unlike Brooks, the majority of my research is contained within the nineteenth century and I concentrate solely on African American activism in Britain, since adaptive resistance was a uniquely *British* phenomenon.

Inherent within this was that black abolitionist performative strategies involved a battle to construct one's own image, in opposition to an audience attempting to push its own preconceived notions onto a performer. As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have argued, those individuals who relate their stories to an audience "are multiply embodied." The individual has to negotiate their own body itself, together with the "cultural attitudes and codes attached to the

[27] Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom 1850-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 3-11.

public meanings of bodies that underwrites relationships of power." Thus, their agency materializes when they exercise "control over the self-representations they produce about themselves."[28] Following the same logic, British audiences often held a stereotypical image of black persons, which whites founded upon racist depictions of African Americans made popular in caricatures and minstrel shows.[29] In a similar vein, nineteenth century newspaper descriptions of black abolitionists consistently focused on the corporeal, and black men and women had to find a way of incorporating this within their performance without succumbing to exhibitionism. For example, descriptions of Frederick Douglass' "eloquence" rarely failed to connect this trait with the fascination surrounding his black body. It was difficult for him and other black abolitionists to disembody themselves from their powerful oratory, as British audiences saw the body first and heard the voice second. Even if his audience appreciated his voice, they only understood his corporeal self through the racialised lens of white Victorian popular culture.[30]

In an attempt to combat this, Douglass summarized the key elements of adaptive resistance when he declared he was "ever ready to write, speak,

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[28] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Interfaces: Women, Autobiography, Image, Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 10.
[29] Alex W. Black, "Abolitionism's Resonant Bodies: The Realization of African American Performance," *American Quarterly* 63:3, (September 2011), 619-623. For discussion on racial stereotypes, see also Tavia Nyong'o, *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance and the Ruses of Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid Nineteenth Century* (Leicester: Holmes and Meier Publishers Inc., 1978); Peter J. Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea (Revised Edition)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, 1989); Adrian Desmond and James Moore, *Darwin's Sacred Cause: Race, Slavery and the Quest for Human Origins* (London: Penguin Books, 2009); Robert Nowatzki, *Representing African Americans in Transatlantic Abolitionism and Blackface Minstrelsy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010); Hazel Waters, *Racism on the Victorian Stage: Representation of Slavery and the Black Character* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[30] Jeanne DeLombard, "Eye-witness to the Cruelty': Southern Violence and Northern Testimony in Frederick Douglass's 1845 Narrative," *American Literature* 73:2, (2001), 270-271. See also Celeste-Marie Bernier, *Characters of Blood: Black Heroism in the Transatlantic Imagination* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2012) and Bernier's article "'Iron Arguments': Spectacle, Rhetoric and the Slave Body in New England and British Antislavery Oratory," *European Journal of American Culture* 26:1, (2007), 57-78.

publish, organise, combine and even to conspire against slavery."[31] His words are symbolic: African Americans who protested against slavery in Britain used every tool at their disposal to "conspire against slavery." Douglass exploited antislavery networks to conduct an extensive lecturing tour across the country and forged new friendships and contacts to speak out against slavery. He wrote to editors of prominent newspapers, courted relationships with prominent newspaper men, and constantly wrote letters back and forth to America sharing stories of his British trips. His fiery rhetoric won many new recruits to the antislavery cause and hundreds of people flocked to hear him speak. Douglass' exploitation of this triad specifically in the 1840s worked successfully to ensure he was a celebrity on the British stage. In contrast, Douglass' second visit in 1859 was not as successful as his first, as certain networks were closed to him after his infamous break with radical abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison in the early 1850s.[32] Together with the growing apathy in Britain towards black rights, Douglass' employment of adaptive resistance was hampered by his inability to exploit the triad in equal measure.

In the last forty years, there has been a significant growth in scholarship about Douglass' experience abroad. Chief among them are John Blassingame, *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Volume 1, Series 1* (1979), Philip Foner, *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings* (1999, first published in 1950), Peter Ripley, *The Black Abolitionist Papers* (1985), Richard Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall,* (2002), and Alan Rice and

[31] *New York Herald*. 4 November 1859.
[32] This will be discussed in chapter four. See Blackett, "Cracks in the Antislavery Wall: Frederick Douglass's Second Visit to England (1859-1869) and the Coming of the Civil War," in Alan J. Rice and Martin Crawford, *Liberating Sojourn: Frederick Douglass and Transatlantic Reform* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999), 187-207.

Martin Crawford (eds.), *Liberating Sojourn: Frederick Douglass and Transatlantic Reform,* (1999). Iain Whyte's *Send Back the Money!* (2012) and Alasdair Pettinger's *Always Elsewhere: Travels of the Black Atlantic* (1998) explore Douglass in Scotland, but Alan Rice and Martin Crawford's study is perhaps the most comprehensive and enlightening examination of Douglass' experience in Britain. A co-edited study, several of its essays explore Douglass' Scottish and Irish campaigns, his association with the Chartist movement, and his visit in the 1850s.

Historians have also focused heavily on Douglass' Irish sojourns. Fionnghuala Sweeney's *Frederick Douglass and the Atlantic World* (2007) discusses his visit to the 'Emerald Isle' in great detail; John F. Quinn's article concentrates on both Douglass' tours of Ireland in '"Safe in Old Ireland': Frederick Douglass' Tour 1845-1846," *Historian,* (2002); Jeffrey R. Kerr-Ritchie discusses Douglass in "Black Abolitionists, Irish Supporters, and the Brotherhood of Man," *Slavery & Abolition,* (2016); Patricia J. Ferreira focuses on Douglass' Dublin edition of his *Narrative* in "Frederick Douglass and the 1846 Dublin Edition of His Narrative," *New Hibernia Review,* (2001), and similarly Robert Levine dedicates an entire chapter to this Dublin edition in his recent work, *The Lives of Frederick Douglass* (2016).

There are many reasons for this focus on Ireland, but primarily it is because Douglass' Irish visit was the first part of his 1840s tour and so was the starting point for dramatic changes in his self-fashioning. For the first time in his life Douglass felt free, and his often-relentless schedule proved

representative of his later travels. This was the beginning of a life-changing experience for Douglass, and he cultivated abolitionist networks and important dignitaries in order to lecture on slavery whenever possible. A second reason for the focus on Ireland is that Douglass' new edition of his *Narrative* (printed in Dublin) represented his growing independence from the Garrisonian movement. In this thesis, I refocus attention on Douglass' experiences in England where his extraordinary success has received – in comparison – less scholarly attention. By analyzing previously undiscovered speeches and commentaries, I provide extraordinary insight into Douglass' oratory and the myriad performative techniques he used to win support for abolition and black rights.

As well as uncovering new evidence in regard to Douglass' relationship with Britain, I also refocus attention on two formerly enslaved individuals and their British tours who have received scarce attention. Apart from a seminal article by Martha J. Cutter, "Revising Torture: Moses Roper and the Visual Rhetoric of the Slave's Body in the Transatlantic Abolition Movement" (2014), Moses Roper has been placed at the side-lines of black abolitionist tours and my research recovers him from the shadows. Roper conducted an extensive tour of the British Isles, speaking to hundreds of thousands of people and travelling to all corners of Britain to lecture against slavery.[33] However, as I have already suggested, he relied too heavily on radical dissonance, jeopardizing his success. He refused to reduce the possibility of dissonance and often *deliberately* made audiences

[33] Moses Roper, *A Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper from American Slavery* (Berwick-Upon-Tweed: Warder Office, 1848).

uncomfortable with his graphic descriptions of violence. During a meeting in Wexford in 1838 for example, Roper's language towards slave-owning Methodist and Baptist ministers raised the ire of local religious ministers and according to a local newspaper he "would not publicly contradict his statements." He had "represented [Methodists] as cruel, canting, hypocrites" and several prominent individuals threatened to end the meeting lest Roper apologize. Roper stood up to speak and endeavored to "excite the feelings of the audience" by relating that a Methodist had enslaved his mother; the meeting broke up with "the majority being evidently displeased with the line of conduct Mr. Roper had pursued."[34] While many black abolitionists employed a measure of compromise or curtailed their radical language, Roper refused to downplay the violent and hypocritical nature of slavery, and argued only he – as a formerly enslaved individual – could know what it was like to be enslaved.

The second individual whose British tour has received little attention is Josiah Henson. Apart from Marcus Wood and the art historian Jan Marsh, Henson's extraordinary visit in 1876-1877 has not been analyzed in detail.[35] He capitalized on his association with the character of 'Uncle Tom' from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and travelled to Britain, where he received numerous invitations to lecture around the country. However, the association with Uncle Tom became burdensome at points. In a meeting in March 1877, he completely rejected the racial epithet and demanded that

[34] *Wexford Conservative*. 6 October 1838, 3.
[35] Jan Marsh, "From Slave Cabin to Windsor Castle: Josiah Henson and 'Uncle Tom' in Britain," *19th Century Studies* 16, (2002), 37-50 and Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America 1780-1865* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

"without his consent no person had any right to call him Uncle Tom." Henson's example not only demonstrates the complexity of black activists exploiting white supremacist narratives for their advantage, but also how they met that challenge with a flexibility where they practiced both a desire to embrace and rebuff audience attempts to define them.[36]

Adaptive resistance was also deeply gendered, and for the first time, I uncover the previously neglected performative techniques that black women used on the British stage to align themselves with their black identity and challenge white supremacy. I also recover evidence surrounding Mrs. Jackson, the activist wife of John Andrew Jackson who was the first African American woman to speak publicly on a British stage about her experiences as an enslaved individual. This radically alters our perception of black female transatlantic activism, and her speeches offer dramatic new insights into abolition and Victorian racial and gender dynamics.

Black women used different performative techniques to negotiate racial and gender publics on the transatlantic stage. Teresa C. Zackodnik argues that there was a "politics of embodiment facing African American women" as they had to negotiate not only the male dominated public stage, but also work with the image of a "mythic black female body." They also faced pressure from white abolitionists whose politics necessitated that a black body represented an eyewitness to the cruelties of slavery. Black women's double embodiment meant they had to appeal to white societal norms and

[36] *Dundee Courier and Argus Warder*. 13 March 1877, 3.

present themselves as civilized, feminine, and eloquent, while at the same time ensuring that they asserted their humanity.[37] White society constantly objectified and sexualized black women. In response, individuals such as Sojourner Truth, Ellen Craft, Sarah Parker Remond, and Ida B. Wells challenged their double embodiment in both the public and private spheres. They used their body and their oratory to express their black experiences, their identity, and ultimately their womanhood. However, their decision to "expose themselves to 'promiscuous' audiences" threatened how those audiences viewed their femininity.[38]

For example, Ellen Craft used silence as a performative technique and crafted a form of embodied resistance to stand up at the end of meetings and confirm everything her husband William had said about slavery. Her near-white skin shocked British audiences, and she used her complexion to highlight that slavery represented violence and rape towards black women. Despite relying on this concept of whiteness in public, I have discovered numerous ways in which Ellen created private networks that aligned with her black identity, including the forging of black networks from her home in London. These complexities help us understand why the majority of activists to exploit adaptive resistance – and travel to Britain for a lecturing tour altogether – were male.

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[37] Teresa C. Zackodnik, *Press, Platform, Pulpit: Black Feminist Publics in the Era of Reform* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 2011), xv-xvi; xxii. See also Renee K. Harrison, *Enslaved Women and the Art of Resistance in Antebellum America* (New York: Palgrave, 2009); Stephanie Camp, *Closer To Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996); Valerie Cooper, *Word Like Fire: Maria Stewart, The Bible, and the Rights of African Americans* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011); Xiomara Santamarina, *Belabored Professions: Narratives of African American Working Womanhood* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).
[38] Zackodnik, *Press, Platform, Pulpit*, (2011), xv-xvi; xxii-xxvi.

Adaptive Resistance: Print Culture

Abolitionists on both sides of the Atlantic realized a successful lecturing tour depended on their relationship to print culture. Whether activists arrived to raise money to free enslaved family members, or to launch sustained attacks on the U.S. system of slavery or the South's attempt to establish a nation based on that system, favourable newspaper coverage could influence public opinion and maximize attendance at their lectures. Activists wrote letters to newspapers, challenged pro-slavery views, and sent copies of newspapers across the Atlantic. They also printed hundreds of their narratives to be sold at meetings, and occasionally arranged for their speeches to be published in pamphlets. For example, Garrisonian abolitionist John Estlin was friends with the editor of London's second biggest newspaper, *The Advertiser,* a connection William Craft exploited to ensure larger coverages of his lectures.[39] William Wells Brown used this connection too, and in a letter published in *The Advertiser* in September 1852, wrote he was "informed by my kind friend Mr. Estlin, of Bristol, that you would insert any article that I might write in favour of my enslaved countrymen."[40]

In the first wave of British abolition, Thomas Clarkson exploited the marketplace and growing print industry to distribute pamphlets and books: Clarkson's *Summary of the Slave Trade* published in 1788 sold nearly 20,000

[39] Peter Ripley, *The Black Abolitionist Papers, The British Isles, 1830-1865 Vol. 1* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 18-25.
[40] *Ibid*, 316-317.

copies.[41] Between 1823 and 1831, 2,802,773 pamphlets were written and published by the Anti-Slavery Society and of that number, 469,750 tracts were published in 1831 alone.[42] Similarly, slave narratives were rapidly consumed by a growing marketplace. Between 1789 and 1837, 36 editions of Equiano's *Narrative* were published; Moses Roper's 1837 *Narrative* went through 11 editions in two years; Frederick Douglass had sold 7 editions by 1849 and William Wells Brown went through 4 editions in the first year of its publication in 1849.[43]

Extending Fisch and Blackett's work, I have carried out an extensive and unprecedented canvassing of Victorian newspapers from the mid-1830s to the late 1890s. The Victorian press can provide us with illuminating insight into black abolitionist performances, and I have (re)discovered new speeches, performative techniques and political strategies black abolitionists used to challenge white supremacy. By analyzing their performances, collating advertisements for their speeches and evaluating their lecture coverage, we can map their speaking locations and assess their popularity in each location. However, when examining newspaper texts, it must be remembered that we are reading a correspondent's version of a particular lecture that cannot be literally recreated or taken for a literal speech.[44] We must also be aware of Victorian racial dynamics. As Marcus Wood states "evidence, and

[41] John R. Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery: The Mobilisation of Public Opinion Against the Slave Trade 1787-1807* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 1-2; 44-45; 51-52.
[42] James Fireman, "The Propaganda of Anti-Slavery," in James Walvin, *Slavery and British Society 1776-1846* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1982), 60.
[43] Frances Smith Foster, *Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Ante-Bellum Slave Narratives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 22.
[44] Janette Lisa Martin, "Popular Political Oratory and Itinerant Lecturing in Yorkshire and the North East in the Age of Chartism 1837-1860," PhD Diss., (University of York, 2010). Accessed online 22 April 2017, http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/834/1/CORRECTEDthesis.pdf 7.

historiography and even the mythology of slavery is one-sided and comes out of a series of white records." Much evidence is "dependent on white sources" and even slave narratives "were created and read against a perpetual backdrop of white suspicion, patronization and possessive fantasy."[45] The majority of, if not all, the correspondents reporting on black performances in the press were white, and reports of activist speeches can never be called accurate representations, since their words were copied down in note form or short hand, and then written up for publication. After all, performances are ephemeral, fleeting and sometimes impossible to describe, particularly if a black artist constructed a performance in front of/for a white audience. Historians analyze such performances through white interpretation and as a result it is likely on several occasions that correspondents misread or misheard performances, and even failed to understand abolitionist strategies. For example, in one coverage of a meeting in 1877, a white reporter completely ignored Josiah Henson's revocation of Uncle Tom.[46]

Whether this was subconscious or not, other correspondents made the deliberate decision to curtail lectures. Occasionally, this was a reflection of a lack of column space. Newspapers usually did not have the space to print coverage of a two-hour lecture, since Victorian lecturers could speak roughly 7,000 words an hour.[47] After formerly enslaved individual Francis Fedric gave a speech in 1862, the correspondent for *The West Middlesex Advertiser* wrote "we omit the account of the horrible tortures to which the slaves are subjected,

[45] Marcus Wood, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 9-11.
[46] *Liverpool Mercury*. 23 April 1877, 7.
[47] Martin, "Popular Political Oratory and Itinerant Lecturing," (2010), 130-138.

as his tale of woe will be repeated in various parts of the neighbourhood."[48] Since Fedric was giving other lectures in the area, this correspondent deemed it unnecessary to write down all of his speech, disregarding the possibility he may have varied his words or story. Being mindful of such biases is crucial to understanding black resistance in this context, together with the notion that black performance often relied upon cloaked words and actions to subvert traditional racial norms. We must also recognize black American contributors to the British landscape whose lives, words, and performances went unrecorded, or are still waiting recovery.

Local newspaper coverage ensured there were two audiences: those that heard and witnessed the lecturer in the flesh, and those that read the speech afterwards. The connections between performance and print culture are essential to understanding how correspondents reported on such meetings. Numerous speeches were distributed in printed pamphlets and by the mid-1850s, 10% of books had their origins from speeches or some form of oral communication. Lecturers who had their speeches printed in pamphlets had more control over their words, often editing or adding to their speech. Others wrote a copy of their speech and gave it to newspaper editors to ensure accuracy.[49] Occasionally, reporters tried to capture the performance more specifically by drawing attention to lecturer's gestures or the emphasis they made on certain words. More often than not, they recorded audience reactions including laughter, cheers and shocked gasps, and these inflections in the

[48] *The West Middlesex Advertiser.* 8 March 1862, 2.
[49] Martin, "Popular Political Oratory and Itinerant Lecturing," (2010), 120-122.

printed word helped others to imagine the *spoken* word.[50]

The Victorian press was a large factor in sustaining antislavery momentum and arousing interest in a visiting lecturer. Black activists were astutely aware that by ensuring positive speech coverage or favourable reviews of their narratives, more speaking engagements would follow. For reformists, establishing – or indeed working with – a newspaper was often essential to garnering further readership and ensuring more support.[51] According to Hannah Barker, newspaper growth across the nineteenth century had a significant impact on British society. Publications "were highly prized by a population hungry for news" and "their contents were devoured and dissected and the information and views they imparted provided a basis for public debate...and the formation of public opinion."[52] Newspapers grew increasingly political, often taking on clear allegiances, but publications could not survive without appealing or printing articles favourable to their readership. Although it is impossible to determine the exact reasons why certain people purchased newspapers, it is evident that the steady and sometimes extended coverage of black abolitionist speeches indicated a popular interest in their missions.[53]

Victorian newspaper circulation increased by 36% between 1816-1836, by 70% between 1836-1856 and grew exponentially by 600% between

[50] *Ibid*, 124-126.
[51] Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695-1855* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 28-29.
[52] *Ibid*, 1.
[53] *Ibid*, 109; 126-129. See also Ivon Asquith, "1780-1855' in the Structure, Ownership and Control of the Press," in James Curran, George Boyce, Pauline Wingate eds., *Newspaper History from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day* (London: Constable, 1978), 98-117.

1856-1881.[54] Provincial press growth was astounding too. By 1800, there were 70 weekly publications, increasing to 130 by 1832 to over 200 in the mid 1840s. *The Leeds Mercury* and *The Liverpool Mercury* reached audiences of over 6,000 per week in the 1840s; *The Manchester Guardian* sold 11,000 by this time and rose to over 20,000 in the 1850s.[55] However, sales figures alone did not equate to readership, as individuals would read to others, share articles, and debate them in meetings.[56] By the early 1870s, stalwart publications such as *The Times* had a circulation between 65,000-70,000; *The Daily Telegraph, Daily News* and *The Standard* had a daily circulation of 500,000 in total, and daily papers in the larger cities outside London could reach 200,000-300,000.[57] Together with the rise in literacy, vast developments in constructing paper and printing itself revolutionized the Victorian popular print media. Changes in technology such as wood-engraving and lithographing, allowed images to be reproduced in the press, and the *Illustrated London News* was the first publication to utilize such images on a large scale.[58]

Black abolitionists understood this important relationship between print and performance, and often spoke with both audiences in mind. As Tom F. Wright argues, the lyceum circuit in America "was a matter as much of print as of performance – a culture of display that was experienced and conditioned far more through newspaper reportage as by first-hand

[54] Kevin Williams, *Read All About It! A History of the British Newspaper* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 5.
[55] Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society* (2000), 29-35.
[56] *Ibid*, 29-35; 63.
[57] Martin Hewitt, *The Dawn of the Cheap Press in Victorian Britain: The End of the 'Taxes on Knowledge' 1849-1869* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 165; 174-176.
[58] Andrew King and John Plunkett, *Victorian Print Media: A Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 166; 339-340; 375-377.

encounter." Print culture "catalysed greater prominence for the verbal, generating new textual *forms* of the talking mind in which print is called in to reinforce, not replace the spoken word." The lecturer's "sonic appeal" was "understood as merely one of many potential reimaginings of an aural composition and speech texts were understood as demanding oral reanimation to establish the word's true meanings and confer upon the reciter some public ethos of the original speaker."[59]

Equally, black and white activists worked tirelessly to persuade the growing local newspaper culture to print coverage favourable to the antislavery cause. Garrison himself acknowledged the importance of this when he wrote to Bristol abolitionist John B. Estlin. After a successful meeting in London in August 1846, Garrison noted that "nearly all the other city journals have noticed the meeting in respectful terms and thus have given that publicity to our movement which is so essential to its success." Thanks to his own background as a newspaper editor, he understood well enough that positive coverage and favourable opinions had a larger impact beyond simply the spread of their message: respectability. This, together with extensive coverage, would mean the abolitionists and their cause could not "fail to make a deep impression on the public mind, on both sides of the Atlantic."[60]

[59] Tom F. Wright, *Lecturing the Atlantic: Speech, Print, and an Anglo-American Commons 1830-1870* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 6-7.
[60] William Lloyd Garrison to John B. Estlin, 19 August 1846, in Clare Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists: An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974), 278.

Adaptive Resistance: Abolitionist Networks

The growth of Victorian print culture in general spurred the success of black abolitionist visits, but antislavery networks were also a vital part of transatlantic lecture tours. Black activists became adept at befriending influential people and newspaper men who promised to print coverages of their speeches.[61] The success of black abolitionist missions often relied on these organized abolitionist networks. For example, if a formerly enslaved person was recognized as a friend of the radical abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, numerous homes and contacts would be open to that individual as soon as they stepped onto British soil. Conversely, the same white networks could ruin a lecturer's reputation through defamation in the press or through abolitionist networks. Victorian racial dynamics decreed that white testimonials were essential to black activist tours, and those without such extensive connections – such as Moses Roper – suffered in comparison to Frederick Douglass on his first tour, who had numerous doors open to him through his Garrisonian contacts.

John R. Oldfield argues that communication was central to abolitionists and "through their networks, activists circulated a huge amount of material – letters, newspapers, prints, books and pamphlets – that, in turn, was abridged, translated and recycled." These '"circuits of knowledge' were multi-directional" and laid the foundations for future networks.[62] Letter-writing was an essential factor in sustaining these circuits, as facts and information were

[61] Ripley, *The Black Abolitionist Papers,* (1985), 14-19.
[62] John R. Oldfield, *Transatlantic Abolitionism in the Age of Revolution: An International History of Antislavery c.1787-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3-4.

shared constantly among national and international societies. Letters were read at public meetings, and shared between activists. They were considered "the nearest thing to instant communication, they complimented and extended the many face-to-face conversations that went on between abolitionists on both sides of the Atlantic, whether in coffee shops, committee rooms or private parlours."[63]

Caleb McDaniel's book *The Problem of Democracy* (2013) shifts focus from Oldfield's study of the eighteenth century to transatlantic Garrisonian networks from the 1830s to the Civil War. He argues that the "Garrisonians' transatlantic ties actually grew stronger after 1840;" the World's Antislavery Convention of that year had led to "shared meals, afternoon teas, rambling parlor conversations, and overnight stays in British homes." Hence, they "made previously abstract ties newly tangible" and "by the end of 1841, there was an identifiable group of British abolitionists who thought of themselves as 'Garrisonite.'" From this date onwards, they "built a communications network" through exchanging letters and newspapers which sustained the transatlantic movement. American abolitionist Abby Kimber wrote to Irish activist Richard D. Webb that his extensive commentary on antislavery events meant she looked "round almost expecting to see you at my elbow." In relation to black abolitionists, McDaniel does acknowledge that black activists "helped reenergize the commitment of Garrisonians abroad,

[63] *Ibid*, 42-47.

both by captivating audiences with details of their harrowing experiences and by publicly praising British abolitionists."[64]

Both Oldfield and McDaniel's important studies concentrate mainly on white abolitionists, the former during the first wave of abolition in the eighteenth century, and the latter during the antebellum period up to the Civil War. I focus on the connections black abolitionists made as well as the extensive networks they relied on, and in doing so, uncover new links to abolitionists and the ways in which lectures were organized throughout the nineteenth century. I also (re)discover reformist networks after the Civil War and explore how Josiah Henson in particular exploited his connections with John Lobb, editor of *The Christian Age,* who utilized his numerous contacts in London to organize an extensive lecturing tour in 1876-1877. Many abolitionists had died or had turned their focus towards other subjects by the late 1870s, but Henson employed adaptive resistance in a new era to remind his white benefactors and white audiences that slavery had not yet fully perished. Tied to this, I also uncover evidence of white reformist sabotage of black abolitionist campaigns. While Lobb was instrumental in making Henson's visit a success, he heavily edited a new edition of Henson's narrative and marketed him as *the* "Uncle Tom." Over thirty years before, Moses Roper was the subject of intense white sabotage as his former supporter denounced him in the public press and aristocrats defamed him for his lectures, interracial marriage, and his supposedly deceitful conduct. Roper had no choice but to strike out by himself. Thus, white networks could often "make or break"

[64] Caleb McDaniel, *The Problem of Democracy in the Age of Slavery: Garrisonian Abolitionists and Transatlantic Reform* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2013), 78-83.

abolitionist tours, revealing Victorian racial dynamics and the white racist schema black men and women had to operate within. Whether supported by white abolitionists or not, black activists sustained antislavery momentum in Britain, borrowed from their abolitionist predecessors to create new "circuits of knowledge," and encouraged Britons to challenge American slavery.

As further evidence of this, I have created a digital mapping project – the first of its kind – that plots black abolitionist speaking locations on maps of the British Isles. As a result, various patterns emerge.[65] We can analyze why activists visited certain locations and how they travelled, as well as revealing the unforgettable mark they had on British society. In an unprecedented campaign, black abolitionists visited nearly every corner of Britain and spoke in churches, chapels, town halls and even open spaces to lecture on slavery, challenge pro-Southern sentiment during the Civil War, or contest scientific racism. For example, the map I have created featuring Frederick Douglass' speaking locations has allowed me to update and expand John Blassingame's previously-definitive list in *The Frederick Douglass Papers*. This has given me new insight into Douglass' travel arrangements, particularly how he exploited new technology such as the railway to travel around Britain (some aspects of his tour follow the railway lines). During his first trip, he lectured at least six times in Bristol and eleven times in the Newcastle area. While many activists spoke in any location they could get a hearing, individuals like Douglass exploited abolitionist connections and stayed with, for example, the Estlin family in Bristol and with the Richardson

[65] See author's website, www.frederickdouglassinbritain.com

family in Newcastle. Both families had extensive connections that would have organized lectures for him, and analyzing north-eastern newspapers allowed me to discover how an extra train was arranged for one of Douglass' meetings in order to take audience members home.[66] Occasionally, he spoke in two cities in the same day, highlighting not only his growing celebrity but also how his lecturing schedule was exhaustingly extensive and often depended on the railway. Hence, if employed in earlier decades, adaptive resistance would have only resulted in moderate success because the triptych would have been a diptych instead; the technological advancements were not in place to help activists gain a wider, and national, hearing.

Both white and black abolitionists had cultivated connections and friendships across the Atlantic since the eighteenth century. As part of his campaign against the slave trade, Thomas Clarkson conducted several tours of Britain: in 1787, he arranged a tour of prominent slave ports such as Bristol, and the following year he lectured across southern England. In 1790, he visited Scotland and several northern towns, and the year after concentrated on the north east of England. Altogether, he journeyed over 35,000 miles and made connections to local, influential people who would help the cause and stir abolitionist support after he had left.[67] He forged connections between London and numerous cities, and organized local branches of antislavery societies, selling and sharing as much abolitionist literature as possible. Early abolitionists established transatlantic networks too, as Granville Sharp's communications with Benjamin Rush and Benjamin Franklin testify.

[66] *Newcastle Guardian*. 12 December 1846, 4.
[67] Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery,* (1995), 74-75.

Correspondence between Quakers in Britain and America shared a mutual desire for abolition as they discussed tactics and exchanged factual information. The Pennsylvania Abolition Society made connections to Clarkson and shared information about the slave trade in states such as Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts.[68]

By the 1830s, British abolitionists such as George Thompson forged their own connections, often relying on religious circuits made up of Evangelicals and Quakers, who offered their homes and churches to the antislavery cause. Before Thompson or other activists arrived in a particular location, local ministers would prearrange meetings in town halls or churches, as it was extremely difficult for a black activist to arrive in a new place, friendless, with no connections. In this instance, the speaker was forced to search and pay for lodgings, print and circulate handbills advertising a lecture, and sometimes employ a bell-ringer to announce the meeting. Some lecturers would venture to a newspaper editor's office, which often had influential connections to townspeople and would print advertisements or coverage of their lectures.[69] While some meetings could be arranged spontaneously or through local networks including churches, organized political meetings had to be arranged at least a week early to ensure local authorities granted permission. The chairman was usually an influential townsperson, occasionally the mayor or an MP, who had the role of introducing the main speakers and of preserving order.[70]

[68] *Ibid*, 1-2; 44-45; 51-52.
[69] Martin, "Popular Political Oratory and Itinerant Lecturing," (2010), 46-48.
[70] *Ibid*, 85-93.

If black lecturers had extensive connections, much of this organization was completed before they arrived in a certain locality. While black visitors received support from the aristocracy (including figures such as the Earl of Shaftesbury and the Duchess of Sutherland), the majority of activists came from the middle classes, such as lawyers, printers and merchants, who were able to exploit such connections. Lecturers required introductions and testimonials to ensure unproblematic travel, and saved funds by staying with abolitionist friends who organized lectures and encouraged leading local men to be chairmen for an antislavery meetings.[71] For example, Douglass described his travel arrangements as he was due to leave Scotland in 1846, writing that as he travelled towards London, he would stop at Newcastle, North Shields "and such other Towns as lay in my way, and in which I may be invited to lecture."[72]

The Garrisonian network of abolitionists were an indefatigable source of support for visiting black lecturers. Boston-based radical activist William Lloyd Garrison established pockets of support in New England, and in Britain when he visited in the early 1830s. Abolitionists such as Richard D. Webb (Dublin), John and Mary Estlin (Bristol), Elizabeth Pease (Darlington) and Eliza Wigham (Edinburgh) ardently campaigned for immediate emancipation. British Garrisonians were Quakers, Unitarians, Chartists, temperance advocates, literary celebrities, and politicians, and kept steady correspondence between themselves and prominent activists in Boston such as Garrison and

[71] Ripley, *The Black Abolitionist Papers,* (1985), 10-11.
[72] Frederick Douglass to Elizabeth Pease, 6 July 1846, in John R. McKivigan, *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series Three, Correspondence Vol.1 1842-1852* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 141-143.

Maria Weston Chapman.[73] Female antislavery groups were also vital in supporting black abolitionist lecturers, often outlasting and adopting a more radical nature than male societies. Antislavery politics were discussed in private homes and networks, as women threatened to close the widening gap between the public and private and the male and female spheres. Women organized petitions and went door-to-door demanding support and subscribers to their societies.[74] Garrisonian female antislavery societies were found in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Perth, Kirkcaldy, Cork, Belfast, Dublin, Bridgewater, Rochdale and Carlisle.[75]

As previously mentioned, such networks benefited from the developing technologies inherent in industrialism, and as Peter Ripley noted, the "antislavery gospel…frequently followed the railway lines."[76] While it was growing exponentially, the railway network was by no means extensive or cheap even by the early 1840s, meaning some lecturers would have continued to travel by carriage or walked shorter distances.[77] For many black activists, though, it was the most effectual way to travel and spread their message. The first railway opened in 1826 connecting Stockton to Darlington, and four years later, industrialists built a route between Manchester and Liverpool. Journey lengths and times were drastically reduced throughout the nineteenth century: a journey from London to Manchester would have taken 30 hours in the late 1820s, which decreased to 5 hours, 40 minutes by 1850, and was further reduced to 4 hours 15 minutes by 1887. In 1841 there were 386 stations in

[73] Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists,* (1974), 3-11.
[74] Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns 1780-1870* (London: Routledge, 1992), 43-45; 60-67.
[75] *Ibid*, 124-133.
[76] Ripley, *The Black Abolitionist Papers,* (1985), 14-19.
[77] Martin, "Popular Political Oratory and Itinerant Lecturing," (2010), 61-62.

Britain, and by 1861 over half of the population resided in a parish with a station, growing to four fifths by 1911.[78] This network allowed men such as Douglass to lecture during the height of his fame in one city in the morning, and then another in the evening. William Lloyd Garrison summarized the impact of such revolutionary technology on antislavery, when he wrote in Belfast in 1846 "is not this driving business with steam power?"[79]

Unfortunately, revolutionary changes in communications and technology, or black abolitionists themselves, could not prevent the fracture of abolitionist networks in the mid-1850s. British Garrisonians tried to establish a major society during the 1850s, but failed due to hostile abolitionist divisions and a lukewarm response from the public. Antislavery societies in Edinburgh and Glasgow separated from the radical Garrisonians to form their own networks, and these divisions were further fractured when some tried to reach out to the rival British and Foreign Antislavery Society. The American Civil War briefly reawakened organized antislavery activity, and the unrelenting George Thompson and his son-in-law Frederick Chesson created the London Emancipation Society.[80] Regardless of abolitionist divisions, black lecturers worked hard to speak at as many engagements as possible and either tried to heal divides between societies or collaborated with all.[81] After 1865, black activists continued to visit Britain and forge their own connections: Josiah Henson's collaboration with John Lobb and Ida B. Wells' numerous

[78] Ian Gregory and Jordi Henneberg, "The Railways, Urbanization and Local Demography in England and Wales 1825-1911," *Social Science History* 34:2 (2010), 200; 210; 225. See also P.J.G Ransom, *The Victorian Railway and How It Evolved,* (London: Heinemann, 1990).
[79] William Lloyd Garrison, 3 October 1846, in Walter M. Merrill ed., *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison: Vol.3: No Union with Slaveholders 1841-1849* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 431-436.
[80] Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists* (1974), 14-15.
[81] R.J.M Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall* (1983), 42-3.

influential networks sustained both their tours in 1876-1877 and 1894 respectively.

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This thesis adopts a chronological approach to demonstrate my argument that black abolitionists relied on a fused triptych of performance, abolitionist networks, and the exploitation of print culture to sustain a black protest American tradition in Britain that was reliant on black testimony. In doing so, activists maintained an antislavery momentum that awakened whites to the brutality of American slavery and kept that spirit alive in the face of racism, white supremacy and the romanticization of plantation culture after the American Civil War. By employing this triad, we can explain why some abolitionist visits were more successful than others, a process that began with Moses Roper and Frederick Douglass. Beginning in the late 1830s, my thesis follows activists' use of adaptive resistance and the black American protest tradition until Ida B. Wells' visit in 1894. For the first time, I bring this protest tradition up to the present day in my conclusion when I discuss modern #BlackLivesMatter activists. A chronological approach can help us understand how black strategies evolved throughout this time period, how they continued to exploit advancements in technology and print culture, and how activists such as Wells built on the success of her predecessors.

Chapter one opens with Moses Roper's transatlantic journey. While not an invisible figure in historical scholarship, historians have rendered Roper

peripheral in their discussions. Using new evidence, however, I argue he was the first individual to significantly contribute to the black American protest tradition in Britain and employ adaptive resistance on the British stage. I uncover Roper's previously unexplored performative techniques, including his decision to use his body as a form of protest by walking through public spaces in London wearing slave chains. He employed adaptive resistance with mixed success, relying too heavily on a radical dissonance that ultimately threatened his reputation. He refused to compromise on his brutal descriptions of slavery, and his experience of torture proved either too upsetting for audiences or invited criticism. Since Victorian racial dynamics decreed that formerly enslaved individuals had to be supported by white networks, Roper's lecture tour was hindered by his lack of white testimonials, and for the first time, I analyze how white sabotage affected Roper's tour. Abolitionists, white aristocrats, and white journalists maligned Roper in the press and ruined the respectability of his mission. Therefore, his exploitation of the triad of performance, print culture, and abolitionist networks proved difficult *compared* to individuals such as Douglass.

Chapters two and three focus on Frederick Douglass' transatlantic journey to Britain in 1845-1847. Douglass epitomises the successful exploitation of adaptive resistance, and showed that by employing each triad's element *simultaneously,* one would court significant fame. He recognised the essential importance of print culture, however, and as a result altered his relationship with that triad to place it centre stage. This forms the main focus of both chapters; perhaps unsurprising given his later career, Douglass

understood the power of the press and its ability to sway opinions. I use these two chapters to discuss why Douglass was so successful at exploiting adaptive resistance compared to other black abolitionists who came to Britain during the nineteenth century.

Chapter two discusses Douglass' performative strategies and his relationship with print culture. He incorporated both favourable and negative reviews of his lectures into his repertoire, courting endless debate in the press. His invocation of strategic anglophilia was balanced with a chastisement of British policy that championed liberty without actively seeking to help the enslaved in America. Unlike Roper, Douglass was a virtuoso who could balance assimilationist and dissonant language effectively and rarely alienated audiences. As a result, Douglass caused a furor towards slavery that was unrivalled by any other African American within a similar time period. He instigated a turning point in the black American protest tradition as he utilized every British connection possible to maximize support for the abolitionist campaign and maintain a momentum of antislavery sentiment. Together with assimilationist strategies such as displaying whips and chains and occasionally invoking minstrelesque stereotypes, he was an architect of subversion and used searing rhetoric to challenge British churches who remained in fellowship with their slaveholding brethren.

Chapter three focuses on Douglass' relationship with abolitionist networks and print culture. He was a shrewd activist who formed friendships with newspaper editors, prominent citizens who had influence over the local

press, and sometimes wrote *for* newspapers specifically to clarify his opinions or to cause further controversy. The clearest example of Douglass' relationship with print culture, is evident with the *Cambria* controversy in 1847. After purchasing a first-class ticket, he boarded the ship only to find his berth had been given to someone else. Douglass wrote a carefully worded letter to *The Times,* stoking British patriotism and arguing he had never experienced racism on British soil until he turned towards America. A perceptive move, he knew the newspaper would reprint the letter and cause controversy in the press and as a result hundreds of newspapers commented on his return, further maximizing his publicity and drawing attention to the antislavery cause. The constant exchange of letters and newspaper articles reporting on his speeches maintained essential momentum for the antislavery cause and enhanced a connected feeling of solidarity. This network did have its disadvantages however, as white abolitionists were not free from prejudice and Douglass – like other black activists – struggled against a white racist schema that threatened to control black bodies. As Alan Rice notes, Douglass "was not prepared to act as second fiddle in an ensemble orchestrated by others, and his visit to Britain convinced him of the limitations of the absolutist Garrisonian mindset."[82] Douglass left Britain more independent and more determined to seek his antislavery career outside the realm of white control. Few activists could challenge the legacy Douglass had made on the black American protest tradition in Britain.

[82] Alan Rice, *Radical Narratives of the Black Atlantic* (London: Continuum, 2003), 174-175.

Chapter four charts the movement of black activists in the 1850s. In an era where numerous African Americans visited Britain, they exploited the rise of popular abolition after the publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852. I argue that while activists such as William Wells Brown and the Reverend Samuel Ward manipulated the interest surrounding the novel to maintain antislavery sentiment, they also used the opportunity to chastise and even harshly criticise Britain for its role in the slave trade. Ward recognised Britain was investing in an abolitionist novel without acknowledging the nation's own history of slavery. An architect of subversion, he intervened in a traditional white space and used his body as a form of protest: he used dissonant language within his form of adaptive resistance, and attacked Britain's sense of moral superiority and displaced memory of slavery, a narrative that would grow in strength and threaten Josiah Henson's visit in the 1870s. The chapter also focuses on two other famous figures in the 1850s, Henry 'Box' Brown and Frederick Douglass. 'Box' Brown refused to bend to any rule in transatlantic activist history, and while he initially incorporated Stowe's novel into his visual Panorama, he used his savvy business flair and did not solely rely on the text. He constantly reinvented himself and his repertoire to court his celebrity, even starring in a play based on his own life, a narrative previously overlooked by scholars. 'Box' Brown was a virtuoso who spurned the traditional abolitionist lecturing circuit and crossed the barrier into the realms of entertainment, theatre, mesmerism and biology to educate thousands of Britons on American slavery. Lastly, I explore the reasons why Douglass' exploitation of adaptive resistance in 1859 was less successful than his first visit in 1845, which can partly be

explained by the fracture of antislavery networks and the growing apathy in British society towards black lecturers. Douglass' break with the Garrison party limited his networking ability, but he also perceived a growing racism in British society that would become further entrenched during the Civil War.

Chapter five concentrates solely on black female transatlantic tours. Due to the gendered nature of adaptive resistance, a separate chapter is necessary to chart the ways they endured a double embodiment on the Victorian stage to campaign against slavery. I argue that Ellen Craft and Mrs. Jackson (the activist wife of John Andrew Jackson) used different versions of adaptive resistance that were conditioned by gender as well as race. Craft used silence as a performative tool, an exploitation of antislavery networks and even created her own communal networks that were based on racial pride. For the first time, I discuss new evidence that points to Craft's desire to align herself with her black identity. While in public she exploited her reputation as a "white slave," in private she was outspoken and was tireless in her enthusiasm to promote abolitionist and other reformist causes. I also analyze a previously undiscovered source where she relates the story of her ingenious escape in her own words. In contrast to Craft's silent public performance, Mrs. Jackson lectured several times on the British stage alongside her husband, making her the first black woman to speak publicly about her experiences as an enslaved female. She intervened in a white, male dominated space and exploited her peripheral position (one that did not require white testimony attesting to her respectability) and crafted a unique performance of radical black feminism on the British stage. African American women were central to

the black protest tradition in Britain and maintained antislavery sentiment throughout the nineteenth century, decades after the British Empire had legally abolished slavery.

Chapter six explores adaptive resistance in Britain during the American Civil War. Black activists exploited this resistance strategy amongst a climate of growing scientific racism and pro-Confederate sympathy, two factors that were often inseparable. Pro-Confederate support in Britain fed on growing racism towards black people, and throughout the conflict, black abolitionists used their testimony to revoke charges of black inferiority and demanded Britons follow a policy of non-fellowship with slaveholders. Despite dwindling abolitionist networks at the start of the war, activists such as William Craft, Sella Martin and William Andrew Jackson lectured on both an abolitionist and non-abolitionist stage with a greater sense of urgency, convinced that the conflict's outcome would mean the consolidation or the removal of slavery. Craft and Martin in particular used dissonant language to target scientific racists such as Dr. James Hunt, who lectured and published work on black inferiority. Hunt avidly supported the South and his friendship with Confederate propagandist Henry Hotze represented the synonymy of a cause that promoted slavery and racism. Black activists used dissonant language to challenge such theories espoused by Hunt and Hotze; Craft relied on humor and flexibility as part of his performance to physically challenge Hunt in person in 1863.[83] Hence, black men such as Martin – who had employed assimilationist tactics at the start of the war – began to rely heavily

[83] James Hunt, "On the Negro's Place in Nature," *Journal of the Anthropological Society of London* 2, (1864), xvi; xviii-xviii.

on dissonant tactics, as he was disturbed to find growing British racism affected his tours of Britain in 1867 and 1868. Martin found it more difficult to intervene in white spaces and struggled to maintain a momentum or interest in black rights. Nevertheless, he contributed to the black protest tradition in Britain, a narrative that would lie in a relatively dormant state until Josiah Henson's visit in the 1870s.

Chapter seven moves beyond most scholarly accounts of black abolitionist performances, and focuses on Josiah Henson in the 1870s. Apart from Marcus Wood and the art historian Jan Marsh, his extraordinarily successful visit in 1876 has been overlooked by historians and for the first time, I analyze his lecturing tour, his visit to Windsor Palace to meet Queen Victoria and the numerous artistic responses to him, including a revised performance of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on the stage, a bust in the Royal Academy and a wax model in Madame Tussauds. I argue that Henson exploited adaptive resistance in an entirely new age and to do this, he needed to reawaken British interest and lecture about the memory of slavery. He used assimilationist language to capitalize on his association with the character of Uncle Tom from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to win fame (and fortune) on the British stage. Henson sought out old friends and made new connections, such as his friendship with the influential editor of the *Christian Age,* John Lobb. However, for the first time, I have uncovered evidence where Henson openly and brazenly admitted his fatigue with his association with Uncle Tom. Britain's obsession with Stowe's novel added more complexity to Henson's tour. As alluded to in Chapter four, British society seized upon narratives of

American slavery in a deliberate act of forgetting its own slavery past. By focusing on the cruelties of American slave-drivers, Britain could conveniently ignore its own sins. I term this phenomenon "superior displacement" and trace its origins in this context back to the 1850s when Stowe published her novel. Henson not only had to negotiate racial stereotypes, but work in a climate which whitewashed the nation's own bloody history of slavery in favour of a romanticized plantation ideal in America. Henson fought against this romanticization at every turn and contributed to the black American protest tradition in Britain a decade after the end of the Civil War.

Chapter eight focuses on Ida B. Wells' transatlantic visits to Britain in 1893 and 1894 respectively. I argue that Wells, like Henson, exploited adaptive resistance in a new era, but this time redeployed its attention to the *legacy* of slavery, particularly lynching and racial violence. She sustained the black protest tradition until the end of the nineteenth century, and borrowed from it to create a successful tour in 1894 in particular. Learning from previous activists within this tradition such as Frederick Douglass, Wells befriended newspaper editors, collected favourable coverage of her lectures, orchestrated interviews in numerous papers and cultivated reformist networks to raise awareness of lynching. Through her skills as a journalist, Wells – like Douglass – recognized the importance of print culture and courted press interviews and collected numerous descriptions of her speeches to send to both supporters and detractors alike. Her extensive connections to aristocrats and influential British supporters ensured her message was met with credibility,

despite the numerous occasions in which white activists tried to sabotage her reputation. Unlike Roper, she had testimonials from Douglass and British supporters to challenge any attempts to defame her. Wells also used a form of visual dissonance within her employment of adaptive resistance: she used photographs of lynched bodies to convince the British people of racial violence, passing the image around at small meetings as a tool of truth to support her rhetoric. She intervened in traditional white spaces such as Parliament to sustain the black American protest tradition and remind British audiences they lived and breathed a legacy of slavery.

I conclude with a short section on the transatlantic #BlackLivesMatter movement, which highlights the black American protest tradition's survival. African American activists crossed the Atlantic in 2015 to campaign against police brutality in both Britain and America. Patrisse Cullors, one of #BlackLivesMatter's founding members, travelled to Britain as part of this tour; the protestors borrowed tactics from their nineteenth century predecessors, and relied on activist networks, skilled performances and social media (the new form of print culture) to raise awareness of racism and police brutality in Britain and America.[84] However, in a significant departure from their nineteenth century counterparts, these transatlantic activists not only included more women in their ranks but also refused to employ assimilationist strategies: they constantly used dissonant language and refused to pay homage to a tolerant British society and highlighted the universality of racism against black and Asian individuals. They intervened in a white transatlantic space

[84] Ferguson Solidary Tour. *Black Lives Matter.* Accessed online 11 January 2017, https://fergusonsolidaritytour.com

and argued that Britain had never been a racial haven for black people, and activists placed their testimony center stage, as their forebears had done before them. BLM activists confronted and exposed the legacy of slavery and maintained an activist transatlantic protest tradition.

Chapter 1: "I Shall Tell The Truth:" Moses Roper's Resistance Against "Monstrous Perversion and Lying Inventions"

One spring evening in 1838, formerly enslaved African American Moses Roper spoke to a crowded audience in Leicester. During one section of his speech, he declared:

> Many will say "This is the slaves' side of the question. The slave-holders would tell a different story." You have heard the slave-holders' story 250 years ago. Now, I think it is time for the slaves to speak.[1]

Roper was the first African American to conduct an extensive tour of Britain, and also the first to make such a bold statement: he would always tell the truth of his experience, however harsh it sounded to white Victorians. He dismissed all white perceptions of slavery not only for their bias and untruthfulness but also because that side of the story had been told *ad nauseam*. Impatient and reluctant to listen to white slaveholders, Roper placed his testimony above white critics since they had continued to ridicule, destroy or suppress the black voice.

In this chapter, I will argue Roper used adaptive resistance with mixed success to tell "the slave's side of the question" in both the public and press. A multi-faceted oppositional strategy, adaptive resistance relied on the triad of

[1] *The Leicestershire Mercury and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties*. 19 May 1838, 2.

performance, abolitionist networks and print culture. Within the strand of performance, black activists exploited assimilationist and dissonant strategies to win support on the British stage; for example, Roper incorporated minstrelsy into his lectures which played to Victorian familiarity and appealed to vast audiences. As will be discussed later in the chapter, Roper subverted minstrelesque stereotypes to simultaneously highlight the racist nature of it and challenge white supremacy. By doing so, he could claim audience attention and use it as a springboard to defy racial stereotypes of black people and slavery. However, his over-reliance on radical dissonant strategies jeopardized his employment of adaptive resistance. He deliberately wove controversial language into his performances to "clash" with audience expectations and cause shock and horror. He used subversive humor, bold protest and a form of dissonant eye-witnessing when he walked down a London street wearing chains. Whether publicly or privately, Roper refused to compromise and used shock tactics to graphically describe slavery: for example, white audience members challenged the impossibility of someone being whipped hundreds of times and surviving. Roper replied he was merely stating facts but if the man did not believe him, there was no other way but to prove it in person.[2] Roper was effectively being *non-adaptive* in his resistance, as he refused to adapt or be malleable in his message to white audiences, which ultimately threatened the authenticity of his message.

Sidonie Smith argues that "autobiographical storytelling is always a performative occasion," as a battle for different identities – or selves – occur

[2] *Sheffield Independent*. 21 April 1838, 3; *The Bradford Observer*. 12 March 1840, 3.

on stage. The performances of different selves do not always overlap and the spaces between them create "unstable boundaries." Roper and other formerly enslaved individuals navigated a tense boundary to present themselves as free, slave and man/woman. While someone like Roper had escaped slavery, he was not free from the memory of slavery and how to narrate his experience. Smith discusses Frederick Douglass' decision to not "speak as a slave" and how he was regarded as "an imposter" as a result. This mirrors Roper's experience in certain areas of Britain.[3] Similarly, Terry Baxter argues that to prove his or her authenticity, an orator – especially a formerly enslaved individual such as Roper – had to create an impression that he or she was "presenting [their] true, unexpurgated self."[4] In spite of rising disbelief, Roper risked his success and reputation to present his "true, unexpurgated self" by boldly refusing to compromise on his descriptions of slavery's brutality, since this denial threatened his identity and was an insult to everything he had endured. Roper – like many African Americans – carried the heavy burden of his experiences and how to depict the truth of slavery on stage. When he walked through the streets of London wearing iron chains, he symbolised the physical and mental burden in which formerly enslaved people carried: the weight of a traumatic past, as well as a past many people denied.

This chapter is split into three sections: after a brief introduction to the antislavery movement, the first section will focus on Roper's inability to successfully exploit antislavery networks. A connected hub of antislavery

[3] Sidonie Smith, "Performativity, Autobiographical Practice, Resistance," *Auto/Biography Studies* 10:1, (Spring 1995), 18-26.
[4] Terry Baxter, *Frederick Douglass's Curious Audiences: Ethos in the Age of The Consumable Subject* (London: Routledge, 2004),135-137.

activists did not exist in the same format as it was to exist a few years later when Frederick Douglass crossed the Atlantic. Prominent individuals who were often part of antislavery networks were extremely influential in crafting or destroying a black lecturer's reputation and for the first time, I have found reference to sustained white sabotage of Roper's campaign. This was a strong factor in limiting his later success on the British stage. The second section explores Roper's performance tactics, including his radical dissonance. Roper refused to capitulate to Victorian perceptions of slavery and challenged white sceptics in his audiences, threatening violence if they did not retract their statements. Whether meant in jest or not, his language often alienated Victorians. The final section will focus on the impact of this dissonant language on Victorian print culture, as it is highly likely Roper's blunt rhetoric hindered a positive coverage in the press.

"Disclaim Him Through the Public Prints:" Abolitionist Networks and Black Lecture Tours

Black abolitionist lectures occurred within a climate of British moral superiority and jingoism. As John Darwin argues, "for the critics of Empire, like the most ardent imperialist, it was Britain's manifest destiny to lead from the centre, as the liberator, protector, transformer, and (some said) evangelist of the world beyond Europe." The British Empire had a duty to rule over inferior peoples and spread Christianity to the heathen.[5] During the early nineteenth century, the Empire had solidified an ideology which focused on

[5] John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 30-32.

(white) and western principles of civilization, reform and morality. According to this ideology, the British brought order, stability, Christianity and governmental rule in their colonies' best interest. Both in Britain and within the Empire, this ideology was strengthened by the 1840s and moral progress was deemed a central part of this philosophy. As the Anti-Corn Law leader Richard Cobden declared, British merchandise "bears the seeds of intelligence and fruitful thought to the members of some less enlightened community" as it was distributed throughout the Empire. Free trade and free labour were seen by many reformers to be part of Britain's future, and slavery was inevitably seen as a natural threat to a growing stable economy as well as to humanity.[6]

Another crucial aspect of this ideology was antislavery. Having abolished the slave trade in 1807 and slavery in the British Empire in 1834, Britain represented itself as a nation defined by liberty. Antislavery activism was tied to a fervent nationalism that interpreted British actions as heroically bestowing freedom upon the enslaved.[7] This ideology of antislavery became tied to British moral superiority and can partly explain the often-patriotic welcome of formerly enslaved African Americans to British shores. British audiences flocked to hear black testimony and were often stirred by their speeches and writings; this was not unusual, as individuals such as John Marrant and Ignatius Sancho campaigned against slavery in the late eighteenth century. Sancho was born on a ship during the Middle Passage and heavily influenced the white abolitionist Thomas Clarkson in his devotion to the

[6] *Ibid*, 26-32; 274-276.
[7] Audrey Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1-13.

antislavery cause.[8] Similarly, Olaudah Equiano, who wrote the first slave narrative in 1789, penned letters to prominent London newspapers, and marched to the House of Commons with several other men of color to campaign for abolition.[9] In 1824, the radical Robert Wedderburn published his book *The Horrors of Slavery,* detailing the cruelties of slavery in Jamaica, particularly the rape and torture of his mother at the hands of his white father, the plantation owner.[10] From the very beginning of abolition, activists such as Equiano, Cugoana and Wedderburn showed that people of color and their testimony was essential to the antislavery mission.

Peter Ripley argues the African American transatlantic mission to Britain "developed in the 1830s and crystallised in the 1840s" and became an important part of the British landscape. Nathanial Paul, Charles Remond and Moses Grandy were the early pioneers who visited Britain to lecture against American slavery and challenge those who supported the American Colonization Society. Grandy visited Britain in 1842 and corresponded with the British and Foreign Antislavery Society to organize a lecture tour and distribute his Narrative. Together with Douglass and Moses Roper, they were regarded as "special for their colour and for the experiences and wisdom that came from being black in America, which gave them a unique authority when addressing issues critical to the antislavery movement."[11] The rise of William Lloyd Garrison's abolitionism and his supporters in Britain ensured a growing

[8] Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 123-125.
[9] *Ibid*, 126-130. See also Vincent Carretta ed., *Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English-Speaking World of the 18th Century* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2004).
[10] Robert Wedderburn, *The Horrors of Slavery* (1824). See Ryan Hanley, "A Radical Change of Heart: Robert Wedderburn's Last Word on Slavery," *Slavery & Abolition* 37:2, (2016), 423-445.
[11] Peter Ripley ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The British Isles, 1830-1865 Vol.1* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 6-10.

network of like-minded individuals who were prepared to offer help, support and their homes to black activists who travelled across Britain to lecture against slavery.[12]

Most successful black activist tours took place between 1845 and 1865, partly because abolitionist networks became more concrete in this period. Historians tend to focus on men and women such as Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, William and Ellen Craft and Henry 'Box' Brown who arrived in the mid 1840s and 1850s. The passage of the Fugitive Act in 1850 and the publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* two years later inspired further fascination with American slavery and a ready market for fugitive slave stories in Britain. Audrey Fisch states Victorians were keen to hear these stories against a backdrop of Britain as the moral savior and a place where enslaved Africans could walk free.[13] As one of the first African American witnesses to appear on the British stage, Moses Roper's story was in demand and the controversies he often created resulted in moderate fame in certain areas of Britain.

Born enslaved in 1815 in Caswell County, North Carolina, Moses Roper suffered from extreme violence and torture as a result of his repeated escape attempts. After his final escape to New York ended in victory, he settled in various northern cities like Boston to ensure he was not recaptured into

[12] Ripley, *The Black Abolitionist Papers* (1985), 6-18; *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser*. 27 June 1840, 2-4. See also R.J.M. Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983) and Clare Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists*: *An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974); Fiona Spiers, "Black Americans in Britain and the Struggle for Black Freedom in the United States 1820-70," in Jagdish S. Gundara and Ian Duffield eds., *Essays on the History of Blacks in Britain: From Roman Times to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Avebury: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1992), 81-98.
[13] Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England* (2000), 1-10; 54.

slavery. He eventually regarded America as unsafe for him, and set sail for Britain in 1835, which was to be the first of at least three trips (he returned in 1846 and 1854, often staying for several years at a time). He lectured around Britain in hundreds of churches and town halls and in 1838 published his *Narrative*.[14]

When Roper began lecturing in 1837, sustained antislavery networks were few and far between. He tried to exploit connections as much as possible, and relied on abolitionists John Scoble and George Thompson who initially provided money and assistance. They ensured he received an education in schools based in Hackney and Wallingford, and helped him attend University College in London in 1836.[15] However, compared to individuals such as Frederick Douglass, Roper did not always receive sustained and direct support from British antislavery networks. He often struggled at times: he recounted one tale where he had survived for three days without food in Manchester until he met a friend who helped him get back on his feet.[16] Similarly, one anonymous letter to *The Bradford Observer* in 1840 noted Roper's lack of support on the lecturing stage, implying he had little white support or testimonials for this meeting. The writer pleaded for anyone "of influence [to] show by kindly countenancing the speaker's exertions" that the people of Bradford supported fugitive slaves.[17]

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[14] Moser Roper, *A Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper, from American Slavery* (Philadelphia: Merrihew & Gunn, 1838); Biography of Moses Roper, in Ripley ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers,* (1985), published on DocSouth, accessed 15 December 2016 http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/roper/bio.html

[15] *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*. 12 October 1839, 8; Biography of Moses Roper, in Ripley, *The Black Abolitionist Papers,* (1985), published on the DocSouth website, accessed 15 December 2016 http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/roper/bio.html

[16] *The Bradford Observer.* 12 March 1840, 3.

[17] *The Bradford Observer*. 5 March 1840, 3.

A few months after this Bradford meeting, an abolitionist and religious minister named Thomas Price attempted to sabotage Roper's reputation. In Roper's 1838 edition of his *Narrative*, Price stated that Roper's testimonials bore "unequivocal witness to his sobriety, intelligence, and honesty." Roper's "great ambition is to be qualified for usefulness amongst his own people; and the progress he has already made justifies the belief that if the means of education can be secured for a short time longer, he will be eminently qualified to instruct the children of Africa in the truths of the gospel of Christ."[18] However, two years later, Price openly criticized Roper for leading a "desultory and mendicant life." His incessant "begging" was contrary to his "original and professed design of becoming a missionary" and Price demanded Roper remove his testimonial from the narrative.[19] Price tapped into racial stereotypes which decreed black people were lazy and charged Roper with renegading on previous promises to become a missionary in Africa. Roper had presumably changed his mind about travelling there, and Price lambasted his conduct and attempted to smear his reputation, in the hope that it would destroy his possibilities of a lecturing career.

In the 1848 edition of Roper's *Narrative*, there are no testimonials and any mention of Price has been removed. This was not only a deliberate attempt by Roper to place his testimony above white reformers, but also was reflective of the white abolitionist sabotage he had experienced. Despite these restrictions, however, Roper's antislavery mission was astounding. He

[18] Roper, *Narrative* (1838), 4-5.
[19] *Staffordshire Advertiser*. 28 November 1840, 2.

travelled extensively through Scotland and Wales, and lectured in numerous counties such as Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Derbyshire, Devonshire, Essex, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Somersetshire, Staffordshire, Suffolk, Sussex, Wiltshire, Worcestershire, and Yorkshire (to name a few).[20]

With few white testimonials, though, Roper struggled to maintain antislavery networks in Britain. Despite having some form of relationship with John Scoble it does not appear Roper attended many antislavery meetings organized by British groups, and perhaps Price's influence ensured he was not invited. Scoble was a member of the British and Foreign Antislavery Society (BFASS) which was formed in 1839 to campaign for the end of global slavery. In 1840, the BFASS held the World's Antislavery Convention in London and throughout the nineteenth century reported on the slave trade, antislavery activity and the movements of formerly enslaved individuals in their newspaper, *The Antislavery Reporter.*[21] In Victorian press reports, Roper does not appear to be in attendance at BFASS meetings in the early 1840s, and there is no evidence to suggest he was a delegate at the Conference in 1840 alongside William Lloyd Garrison. Regardless, in 1844, Roper had changed his mind about becoming a teacher in Africa. Perhaps this change of heart was a result of a struggling financial position, but he turned to the BFASS to ask for money to travel to Africa. Through the sale of his narrative, he had raised enough money to live: he had lectured in over two thousand towns throughout

[20] Moses Roper, *Narrative of the Life of Moses Roper* (Berwick upon Tweed: Warder Office, 1848).
[21] Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 329.

the country, sold over twenty-five thousand English copies of his narrative, and five thousand in Welsh. According to his listeners, "they [had] never heard a lecture more calculated to enlighten" the public on American slavery. Proving he was capable (and deserving of assistance) Roper asked the BFASS committee for help to take himself and his family to the Cape of Good Hope to settle in Africa and "be useful to that race." Roper reassured the Committee he would be "able to settle and make myself useful" as he was proficient in cotton and tobacco cultivation, in a sense selling himself to appear worthy to justify the Committee's faith. Roper wanted to assist the African people and argued his wife (a white woman from Bristol) could teach in a school. Whether a result of Price's slander or not, his appeal seems to have fallen on deaf ears because Roper returned to America shortly afterwards.[22]

Roper also managed to raise the ire of Garrisonian abolitionists, which could partly explain his lack of support within that circle. In a letter to Maria W. Chapman in 1845, Richard D. Webb described Frederick Douglass' Irish tour and how two badly attended antislavery meetings in Waterford were the result of:

> The bad odour left by Moses Rufus, who was a drunken, ignorant, ill-behaved fool and accustomed to disgrace his race at the antislavery cause wherever he set his foot.[23]

[22] Moses Roper to British and Foreign Antislavery Society, 9 May 1844, in Ripley, *The Black Abolitionist Papers,* (1985), 134-136.
[23] Richard D. Webb to Maria Weston Chapman, 12 October 1845. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 25 July 2015 www.archive.org (identifier: lettertomydearfri00webb23).

It is very likely Webb is referring to Roper here. If Roper was indeed intoxicated, this could partly explain why abolitionists refused to help him, as he was in their mind an ineffective witness to slavery. According to Webb, he did not represent a black man or his "race" efficiently enough to be made an example of what that race could aspire to be. Webb's slander against Roper could also be because he was afraid of competition. Douglass and Roper were travelling around Britain and Ireland in the mid 1840s and perhaps Webb believed only one African American, and an excellent orator and person of sound character, could attract the public's attention at one time. Whether Roper was drunk or not, Webb clearly believed he was a hindrance to the antislavery cause and his behavior – unacceptable to a white audience – threatened the success of future antislavery meetings, including those led by other black Americans.

Unfortunately for Roper, his own limited networks were not strong enough to maintain sustained attack by white critics. For the first time, I have found reference to British aristocrats deliberately sabotaging Roper's reputation. In an American newspaper, a Rev. J.C. Bodwell of Massachusetts related an incident regarding Roper during a lecture entitled "The American's Reception in England." Bodwell had lived in England for fourteen years, which had "given him ample opportunity to judge [the] follies as well as to appreciate the greatness" of England. He made special mention of:

> …runaway slaves, who are feasted and fetted and lionized, and introduced into the leading society, and related amusing incidents that had come under his observation, especially of one Moses Roper, who, representing himself as an American runaway slave, was immediately introduced into the good graces of all Englishmen, received passports to various parties and assemblies, and was on one occasion the only gentleman of a fashionable evening party of the West end precincts of London; that he finally married a fair-haired daughter of England, but became so saucy that his friends, the aristocracy, were obliged to disclaim him through the public prints.[24]

Bodwell implied Roper was a fraud: he was merely "representing himself" as a fugitive slave and played on the gullibility and sympathy of British audiences. His lies and deception were inherent to the African race, and his interracial marriage clearly repulsed his American listeners as it had done his upper class British friends. Americans like Bodwell could see straight through the performance and Roper's poor conduct was proven by his scandalous marriage and "saucy" conduct. His description of Roper as the only black man in a "fashionable" party echoes eighteenth century British desires to own a black slave or servant, and obsess over the exotic. In these nineteenth century meetings, Roper was feted and fawned over; his commodified body the center of white aristocratic voyeurism.

[24] *Manchester Daily Mirror*. 23 January 1852, 2.

The slander against Roper demonstrates not only the mechanics of abolitionist networks in Britain but also Victorian racial dynamics. Networks were incredibly important for successful lecturing tours and the livelihood of formerly enslaved people, particularly those who relied on their narrative sales to live, eat and travel. However, successful abolitionist networks were useless if white aristocrats used slander to discredit fugitive slaves, who were already in a precarious position because of negative stereotypes about black people. It is entirely possible Bodwell refers to Price's slander here, or the slander Price set in motion. Regardless, Bodwell states that it was the white aristocracy's duty to curtail Roper's success, as he was an embarrassment to society: white people had welcomed and taken him in, Roper had behaved inappropriately and shamed himself and his friends by association. They were left with no choice but to disown him, like an adopted child they could no longer look after. Bodwell's patronizing and racist attitude painted Roper as an impertinent, ungrateful child who spurned white patronage.

We do not know the full impact of this on Roper's tour, but it possibly explains the often-vitriolic responses in the press towards his lectures and his lack of success in London. Perhaps this also illuminates why he received lacklustre support from the BFASS and Garrisonian abolitionists, as both organizations had very influential connections. Unlike Frederick Douglass, Roper had no wealthy or influential connections to help him counteract the slander. During his first tour in 1846, Douglass was maligned in the press with damaging rumours, but the Garrisonian network rallied behind him and collectively caused the offending party to issue an apology in the public

press.[25] Thus, Roper was restricted in his ability to exploit adaptive resistance as many abolitionist and reformist networks were closed to him, showing how essential white networks could be to black lecturers in a climate dominated by a white racial schema.

Bodwell does not go into detail about exactly why Roper was reprimanded by the aristocracy for his "saucy" behavior. This could be because of his choice of wife, some unknown misdemeanor against the aristocracy or for his dissonant language. The next section will chart the ways in which Roper relied on the latter to cause controversy on the British public stage and attempt to educate audiences on the true nature of American slavery.

"It is Impossible to Describe What it is To Wear Them:" Roper's Performative Tactics

During his speeches and in his *Narrative*, Roper refused to downplay the violent nature of slavery and employed radical dissonant strategies in his performances. From subversive humor to bold protests, he maintained he would always tell the truth about the brutality he had suffered, even if it jeopardized his successful exploitation of adaptive resistance.

One of the key themes of Roper's speeches focused on the suffering he had endured while enslaved. He recounted stories of failed escape attempts and the subsequent punishments he received: on one occasion, he was whipped one

[25] *Dundee Courier*. 18 August 1846, 2.

hundred times, and had burning tar poured on his face. According to Roper, these "excruciating" punishments ended before any "great injury" but nevertheless, the explicit and detailed language Roper used to describe this torture inevitably shocked his Victorian middle class audience, who may have attempted to empathize with Roper's suffering.[26] In discussing bodily pain, Roper tapped into transatlantic narratives of sentiment and sympathy. From the 1830s in America, William Lloyd Garrison and his followers employed sentiment to convince others of slavery's sins. Abolitionists focused on black suffering and family separation, urging supporters to feel what the enslaved suffered.[27] Brycchan Carey argues that sentiment represented a method of engaging "directly into the heart of human condition." Emerging from the Romantic period as a strong narrative theme, the ability to empathize with suffering was exploited within literature and linked strongly to political action. If someone was to *feel* suffering, they were more likely to act upon it. This "active sensibility" as Carey calls it was central in a reformist culture that aimed to eradicate human suffering.[28]

Focusing on black pain was a popular trope that developed throughout the nineteenth century. Abolitionists distributed and sold images of tortured enslaved individuals and their scars to highlight the cruelty of southern slavery. Jeanne DeLombard argues that the scarred black body became representative of slavery and by extension the South itself. In the face of sceptics and racists,

[26] Roper, *A Narrative* (1838), 9-13; 52-55.
[27] Christine Levecq, *Slavery and Sentiment: The Politics of Feeling in Black Atlantic Antislavery Writing 1770-1850* (New Hampshire: University of New Hampshire Press, 2008), 190; 208-230; Heather Nathans, *Slavery and Sentiment on the American Stage, 1787-1861* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 73; 189.
[28] Carey Brycchan, *British Abolitionism and Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment and Slavery 1760-1807* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 2-3.

white abolitionists focused on violent testimony to bear witness to what slavery truly was. Formerly enslaved individuals were cast as heroes for escaping slavery as well as suffering victims, and slaveholders were cast as villains. DeLombard states however that this story reveals complicated racial dynamics as white abolitionists would delete, re-phrase and re-package black stories to serve a white market.[29] The "rhetoric of the antislavery movement was grounded in the politics of the body," as fugitive slaves became "victims and eyewitnesses" to slavery while white abolitionists were "advocates for the slave." This "reinforced the subtle racial hierarchy within abolitionist rhetoric" as the formerly enslaved subject – as a free man or woman – was reduced to a scarred body and was exposed to a white spectatorial gaze. Abolitionists encouraged this rhetoric and the reproduction of such images, directly exploiting audience sympathy who hopefully would act upon their emotions and do something about slavery.[30]

Tapping into this narrative and borrowing from his eighteenth-century abolitionist predecessors, Roper exhibited whips and chains in his meetings to highlight the brutality of slavery, a technique which white audiences would have been familiar with. During a meeting in Sheffield in April 1838, he exhibited whips and a device nicknamed a "negro flapper" used to beat enslaved people working in the fields. He also exhibited another instrument of torture which the newspaper correspondent compared to a "cricket bat, perforated with three rows of round holes." When an enslaved person was beaten with such an instrument, the initial blow created wheals on the skin,

[29] Jeanne DeLombard, "Eye-witness to the Cruelty': Southern Violence and Northern Testimony in Frederick Douglass's 1845 Narrative," *American Literature* 73:2, (2001), 245-249.
[30] *Ibid*, 245-256; 270.

however, a second blow was delivered to "split them open." He also exhibited chains of "tremendous weight," and the newspaper correspondent believed that despite his sufferings Roper's attempts to escape showed "the most indomitable perseverance and great fertility of invention."[31]

Jennifer Putzi argues that scars and weapons of torture acted as instruments of the 'real' and thus the ability to demonstrate the truth of slavery.[32] She refers to Roper's scarred body and how he offered "his own body up as text" to represent the brutality of slavery, regardless of his audience's reluctance to accept that brutality. The exhibition of his scars and strong denunciations of violence indicated he was willing to visually show slavery's brutality but only in combination with his fiery rhetoric against it. Roper was reclaiming the scarred back from abolitionist rhetoric and reframing it to place more importance on the black voice.[33] Similarly, Martha J. Cutter argues Roper's body was used to "bear testimony to truth" and through his *Narrative* turned "this experience into language…[and] designates himself as a subject who has *surmounted* this torture."[34] Cutter argues that Roper resisted the notion of reducing himself to a tortured body; he navigated the difficult waters of appearing as an agent in his own destiny to avoid commodification.[35] Whereas Putzi and Cutter's discussions refer mainly to Roper's *Narrative*, his lectures in Britain have been overlooked and deserve further study. His oratory and its powerful attempts at resisting white critics

[31] *Sheffield Independent*. 21 April 1838, 3.
[32] Jennifer Putzi, "The Skin of an American Slave: African American Manhood and the Marked Body in Nineteenth-Century Abolitionist Literature," *Studies in American Fiction* 30:2, (Autumn 2002), 183-186.
[33] Putzi, "The Skin of an American Slave," (2002), 186-188.
[34] Martha J. Cutter, "Revising Torture: Moses Roper and the Visual Rhetoric of the Slave's Body in the Transatlantic Abolition Movement," *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 60:3, (2014), 371-375.
[35] *Ibid*, 371-375; 396; 405.

shine new light on his performative techniques: Roper added another dimension to the concept of his "body as text" in unique ways to reveal the brutality of slavery to British audiences. He employed a specific form of dissonant eye-witnessing to show not only his power over his own body, but also how he fought the erasure of black voices.

Roper recounted his strategies of dissonance in a meeting one evening in Leicester in 1838. The chapel was "crowded by an intelligent and deeply-interested auditory, who could not fail of having their aversion to slavery strengthened, their sympathies awakened afresh, and their energies aroused to increased exertions [on] behalf of the oppressed." The lavish introduction together with the extensive coverage of this speech stretches across at least three columns of one page, and the frequent references to the sale of Roper's Narrative, indicate how his supporters encouraged their audience to purchase his literary work even "if it is the last 2s. you have." This speech provides unique insight into Roper's corporeal tactics of subversion. During this meeting, Roper stated:

> I shall show you irons made of the same shape and weight as those I wore myself. I had them made because many thought it impossible to wear them in the way I mentioned. I thought if I could not convince them in any other way, I would shew them; so I put them on, and walked through Cheapside in London. The slaves suffer a great deal, but it is hard to convince the people here…Though I shew you

> the irons, it is impossible to describe what it is to wear them. You may go and see them worn, and yet not know. You must be slaves themselves, before you can feel what it is…These handcuffs and collars are made in Birmingham. I saw them in a window, and wondered what they were for, as I knew there were no slaves here; so I went in, and asked the price. The clerk thought I was a West Indian planter or merchant, and shewed me several kinds which he said he had sent out to America. [A large iron collar, and a pair of handcuffs were then produced.] One he showed me had [a] spike in it. I gave him a copy of my book, and told him if he read it I hoped he would never make such irons again.[36]

Roper's extraordinary speech highlights his multi-layered activism on the British stage. He had chains and manacles made especially for his lectures, and sought to have them represent – along with his black voice – the truth of slavery's brutality. In an open display of dissonant eye-witnessing, he openly wore them down a London street, far removed from an abolitionist stage. It was a daring feat to convince the ordinary public of slavery's reality, and perhaps reach those who would not be inclined or could attend antislavery meetings. Roper was also incredibly tall (of "gigantic proportions") according to one newspaper, which could only have added further interest to this self-engineered protest-spectacle.[37] He argued it was impossible to imagine what it felt like to be enslaved, and even if one was to watch him exhibit these chains

[36] *The Leicestershire Mercury and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties*. 19 May 1838, 2.
[37] *The Bradford Observer*. 5 March 1840, 3.

or wear them around his neck, one would still not understand what it meant to be enslaved. For that, Roper argues, "you must be slaves themselves." He claimed in his visits to British factories he had never witnessed the whip or instruments of torture forced upon men, women and children, but stated if Englishmen "think they are worse off than the slaves, let them exchange with them." He would "find a slave for everyone who will go."[38]

Resisting the erasure of black voices, Roper argues here that the body is not just a site of suffering or text but transforms his body into a literal site of activism. By wearing the chains, his body becomes a walking testimony to slavery's brutality, and while this bold protest may have been silent (Roper does not say) his response to white doubters was answered in a completely unique way: white people in Cheapside may have stopped to look in shock, particularly because Roper appeared white and this may have jarred contemporary assumptions of racial dynamics. Regardless, Roper's form of protest is unique amongst African American visits to Britain. While other formerly enslaved individuals made bold protests (namely William Wells Brown and William and Ellen Craft at the Great Exhibition in 1851), Roper was the only formerly enslaved individual to wear his chains in a public protest, away from the abolitionist lecturing circuit. His dissonant eye-witnessing forced white Britons to acknowledge his position as a formerly enslaved individual and the concept that abolition was a battle already won.

[38] *The Leicestershire Mercury and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties*. 19 May 1838, 2.

Roper's dissonant strategies were employed even further in a confrontation with the shopkeeper. He does not say how the shopkeeper reacted, or whether he ceased to sell chains, but Roper demonstrated a powerful control over his body and combined a unique form of artistry with an essential form of adaptive resistance: improvisation. As soon as he saw the chains, he made a decision to instantly question the shopkeeper and demand their removal.[39] He reappropriates the commercialization of slave chains and purchased them to remind others of slavery's brutality. Roper's radical dissonance involves re-appropriating slavery's tools: he embodies the violence and draws awareness to the hidden scars he carries. In this appropriative performance, Roper is silent but the chains give voice to his scars. He used them as mute objects on stage to create active protest and demonstration, and in doing so prevented the sale of such items to be used on enslaved people abroad. Because Roper was fair-skinned, the shopkeeper believed him to be white and addressed him as a merchant or slaveholder, and clearly Roper played along with this ruse to find out more details about the chains. Not only does Roper invert Victorian racial norms here, he also acts white to lull the shopkeeper into a false sense of security. In a remarkable feat of black agency and artistry, he reveals his true self by an act of protest and hands the shopkeeper a copy of his book: he uses his voice, actions and literary work to liberate himself from a momentary disguise and shame the shopkeeper into removing the items. Coincidentally, Roper expects the shopkeeper to immediately stop the sale of such items once his *Narrative* is read, exploiting sentimentalism and the concept that one would read something and take action

[39] Levecq, *Slavery and Sentiment,* (2008), 208-209.

as a consequence of their deliverance from ignorance. Once an individual read about slavery or gazed at the illustrations in Roper's *Narrative*, they would do anything to aid in its destruction.[40] Fifty years before, Olaudah Equiano had argued that only those involved in the slave trade itself could read his *Narrative* without invoking feeling or action. Reform, moral suasion and emotion were linked together as a form of evidence against the slaveholding republic, and abolitionists relied on audience indignation to provoke a response into supporting the antislavery cause.[41]

As well as a form of dissonant eye-witnessing, Roper employed numerous other performative techniques on the British stage including minstrelsy. An assimilationist strategy, he engaged with racial stereotypes of black people in order to appear familiar to Victorian audiences. During one meeting in 1840, he told the story of a black female preacher:

> Her text was 'The sheep shall sit on the right hand and the goats on the left.' 'And now brethren, what you tink dis mean? You no know – I tell you den what dis mean. Sheep hah curly hair, nigger hah curly hair; sheep you see mean nigger. Goats hab straight hair; buckra (whites) hah straight hair – goat den white men. Now you see what dis mean.[42]

[40] *The Leicestershire Mercury and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties*. 19 May 1838, 2. Ellen Craft would use this strategy in the late 1840s, when she dressed as a white slaveholder to escape slavery with her husband (see chapter five.)
[41] Michael E. Woods, "A Theory of Moral Outrage: Indignation and Eighteenth-Century British Abolitionism," 36:4, (2015), 675-677.
[42] *The Bradford Observer*. 5 March 1840, 3.

Roper's use of minstrelsy was deliberately subversive as he chose to comment on racial segregation, racism and slavery. While he played on familiar stereotypes of black people – the curly hair, reducing them to animals – he also mocks white people for their "straight hair" and labels them as farmyard animals as well. His use of assimilation and playing to the familiarity of white audiences allowed him to subversively subsume Victorian tropes and recraft them for his own performance, quietly and subtly attacking white audiences. He used minstrelsy as a base to attract audience attention, and then challenge white supremacy and the racist origins in which minstrelsy evolved.

The origins of minstrelsy can be traced back to 1832 when Thomas Dartmouth Rice performed as the character Jim Crow. Such was its success that Rice travelled to Britain four years later, which inspired performances across the country. While its origins overlapped with abolitionism, minstrel shows became virulently racist and avoided connections to antislavery in any form.[43] Hazel Waters argues Jim Crow and American minstrelsy deeply influenced British society, and this led to "a new conception of the black individual as no longer the vengeful African of yesteryear, but a comic black American slave, grotesque in appearance, manners and language." It caused people to understand "the black as a species apart," a trend "that quickly rooted itself into popular culture and continued to grow there."[44] Robert Nowatzki concurs, and argues that on both sides of the Atlantic the popularity of abolitionism and minstrelsy revealed a "common fascination with black

[43] Robert Nowatzki, *Representing African Americans in Transatlantic Abolitionism and Blackface Minstrelsy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 1-5.
[44] Hazel Waters, *Racism on the Victorian Stage: Representation of Slavery and the Black Character* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 89-90.

people." In America, antislavery activists borrowed from the realm of entertainment and put African Americans "on stage to lecture, sing, recount their nightmarish experiences under slavery, or display their mutilated bodies for white audiences." In turn, minstrelsy borrowed scenes of slavery's cruelty from abolitionists. "Black musicality" was a trope borrowed by both antislavery activists and minstrel shows, since audiences for both realms possessed a "pornographic fascination with black bodies." In both abolitionist lectures and on the minstrel stage, blackness was performed as African Americans were exhibited for "white consumption."[45] Thus, minstrel shows became increasingly popular on British soil and appealed to all audiences: even Queen Victoria was entertained by a minstrel show during the height of Douglass' fame in 1846.[46]

Together with his use of minstrelsy, Roper employed another radical form of dissonance in his performances that involved subversive comedy. When he was faced with numerous sceptics who openly challenged his stories of torture, Roper threatened to use those same weapons of torture on audience members. Instead of relying on white testimonials, Roper wanted to use his own strategies to convince Britons of slavery's reality. Frances Smith Foster argues that in order to achieve their political aims or conduct a successful antislavery meeting, formerly enslaved individuals often had to employ subtle language so as not to challenge white superiority and "avoid unnecessarily antagonizing their audience," but she does not refer to Roper's lectures in

[45] Nowatzki, *Representing African Americans,* (2010), 3-4; 10-11; 24-28; 147.
[46] Queen Victoria, 8 July 1846. Queen Victoria's Journals, accessed 18 September 2017, http://www.queenvictoriasjournals.org

Britain.[47] Despite shrouding his performative strategy in humor, Roper was probably one of the few African Americans who *deliberately* antagonized his audience. In 1838 for example, Roper stated:

> The first or second time that I attempted to speak in public, about three months ago, when I was exhibiting this whip, a gentleman (who I afterwards found a pro-slavery man) got up, and said that he did not believe the statement. He said that a person, after he had given one lash, would have to rest five minutes. I said that I was not able to argue with him, but, having been a driver, if he would walk out into the street, I would give him 100 lashes without stopping.[48]

He employed the same tactic in Sheffield in April 1838, and again Bradford in 1840:

> A gentleman in the meeting interrupted him and disputed the fact, to say nothing of the recipient's capability of endurance, he considered it impossible for any person to administer two hundred lashes without cessation. Moses replied, he had no intention to state ought but facts, and he was sure he kept under the mark, rather than exceeded it, but his facts being disputed he had no other means to

[47] Frances Smith Foster, *Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Ante-Bellum Slave Narratives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 9-14.
[48] *The Leicestershire Mercury and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties*. 19 May 1838, 2.

> prove the truth of his facts but by demonstration. He would therefore say to the gentleman who disputed this fact, that if he would go into the street he would prove the possibility of inflicting two hundred lashes, or if he would prefer it, three hundred, or even five hundred without cessation (great laughter). He would say the same to his present audience, if any gentleman disputed his facts he was willing to prove the truth of what he had advanced by inflicting upon him such a number of lashes as he might feel disposed to receive for the experiment (laughter).[49]

It is difficult to ascertain whether Roper meant these comments in jest, which highlights a problem with the use of spectacle. Using such dangerous language was complex because audience reaction could not be predicted. In the Bradford meeting, the newspaper correspondent records the audience laughing and it seems Roper was deliberately being subversive to challenge white racism and oppression through humor. Roper emerged the superior opponent as the gentleman in the audience did not speak again. In the first extract however, the correspondent does not record audience reaction or the precise way Roper worded this threat, so it is impossible to know whether this was a dark form of humor with a transparent hint of physical threat. Regardless of his audience reaction, or the consequences of his spectacle, Roper was determined to portray slavery as an indescribable and unimaginable institution. Those who had not felt the lash or suffered from extreme violence

[49] *Sheffield Independent*. 21 April 1838, 3; *The Bradford Observer*. 12 March 1840, 3.

– effectively his white audience – could never know what it felt like to be an enslaved person. Henry Louis Gates argues, "black people created their own unique vernacular structures and relished in the double play that these forms bore to white forms." Within such a process of signifying, "repetition and revision are fundamental to black artistic forms."[50] Roper used a form of double play here to not only challenge white supremacy and ignorance, but also encouraged the audience to laugh alongside him at the absurdity of the challenge.

Glenda Carpio argues that African Americans challenged racism "with a rich tradition of humour" which undermined white oppression.[51] She charts African American humor and its usage from the plantation and beyond, and argues "until well into the twentieth century it had to be cloaked in secrecy less it be read as transgressive and punished by violence."[52] Away from the plantation, Roper continued to employ subversive humor but paradoxically threatened violence *as part of* the joke. His humorous theatricality involved the black corporeal facing a white audience, and challenging their ignorance by using strong and (to a white audience) comical language. He managed to twist a horrible punishment meant for African Americans into laughter: he had command of the audience and his effective use of humor and oratory dispelled disbelief of his facts and personal character. Roper conjured up an image of an African American male dragging a white man into the streets and to publicly flog him. To a white audience this was an impossible image, and it was

[50] Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), xxiv.
[51] Glenda Carpio, *Laughing Fit to Kill: Black Humor in the Fictions of Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4-5; 13-14.
[52] *Ibid*, 4-5.

humorous to imagine this role reversal of a black person whipping a white man; this perhaps would feel more comfortable in a minstrel show as it disrupted Victorian gentility and inverted social norms. Roper employs a form of adaptive resistance here, and used humor in his performance to reinforce his facts and destroy the challenge by appearing confident and sure of his identity.

Roper answers his critics in a completely unique way. No other African American deliberately "antagonized" his or her audience, or threatened to physically harm an audience member, whether in jest or not. Other black lecturers employed white testimony, read accounts from southern newspapers, quoted from their narratives or other abolitionists, all working within and seeking to challenge a framework identified by John Sekora, as a "black message sealed within a white envelope."[53] Roper refused to allow his message to be edited and reshaped around white testimony, and simply argued if anyone discredited his facts, he would prove truthful through demonstration. This is an example of Roper's shock tactics – he did not want to entertain his audience with genteel descriptions and offered them another version of truth. Roper did not want to confine his descriptions of slavery to his narrative or to his voice; if people were unwilling to believe him he was willing to *show* them in practice. Hearing an individual speak or reading such a passage in a narrative was shocking for British audiences but bearing *witness* to an act of violence and to see the instruments of torture used in person was something entirely different. William L. Andrews argues formerly enslaved individuals operated within a strict white framework but "instead of either conforming to the rules of the

[53] John Sekora, "Black Message/White Envelope: Genre, Authenticity, and Authority in the Antebellum Slave Narrative," *Callaloo* 32, (Summer 1987), 494-497; 502.

literary game or refusing to play, they set about changing the rules by which the game was played even as they played along with it."[54] Black men and women refused to simply tell the facts without denouncing slavery as a system, and in Roper's case, refused to downplay stories of violence.

Roper's improvisational abilities were antagonistic and/or humorously challenging, receiving mixed success. Frederick Douglass on the other hand, was brilliant at adapting to a new location or an interruption to his speech. Douglass lectured extemporaneously and he could turn the tables on any criticism or disbelief arising from his white listeners, allowing him room to answer questions on the spot. Ever the malleable performer, he employed flexibility as part of adaptive resistance to challenge such critics.[55] For example, during an infamous speech at a British and Foreign Antislavery Society meeting in London in May 1846, Douglass read from Theodore Weld's *Slavery as It Is* (published in 1839) which collected numerous white testimonials on slavery. A voice from the crowd asked the value of an enslaved person, and Douglass masterfully turned the question on its head by stating although "slaves vary in price" it was well recorded that "when cotton gets up in the market in England, the price of human flesh gets up in the United States." He directly targeted the person in the audience and rhetorically asked them, "how much responsibility attaches to you in the use of that commodity?" When Douglass discussed the relationship between religion and slavery in the South, and how "babies [were] sold to buy bibles" another

[54] William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography 1760-1865* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 6; 89.
[55] Ronald K. Burke, *Frederick Douglass: Crusading Orator for Human Rights* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996), 21

sceptic shouted from the crowd, "it is not true." Douglass instantly and extemporaneously declared "not true! Is it not?" to huge cheers from his audience and proceeded to read an advertisement in a southern paper that specifically identified a church selling enslaved people. He again rhetorically asked his audience, "I could read other testimony on this point, but is it necessary?" Most of the audience responded in the negative, but one voice shouted for one more, which Douglass dutifully gave.[56] Douglass employs humor in a completely different and non-antagonistic fashion: he mocks his sceptics with skillful rhetoric and invites rather than alienates his audience to participate in the challenge. Douglass also employs assimilationist strategies by reading from white southern newspapers. Well aware his audiences were more likely to be silenced from white testimony, he read several accounts of cruelty to defy sceptics and prove the truth of his experience.

Roper's refusal to compromise and his desire to place his testimony above white accounts, ensured some negative coverage in the press which ultimately threatened his successful employment of adaptive resistance. Douglass was a skillful virtuoso who mastered the art of compromise between assimilationist and dissonant language, a talent that Roper did not have or refused to exploit on principle.

[56] Frederick Douglass, 1846, in John Blassingame ed., *Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One: Speeches, Debates and Interviews, Vol.1 1841-1846* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) 269-284.

"I Shall Tell the Truth:" Roper's Struggle Against Victorian Print Culture

Throughout his lecture tours, Roper struggled to balance assimilationist and dissonant strategies within his performances. Many white reformers were worried about what he might say on the lecture circuit and how it would be reported in the press. During a lecture in Birmingham in 1838 for example, Roper's strong words against southern Christianity caused some concern amongst the local religious community. Reverend Peter Sibree wrote in his diary that he had advised Roper to tone down his language regarding slaveholders and Christianity, but received in reply "I shall tell the truth."[57] Boldly refusing to acquiesce to white supremacy, Roper refused to be silenced and resolved to always "acquaint the English reader with the evils of American slavery." Although his descriptions of violence were "incredible," the scars on his back acted as a "standing testimony to the truth."[58]

Depicting slavery was a complex but essential abolitionist aim, and conflicts arose as to the best means of representation.[59] Authenticity was an unending struggle for African American writers and lecturers, and their attempts to reconfigure space on a British stage were entwined with a battle to assert their truth. Abolitionists wanted to create a verifiable story for consumption and thus wanted to make sure facts were ironclad and detailed. Testimonials at the narrative's beginning were essential, together with written

[57] Paul Walker, "Moses Roper: African American Baptist, Anti-Slavery Lecturer and Birmingham Nonconformity," *Baptist Quarterly* 44, (April 2011), 102-106.
[58] Roper, *A Narrative* (1838), iv; 9-13.
[59] Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America 1780-1865* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 8; 81.

letters of introduction to other abolitionists or antislavery sympathizers.[60] The abolitionist politics surrounding authenticity reveal the racial undercurrents between white and black, and how a white abolitionist framework confined and constricted black voices. Slave narratives above all had to represent themselves as truthful stories with a clear basis on facts. Those narratives in which the narrator is not a central figure required those individuals to separate their written story from their own memories and sacrifice this in favor of facts made knowable to a white audience. If a narrator described his experience or his experience of violence, there was a danger white supporters would be skeptical of that particular story. White approval of a particular narrative focused on the black narrator's ability to edit his truth into a form acceptable for white consumption.[61]

In an early attempt to confront the dilemma of depicting slavery, white abolitionist Theodore Weld published the aforementioned *Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* in 1839. Weld combined accounts from former slaveholders, abolitionists, newspaper articles and letters to paint a visual picture of slavery and to refute pro-slavery arguments that it was a benevolent institution.[62] Abolitionists and the northern reading public deemed such statements to be more truthful because the abolitionists had collected advertisements, first-hand accounts and newspaper articles from slaveholders, and they used their own words to denounce the system. Weld described how

[60] Sekora, "Black Message/White Envelope," (1987), 496-502. See also Celeste-Marie Bernier, "Iron Arguments': Spectacle, Rhetoric and the Slave Body in New England and British Antislavery Oratory," *European Journal of American Culture* 26:1, (2006), 57-78.
[61] Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story* (1986), 4-30.
[62] Theodore Dwight Weld, *American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (New York: Anti-Slavery Society, 1839). DocSouth Books, accessed 8 September 2015, http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/weld/weld.html, 3; 7; 16.

"great care should be observed in the statement of facts" and only "well-weighted testimony and well-authenticated facts" would be published. Readers were invited to be "a juror to try a plain case and bring in an honest verdict" against slavery. "Corroborative facts" were essential so as to lend more than one voice to the same story and thus the truth could then defeat pro-slavery arguments and win support for abolition. Weld clearly and boldly spelled out the nature of slavery in the South, and structured his work so the verdict against slaveholders would always be guilty. In an obvious omission to contemporary eyes, enslaved testimony was neglected in favour of white testimony, which was used to convince mainly white audiences that slavery was a sin.[63]

The book's success epitomised the growing fascination with sentimentalism and torture iconography. Karen Halttunen argues that the spectator "identified not just with the sufferings of the virtuous victim but with the cruelty of her or his tormenter" and "pleasure mixed with pain, and pain with pleasure." Identifying with a victim aimed to reduce the distance between victim and spectator, but this identification needed that distance in order to function. Edmund Burke summarized this idea and stated that pain is "simply terrible…*at certain distances,* and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful." By the late eighteenth century, the "cultural meaning of pain was undergoing a significant transition entered on the emergence of a new pornography of pain: a heightened awareness of the close relationship between the revulsion and the excitement aroused by pain." Images of naked

[63] *Ibid,* 3-20.

or semi-clothed men and women whipped, in chains, or bleeding from gaping wounds formed a staple in sentimental literature, and white abolitionists in particular often focused on obscene accounts of burning enslaved people at the stake or horrific accounts of torture.[64] Instead of constantly rousing indignation or horror, spectators felt a certain kind of voyeurism where wounds were no longer repulsive, but exciting. Weld himself stated "[m]y own heart was becoming so hardened that I could witness with comparative indifference, the female writhe under the lash." The saturation of such images and literature "aroused a positive taste for cruelty" and the "eroticization of suffering."[65]

Many British abolitionists used Weld's testimony to authenticate formerly enslaved individuals and tapped into this voyeuristic narrative when describing slavery. In 1841,
the *North Wales Chronicle* published an attack on Roper's depictions of violence. A BFASS supporter wrote to the paper in response and while on the surface it appears a defence of Roper (very much akin to the testimony by white abolitionists at the start of slave narratives) the correspondent makes no reference to defend Roper's character or reputation. Instead, he makes a case against the newspaper for its skepticism about the weapons of torture used during slavery. The letter urged readers to consult BFASS reports, as the society had collected numerous evidence to suggest violence towards enslaved people was not exaggerated. The style and tone of this letter is almost exactly

[64] Karen Halttunen, "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture," *The American Historical Review* 100: 2, (April 1995), 308-310; 318-321. See also Marcus Wood, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
[65] Halttunen, "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain," (1995), 323-325.

the same as Weld's book, with long sentences detailing barbarity after barbarity:

> [The slaves] are often stripped naked, their backs and limbs cut with knives, bruised and mangled by scores and hundreds of blows with the paddle and terribly torn by the claws of cuts, drawn over them by their tormentors, that they are often hunted with blood-hounds and shot down like beasts, or torn in pieces by dogs, that they are often suspended by their arms and whipped and hearten till they faint flesh branded with red hot irons, and that they are unarmed, mutilated, and burnt to death over slow fires.[66]

As Douglas A. Jones Jr. argues, "black pain had to 'be brought close' to white bodies" and "abolitionists believed empathetic attachments would clarify the crimes of slaveholding and induce antislavery sensibilities in readers and spectators not yet convinced of the institution's depravity."[67] Listing such cruelty was a powerful method of proving the violence against the enslaved and how white people saw them as victims and witnesses to horrendous cruelty. The emphasis on slave suffering reinforces the abolitionist desire to describe pain and how white people were crucial in removing this suffering. The focus of bodily black pain implies black people were victims, something Roper actively fought against. The testimony and support from a white man, and a BFASS supporter, was necessary to ensure readers that Roper's stories

[66] *North Wales Chronicle*. 23 November 1841, 3.
[67] Douglas A. Jones, Jr., *The Captive Stage: Performance and the Proslavery Imagination of the Antebellum North* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), 140-141.

were authentic, a narrative which reinforced white racist power structures. Literary work written by white abolitionists not only acted as further evidence and testimony themselves to black voices, but also appeared as the authority on slavery rather than the enslaved themselves. The BFASS supporter instructed audiences to read white authenticated BFASS reports rather than referring to black testimony. In a complicated dynamic, white audiences needed to *witness* white support of black *witnesses*.

As seen through this minor controversy in the press, Roper's desire to represent his true self invited criticism both within and outside the abolitionist stage. Dwight A. McBride argues that black abolitionists were deemed more "truthful" than white lecturers because they had experienced the brutality of slavery: white abolitionists recognized this insatiable appetite to hear the truth being spoken on both sides of the Atlantic, and black agents were hired by antislavery societies to lecture across both America and Britain.[68] McBride employs the term "discursive terrain" to explain the discussions and debates resulting from antislavery speeches. Black authors had to "speak the language that pre-exists the telling of his or her story" and "had to conform to certain codes."[69] White abolitionists wanted formerly enslaved individuals to tell their authentic stories as they were "real" witnesses to slavery's atrocities. Enslaved testimony was "framed all the time by the context of their presentation" and it is the "theater of abolitionism that enables the moment of articulation, the

[68] Dwight A. McBride, *Impossible Witnesses: Truth, Abolitionism, and Slave Testimony* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 4-10. See also Calvin Schermerhorn, "Arguing Slavery's Narrative: Southern Regionalists, Ex-slave Autobiographers and the Contested Literary Representations of the Peculiar Institution 1824-1849," *Journal of American Studies* 46:4, (November 2012), 1009-1033 and Augusta Rohrbach, "Making it Real: The Impact of Slave Narratives on the Literary Marketplace," *Prospects* 26, (2001), 137-162.
[69] McBride, *Impossible Witnesses* (2001), 3-5.

moment of bearing witness." Thus, abolitionism "produced the occasion for bearing witness, but to an experience that had already been theorized and prophesised…before the slave ever speaks, we know the slave, we know what his or her experience is, and we know how to read that experience."[70]

McBride analyzes the written narratives of formerly enslaved individuals such as Mary Prince who boldly proclaimed her ability to testify and act as a superior witness to slavery. Prince's "politics of experience" made her the distinct authority on what it felt like to be enslaved, and she had to convince audiences in Britain of its brutality. To do this, Prince allowed her readers "access to the real" – her memories and experience of slavery – although as McBride points out, an audience also witnessed "the performance of the inability to bear witness." Enslaved individuals from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries maintained that slavery could not be described, even in narratives or oratory.[71] McBride quotes Henry David Thoreau's famous phrase, that "it takes two to speak the truth – one to speak and another to hear:" the black witness had to write their testimony so "that whites' understanding of slavery functions as public understanding of slavery." Thus, he or she had to be careful about presenting their version of the real lest it jar with mainstream views about slavery. In order to be successful, black witnesses had to understand white conceptions of slavery and how to address white audiences, and once they have successfully navigated "the horizon of the white reader, the more politically effective his or her testimony will be."[72]

[70] *Ibid*, 3-6.
[71] *Ibid*, 85-95.
[72] *Ibid,* 151-154.

McBride's incisive analysis of the politics of witnessing adds context to Roper's difficulties of speaking the truth on a British stage. He wanted to provide his audiences with "access to the real" by retelling his story, showing whips and chains and occasionally his scars as tools to highlight his authority as a witness to slavery and its brutality. In 1839, Roper gave a series of lectures along the south coast but was criticized for extending a narrative beyond what we could call "the horizon of the white reader." As a result, the press attacked him and his reputation as a real slave. One correspondent for the *Hampshire Advertiser and Salisbury Guardian* mocked audience gullibility one summer's evening, and declared they were "being imposed on" by Roper. The British people knew about "the horrors of slavery and its dreadful extent" but his display of whips and chains were so implausible they could not be true.[73] Although the correspondent had not heard Roper speak at this point, he based his account on hearsay and wrote:

> We have heard of a cat having nine lives, but Sambo must have had at least 18, and his fingers and toes, doubtless, possess the re-producing powers of the crab. We sincerely congratulate him on his final escape. It seems we [were] wrong in imagining the various instruments of torture he exhibits were brought by him from America – as Sambo had them forged for his own especial use at Birmingham…Slavery is the foul blot which obscures and defiles all that is great and good

[73] *Hampshire Advertiser and Salisbury Guardian*. 6 July 1839, 2; *Hampshire Advertiser and Salisbury Guardian*. 13 July 1839, 2.

> among men who achieve freedom for themselves, but denied it to their fellow men. But it is not the monstrous perversions and lying inventions of Moses Roper that will either enlist English sympathies or effect a change in the American character. We have the evidence of better authorities than Moses Roper for the real treatment of slaves.

According to this correspondent, Roper was an "anti-truth telling-and-unbelieving nigger" because no one could survive such brutality. [74] If an individual faced such violence, death was inevitable and the correspondent mocked Roper for seemingly possessing healing powers or the ability to resurrect himself from the dead. The correspondent believed it was impossible for a man to beat another with such strength that he would be able to survive. Similarly, Roper's decision to make whips and chains in Birmingham was added testimony to his lies. His stories, like those instruments of torture, were fabricated and exaggerated in England. While slavery was a sin, men like Roper were hindering the abolitionist cause and played to the gullibility of white men and women, who naturally would be sympathetic without question to a formerly enslaved individual. Indeed, the paper mentions Harriet Martineau as a "better authority" because white abolitionists were deemed more truthful. The repeated use of "Sambo" was a racial epithet to discredit Roper even further, and cast him aside as an ignorant and lying fool, a stereotype that white Victorians were familiar with. Using McBride's analysis,

[74] *Hampshire Advertiser and Salisbury Guardian*. 13 July 1839, 2.

Roper had made a distinct decision to not only challenge the "public understanding of slavery" but also to go beyond the "horizon of the white reader" and establish a new perspective in which slavery was to be described. Roper set a new horizon at a point where the facts about slavery's brutality should be told, regardless whether an audience wanted to hear about them or not. He jeopardized his success on the British stage to act as a witness unrestricted by white control and attempted to present himself as an authentic slave. Since abolition and Victorian society as a whole was codified and framed by whiteness, Roper's bold language offended Victorian sensibilities and he did not present a narrative people were familiar with. As a result, his narrative was spurned and ridiculed for crossing the boundaries of authenticity. Unfortunately for Roper, Thoreau's concept that it "takes two to speak the truth" failed because white audiences in Hampshire refused to listen to a black witness and instead sought to discredit him.

The slander against Roper did not cease and *The Hampshire Advertiser and Salisbury Guardian* was livid at his continued lecturing tour in the south. Two weeks after this meeting, the correspondent was shocked his lectures were still being attended. "Moses Munchausen" was "reaping a rich harvest at the expense of the gullibility of John Bull" and was offering the most insulting speech "delivered out of bedlam." Roper defended himself against these charges at another meeting, and presumably attacked the newspaper for they issued a letter to Roper demanding a retraction of his statements. This smear campaign was designed to hurt Roper's reputation and to further add flame to the fire that he was a liar and an imposter. The reference to "bedlam" gave the

impression Roper was mentally insane or incompetent, and should be locked up in an institution so as not to pray on British public morality.[75]

The newspaper evidently had a long memory, for two years later in 1841 they reported on another of Roper's meetings when he returned to the south. The paper expressed its anger that a white American had recently lectured on antislavery in Poole but had little success compared to the "egregious Moses Roper." This American gentleman did not possess "Birmingham-forged chains" to win over his gullible audience and the newspaper refused to believe Roper had been enslaved at all.[76] Regardless of this criticism, Roper used his violent language and sharp wit to paint a vivid, horrifying picture of American slavery. His performative strategy of dissonance meant he was not prepared to downplay or conceal brutal punishments (as codified by whiteness) and was unconcerned about upsetting Victorian notions of gentility and decency.

Roper's dissonant language threatened his successful employment of adaptive resistance and greatly influenced his experience in Britain. William Andrews argues Roper does not mention in his *Narrative* "how much of the truth a slave owes his white audience," but perhaps more accurately, we should consider how Roper *conveys* that truth. Using any means necessary, he employed different tactics to teach white audiences about the brutality of slavery – from handing out copies of his *Narrative* to walking the streets of

[75] *Hampshire Advertiser and Salisbury Guardian*. 27 July 1839, 4.
[76] *Hampshire Advertiser and Salisbury Guardian*. 25 September 1841, 5.

London literally in chains.[77] This, together with the lack of sustained support and the constant recounting of his traumatic experiences was a heavy burden to bear. In 1838, while exhibiting whips and chains, Roper described how he could not "bear to hear the rattling of these chains" as though handling them brought him great pain and misery. In the same speech, he recounted that during one night in Mansfield "there was a large dog chained in the yard" and at night he dreamed he was back at the plantation. He also described an incident where twenty-eight black men decided to collectively commit mass suicide and jump into the Charleston River rather than be sold. Roper said he had "seen many slaves hang themselves; drown themselves, and cut their throats, but I never knew of anything (except parting with my own mother) that affected me so much as this." Twenty years later in 1861, the local press in Wickhambrook reported that during his speech Roper's mind was clearly "recalled to far distant climes and painful memories" as he recounted the story of his escape.[78] Roper's desire to "speak the truth" about his traumatic experience to thousands of people across the decades had clearly taken its toll. When Roper returned to America, he continued to lecture sporadically, but was forced to work on a farm to earn money, until he was too exhausted to carry on. In 1891, his unconscious body was found at a train station in Boston, wrapped in several layers to protect himself from the cold. He died in hospital, with his loyal dog Pete by his side.[79]

[77] Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story,* (1986), 89-93.
[78] *The Leicestershire Mercury and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties*. 19 May 1838, 2; *The Bury and Norwich Post and Suffolk Herald*. 12 March 1861, 2-3.
[79] *Boston Daily Globe*. 16 April 1891, 1.

Roper's lecturing tours were not conventionally successful when measured against the theory of adaptive resistance, though he performed well despite the circumstances. Comparing Roper to Douglass, however, proves to be an intriguing case study: Douglass was positively lionized by British audiences and through his Garrisonian networks he had numerous friends to help organize (and pay for) antislavery meetings. While at times Douglass employed graphic language to describe slavery, he was unafraid of compromise and adapted to each location and controversy with relative ease. Roper's employment of adaptive resistance was unbalanced because of his deliberate decision to rely on dissonant strategies such as his graphic descriptions of slavery, subversive humor, and dissonant eye-witnessing. Nevertheless, he forged his own path to survive in an often hostile and racist environment. In every situation, whether publicly or privately, Roper resolved to represent his "true, unexpurgated self" and recount the black experience of slavery. His bold declaration of "I shall tell the truth" together with his extensive canvassing of Britain was a precedent that future African Americans like Douglass would build on. The next two chapters focus on Douglass' British sojourn between 1845-1847 and how his ardent belief in the power of print culture shaped his relationship with performance and abolitionist networks.[80]

[80] *The Leeds Mercury*. 6 July 1894, 3.

Chapter 2: "All the Bloody Paraphernalia of Slavery:" Frederick Douglass' Performative Strategies on the Victorian Stage

In the first week of March 1847, Frederick Douglass was scheduled to lecture in the New Hall in Leicester. Shortly before he came on stage, a local newspaper correspondent reported that the Hall,

> …was filled literally to overflowing (for hundreds after strenuously endeavouring to find an entrance into the spacious room, were obliged to give up the attempt as hopeless**)** by an audience composed of all sects and parties, who came to hear this truly eloquent 'runaway slave' speak of the grievous and appalling wrongs endured by his brethren in the professedly democratic and religious United States of America. And well were they repaid, for rarely, if ever has it been our good future to listen to a more heart-stirring appeal on behalf of the oppressed, of whatever colour, clime or creed – never have we heard a more uncompromising yet more dignified denunciation of the oppressor and of those who gloss over and strive to palliate the crimes which he daily perpetrates in the sacred name of the law, and even of religion.[1]

[1] *Leicestershire Mercury*. 6 March 1847, 2.

The correspondent was overwhelmed with Douglass' testimony against slavery and his rhetoric against the "oppressor." His celebrity-like status culminated in a "heart-stirring" performance that left no room for pro-slavery sympathy. His testimony provided an electrifying narrative to all classes and religious sects – regardless of position, all were united in his call for abolition. Douglass' status as a formerly enslaved individual was central to his denunciation of slavery, partly explaining the vast fascination in which hundreds of people flocked to see him.

The reaction in Leicester was far from an isolated occurrence. In Colchester shortly afterwards, an antislavery meeting was so crowded that people were forced outside and the eager amongst them craned their necks to listen through an open window. According to a local newspaper, Douglass spoke for two hours and gave a "very vivid description" of American slavery, and at the end many people "pressed forward to shake hands with him."[2] As Celeste-Marie Bernier argues, Douglass was a "virtuoso of the antislavery circuit, endlessly pushing the boundaries of acceptable discourse by providing experimental and original performances in which he not only narrated the horrors of slavery but also recreated, re-enacted and revisualized the depths of its enormity to elicit a profound emotional engagement from his audiences." His lectures "testify to Douglass' skills as a performer, adept at convincing his audiences of the authority of his arguments, not only by his literary prowess, but also by his visual display, which relied upon the spectacle of his body."[3] Douglass' British experiences speak volumes about the ways in which he

[2] *Essex Standard.* 19 March 1847, 2-3.
[3] Celeste-Marie Bernier, "From Fugitive Slave to Fugitive Abolitionist: The Oratory of Frederick Douglass and the Emerging Heroic Slave Tradition," *Atlantic Studies* 3:2, (2006), 203-210.

"recreated" the horrors of slavery and used his status as a formerly enslaved individual to spark curiosity about his performances. His British lectures also reveal new dimensions to his performances, and the overwhelmingly popular desire to hear Douglass speak and physically touch him reveal a racial obsession with witnessing a fugitive slave in the flesh. He created connections between his stage persona and the audience, and evidently left a deep impression on newspaper correspondents who clamored to write eloquent and lavish descriptions of him.

The next two chapters will focus on Frederick Douglass' employment of adaptive resistance and how his successful exploitation of print culture, abolitionist networks and performance strategies combined *at the same time* to propel him to celebrity on the British stage. His use of adaptive resistance was based on the central triad, but this relationship was measured and driven by print culture, which will be the unifying theme for both chapters. The heavy reliance on print culture mirrored Douglass' later ambitions to start a newspaper and also his life-long relationship with speech *and* print. Throughout his career, Douglass was brilliant at courting the press and he employed adaptive resistance through his relationship with print culture.

Terry Baxter argues that for nineteenth century commentators, if a speaker was described as eloquent, powerful, or holding a particular sway over an audience, it meant the individual had succeeded in becoming a successful orator. He states that if audiences felt moved or were impressed by the oratory, it was a combination of individual skill as well as the relationship he or she

created with the audience in that location.[4] Black orators operated within distinct racial dynamics when compared to white speakers, and did not miss occasions to challenge white audience expectations of language, diction or delivery. Baxter states that "the audience has some impression of the speaker as he or she strides to the lectern" and black orators carved a space for their own voices and used their oratory, physical appearance and charismatic aura on stage to encourage further activism in the name of antislavery.[5]

Along similar lines, Fionnghuala Sweeney discusses Douglass' "performative engagement" with his audiences as a central part of his appeal. Creating such a relationship between Douglass and his audiences rested on many factors, which often changed depending on the location, audience configuration and the level of communication between them. His power "sprang from the popularity he enjoyed as a public speaker, his command on the platform, ability to capture and hold the attention of large crowds, and sway them with his rhetorical prowess." His "public image and interaction" were central to the art of participation and "each performance was original, with the input of crowd and actor." Douglass' lectures were "a form of testimony, confirming, through spectacle, the physical reality of the slave."[6]

Building on Baxter and Sweeney, I argue in this chapter that Douglass created unprecedented relationships with his audiences and with the Victorian press. He cultivated newspaper coverage to fuel the antislavery controversies

[4] Terry Baxter, *Frederick Douglass's Curious Audiences: Ethos in the Age of The Consumable Subject* (London: Routledge, 2004), 2-25.
[5] *Ibid*, 27; 90-95.
[6] Fionnghuala Sweeney, *Frederick Douglass and the Atlantic World* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 124-129.

he created, and newspaper correspondents – as evidenced above – waxed lyrical about his performance and stage presence. He incorporated press reports into his lectures, denouncing publications such as *The Northern Warder* for supporting the Free Church. He used anglophilia and crafted his rhetoric against American hypocrisy, subjects guaranteed to simultaneously win him support in the British press and slander from America. He also replied to opponents publicly on stage knowing his denunciations would appear in newspapers, stoking further controversy and defending his character against rumours. Douglass knew how to attract press attention and utilized any form of print culture to publicize his antislavery message. In one of his early meetings in Dublin in September 1845, a local correspondent described how he was "the great attraction of the evening" and the lecture room was so crowded that "many persons must have gone away for want of accommodation."[7] In Perth, "the novelty of a slave addressing the people of this county could not fail to attract attention" and Douglass had the "advantage of possessing mental attainments much beyond what might be generally supposed to belong to a slave; and can, thereby, be listened to, more than once, with interest."[8] Another correspondent in Sunderland described Douglass' speaking ability as "gifted by nature" and his speech "was replete with thrilling statements, fervid denunciations, and stirring and eloquent appeals."[9] Douglass' performances and appeal as a formerly enslaved individual sparked such extravagant descriptions. His lectures led to immense interest and in numerous towns hundreds of people flocked to hear him speak with unabated zeal.

[7] *The Freeman's Journal*. 8 September 1845, 3.
[8] *Perthshire Courier*. 29 January 1846, 3.
[9] *The Newcastle Guardian*. 26 September 1846, 5.

I will argue that Douglass' employment of adaptive resistance and his performances on the British stage created a furor across the nation that was unrivalled by any other African American. He skillfully used assimilationist and dissonant strategies within his lectures not only to shock British audiences into realizing the brutality of slavery, but also encourage them to morally shame America into ending it. In an oft-quoted speech that highlights this blistering rhetoric, Douglass demanded slavery be laid bare so "the mask from this abominable system" would be exposed to the light, and would "burn and wither it out of existence." He wanted "the slaveholder surrounded, by a wall of anti-slavery fire, so that he may see the condemnation of himself and his system glaring down in letters of light."[10] Douglass' assimilationist strategies were designed to appear familiar to Victorian audiences, and as a result he employed a distinct form of anglophilia in most of his lectures: he praised British society for the freedoms he enjoyed and their role in abolishing slavery in the British Empire. On occasion, he displayed whips and chains as previous abolitionists had done, invoking the protest language previous activists had used. He also used minstrelsy and mimicry to mock slaveholders and entertain his audiences, accompanied with sharp wit and a damning condemnation of slavery.[11] However, instead of purely relying on assimilationist strategies, he also used dissonant language to highlight the hypocrisy of American slaveholders and slaveholding religion. Proving to be a successful technique,

[10] Frederick Douglass, *American Slavery: Report of a Public Meeting Held at Finsbury Chapel, Moorfields, to Receive Frederick Douglass, the American Slave, on Friday, May 22, 1846* (London: Christopher B. Christian & Co., 1846), 17-18.
[11] For further research on Douglass' assimilationist strategies, see Angela G. Ray, "Frederick Douglass on the Lyceum Circuit: Social Assimilation, Social Transformation?" *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 5:4., (Winter 2002), 625-647.

this led to the controversy surrounding the Free Church of Scotland, which will be analyzed as a key outcome of Douglass' performative techniques.

Douglass' use of adaptive resistance sometimes caused controversy but his oratory and self-representation did not challenge his popularity. Unlike Moses Roper for example, Douglass was able to balance dissonant strategies with his charisma and expert cultivation of celebrity: Douglass did not threaten physical violence on stage as Roper had done, and he was also able to make use of influential friends to defend him during numerous controversies. Douglass and the Garrisonian abolitionists were dependent on each other, and were constantly networking, sharing information, and circulating press articles and narratives back and forth across the Atlantic. This constant exchange and exploitation with print culture will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, in order to fully analyze the myriad techniques he used to maintain abolitionist momentum.

"The Cancer That Was Eating into Their Vitals:" Douglass' Performative Techniques

Douglass employed numerous performative strategies on the British stage. The following section will analyze his exploitation of assimilationist tactics such as anglophilia and moral suasion, and how he attempted to shame Britain's lacklustre responses to antislavery in the wake of abolition.

Gregory Lampe argues that Douglass' powerful rhetoric, physical appearance and charisma joined together to form an impressive presence on the transatlantic stage. Douglass' rhetorical strategies were born and nurtured while Douglass was still enslaved as he read Caleb Bingham's influential publication *The Columbian Orator*. Douglass realized the "importance of language, its content, tone and rhythm," and the *Orator* exposed him to a rational logic within oratory which he absorbed to counteract the slaveholder's justifications of slavery. Douglass also relied upon traditional forms of oratory and storytelling within his African heritage. The religious sermons he gave often began powerfully but hesitatingly, building to a frenzied passion which relied on potent imagery and oratory to envelop his audiences. These sermons gave him the tools in which to construct powerful visuals of oppression and sin. He learned how to stir the hearts and minds of his audiences and encourage sympathy for his enslaved brethren, and used techniques such as call and response to invite audience participation.[12]

Learning from such influences, Douglass changed the pitch of his voice and relied on impassioned rhetoric and gestures to illustrate his speeches. He began on stage quietly and slowly, with his voice growing louder and more confident as the speech continued. Black activist William G. Allen marvelled at Douglass' rhetoric, describing how he "sways a magic wand" across his audiences; "he works with the power of a mighty intellect, and in the vast audiences which he never fails to assemble, touches chords in the inner chambers thereof which vibrate music now sweet, now sad, now

[12] Gregory P. Lampe, *Frederick Douglass: Freedom's Voice 1818-1845* (East Langing: Michigan State University Press, 1998), viii-ix; 1-15.

lightsome, now solemn, now startling, now grand, now majestic, now sublime."[13] Douglass' attention to detail in his rhetoric filtered down to his gestures, facial expressions and clothing. He orchestrated an entire performance that included turning up the lights so audiences could fully see him, and amplifying his voice to reach the back of the lecture hall.[14]

Garrisonian abolitionists in Britain were impressed by Douglass' appearance and rhetoric. When Bristol-based abolitionist Mary Estlin finally met Douglass in person, she believed he exceeded "the picture we had formed both in outward graces, intellectual power and culture, and eloquence."[15] Mary Carpenter declared that "the wronged Africans could not have had a more noble champion" and his "satire [and] pathos" together with "his rich deep tone of voice" would surely "rouse the guilty nations of the new world." Despite being a self-professed abolitionist, she had never until that moment had "such a vivid impression of the horror of slavery."[16] Carpenter echoed these sentiments when she witnessed one of Douglass' lectures in London; she desired nothing more than the "privilege of shaking hands with him," a brief moment to physically touch him. Douglass was a "noble champion…an ornament of human nature." He was the epitome of elegance and was an inherently special human being, far superior to others. Carpenter's lavish descriptions indicate a fascination with the black male body and indicate how

[13] John Blassingame, *Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One: Speeches, Debates and Interviews, Vol.1 1841-1846* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), xxxi-xxxiii; xxxvi-xxvii.
[14] John Stauffer, "Douglass's Self-Making and the Culture of Abolitionism," in Maurice S. Lee ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Frederick Douglass* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 17.
[15] Mary Estlin to Maria W. Chapman, September 1846, in Clare Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists*: *An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974), 282.
[16] Mary Carpenter to Maria W. Chapman, 1 April 1846? Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 18 May 2015, www.archive.org (identifier: lettertomrschapm00carp2).

she deeply revered him. This glamorized figure of Douglass with its deeply sexual undertones indicates the importance of the physical form, particularly on stage when the lecturer and the audience would have had a unique relationship. After one lecture, another fascinated woman commented that "the play of his fine features made a little thrill run through me. The dignity of his attitude, the majesty of his stature, made Frederick Douglass look every inch a man."[17] These descriptions show Douglass' charismatic personality was central to his appeal as a celebrity, and his powerful aura on stage could not survive without it.[18] Terry Baxter argues that it is impossible to gauge how many times (if at all) Douglass' gaze strayed and held a woman's eyes, or how much he physically touched members of his audience before or after a lecture, but what is clear is how Douglass crafted a performance on stage to warrant admiration and even sexual desire. As we can see from some British newspapers, he would have had some contact with members of his audience. People rushed to shake hands with him and the desire for this intimate encounter would create a special connection between Douglass and his audience. The chance to meet Douglass after his speech may have been a thrilling opportunity to talk with and learn more about a formerly enslaved individual.[19]

As Fionnghuala Sweeney points out though, women's attraction to Douglass was attributed *only* to his physical appearance and charm, as opposed to women's interest in political and moral subjects. Without female

[17] Baxter, *Frederick Douglass's Curious Audiences,* (2004)*,* 134-135.
[18] Mary Carpenter to Maria Weston Chapman, 1846? Boston Public Library Anti-Slavery Collection, accessed 25 May 2015, www.archive.org, (Identifier: lettertomrschapm00carp2).
[19] Baxter, *Frederick Douglass's Curious Audiences* (2004)*,* 135-137.

support, avenues to influential upper-class circles and networks would have been closed to him; their constant advertising and commitment to the antislavery cause was instrumental in his success on the British stage, something which Douglass recognized.[20] Regardless, a live performance on stage and actually witnessing Douglass in the flesh, combined with his charismatic speech and the occasion's spectacle, created an event that could not be replicated.[21]

To fuel such an ardent and committed following both from abolitionists and the press, Douglass employed several performative strategies to impress his British audiences. One essential tactic involved a blistering attack on American hypocrisy. Caleb McDaniel argues Douglass "showed an exceptional facility with the rhetoric of patriotic shame" and no other abolitionist was so effective at exposing the hypocrisy of American freedom.[22] He painted America as an imperialist power which brutally oppressed his enslaved brethren; criticizing American nationalism at its core, he argued the nation could not progress morally or intellectually as long as slavery still existed. He went further, and stated that if a formerly enslaved individual escaped slavery, he or she was hunted and likely to be killed by that very nation. He targeted not only the American ideological foundations of freedom

[20] Sweeney, *Frederick Douglass* (2007), 47-54. Gregory P. Lampe also notes Douglass' appreciation of female antislavery activists in *Frederick Douglass: Freedom's Voice 1818-1845* (East Langing: Michigan State University Press, 1998), 77.
[21] Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody, "Introduction," in Luckhurst and Moody, *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain 1660-2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), 1-3.
[22] Caleb McDaniel, *The Problem of Democracy in the Age of Slavery: Garrisonian Abolitionists and Transatlantic Reform* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 81-82. See also Clare Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists*: *An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974); R. J. M. Blackett, *Beating Against the Barriers: The Lives of Six Nineteenth Century Afro-Americans* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986).

but also the cultural myth it was the freest nation under heaven.[23] He attacked the image of America "as the land of the free and the home of the brave," especially in relation to the "harangues on the 4th of July" where it was declared "all men were born free, and were equally entitled to certain inalienable rights." However, "under the very eave-droppings of their chapel, were heard the clank of the fetters and the rattling of the chains which bound their miserable slaves together." By allowing the sin of slavery to exist, America had betrayed its independence, and in one speech he sarcastically repeated the phrase "a land of civil and religious liberty!" in a mocking tone after he relayed each fact or act of brutality.[24] English influence proclaiming the "abhorrence of their crime" would be a powerful blow to the slaveholders, who would then "see the cancer that was eating into their vitals, and that all their vaunted independence was a lie."[25]

Douglass painted British audiences as morally righteous people compared to their heathen American brethren. In one speech in Liverpool he declared:

> [Americans] would see that all their pretensions to a love of God, while they hated the slave, was regarded as an absolute profanity; they would see that their boast of sending the Gospel to the

[23] Leslie Elizabeth Eckel, "A Type of his Countrymen': Douglass and Transatlantic Print Culture," in Eckel, *Atlantic Citizens: Nineteenth-Century American Writers At Work in the World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 12-16. Accessed 28 March 2017 via Edinburgh Scholarship Online http://edinburgh.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748669370.001.0001/upso-9780748669370-chapter-4.
[24] *Bristol Times and Mirror*. 29 August 1846, 1.
[25] *The Liverpool Mercury Supplement*. 23 October 1846, 4.

> heathen, while they withheld it from their slaves, was all marked down here as utter blasphemy…If the hypocrisy of the American church was fully known to British Christians, they would as soon think of linking themselves to a pirate ship as to that church."[26]

Douglass accused Americans of not fulfilling their duties as Christians. Their love for God was mere pretense, and it was hypocritical for them to send Bibles to people they regarded as heathen, when they were heathen themselves for turning their backs to the enslaved. They denied millions of people the right to read and practice teachings from the Bible, and any nation – including Britain – would (and should) regard this practice as "blasphemy." By alluding to and denouncing this hypocrisy, America should embrace her shame and immediately end slavery. Douglass compared American churches to pirate ships where lawlessness, violence, and heathenism were commonplace. These churches did not represent the true God and British churches should denounce all fellowship with such pirates. By employing such language, Douglass heightened tensions surrounding American national identity. As an American on British soil, he ridiculed American boasts of freedom and presented his own version of American history and identity, one that was severely lacking in civil rights for black people. Throughout the controversies he courted with the Free Church, the Evangelical Alliance and the World's Temperance Convention (to name a few), British audiences tended to side with Douglass

[26] *The Liverpool Mercury Supplement*. 23 October 1846, 4.

against visiting American brethren or the misguided actions of British ministers. When reported on in the American press, it appeared Douglass was criticizing America as a whole. Perhaps this was unsurprising, since on several occasions he personified slavery as a large monster, casting its shadow over the southern states and threatening Texas and the west through territorial expansion.[27]

In casting Britain as a land of freedom in direct contrast to America's self-professed declarations, Douglass was employing anglophilia as an assimilationist tactic. He played to Britain's moral superiority and jingoistic pride when he stated Britain had a unique and powerful influence on America and the world, and argued the state of freedom was synonymous with the nation.[28] His invocation of British freedom was a common performative strategy both for himself and numerous other African Americans on the Victorian stage. When he first arrived in 1845, he was shocked at the differences compared to the United States: "I am seated beside white people - I reach the hotel – I enter the same door – I am shown into the same parlor – I dine at the same table – and no one is offended."[29] Although Douglass did experience racism on British soil, he exposed the hypocrisy of a U.S. nation that fought for freedom in the American Revolution but consistently denied freedom to thousands of African Americans. His speeches, which contained comparisons between republican America and monarchical Britain, implied that Britain was a racial paradise for African Americans. He conveniently

[27] Eckel, "A Type of his Countrymen," (2013), 3-6; 12; David B. Cheesbrough, *Frederick Douglass: Oratory From Slavery* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998), 83-89; 90-96.
[28] Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 37-39; 80-82.
[29] Frederick Douglass to William L. Garrison, 1 January 1846, in Philip Foner ed., *Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass Vol.1* (New York: International Publishers, 1950), 125.

ignored the success of blackface minstrel shows and more importantly, the racism that was directed towards him. This "strategic anglophilia" (a term used by historians Audrey Fisch and Alan Rice) allowed Douglass and other African Americans systematically to discredit American white mainstream society while at the same time garnering support in Britain via their appeals to British patriotism.[30] Britain was inevitably an important place in the black transatlantic abolitionist mind: it had destroyed slavery in the Empire and had taken active steps towards ending slavery in the rest of the world. Thus, Douglass argued that slavery – and racism - was counter to the British ideal of civilized respectability. In other words, as Elisa Tamarkin has put it, "the British [were] too decorous to show prejudice."[31] Antislavery was civilized and those who subscribed to it proved they had "cultivated tastes," implying antiracism was intertwined with class.[32] Ultimately, this episode highlights adaptive resistance as a specific *British* strategy since anglophilia was such a central aspect of black abolitionist performances.

In an expertly crafted performance of anglophilia, Douglass recounted his experience on the *Cambria* to British audiences. As he was sailing towards Britain in 1845, he was targeted by pro-slavery men who tried to stop him lecturing on slavery to the passengers. He recounted in Belfast in 1845 how he rejoiced that the English Captain had protected him and allowed him to speak,

[30] Frederick Douglass, "American Prejudice against Colour," in John Blassingame, *The Frederick Douglass Papers Vol.1* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1979), 159; Audrey Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England: Abolitionist Politics in Popular Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1-30. See also Alan Rice, *Radical Narratives of the Black Atlantic* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2003), 160-190; Tom F. Wright, *Lecturing the Atlantic: Speech, Print, and an Anglo-American Commons 1830-1870* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 58-68.
[31] Elisa Tamarkin, *Anglophilia: Deference, Devotion and Antebellum America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), xxii-xxx; 180-182.
[32] *Ibid*, 203-204.

and his story caused "considerable merriment" in the audience.[33] Douglass embellished this story yet further, and emphasized how it was a "noble-hearted Irishman" who had saved him from the proslavery mob, greatly pleasing the Irish audience who cheered when Douglass told how the Captain threatened to put the men in irons.[34] American narratives of this story were quite different however. An abolitionist who was travelling to Britain alongside Douglass wrote a letter about the riot, which was published in an American newspaper. In this account of the incident, the Captain declared his support of Douglass but also said he "was once the owner of two hundred slaves" and "they were [now] liberated" which was the "right" course of action. In Douglass' accounts on British soil, he employed anglophilia as an assimilationist technique, and did not mention that the Captain had been a former slaveholder, as this would have upset his audience and jarred with the contrast he was trying to create between a free, monarchical Britain and an enslaved republican America.[35] Alasdair Pettinger has pointed out too that Captain Judkins ousted a black passenger from one of his ships a year previously to this incident. Even if the abolitionists had known about this, they wisely kept this a secret lest it destroy their argument of a superior British nation.[36] Regardless of this, as soon as Douglass stepped on Liverpudlian soil,

[33] *The Belfast Newsletter*. 9 December 1845, 1.
[34] *The Freeman's Journal*. 13 September 1845, 4. Douglass also recounted his story of the Cambria in a letter to Garrison: Frederick Douglass to William Lloyd Garrison, 1 September 1845. Library of Congress General Correspondence, accessed 28 March 2017 https://www.loc.gov/collections/frederick-douglass-papers/about-this-collection/ Douglass played on the Irish connection when he was in Ireland too. See Fionnghuala Sweeney, *Frederick Douglass and the Atlantic World* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007).
[35] *Spectator*. 4 October 1845, 1. Douglass avoided discussions of Irish repeal, poverty and Daniel O'Connell in certain areas of Ireland: See John F. Quinn, "Safe in Old Ireland": Frederick Douglass's Tour, 1845-1846," *Historian* 64, 3-4, (2002) 548-549.
[36] Alasdair Pettinger, "Send Back the Money: Douglass and the Free Church of Scotland," in Alan Rice and Martin Crawford, *Liberating Sojourn: Frederick Douglass and Transatlantic Reform* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999), 47.

he fed the story to the local press to maximize his publicity yet further.[37] This quite literally highlights Douglass' close connections with print culture and how his first few hours in Liverpool consisted of exploiting press coverage.

Fed by Douglass' anglophilia and his exploitation of the narrative of moral superiority, the British press occasionally re-printed articles about slavery in the American newspapers. Douglass had wanted the British public to stir a response in America and ultimately shame the nation into ending slavery, and while his visit would never be enough to initiate physical conflict, it did create a transatlantic war in the press. Articles and letters from *The Liberator* were sometimes printed verbatim, and letters Douglass wrote celebrating British freedom were popular. Others quoted papers from Boston and New York that commented on Douglass' trip. During the height of Douglass' fame in autumn 1846, the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* quoted a *New York Sun* article about Douglass in Britain, arguing that if black people experienced such freedom there "England is the best place for the black population to emigrate to." The article's brevity suggests a smug superiority in which this newspaper proudly agreed with the concept the nation was a safe haven for fugitive slaves.[38]

Other British newspapers reprinted coverage of violence in the slave states, occasionally at the bottom of articles recounting Douglass' lectures. After one account of Douglass' speech, the *Bradford Observer* reprinted a story from an American paper of an enslaved girl who was hanged for hitting

[37] Robert S. Levine, *The Lives of Frederick Douglass* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 79.
[38] *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*. 31 October 1846, 5; *Dumfries and Galloway Standard*. 22 July 1846, 2; *Coventry Herald*. 4 June 1847, 2.

her mistress, and the *Leicestershire Mercury* reprinted a violent scene from a Baltimore plantation on the same page as an article describing Douglass' departure from Britain.[39] In one edition of *The Belfast Newsletter,* a section of *The Alabama Whig* described the use of "negro dogs…to catch run-away negroes," with the Irish correspondent mocking such a "fine example of liberty in the land of freedom."[40] These small articles highlight not only a degree of British moral superiority but also a genuine attempt by correspondents to use Douglass' testimony as a base in which to seek out other facts about slavery. Douglass educated thousands of Britons about the true nature of slavery and made them aware of its cruelties, sparking such references in newspapers while he was there and sometimes well beyond his visit.

However, an essential element of strategic anglophilia involved ignoring Britain's poverty, racism and history of colonialism. As Vanessa Dickerson points out, Douglass' anglophilia and attempts to praise British freedom was ironic given how the nation sought to colonize and Christianize black people across the world. Britain's antislavery past and its apparent tolerance of black people was mirrored by a Britain of imperialism, prejudice and racism.[41] Douglass also ignored Britain's fascination with colonized peoples. As Sadiah Qureshi has pointed out in a ground-breaking study of British performance spaces, the commodification of non-white individuals was commonplace on the British national stage. In May 1847 (a month after Douglass had returned to America), Robert Knox exhibited several Africans

[39] *Bradford Observer*. 25 June 1846, 7; *Leicestershire Mercury*. 10 April 1847, 1.
[40] *Belfast Newsletter.* 28 August 1846, 2.
[41] Vanessa Dickerson, *Dark Victorians* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008), 2-14; 20; 40-50.

on stage at Exeter Hall. Known amongst reformers as a symbol of abolitionist activity – and an institution in which Douglass himself had spoken – the Hall oversaw the exhibitionism of black bodies.[42]

Ignoring narratives of colonialism was a political tactic to ensure popularity, and instead Douglass relied on moral suasion to chastise the British for forgetting their antislavery principles. He urged the British people to take action against the bloody institution of American slavery and asked rhetorically how British audiences could "remain silent" when his enslaved brethren were "within fourteen day's sail of them, shut up in prison for no crime" and "having tongues and not allowed to speak." If anyone doubted whether Englishmen should interfere, they should remind themselves of this fact and "remember that the slave was a man, and had rights."[43] Citing the immense improvements in technology and communication in the 1840s, he pointed to the short geographical distance that existed between America and Britain to highlight the urgency of his mission: millions of men, women and children were enslaved and being tortured only a few weeks' sail away. Douglass also blamed Britons for their part in the slave trade, which dealt "in the thews and sinews of their fellow-men" and it was their duty "to effect that foul blot…[and] redeem the errors of your race."[44] Hence, British people were in a unique position where they could use moral suasion to convince Americans of their crime. Carefully phrased so as not to provoke hostility from his audiences, he cajoled British audiences into accepting their moral and

[42] Sadiah Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 1-4.
[43] *Leicester Mercury*. 13 March 1847, 1.
[44] *The Vindicator*. 10 December 1845, 1. See also Bridget Bennett, "Frederick Douglas and Transatlantic Echoes of 'The Color Line," in Kevin Hutchings, and Julia M. Wright ed., *Transatlantic Literary Exchanges 1790-1870* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011), 106-110.

physical responsibility to do something about American slavery. While the government may have ended slavery in the Empire, it seemed to care little about the consequences of the slave trade in America. As a result, he urged the British not to give up its antislavery efforts, since the abolition of slavery in the British Empire "infused amongst us a spirit of hope, of faith, of liberty." He stated, "*don't let your power cease here"* as "every one has an influence."[45] A year later he returned to this theme and declared British antislavery feeling was lying "dormant, as if it had nothing on which to vent itself." The "foul blot of American slavery calls upon you, cries aloud to you, demands of you" to "enter your assistance and co-operation in bringing about the abolition" of the enslaved.[46] Douglass empowered his audience to be activists even in small ways as he knew how much hope it would give to his enslaved brethren. No white abolitionist could say this with the same conviction, as it was Douglass' unique experience as a formerly enslaved individual which allowed him to make this claim: the British public must do something, because he knew what it was like to suffer.

Along similar lines, Douglass bluntly made it clear that slavery could not exist without violence and denied it existed on British soil. Contrary to British popular opinion, slavery was "not the relation in which a great mass of people are compelled to labour," as he had "laboured as hard in a state of freedom as ever I did in a state of slavery." American slavery referred to the concept where "one man claims and enforces the right of property in the body and soul of another man." The enslaved were "reduced to the condition of

[45] *Supplement to Cork Examiner*. 7 November 1845, 1.
[46] *The Leeds Times*. 26 December 1846, 7.

marketable commodities" and "sold on the auction-block, just as horses, sheep, and swine, are sold in the market."[47] He wanted British audiences to understand what slavery truly was, and how it could not function without violence. He ensured there was little room for argument on this front, and destroyed the myth that the enslaved population could be content or happy. He stated that men "don't go to the field and labour without wages" and argued "the whip must be there – the chain must be there – the gag must be there – the thumb screw must be there – the fear of death must be there" to stop the enslaved rising up or protecting their families from the auction block.[48] Douglass explained the brutality of slavery and "put his audience in full possession of it, by illustrations taken from his own personal experience" and by reading newspaper advertisements from the southern press. This assimilationist strategy was often employed by both black and white abolitionists, and in doing so Douglass asked rhetorical questions in a call and response pattern to reinforce his hatred of the system:

> Can the man who ties up men and women, and even girls
> not more than seventeen years of age – who lashes them
> until the blood streams down their backs – who brands
> them with red hot irons hissing into their flesh – who cuts
> off their ears – who puts iron collars round their necks,
> and heavy chains upon their bodies – who hunts them
> with bloodhounds trained for the purpose, and who shoots

[47] *The Newcastle Guardian*. 8 August 1846, 2-3.
[48] *Ibid.* Douglass did discuss graphic cases of torture and murder. A "feeling of horror" was created during one lecture as he recounted the case of an enslaved man who was burned; the man cried out for mercy but his murderers decided to "lower the intensity of the fire" so he was "slowly consumed." *Caledonian Mercury*. 11 May 1846, 3.

> them mercilessly when they refuse to surrender…can
> these monsters be Christians?

Through short, sharp repeated phrases, Douglass forced Britons to imagine what slavery was truly like and what decisions they would make if their family were enslaved. In his bold and fiery language, Douglass used key words to awaken the senses to the brutality of slavery. He focused on words such as the "hissing" of irons on flesh, the "lashes" of the whip against black bodies, forcing audiences to try and imagine the sound of such violence, only to silence the sounds altogether by cutting off the ears. Blood streaming down enslaved bodies, together with their frames weighed down by chains and manacles, represented a dark visual of what slavery truly entailed. The correspondent to this newspaper noted that despite the fact the meeting was held in a church, "the audience had much difficulty in restraining their feelings" in the face of Douglass' "glowing and eloquent words."[49] As Tom F. Wright argues, Douglass was "principally drawn to images of voice" and thus highlighted his "increasingly sophisticated awareness of reprint pathways." Well aware of his relationship with print culture, "he knew that such coverage both prolonged the life span of his words and gave them greater symbolism." In turn, he "projected a vision of public opinion formed most powerfully through the combined sway of oratorical charisma, through the contagion of peer response, and crucially, through the symbolic depictions of such acts of collecting listening in print."[50] Reading an article such as this one, with its visual and auditory descriptions, would have reminded those who heard

[49] *The Evening Packet*. 16 September 1845, 2.
[50] Tom F. Wright, *Lecturing the Atlantic: Speech, Print, and an Anglo-American Commons 1830-1870* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 58-68.

Douglass the force of his words, as well as forcing non-attendees to imagine the brutality of slavery. By applying such language, Douglass had both public performance and print in mind and reached out to both audiences simultaneously.

To illustrate his argument yet further, Douglass often quoted accounts of violence which were legalized by the Black Codes of each slave state, reading several at once to highlight the brutal punishments enslaved people received for trifling offences. In a meeting in Dundee in 1846 for example, he recounted how an enslaved individual would be flogged thirty-seven times if he or she deviated from their route, and how enslaved men, women and children were beaten and branded if they tried to run away. Douglass listed these punishments one after the other, drilling into an audience the barbarity of slavery, building to a crescendo and finally denouncing the American government for sanctifying slavery. Similarly, he focused on slaveholders' violent sexual desires. Their lack of morality ruined their souls as much as insulting a woman's decency. The decision to focus on the female corporeal would have struck a chord with a Victorian audience: a woman's role was in the private sphere and these stories disrupted social norms and were a horrifying insult to femininity. He also described the separation of families on the auction block, and how the husband might die of a broken heart when his wife was sold to a different plantation. The concept of a forcibly broken family would also insult Victorian gentility. Douglass deliberately chose these stories to horrify an audience but ensured the cultural commodification of the

female black body as a result.[51] Exploiting the strain of sentimentalism in transatlantic culture, he argued that by relating these stories about women, Britons would be filled with such horror that they would be motivated to act. Douglass and other black men tried to avoid descriptions of passive enslaved men as this threatened their masculinity, but by refocusing their attention on women, they played into gender stereotypes and used accounts of white men violating black women to stir sympathy from their audiences.[52]

In his narrative, Douglass' account of Aunt Hester's whipping served to illustrate violence against a defenceless woman as well as voyeuristically placing her under a male gaze to provoke outrage and abolitionist action. Similarly, in Limerick, Douglass exhibited chains to his audience which had been used on an enslaved woman, and reports noted they were still covered in blood.[53] As Frances Smith Foster argues, African American men relied on a trope that described "women in terms of manners, morals and motherhood" and restricted "the female protagonist to the general writing designed for the woman reader." Stories of black female rape by white slaveholders were told by white abolitionists in brutalized language, often rendering women as voiceless and faceless victims. However, as Harriet Jacobs, Sojourner Truth and Elizabeth Keckley showed in their narratives, accounts of sexual assault were hardly ever described and were certainly not "the most profound aspect

[51] *Dundee, Perth and Cupar Advertiser*. 30 January 1846, 3. Another account of this performance strategy can be found in *The Leeds Mercury*. 26 December 1846, 7.
[52] Cynthia S. Hamilton, "Frederick Douglass and the Gender Politics of Reform," in Alan J. Rice and Martin Crawford, *Liberating Sojourn: Frederick Douglass and Transatlantic Reform* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999), 77-84.
[53] Jenny Franchot, "The Punishment of Esther: Frederick Douglass and the Construction of the Feminine," in Eric J. Sundquist ed., *Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 141-146.

of their existence."[54]

Douglass' reliance on black female victimhood was an assimilationist technique that convinced audiences of slavery's horrors, but he also relied on other traditional assimilationist strategies such as displaying whips and chains to visualize violence for his audiences. In slave narratives and within oratory, black activist descriptions of violence were intended to shock audiences and stir their compassion towards the enslaved. During the early nineteenth century, there was a distinct transference within such debates to focus on torture and suffering: both black and white abolitionists used this to cultivate an ideology of moral suasion and to urgently act *now* to do something about American slavery.[55] When Douglass first arrived in Ireland, he often lectured with James Buffum, and at least twice in the first couple of months both men used this familiar abolitionist tactic. In Dublin, Douglass "entered into a long and horrifying description of [slave] punishments, substantiating his statements by reading advertisements from the American newspapers." He also "exhibited, amid great sensation, several instruments of torture in common use in the slave states."[56] As Douglass travelled around the country and became a celebrity throughout 1846, he rarely exhibited whips and chains in these meetings.

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[54] Frances Smith Foster, *Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Ante-Bellum Slave Narratives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), xxix-xxxiii. For further discussion on gender and masculinity, see Maurice Wallace, *Constructing the Black Masculine: Identity and Ideality in African American Men's Literature and Culture 1775-1995* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).
[55] Christine Levecq, *Slavery and Sentiment: The Politics of Feeling in Black Atlantic Antislavery Writing 1770-1850* (Lebanon: University of New Hampshire Press, 2008), 190-220.
[56] *The Freeman's Journal*. 18 September 1845, 4. Douglass also exhibited instruments of torture in Dublin: *The Freeman's Journal*. 4 October 1845, 4.

Since the eighteenth century, black and white abolitionists had displayed whips, manacles and chains to teach audiences about slavery and encourage their support for the abolitionist movement. Celeste Marie-Bernier argues that, despite this, eighteenth and nineteenth century black activists had resisted the white abolitionist trope of portraying black bodies as "living parchments" and sought to represent themselves in different and innovative ways. Formerly enslaved individuals challenged the white paternalist ethos of Josiah Wedgewood's "Am I Not A Man And A Brother?" and used their oratory or literary talents to tell their experience through their own lens. Several abolitionists exhibited whips and chains together with the use of powerful rhetoric to illustrate the brutality of slavery; in Britain, the reliance on such instruments of torture or visual culture surrounding slave ships was more pronounced than in America. Black abolitionists and formerly enslaved individuals became "iron arguments" in the debates against slavery, as someone who had witnessed slavery made their testimony highly prized. As a result, black activists relied on their voices to highlight their independence from a white paternalist ethos but also their identity in a colonial world. David Walker and Robert Wedderburn used their rhetoric to challenge antislavery or proslavery imagery that cast black people as physically and mentally inferior, and men such as Jupiter Hammon recognized the need to develop "distinct rhetorical styles" to "resist the objectifying state of their bodies as abolitionist commodities."[57] Douglass built on these foundations and employed powerful oratory instead of relying on exhibiting whips and chains and moved away from previous abolitionist strategies. Most importantly, he used the power of

[57] Celeste-Marie Bernier, "Iron Arguments': Spectacle, Rhetoric and the Slave Body in New England and British Antislavery Oratory," *European Journal of American Culture* 26:1, (2007), 58-72.

his voice to recount the barbaric experiences of slavery. His powerful oratory and graphic descriptions of slavery shocked audiences and by refusing to use chains as a prop, he directed audience attention away from his corporeal self, and focused it instead on his own testimony. His body was not to be confined or interpreted as a lens through which slavery operated, since his testimony was the only evidence necessary to depict slavery.

Slave narratives highlighting whippings or bodily scars were used by white abolitionists to force spectators into an emotional response, and thus act against slavery in some form. The scar was used by both formerly enslaved people and white abolitionists to testify to the violence of slavery and show audiences that their stories were authentic. In other words, the slave's scarred corporeal self acted as an authentic language that bespoke the violence of slavery.[58] Marcus Wood argues that "the cultural memory of English slavery" rests on "white fantasies of black lives and suffering."[59] Wood suggests the enslaved body was viewed – through scarred backs and instruments of torture – with almost pornographic fashion. Thomas Clarkson's tour of Britain featured numerous whips and chains which were often handled and presented in a fetishist way, often focusing on how they worked on the body itself. There was a "Sadean delight in the efficiency of the equipment and in the absolute power of the master to use it with brutal detachment."[60] In his third autobiography, *Life and Times* (first published in 1881), Douglass admitted to a certain lack of control on the abolitionist circuit, stating he was "called upon

[58] Jennifer Putzi, "The Skin of an American Slave': African American Manhood and the Marked Body in Nineteenth-Century Abolitionist Literature," *Studies in American Fiction* 30:2, (Autumn 2002), 184-187; Steven Mailloux, "Re-Marking Slave Bodies: Rhetoric as Production and Reception," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 35: 2 (2002), 102-103.
[59] Marcus Wood, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 21.
[60] *Ibid,* 409-427.

to expose even my stripes, and with many misgivings obeyed the summons and tried thus to do my whole duty."[61] There is little evidence to suggest he did this in Britain and in light of his later admission, I would argue Douglass was deliberately rejecting literary and visual abolitionist discourse that depicted the suffering black body. In a meeting in May 1846, Douglass declared to a Scottish audience:

> But a word about the cruelties. He would not speak of those he endured himself. He would not show them the stripes on his own back; but he would read them a number of advertisements daily inserted in the newspapers by the masters themselves, which may lead to the detection of the runaway slaves. [He] then read a great number of these, from which it appeared that the runaway slaves, when recovered, are branded and mutilated in a horrible manner. Some had pieces of chains on their legs, attached to which were heavy bars of iron to prevent them from escaping, while others (and these were chiefly women) were decorated with iron collars.[62]

Whether this is a genuine example of his exhaustion at reliving his experience of violence on a public stage proscribed by a white racist schema, or a

[61] Celeste-Marie Bernier, "His Complete History'? Revisioning, Recreating and Reimagining Multiple Lives in Frederick Douglass's Life and Times (1881, 1892)," *Slavery & Abolition* 33:4, (2012), 595.
[62] *Caledonian Mercury*. 11 May 1846, 3.

performative technique which left the audience hungry for his every word, it is a rare example in Britain of Douglass blatantly refusing to show his scars. He employs dissonance here and challenges audience expectations by *not* showing his scarred back. In most of his meetings, Douglass read advertisements of runaway slaves, which catalogued identifiable scars on their bodies from repeated whippings and torture. This is demonstrated in the extract by the particular language the correspondent used. While the correspondent described the tortures as "horrible," he also uses the descriptive term "decorated" to refer to enslaved people wearing iron collars. Although the general impression from the article implies it was not the enslaved people's choice to wear such cruelties, it belies a curious and pornographic fascination with these whips and chains, as though they were adorned on enslaved bodies like jewellery. As Wood argues above, the chains embellished the enslaved, a decoration which audiences expected to see as they so closely associated instruments of torture with enslaved bodies.

Sadiya Hartman in particular has explored the perils of describing torture and subsequent empathy towards suffering. Victorian audiences, she notes, were interested in the "spectacle of punishment" and the violence that represented the heart of slavery. By identifying with black pain, white audiences attempted to identify with the enslaved in fetishist ways and interpret the body as a site of pain and subsequently, spectacle.[63] As a result, Douglass did not want such descriptions, nor the language of decoration, applied to him. Hence, he used his blistering testimony and status as a fugitive

[63] Sadiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery and Self-Making In Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 10-25.

slave to convince his audiences about the horror of slavery, as he did not want to represent a voiceless body on stage or allow his scarred back to become an attraction. He refocused audience attention on advertisements, and by extension, the bodies of others (particularly women) which not only sought to reiterate his argument about the violence of slavery, but also rendered the arguments slavery was a benevolent institution as obsolete.

"As More Akin to Apes Than To Men:" Douglass and His Use of Minstrelsy

Another key aspect of Douglass' assimilationist techniques was his use of minstrelesque language. Since Thomas D. Rice had created his Jim Crow character in 1832, the minstrel show had become very popular on both sides of the Atlantic. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the rise of minstrelsy corresponded with the rise of Garrisonian abolitionism in America and initially both borrowed elements from each other to ensure success. For example, some minstrel shows deliberately portrayed slavery as a sin and the abolitionists' use of the stage and performance – through exhibiting formerly enslaved people or encouraging them to lecture and sing – was a tactic borrowed from the entertainment sphere. Shared themes between abolitionism and blackface minstrelsy ultimately involved an obsession with the black body.[64] The small British black community did not make abolitionism an electrically charged issue as it was in the United States, and the geographical separation from the West Indies only aided British feelings of supremacy. The growth of scientific racism, however, changed the nature of minstrelsy on a

[64] Robert Nowatzki, *Representing African Americans in Transatlantic Abolitionism and Blackface Minstrelsy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2010), 1-12.

British stage, and gradually the representation of black people became more savage and cruel.[65]

Hence, there were occasions when the lines between abolition and minstrelsy were blurred. During Douglass' tour in 1846, a group named the Ethiopian Serenaders travelled to Britain and received rave reviews for its performances. The group's popularity illustrates that racial stereotypes were still very much accepted into the national consciousness. Sarah Meer argues that the Serenaders offered a different perspective on the African – the group highlighted entertaining aspects of black men in contrast to Douglass' eloquence and civilized persona. The Serenaders (all white men) painted their faces, filled their popular performances with songs and dances, and spoke in plantation dialect.[66] A review in the *Leamington Spa Courier* declared them "remarkably clever and admirably 'made up' [to] illustrate most faithfully the negro character and melody." These racist assumptions rested on the notion that they had a basis in fact and the actors were so talented that many believed they were "darkies."[67] Douglass was unimpressed by the Ethiopian Serenaders' success, and lambasted their portrayal of Africans "as more akin to apes than to men."[68] The Serenaders' lips were "evidently painted and otherwise exaggerated" and their singing was "but an imitation of white performers and not even a tolerable representation of the character of colored

[65] *Ibid*, 41-65. See also Harry J. Elam ed., *Black Cultural Traffic: Crossroads and Global Performance and Popular Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005); Eric Lott, "Blackface and Blackness: The Minstrel Show in American Culture," in Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, Brooks McNamara eds., *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 3-35.
[66] Sarah Meer, "Competing Representations: Douglass, the Ethiopian Serenaders and Ethnic Exhibition in London," in Alan Rice and Martin Crawford eds., *Liberating Sojourn: Frederick Douglass and Transatlantic Reform* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999), 141-146.
[67] *Leamington Spa Courier*. 7 February 1846, 2.
[68] Vanessa Dickerson, *Dark Victorians* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008), 62-64.

people." The performers had tapped into and promulgated the existing stereotype of African American physical features.[69] The Serenaders were "the filthy scum of white society, who have stolen from us a complexion denied to them by nature, in which to make money, and pander to the corrupt taste" of white people.[70] Minstrel shows were damaging not only to African Americans, but also society in general, as they had a potential to destroy and weaken race relations.[71]

Despite criticizing a white actor in Limerick in 1845 who performed as Jim Crow in local theatres, Douglass occasionally borrowed from the minstrel stage and used plantation dialect in his speeches.[72] According to Patricia Ferreira, Douglass did not use plantation dialect as he wanted to rely on his voice to tell his experience, and could do this for the first time in Britain.[73] However, during one meeting in 1845 he mocked slaveholder's rhetoric that the enslaved should be "grateful that God in his mercy brought [them] from Africa to this Christian land," and said:

> They also tell the wretched slaves that God make[s] them to do the working and the white men the thinking. And such is the ignorance in which the slaves are held that some of them go home and say

[69] Frederick Douglass, "Ethiopian Serenaders." *The North Star.* 29 June 1849.
[70] Frederick Douglass, "The Hutchinson Family." *The North Star.* 27 October 1848.
[71] Frederick Douglass, "Ethiopian Serenaders." *The North Star.* 29 June 1849. Douglass was more optimistic about a black troupe of Serenaders, as it could "represent the colored man rather as he is, than as Ethiopian Minstrels represent him to be."
[72] Fionnghuala Sweeney, "Mask in Motion: Dialect Spaces and Class Representations in Frederick Douglass' Atlantic Rhetoric," in Joanna M. Braxton, Maria I. Diedrich eds., *Monuments of the Black Atlantic Slavery and Memory* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004), 34.
[73] Patricia, J. Ferreira, "Frederick Douglass and the 1846 Dublin Edition of His Narrative," *New Hibernia Review* 5:1, (Spring 2001), 65-67.

> 'me hear a good sermon to-day, de minister make ebery thing so clear, whiteman above a nigger any day' (roars of laughter).[74]

Although in some cases the lines between minstrelsy and abolitionism were blurred, Douglass' use of minstrelsy reveals a subversive dissonant strategy to simultaneously appeal to Victorian audiences while also rejecting white supremacy. According to Sweeney, "borrowing from the minstrel stage allows him to be understood as an ironic articulation of blackface in this debate, that is an imitation of an imitation and serves to distance Douglass the authentic representative of blackness, from the ventriloquized counterfeit."[75] In this extract, Douglass plays on stereotypes of ignorant black people and the superior Anglo-Saxon. Even if the enslaved figure is not educated by white standards, the white minister who owned slaves and exploited his position of power over others is the real target of his rhetoric. He played on the trope of black ignorance to mock the white racist ethos that enslaved people were unintelligent.[76]

Other African Americans sometimes relied on minstrelsy in their performances and literary work. William Wells Brown employed minstrelsy in his role as a playwright as well as in his novel *Clotel* in 1853. Glenda Carpio argues Brown knew "the risk of affirming racial stereotypes, but he believed that the laughter it produced could be turned to social change." He "used the

[74] *The Leeds Times*. 15 November 1845, 7. See also Paul Gilmore, ""De Genewine Artekil": William Wells Brown, Blackface Minstrelsy, and Abolitionism," *American Literature* 69:4, (December 1997), 744-746 for a discussion on minstrelsy, Douglass and William Wells Brown.
[75] Sweeney, *Frederick Douglass and the Atlantic World* (2007), 130.
[76] Very occasionally, Douglass sang abolitionist songs to his audience too. See *The Limerick Reporter*. 25 November 1845, 2; *The Cork Examiner*. 29 October 1845, 3.

infectious good feeling of sharing and release that laughter can produce to make his audiences laugh at the bigoted whites that he also impersonated."[77] However, men such as James Watkins refused to engage in such stereotypes as he believed they were damaging to African Americans. The minstrel stage was no place to exert black identity because African Americans were expected to conform to something they were not. In his narrative Watkins bemoaned the stereotypical characteristics of African Americans, especially when British women threatened their children with "a black sam" if they misbehaved. The shows themselves, where men "perform such outlandish antics as were never seen amongst the negroes," were frustrating and upsetting to him. In condemnation of these shows, he said:

> Though I have for twenty years been ground down under the relentless hoof of the oppressor, and have tasted the bitterest dregs of slavery, I had rather that the laws of England would send me back into bondage, than that I should ever be guilty of disfiguring my face in order to bring into contempt a race of men who have been injured and wronged as have the Africans; whose woes and sorrows should excite the sympathies, instead of provoking the mirth and raising the laughter, of more fortunate human beings.

Like Douglass, Watkins believed minstrel shows did not aid the general feeling towards African Americans or antislavery. He would not stoop to a

[77] Glenda Carpio, *Laughing Fit to Kill: Black Humor in the Fictions of Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 35-36.

level of entertainment that destroyed black identities and his fierce condemnation of a comical or ignorant enslaved individual stereotype indicates he was fully aware of how minstrel shows had become deeply entrenched into British society.[78] Minstrel shows tapped into pre-existing stereotypes that Watkins, Douglass, and others had to continually fight against: when he faced an audience, he had to prove and assert his identity, and separate this from the caricatures with which his audience would have been more familiar with.

Following his removal of whips and chains from his repertoire, Douglass rarely used minstrelsy or plantation dialect in 1846 and 1847. He dropped both performance techniques after the first few months of his British tour, signaling his growing independence from the white abolitionist movement and the Garrisonians. He wanted to rely on his voice and testimony of slavery, without objectifying his body or reverting to stereotypes of black people to ensure success. In America, white abolitionists had urged Douglass to "give us the facts…we will take care of the philosophy." Concerned that Americans would no longer believe Douglass was a formerly enslaved person, they wanted him to restrict his speeches to facts and figures or use plantation dialect.[79] By championing his oratory and replacing whips, chains and plantation dialect in his British speeches, Douglass was demonstrating to white abolitionists his creation of a new philosophy where black men could organize themselves and become a successful independent orator.

[78] James Watkins, *Narrative of the Life of James Watkins* (Bolton: Kenyon and Abbatt, 1860), 43-45.
[79] Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 22-23.

It is perhaps no surprise then, that Douglass embraced his star billing and the freedom to lecture by himself. As his independence grew, he simultaneously rejected minstrel shows and white abolitionists in his final speech in London in March 1847. White activists organized this farewell meeting for Douglass, attracting hundreds of people and influential reformers from around the country. Their decision, however, to employ Henry Russell for introductory vocal music greatly displeased Douglass.[80] Russell was a successful actor who toured Britain with his minstrel show. According to the press, he had the ability to excite audiences through somber and comical songs, but was most effective through his "accurate imitation of the voice, gestures, etc. of the American nigger," and his audiences laughed uproariously at his "droll stories in the negro dialect."[81] When Douglass stood up to speak, he stated that Russell had "unjustly" painted blacks as "simple in [their] understanding." He rejected Russell's portrayal of black people and subverts his introduction to the evening: Douglass did not want his audience to invest in minstrel stereotypes when instead they could respect and admire him as a talented and eloquent individual, a real African American.[82] He had to fight to preserve his black identity and disprove contemporaneous stereotypes when they were often defined through a white lens. Here, Douglass challenged racist stereotypes in person and criticized Russell for espousing negative stereotypes

[80] Frederick Douglass, *Report of Proceedings at the Soiree given to Frederick Douglass* (London: R. Yorke Clarke and Co., 1847), 3.
[81] *The Belfast Newsletter*. 30 September 1845, 2.
[82] Frederick Douglass, 30 March 1847, in John Blassingame, *Frederick Douglass Papers: Series One, Speeches, Debates and Interviews, Vol.2 1847-54* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 19-52.

of black people. He also subtly attacks white abolitionists too, for their decision to employ Russell in the first place.[83]

Thus, Douglass very rarely used plantation dialect on the transatlantic stage to convince Britons of American hypocrisy. As his tour lengthened however, he relied on mimicry instead to mock slaveholders and their hypocritical practice of Christianity. This, indeed, would became a central theme in his rhetoric.

"Devils Dressed in Angels Robes:" Douglass, Religion and the Free Church

Exposing the relationship between slavery and American churches was a core theme of Douglass' speeches, and he perfected the art of attacking southern churches as part of his performative strategy. He tapped into pre-existing debates that had circulated since the early 1830s in Britain, where several British churches had sent remonstrances regarding slavery to their brethren in America. Concerned at American apathy, many British ministers were swayed by Douglass' rhetoric to challenge American churches.[84] Douglass exploited this and in almost every speech pointed to the church as a foundation stone of slavery and cruelty in the South. In one speech in Liverpool, he declared:

[83] Nowatzki, (2010), 13; 35-36. See also Valerie Smith, *Self-Discovery and Authority in Afro-American Narrative* (Harvard, Harvard University Press, 1991); Robert Stepto, *From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979).
[84] Thomas F. Harwood, "British Evangelical Abolitionism and American Churches in the 1830s," *The Journal of Southern History* 28:3, (1962), 288; 295.

> [Slaveholders] had men sold to build churches, women sold to support missionaries, babes sold to buy bibles to send to the heathen. The slaves' prison and the church stand in the same street – the gates of heaven and the gates of hell being in the same avenue. The pulpit and the auctioneer's block are in the same neighborhood, and the blood-stained gold, received from the sale of human flesh on the auction block, goes to support the pulpit, while the pulpit, in return, governs the infernal business with the garb of Christianity. Under the drippings of the American sanctuary slavery has its existence. Whips, chains, gags, blood-hounds, thumb-screws, and all the bloody paraphernalia of slavery lie right under the drippings of the sanctuary, and instead of being corroded and rusted by its influence, they are kept in a state of preservation. Ministers of religion defend slavery from the Bible – ministers of religion own any number of slaves – bishops trade in human flesh – churches may be said to be literally built up in human skulls, and their very walls cemented with human blood – women are sold at the public block to support a minister, to support a church – human beings sold to buy sacramental services, and all, of course, with the sanction of the religion of the land.[85]

[85] *The Liverpool Mercury Supplement*. 23 October 1846, 4.

In graphic and electrifying language, Douglass painted the American slaveholding church not as a safe haven but as an accomplice and enemy of the enslaved, and all true Christians as a result. Churches and plantations existed in the same location, and the church – instead of being a light in the darkness – was part of the evil system of slavery. Douglass mocked the fact that the church and auction block existed in the same place, and invited his audience to agree with him on this judgment without actually asking them: this relationship was obviously morally wrong and incomprehensible. He went further, and described how both coexisted in the same community and profited from each other. When an enslaved individual was sold, the profit was directed to the church, who pretended to respect and honor the Savior when in reality made a mockery of it. The violence of slavery and the instruments of torture such as whips and chains were protected instead of shunned by the church, and the term "dripping" conjures images of bleeding wounds. The structures in the South – physically, morally, and mentally – were saturated in blood, right to its foundation's heart. Churches were built by this blood and sustained by it, and were sites of death, violence and rape. A minister could not truly be a Christian if he preached to a congregation on Sunday in a blood-stained institution, only to return to his enslaved population afterwards. In another meeting, he once again espoused the same themes and argued that slaveholders were "devils dressed in angels robes."[86]

Douglass used language that resonated with British audiences like no other to confront the foul nature of slavery and its relationship with American

[86] *The Newcastle Guardian*. 8 August 1846, 2-3.

churches. He balanced on a tightrope between assimilationist and dissonance strategies while doing so: on the one hand, he exposed the familiar line of argument to British audiences about the links of some churches to slaveholding states, but on the other, he went further and relied on dissonance to completely overturn audience expectations. He was careful to define himself as a religious man but declared his hatred for "the slave-holding, the woman-whipping, the mind-darkening, the soul-destroying religion that exists" in the South.[87] His bold and often harsh language shocked audiences and he reassured them he was not one of "the enemies of the church or of religion" but simply chose to "remove the mask from her face, and give the nations of the earth a peep at her enormities."[88] Exposing this relationship was complex and he admitted it was "one of the most painful duties he had been called on to perform;" it was necessary however, to ensure "the light of truth be permitted to shine into [the church's] dark recesses." Revealing such conduct was the only way of "saving her from the deep damnation of which she was in danger, and into which she was plunging." It was for the "salvation" and "purification" of the church to expose such connections, as well as for the "redemption and disenthralment of his race."[89] He elaborated on this theme further in another meeting in Dublin:

> I love the religion of Jesus which is pure and peaceable, and easy to be entreated. I ask you all to love this religion, but I hate a religion which, in the

[87] Frederick Douglass, *American Slavery: Report of a Public Meeting Held at Finsbury Chapel, Moorfields, to Receive Frederick Douglass, the American Slave, on Friday, May 22, 1846* (London: Christopher B. Christian & Co., 1846), 12.
[88] *The Belfast Newsletter*. 26 December 1845, 1.
[89] *The Northern Whig*. 25 December 1845, 1.

> name of the Saviour, and which prostitutes his blessed precepts to the vile purposes of slavery, ruthlessly sunder all the ties of nature; which tears the wife from the husband – which separates the child from the parent – which covers the backs of men and women with bloody scars – which promotes all manner of licentiousness. I hate such a religion as this, for it is not Christianity, it is of the Devil. I ask you to hate it too, and to assist me in putting in its place the religion of Jesus. – Let the Methodist minister, the Presbyterian minister, the Baptist minister, the Unitarian minister, the Catholic clergyman, and the Protestant clergyman – let the Society of Friends – let all of every denomination in Ireland be faithful to their Saviour, and slavery in America will soon fall to the ground.[90]

Douglass was careful to dwell on the distinct differences between the form of Christianity he (and the audience) subscribed to, and that of southern slaveholders. By connecting the violence, rape and plunder of slaveholders he painted this religion as dark, evil and sinful. He described the true Christianity as the light, and ultimately, the form of truth and moral righteousness which would destroy slavery. The twisted form of Christianity in the South ignored religious teachings and represented brutality and violence in all its forms.

[90] *The Freeman's Journal*. 4 October 1845, 4.

Ultimately, slavery was the Devil's work. After exposing this religion, Douglass once again implored his audience to urgently do something about slavery, demanding they support the true principles of Christ, regardless of what sect they belonged to. If such unity and religious support could be gathered together, abolition was inevitable.

Douglass' exploitation of such dissonant strategies (particularly his harsh language towards British churches) occasionally proved controversial. When he accused British churches of not doing enough to expose the links between slaveholding and American churches, many British ministers were outraged. In Dublin, Douglass attacked the Methodist Church for their lack of criticism against their American brethren, and sarcastically used the oft-quoted Bible phrase used by slaveholders to justify their violence, "He who knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." When he declared that the Methodists in America supported slavery, fellow Methodists in Dublin took offence and refused Douglass entry into their meeting houses. Douglass mocked their actions in a speech shortly afterwards, and declared "he would not sacrifice his friends now in chains, and perhaps writhing under the lash while he spoke, to any fear of personal inconvenience." Because the Methodists had "closed their doors against him," it merely proved the truth of his attacks against the Methodists in America.[91] Doubtless Douglass knew these comments would be printed in the coverage of his speech, and saw no problem with criticizing the Methodists and defending his character. Although abolitionist John B. Estlin remarked in a letter that

[91] *The Freeman's Journal*. 18 September 1845, 4; John F. Quinn, "Safe in Old Ireland": Frederick Douglass's Tour, 1845-1846," *Historian* 64: 3-4, (2002) 538-540.

"friends in Dublin had been scandalized by the violent denunciations uttered" by Douglass, he refused to compromise. In a powerful performative technique, he turned the criticisms against him into a strength. He used his opponent's own words against them, molding them to suit his own ends.[92] Unlike Moses Roper, he was able to balance dissonance with his oratorical talent. He did not reverse his attacks or his language, as he was determined to not only educate his audiences on the links between religion and slavery in America, but also illustrate the different ways British people could influence America. He deliberately used dissonant language to stir controversy and force the British public to question their stance and remove all connections to slavery. He also used his celebrity and popularity to weather the storm, as unlike Roper he was not short of friends in Ireland or places to speak.

Douglass' fiery rhetoric against slaveholding churches led to several controversies in Britain, including the Free Church of Scotland and the Evangelical Alliance, the first of which will be discussed here.[93] In 1843, Thomas Chalmers and his supporters separated from the established Church of Scotland to form the Free Church, and Chalmers was declared the leader. To raise money for the new organization, Chalmers sent a small deputation to America including Dr. William Cunningham, Reverend George Lewis and Reverend William Chalmers. The Free Church's decision to break away from authoritarian control proved popular in America, and many gave generously to

[92] John Estlin to Richard D. Webb(?) 5 November 1845, in Taylor, *Transatlantic Understanding* (1974), 240-241. There were other occasions when Douglass' harsh language offended abolitionists or local citizens. He was reluctantly forced to apologize in Bristol after a local Unitarian minister criticized his views on the Unitarian "terms of communion." *Bristol Mercury*. 12 September 1846, 6.
[93] The Evangelical Alliance and World's Temperance Convention offer two more concrete examples of Douglass' impact on Britain, and how his antislavery agitation affected British organizations. He ensured American slavery could not be ignored and created transatlantic debate which had international consequences.

the cause. Two ministers including Lewis were sent to the South.[94] This mission raised ten thousand pounds, a third of which came from slaveholders in the South, deeply offending abolitionists on both sides of the Atlantic. Before the ministers had left for America, radical Garrisonian abolitionist Henry Clarke Wright and the Glasgow Emancipation Society (who ardently supported Douglass later on) urged them to denounce fellowship with slaveholders and slaveholding churches, a course both pursued when the ministers returned.[95] But if Wright aroused a sense of curiosity among the Scottish people, it was Douglass who captured their attention. Douglass exposed the hypocrisy of a *Free* Church taking money from slaveholders in the South, and urged Irish Presbyterians to attack the Church. The controversy Douglass created in Belfast was magnified as he travelled to Scotland, and criticized the Free Church's conduct.[96] Douglass' status as a formerly enslaved individual made him a curiosity to the British public: here was the opportunity of hearing about slavery from someone who had experienced it, unlike Wright and other white abolitionists.[97] Douglass' celebrity persona also courted attention from the Scottish press, and he was able to build momentum after a heavy lecturing schedule across major Scottish cities and towns.

For example, during most Dundee meetings, the lecture halls and churches were "crowded to excess" and "many had to return home, being

[94] Iain Whyte, *Send Back the Money! The Free Church of Scotland and American Slavery* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2012), 9-18. See also, Alasdair Pettinger, "Send Back the Money: Douglass and the Free Church of Scotland," in Rice and Crawford, *Liberating Sojourn* (1999), 31-56.
[95] *Ibid*, 33-45.
[96] R.J.M Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 82-87.
[97] Audrey Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England: Abolitionist Politics in Popular Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: 2000), 1-10; 29-30.

unable to obtain a hearing."[98] During one meeting, Douglass charged the Free Church ministers with entering into southern homes where "the coats, the boots, the watches, the houses, and all they possess, are the results of the unpaid toil of the poor fettered, stricken, and branded slave."[99] By using repetitive language hammering home the Free Church's crimes, he made a series of charges against the Church for "fellowshipping menstealers" and accepting the bloodstained money from "well-known thieves" to pay for the new organization. The action "disgraced the human family:" the ministers took "counsel and following the bidding of slaveholders and their guilty abettors, [they] turned a deaf ear to the bleeding and whispered slave."[100] Along similar lines, he declared a few months later that the ministers had "paralysed their own Christian feelings" and "dined at [the slaveholder's] tables, sat in their pews" and "took the blood money which was offered them."[101]

For an African American and formerly enslaved individual, Douglass' impact on Scotland was unprecedented. The slogan "Send Back the Money!" was painted on churches, pavements, signs and discussed across Scotland. Douglass took it upon himself to be the leader for the Free Church campaign, and his oratory and charisma made a strong impact on Scottish society.[102] He wrote that Britons had "nobly responded" to the mantra of "Send Back the Money;" and "our cry is *disgorge – disgorge* your ill-gotten gold – give up – give up the fruit of plunder – build not your houses by fraud, and support not

[98] *Dundee, Perth and Cupar Advertiser*. 30 January 1846, 3.
[99] *Dundee Courier*. 3 February 1846, 2-3.
[100] *Dundee Courier*. 17 March 1846, 2.
[101] *The Western Times*. 5 September 1846, 6-7.
[102] Gerald Fulkerson, "Exile as Emergence: Frederick Douglass in Great Britain 1845-7," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60:1 (1974), 74-77.

your gospel by the wages of unrighteousness!"[103] Mary Welsh, a fellow Garrisonian abolitionist in Edinburgh, wrote that Douglass' tactics appeared to be working, as he and his supporters had "done wonders in opening the eyes of the public" to the Free Church campaign. She thoroughly believed the excitement was unparalleled in Edinburgh's history of antislavery.[104] News of the controversy spread across the nation and the *London Daily News* reported that Scotland was "the scene of a movement provocative alike of mirthful and dolorous emotions" and Douglass' mantra of "Send Back the Money!" had created a "perfect hurricane of indignation."[105]

During this controversy, Douglass favored particular performative techniques to highlight the Free Church's hypocrisy. Throughout Douglass' career as an orator and journalist, he always exploited and returned to the theme of religious hypocrisy in the South. Instead of merely making the connections between slaveholders preaching at the pulpit on a Sunday, then whipping his enslaved population the next day, Douglass added mimicry and humor into his repertoire to criticize southern churches as well as northern churches who refused to denounce them. Gary S. Selby argues that Douglass' famous "Slaveholder's Sermon" had "potential for creating dissonance" as again and again Douglass highlighted the irony of slaveholders quoting from the Bible to justify slavery. Douglass used his formerly enslaved status to highlight the irony behind the slaveholding preacher's invocation that "servants, be obedient to your masters." He used this speech to great success

[103] *Belfast Commercial Chronicle*. 4 February 1846, 2.
[104] Mary Welsh to Maria W. Chapman, 17 May 1846. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 18 May 2015 http://archive.org/details/lettertomydearmr00wels5
[105] *London Daily News*. 29 June 1846, 1.

in America, adapting sections of it for his British tour.[106] As Selby notes, "Douglass's parodies of white religion violated the boundaries of social hierarchy" and his audiences were "unable to escape the alarming dissonance that resulted from hearing such language on the lips of a slave."[107] Douglass also relied on African "trickster" concepts and used humor to bridge the racial gap between himself and his white audiences. His use of mimicry was often described as unparalleled by any other abolitionist speaker; encouraging his audiences to laugh at such scenes created a feeling of community. All were in on the joke at the slaveholder's expense, as well as mocking the stereotype of a lazy enslaved person when such a powerful and eloquent formerly enslaved man stood before them.[108]

Douglass' excellent talent as a mimic allowed him to perform several "sermons" impersonating a slaveholder. In a performance which has overtones of a form of reverse minstrelsy, he "buttoned up his coat, twisted his countenance into a grave and canting aspect, and with a most inimitable tone of voice, and a genuine Yankee twang, gave the following sermon amidst shouts of laughter." Along with this impression, he declared his text to be "Servants obey your masters," much to the delight of his audience.[109] He employed this performative device again in Leicester, but the correspondent could barely describe his performance effectively since so much "depended upon looks, gestures, and tones, exactly imitative of the whine and drawl

[106] Gary S. Selby, "Mocking the Sacred: Frederick Douglass's 'Slaveholder's Sermon' and the Antebellum Debate over Religion and Slavery," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88:3, (2002), 326-335.
[107] Selby, "Mocking the Sacred," (2002), 337-338.
[108] Granville Ganter, '"He Made Us Laugh Some': Frederick Douglass's Humor," *African American Review* 37:4, (Winter, 2003), 535-539.
[109] *The Western Times.* 5 September 1846, 6-7.

adopted by certain classes of religionists."[110] Descriptions in such forms of print culture could not capture his performance in its entirety, but this only added to Douglass' attraction and the desire to see such a man in action.

During one meeting in Dundee for example, Douglass used mimicry to recreate a fictional scenario. He imagined a scene where he was enslaved and Reverend George Lewis, who had travelled to the South to raise money for the Free Church, called on his former master Thomas Auld. Much to the audience's enthusiasm, he recounted the "speech" by Lewis, imploring Auld to give money to "religious freedom in Scotland." Douglass' ear was pressed to the door and could hear his master agree to give the minister money through the sale of one of his slaves. Through much "applause and laughter," Douglass imagined Lewis accepting the "bounties produced by the blood of the slave watered by the sweat and enriched by the blood of the half-famished negro." When the minister was ready to leave, Douglass imagined himself as the slave "tied behind the carriage" and taken away to be sold on the auction block. Five hundred dollars was bid, and Douglass lambasted Lewis's greed to much laughter from his audience. The ministers then commenced building churches in Scotland with this money, and Douglass argued how "brother Lewis daringly stands up here in Scotland makes light of it."[111] By constructing a detailed and powerful story such as this, Douglass mocks the Free Church in a way that no other white abolitionist could: he forms a story based on his own experience as an enslaved individual. He had managed to escape slavery, but the blood money the Free Church accepted represented the sale of innocent

[110] *Leicester Mercury*. 13 March 1847, 1.
[111] *Dundee Courier*. 17 March 1846, 2.

enslaved people. Douglass cleverly uses a moral argument to not only win support for the abolitionist campaign but also highlight how closely slavery and religion were interlinked. Hence, Douglass used mimicry as a performative strategy to illustrate his unwavering position against the Free Church and ensure their arguments for accepting the money were ridiculed.

However, Douglass was criticised in some quarters for his harsh language against the Church. *The Scottish Guardian* argued in racist tones that Douglass was a "semi-savage" and his radicalism was unacceptable.[112] In Fife, his "nauseous speeches" were hindering the abolitionist cause and Douglass should have been "detained a few years longer in bonds" as his efforts "in the cultivation of coffee" would have been far more successful than his current abolitionist activities. [113] According to another Scottish newspaper, Douglass' mimicry in particular "was in very bad taste" particularly when "directed against a minister of the gospel, and indulged in by one in the prosecution of such a holy mission" as antislavery. His behaviour was "not only contemptible but disgusting."[114] Many criticisms towards Douglass were racist, whether in their invocation of stereotypes surrounding supposed African barbarity or the fact black people belonged in slavery.

This was not the only time Douglass faced criticism during his British tour. In a meeting in Darlington in January 1847, debates about the Free Church and the Evangelical Alliance led to a "scene of tumult and uproar," and the *Belfast Newsletter* were similarly unimpressed with Douglass' rhetoric

[112] *Dundee Courier*. 21 April 1846, 3.
[113] *The Fife Herald, and Kinross, Strathearn and Clackmanan Advertiser*. 14 May 1846, 3.
[114] *The Perthshire Advertiser*. 19 March 1846, 3.

against both religious organizations. One article described Douglass and Garrison as "American Antislavery Agitators" and another recorded how one meeting resulted in such "disapprobation…that, as the only means to put a stop to the confusion, thanks were voted to the chairman, and the meeting broke up." Whilst most of the criticism was saved for Garrison, Douglass was described as the '"curled darling' of the ladies" who in another meeting led to such "a mournful exhibition of bad taste and worse feeling" that the correspondent refused to write what Douglass had said.[115]

Most of the time though, Douglass used his brilliant performative techniques to turn attacks in print to his advantage and even incorporate them into his lectures. He used attacks upon his character – particularly rumours he was an imposter – and accused the Free Church of trying to blacken his reputation. By refusing Douglass a hearing, they only proved their guilt at accepting the money from slaveholders.[116] Furthermore, during a meeting in Dundee when audience members hissed against his language towards the Free Church, Douglass employed dissonant language and said he was "glad to hear these hisses" for "when the cool voice of truth falls into the burning vortex of falsehood there would always be hissing." He called out the individuals who hissed, inviting them to defend themselves on the platform and answer how would they defend Free Churchmen who took slaveholders' money.[117] As we saw in the previous chapter in comparison to Moses Roper, Douglass was a

[115] *Newcastle Guardian*. 16 January 1847, 5; *Belfast Newsletter.* 2 October 1846, 2; *Belfast Newsletter*. 6 October 1846, 1-2.
[116] Fisch, *American Slaves* (2000), 92-3.
[117] *Dundee Courier*. 3 February 1846, 2-3.

skillful orator who invited rather than alienated his audience, and encouraged them to side with him against dissenters.

Douglass also ridiculed local newspapers in his speeches. *The Northern Warder,* a paper that often supported the Free Church, wrote that attacking the Church was "the main and the engrossing object of these transatlantic demagogues."[118] In response, Douglass replied to *The Northern Warder*'s criticisms and argued it had employed the "grossest misrepresentations" and "darkest insinuations;" the editor had attempted to blacken the abolitionists and refused to allow them space to defend themselves in their columns.[119] By including such negative reviews in his performance, Douglass boldly and slowly broke down all criticisms one by one to ensure his audiences were in no doubt of their positions' immorality. He dismissed such remarks often to the laughter of his audiences, and used powerful oratory and mockery to render their attacks useless.

Despite Douglass' successes, Iain Whyte argues that Douglass' rhetoric "prevented any possibility of dialogue with the church leadership."[120] This may not have been his intention, however. Reflecting on the controversy in his 1855 autobiography *My Bondage and My Freedom*, Douglass argued that the campaign was a victory for the abolitionists. It "furnished an occasion for making the people of Scotland thoroughly acquainted with the character of slavery, and for arraying against the system the moral and religious sentiment

[118] *The Northern Warder*. 19 March 1846, 5.
[119] *Dundee Courier*. 17 March 1846, 2.
[120] Whyte, *Send Back the Money!* (2012), 82-84.

of that country."[121] While the controversy surrounding the Free Church might have ruined the reputation of other black abolitionists, Douglass manipulated every situation to his advantage and emerged relatively unscathed. Despite the criticisms against Douglass and a few condemnations in other newspapers, these were small in number compared to the praise he received. His attacks on slavery and subsequent bold language highlighted in new ways the violent nature of American slavery and the dangers of associating with it in any form.

Douglass' second autobiography recounts the main controversies he became involved in during his tour, but it does not include an account of the physical and mental struggles he faced while in Britain. Over the course of his trip, Douglass created a unique performance that, publicly, left little room for fatigue or mental anguish. Part of his celebrated persona – particularly in the press – meant he could not show any signs of weakness. There were cracks in this façade however, and through such cracks we can begin to understand the physical and mental toil his tour must have taken upon him. Defending himself in public against charges of fraud, convincing thousands of people about the true nature of slavery, as well as repeating his traumatic stories was a heavy burden to bear. He admitted to a Cork audience in the first few months of his trip that he stood before them "with the marks of the slave-driver's whip, that will go down with me to my grave" but far worse was the "scourge of slavery itself piercing into my heart" and "crushing my feelings."[122] This was something no white abolitionist could feel or experience, and the loneliness of conducting such a tour and recounting such

[121] Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855), 370-399.
[122] *The Hampshire Advertiser*. 8 November 1845, 7.

stories caused Douglass endless fatigue.

The constant networking, too, together with travelling for hours at a time to reach new destinations took its toll. In the first month of his trip, Douglass confessed that one of his initial objectives in visiting Britain was "to get a little repose, [so] that I might return home refreshed and strengthened" but if "the labor of the last two weeks be a fair sample of what awaits me, I have certainly sought repose in the wrong place." He had to turn down several invitations to speak, something which was such a difference "from my treatment at home!"[123] The curiosity and interest in Douglass continued unabated, and in the spring of 1846, Thompson described Douglass' busy lecturing schedule. He had "crammed a year's sensations into the last five days," speaking at an antislavery meeting on Monday, a peace society meeting on Tuesday, a suffrage meeting on Wednesday, a temperance meeting on Thursday and another antislavery meeting on Friday in a speech that lasted three hours to around two thousand five hundred people.[124] In September of that year, William Lloyd Garrison described their hectic travelling arrangements:

> On the 23rd, we shall proceed to Edinburgh, where we shall remain till the 28th, improving our time to the best advantage. From thence, we expect to go to Dundee; from Dundee back to Glasgow; from Glasgow to Belfast; from Belfast to Dublin; from

[123] Frederick Douglass to William Lloyd Garrison, 29 September 1845, in Philip Foner, *Life and Writings Vol. 1* (New York: International Publishers, 1950), 120.
[124] George Thompson to Henry C. Wright, 23 May 1846. Boston Public Library, MS.A.1.2 V.16, 51.

> Dublin to Cork; from Cork to Liverpool; via Dublin; from Liverpool to Wrexham; from Wrexham to Manchester; from Manchester to Rochdale; from Rochdale to Darlington; from Darlington to Liverpool. All this to be completed in four weeks! Now talk of writing, to a man who has as yet found not time to sleep![125]

As a result of the constant string of lectures, Douglass suffered from frequent bouts of illness which threatened to affect his performance on the British stage. During April 1846, he complained of his poor eyesight and in particular a "difficulty with my right eye which has troubled me very much."[126] The exhausting travelling schedule meant Douglass had to cope with illness after spending hours on trains or carriages, followed by speaking for one or sometimes two hours a night on a traumatic subject. After an Exeter Hall meeting in 1846, Garrison noted he was "quite weary in body and Frederick was still more so" and noticed Douglass was "naturally enough sighing to see his wife and children."[127] By the end of 1846, Douglass became ill due to his relentless lecturing schedule, speaking most evenings every week to over 60,000 people.[128] He cancelled a meeting in Leeds because of a "fit of

[125] William Lloyd Garrison to Edmund Quincy, 18 September 1846, in Walter M. Merrill ed., *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison: Vol.3: No Union with Slaveholders 1841-1849* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 417-420.
[126] Frederick Douglass to Richard D. Webb, 25 April 1846. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 18 May 2015, www.archive.org, (identifier: lettertodearfrie00doug_6); Frederick Douglass to Richard D. Webb, 26 April 1846. Boston Public Library, M.S.A.1.2 V.16, 38.
[127] William Lloyd Garrison to Richard D. Webb, 12 September 1846. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 18 May 2015, www.archive.org, (identifier: lettertomydearwe00garr5); William Lloyd Garrison to Helen Garrison, 17 September 1846. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 18 May 2015, www.archive.org, (identifier: lettertomydearwi00garr21).
[128] Gerald Fulkerson, "Exile as Emergence: Frederick Douglass in Great Britain 1845-7," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60:1, (1974), 81-82.

sickness" which sapped his "usual strength," according to local abolitionist Mary Brady.[129] When he finally attended the rescheduled meeting however, even the newspaper correspondent noticed "he was evidently laboring under [a] severe disposition" and half way through his speech, his "strength failed him, and he was compelled to resume his seat, requesting that some one might address the meeting until he had in some measure recovered."[130] The exhausting lecturing tour impacted on Douglass' performance, and near the end of his journey caused one correspondent in Warrington to note how his speeches were "suffering from great debility owing to the large amount of fatigue he has lately endured."[131] Even at the end of March 1847, an audience member in Sheffield noticed Douglass was "too ill, from long continued exertion, to do full justice to himself."[132]

The cracks in Douglass' lionized image reveal the man behind the celebrated mask. The infrequency with which he let his exhaustion show on a public stage is symbolic of his well-orchestrated performance. Despite personal trauma and bodily exhaustion, he was able to rely on his brilliant oratory to rouse hundreds of people in numerous towns and cities across Britain. Together with his successful exploitation of performance techniques such as anglophilia and dissonant language, he made an extraordinary impact on the British cultural landscape. Placing strong emphasis on his relationship with print culture, he crafted his performances using distinct assimilationist

[129] Mary Brady to Maria Weston Chapman, 30 December 1846. Boston Public Library, MS.A.9.2.22, 139.
[130] *The Leeds Times*. 26 December 1846, 7.
[131] Philip Foner, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass: Early Years 1817-1849* (New York: International Publishers, 1950), 73-75.
[132] Raymond Gerald Fulkerson, "Frederick Douglass and the Anti-Slavery Crusade: His Career and Speeches 1817-1861," PhD Diss., (Urbana Champaign: University of Illinois, 1971), 138-139.

and dissonant strategies to ensure extensive coverage in the press. By lambasting newspapers unfavorable to his cause and creating controversies such as the Free Church of Scotland, he sustained antislavery momentum and manipulated the growing furor amongst ordinary citizens of Scotland. He was able to create a distinct relationship between himself and the audience, which often left them (and notably newspaper correspondents) spellbound. In the next chapter, I will discuss in more detail Douglass' relationship between print culture and abolitionist networks: following in Garrison's footsteps, he befriended newspaper editors and courted favourable opinions from the press to ensure a wider coverage of his lectures. He also used the railway to visit as many towns as possible, and during the last few months of his journey spoke nearly every night to crowded audiences. His brilliant understanding of print culture can be seen in the second *Cambria* controversy of 1847, in which he used his last moments on British soil to court celebrity and support for the antislavery cause.

Chapter 3: "[They Have] Not Ceased to Hold My Hand Since:" Frederick Douglass' Exploitation of Print Culture and Abolitionist Networks

Frederick Douglass' transatlantic sojourn in Britain enhanced his fame, perfected his oratorical skills and led to a substantial communicative network that reached numerous towns and cities across the nation. He arrived in 1845 as an unknown fugitive slave, and returned to America with support and praise from British newspapers that verged on hyperbole. For example, in typically grandiloquent fashion, *The Bristol Mercury* declared in 1847 that Douglass left Britain a "General" and the subsequent battle for slavery would be "a battle of the press." British support and contributions had provided Douglass with money to buy a printing press, and the *Mercury* saw this as a "magnificent piece of artillery" and the "shot…will be cast, and served out to his troops, all of them black soldiers enlisted in the cause of emancipation." That newspaper,

> …will be fired upon the enemy at stated intervals and rockets and shells carrying most destructive syllables will from time to time be scattered among the foe. General Douglass will have at his disposal a far more potent combustible than the celebrated Greek fire – namely, printer's ink…It is not for us to prophecy the duration of the contest; we can only express our hopeful assurance that with such weapons General Douglass must ultimately be

> victorious. From his demeanour in this country we are sure that he will carry on the printer's war (the only war in which the devil does good service) with as much forbearance as skill.[1]

Purchasing a printing press with British donations was a savvy and important career move for Douglass, but it also serves as an excellent symbol of his successful courtship of print culture and abolitionist networks in Britain. More than any other African American, perhaps only rivalled by Ida B. Wells in the 1890s, Douglass befriended newspaper editors, wrote letters to the British press, and exchanged press cuttings on a transatlantic scale which created an impressive and ever-expanding network. This led to more lectures and firm friendships, and through the latter, places to stay and more support for the cause. In this *Mercury* article, the press was seen as a weapon against the slaveholding forces of America and Douglass was the chief, the General, leading all black Americans in the fight against slavery. The loaded "missiles" (articles) would be launched at "stated intervals," indicating the importance not only of newspapers in general but also the time in which such articles were published, perhaps to relate or respond to certain events. Language and words were "destructive" and had the power to shame and destroy pro-slavery forces: while fire burned and died out, the "printer's ink" would remain shining as an abolitionist light in the darkness of slavery. By using such weapons, and with Douglass in charge, the death of slavery would be inevitable. He had evidently

[1] *Bristol Mercury*. 15 May 1847, 2.

begun a "printer's war" in Britain, one that he would move to a different front in America.[2]

Leading on from the previous chapter which focused on Douglass' successful exploitation of adaptive resistance in relation to performance, this chapter will focus on print culture and abolitionist networks. He was a savvy activist who placed great emphasis on forming extensive relationships with the mechanics of print culture, whether this was befriending newspaper editors or physically writing to publications. In making this his central theme, he created a persona of dizzying proportions that was rarely (if ever) challenged by any other visiting black lecturer. Douglass also relied on extensive networks to win support on the British stage. As Caleb McDaniel points out, the "Garrisonians' transatlantic networks were facilitated in part by revolutions in transportation and communication technologies that seemed to be annihilating time and space." These networks were "communities of discourse" and were active in supporting antislavery on both sides of the Atlantic.[3] Their "transatlantic networks served as conduits of information, tactical knowledge, and material or moral support" and "imagined their travels and transatlantic friendships as the surest proofs of their cosmopolitanism."[4] Antislavery activists maintained that the reduced journey times via steamship between both countries and the railway enhanced communication. Transatlantic relationships were strengthened by stronger connections between Britain and

[2] Regardless of its bombastic metaphors, the location of the newspaper is very significant. The Estlin family were based in Bristol and were staunch supporters of Garrison and his abolitionists. As a prominent local citizen who had friends in upper class circles, John B. Estlin probably used his contacts with the newspaper to publish such an article.
[3] Caleb McDaniel, "Our Country is the World: Radical American Abolitionists Abroad," PhD Diss., (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2006), 4-5.
[4] McDaniel, "Our Country is the World," (2006), 106-7.

America, as correspondence and the exchange of reports and newspapers hastened under the developing industrial age. Activists on both sides of the Atlantic sought to capitalize on abolitionist momentum. Douglass argued that what he said in a meeting in one city could be heard in America less than two weeks afterward. To use McDaniel's phrase, abolitionists "were purposely sketching a moral map of the Atlantic world" where those who supported antislavery could stand on one side versus the slaveholder on the other.[5]

In this chapter, I will argue that Douglass was part of an extensive Garrisonian support system which was constantly networking and creating new connections he could exploit. Abolitionist Catherine Paton summarized the fluidity of this network in 1846, stating that despite British and American abolitionists residing in two countries, "we think and speak and act as if there was no distance between us."[6] This network ensured a successful tour and also led to a transatlantic conversation about slavery through the constant circulation of letters and newspapers. The flurry of activity between Douglass, the abolitionists and hundreds of newspapers in Britain represented the pinnacle of such a relationship, and how successfully Douglass managed to exploit adaptive resistance. The constant intellectual and physical exchange was a transatlantic hub, gaining strength, size, and enhancing a united feeling of comradeship and solidarity.

[5] Caleb McDaniel, "Saltwater anti-slavery: American Abolitionists on the Atlantic Ocean in the Age of Steam," *Atlantic Studies: Global Currents* 8:2, (2011), 143.
[6] Catherine Paton to Maria Weston Chapman, 17 November 1846. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 18 May 2015, www.archive.org (identifier: lettertodearmuch00pato2).

The Victorian press were fascinated with Douglass and wrote millions of words describing his commanding stage presence as well as the content of his lectures. Many British newspapers were amazed at the idea that Douglass – as a black man and formerly enslaved individual – was such a powerful orator. Their lavish descriptions of him offer a small window into Victorian racial dynamics but also highlight why in part his performances were so lionized. While this was outside of Douglass' immediate control, he did stoke the fascination by interacting with his audiences and highlighting his fugitive slave status. Douglass knew the value of the press in particular, and frequently stated how he wanted the "press of England [to] blaze with anti-slavery indignation" to "call upon the Americans to abolish slavery [and] tear down their star-spangled banner and bind the wounds of their slaves up with it."[7] British newspapers had already shown interest in formerly enslaved individuals before, but their descriptions of Moses Roper did not evoke the same obsession or divine language. Roper was a good speaker but failed to rouse audience interest in the same manner as Douglass. Roper refused to compromise in his performances, and did not have the supportive networks Douglass had when he was maligned in the press.

This chapter will begin with an analysis of Douglass' connections to influential Britons, and the ways in which Garrisonian abolitionists exploited connections to merchants, newspaper men and printers. It will then explore Douglass' relationship with print culture, and analyze transatlantic newspaper articles relating to his persona and his British sojourn. Racialized descriptions

[7] Frederick Douglass, September 1846, in John Blassingame ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series One – Speeches, Debates, and Interviews, Vol. 1 1841-1846* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 371-381.

of Douglass in the press focused on the corporeal, however much he tried to challenge them in his speeches. The next section, meanwhile, will focus on his struggles with the Garrisonian network, which often betrayed a white paternalist ethos that challenged his independence. He was frequently forced to defend his actions, which foreshadowed his split from the Garrisonian party a few years later. Ever the subversive architect, Douglass emerged from his British trip an independent antislavery activist in his own right. The last section focuses on the *Cambria* controversy, which highlights Douglass' savvy command of print culture to ensure his departure from Britain was a memorable one.

"Electric Speed:" Mapping Frederick Douglass' Journey

Recording and visualizing Douglass' journey around Britain not only highlights his exhausting lecturing schedule, but also the extensive abolitionist network he helped to forge. He travelled to Britain at a time of great industrial change and thus he was able to tap into new transport links slowly emerging in Britain. He garnered much support in the press and from prominent individuals, who in turn, had friends and connections with newspapers. By the time of Douglass' arrival in 1845, the Garrisonian network was concentrated in certain locations. Jane Wigham led an abolitionist society in Edinburgh; Richard D. Webb held the city of Dublin; John Murray and William Smeal formed a stalwart Garrisonian society in Glasgow, and the Estlin family in

Bristol influenced much of western England.[8] The following map showing Douglass' tour is very revealing.[9]



Douglass spoke in numerous locations from large industrial towns to small fishing villages on the coast. He wrote on his return to America he had "made use of all the various means of conveyance, by land and sea, from town to town, and city to city" and travelled the length and breadth of the country.[10] He had "journeyed upon highways, byways, railways, and steamboats" and

[8] Peter Ripley ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The British Isles 1830-1865 Vol.1* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 6-18.
[9] Map of Frederick Douglass' speaking locations, author's website. See appendix, and the website address www.frederickdouglassinbritain.com
[10] Frederick Douglass to William Lloyd Garrison, 21 April 1847, in John R. McKivigan ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series Three, Correspondence Vol.1 1842-1852* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 202-203.

stated, "I have myself gone, I might say, with almost electric speed."[11] The rapidity of the railway boom was unprecedented and transformed British society: journeys were faster, time was standardized, ship-building increased, trade was made easier and quicker between towns and the countryside. Recognising this, Douglass argued in Leeds in 1846, that "what is uttered this day in the Music Hall of Leeds, will, within fourteen days resound in Massachusetts."[12] The growing connections between both countries would help to ensure the death of slavery, a statement he elaborated on a few years later in his famous 1852 speech "What to the Slave is the 4th July?" He reiterated that "oceans no longer divide, but link nations together…space is comparatively annihilated – Thoughts expressed on one side of the Atlantic are distinctly heard on the other."[13]

Shortly before his Leeds speech, anticipation for Douglass' speech in Newcastle was so high that a special train was scheduled to leave at quarter past ten to allow people from Sunderland and Shields to attend the lecture.[14] His connections to the stalwart abolitionist Richardson family in Newcastle indicate why he spoke there several times, and perhaps explain this railway connection, as it is very likely they had some influence in arranging the extra train. Regardless, the concept of travelling to a meeting outside an immediate location was novel. It highlights the growing importance of the railway to local towns and how it allowed for greater communication and a chance for

[11] Frederick Douglass, 30 March 1847, in John Blassingame ed., *Frederick Douglass Papers: Series One, Speeches, Debates and Interviews, Vol.2 1847-54* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 19-52.
[12] Frederick Douglass, 23 December 1846, in Blassingame, *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series One, Vol 1* (1979), 174.
[13] Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the 4th of July?" 5 July 1852. Viewed online 8 August 2017 at the University of Rochester Frederick Douglass Project, http://rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/2945
[14] *Newcastle Guardian*. 12 December 1846, 4.

people to physically travel to see a famous figure. British abolitionists combined the importance of travel, advertising and modern technology to advertise Douglass and make him a tourist attraction. Douglass himself recognized the importance of the railway network as a whole for his lecturing tour, and in a meeting in Carlisle in August 1846 stated Britons could exploit new technologies to influence "public opinion, [which was] rapidly conveyed through the medium of steam and the press, to alarm the consciences of the slaveholders."[15]

Organizing a lecturing tour was an impressive enterprise that had to be carefully planned. Abolitionists would often arrange to meet Douglass at a train station or hotel, and he was introduced to local activists or friends of the movement. They would orientate him around a city and sometimes lead or chair antislavery meetings.[16] Before his arrival in Liverpool for example, Richard D. Webb recommended Douglass stay at Browns Hotel in the city's heart, and mention Webb's name (presumably to guarantee his respectability). After meeting with a Webb family member in the city, Douglass should proceed to catch the steamship to Dublin from the docks, at whichever fare was cheapest.[17] Similarly, when he arrived in Belfast in early December 1845, he was met at the train station by a friend to the antislavery cause, who brought him to the Victoria Hotel where he was staying. The hotel was used as a meeting place for other abolitionist supporters, who, according to Douglass,

[15] *Carlisle Journal*. 22 August 1846, 4.
[16] *The Freeman's Journal*. 13 September 1845, 4. When Douglass visited Bristol, John B. Estlin met him at the train station and brought him back to his house for a dinner with friends of the antislavery cause. Estlin to Samuel May, 1 September 1846. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 18 May 2015, www.archive.org, (identifier: lettertomydearsi00estl_1).
[17] Richard D. Webb to Maria W. Chapman, 1845. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 18 May 2015, http://archive.org/details/incompleteletter00webb3

were "doing what they can to make my meeting successful."[18] In Wexford, Webb organized for Douglass to stay with his cousin's family and coordinated two lectures in a local venue for him in early October. Webb then arranged for him to stay with the Jennings family in Cork who advertised Douglass' lectures and invited influential people to attend.[19]

These connections were initiated by Garrisonian abolitionists as well as Douglass himself. Occasionally, prominent individuals reached out to the abolitionists too, as many social and political reformers shared a common cause. During one meeting in Newcastle, the chairman Jonathan Priestman welcomed Douglass to the meeting and proceeded to explain his own interest in abolition:

> His abhorrence of slavery arose, first, from the circumstance of his parents entertaining an African slave named Gustavus Vasa, who was travelling through the country, endeavouring to instruct, in the truths of religion, the people who had so shamefully treated him.

Priestman stated that Vassa's history "made such an impression on his mind, that he had never forgotten it, and he hoped he never would." His statement illustrates the importance of such networks and how Vassa – or Olaudah Equiano – courted influential supporters decades before Douglass. He had a

[18] Frederick Douglass to Richard D. Webb, 5 December 1845. Boston Public Library, MS.A.1.2V.15, 85.
[19] Tom Chaffin, *Giant's Causeway: Frederick Douglass's Irish Odyssey and the Making of an American Visionary* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014), 71-72.

direct influence on Priestman who organized further antislavery networks as a result. Despite the difficulties of transportation and communication in the late eighteenth century, Equiano laid the foundations for hundreds of black activists who now had the advantage to exploit growing technology to reach as many people as possible.[20] This is further evidence to suggest that if adaptive resistance was employed earlier, it would have resulted in moderate success or widespread fame because the triptych would have been a diptych instead. The technological advancements in regard to "steam and the press" were not in place for activists to exploit and it was far more difficult in earlier decades to gain a wider hearing.

Throughout Douglass' sojourn, abolitionists prepared for his visit and stoked interest in his *Narrative* and American slavery in general. For a short time, Webb printed and bound Douglass' *Narrative*, and in September 1845 published two thousand copies: these were distributed across the Garrisonian network and John B. Estlin in Bristol recommended they should be sold at antislavery meetings together with a collection at the door for "private expenses or for the cause."[21] Before Douglass' first meeting in Bristol, the Estlin family sold over one hundred and fifty copies of his *Narrative* to "ensure him a welcome and a numerous audience," and John's daughter Mary expressed her enthusiasm at the prospect of Douglass staying in their household. The second half of his visit would take place with Quakers, her father decided, "who will introduce him to a different circle from our own."

[20] *The Newcastle Guardian*. 2 January 1847, 6.
[21] John Estlin, to Richard D. Webb? 5 November 1845, in Clare Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists: An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974), 240-242.

The Estlin family had also sent his *Narrative* "and written letters about him to friends in other towns" who looked forward to a future visit.[22] John Estlin also distributed over three thousand handbills to advertise one of Douglass' meetings to maximize interest in the antislavery cause and encourage a large attendance at meetings.[23]

Similarly, abolitionists read extracts of Douglass' *Narrative* to public meetings to entice further interest. In Rochdale, William Logan implored Garrison and Douglass to hold a meeting in his town as he had organized several meetings "on the subject of 'American man-stealing'…[as] the subject is almost new to the people." Before Douglass' arrival, he read extracts from Douglass' *Narrative* to antislavery meetings which "produced a powerful impression on the audience."[24] Logan whet the appetite of Rochdale citizens by introducing Douglass through literary work, and seeing Douglass in person would have created a sense of celebrity and awe. This circulation of print culture had a formidable impact, as Douglass himself acknowledged in a speech in Cork: a local minister had read his *Narrative*, he noted, and thus was "the cause of his preaching last Sabbath an antislavery discourse."[25] British abolitionists recognized this exchange of narratives – together with transatlantic poetry, letters and newspaper articles – as "one of the best ways to help the cause."[26]

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[22] Mary Anne Estlin to Maria W. Chapman, 1 March 1846. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 18 May 2015, www.archive.org, (identifier: lettertomydearmr00estl4).
[23] *Belfast Newsletter*. 16 June 1846, 2; *The Northern Warder*. 29 October 1846, 6; John B. Estlin to Samuel May, 1 September 1846. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 18 May 2015, www.archive.org (identifier: lettertomydearsi00estl_1).
[24] William Logan to William Lloyd Garrison, 28 September 1846. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 18 May 2015, www.archive.org, (identifier: lettertodearfrie00loga_0).
[25] *Supplement to the Cork Examiner*. 7 November 1845, 1.
[26] Mary Estlin to Maria W. Chapman, 1853. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 18 May 2015, http://archive.org/details/lettertodearestm00estl5

As well as abolitionists reaching out to him, Douglass himself would also court these relationships, and suggest dates for visits. He was in contact with prominent British abolitionists like Glasgow-based William Smeal, and in March 1847 he wanted to rearrange a meeting in Darlington with Garrison's good friend Elizabeth Pease after his first lecture was not as successful as he had hoped.[27] Despite representing Garrison's party, Douglass worked with the Sturge family (British and Foreign Antislavery Society supporters), the renowned writer William Howitt, and several prominent Chartists including Henry Vincent, who lectured with him in August 1846 in London at the founding meeting of the Antislavery League.[28]

Despite the brief life of the League, Garrison also worked hard to create and sustain connections that would benefit Douglass and the antislavery cause. When he arrived in Britain in 1846, he organized meetings with influential individuals, particularly those involved with some form of print culture like editors, journalists and printers who could have a significant impact on public opinion. As he stated in a letter to Edmund Quincy, it was his mission "as far as practicable, to become personally acquainted with those who have the control of the press in this country, or who, by their literary efforts, are molding the public sentiment, in order to secure their co-operation with us."[29] He befriended the editor of the *Daily News*, and the editor of

[27] Frederick Douglass to Richard D. Webb, 5 December 1845. Boston Public Library, MS.A.1.2V.15, 85; Frederick Douglass to Elizabeth Pease, 3 March 1847. Boston Public Library MS.A.1.2V.17, 19; Frederick Douglass to Elizabeth Pease, 11 March 1847. Boston Public Library, MS.A.1.2.V17. 21.
[28] *The Northern Star*. 22 August 1846, 3.
[29] William Lloyd Garrison to Edmund Quincy, 14 August 1846, in Walter M. Merrill ed., *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison: Vol.3: No Union with Slaveholders 1841-1849* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 369-373.

Punch magazine, Douglas Jerrold, who reprinted articles from Garrison's *The Liberator*.[30] The editor of the *Daily News* in particular was a useful ally who would "inform the public mind, from time to time, through his columns, of the workings of slavery in America." Garrison tasked Richard D. Webb with cutting articles from *The Liberator* to send to the newspaper "as far as the editor may find room and inclination for their insertion."[31]

Following in Garrison's footsteps, Douglass courted the support of newspapers and their editors as soon as he had arrived on British soil. During his first month in Ireland, Douglass and fellow abolitionist James Buffum dined with the Lord Mayor, who chaired an antislavery meeting in late September 1845. James Haughton, a noted abolitionist, Dublin-resident and friend to both Garrison and the Mayor, was crucial to arranging the support Douglass received in that city.[32] Douglass himself was surprised at his early fame in Ireland, and wrote the "success here is even greater than I had anticipated." By mid-September, four antislavery meetings had already been held in Dublin, and a fifth was scheduled for the Music Hall, capable of seating three thousand people. Douglass estimated the fee to book such a hall was around $50, "but its generous proprietor, Mr. Classon, has kindly agreed to let me have it free of charge."[33] A couple of months later in Cork, Douglass befriended the Mayor of that city who chaired some of Douglass' antislavery meetings, and in one lecture the Mayor thanked the local press:

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[30] Walter M. Merrill, *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison: Vol.3: No Union with Slaveholders 1841-1849* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 326-328.
[31] William Lloyd Garrison to Edmund Quincy, 14 August 1846, in Walter M. Merrill ed., *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison: Vol.3: No Union with Slaveholders 1841-1849* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 369-373.
[32] *The Freeman's Journal*. 3 October 1845, 4.
[33] Frederick Douglass, 16 September 1845, in "Letters to Antislavery Workers and Agencies, [Part 1]," *The Journal of Negro History* 10:4, (October 1925), 658-661.

> We know it is a mighty engine; and when we find it engaged on the side of humanity, we are glad to give it our full testimony of thanks – their giving us a *corner* at all might well be considered a compliment, instead of this they have given us *columns.* The Anti-Slavery Societies of Cork are deeply indebted to the *Examiner* and *Reporter* papers in giving publicity to the Anti-Slavery efforts.[34]

At this early stage in Douglass' sojourn, the press in Dublin and in Cork were essential in publicizing his speeches. The response was much larger than Douglass ever anticipated, and instead of mere paragraphs had provided himself and the antislavery cause with "columns." The Mayor – like Douglass – understood that by singling out certain publications they would continue to write favourable coverage of his lectures and potentially advertise his Narrative. His travelling companion James Buffum understood this all too well, and while Douglass was in Ireland he travelled to Manchester to lay the groundwork for future meetings. He orchestrated a meeting with the *Manchester Guardian*'s editor one evening in October 1845, where they "had considerable conversation on slavery, and spoke of Frederick Douglass." The editor promised Buffum he would give Douglass "a good notice when he comes to this place" and requested a copy of his *Narrative* which "he will also notice" in his paper.[35] At this early stage of

[34] *Supplement to Cork Examiner*. 7 November 1845, 1.
[35] James Buffum to Richard D. Webb? 28 October 1845. Boston Public Library, MS.A.1.2.V.15, 74.

Douglass' tour, press coverage and connections to editors were essential in spreading interest and bestowing respectability on the cause.

Douglass continued to acknowledge his debt to the press in his speeches. As we saw briefly in the previous chapter, he singled out certain publications and in March 1846, he thanked the *Dundee Courier*'s editor specifically as the paper never ceased to cover his lectures in extensive detail. Pitting the *Courier* versus another Scottish newspaper, *The Northern Warder,* (who maintained strong links to the Free Church) Douglass declared:

> The *Courier* will be read on the other side of the Atlantic with the warmest emotions of gratitude by the Abolitionists; and while the *Warder* may congratulate itself on the support it gains to the Free Church from human fleshmongers, a more satisfactory compensation will be afforded to my excellent friend the Editor of the *Courier* by the warmest gratitude of three millions of bondmen…I say to the Editor of the *Dundee Courier,* he need never expect any compliment from the Slaveholding States of America."[36]

Using hyperbole and a form of antislavery patriotism, Douglass lambasted *The Warder* for taking the side of slaveholders and praised the *Courier* for defending the abolitionists. A supporter of Douglass' campaign against the

[36] *Dundee Courier*. 17 March 1846, 2.

Free Church from the beginning, the *Courier*'s editor was an antislavery sympathizer and believed the "Send Back the Money" agitation was justified. Douglass exaggerated this minor debate to symbolize the different sides over slavery. *The Warder* was supported by slaveholders and their defenders and appeared to bolster slavery itself, while the *Courier* represented the most ardent abolitionist, pursuing the course of righteousness and truth. Douglass acted as a grateful representative to the *Courier* for staying true to genuine Christian principles and denouncing slavery in all its forms. The *Warder*'s print*,* unlike the *Courier*, was stained with the blood of the enslaved.

Douglass' exploitation of adaptive resistance included a masterful campaign of befriending newspaper editors and influential local townspeople. He ensured favourable coverage of his lectures and worked hard to maintain connections across the country. However, descriptions about Douglass were not always positive. Almost all of the lecture coverage in some way focused on the corporeal: his eloquence as a speaker was rarely disconnected from racialized conceptions of him, and this led to his desire to challenge the insulting commodification of his physical self.

"A Negro Hercules:" Douglass, the Press and Victorian Racial Assumptions

Numerous publications across the country published extensive coverage of Douglass' lectures, as well as lavish descriptions of Douglass himself. They rated him as anything from a racial curiosity to a classical hero, some criticizing his strong language, others highlighting his eloquence. Douglass

was sometimes offended by such press descriptions (particularly those that reduced him to a racial caricature) but he constantly challenged these perceptions and made continuous references to the press in his speeches.

The context of Victorian racial dynamics is essential to understanding Douglass' successful exploitation of adaptive resistance and how his celebrity, charisma and status as a fugitive slave combined to stoke audience obsession.[37] During the early nineteenth century, the image of the African centered on a "noble savage," archetype but by the 1830s this had altered to a vision of childlike innocence that was threatened under slavery.[38] Douglas Lorimer argues that this conflicted with later visions of the African subject as a "comic minstrel or a cruel lustful savage," a "happy go lucky singing, dancing simpleton" or a slave as "Christian Uncle Tom" that came after the 1852 publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* Romantic racialism and the growth of minstrel shows allowed white scientists to signal the end of "nigger philanthropy" and a hardened form of scientific racism.[39] The new evolutionary science suggested that it might take hundreds of years for inferior races to develop and improve themselves, and a racial hierarchy was thus based on the amount of time it took for a race to pass from savagery to civilization.[40]

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[37] Historians who have documented African American reactions to Britain include Alan Rice and Martin Crawford, *Liberating Sojourn: Frederick Douglass and Transatlantic Reform* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999); Richard Blackett, *Building An Antislavery Wall* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983); Fionnghuala Sweeney, *Frederick Douglass and the Atlantic World* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007).
[38] Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid Nineteenth Century* (Leicester: Holmes and Meier Publishers Inc., 1978), 24.
[39] *Ibid*, 90-107; 148; 160.
[40] Theodore Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism and the Historical Imagination: Nineteenth-Century Visions of a Greater Britain* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2011), 209-216; 226-228. See also Edward Beasley, *The Victorian Reinvention of Race: New Racisms and the Problem of Grouping in the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 14-16; Peter J. Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an*

The racialized climate of Victorian society meant press descriptions focused on Douglass' intelligence, eloquence and the corporeal self. Jeanne DeLombard argues that reports of Douglass' oratory "powerfully illustrate the extent to which it is the formerly enslaved witness, rather than the southern crimes of slavery, that becomes the object of scrutiny." Despite Douglass' attempts to refocus "the corporeal, his white contemporaries' depictions of him consistently call attention to his body."[41] Robert Fanuzzi concurs, stating that Douglass was "judged according to a set of conventions that valued his body as a visual delight." Numerous newspaper descriptions emphasize Douglass' corporeal self, sometimes describing his physique, face, hair, skin, and even the aura that surrounded him, occasionally at the expense of what he actually said. Audiences relied on their white privilege to train their spectatorial gaze on his body, but Douglass refused to be viewed and treated like an enslaved figure on the abolitionist block. While correspondents described him as a black masculine hero, he used the opportunity to refer to Madison Washington, a man who Douglass fervently admired as a leading example of black heroism and manhood. Douglass also encouraged descriptions of his corporeal self as a heroic example since he represented the very antithesis of minstrelesque stereotypes of black people.[42] White audiences imagined black masculinity in oppositional terms: either men were

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Idea (Revised Edition) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, 1989); Helen Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory: Empire, Development and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge 1870-1950* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011), 218-230; Vanessa Dickerson, *Dark Victorians* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 3-4.

[41] Jeanne DeLombard, "Eye-witness to the Cruelty': Southern Violence and Northern Testimony in Frederick Douglass's 1845 Narrative," *American Literature* 73:2, (2001), 270-271.

[42] Robert Fanuzzi, "The Trouble with Douglass's Body," in Audrey Fisch ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 27-30. See also Celeste-Marie Bernier, "From Fugitive Slave to Fugitive Abolitionist: The Oratory of Frederick Douglass and the Emerging Heroic Slave Tradition," *Atlantic Studies* 3:2, (2006), 201-224.

violent and lustful or passive and unassertive. Nineteenth century gender politics implied attributes such as power and strength were closely associated with the male form, but if black men exercised their strength they would play into stereotypes of black aggressiveness. Black Americans had to negotiate between these binaries and establish another form of masculine identity which did not rely on white fears or patronization.[43] In response to this, and to white abolitionist writings such as Weld's *Testimony* (where black people were presented as voiceless and unnamed victims to southern cruelty) formerly enslaved subjects emphasized not only their humanity but also their manhood by relating stories of violence and courage against whites. While formerly enslaved individuals highlighted violence, they also told stories of fighting back; Douglass retold his battle with Edward Covey and Josiah Henson related the story of his father protecting his mother from rape to illustrate the right of self-defence and the strength of black masculinity.[44]

While Fanuzzi and DeLombard refer specifically to American print culture, explorations of the Victorian press in Britain confirm the same obsession with the corporeal. The most frequent words used to describe Douglass included "eloquent," "manly," and "colossal."[45] British newspapers offered extensive commentary on the lectures of African Americans and in many cases reflect the prevalent racial stereotypes as espoused by racial

[43] James Jasinski, "Constituting Antebellum African American Identity: Resistance, Violence, and Masculinity in Henry Highland Garnet's (1843) "Address to the Slaves,"' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93:1, (2007), 28-30.
[44] Sarah N. Roth, "How a Slave was Made a Man': Negotiating Black Violence and Masculinity in Antebellum Slave Narratives," *Slavery & Abolition* 28:2, (2007), 257-263.
[45] John Blassingame, *Frederick Douglass Papers: Series One Speeches, Debates and Interviews, Vol.1 1841-1846* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), xxviii-xxx.

thinkers such as Thomas Carlyle.[46] There were numerous descriptions of Douglass in particular because a man of his power and talent offered a challenge to such pervasive prejudice. A reporter in *The Bristol Mercury* – and someone likely to have been influenced by the strong antislavery support in that city – described Douglass thus:

> His language is plain and to the purpose. His manner though not deficient in energy is on the whole quiet and subdued, and yet there are occasional tones in his voice – not unlike the low growl of the lion which hint at "something dangerous" and which would seem to indicate that he is a man not to be trampled on with impunity.[47]

The imagery associating Douglass with the "lion" has several connotations that run along white racist lines. A lion is a majestic animal, but in this context provoking this foreign beast may result in a "dangerous" attack and it would be unwise to cage such a being. As his first autobiography and rehearsal of his experiences in his speeches confirmed, his previous owners had tried to do this and failed, for such a powerful man like Douglass would never be "trampled" by slavery for long. Evidently, there was something about Douglass to which men and women were drawn. *The Leeds Times* went still further:

> Those who have seen him, must have felt that there stood before them one of nature's noblemen – there is the negro's woolly

[46] For more on this, see Carlyle, "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question," *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country,* XL, (February 1849), 528-534; 534-537. See also, Marcus Wood, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 356-376; Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).
[47] *Bristol Mercury*. 29 August 1846, 8.

> head, his prominent thick lips, and high cheek bones; but with these stand the broad and ample forehead, bespeaking sense, the eye which in its flashing indicates it is the true inlet of the soul; in short, none can look upon him but to feel that he is a man possessed of all the faculties and powers which make man noble.[48]

The stereotypical "African" features are all present in this extract: the "woolly head," the "thick lips," and "high cheek bones." In a letter to fellow abolitionist Francis Jackson, Douglass wrote "I am hardly black enough for British taste, but by keeping my hair as woolly as possible I make out to pass for at least half a Negro at any rate."[49] Despite Douglass' self-proclaimed fair treatment, he still had to combat this popular stereotype in Britain. Britons did not believe him to possess "African blood" and he sarcastically referred to his hair as this seemed to give him away. Beneath the joke however, lies Douglass' frustration: people expected him to appear as a caricature, rather than himself. The correspondent in the extract however, expected to encounter these features because Douglass was black, but contrary to his expectations, he found something else: a true "noble" man. It is unclear how the Leeds journalist judged this concept of nobility. A noble man traditionally belonged to a rank or possessed a title, and even if Douglass had neither he was clearly a distinguished individual. His eloquence, civility and ability to mix with the upper echelons of society made him noble. The romanticized imagery, and the

[48] *The Leeds Times*. 26 December 1846, 7.
[49] Frederick Douglass to Francis Jackson, 29 January 1846, in Philip Foner ed., *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 25.

idea that one could see into Douglass' soul, is similar to this extract from *The Manchester Examiner:*

> His features indicate decision of character and undaunted firmness of purpose, mingled with a kind and benevolent disposition. He is tall, and of great muscular strength; indeed he might serve as a model for a Negro Hercules. It is quite apparent, however, that he is not of the pure Negro race. In his veins evidently flows the blood of the white man, co-mingled with that of the African.[50]

Douglass – as a noble and civilized man – was a "Negro Hercules," a phrase that conjures up images of strength and his mythical status as a celebrated hero. Since the classical figure was half-god, half-man, the correspondent pointed to Douglass' mixed racial heritage. These articles have much in common in that they regurgitate prominent stereotypes but also highlight this quality of "nobility." Douglass radiated a powerful sense of independence and dignity, a larger than life personality that contributed to his own mythology. However, the description invoked is characterized by paternalism and patronization: Douglass, despite being black and having survived slavery, represented a pinnacle of civilization according to a white racist schema. As Douglas Lorimer argued, Victorians "confused the relationship between physical traits and cultural or learned behaviour" of the races, and viewed black people in context to their status, whether formerly enslaved or not. The

[50] *The Manchester Examiner*. 11 July 1846, 5.

majority of Victorians did not believe in equality between black and white, but certain individuals could improve themselves by working hard and pursuing an education.[51] Similarly, the article foreshadows later debates within scientific racism. The correspondent alludes to the fact Douglass was "not of the pure Negro race," hinting that his eloquence can be explained by the white blood in his veins. As we will see in chapter six, activists such as William Craft and J. Sella Martin challenged these narratives both within and outside abolitionist meetings.

In response to newspaper descriptions focusing on the corporeal, Douglass challenged and exposed this racism in his speeches. In October 1845, the *Cork Examiner* stated: "the hue of his face and hands is rather a yellow brown or bronze, while there is little, if anything, in his features of that peculiar prominence of lower face, thickness of lips, and flatness of nose, which peculiarly characterize the true Negro type."[52] Douglass despised this stereotype, a false impression which he fought against on a daily basis. In response to a similar charge from the Irish newspaper *Constitution,* he objected to the description because it was "the mode of advertising in [America] a slave for sale."[53] Douglass abhorred such language and rejected white racist conceptions of him, and as Celeste-Marie Bernier argues, "resisted white mainstream tendencies towards annihilating black subjectivities by mapping his own history not onto the typical experiences of

[51] Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid Nineteenth Century* (Leicester: Holmes and Meier Publishers Inc., 1978), 14-20.
[52] Frederick Douglass, 15 October 1845, in John Blassingame ed., *Frederick Douglass Papers: Series 1: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews, Vol. 1* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 36. See also Celeste-Marie Bernier, ''Iron Arguments': Spectacle, Rhetoric and the Slave Body in New England and British Antislavery Oratory," *European Journal of American Culture* 26:1, (2007), 57-78.
[53] Frederick Douglass, 27 October 1845, in Blassingame, *Frederick Douglass Papers,* (1979), 59.

anonymous enslaved men and women but onto a neglected black heroic tradition." During this particular speech, Douglass highlighted the heroism of Madison Washington and his mutiny on the *Creole* ship, and placed himself in a line of black male heroes in America. He sought to prove he was anything but a "fine young negro."[54]

The intersection between masculinity and race can clearly be seen in such newspaper descriptions, and only by comparing Douglass to other activists do we see the differences in language. There was something about Douglass that white audiences responded to, as he was unique not only for the sheer amount and volume of articles dedicated to him but also for *how* he was described. His power and presence were something to behold, and there are more lavish descriptions of him than any other fugitive enslaved man or woman. For example, in comparison to Douglass, Moses Roper did not invite such extravagant descriptions. In 1838, Moses Roper appeared before a Sheffield audience and was described thus:

> [He] is a young man of intelligent countenance…and spoke pretty good English but slowly and hesitatingly. He appears however, to be possessed of excellent parts; having a keen perception of what is ridiculous and inconsistent, and strong common sense. His narrative is highly interest[ing] though his manner of relating it is somewhat confused.[55]

[54] Celeste-Marie Bernier, "A 'Typical Negro' or a 'Work of Art'? The 'Inner' via the 'Outer Man' in Frederick Douglass's Manuscripts and Daguerreotypes," *Slavery & Abolition* 33:2, (2012), 293.
[55] *The Sheffield Independent*. 21 April 1838, 3.

Although for a formerly enslaved individual Roper was deemed intelligent (by a white audience), the correspondent clearly created a distinct barrier between whites and the black man on stage. The correspondent was impressed with his diction but remarked that his delivery was slow, perhaps indicating that Roper was not born with natural intelligence. To appear as a genuine formerly enslaved subject, Roper was expected to speak in plantation dialect and ultimately had to conform to the perceptions of his audience, which was one reason why the correspondent remarked on his "confused" retelling of his narrative. Unlike Douglass, Roper does not radiate a noble or heroic character and the descriptions of him seem flat and uninspired, with little desire to extend or challenge the racial type. For example, the descriptions of Roper focus more on his physical appearance or voice – his skin color, his hair, and his diction.

The descriptions of Douglass however are verging on hyperbole – the "lion" or Herculean hero who inspired confidence and oozed power. Similarly, Douglass' celebrity fueled noble and divine descriptions of him. Scottish abolitionist Eliza Wigham argued Douglass had been "raised up by the Divine hand" and his "remarkable powers and attainments and his earnest zeal and Christian rectitude all confirm this belief." This powerful religious iconography illuminates Douglass' charisma on a public stage but also in private: his personality and strength of mission towards ending slavery combined. He was no ordinary man, or ordinary African American and

evidently, his perceived exceptionalism was not confined to intimate conversations or public lectures.[56]

The links between physical appearance and intellect in the press reveal that audiences did not expect an African American to be talented and civilized.[57] Black activists were a symbol of their oppressed brethren but possessed no active agency, rather it was the duty of white abolitionists to assume this agency for them on their behalf. The story of abolition was a white narrative, populated by white politicians and antislavery activists who organized societies for the benefit of black people. For example, Richard D. Webb tapped into the stereotype of black people as dependent and child-like, and applied this to visiting African Americans when he described a proposed visit by Charles Remond in the mid 1840s. Remond "begged too much" and his manner was child-like and immature.[58] It was rare to find an abolitionist in favour of complete equality and although many were keen to help the slave, they maintained a distinct separation.[59] For instance, Sarah Hilditch, an abolitionist in Wrexham, wrote that Frederick Douglass was a "living example of the capabilities of the slave and though we do not expect all to be equally gifted, he proved that they [have been] misrepresented."[60] Similarly, Catherine Clarkson, wife of abolitionist Thomas Clarkson, wrote privately that it was a shame that Douglass was not a "full blood black for I fear [the] pro-slavery

[56] Eliza Wigham to Maria W. Chapman, 1847. Boston Public Library Anti-Slavery Collection, accessed 25 May 2015, http://archive.org (Identifier: lettertomydear47eliz2).
[57] Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians* (1978), 35.
[58] Richard D. Webb to Maria W. Chapman, 1846. Boston Public Library Anti-Slavery Collection, accessed 25 February 2015, http://www.archive.org (Identifier: lettertomydearfr00webb25).
[59] Robert Nowatzki, *Representing African Americans in Transatlantic Abolitionism and Blackface Minstrelsy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2010), 55.
[60] Sarah Hilditch to Maria W. Chapman, 31 October 1846. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 20 March 2013 www.archive.org (Identifier: lettertomydearmr00hild).

people will attribute his pre-eminent abilities to the white blood that is in his veins."[61] In the context of newspaper articles that highlighted his mixed racial heritage, Clarkson tapped into the growing scientific racism that became even more prominent a decade later. Racial scientists would explain any talented or skilled black man or woman as possessing some European blood in their veins. Douglass' mixed heritage fueled abolitionists and the press in equal measure to attribute his eloquence to his white ancestry, and the next section will illustrate his growing frustration with white abolitionist attempts to control his voice and exhibition of his body on stage.

"Their Delight was Extreme to Feel Him:" Douglass' Complex Relationship with Garrisonian Transatlantic Abolitionists

Douglass' exploitation of adaptive resistance was often hindered by the complex relationship he had with abolitionists. He was forced to experience the underlying abolitionist white paternalist ethos, which often threatened his independence. For example, during his first trip to Belfast, Douglass thanked the abolitionists for welcoming him to the city. He described in an antislavery meeting how he was met at the train station and was "taken by the hand" and most tellingly, how the abolitionists had "not ceased to hold my hand since." Synonymous with Douglass' growing celebrity was the abolitionists' desire and failure to control him. Douglass' British tour owed much to the organisation skills of abolitionists, but he resented the frequent eruption of

[61] Catherine Clarkson to Maria W. Chapman, 2 August 1846, in Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists* (1974), 275; James Walvin, *Black and White: The Negro in English Society 1555-1945* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), 159-167; 174.

political squabbling, paternalism, and attempts to control the black body.[62] His tour effectively exposed the racial dimensions within transatlantic reformist networks, as many white abolitionists betrayed a white racist paternalist ethos and sought to control the actions of African Americans based on the idea that these men and women could not make those decisions themselves. Similarly, if African Americans garnered great support and became celebrities, some white abolitionists were concerned they would follow their "base" instincts and choose fame over an industrious, civilized life.

Douglass' snide comment about the paternalism of Irish abolitionists was not the first indication of his frustration in Belfast. As Tom F. Wright points out, "performers frequently felt themselves objectified, and deplored the imperative of incessant sociability involved in constant movement from host to host." After one of his lectures in Edinburgh in 1840, Charles L. Remond had to spend an hour shaking hands with his entire audience.[63] Similarly, in a revealing letter to Richard D. Webb in 1845, Douglass complained that local antislavery friends had put him in a hotel in Belfast "to make me accessible to everyone that wishes to see me." Abolitionists used the press to advertise forthcoming lectures, but also used their contacts to ensure Douglass had a steady stream of visitors and admirers. The abolitionists wanted to orchestrate Douglass' celebrity in a manner which allowed the individual to be physically close to his audience. For the latter, the chance to see a formerly enslaved individual coupled with fascination over the black corporeal self, enhanced his accessibility and made him into a commodity.

[62] *Belfast Newsletter*. 9 January 1846, 1.
[63] Tom F. Wright, *Lecturing the Atlantic: Speech, Print, and an Anglo-American Commons 1830-1870* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 54.

Visitors constantly badgered Douglass and he noted that they believed they had a "special claim on my time." He was unimpressed with listening to their opinions on his speeches as well as the abolitionist meddling. He was wearied of being placed on a pedestal and clearly thought these private meetings were beyond him, which betrays a significant tension on the antislavery circuit between private and public meetings. This increased accessibility was almost a form of advertisement – the chance to meet and speak to Douglass in the flesh was a way of garnering more support for the antislavery cause and for future lectures. Visitors could talk to Douglass and spread the word about his meetings, encouraging others to go. Douglass' body was on display, and he was irritated at the constant flow of people and the lack of control he had over the situation. As much as possible, then, Douglass tried to resist this and frequently fought against abolitionist tactics of making him feel like – or appear to be – a puppet on a string.[64] As an independent and fiery orator, Douglass always objected to white patronization and control. While he understood the mechanics of white transatlantic abolitionism, he was not prepared to sacrifice his self-respect.

On several occasions, Douglass clashed with British Garrisonian abolitionists in particular and was not prepared to relinquish control over his body or his actions. Before Douglass visited Bristol for the first time, local Garrisonian abolitionist Mary Estlin spoke of Douglass' narrative and the interest it had generated; she observed that people were "impatient to see and hear him." They longed for something more than a book and desired to

[64] Frederick Douglass to Richard D. Webb, 6 December 1845. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 25 May 2015 http://archive.org (Identifier: lettertomydearfr00doug_1).

witness his corporeal self.[65] When he did visit Bristol, the Estlin family wasted no time in parading him around important social circles and taking him to visit friends and reformers. One visit included an asylum for the blind, where his narrative had been read to over sixty men, women and children. John Estlin recorded how "their delight was extreme to feel him" and he believed Douglass would not quickly forget the experience.[66] The decision to allow these individuals to *feel* Douglass is incredibly significant, not least because of Douglass' status as a formerly enslaved individual and the uncomfortable comparisons to slavery and the auction block. Douglass would have been touched, prodded and felt by slaveholders ascertaining his strength and worth, and this connection must have been deeply disturbing to Douglass. It also highlights the importance of touch, as the chance to physically connect with a celebrity would have created a distinct connection in the mind of those men, women and children. Without sight, the only way to picture Douglass' face was through touch and this broke down the usual boundary between a celebrity and their audience, in a literal way others may have metaphorically craved.[67] The concept that Douglass was akin to an object, an important piece in the abolitionist network but one that needed restricting, symbolised Douglass' struggle with British Garrisonian abolitionists. He was a witness to the brutality of slavery, and he served as a living example and testament to white abolitionist rhetoric. He was the physical "brother" from Josiah Wedgewood's "Am I Not a Man And A Brother?" medallion and hundreds of

[65] Mary Anne Estlin to Maria W. Chapman, 14 November 1845. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 25 May 2015 http://archive.org (Identifier: lettertomydearmr00estl3).
[66] John Estlin to Samuel May, 1 September 1846. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 25 May 2015.
http://archive.org (Identifier: lettertomydearsi00estl_1).
[67] Mary Anne Estlin to Maria W. Chapman, 1 September 1846. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 25 May 2015 http://archive.org (Identifier: lettertomydearmr00estl5).

people desired not only to witness him in the flesh but to physically feel his body and scars. In response, Douglass challenged such passive stereotypes and ensured his voice was heard on both a public and private stage.

The battle over Douglass' body became tense as his fame in Britain grew and Garrisonian abolitionists were concerned about this emerging celebrity. As Robert Levine notes, the sales of his narrative "allowed him to live abroad without feeling overly indebted to a particular antislavery organization, which further contributed to his ongoing development as an independent thinker, speaker, and antislavery leader." Even Garrison realized that Douglass' fierce independence and rhetoric electrified British audiences: he had become second best and comparably, was not in demand as much as the eloquent fugitive slave. Richard D. Webb stated in one letter that Douglass appeared "majestic – with an air that makes Garrison a mere baby beside him."[68] At times, Douglass was forced to defend himself against insinuations from Richard D. Webb and Maria W. Chapman in Boston that Douglass would forsake the antislavery cause for financial gain. Hazel Waters argues "abolitionism should not be confused with racial egalitarianism," since "paternalist philanthropic attitudes to the suffering black slave could easily coexist with, and help to entrench, a particular stereotype of the black as lower in the racial hierarchy."[69] Nowhere is this more apparent than through Douglass' and Chapman's correspondence. Even before Douglass had reached Britain, Chapman expressed her concerns about Douglass' character. She

[68] Robert S. Levine, *The Lives of Frederick Douglass* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 108-109.
[69] Hazel Waters, *Racism on the Victorian Stage: Representation of Slavery and the Black Character* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 155-156.

believed Douglass should be warned away from doing "anything for himself in the preservation of philanthropic enterprise" and was skeptical of the management of his own fame. Chapman saw Douglass as an untrustworthy child who might wreak havoc or be led astray from the Boston Society's influence. So far, Douglass had taken the right course but he should follow in the footsteps of Garrison and Wendell Phillips, who spurned fame or notoriety in favour of the antislavery cause. Douglass should not "yield to temptation" and sacrifice the cause of abolition, a patronizing comment that implies a formerly enslaved black man would forget about slavery more quickly compared to a white Boston abolitionist.[70] She was worried Douglass' trip abroad would cause him to become too independent (a prediction that would become true). A few months later, Chapman expressed her fears again and declared Douglass should not become "drunk with vanity:" if he used common sense and steered on the right course (i.e., what the Garrisonian abolitionists wanted) then "all will be well."[71] The bitterness between Douglass, Chapman and Webb existed for months, and Douglass had to repeatedly reassure them he remained an "old organized Garrisonian abolitionist."[72] He resented abolitionist meddling, and thought he could control the sale and profit of his narrative by himself. He grew tired of abolitionists watching his every move and Chapman's lack of trust was a "great injustice" to him.[73] Even Isabel

[70] Maria W. Chapman to Richard D. Webb, 29 June 1845. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 25 May 2015 www.archive.org (Identifier: extractsofthreel00chap).
[71] Maria W. Chapman to Richard D. Webb, 23 January 1846, Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 25 May 2015 www.archive.org (Identifier: extractsofthreel00chap).
[72] Frederick Douglass to Richard D. Webb, 29 March 1846. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 25 May 2015 www.archive.org (Identifier: lettertomydearfr00doug_7).
[73] Frederick Douglass to Maria W. Chapman, 29 March 1846. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 25 May 2015 www.archive.org (Identifier: lettertomrsmwcha00doug).

Jennings, a white abolitionist based in Ireland, recognized Douglass' impatience, and remarked, "some dictated to him" too much.[74]

Chapman's fears over Douglass' "vanity" in 1846 were heightened when Douglass decided to speak at a meeting of the rival British and Foreign Antislavery Society (led by Joseph Sturge), which angered a number of Garrisonian abolitionists. In a misjudged attempt to chastise him, Richard D. Webb read Douglass a letter from Chapman, who believed Douglass spoke at the meeting for the money. Douglass refused to apologize for this and stated he lectured there because "good friends" advised him to do so, thereby implying Chapman did not have his best interests at heart. Douglass was deeply offended by the accusation of "money temptations" and declared he would "speak in any meeting where freedom of speech is allowed" and promised to do "anything to expose the bloody system of slavery."[75]

Douglass' first meeting with the British and Foreign Antislavery Society was thinly attended, which was explained to him as a result of "several very important philanthropic meetings in progress at the same hour." Douglass sent "a pretty accurate sketch of its proceedings" from a London newspaper to Garrison, presumably for publication in *The Liberator.* In contrast, the second BFASS meeting was "most effective and satisfactory," but Douglass scolded Garrison when he discovered the latter did not send a

[74] Isabel Jennings to Maria W. Chapman, 2 August 1847. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 25 May 2015 www.archive.org (Identifier: lettertomydearmr00jenn8). Another example of abolitionists 'dictating' to Douglass can be found with John B. Estlin, who decided to edit a passage of Douglass' narrative that he found too violent for women to read: Estlin to Samuel May, January 29-February 1846. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 18 May 2015, www.archive.org, (identifier: lettertomydearmr00estli). For more on this, see R.J.M. Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983) and Alan Rice, *Radical Narratives of the Black Atlantic* (London: Continuum, 2003), 175-185.

[75] Frederick Douglass to Maria W. Chapman, 18 August 1846. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 25 May 2015 www.archive.org (Identifier: lettertomydearmr00doug).

copy of his paper to the BFASS. Knowing full well the societies were sworn enemies, Douglass politely told the BFASS that he believed reports "had been miscarried, or that some accident had befallen them" as he rhetorically stated to Garrison he could think of "no reason for withholding them." Garrison's society should "exchange opinions with every class of abolitionists, whether they be for or against the views held by us."[76] Douglass was impatient with any form of rivalry that threatened the success of the anti-slavery cause, and highlighted the hypocrisy of a society which refused to share information with other groups.

Certain Garrisonian abolitionists were notoriously prickly, and Chapman and Webb were no exception. Douglass' disagreements with Chapman (a woman Webb idolized) did not improve Webb's opinion of Douglass. He thought his "selfishness intense, his affections weak and his unreasonableness quite extravagant when he is in the slightest degree hurt or when he thinks himself hurt." He was "haughty and self-possessed" and Webb took great offence when Douglass was unimpressed with a portrait for the new edition of his narrative, which Webb was printing. In distinctly racist language, Douglass was a "savage" and a "wild animal." Douglass was just like other black men in this view; he was neither eloquent, nor noble and did not know how to behave in society and was deemed socially and racially inferior. His "savage" nature would make him difficult to tame or control, and

[76] Frederick Douglass to William Lloyd Garrison, 23 May 1846, in John R. McKivigan ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series Three, Correspondence Vol.1 1842-1852* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 127-135.

he was naturally uncivilized.[77] The tension with Webb increased throughout 1846, particularly surrounding the publication of Douglass' *Narrative*. Webb had published hundreds of copies but Douglass was displeased with the design, and after trying to negotiate with Webb, chose a Scottish publishing company to print his work instead.[78]

Shortly afterwards, Webb's anger had dissipated somewhat as he remarked that Douglass looked "stately and majestic" on stage, but it did not stop him sneering at the "petting he gets from beautiful, elegant and accomplished women." Webb sarcastically wondered how Douglass would manage when he returned to his wife in America, and he clearly thought Douglass was enjoying all the attention celebrity could bring.[79] John B. Estlin observed this too, and wrote that Douglass would "face a craving void" when he returned home. He also remained skeptical about Douglass' work ethic, and was convinced he would shy away from working too hard since he had become used to "sailing on [the] tide of popularity."[80] Contemporary racial assumptions assumed black men were naturally lazy or sexually aggressive, and Webb and Estlin implied that once Douglass had become famous he would no longer have the desire to work as hard. In their view, if Douglass did not remain industrious, he did not deserve his celebrity.

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[77] Richard D. Webb to Maria W. Chapman, 16 May 1846. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 25 May 2015 www.archive.org (Identifier: lettertomydearfr00webb29).
[78] Richard D. Webb to Maria W. Chapman, October 1846. Boston Public Antislavery Collection, accessed 25 May 2015, http://archive.org/details/lettertomydearfr00webb31
[79] Richard D. Webb to Maria W. Chapman, 31 October 1846. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 25 May 2015 www.archive.org (Identifier: lettertomydearfr00webb31).
[80] John Estlin to Samuel May, 12 January 1847. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 25 May 2015. www.archive.org (Identifier: lettertomydearmr00estl_21).

The purchase of Douglass' freedom also spoke to this complicated relationship with white abolitionist networks. During his trip, Douglass became very close to the Richardson family in Newcastle, who helped raise money to purchase Douglass' freedom from his former master. This decision ruffled Garrisonian abolitionist feathers on both sides of the Atlantic as it was a "compromising of principle" and appeared to give sanction to the idea human beings were property.[81] Douglass completed the purchase for two main reasons, firstly to protect himself and his family. As a fugitive slave and growing celebrity, the legal purchase of his freedom offered him some security. Douglass could not operate by sheer principle alone, and this incident not only highlighted the large gulf between white and black abolitionists, but also how the Garrisonians could not control Douglass in the way they wanted. However, Douglass used this as an opportunity to further illustrate the horrors of American slavery. Unlike the abolitionists, who were offended at the principle, Douglass turned that very principle on its head and used it as propaganda. Turning once again to his savvy exploitation of adaptive resistance (and in this case, print culture), he argued in the press that his friends were robbed of the money to purchase him, reinforcing the idea the peculiar institution was an evil system that affected both black and white.[82]

Reacting against an abolitionist desire to control him through a white paternalist ethos, Douglass fiercely denied his experience would change as he could not so easily forget the trauma of being enslaved, and it was an insult

[81] Catherine Paton to Maria W. Chapman, 17 November 1846. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 25 July 2015 www.archive.org (Identifier: lettertodearmuch00pato2). Mary Welsh, another Garrisonian abolitionist, also objected to the sale: Welsh to Maria W. Chapman, 1846. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 25 May 2015 http://archive.org/details/lettertomydearmr00wels6

[82] *Durham Chronicle*. 5 February 1847, 6.

that he would revoke the abolitionist cause. Douglass used this incident to highlight his freedom from his former master, but also to some extent the network of abolitionists. He did not seek permission from them or require their approval for a decision that affected him and him alone. It demonstrated Douglass' sense of self-mastery in a private context and this deliberate dissent against both slaveholders and white networks highlights Douglass' use of adaptive resistance. He challenged not only the white space within the world of slavery but also within the world of abolition. The purchase of his freedom was first and foremost a decision to protect himself, but it proved to be an act of defiance against abolitionist attempts to restrict and control the black body.

After Douglass separated from the Garrisonian party, he wrote about the difficulties of travelling Britain under the watchful eye of white abolitionist networks. In 1853, when Harriet Beecher Stowe visited Britain after the success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Douglass declared that if she had gone under the auspices of an antislavery society she would have been "consumed in almost useless debate." Instead, she was "untrammelled and free."[83] Douglass' last act on British soil symbolised his transformative experience in Britain and his growing independence from the Garrisonians. His ability to lecture by himself in the last few months of his visit, together with his exploitation of Victorian print culture to engineer a second *Cambria* controversy illustrated he was independent and headstrong, much to the chagrin of the abolitionists.

[83] Mary Estlin, 29 April 1853? in Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists* (1974), 398-399.

"The Foul Spirit of Slavery:" Douglass and the *Cambria*

Between February and March 1847, abolitionists held farewell meetings in numerous cities to thank Douglass for campaigning against American slavery in Britain. His popularity with the public showed no signs of abating. The desire to hear Douglass speak was so great throughout the latter part of his trip, that in the last week of his journey alone in 1847, he was forced to turn down thirty invitations to lecture across the country.[84] In a London meeting in March 1847, Douglass had "awakened a larger amount of attention to the question of slavery" in Britain than any other and he was met with "vociferous cheering." His fame had spread quickly, and at this meeting an abolitionist read a letter from Charles Dickens, apologizing for his non-attendance. Douglass himself announced, "I came a slave, I go back free, I came here despised, I go back with reputation."[85] In Bristol, Douglass spoke for two hours on the successes of his trip and urged the British public to continue their efforts in moral suasion and shame the Americans into ending slavery. He had given at least three hundred lectures in the British Isles by this point and "never had he met with one in whom he could discern the slightest dislike towards him on account of colour."[86]

His steadfast anglophilia was tested when he eventually boarded the Cunard steamship *Cambria* with a first-class ticket. He was refused entry and found that the Cunard Company had given his berth to someone else.

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[84] "Frederick Douglass's Last Appearance in England," *The Inquirer.* 10 April 1847. Massachusetts Historical Society, Bdses-Sm 1847 Apr.10.
[85] *The Newcastle Guardian*. 3 April 1847, 5.
[86] *The Bristol Mercury*. 3 April 1847, 8.

Douglass was outraged and wrote a letter to *The Times* questioning how he managed to travel across Britain without prejudice (an exaggeration), only to face it on his return to the United States.[87] *The Times,* a conservative paper, declared that the incident was "wholly repugnant to our English notions of justice and humanity."[88] *The Times* described Douglass as a "highly respectable man of colour" whose journey in England should have "earned at least some title to be regarded" as a civilized passenger on board the *Cambria.*[89] Douglass was savvy: *The Times* had a daily circulation of 40,000 at this point, and he knew it was regularly quoted by other publications in Britain. Douglass' decision to wound British pride was a skillful method of attracting British attention and signifies his bold exploitation of British racism as well as print culture in general.[90] The incident highlighted a dilemma for Britain: a transatlantic individual had exposed, on a national scale, the difference between how Britain wanted to be seen and the country's reality. Douglass' savviness highlights why adaptive resistance was a *British* based approach, as the narratives of abolition and moral superiority were central to how this incident was viewed by the British public, and why it was created in the first place.

Although several scholars have focused on Douglass' journey on the *Cambria* towards Britain, this more-neglected second transatlantic crossing is equally telling. W. Caleb McDaniel terms the voyages of abolitionists "saltwater anti-slavery" and argues that during the mid-nineteenth century,

[87] *Bradford Observer*. 8 April 1847, 4.
[88] *The Examiner*. 10 April 1847, 3.
[89] *Manchester Times*. 9 April 1847, 2.
[90] Hannah Barker, *Newspapers and English Society 1695-1855* (London: Routledge, 2000), 32-33.

there was a steady stream of American abolitionists visiting the British Isles who used the transatlantic crossing to make a statement about American slavery. The ocean was a "scene of historical action" and as the journey shortened to a mere couple of weeks, the bonds between abolitionists grew stronger. How could American slavery exist, argued abolitionists, when Britain – a nation who had fought hard to remove slavery – was only a few weeks' voyage away. The short journey increased correspondence, and letters, pamphlets and newspapers were sent to and fro in an unprecedented capacity. Douglass and other black abolitionists couched the voyage in terms of a passage from American racism to British freedom. If African Americans experienced racial discrimination or injustice on board, the unusual ideological space between two countries (one with slavery and one without) could often make confrontations tense. McDaniel explains that steamships were "contact zones" of "forced sociability" which often resulted in conflict. Never one to miss an opportunity, Douglass used this experience as a political lens through which to examine the differences between the freedoms he experienced on British shores and the racism he endured in the United States. Incidences such as this gave abolitionists a unique opportunity to challenge passenger opinions on board which constituted a diverse group with regard to class, political views and opinions.[91]

Alasdair Pettinger is one of the few historians to analyze Douglass' return journey in detail.[92] Because the incident against Douglass happened on

[91] W. Caleb McDaniel, "Saltwater Anti-slavery: American Abolitionists on the Atlantic Ocean in the Age of Steam," *Atlantic Studies: Global Currents* 8:2, (2011), 142-146.
[92] See Alasdair Pettinger's website, accessed 19 September 2017, http://www.bulldozia.com/projects/index.php?id=260

British soil, the British press quickly and comfortably denounced it. Racism was a distinctly *American* problem and it should never happen on a journey from a land of freedom, or in the land of freedom itself. The British press recognized that the sea was a difficult geographical place to negotiate in terms of social attitudes, but the customs were clear: Douglass' experience jarred with the image of Britain as a nation of freedom and tolerance. Douglas Lorimer has argued that the press "gives an exaggerated, distorted view of racial attitudes" and that nineteenth-century Englishmen were more racist in reality than they were in either print or in principle. If press coverage was distorted to the degree Lorimer suggests, however, it is still worth studying because it not only highlights how the British wanted to be seen, but how the national myth of antislavery had severe fissures under the surface.[93] Several articles clearly demonstrate this. Under the headline "AMERICAN SLAVERY IN ENGLAND," *The Bradford and Wakefield Observer* reported:

> Here is an attempt to resuscitate the foul spirit of slavery…Here, in the land of equal laws and liberty, is an act of gross injustice perpetuated upon a man, *because he has a black skin!*... But mark – it does not involve more of injustice to Mr Douglass than of insult and cool contempt of the British people. It is an attempt to set up in the second port in the empire the worst spirit of American slavery. This must not be tolerated. In vain shall we attempt to shame the Americans out of their national vice and

[93] Lorimer, (1978), 17-18.

> their national reproach if we suffer the unclean spirit to set up a temple in our own country.[94]

In Douglass' case, an eloquent individual capable of mixing with the aristocracy had been treated abominably in contradiction to Britain's self-professed aggrandizements of freedom. His class, stature, celebrity and savvy decision to call out the Cunard company all played a part in the controversy. As demonstrated in the newspaper article, the repeated use of "spirit" implies that American slavery had the potential to infect the free soil of Britain. Slavery was dead in the British Empire but it had the potential to rise again, ghost-like, if the British public were not roused to defend themselves. This defence could only be mounted through moral suasion however: the British had to "shame" America and force the people to realise, without arms or political pressure, the strength of its wrongs. According to Tavia Nyong'o, British moral superiority in the press involved a narrative that "distanced England and its Anglo-Saxon heritage from any complicity in either slavery or racism, seizing the occasion to tout liberalism's ethic of tolerance."[95] The *Cambria* perfectly encapsulates this narrative, as nowhere did the press acknowledge Britain's own history with slavery or its continued survival within the British Empire.

Conversely, these newspaper articles also referred to racism and slavery as an American phenomenon. *The Nonconformist* mocked the Cunard

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[94] *The Bradford and Wakefield Observer, and Halifax, Huddersfield, and Keighley Reporter*. 8 April 1847, 8.
[95] Tavia Nyong'o, *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance and the Ruses of Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 126-127.

Company with similar force, under a title of "A BRITISH BOW TO AN AMERICAN PREJUDICE:"

> The proprietors have no right to outrage the feelings of Englishmen on board their vessels, by the adoption of the vilest of American prejudices…we owe it to ourselves, we owe it to our coloured brethren and we owe it to our principles, to brand with reprobation, loud and universal, the stooping of British commerce to such unutterable meanness.[96]

Clearly, if this discrimination were allowed to happen, it would make a mockery of everything Britain stood for. The blame must squarely be placed on Americans and anything connected to America - a transatlantic business could not be tainted with America's shame. Furthermore, the legacy of abolition had created a sense of obligation. It was Britain's duty to protect the "coloured brethren," a patronizing theme which echoes the antislavery argument "Am I Not a Man and a Brother?" Although Douglass was an eloquent and civilized individual, the British press saw him as a victim of discrimination: he had appealed for help from British society. British antislavery rhetoric declared Britain had a moral duty to help formerly enslaved individuals and this discrimination could not be allowed to pass. Britain had always prided herself on the history of abolition, and this threatened the very "principles" of society.

[96] *Norfolk News*. 10 April 1847, 3. Originally from *The Nonconformist.*

The newspapers argued that a man such as Douglass, whose "eloquent lectures" had "made his name and history familiar throughout the length and breadth of the land" should not suffer racial discrimination while under the protection of the British flag.[97] The controversy cut to the heart of what it meant to be British. For a patriotic, antislavery nation that prided itself on being a beacon of hope and freedom to the rest of the world, this insult trumped any lingering racism toward Douglass. According to David Turley, Britain was "shaped by an evangelist impulse to Christianise the world" and abolishing slavery was part of this humanitarian tradition.[98] The "discourse of patriotism inevitably became part of the culture of antislavery and underlined both the coherences and contradictions of the movement."[99] Hence, if that global mission was thwarted then it was as though Britain itself was under attack. According to its self-aggrandizing perceptions, Britain itself represented liberty and equality, where slaves would instantly walk free on British soil. Slavery or social injustice was not tolerated, so the patriotic narrative went, and the self-erasure of Britain's role in the slave trade was essential to this xenophobic outrage at Douglass' treatment.

Richard Huzzey argues that although antislavery had "become a hegemonic ideology" and there was a "genuine fascination" with abolition, the number of articles dedicated to antislavery in the British press did not necessarily mean universal support for abolition and cannot be used as a litmus test to gauge the national opinion. Huzzey believes that antislavery

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[97] *The Leeds Times*. 10 April 1847, 4; *Leicestershire Mercury*. 10 April 1847, 1; *Manchester Times*. 10 April 1847, 2; 7; *Norfolk News*. 10 April 1847, 3.
[98] David Turley, *The Culture of English Antislavery 1780-1860* (London: Routledge, 1991); 1-30; 228-229.
[99] *Ibid*, 153-156.

sentiment had seeped into the national consciousness regarding what it meant to be British, evident in how small articles in the press would champion the Royal Navy fighting slavery along the coast of Africa, or denounce American law when black British sailors found themselves in trouble along the southern coast. He notes that it was inconceivable for British politicians to remonstrate with America and so abolitionists were content to irk them through British newspapers and raise as much grassroots support as possible. Yet he also questions whether this antislavery sentiment was at all meaningful. Huzzey does not refer to the press coverage of Douglass' departure, however, wherein the *Cambria* incident suggests far more than a "drifting with the current."[100] Although people might not have purchased a newspaper to specifically read about Douglass, the sheer volume of press coverage and the language used to describe Douglass – a famous, "eloquent" individual – suggests Huzzey has missed the strength of antislavery sentiment.

It was no surprise at least to abolitionists, then, that the Cunard Company's conduct was "noticed with strong and well deserved censure in our leading newspapers."[101] Mary Estlin remarked how letters poured in from all corners of Britain "overflowing with the commotion thus aroused."[102] Correspondence pages in newspapers debated the incident too. For example, a letter signed only as E.H.K to the editors of *The Manchester Examiner* deplored Douglass' treatment and argued "if this instance does not arouse the Christian feeling of this country and set the abolitionists of England to work in

[100] Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 32-34; 204-208.
[101] Lucy Browne to Maria W. Chapman, 1847. Boston Public Library Anti-Slavery Collection, accessed 19 May 2015 http://archive.org/details/lettertomydearmr00brow2
[102] Mary A. Estlin, to Maria W. Chapman, 1847. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 25 May 2015 www.archive.org (Identifier: lettertomydearmr00estl9).

earnest, I know not what will."[103] The controversy reached such a height that the Cunard Company were forced to respond. Charles McIver, the Liverpool agent, replied to Douglass publicly through the press. He denied the charge of racism and declared the main reason why he had been refused his berth was due to the trouble Douglass caused on his journey to Britain nearly two years before. His presence and subsequent lectures had led to such a "serious disturbance on board" that the Captain was forced to intervene, and McIver did not want a repeat, regardless of how famous Douglass had become.[104] The letter reads as though Douglass was simply a troublesome celebrity, who had only incidentally played on his status as a formerly enslaved individual to win support. Reading between the lines though, McIver surely recalled how Douglass' lecture on the *Cambria* in 1845 irked several American slaveholders, in other words, paying customers. In McIver's eyes, it was a prudent business decision to separate Douglass just in case he threatened future patrons. Although McIver claimed he would have made the same decision even if Douglass were white, he denied him a ticket because he was concerned Douglass' race would offend others.

Not long after this, a letter appeared from one Charles Burrop, a Cunard Company representative from Virginia. He defended the actions of McIver and accepted no blame for the persistent racial prejudices of his customers, adding that as a business, Cunard was only doing what was best for the majority. Cunard were at risk of losing money, said Burrop, and so this policy would only change when racism ended. Again, newspapers widely

[103] *The Manchester Examiner*. 10 April 1847, 7.
[104] *Carlisle Patriot*. 16 April 1847, 3.

printed this correspondence but the plot thickened yet further, as a letter signed by Mr. Cunard himself appeared very quickly denying the existence of an individual named Charles Burrop. Significantly, Cunard promised that such discrimination would no longer have a place on his ships.[105] For a formerly enslaved African American to receive a public apology from a transatlantic businessman, and for his story of discrimination to be discussed in the press for weeks and even months afterwards, suggests how strong an impact Douglass had made on British society.

The *Cambria* incident and its coverage in the press reveals how successfully Douglass had played to the British press and crafted his self-image in the British mind. Douglass knew that the British valued their role in abolition and he stoked their sense of patriotism in every single lecture or letter he wrote. He successfully tapped into the British worldview and forced them to confront their attitude to slavery, seemingly on their terms but only to contest dominant parameters. The strong network between American and British abolitionists helped propel him into the spotlight – especially if the editors of certain newspapers were antislavery supporters. Douglass exploited these newspapers to shame the British public into a response. The *Cambria* incident also highlights the prolificacy of abolitionist correspondence. Antislavery activists in both Britain and America helped to drive the campaign by constantly writing letters and exchanging newspaper clippings.

Upon his return to America, Douglass received more invitations to

[105] *Hampshire Telegraph*. 17 April 1847, 7.

speak than he could fulfil, but assured his supporters he would "not be silent." He promised he was "strongly determined to devote myself to *printing,* as well as *speaking* for my race."[106] Douglass refers here to his desire to establish a newspaper, and believed writing and speaking for the cause was an intertwined relationship that would further abolition. While he had always recognized the importance of this combination, his British trip allowed him to explore and adapt this relationship to great heights.

Taken together, both this and the preceding chapter allow us to see the sources of Douglass' successful exploitation of adaptive resistance. Relying on print culture as the connecting and central force that fed his performances and antislavery networks, Douglass spoke to thousands of people and reached thousands more through city and provincial newspapers across the country. Whether he exploited connections to newspaper editors, befriended influential people to ensure positive coverage of his lectures, or wrote to newspapers highlighting racial injustice, Douglass was savvy at courting and creating a popular personality within transatlantic print culture. While he captivated numerous audiences by his eloquent performances (simultaneously relying on a balance of assimilation and dissonance in his lectures), his networking behind the scenes ensured him a hearing in cities, towns and small villages across the country. Ever aware of his status as a formerly enslaved individual and celebrated persona (both mutually reinforcing), he used a powerful combination of networks, print culture and performance *at the same time* to ensure popularity and success on the British stage. Douglass received

[106] *Dundee Courier*. 25 May 1847, 1.

extensive press coverage within a relatively short amount of time, and British newspapers continued to report on his activities in America.[107] As Alan Rice and Martin Crawford argue, Douglass was a "triumphant exile" and he reversed "the Atlantic crossing from a historically enslaving experience into a literally liberating one." Douglass' visit was a "mirror" of the slave trade: he travelled to Britain "as a raw material" but would leave "the finished independent man cut from a whole cloth and able to make his own decisions."[108]

Douglass' tour was impressive for numerous reasons, but not least because his fame and his ability to create national controversies was virtually unprecedented. In a time before Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had burst onto the British landscape, Douglass tapped into long-established debates in Britain of fellowship with slaveholding churches, and skillfully exploited British moral superiority and smug paternalism. His fiery oratory was remembered and cherished in many areas of Britain, and when he returned in 1859-1860 several newspapers waxed lyrical about his legendary oratory. The next chapter will focus on black exploitation of adaptive resistance in the age of Stowe's novel, and how activists incorporated it into assimilationist strategies to win support on the British stage. The 1850s witnessed a golden age of black activism in Britain, but paradoxically, Douglass' second visit in 1859 was not as successful as his first. His exploitation of adaptive resistance over a decade later was weakened by his

[107] David B. Cheesbrough, *Frederick Douglass: Oratory From Slavery* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998), 29-33.
[108] Alan J. Rice and Martin Crawford, "Triumphant Exile: Frederick Douglass in Britain 1845-1847," in Rice and Crawford, *Liberating Sojourn: Frederick Douglass and Transatlantic Reform* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999), 2-4.

comparative lack of abolitionist networks, which further reduced his ability to exploit favourable press coverage.

Chapter 4: To "Frighten the Hyena Out of His Ferocity:" Black Activism in Britain 1850-1860

In 1855, Moses Roper returned to British soil to lecture against slavery. While this tour was not as extensive as previous visits, he nevertheless stayed true to the views he espoused in the early 1840s, arguing in dissonant language that slavery was an abhorrent evil. He also wanted to remind British audiences that despite the rise in popular abolition he had been a lone voice speaking the truth about slavery years before:

> When he lectured on his previous visit to England, there were many people who did not believe the statements he then made, with regard to the cruelties inflicted upon slaves, and the oppressions they were compelled to submit to; but since that time "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and a thousand other witnesses had added their testimony to the truth of his assertions.[1]

Alluding to the vitriolic criticism he received in the British press, Roper argued that although Stowe's novel, together with the transatlantic journeys of other black activists, had finally opened the public's eyes he was among the first to depict the violence of slavery. Now British audiences had awakened to its evils, and he implied the testimony from "other witnesses" added weight to

[1] *Hereford Times*. 4 August 1855, 9.

what he had always maintained. With an air of vindication, he reminded Britons of his testimony before abolition became fashionable. Most activists in the 1850s – including Roper – invoked Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a context for their experiences. In typically dissonant style, Roper did not present the novel as the pinnacle of evidence against slavery, rather, his own black testimony would do that instead.

Richard Blackett notes that "more black leaders visited the UK in 1848-1854 than any other period." For example, Alexander Crummell came to earn a degree and raise money for a black church; James Pennington challenged the Colonization Society; William Wells Brown arrived as a Peace Delegate for Paris in 1849 but conducted an extensive lecturing tour until the mid 1850s; Josiah Henson campaigned for donations for his settlement in Dawn, Canada; Reverend Samuel Ward raised money for the Canadian Antislavery Society; William and Ellen Craft sought refuge from the Fugitive Slave Act, and Henry Highland Garnet rallied support for the Free Produce Movement.[2]

Black abolitionist employment of adaptive resistance in the 1850s was influenced by two major events. The first was the Fugitive Slave Act's passage in 1850. Bitterly contested in America, the Act incorporated California – a free state – into the Union and, to appease the South, a stronger provision for reclaiming fugitive slaves was included. Abolitionists on both sides of the Atlantic were outraged and held lectures in protest against it: in

[2] R.J.M Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 145-146.

Belfast, Henry Highland Garnet argued the Fugitive Slave Act's passage "had brought out slavery in its true colours…in such a way that it needed no commentary."[3] William Wells Brown concurred, and declared it "was more important now to bring the question of slave-labour" before the British public. For Brown, "the efforts of slave-holders and their friends to perpetuate and spread slavery over the new territory of the United States, on the one hand, and the efforts of the abolitionists on the other…had excited not only the interest of that country, but of the entire world."[4]

The second event (and the one that will receive most discussion here) was the publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852. This antislavery novel and its characters of Eva, Topsy and Tom simultaneously won the hearts of transatlantic sympathizers and enraged the South. Activists such as Samuel Ward travelled to Britain to "take advantage of the well-known anti-slavery feeling… quickened and intensified as that feeling had recently become by the unprecedented influence of Mrs. Stowe's masterpiece."[5] Ward and others recognized the unique opportunity to exploit a popular and commercialized abolition.

Sarah Meer argues travelling black lecturers used the novel as a springboard to discuss the realities of slavery. By incorporating the novel into their lectures, black abolitionists capitalized on a white fiction of slavery and subverted it to discuss their truth. Meer states that "repeatedly their lives and experiences were measured against Stowe's fiction" and "black abolitionists

[3] *The Belfast News-Letter*. 22 January 1851, 2.
[4] *Nottingham Review*. 4 April 1851, 3.
[5] Samuel Ringgold Ward, *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro* (London: John Snow, 1855), 227-228.

added drama and topicality to their speeches by referring to Uncle Tom but they also modified and elaborated on its account of slaveholding society." Activists such as Wells Brown, William G. Allen, William Craft and Sarah Parker Remond "incorporated references to Stowe's novel in their speeches, both authenticating Stowe's fiction and hoping to shed a little of glamour."[6] In the first part of this chapter, I want to build on Meer's seminal work and argue that while activists such as Wells Brown and Ward used the novel in their lectures to accurately portray slavery, they also used it to chastise and criticize Britain's sense of moral superiority regarding the slave trade. British investment in the novel without acknowledging the consequences of Britain's involvement in perpetuating slavery was hypocritical. Activists knew that Britain deliberately chose *not* to realise its involvement with the slave trade, and how Britons were happy to invest in narratives of American slavery, preferring to distance themselves from their *own* memories of the institution. This foreshadowed the difficulties Josiah Henson would face during his visit to Britain in the 1870s, as this narrative of displacement grew in strength. Thus, black abolitionists urged Britain to recognize its role in the history of slavery and understand its obligation to America. In order to accomplish this, black activists believed their voices were the most crucial weapon in the campaign against slavery. As Roper had implied, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was just another abolitionist text to authenticate black testimony, instead of the other way around.

[6] Sarah Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania: Slavery, Minstrelsy and Transatlantic Culture in the 1850s* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 179-180. See also Audrey Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England: Abolitionist Politics in Popular Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

The second part of this chapter will focus on Henry 'Box' Brown. Brown initially used Stowe's novel and took advantage of its success but did not solely rely on it. He had savvy business sense and understood that most popular cultural phenomena faded or suffered from eventual audience fatigue. As he would do throughout his career, he reinvented himself to maintain his celebrity and used such opportunities to discuss American slavery on his own terms. Alan Rice argues 'Box' Brown "used his black bodily presence as a weapon against slavery but with an eye to entertainment value that establishes him as the showman par excellence." Adverts and placards distributed in local towns provided the chance for "the non-literate or those unable to access slave narratives into the exotic, countercultural world of African American abolitionism."[7] Rice describes how 'Box' Brown and other activists engaged in the process of "guerilla memorialization." "Making individual diasporan African stories live and breathe is a political action, a signal intervention into a landscape that has traditionally elided their presence." Black activists challenged the erasure of black voices in America and used "the performative public space" of areas within Britain "to make [their] point as dramatically as possible by exposing the hypocrisy of [their] homeland at the heart of its national rival."[8] While following Rice's incisive analysis, I use previously undiscovered material to argue how Brown used other ways to make a "signal

[7] Alan Rice, "Henry Box Brown, African Atlantic Artists and Radical Interventions," in ed., Celeste-Marie Bernier and Hannah Durkin, *Visualising Slavery: Art Across the African Diaspora* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 115-117. See also Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England* (2000); Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America 1780-1865* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000). For a brilliant essay on black activists such as Brown resisting racial science through "fugitive science," see Britt Rusert, "The Science of Freedom: Counterarchives of Racial Science on the Antebellum Stage," *African American Review* 45:3, (Fall 2012), 291-308.

[8] Alan Rice & Johanna C. Kardux, "Confronting the Ghostly Legacies of Slavery: The Political of Black Bodies, Embodied Memories and Memorial Landscapes," *Atlantic Studies* 9:3, (2012), 252-256. For further discussion on guerrilla memorialization, see Rice, "Tracing Slavery and Abolition's Routes and Viewing Inside the Invisible: the Monumental Landscape and the African Atlantic," *Atlantic Studies* 8:2, (2011), 253-274, and Rice, "Dramatising the Black Atlantic: Live Action Projects in Classrooms," in Linda K. Hughes and Sarah R. Robbins ed., *Teaching Transatlanticism: Resources for Teaching*

intervention," namely his decision to act in a play based on his life. Rice, Daphne Brooks nor Brown's biographer Jeffery Ruggles mention Brown's dramatic career, and while scholars have commented on 'Box' Brown's successful theatrics, my analysis will extend to discussing his career *in* the theatre.[9]

'Box' Brown worked hard to maintain his celebrity without relying on prominent white individuals, an option that was not available to all black activists in Britain. Unfortunately for those who relied on such connections, divisions between abolitionist societies threatened the success of black activist visits. By the end of the 1850s, these divisions, in part, ensured Frederick Douglass' second visit to Britain was far less successful than his first. The last section of this chapter will explore the instability of Douglass' application of adaptive resistance due to the lack of antislavery networks and growing public apathy towards abolitionism after the storm surrounding Stowe's novel faded away. More so than ever before, Douglass employed dissonant language to criticize British society for abandoning its antislavery principles.

Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Print Culture (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 82-95.

[9] Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom 1850-1910* (Duke: Duke University Press, 2006); Jeffrey Ruggles, *The Unboxing of Henry Brown* (Richmond: University of Virginia Press, 2003).

"In Everybody's Hands and Hearts:" African American Performance in the Age of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

The tremendous success of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* led to a renewed interest in abolition. Published in 1852, it reawakened a commercial interest in antislavery and thousands of people across Britain filled lecture halls, churches, and music rooms to hear black abolitionists denounce slavery. Sarah Meer has most fully traced the novel's impact on British culture, arguing that "Tom-mania" sparked endless articles, books based on the characters, operas, as well as merchandise such as cards, wallpapers and dolls. Plays, in particular, proved a lucrative market, and between 1852 and 1853 one could watch over twenty different *Uncle Tom's Cabin* performances in London. Stowe's visit to Britain in 1853 reinforced this British obsession, and as a direct result antislavery societies and abolitionist meetings were held and sponsored across Britain. The novel inspired the famous Stafford House Address, signed by half a million women, which was sent to America to protest against American slavery. Meer explains that part of this popularity came from Stowe's use of minstrelsy themes in her work, including blackface. Moreover, slavery had become inextricably linked to British patriotism and its restructuring as a "fashionable topic" gave Britons further desire and impetus to scorn America for a constitution that promulgated slavery.[10] Thus, "Tom-mania" created a storm in British popular culture. The success of slave narratives in the early 1850s was tied to the novel's popularity, and according to Audrey Fisch, this formed a "general commercialization of American

[10] Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania,* (2005), 1-11;133-135; 162-168.

abolitionism." Demand was "nearly insatiable and African Americans found themselves constructed as just so much more abolitionist product consumed by English audiences who could not get their fill of Uncle Tom no matter what shape or form he assumed."[11]

As George Frederickson has noted, antislavery activists on both sides of the Atlantic adopted an ideology of romantic racialism, which also played a central part in Stowe's novel. According to this concept, black people were childlike and simple and, though it was acknowledged that slavery was not the natural state of black people, black passivity and placidity enabled slave-owners to exploit them. Romantic racialism was "an acceptance of inherent diversity" and was well received because it was "compatible with Christian humanitarianism and opposition to slavery." Stereotypes of black docility and gentility became the norm: Uncle Tom was passive and unwilling to run away, while George Harris (who had mixed racial heritage), was "distinguished from the full-blooded negroes in that they alone run away or otherwise actively resist slavery."[12] Stowe's characters reinforced passive stereotypes, black inferiority and the concept of white benevolence, since only through white intervention could enslaved individuals be freed. African Americans were portrayed as victims with little or no agency whatsoever.[13]

Despite the racialized stereotypes, black abolitionists challenged perceptions of their lack of agency and manipulated Stowe's novel throughout

[11] Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England* (2000), 52-53; 69-70.
[12] George Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972), 101-117.
[13] Elizabeth Ammons, "Introduction," in ed., Ammons, *Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin: A Casebook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 9.

the 1850s. As one of the most influential black activists to travel to Britain during the early 1850s, William Wells Brown received much fanfare and success throughout his sojourn. Born enslaved in Kentucky, he travelled to Britain in 1849 and lectured extensively across the country. During his five-year sojourn in Britain, Brown travelled at least 25,000 miles and lectured over one thousand times, speaking at twenty-three Mechanics' and Literary Institutions and hundreds of churches and town halls.[14] Famously, he joined with William and Ellen Craft after their ingenious escape from slavery. In these collaborative lectures, Brown usually outlined how slavery operated, arguing there was "not a rood of territory over which the "Stars and Stripes" fly on which William and Ellen Craft or myself could be protected by law." William Craft would then come forward to describe their escape.[15] Both Craft and Brown declared themselves representatives of the three million enslaved people in America; Brown argued it was only right that "some one should speak in favour of the slave, who could not, and who would not put confidence in the slaveholder of his apologist who might visit England." He had the right to do this because he "had himself worn the chain of slavery."[16] Indeed, if Brown were to tell the "true character" of slavery, "he would pluck a feather from the wing of some fallen angel, dip it in the wailings of despair, and write upon the blackened walls of perdition in characters which would frighten the hyena out of his ferocity." As part of the black American protest tradition in Britain, he invoked the slave's right to speak and bore testimony to

[14] *The Newcastle Courant*. 14 December 1849, 4; William Wells Brown, *American Fugitive Slave in Europe* (Boston: John P. Jewett & Co., 1855), 32; William Wells Brown, *Narrative of William W. Brown, A Fugitive Slave, Written by Himself* (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1847). See also the seminal biography of Wells Brown by Ezra Greenspan, *William Wells Brown: An African American Life* (New York: W.W. Norton Co, 2014).
[15] *Dundee Courier*. 29 January 1851, 2-3; *Nottingham Review*. 4 April 1851, 3; *Bedfordshire Mercury*. 26 September 1863, 6.
[16] *The Leeds Mercury*. 19 January 1850, 7.

the cruelty of slavery. In doing so, he also criticized Stowe's novel for its inaccuracies: no one, especially a white woman, could describe what slavery was unless they had lived through it, and even then, it defied language. By claiming he could never describe the reality of slavery though, he *reinforced* its brutality, as he would not insult Victorian sensibilities by depicting the true horrors. While Moses Roper was content to describe this violence in detail, Brown deftly uses this rhetorical ploy and plays with language to illustrate slavery while at the same time forcing audiences to realise they cannot imagine its reality.[17] Brown and Roper used two opposing methods to discuss the violence of slavery, and this illustrated how adaptive resistance could be a complex political act. Roper suffered criticism and sometimes vitriolic attacks for his refusal to downplay his brutal descriptions of slavery, whereas Brown's hesitancy demonstrates his desire to avoid offending Victorian sensibilities and his pragmatic strategy to win support amongst British audiences.

In a letter to William Lloyd Garrison in May 1853 concerning a recent antislavery meeting, Wells Brown praised Stowe's novel and stated that "no time could possibly have been more appropriate for such [an antislavery] meeting than the present." Stowe's novel had "come down upon the dark abodes of slavery like a morning's sunlight, unfolding to view its enormities in a manner which has fastened all eyes upon the peculiar institution, and awakening sympathy in hearts that never before felt for the slave." Nearly five thousand people came to this particular meeting in Exeter Hall to see Harriet Beecher Stowe herself, and for "more than a week before the meeting came

[17] Speech by William Wells Brown, 5 September 1849, in Peter Ripley eds., *The Black Abolitionist Papers, Vol. I: The British Isles, 1830-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), accessed 8 March 2016, http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/brownw/support2.html

off, the tickets were all disposed of, and it was understood that hundreds were appling every day." Along with Brown, Reverend Samuel Ward, William G. Allen and the Crafts were on the platform, and Brown asserted his belief that the "anti-slavery cause is in a more healthy state than it ever was before, and from all appearance much good will be done by the present excitement."[18]

However, using Stowe's novel as a base, Wells Brown also chastised the British for relinquishing their obligation to abolish slavery throughout the world, especially since they had played a large part in creating it. Due to his discovery that many Britons were blissfully unaware of slavery's violent nature, Brown constantly referred to the novel in his lectures to explain that slavery was even more brutal than how it was depicted by Stowe. Brown recounted how British people constantly asked, "if certain portions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were not exaggeration." He replied that it was impossible to "exaggerate the workings or the evils of the system" which sold men, women and children as property. Doubts of authenticity surrounded the novel, and lecturers often had to elaborate on their truth of slavery compared to Stowe's representation of it.[19]

Brown's fellow activist Samuel Ward relied on dissonant language to openly criticize Britain's hypocrisies regarding slavery. Born enslaved in Maryland, Ward worked for the Canadian Anti-Slavery Society and was sent to Britain in April 1853, and for thirty months visited towns and villages in

[18] William Wells Brown to William Lloyd Garrison, 17 May 1853, in "Letters to Antislavery Workers and Agencies [Part 9]," *Journal of Negro History* 10:3, (July 1925), 544-546.
[19] Speech by William Wells Brown, 1 August 1854, in Peter Ripley ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers, Vol. I: The British Isles, 1830-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985). Accessed 8 March 2016, http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/brownw/support5.html See also Alan Rice, *Radical Narratives of the Black Atlantic* (London: Continuum, 2003), 185-187.

England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales.[20] He arrived in England shortly after Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published and in the British edition of his narrative, described how the novel "was in every body's hands and heart." A "more favourable time could not have been chosen" for Ward to visit Britain and the novel's publication was a "special ordination of Providence." In his opinion, the book's arrival "awakened more attention to the anti-slavery cause, in 1853, than had existed since the agitation of the emancipation question in 1832."[21] While he invoked the novel and recognized its importance within the abolition movement, he was skeptical whether this British interest would translate into action. In 1854, he was dismissive of the mania surrounding Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as it appeared "the rage for it was now over" and the public were occupied with other things. He implied that solid action was needed to end slavery, although he was not confident he would live to see it.

Ward urged British audiences to act against slavery instead of passively listening to his speech. In his analysis of "witnessing," Joe Lockard discusses how white audiences relied on their spectatorial gaze to reinforce moments of "white racial supremacy and black subordination." On the auction block for example, enslaved daily life before or after the auction was seldom discussed or referred to, and "simply to be a witness was to enjoy racial privilege; unhindered and free travel was an implicit expression of racial superiority."[22] The "refusal to witness the crimes and traumas of African American slavery was an instrumental component of American nation-

[20] Jeffrey R. Kerr-Ritchie, "Samuel Ward and the Making of an Imperial Subject," *Slavery & Abolition* 33:2, (2012), 209-212.
[21] Ward, *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro,* (1855), 248-249.
[22] Joe Lockard, *Watching Slavery: Witness Texts and Travel Reports* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2008), xix-xxii.

building and it created an antebellum culture of *watching slavery* instead of *witnessing slavery.*" The former was a "passive act" while witnessing "involved both observing and acting against it." Instead, African American literature and orality "created a new opposition to slavery based on the primacy of eyewitness reports as a weapon of testimony."[23]

While Lockard refers mainly to America, I would argue that Ward used dissonant language to shame British audiences and criticize their tendency to passively "watch" black British sailors' capture into slavery. Instead of witnessing and actively doing something to prevent it through Parliament or grassroots petitions, Britain feebly did nothing to live up to its reputation as an antislavery nation. Ward chastised white Britons for failing to recognize their privilege and unwillingness to champion or protect their black citizens. He felt that white Britons ignored the fact they were able to travel "unhindered and free" and raised only lacklustre support for those without the power to do so for themselves. With considerably less subtlety than Wells Brown, Ward directly targeted Britain's narrative of moral superiority and argued that ignoring such incidences were "not in accordance with John Bull's ideas." If his audience were looking for ways to help, they should protest, "make a noise, kick up a row, let Downing-Street understand that these things are not to be tolerated much longer, speak out; [and] demand that your fellow-subjects shall not be sold into slavery by anybody."[24] Ward, as suggested here, deftly balanced assimilationist and dissonant language, walking a tense tightrope between his employment of strategic anglophilia and rejecting

[23] *Ibid*, xxiii-xxv.
[24] *The Bury and Norwich Post and Suffolk Herald.* 19 July 1854, 6.

British self-professed declarations of freedom. In York in 1854, he achieved this balance particularly successfully, echoing the chairman's grandiose statements that the nation should be proud of abolition, while at the same time rejecting it. Ward attacked Britain's moral superiority and declared that since the Tudor times "the people of this island had been reddened in the blood of his race" and while "Englishmen sang "Britons never shall be slaves" [some] were annually made slaves." He specifically mentioned the case of John Glasgow, who was born free in Demerara and then seized and sold into slavery in Georgia. Ward protests against *British* erasure of black voices here, and argues it was a deliberate and hypocritical attempt to ignore reality. This event was "un-English, and it was strange that this great country allowed it to exist without its voice being raised against it."[25] Ward understood the trajectory of British abolition, in relation to what historian Linda Colley has termed the shift "from being the world's greediest and most successful traders of slaves in the eighteenth-century…to being able to preen themselves on being the world's foremost opponents of slavery."[26] Ward subverted and exposed this narrative. Unlike other activists who gently chastised British moral superiority, Ward illuminated its hypocrisies and pointed to incidences where it failed. For the outspoken abolitionist, the British should not feel pride because their work was not finished.

Black activists like Brown and Ward incorporated Stowe's novel into their lectures and exploited the demand it created. Both men criticized Britain

[25] *The York Herald.* 28 October 1854, 6. For more on Glasgow and the arrest of black British sailors, see Edlie Wong, "Anti-slavery Cosmopolitanism in the Black Atlantic," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 38:2, (2010), 451-466.
[26] Linda Colley, quoted in "Introduction," in Katie Donington, Ryan Hanley, and Jessica Moody ed., *Britain's History and Memory of Transatlantic Slavery: Local Nuances of a 'National Sin* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 1-2.

for ignoring its vast legacies with the slave trade and played on the nation's moral conscience to galvanize the British people into taking action. Other activists refused to be so bold in their exposure of British moral superiority. The next section, for instance, will explore Henry 'Box' Brown's influence on the transatlantic stage: as one of the first black celebrities, he was enormously successful at orchestrating his own fame but once Stowe's novel lost purchase in mainstream society, he avoided Ward's blunt language and simply reinvented himself to appeal to the public's changing tastes.

"Mr. Brown's Powerful Acting… is Really Worthy of the Highest Commendation:" Henry 'Box' Brown on the British Theatrical Stage

Born enslaved in Virginia, Henry Brown was desperate to escape slavery after his family were sold and used a trusted carpenter to make him a box within which he might flee. In what is now known as one of the most miraculous escapes from slavery, Brown then posted himself from Richmond to Philadelphia. His "battle of liberty" became romanticized in American legend, particularly after his grim determination that he was "resolved to conquer or die." White abolitionists seized Brown's box and Brown "[rose] from the dead."[27] Daphne Brooks argues African Americans such as Brown incorporated "Afro-Alienation Acts" on stage, a performance strategy that challenged American slavery through self-fashioning identity. African Americans used their horrifying experiences of slavery to inform their performance and systematically break down traditional racial and gender

[27] Henry 'Box' Brown, *Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown* (Manchester: Lee & Glynn, 1851), 1; 42-59.

narratives. Brown designed his own form of resistance that Brooks terms "escape artistry."[28] She argues Brown's box was a symbol through which he hid his body from view, while at the same time moving through white society unnoticed and without objectification. His escape was a manifestation of the fight against the commodification of the black corporeal self. During his lectures and performances, Brown concentrated on the emergence from his box and restyled it as a reawakening of his soul and a new beginning on free soil. Coupling his retelling of his escape with a Panorama from 1850 onward, Brown combined visual images with the power of his own story to create an entirely new antislavery performance.[29] 'Box' Brown "channelled various forms of alienation and dissonant identity politics into [his] performances" and "stylized alternative forms of cultural expression that cut against the grain of conventional social and political ideologies." By using "Afro-Alienation Acts," men such as 'Box' Brown carved their own space "in the spectacular and systemic representational abjection of black peoples."[30] I will build on Brooks' important study by arguing Brown's performance was based on self-reflexive experimental practices. Brown knew how to manage his celebrity and use it to sustain an interest in his lectures. In an episode previously unknown to scholars, his decision to act in a play based on his life reinforces the relationship between celebrity and performance in a unique way that has not been analyzed. It speaks volumes about his independent agency and desire to forge a new form of antislavery artistry on the British stage. Brown's

[28] Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom 1850-1910* (Duke: Duke University Press, 2006), 4-11. See also Tavia Nyong'o, *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance and the Ruses of Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); and Jenna Gibbs, *Performing the Temple of Liberty: Slavery, Theater, and Popular Culture* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014).
[29] Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent,* (2006), 67-77.
[30] *Ibid,* 4-5.

version of adaptive resistance did include a unique and unparalleled use of flexibility, but not necessarily a reliance on abolitionist networks: he refused to be restricted by antislavery societies, which were simultaneously unwilling to challenge the norms of Victorian decorum or to push boundaries of abolitionist agitation.

When Brown first arrived in Liverpool via steamship in 1850, he was "almost penniless" and could not even afford to retrieve his "Panorama or Mirror of American Slavery" from the ship's storage. The Panorama depicted "appalling scenes" of slavery including the separation of families on the auction block. To accompany this, Brown often sang about the scenes represented and exhibited himself in a box afterwards.[31] The Panorama was central to antislavery visual culture, attracting numerous audiences across the northern states of America as well as the British landscape. Scenes focused on the violence of slavery, the forced separation of families on the auction block and whipping of enslaved individuals. These images and concepts that were familiar to British audiences and were designed to encourage sympathy for the slave.[32]

With his Panorama and the story of thrilling escape, 'Box' Brown created an entertaining spectacle, while at the same time presenting a horrific account of slavery. On both sides of the Atlantic, Brown exploited the Victorian press and enlisted the growing mass media market to produce posters, adverts and copies of his narrative to promote his unique

[31] *Liverpool Mercury*. 5 November 1850, 8; *Liverpool Mercury*. 8 November 1850, 1; 6.
[32] Teresa A. Goddu, "Antislavery's Panoramic Perspectives," *MELUS* 39: 2, (Summer 2014), 1-3; 23-24.

performances. He turned his story into a commodity, capitalising on its thrills, twists and turns and became famous based on his escape, not for his oratory or account of slavery.[33] Brown's story of American slavery excited the public, particularly as the tale was told almost as a thriller or adventure novel, where Brown forced himself into a small box "amid perils so great, that the mind shudders when they are contemplated."[34]

Brown understood the impact of such newspaper reviews and, when his success was threatened, he exploited his relationship with performance and print culture to sue a publication for libel in 1852. After travelling extensively across northern England and exhibiting his Panorama, Brown arrived at Wolverhampton and had great success there until the *Wolverhampton and Staffordshire Herald*'s editor published a strong condemnation of Brown and his performance. The editor remarked that Brown's Panorama "which like his oral representation of slavery, is a gross and palpable exaggeration." In response, Brown stated he had lost a profit of £50-70 because of this defamation, and was forced to leave Wolverhampton after a considerable loss in income. The case highlights how Brown's *character* was very much on trial and, as with narratives or lectures or any form of public engagement, shows that black abolitionists who operated in white society had to testify and prove their authenticity. Brown eventually won the case, and received £100 in damages.[35] The newspaper coverage of Brown's libel case indicates he was not completely successful at combating British racism and, as Audrey Fisch

[33] Cynthia Griffin Wolff, "Passing Beyond the Middle Passage: Henry 'Box' Brown's Translations of Slavery," *The Massachusetts Review* 37:1, (1996), 23-24; 28-29.
[34] *The Bradford Observer*. 9 August 1849, 7; *The Blackburn Standard*. 15 August 1849, 4; *Preston Chronicle*. 18 August 1849, 3. Some of these reports were originally published in Boston newspapers.
[35] *The Morning Chronicle* (London). 30 July 1852, 8.

argues, Brown was perhaps inspired more by financial reasons to secure as much money as he could for his performances.[36] Still, this suggests Brown understood in some way the complex and essential relationship between performance and print culture and utilized any means to protect his reputation and ensure favourable press coverage around Britain.

Between 1850 and 1855, Brown, the "celebrated American slave" added more scenes of American slavery to his Panorama in accordance with Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, thereby using immensely popular contemporary literature to entice the British public. For people who had already seen Brown's Panorama, his decision to include these scenes attracted old and new audiences. He also consistently changed his musical entertainment and included black performers on stage, and in Nottingham, even included local performers in his repertoire.[37] The *Isle of Wight Observer* remarked that over two million people had visited his Panorama and "beheld the spectacle with combined feelings of interest and admiration."[38] Similarly, Brown's lavish re-enactment of his escape in Bradford saw crowds of people watch him ceremoniously walk to the train station, surrounded by American flags, where he boxed himself up again, which was reopened to a Leeds audience shortly after. The longer Brown stayed in Britain the more dramatic his performances became. He started to dress in lavish clothes, a turban, expensive jewellery, and rechristened himself "the African Prince." He also

[36] Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England,* (2000), 72-83.
[37] *The Bristol Mercury*. 21 April 1855, 5; *The Hull Packet and East Riding Times*. 26 November 1852, 1; *Manchester Times*. 22 October 1853, 12; *Nottinghamshire Guardian*. 1 June 1854, 5. Brown also employed his wife Jane in his performance, who would lecture as the panoramas were displayed. See *Isle of Wight Observer*. 25 December 1858, 2; *Hampshire Chronicle*. 12 June 1858, 5; *Wellington Journal*. 12 November 1859, 3; *West Surrey Times*. 5 February 1859, 3.
[38] *Isle of Wight Observer*. 10 May 1856, 1.

began to introduce mesmerism and hypnotism into his performances. As Britt Rusert notes, the notion of a black performer controlling a white audience member through mesmerism is significant and subverts traditional social norms.[39] Black performers – whether abolitionist or not – were expected to conform to Victorian norms and Brown's show exposes a new racial dynamic within the entertainment sphere, and perhaps a new form of performance entirely where white audiences were controlled and expected to rely on a black individual to guide them through a performance in new ways. The idea of a white individual relinquishing control over his body and mind to a black performer was unthinkable according to white norms. A black performer psychologically controlling and potentially influencing white audiences makes this type of performance inherently political, even if Brown's overall aim was financial. As Jeffrey Ruggles argues in his seminal biography of Brown, he was "the only abolitionist to lead a parade through a town dressed as an African prince and brandishing a huge sword" and "Brown the showman no doubt reached audiences not addressed by more proper lecturers." Ever "resolute, resourceful, and open to new things…[he] embraced his world turned right-side-up with a life of creative transformation."[40]

In another attempt to creatively transform himself and "try new things," Brown exploited his unique gift for malleability and turned to the theatre. He cleverly anticipated the trend of celebrities branching out of their natural respective fields to try something different, and he played on the phenomena of abolitionist stories such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on stage. Yet

[39] Britt Rusert, "The Science of Freedom: Counterarchives of Racial Science on the Antebellum Stage," *African American Review* 45:3, (Fall 2012), 299-301.
[40] Ruggles, *The Unboxing of Henry Brown,* (2003), 174.

again we see how Brown's skillful performance included reaching and adapting towards a traditional form of public entertainment. As Brooks argues in regard to his re-staging of his escape, "the box that had initially set Brown free would in fact play a central role in his continuing efforts to publicize his own metamorphosis from "slave into man."" It "recognized the benefits of converting his own commodity as a slave into that of cultural commodification" and "used the spectacle of his own entrapment." He "marketed the sight of his own conversion, once again imagining new ways of dually utilizing his body as a source of his own capital and political propaganda."[41] I extend this argument to include Box Brown's decision to act in three plays, one of which was based entirely on his life. This included a scene where he was 'boxed' up and then re-opened again in front of abolitionists, just as he describes in his Narrative.

In 1857, Brown starred in "Pocahontas, or the English Tar and the Indian Princess," "The Nubian Captive," and "The Fugitive Free," the latter of which will occupy the most discussion here. This play was based entirely on Box Brown's life with certain additional dramatic scenes. The play opens on a Virginian plantation with the Captain, a plantation owner, discussing his daughter's birthday plans. Every year on her birthday the Captain frees one enslaved individual, but this year the daughter asks for the freedom of her "favourite slave" Henry Brown, his sister and his mother. The Captain eventually agrees despite his financial concerns, but Allen, his advisor, promises his money is safe in the local bank. Henry learns he is to be free,

[41] Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom 1850-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 118-123.

stating “I am all joy, joy that knows no bounds” and sings a song of liberty. He looks for his sister Jane and saves her from the unwanted advances of Allen, who threatens that his freedom will be an “artificial” one. As Allen had planned, the local bank folds and the Captain is financially ruined; Allen seizes the property, including the enslaved and attempts to sexually assault Jane again but is beaten back by a heroic Henry. The scene moves to an auction block, where Henry and Jane are sold; at the last minute, a stranger intervenes and declares Henry and Jane are free because of the manumission papers the Captain had drawn up before the transfer of property to Allen. Nancy however, is placed upon the auction block and sold, with a devastated Henry lamenting “my wife – my blessed wife…then I am lost, fate has done its worst – all hope is gone and I am desolate.” They embrace, and the scene ends. The next act sees Henry apprehended for attempting to visit his wife and he is flogged on stage by two cruel overseers. Henry’s friend arranges for his escape, and places him in a box which is to be sent as part of the Captain’s luggage. The scene shifts to the Captain and his daughter, who receive a telegram to say they are being sent a box, to which they must “open it immediately…[the] contents are precious.” The kind stranger who delivers the box invites his friends to witness this, as “should [Henry] live this will be one of the wonders of the age.” The stranger taps upon the box, whispering “are you well?” Henry replies, “I am thank God.” The box is opened and Henry is lifted out, and the play ends with Henry rejoicing that he can finally “breathe the pure air of freedom…[and] may all here smile on the good fortune that has made The Fugitive Free.”[42]

[42] ‘“The Fugitive Free’ drama in three acts.” E. G. Burton. 15 June 1857. British Library. Add MS 52966 Y. In the archives, the title is erroneously written “The Fugitive Tree.”

Unfortunately, one of the plays – probably Pocahontas – was received very poorly in comparison to "The Fugitive Free." Due to the "loss upon each performance after the first two nights," Brown claimed the theatre manager (R. Thorne) had "refused to hand him over any portion of the proceeds of either night" and sued him for a loss of income. The manager stated "his agreement with the plaintiff was for six nights' performances, and that he was to deduct £36 for expenses, and not £6 per night" as Brown claimed. E.G. Burton, the playwright, "swore that plaintiff had told him that £36 was to be deducted for house expenses" and the judge ruled in Thorne's favour. This incident very likely soured relations between Burton, Brown and Thorne, which explains the very abrupt halt to Brown's budding theatrical career in Margate. Another reference in *The Era* newspaper suggests Brown transferred his career to Liverpool.[43]

Regardless of the short-lived success in Margate, reviews of Box Brown's performances were generally favourable. One correspondent was deeply impressed, writing that his "powerful acting in this piece is really worthy of the highest commendation."[44] He was described as the "well known escaped slave and public lecturer" who would offer "the rare occurrence of a hero personificating himself."[45] He was "favourably received" as the Prince in "The Nubian Captive," and the scenes of slavery were "most vividly and painfully depicted."[46] *The Era* wrote:

[43] *The South Eastern Gazette*. 22 September 1857, 5; *The Era* (London) 4 October 1857, 11-12.
[44] *The South Eastern Gazette*. 4 August 1857, 5.
[45] *The Era*. 28 June 1857, 1; *The Era*. 27 September 1857, 11-12.
[46] *The Era*. 4 October 1857, 11-12.

> There are occasionally romances in real life that, had we not the most incontestable evidence of their authenticity, we should set down as the lucubration's of a novelist, beyond the creed of truth and probability… In the meantime we can but draw general attention to a gentleman, who, in his career as slave and freeman, has exhibited talents and displayed heroism of no ordinary character, and with the same cordiality with which we greet all worthy aspirants for fame, no doubt Mr Brown will receive the success and honour that his merit and perseverance demand.[47]

Despite his credentials as an entertainer, *The Era* had no qualms about accepting Brown's stories. This was no doubt a way to encourage Britons to frequent the theatre, and illustrates how important it was for white Victorians to know Brown had *genuinely* experienced American slavery, which authenticated the play as a result. The term "romance" implies Brown's life was a thrilling tale, fraught with danger, feeding Britain's insatiable appetite for dramatic stories of formerly enslaved individuals. Apart from William Wells Brown, few black abolitionists broached the theatrical realm as a forum for abolition. Douglas A. Jones Jr. discusses Wells Brown's career as a playwright and actor, arguing how "he used representational forms and

[47] *The Era*. 4 October 1857, 11-12.

modalities fashioned in the dominant racial imagination of the antebellum north" such as minstrelsy, to win support. Since Wells Brown orchestrated the play, "the discomfiture and shame audiences experienced were redoubled" as his "well known personal history as a runaway slave also contributed to the ways in which his performance signified." One review of Wells Brown's performance described how "*no ordinary man* is swaying the feelings of the deeply interested and breathless auditory." Ultimately, Wells Brown himself stated that "people will pay to hear the Drama that would not give a cent in an anti-slavery meeting."[48] Ever the virtuoso showman, 'Box' Brown – like Wells Brown – understood the power behind starring in a play based on his life and how he could reach audiences that would not have attended an antislavery lecture. He was, we might say, preaching to the unconverted, and at least two of the three plays he starred in possessed an antislavery message. His position as a fugitive slave, with the central characters from his life starring in the play (including his wife Nancy) would have no doubt resonated with his audience.

Box Brown was a virtuoso and a master at making a "signal intervention:" he excelled at exhibiting his Panorama, singing melodies of his escape, and now he was starring in a drama based on his life. However, it is difficult to estimate the level of control Brown had over the script. As noted above, Daphne Brooks has argued Brown refused to allow others to objectify his body. However, Brown's decision to act in dramatic plays raises the question of whether Brown was owning his performance or wilfully

[48] Douglas A. Jones, Jr., *The Captive Stage: Performance and the Proslavery Imagination of the Antebellum North* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), 138-140; 163-164.

participating in the cultural commodification of his corporeal self. Nevertheless, this unique performance demonstrates Brown's ability to reach all audiences: from antislavery Panoramas, to mesmerism and to the dramatic stage, he always sought to teach others about the nature of American slavery via multiple mediums.

Brown's inimitable performances are one indication of the myriad ways black activists employed adaptive resistance. His invocation of unique performances and successful exploitation of print culture ensured Brown's continued celebrity on the British stage. While Brown spurned most abolitionist networks and collaborations with his formerly enslaved brethren, white abolitionists, in turn, appeared to avoid him, probably because of their limited ability to control his movements. After his arrival in Britain, Bristol-based abolitionist John Estlin resolved to send him some money but wondered to an American friend whether Brown was a "deserving person."[49] Brown did not come to Britain as an agent of a particular antislavery society, which meant his arrival caused some curiosity as to whether he would appeal to white Victorian decorum and employ self-help to improve himself. Ironically, 'Box' Brown managed to outlive organized antislavery activity which fractured throughout the 1850s, at times threatening black activist success.

[49] John B. Estlin to Miss Weston, November 1850. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 18 May 2015, www.archive.org, (identifier: lettertomydearmi00estl19).

"An Arab Chief:" Frederick Douglass' Second Trip to Britain 1859-1860

In the autumn of 1859, radical abolitionist John Brown launched an assault on Harper's Ferry, Virginia in an attempt to spark an uprising of the enslaved population. Frederick Douglass was implicated in this failed insurrection, and he was forced to flee to Canada and then to Britain for his safety, arriving in early December.[50] Richard Blackett argues that "there was no noticeable drop in British support for his efforts in America" and "he continued to attract considerable support from a cadre of British followers." Whilst Douglass did have numerous friends in Britain, his limited Garrisonian connections also hampered opportunities for further controversy on British soil.[51] Compared to the 1840s, Douglass' exploitation of adaptive resistance was less successful during his second visit. He was also concerned at the growing apathy towards slavery and the rise in racism, and believed the public had become fatigued with abolitionist stories like *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*

Despite the rise of popular abolition in the early 1850s, by the end of the decade organized antislavery networks had suffered greatly and became ineffective by the time Douglass visited in 1859. Divisions within groups over ideals and sometimes even between black individuals themselves had caused serious rifts in British abolitionist societies. While some black men and women remained independent of abolitionist divisions through choice or circumstance, others aligned themselves with Garrisonian activists or the

[50] *Newcastle Courant*. 24 February 1860, 8.
[51] Richard Blackett, "Cracks in the Antislavery Wall: Frederick Douglass's Second Visit to England (1859-1869) and the Coming of the Civil War," in Alan J. Rice and Martin Crawford ed., *Liberating Sojourn: Frederick Douglass and Transatlantic Reform* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999), pp.190-191.

British and Foreign Antislavery Society (BFASS) which had varying degrees of success.[52] These decisions led to increasing tensions. For example, in 1851, Bristol-based Garrisonian abolitionist Mary Estlin accused J.W.C. Pennington, Josiah Henson and Henry Highland Garnet of encouraging bad press against the Garrisonian abolitionists. Estlin framed the tension between abolitionist parties as a battle, stating "Henson too will we hope soon be set aside, and then Garnet will be our chief remaining antagonist."[53] She wrote of the "brisk warfare we are perpetually engaged in," specifically targeting white abolitionists such as Anna Richardson in Newcastle and the BFASS in London.[54] This paternalistic attitude represented another form of racial discrimination: Jason Stupp argues the black body was often "emptied of historical meaning through dehumanizing racial subjection" in the abolitionist movement and white audiences were often depicted as "moral redeemers" who indulged in empathising black victimhood.[55] As a "moral redeemer," Mary Estlin believed she had a right to dictate and control the movements of black abolitionists, as she was the best person to make decisions for them. These arguments testify that some white abolitionists believed that the focus should not be on the formerly enslaved individual as witness or more importantly as a person with a distinct voice, rather, they believed that the central players in the struggle for abolition were white benefactors. Estlin's

[52] White abolitionists were very paranoid about 'imposters,' particularly in the wake of Stowe's novel. The success of Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* "has so awakened sympathy for the negro, that a black face and a touching tale are now sure passports to private pockets." See the *Antislavery Reporter,* 1 April 1853, Issue 4, 82. The most famous of these men was Reuben Nixon, who lectured across Britain claiming to be a fugitive slave until he was caught and arrested upon evidence supplied by the BFASS in 1854. See *Daily News* (London). 27 March 1854, 3.
[53] Mary Anne Estlin to Caroline Weston, 1851. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 24 March 2015, www.archive.org, (identifier: ourpromisedwelco00estl).
[54] Mary Anne Estlin to Miss Weston, 1851. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 24 March 2015 www.archive.org (identifier: youhavebeenveryg00estl).
[55] Jason Stupp, "Slavery and the Theatre of History: Ritual Performance on the Auction Block," *Theatre Journal* 63:1, (2011), 62-74.

obsession with the lectures of those black abolitionists she could not control reveals her desire to discredit not only white abolitionists but also black figures themselves.

Douglass' break with Garrison in the early 1850s also highlighted the divisions amongst British abolitionists. He had navigated abolitionist tensions during his first trip to Britain and his second visit was no exception. Before his arrival in 1859, he was targeted by Mary Estlin who tried to understand his motives for returning to Britain. She believed he would "succeed in promoting his own interests, whether by assured friendship, or avowed hostility, to the cause's true friends." Estlin thought Douglass was selfish and an enemy to the true abolitionist cause, further showing the supercilious strain within white antislavery politics.[56] Tensions continued to mount when Douglass commenced his lecturing tour, culminating in a fierce contest between himself and Garrisonian supporter (and former friend of Douglass) George Thompson. Douglass was no longer a supporter of Garrisonian policies, which included support for disunion, a hatred of the political process and the notion that the United States Constitution was a pro-slavery document. In a complete reversal, Douglass embraced the Constitution as an *anti-slavery* document, an argument that Thompson abhorred. Thompson organized several lectures to denounce Douglass. In response, Douglass published one of his speeches outlining his views on the Constitution and claimed he was "under the fire of

[56] Mary Anne Estlin to Maria Weston Chapman, 20 October 1859. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 18 May 2015, www.archive.org, (identifier: lettertomydearmr00estl2).

both platform and press."[57] Thompson demanded Douglass meet him in public debate to discuss his political advocacy and pro-Unionism but the latter refused. As a result, Thompson organized numerous antislavery meetings to denounce Douglass and read extracts of his speeches in 1847 that upheld his previous Garrisonian convictions. Douglass continued to refuse to meet in public.[58] Due to these tensions, many Garrisonian networks – like the Estlin family in Bristol for example – were closed to Douglass, which prevented him from lecturing in cities such as Bristol or other Garrison-supported hubs. Despite this, Douglass remained friends with numerous British activists throughout the decade, who were keen to offer any help they could. In an effort to garner widespread public interest in Douglass' visit many of these individuals, including Julia Griffiths, pressured or persuaded local newspapers to publish some of Douglass' work.[59]

Griffiths also organized speaking engagements for Douglass, arranging for him to speak in early December 1859 at the Mechanics Hall in Halifax, the town in which she was based.[60] Indeed, Douglass made good use of Griffiths' networks as he travelled around northern England and Scotland, and it was evident that his celebrity was still enough of an attraction. In Barnsley in 1860, Douglass "was greeted with deafening bursts of applause, which broke out again and again over all parts of the immense audience."[61] In Newcastle, a

[57] Frederick Douglass, 26 March 1860, in John Blassingame ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers Series One: Speeches, Debates and Interviews, Vol. 2 1855-63* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 340-366.
[58] Raymond Gerald Fulkerson, "Frederick Douglass and the Anti-Slavery Crusade: His Career and Speeches 1817-1861," PhD Diss., (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois, 1971), 385-391.
[59] Sarah Meer, "Public and Personal Letters: Julia Griffiths and Frederick Douglass' Paper," *Slavery & Abolition* 33:2, (2012), 252-255. See also Janet Douglas, "A Cherished Friendship: Julia Griffiths Crofts and Frederick Douglass," *Slavery & Abolition* 33:2, (2012), 265-274.
[60] William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991), 203.
[61] *The Barnsley Chronicle*. 14 January 1860, 8.

meeting was "crowded to the door by a respectable, intelligent audience" and "many persons were unable to obtain admission to the room."[62] As we saw in chapter three, the Victorian press often focused on Douglass' corporeal self and described his power over an audience, often framing him in noble and romantic imagery. This continued in abundance during his second trip, epitomised by one newspaper who described Douglass as an "Arab Chief" and "wherever he goes, [he is] a man noble planned and noble endowed."[63] The romantic description of an "Arab Chief" reflected Victorian racial stereotypes of the noble savage. White Victorians believed Douglass – as a chief – would lead his race to victory, imbuing him with a sense of importance and the exotic. A description designed to increase racial curiosity, Victorian audiences expected a foreign prince from afar. Douglass possessed a noble mind, heart and spirit, a form of exalted moral excellence that few white and fewer black people could aspire towards. He was naturally gifted and nobility radiated from his body and voice, a stark contrast to the racist and "comic" images of black Americans in the press or in minstrel shows.

Throughout his journey in 1859 Douglass continued to espouse themes he had exploited during his first visit, including strategic anglophilia. He waxed lyrical about British freedom, referring to Britain as the "home of the oppressed of all nations [and] the asylum of all who suffered from despotism in any form." Douglass stated, "he was indebted to their pounds, shillings and pence for the liberty which he had enjoyed" in the United States, expressing

[62] *The Daily Chronicle and Northern Counties Advertiser*. 20 February 1860, 2.
[63] *Dundee, Perth and Cupar Advertiser*. 14 February 1860, 2-3.

his gratitude to the British abolitionists who had paid for his freedom.[64] During his meeting in Halifax in December 1859, Douglass argued "no nation on the globe could claim to understand" liberty and equality more than Britain. He reflected on his first trip in 1845 and recalled, "he never saw the first look, or heard the first word which reminded him of his colour." Though "England had sinned against his poor perishing race," Britain had "struck off the chain from eight hundred thousand of the oppressed, and put herself in the position to protest against the existence of slavery."[65] He was content to praise British abolition and use the past as a tool to reawaken antislavery activity and encourage audiences to challenge United States slavery.

More so than during his first journey, however, Douglass employed dissonant language to chastise the British for forgetting their antislavery principles. He made reference to the growing apathy towards abolition in British society: a "doctrine of non-intervention" had taken root since his last visit and he wanted to remind the British public they had a duty to denounce slavery, for "that vile system of blood was an outrage upon all the great principles of justice, liberty and humanity, principles which belonged alike to all men of whatever country, colour or clime." As explained by Douglass, the British slave trade legacy was directly linked to American slavery and, as a result, Britain had a duty to promote abolitionism.[66] In a meeting in Sheffield in 1859, Douglass argued the English "were in danger of being corrupted…for the friends of the slave holder were circulating their publications continually

[64] *The Leeds Mercury*. 3 December 1859, 7.
[65] Frederick Douglass, 7 December 1859, in John Blassingame ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers Series One: Speeches, Debates and Interviews, Vol. 2 1855-63* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 276-289.
[66] *The Leeds Mercury*. 10 December 1859, 7.

in this country." He urged the Sheffield audience to make a concerted effort to resist such influence, he urged, since the city's influence "went wherever its knives and crinoline went." He warned people not to support American slaveholding churches and "in so far as England supported it she was riveting the chains of the American slaves." Since "England had helped to put the negro into slavery," the nation "had a right to take him out."[67] Douglass was concerned to see that Britain "was actually in danger of contamination by its intercourse" with pro-slavery supporters, and newspaper articles denouncing John Brown's actions in *The Times* and *The Leeds Mercury* were evidence of such a decline in antislavery sentiment.[68] He "felt perfectly sure that in some manufacturing towns in England there was a sympathy springing up with the slaveholders, arising from the intimacy caused by trade." Much to his chagrin, he found "the price of human flesh on the Mississippi was regulated by the price of cotton in Manchester."[69]

Shortly afterwards, in a meeting in February 1860 in Dundee Douglass elaborated on this and "impressed on the people of Britain the necessity of preserving a moral feeling" against American slavery. He "strongly condemned the pro-slavery feeling" that had begun to poison parts of British society. Douglass criticized the portrayal of African Americans through minstrel shows specifically, condemning such performances as corrupt and inconsistent with fact; the rise in popularity for such shows made it clear to Douglass at least why his second visit did not attract the same attention as his

[67] *Supplement to the Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*. 24 December 1859, 10.
[68] *The Sheffield Daily Telegraph*. 20 December 1859, 3.
[69] *Supplement to the Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*. 21 January 1860, 10.

first.[70] Indeed, Blackett states "there were buskers who performed at street corners, at fairs, and at the seaside; professional companies who played in theaters and concert halls; and amateur productions who performed in working men's clubs and at village fetes." The "popular image of the Negro came to influence people's perceptions of slavery, emancipation, and the future of the freedmen" and "that a large cross section of the public attended these performances and thoroughly enjoyed the entertainment meant that these distortions of the Negro's character reached a wider audience."[71] With increasing dissonance and language that contrasted sharply with his discourse during his 1840s visit, Douglass detested this change and even went so far as to say that Britain's "proud boast" of liberty could not be made at the present moment because "American prejudice might be found in the streets" of British cities. He blamed "pro-slavery ministers" and "that pestiferous nuisance, Ethiopian minstrels" who had "brought here the slang phrases, the contemptuous sneers all originating in the spirit of slavery."[72] For Douglass, the popularity of minstrel shows, the influence of pro-slavery Americans visiting Britain and the British abandonment of antislavery principles threatened the nation's proud history of abolition. He feared that, unless the public acted immediately, the toxic influence of racism would pollute society.

Tragically, Douglass' visit to Britain was cut short by the news that his daughter Annie had died. As Douglass himself explained in his third autobiography, *Life and Times,* (1881), the news "of the death of my beloved

[70] *Dundee Perth and Cupar Advertiser*. 14 February 1860, 2-3.
[71] Blackett, "Cracks in the Antislavery Wall," (1999), 201-203.
[72] Frederick Douglass, 23 February 1860, in John Blassingame ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers Series One: Speeches, Debates and Interviews, Vol. 2 1855-63* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 334-340.

daughter Annie, the light and life of my house" reached him in Scotland, and "deeply distressed by this bereavement, and acting upon the impulse of the moment, regardless of the peril, I at once resolved to return home, and took the first outgoing steamer."[73] Although Douglass' account gives the impression he immediately left for the continent, but the Victorian newspapers suggest otherwise. Douglass certainly arranged passage back to the United States as soon as possible, but he did not cancel his antislavery meetings. He continued his hectic lecturing schedule despite this news, and ever the virtuoso performer, tried to hide the emotional strain behind his public mask of performance. At a meeting in Ayr, however, Douglass cracked under the pressure of maintaining this façade. The correspondent at the meeting wrote how "Douglass, though eloquent, was evidently labouring under a depression." After speaking for nearly an hour, "he apologised to the audience" and said, "he had that morning received a letter from America bringing the melancholy tidings of the death of one of his family." The correspondent noted that while the "meeting, which no doubt was disappointed a little in not bearing the address out, deeply sympathised with Mr Douglass in his bereavement."[74] His private grief overflowed into a public performance he refused to reschedule and the meeting was broken up early as a result. In a meeting in Paisley shortly afterwards, one correspondent noticed Douglass "was evidently undergoing a severe mental struggle, produced by the intelligence received, within the last day or two, that one of his children had died." Nevertheless, Douglass was able to resurrect some of the energy

[73] Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: His Early Life as a Slave, His Escape from Bondage, and His Complete History to the Present Time* (Hartford: Park Publishing Co., 1881), 328.
[74] *The Paisley Herald and Renfrewshire Advertiser.* 31 March 1860, 2.

needed (or re-erect his masked performance), since the correspondent described Douglass' speech as "replete with the most thrilling passages of eloquence" and "shaded by a series of sparkling jokes."[75] As he had done in the 1840s, Douglass tried to hide his mental struggles and construct a carefully orchestrated public performance.[76]

Despite the decline in antislavery sentiment and navigating a deep personal tragedy, Douglass managed to assimilate and exploit contemporary narratives of British patriotism. Using his rhetorical skill, Douglass critiqued British society for their dwindling efforts in attacking the slave trade and reminded Britain it had a duty to reignite their battle against slavery. Although the lack of Garrisonian networks and his failure to court controversy resulted in a less successful campaign compared to 1845, Douglass' fame was such that newspapers around the country reported on his visit and paid homage to the strength and skill of America's most famous black man. While his performances and oratory were still impressive, he was unable to exploit print culture and antislavery networks with as much success.

To conclude, during the 1850s many black abolitionists used Stowe's novel as a springboard to discuss slavery and criticised Britain's role in the slave trade more than ever before. Black activists such as William Wells Brown and Samuel Ward employed assimilationist and dissonant strategies within an adaptive resistance framework to play to audience familiarity and refer to the novel's characters, while at the same time teaching audiences to

[75] *The Paisley Herald and Renfrewshire Advertiser*. 31 March 1860, 2.
[76] Douglass lectured on self-made men in Bradford in 1860. See *The Bradford Observer*. 15 March 1860, 5.

realise the reality was much worse. Black abolitionists used the interest in the novel specifically to win support and, in Ward's case, sharply attacked Britain for building a society based on the blood of black people.

Henry 'Box' Brown was one of the only activists in the 1850s to maintain popularity amidst this white racist schematizing. He embodied dissonance to challenge white racists (including newspaper editors), and was aware he could not rely solely on the interest generated by Stowe's novel to maintain his celebrity. He achieved this with much success, a virtuoso who adapted not only his Panorama to other worldly events, but also his repertoire. Although his shows had an abolitionist message, they were reframed as entertainment to attract wide audiences that were not confined to a particular class, gender, or age group. He also employed other forms of spectacle, namely his decision to dramatize his life, constantly reshaping his antislavery narrative to maintain popularity across Britain. A malleable celebrity who intervened in white spaces such as the lecturing stage, the theatre, the entertainment hall and the school room, his self-reflexive acts disrupted power balances between white and black, and nowhere was this more apparent than his use of mesmerism and the dramatic arts.

Frederick Douglass' employment of adaptive resistance was far more successful in the 1840s than in 1859. He believed this was a result of the growing number of minstrel shows and racism in British society. By the end of the Civil War, *Punch* magazine captured much of the British cultural narrative when it denounced the appeal of the "American Negro" as "Am I

Not A Man and A Bother?"[77] As Catherine Hall summarizes, by the 1850s many Britons believed "the experiment of emancipation in the West Indies had not been entirely successful" and "anxieties focused on the collapse of the plantation economy." Thomas Carlyle's influential essay on black people in the Caribbean "marked the moment when it became legitimate for public men to profess a belief in the essential inferiority of black people, and to claim that they were born to be mastered and could never attain the level of European civilization."[78]

By 1859, Douglass was unable to take advantage of Stowe's novel partly because of this rise in British apathy. However, perhaps he never wanted to. In a meeting in Barnsley in 1860, he declared that being a Christian did not mean the slave should "tamely [*sic*] submit to his fate" and thus "for this reason he more admired the Christianity of [George] Harris than that of Uncle Tom, inasmuch as the former had a little more of the 'man' left within him."[79] Recoiling at Tom's passivity, Douglass aligned himself with black male heroism, including specifically the self-made man. In Douglass' assessment, while Stowe's novel had caused great interest in abolition, the character of Tom did not represent black men.

'Box' Brown and Douglass were two of the few black abolitionist celebrities who could court favour throughout this decade, but their success and fame was rivalled by William and Ellen Craft. Their infamous escape

[77] *Dundee Courier*. 21 March 1865, 3.
[78] Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 48-54.
[79] *The Barnsley Chronicle*. 14 January 1860, 8.

from slavery together with their extensive lecturing tours, ensured significant British press coverage and interest in their work. Ellen in particular was transformed into a celebrity because of her corporeal figure: while British audiences fawned over Frederick Douglass' body on the lecturing stage, it was Ellen's near-white skin that attracted great curiosity in Britain. Ellen's activism, and the previously overlooked activism of Mrs. Jackson, will be the subject of the next chapter on transatlantic black female lecturing tours.

Chapter 5: "I Would Much Rather Starve in England, A Free Woman, Than Be a Slave:" Black Women and the Gendered Nature of Adaptive Resistance 1850-1865

The infamous escape of William and Ellen Craft in 1849 from a Georgian plantation captivated the transatlantic public. Posing as a white, male southerner with William as her manservant, Ellen created a skilled performance to carry them both across state lines to Philadelphia. After conducting a successful lecturing tour in the United States, the Crafts were forced to seek refuge in Britain after the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, but continued their activism on British soil. Although Ellen is best known for using silent protest as a distinct performative technique, she also took other opportunities to denounce racism and was unafraid of giving her opinion amongst influential private circles. For example, in 1853 the *Anti-Slavery Advocate* wrote:

> A gentleman at table asked [Ellen] if the slaves generally were intelligent enough *to take care of themselves,* if they were emancipated. She replied, "At present they take care of themselves and their masters too; if they were free, I think they would be able to take care of *themselves*!"[1]

[1] *Waterford Mail*. 12 February 1853, 4. Originally from the *Anti-Slavery Advocate*.

Ellen's bold activism and refusal to capitulate to white supremacy meant she used or created a range of opportunities to challenge the legacy of slavery. Her extraordinary and brave escape was living proof that black people could "take care of themselves" and, as here, she used white critics' words against them. She targeted not only white racists but also racial scientists, and declared her abhorrence at the pervasive concept that black people needed white benevolence to ensure their survival.

Celeste-Marie Bernier argues black male and female artists "engaged in experimental visual, oratorical and textual practices designed to challenge the tendencies toward reductive fixity" and crafted their own images of themselves amidst a white racist schema.[2] She states in particular that "black female heroism must be understood on its own terms rather than in conjunction with a black male continuum of resistance." Only through this approach can we study in detail the numerous self-reflexive strategies black women such as Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman used to challenge white supremacy.[3] Additionally, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson describe examples of "women's self-representation as a performative act," one that is "never transparent" amidst the "interplay of memory, experience, identity, embodiment and agency." Women have used their own bodies, they argue, as performative strategies or for constructing art and "autobiographical acts" to create a "theater of embodied self-representation."[4]

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[2] Celeste-Marie Bernier, *Characters of Blood: Black Heroism in the Transatlantic Imagination* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2012), 8-9.
[3] *Ibid*, 12-13.
[4] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson ed., *Interfaces: Women, Autobiography, Image, Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 4-10.

In this chapter, I build on Bernier's argument to suggest that the concept of adaptive resistance has a deeply gendered aspect and argue that black female resistance has to be understood separately from that of black men, who operated under a different set of gender dynamics on the Victorian stage. Often described through their femininity and forced to combat the prevailing stereotype that women should not speak in public, the women I discuss here demonstrate their numerous self-reflexive strategies to achieve independence and celebrate their black female identity. Uncovering new evidence, I show that throughout her residency in Britain, Ellen Craft subverted traditional gender and class norms by using her corporeal self as a representation of sexual violence and the lengths she had to go to escape a violent institution. She used three main techniques of adaptive resistance: silence as a performative tool, an exploitation of antislavery networks, and organisation of a communal network based on black family and racial pride, unique amongst other travelling African American women as well as male activists. Her outspoken activism in private against white supremacy led to constant antislavery work and her tireless enthusiasm turned her home into a hub of black community and solidarity.

Craft and activist Sarah Parker Remond have been described by historians as the only two women who conducted lecturing tours between the 1850s and the 1860s.[5] Although Craft for the most part did not actively lecture while her husband recounted their escape, Remond's passionate oratory in the 1850s called for a united sisterhood against slavery and oppression. Unlike

[5] Teresa C. Zackodnik, *Press, Platform, Pulpit: Black Feminist Publics in the Era of Reform* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 2011), 54-58.

Craft, Remond relied on her voice to urge her audiences to act *now* to do something about American slavery, and re-directed attention away from her own experiences so she would not stand as a complete representative of an enslaved woman. Her eloquent language negotiated this difficult balance with the reality of her public persona as the first black woman to speak widely on the British stage, which in itself represented an important step in radical transatlantic black feminism.[6] This chapter will firstly focus on Ellen Craft, and then move to an analysis of the relatively unknown formerly enslaved African American Mrs. Jackson (the activist wife of fugitive slave John Andrew Jackson). Overlooked by historians, she lectured on several occasions beside her husband and was the first black woman to speak publicly on her enslaved experience before the Civil War. Hence, her voice deserves to be recovered and treated separately from her husband's. Whether her performances on a Victorian stage evolved to include her speaking publicly or whether she did this from the beginning, her activism needs to be placed alongside independent women such as Craft and Remond. While she does not appear to have exploited antislavery networks as much as Ellen Craft, she often spoke directly after her husband, and wanted to share a unique perspective on the role of black women within slavery. She used her peripheral position to challenge perceptions of American slavery and black women in general.[7]

[6] Teresa Zackodnik, "The Enslaved As Spectacle: Ellen Craft, Sarah Parker Remond and American Slavery in England," *Nineteenth Century Prose* 29:1 (Spring 2002), 6-10; 22-25.
[7] So far, I have been unable to track down Mrs. Jackson's first name, only finding the name of John's first wife. More research needs to be done surrounding her activism in Britain and whether she utilized antislavery networks.

Embodied by their race and gender but disregarding Victorian concepts of a male-dominated public sphere, both Ellen Craft and Mrs. Jackson employed various performative strategies including silence, courting antislavery and familial networks, and oratory to assert their independence and radical feminist politics. Whether silent or outspoken, both women exploited different forms of adaptive resistance to their own advantage.

"It is an Old Story, but One Worth Repeating:" Ellen Craft's Transatlantic Activism

Black feminist speakers confronted the double embodiment of race and gender in various ways. In early 1830s America, Maria Stewart powerfully highlighted the inequalities between black men and women and urged black solidarity in the face of racism, injustice and poverty. Stewart was the first woman – white or black – to lecture on politics in the United States before a mixed audience. Born a free woman in Connecticut, she lectured five times between 1831 and 1835 until the backlash against her public speaking forced her into early retirement. Stewart argued that God favored African Americans and her speeches are littered with religious references to black millennialism.[8] She saw herself as a soldier and a prophet, which according to her was not a contradiction in terms. Stewart wanted to lead her troops – a unified race – into battle to protest injustice and to demand their rights.[9]

[8] Valerie Cooper, *Word Like Fire: Maria Stewart, The Bible, and the Rights of African Americans* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 1-3.
[9] Christina Henderson, "Sympathetic Violence: Maria Stewart's Antebellum Vision of African American Resistance," *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S.* 38:4, (Winter 2013), 56-65.

In contrast, Nell Irvin Painter argues Sojourner Truth "used photography to embody and to empower herself, to present the images of herself that *she* wanted remembered." Truth's combination of oratory and photography was a "means to communicate without writing." Textual representations of black men and women were often stereotypes, twisted versions of the real black body and Truth's reliance on photography illustrates her desire to appear whole, to create her own image – her "real self" – rather than allowing it to be created for her.[10] Ellen Craft's use of silence on stage link to Truth's photography: her careful representation of herself as a Victorian woman combined with her desire to align with her black identity. While she did not speak on the lecturing stage, she used the photograph of herself dressed as a southern gentleman to illustrate her bold resistance against the slave system; her still body on stage was perhaps a way to portray her "real self." Indeed, photography as a performative form will be discussed in chapter 8 with Ida B. Wells' use of lynching photography.

On the lecturing stage, black female reformers remained in Teresa Zackodnik's phrase "doubly embodied by their race and gender" and excluded from the public and (white) domestic sphere. As a result, black female success often depended on their pleas for a shared sisterhood between white and black women. On stage, their womanhood was questioned while at the same time they were always viewed through a narrow lens of race. Sadiya Hartman argues nineteenth-century opinion held the enslaved woman's experience should be identified through empathy, to force audiences into an emotive and

[10] Nell Irvin Painter, "Representing Truth: Sojourner Truth's Knowing and Becoming Known," *Journal of American History* 81:2, (September 1994), 462-466; 487.

then active response. Hartman cautions against this however, as the practice of empathy entails the imagination of oneself into the sufferer's position, and this can lead to thoughts concerning one's own condition rather than the person one should be feeling empathy for. This "facile intimacy" is a result of the "precariousness of empathy" and it has the potential to make empathy the central component of entertainment, which no doubt encouraged the sale of narratives and perhaps the popularity of black abolitionist lectures.[11] Hartman argues the spectacle of suffering was a constant narrative in the nineteenth century, and it retained a voyeuristic longing to identify and empathize with the victim.[12] The black body becomes silent testimony and instead of reaffirming the "humanity" of that black body, a white tourist encounters a voyeuristic exploration into what it would feel like to be a slave. Hartman adds that "if the scene of beating readily lends itself to an identification with the enslaved, it does so at the risk of fixing and naturalizing this condition of pained embodiment."[13] Thus Angelika Grimke used the term "sister slave" to encourage women to imagine themselves as slaves and invoke a strong sense of sisterhood to protect and fight for enslaved women *and* women in general since Grimke suffered discrimination for entering the public domain.[14] British women similarly employed this rhetoric of sisterhood, championing the slogan "Am I Not A Woman And A Sister?" which emphasized the transatlantic bonds between white and black women in Britain and the United States. This motif replicated the problems of its male counterpart however, and swallowed

[11] Zackodnik, *Press, Platform, Pulpit* (2011), 96-106.
[12] Sadiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery and Self-Making In Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 20-23.
[13] *Ibid*, 17-22.
[14] Zackodnik, *Press, Platform, Pulpit* (2011), 54-58.

any form of black agency or resistance, focusing instead on white paternalism.[15]

British women were central agents in organizing abolitionist petitions, walking door-to-door to encourage boycotts of slave-grown produce, and held meetings in their own homes and therefore subverted the traditional and unpolitical domestic sphere. More female rather than male groups aligned themselves with immediatism – the concept that slavery should immediately be eradicated – and they challenged the concept of female dependence and a deference to male authority.[16] Female groups in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Perth, Kirkcaldy, Cork, Belfast, Dublin, Bridgewater, Rochdale and Carlisle supported and arranged meetings for visiting abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass, and often survived longer than their male auxiliary groups. Women such as Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Pease and Anne Knight combined their long history of activism with other fledging abolitionists such as Mary Estlin, Eliza Wigham and Anna Richardson. When Ellen Craft settled in Britain in the early 1850s, female antislavery societies in Britain were far more numerous than male organizations.[17]

Maria Stewart, Sojourner Truth, and Ellen Craft had to navigate the difficulties of exploiting empathy for political gain, as well as the different representations placed on them by an audience: on the one hand, they had to identify and embody a civilized and refined woman, as well as the idea of an

[15] Clare Midgley, "British Abolitionism and Feminism in Transatlantic Perspective," in ed. Kathryn Kish Sklar and James Brewer, *Women's Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery in the Era of Emancipation,* 121-140. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 131-135.
[16] Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns 1780-1870* (London: Routledge, 1992), 70-71; 116.
[17] *Ibid*, 70-71; 124-138.

exotic black woman on stage. This tension was exaggerated in the abolitionist movement, when an African American body stood as testimony to the brutality of slavery. According to Zackodnik, these women "negotiated a politics of embodiment informing public perceptions of 'blackness' and 'womanhood'" as they argued racial uplift could only take place if black women were respected and treated as equals. Their race and gender formed publics that sometimes rejected the notion that black women should speak in public.[18]

Ellen Craft's activism on the British stage indicates the ways in which she challenged white racists and negotiated the boundaries of Victorian racial dynamics. The rest of this section will trace three ways in which she exploited aspects of adaptive resistance, including silent protest, the cultivation of political antislavery networks, and the nurturing of communal and familial networks. Her public performance has been scrutinized by numerous scholars, and her use of speech/silent protest on the transatlantic stage is an essential factor in her successful employment of adaptive resistance. But some scholars have often misinterpreted Ellen's activism. For example, Sirpa Salenius argues

[18] Zackodnik, *Press, Platform, Pulpit* (2011), xv-xxii. See also Alex W. Black, "Abolitionism's Resonant Bodies: The Realization of African American Performance," *American Quarterly* 63:3, (September 2011), 620-629. For further analysis of black feminism and resistance both on and outside the lecturing stage, see Renee K. Harrison, *Enslaved Women and the Art of Resistance in Antebellum America* (New York: Palgrave, 2009); Stephanie Camp, *Closer To Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Celeste-Marie Bernier, *Characters of Blood: Black Heroism in the Transatlantic Imagination* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2012); Celeste-Marie Bernier, "Iron Arguments': Spectacle, Rhetoric and the Slave Body in New England and British Antislavery Oratory," *European Journal of American Culture* 26:1, (2007), 57-78; Xiomara Santamarina, *Belabored Professions: Narratives of African American Working Womanhood* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Elizabeth J. Clapp and Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Women, Dissent and Anti-Slavery in Britain and America 1790-1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Valerie Smith, *Not Just Race, Not Just Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Frances Smith Foster, *Written By Herself: Literary Production by African American Women 1746-1892* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993); Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves 1894-1994* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999).

a transatlantic sisterhood emerged from the visits of black activist women such as Ellen Craft, Sarah Parker Remond and Harriet Jacobs. All three women "directly appealed to the shared womanhood of the female audiences they were addressing" and created, joined and shared networks and societies in which women were leaders or leading members. These women "displaced dominant norms, creating a counter-narrative to patriarchy and anti-blackness" and "assumed agency" to reframe "gendered subjectivity." While Salenius' analysis gives us a fresh and enlightening perspective on black female activism, her evaluation of Ellen's role is flawed. According to Salenius, Ellen "for the most part remained a passive recipient of white women's paternalist, or patronizing, benevolence." Instead of lecturing publicly, she "remained overshadowed by her husband, but she found her calling as a wife and a mother, two social responsibilities, or rights, that slavery had denied her." Ellen "tended to be overshadowed by her husband William and marginalized by William Wells Brown" and it is "difficult to hear Ellen's voice on these tours where she was objectified and exhibited on stage." Instead she "became part of a protective sisterhood in which white women took care of her in a motherly way" and "despite her submissiveness, pursued her personal dreams [of family] with the assistance of white British women."[19]

In fact, Ellen combined motherhood, domesticity *and* activism together on the British stage. She was not submissive in herself or to white women, and her activist networking serves as a complete contradiction to Salenius' argument. Unlike formerly enslaved individuals who fleetingly visited British

[19] Sirpa Salenius, "Transatlantic Interracial Sisterhoods: Sarah Remond, Ellen Craft, and Harriet Jacobs in England," *A Journal of Women Studies* 38:1, (2017), 166-170; 182-188.

shores or even William Wells Brown who stayed for several years, the Crafts established a permanent home in Britain. They mixed in middle and upper-class circles, and attended the theatre in London regularly, especially to watch black actors perform in plays such as *Othello*. Ellen in particular became involved with suffrage activists in London, and visited evening receptions attended by politicians and their influential wives.[20] While much scholarship focuses on Ellen's performance – which will be discussed first – more research is needed to uncover her tireless activism and self-reflexive strategies on the private stage: although her desire to celebrate her identity as an African American woman rather than the white slave was problematic while living amongst a white racial schema, her decision to establish a black network from her home in London represented a concrete commitment to black solidarity, something she would extend when she returned to the United States and organized a school for black children in Georgia. Her repeated networking and desire to challenge the legacy of slavery through retelling her story reveals the numerous ways in which she navigated the double embodiment of race and gender.

Born enslaved in Georgia in 1824 and 1826 respectively, William and Ellen Craft resolved to escape from fear they would be separated and any future children would be sold on the auction block. They devised an ingenious escape plan: Ellen would cross the boundaries of race, gender, class and even physical ability to assume the disguise of a disabled white southern gentleman (as her complexion was near-white as a result of her mother's rape). William

[20] Gay Gibson Cima, *Performing Anti-Slavery: Activist Women on Antebellum Stages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 227-230.

would act as her enslaved servant. Ellen wore spectacles, bandaged herself with poultices and put her right arm in a sling to disguise the fact she could not write. They embarked on a dangerous journey to Philadelphia via train and steamship, eventually settling in Boston until they were hunted by slave catchers. Abolitionists in Boston raised money for them to sail to England, where they remained until after the Civil War.[21]

The Crafts' arrival in Britain generated much excitement because of Ellen's complexion and tyrannical slaveholders were denounced for enslaving a "white" person: it was shocking for Victorian audiences to consider the notion of a white slave.[22] The extraordinary circumstances of their escape, together with Victorian racial dynamics, ensured numerous descriptions in British newspapers. William was described as a "fine and intelligent looking man but his negro character [was] unmistakeable" while Ellen was "darker than that of our country woman [and] was neatly dressed and exhibited a modest demeanour."[23] This correspondent was clearly at pains to highlight that although Ellen was described as white, her skin was still of a darker shade – therefore different – to English white women. In another newspaper, Ellen was a "gentle, refined-looking young creature of 24 years, as fair as most of her British sisters, and in mental qualifications their equal too." William was

[21] William and Ellen Craft, *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom, or the Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery* (London: William Tweedie, 1860). See also Hollygale Millette, "Exchanging Fugitive Identity: William and Ellen Craft's Transatlantic Reinvention (1850-1869)," 61-77, in Cora Kaplan and John Oldfield, *Imagining Transatlantic Slavery* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010); Geoffrey Sanborn, "The Plagiarist's Craft: Fugitivity and Theatricality in *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom*," *PMLA* 128:4, (2003), 907-922; Barbara McCaskill, *Love, Liberation and Escaping Slavery: William and Ellen Craft in Cultural Memory* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015). On disability, see the section on Ellen Craft in Ellen Samuels, *Fantasies of Identification: Disability, Gender, Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2014). For a comprehensive study on the Crafts in Britain, see R.J.M. Blackett, "Fugitive Slaves in Britain: The Odyssey of William and Ellen Craft," *Journal of American Studie*s 12:1 (April 1978), 41-62.

[22] William and Ellen Craft, *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom,* (1860); *The Aberdeen Journal*. 12 February 1851, 4; *The Bristol Mercury*. 12 April 1851, 6-8.

[23] *The Bristol Mercury*. 12 April 1851, 6-8.

"dark, but of a reflective intelligence countenance, and of manly and dignified deportment."[24] Ellen was also described as having "pleasing manners." These child-like and patronizing descriptions of both Ellen and William illustrate popular racial stereotypes.[25]

When focusing on Ellen, her etiquette and civility were judged to be acceptable for white society. These manners were compared to a white person of standing, and she did not appear uncivilized as per the typical stereotypes of black people. Ellen had passed the test and middle and upper classes welcomed her into the echelons of society. Ellen's case is a good example to illustrate how gender intersects with femininity and race: as a woman, Ellen was expected to defer to her husband and she was always described in feminized language. Another newspaper described her as an "intelligent and delicate good-looking woman" with no discernible traces of "African blood in her veins." Much like Frederick Douglass and Moses Roper, when African American men and women exhibited themselves on a public platform, audiences were looking for traits deemed to be common in people of African descent: the flat nose, the high cheekbones, the woolly hair, the dark complexion, all exaggerated and witnessed by white people in a minstrel show or cartoons in mid nineteenth century newspapers. Ellen's passage into white society was easier because she did not seem to possess these distinctive "negro" traits. Audiences were meant to feel horrified because Ellen's near whiteness did not protect her from an enslaved status, but at the same time

[24] *Hampshire Advertiser and Salisbury Guardian*. 26 April 1851, 7.
[25] *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*. 22 May 1851, 2; *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*. 29 May 1851, 3.

there was a distinct distance because she was still descended from Africans.[26] Even the famous concert singer Elizabeth Greenfield, who toured Britain in the early 1850s, was subjected to racialized descriptions and white control. Greenfield's white tour manager advertised her as a racial spectacle and organized segregated concerts; white women instructed her to dress in respectable clothing and hold herself in a manner which evoked civilized and refined behavior.[27]

Zackodnik argues Ellen Craft was "the drawing card" at antislavery meetings, and Craft carefully constructed her performance to finish the evening after her husband and William Wells Brown lectured on their experiences of slavery. She read the nature of British audiences well and recognized how she should act like a middle class, eloquent Victorian woman, particularly on a stage that did not usually welcome women of any color. Ellen's "whiteness" was the main attraction and she used her corporeal figure to appeal to audience emotions. In the trio's lectures, Brown and William Craft would chastise Britain for allowing antislavery spirit to fade, and describe their experiences in slavery. Ellen stood or sat in the background, a silent witness authenticating their speeches and adding an element of shock and horror to a white Victorian audience.[28] At the end of antislavery meetings, she "stood forward…so as to become visible to the audience, by whom she was cordially and repeatedly cheered."[29] Her whiteness was central to her celebrity and her silence was a distinct performative strategy to highlight the

[26] *Dundee Courier*. 29 January 1851, 3.
[27] Sara Lampert, "Black Swan/White Raven: The Racial Politics of Elizabeth Greenfield's American Concert Career, 1851-1855," *American Nineteenth Century History* 17:1, (2016), 77-85.
[28] Zackodnik, *Press, Platform, Pulpit* (2011), 59-75.
[29] *The Bristol Mercury*. 12 April 1851, 6.

sexual violence women faced in slavery.[30] Both Craft (and later Remond) employed what Zackodnik refers to as the "tragic mulatta" trope, in which both women focused on the "whitened slave" to illustrate the evils of slavery.[31] White abolitionists used mixed-race individuals like Ellen Craft as a symbol of slavery's brutality and urged their white audiences into action. The "spectacle of racial hybridity" became a powerful tool in the abolitionist arsenal, and frustrated proslavery supporters on both sides of the Atlantic.[32]

Ellen's use of silent protest was echoed outside the traditional lecturing arena too. Lisa Merrill, for example, argues William Wells Brown and the Crafts organized a deliberate performance during the Great Exhibition in 1851. Originally, white abolitionist Henry Clarke Wright wanted the Crafts to play on Ellen's tragic mulatta figure, encouraging them to be auctioned off in a staged performance at the Exhibition. Evidently, the Crafts refused this objectification and adopted a different performative technique instead.[33] This was a unique platform – separate from the abolitionist sphere – where innovations in art, technology and science were displayed from the United States and in Europe, and became a space where men and women from all classes, races and nations mixed in the elegant Crystal Palace. Brown and the Crafts planned to "transform and re-appropriate their audience's gaze in an explicitly performative act of self-determination" and offer a small but significant protest against American slavery. The event gave these formerly

[30] Zackodnik, "The Enslaved As Spectacle," (2002), 9-20.
[31] *Ibid*, 3-6. For more on the tragic mulatta figure, see Kimberley Synder Manganelli, *Transatlantic Spectacles of Race: The Tragic Mulatta and the Tragic Muse* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012).
[32] Lisa Merrill, "Most Fitting Companions: Making Mixed-Race Bodies Visible in Antebellum Public Spaces," *Theatre Survey* 56:2, (May 2015), 138-143.
[33] Kimberley Synder Manganelli, *Transatlantic Spectacles of Race: The Tragic Mulatta and the Tragic Muse* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 69-70.

enslaved individuals and their abolitionist friends a chance to carefully plan a performance to shock American slaveholders and other visitors into a response. Merrill argues this "choreographed" event involved Brown linking arms with a white female abolitionist, and a white male abolitionist linking arms with Ellen Craft, as they walked through the Exhibition's American section on a day where the upper classes and Queen Victoria would be visiting. Their black bodies would act as a form of protest against the American display and provoke spectacle: United States democracy would be exposed as a sham. Brown and the Crafts chose to exhibit themselves in front of Hiram Power's sculpture of an enslaved Greek woman about to be sold, entitled *The Greek Slave.* The party stopped in front of the sculpture and Brown announced to a gathering crowd he was a fugitive slave and placed upon the sculpture a drawing of *The Virginian Slave* (an image from *Punch* magazine of an enslaved black woman). Ellen Craft's silent protest was akin to her position on the abolitionist platform, "her white appearance offering corporeal testimony" to the plight of enslaved women.[34] Similarly, Alex Black argues Ellen's performance at the Great Exhibition relied on her body in order to be successful. Neither Hiram Power's statue nor the Punch image were accurate representations of an enslaved body or an African American, so Ellen provided the truth – or an authentic representation – of what a formerly enslaved African American looked like. Her "resonant body and voice" forced

[34] Lisa Merrill, "Exhibiting Race 'Under the World's Huge Glass Case': William and Ellen Craft and William Wells Brown at the Great Exhibition in Crystal Palace, London, 1851," *Slavery and Abolition* 33:2, (2012), 322-331. Merrill also discusses the incident in "Most Fitting Companions: Making Mixed-Race Bodies Visible in Antebellum Public Spaces," *Theatre Survey* 56:2, (May 2015). See also Cima, *Performing Anti-Slavery: Activist Women on Antebellum Stages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 180-185, and Uri McMillan, *Embodied Avatars: Genealogies Black Feminist Art and Performance* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 60-68. The Crafts' protest was also noticed by American newspapers such as the *Pennsylvania Freeman*. 7 August 1851, 2 and *New Hampshire Sentinel*. 7 August 1851, 2.

audiences to consider their own stereotypes and offered an alternative form of representation.[35] This bold performance illustrates black abolitionist willingness to explore new platforms to exploit and create spectacle, and invade traditional white spaces beyond the lecture hall. A short declaration from Brown encouraged interest from the surrounding crowd, and all three exhibited their bodies without objectifying themselves. In a rehearsed performance Brown and the Crafts not only selected the exhibition to enact their performance, but also the day and the manner of that performance. They turned the Great Exhibition into a public stage in which to denounce slavery in the South.[36]

While most scholars have concentrated on Ellen's silence as a performative strategy, Gay Gibson Cima argues that Ellen "may have been the first female fugitive to speak from an abolitionist stage" in the United States and has recovered evidence of Ellen's public voice. In a meeting in New Bedford in February 1849, Ellen answered questions from the audience about slavery and whether she was called a "nigger in the south." As the Crafts embarked further on their lecturing tour in America, other audiences called on Ellen to speak and she "replied to a few questions."[37] Ellen's decision to speak on the public stage continued until April, as a letter from John L. Lord in *The Liberator* confirms Ellen addressing the audience again. While the early meetings consisted of her answering questions, and confirming or denying facts about slavery, Lord's letter seems to imply she gave a lecture about her

[35] Alex W. Black, "Abolitionism's Resonant Bodies: The Realization of African American Performance," *American Quarterly* 63:3, (September 2011), 623.
[36] Merrill, "Most Fitting Companions: Making Mixed-Race Bodies Visible in Antebellum Public Spaces," (2015), 146-148.
[37] Cima, *Performing Anti-Slavery*, (2014), 199-207.

experience. In Newburyport, eight or nine hundred people came to hear William Wells Brown and the Crafts' speak. When Ellen was introduced, she "gave a very particular account of their escape" and "it was told in so simple and artless a manner, as must have carried conviction to the mind of every one present."[38] There is little evidence to suggest she spoke in her British lectures, giving the impression she preferred a silent protest to illustrate the barbarities of slavery. She understood Victorian racial dynamics and exploited it to present her near-white body as an illustration of sexual violence. Her change in strategy was a deliberate attempt to alter her performances on a completely different stage in a new context.

However, this did not prevent her from asserting her own opinion on the British stage. During a meeting in Edinburgh in 1851 with the black activist J.C.W. Pennington, Ellen used laughter to mock his argument that in line with the Fugitive Slave Act if he was recaptured and sold into slavery, it was his Christian duty to capitulate. Her derision toward Pennington's argument and her act of resistance reminded him and perhaps her audiences the freedom they all enjoyed in Britain compared to the horrors of slavery and the terror of escaping in the United States.[39] As Cima argues, Ellen's self-fashioning was based on her constantly being "in motion throughout her life – she stood her own ground while escaping others' constructions of her." While her body represented spectacle on the Victorian stage, she moved beyond audience's impressions of her as an attraction and Cima proves Ellen often altered her silent performance to challenge audience perceptions. Her

[38] John L. Lord, *The Liberator*. 27 April 1849. Accessed 25 March 2017, http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/craft/support2.html
[39] Cima, *Performing Anti-Slavery* (2014), 212-219.

"unexpected moments of outspokenness and laughter" were symbols of her self-reflexive strategies in the face of celebrity and Victorian racial dynamics.[40]

Ellen sought to make her voice heard in other ways too, and exploited print culture in particular. In 1852, Ellen addressed a letter to proslavery supporters in reply to a rumour circulating in the United States that she wished to return to slavery. The letter, published in *The Liberator,* counteracted this racist claim: the "erroneous report" was "entirely unfounded" as she "never had the slightest inclination whatever of returning to bondage." She would "much rather starve in England, a free woman, than be a slave for the best man that ever breathed upon the American continent."[41] In Ellen's letter, she represents herself as anything but the passive, meek, submissive soul some painted her as: she was willing to die before she became enslaved again. Barbara McCaskill argues she signed the letter as Ellen Craft to denote respectability, domesticity and her marriage to William but also her liberated self from slavery's clutches. Life in freedom had allowed her to marry whomever she wanted and a chance to raise her children away from fears of separation. Freedom gave her the opportunities to truly live her life as a woman, mother, wife, worker, and activist too.[42]

Thus, Ellen's use of silence as a performative strand of adaptive resistance was a unique tactic to appeal to Victorian audiences. Occasionally,

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[40] *Ibid*, 180-185.
[41] Ellen Craft, 26 October 1852, in "Letters of Antislavery Workers and Agencies' Part 5," *Journal of Negro History* 10:3, (1925), 444-468.
[42] Barbara McCaskill, "Yours Very Truly': Ellen Craft – The Fugitive as Text and Artifact," *African American Review* 28:4, (Winter 1994), 512-515.

she expressed her opinions through laughing, answering questions, or using literary skill to denounce racists, illustrating she was not averse to responding to white critics. She used her body to reject British conceptions of slavery and avoided objectification by staging both public and private protests. Even if she was not in a position to completely control the reception of her performances however, she exploited the print culture strand within adaptive resistance as well as cultivating political and communal networks in conjunction with her performances to challenge white supremacy. Her creation of communal friendships in particular was a clear expression of her racial pride but also independence from white abolitionists.

As soon as she stepped foot on British soil, Ellen exploited the last strand of adaptive resistance – networks – to cultivate friendships and political connections. She and her husband frequently joined with other formerly enslaved individuals on the lecturing circuit and, most famously, worked with William Wells Brown for several years. Both men gave lectures after the display of Brown's Panorama, depicting slavery on two thousand feet of canvas.[43] In these meetings, Brown described how himself and the Crafts had not escaped from a dictatorship or a monarchical government, like other refugees who had fled to Britain. They were "flying away from the stars and stripes of America," even though they had committed no crime.[44]

[43] *Glasgow Herald*. 3 January 1851, 5.
[44] William Wells Brown, *National Anti-Slavery Standard*. 1851, accessed via Black Abolitionist Archive, 25 March 2016, http://research.udmercy.edu/find/special_collections/digital/baa/item.php?record_id=711&collectionCode=baa

Barbara MsCaskill states that the Crafts "met and mingled with aristocrats, international activists and celebrated artists" and created substantial networks from their home in London.[45] In July 1860, William Craft wrote about the numerous "proslavery Americans" in Britain that tried to "poison and mislead the public" and evidently, both William and Ellen were fully aware of the importance of networking in "private circles" where their influence was more significant rather than public lectures.[46] As early as 1851, abolitionist Mary Estlin wrote that Ellen was surprised and frustrated at "the amount of pro-slavery feeling among the English, the bigotry of the majority of people and anti-slavery people, [and] the small number of actual working abolitionists." Ellen believed the Garrisonians in America had "greatly overestimated" the support in Britain, as they were not "aware of the manifold difficulties which we have to contend before we can get up any interest that will produce fruits."[47] Hence, throughout their time in Britain, the Crafts adapted their performance and celebrity to use whatever avenues necessary to combat racial prejudice, slowly building up a network of solid friends and benefactors in a climate where pro-slavery support in Britain continued to grow.

Gay Gibson Cima concurs, and argues Ellen asserted her black identity and "seized the opportunity to perform her cosmopolitan independence." The Crafts dined with influential and upper-class members of society, and Ellen was anything but silent. During one dinner party, she was seated next to the

[45] Barbara McCaskill, *Love, Liberation and Escaping Slavery: William and Ellen Craft in Cultural Memory* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 34; 90.
[46] William Craft to Samuel May, 17 July 1860. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, MS.B.16.V8P.32.
[47] Mary Anne Estlin to Miss Weston, 1851. Boston Public Library Antislavery Collection, accessed 25 March 2015 http://archive.org/details/youhavebeenveryg00estl

former Governor of Jamaica Edward J. Eyre, who brutally suppressed the Morant Bay slave revolt in 1865. Unaware of his background, she discussed the situation in Jamaica and when it was pointed out to her who she was sitting next to, she betrayed no sense of embarrassment and instead criticized his decision to execute black politician George William Gordon for his supposed part in the rebellion. "Do you not yourself, sir" stated Ellen, "feel now that poor Gordon was unjustly executed?" Her "sophisticated grasp of the power of political improvisation" was acute, and she repeated this again with Charles F. Brown (also known as Artemius Ward), who was notorious in his racist depictions of black people. Ellen, "looking him straight in the eye," challenged him and stated he should "never again write anything which shall make people believe that you are against the negro." As Cima argues, she was no mere fugitive or celebrity – or in Salenius' word, submissive – her self-reflexive performative strategies were honed on the British stage as she used or created scenarios to challenge white racists.[48]

In conjunction with her performances, antislavery and cosmopolitan networks, Ellen forged her own communal networks that celebrated racial pride, black solidarity, and the African American family. Perhaps organized to firmly align her identity with African Americans, as compared to her proscribed white slave performance along a white racial schema, Ellen used private circles to establish her ancestral links to family and friends who remained in the United States. Although it has been previously undiscussed by historians, Ellen turned her home into a safe refuge for other formerly

[48] Cima, *Performing Anti-Slavery* (2014), 220-230; *Chicago Tribune*. 28 January 1867, 1.

enslaved individuals. While William travelled to Africa in 1863, she cared for a formerly enslaved woman ("her old companion in bonds") together with her five children. According to a local newspaper, the woman's husband was sold away years before but both promised each other to run away and join each other in Africa. "In faith and love" she was convinced he would meet her there, and she had travelled to England where she was "taken by the hand in London by her old friend, Mrs. Craft." The article urged its readers to make a donation to help the woman's family and journey to Africa, as a captain had already been sourced. While it was a "romantic enterprise" she had "great faith in its success" and once landed, she "will have introductions to friendly hearts in that wide country" and "some clues she has by which she hopes to regain her husband's side."[49] It is highly likely Ellen's private contacts and extensive networks allowed her to help her friend and source a captain for this enterprise, as well as finding certain people in Africa who may have been able to locate the husband. Perhaps William's contacts or even William himself helped while he was in Africa.

Ellen's desire to create familial networks and align herself with her black identity also extended to organizing her mother's journey to Britain. While William was away once again in Africa, she and other abolitionists on both sides of the Atlantic discovered her mother still alive in Georgia (for Ellen had no contact with her previously) and with the help of a General from the Union army, orchestrated her mother's safe arrival in London.[50] Ellen's commitment to family and friends and her determination to help formerly

[49] *Newcastle Chronicle*. 16 May 1863, 2.
[50] *Newcastle Courant*. 15 December 1865, 2. See also McCaskill, *Love, Liberation and Escaping Slavery* (2015), 59-61.

enslaved women in particular highlights the myriad ways in which she consolidated and generated black solidarity in Britain. She helped others escape the United States and establish new lives, and used all her private contacts to create a transatlantic network to challenge American slavery. Echoing the thousands of African Americans who tried to find family members after the Civil War, Ellen had spent years cultivating important networks in Britain and saving for her mother's release that she was in a position to exploit such networks to extend and protect the bonds of kinship and love when the time came.

When the Crafts returned to American soil in 1868, Ellen continued to celebrate her black identity and nourish reformist networks.[51] She created further opportunities to tell her story and educate others on the legacy of slavery. For example, and when she visited Philadelphia in 1881 she addressed a small gathering of friends and abolitionists. In this previously undiscovered speech, she recounted her story to a private circle of influential people – where she had always excelled in Britain – and recalled how "memories of days gone by rise up" as she walked through the streets of Philadelphia, and declared how "except for the feeling of security" it felt "but yesterday since I was a fugitive slave hidden within a few miles of here, dreading day and night that my place of rest" would be discovered. She continued:

> Oh! but those were stirring days, never to be forgotten. It is an old story, but one worth

[51] *Carson Daily Appeal*. 9 April 1874, 2.

> repeating…How we managed to travel the thousand miles between [Georgia] and Philadelphia without being detected seems like a miracle. At all the principal hotels on the way I was the 'invalid gentleman from the south' and at times I was compelled to sit at dining tables and converse with men who had known me as a slave. Finally, however, after running great risks we landed in Philadelphia with our hearts in our mouths. We were driven to the colored hotel, then on pine street, and I shall never forget how surprised and perplexed the landlord looked when half an hour after our arrival, I came down stairs in woman's garments...[52]

In their *Narrative*, William stifles Ellen's textual self and any agency by her is removed in an attempt to appeal to Victorian domesticity.[53] The extract above is one of the few sources we have where Ellen describes her escape in detail in her own voice. While it is likely she had some input in the Craft's *Narrative*, this speech to a small private gathering illustrates not only her use of networking but her desire to describe her experience as a black woman escaping slavery. For Ellen and other formerly enslaved women, slavery could never be forgotten and she continued to challenge the legacy of enslavement by relating her experiences. She discussed how "perplexed the landlord

[52] *St Louis Globe-Democrat*. 30 December 1881, 6; *Indianapolis Sentinel*. 3 January 1882, 7.
[53] McCaskill, "Yours Very Truly," (Winter 1994), 519-525.

looked" after she had cast aside her disguise, and alludes to the change in her status as she walked down the stairs: once a formerly enslaved individual, she was free and in control of her own destiny. While she could not forget slavery nor her terrifying ordeal, she related this story not through the corporeal – she barely mentions her near-whiteness – but aligns herself with her black identity. At the end of her story, she recounts how in Boston the "colored people held mass-meetings" and promised to defend them "to the death" if slave-catchers tried to find them. While she gave passing thanks to white abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips, she focused on the local black population's heroism and bravery in an overwhelming example of black community and solidarity. Furthermore, she alludes to her own celebrity, "the Craft excitement," offering a rare commentary on her own fame in the United States compared to her enormous transatlantic celebrity in Britain.

This newspaper article is also a unique example of Ellen's heroism and courageous resistance through her own words. Amongst this private circle of friends, she was not restricted by the double embodiment facing women on the public stage, and could celebrate her ingenious strategy as a "miracle:" she knew the escape completely rested on her ability to act as a white, disabled southern gentleman and if she failed death may have been the result. She was forced to sit with men whom she recognized and the numerous "great risks" she endured were testament to her own self-reflexive performative strategies she would later hone on the lecturing circuit. Unlike William's account of their escape in speeches on the British stage, or their *Narrative*, the extract

above serves to highlight Ellen's perspective on their escape and how crucial her performance was to the success of their mission. Ellen's continued activism highlights her courageous achievements to challenge the legacy of slavery, create private and influential networks, and establish her home as a place of black community and solidarity both in Britain and in the United States.

"She Would Make A Few Remarks on Slavery:" Uncovering Mrs. Jackson From Her Husband's Shadow

Ellen Craft and Sarah Parker Remond remain the two most famous examples of black female activists living and working in Britain during the mid-nineteenth century. Their demands for abolition, coupled with the cultivation of their celebrity, propelled them into the spotlight and they educated thousands of British people on the nature of American slavery. However, (re)discovering other black women from history is an essential step towards a more complete picture of the transatlantic lecture circuit. Several formerly enslaved women travelled to Britain during the nineteenth century, but not necessarily to lecture. For example, Harriet Jacobs explored parts of Britain in 1847 and returned in 1858 to try and publish her *Narrative*, and Dinah, a woman born enslaved in Virginia worked with John Hawkins Simpson to publish a narrative of her life in 1863. Jacobs and Dinah present two very different but graphic tales of the reality of American slavery for black women,

chronicling sustained physical and sexual violence, and the forced separation of children.[54]

As shown above, Ellen Craft deserves to shed her reputation as a "wife" (or "housewife" as described by one historian), and instead be seen as an independent and strong black woman in her own right.[55] Mrs Jackson, a formerly enslaved woman who travelled to Britain with her husband John Andrew Jackson, also deserves separate attention from her husband. The latter published a narrative of his experience in slavery in 1862 while the couple were in Britain, and conducted a successful lecturing tour around the country. Most newspaper reports or contemporary scholars do not mention the important role Mrs Jackson played within this lecturing tour, as on some occasions she gave her own testimony which ought to be viewed as separate and important narratives. Unlike black male activists who were always introduced by white men on the Victorian stage, Mrs Jackson was introduced – and therefore authenticated – by her husband, and exploited her peripheral position in a more reactive fashion on the public stage than Ellen Craft. She was free from abolitionist control specifically *because* of her gender, and played on this and the patriarchal nature of antislavery politics to speak out against slavery. In her short speeches, Mrs Jackson used assimilationist techniques to appear dependent on white abolitionist support (particularly in her acknowledgement for white funding) but subversively counteracted this by

[54] Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Boston, 1861); John Hawkins Simpson, *Horrors of the Virginian Slave Trade and of the Slave-Rearing Plantations. The True Story of Dinah, an Escaped Virginian Slave, Now in London* (London: A.W. Bennett, 1863). See also Jean Fagan Yellin ed., *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers: Volume 1* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).
[55] Richard Blackett, *Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 188. Blackett mentions this in a summary of black people who visited Britain during the Civil War.

the act of speaking herself. She used these techniques together with her fugitive slave status. Sarah Parker Remond was born a free black woman and although she experienced much racism and discrimination on behalf of her skin, she had never been enslaved. The relatively small narrative we have by Mrs Jackson represents a rare tale from someone who publicly lectured on her experience of being enslaved.[56]

We know little of Mrs. Jackson's early life. John Andrew Jackson was born enslaved in Sumter County in South Carolina, and after he was separated from his first wife escaped to the North. He settled in Canada after the Fugitive Slave Act and married his second wife, who was born enslaved in North Carolina. With the support of prominent Bostonian abolitionists, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Frederick Douglass' friend Julia Griffiths once in England, the Jacksons' travelled to Britain in 1857 to raise money to purchase John's relatives from slavery.[57] Some newspaper reports of the Jacksons' lectures are more ambiguous as to who lectured across the course of their visit. One newspaper reviewed Jackson's lecture very briefly in June 1857, and mentions Mrs. Jackson in attendance. According to the correspondent, "an account of her escape formed part" of the speech but it is unclear whether she narrated this herself or her husband did this on her behalf.[58] If Mrs. Jackson

[56] Most historians concentrate on John Andrew Jackson, partly because of his narrative and his subsequent success as a lecturer on the transatlantic circuit. Mrs. Jackson is not mentioned in Susanna Ashton's work *I Belong to South Carolina: South Carolina Slave Narratives* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012).
[57] *The Gravesend Reporter*. 1 September 1860, 4; Biography of John Andrew Jackson, in Peter Ripley ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers, Vol. 1: The British Isles 1830-1865* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), accessed 30 March 2017, http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/jackson/bio.html; John Andrew Jackson, *The Experience of A Slave in South Carolina* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1862).
[58] *Paisley Herald and Renfrewshire Advertiser*. 13 June 1857, 8. In a meeting reported in *The Ashton Weekly Reporter, and Stalybridge and Dukinfield Chronicle*. 24 April 1858, 3, Jackson "gave an account of his wife's escape, who is travelling with him."

did not start lecturing publicly when she first arrived in Britain, she could have demanded from her husband that her role be expanded on the lecturing tour, or she could have benefited from Sarah Parker Remond's public activism and began lecturing after Remond had established a name for herself as a female black lecturer on stage, and perhaps made it acceptable within some circles for this to happen.

On the 1 September 1860, *The Gravesend Reporter* reviewed a "lecture by a fugitive slave:" John Andrew Jackson. His "photographic" descriptions of scenes he had witnessed were most heart-rending" and he referred to slave-owners as "demons." Jackson related his escape, and then "Mrs. Jackson addressed the audience after her husband had concluded." The correspondent was impressed by her diction, although it was "in a peculiar American tone," and stated she "had the advantage of being brought up in the house" as "a lady's maid." While it is impossible to know exactly what Mrs Jackson said, the offhand remark in which this is referred to reveals an ignorant and racist belief in which black women were "better off" in the plantation house. Mrs Jackson did not want to talk about sexual abuse she may have experienced or witnessed to her Victorian audiences (either because of significant trauma or because it would have upset notions of Victorian gentility, or indeed both) but the correspondent here completely ignores the physical, mental and sexual abuse that black women faced on a daily basis while living in the plantation house.[59]

[59] *The Gravesend Reporter*. 1 September 1860, 4.

The correspondent also reports that Mrs Jackson was "very grateful for the sympathy shown" to herself and her husband, and pointed out any money raised was sent to free her husband's enslaved family members. Anticipating and exploiting Victorian racial dynamics, Mrs Jackson declared any donations were sent to a British benefactor who acted as a middle man to ensure the funds were properly saved and delivered. A practice many black lecturers were forced to comply with, it revealed the complex racial dynamics where white abolitionists often distrusted formerly enslaved individuals to keep the money they raised, believing they would be frivolous with it. This distrust stemmed from racist ideas that black people could not be independent and manage their own affairs. It was a damning stereotype which also betrayed patronisation, as though women such as Mrs Jackson would forget or forsake their brethren for money.

At the meeting's end, and in an incident which further illustrated the differences in gender and class politics, the chairman made special note to thank Mr Jackson and how he should be "entitled to a large expression of their sympathy." The erasure of Mrs Jackson's contribution is a significant moment: regardless of how long she spoke for, or who was advertised on the playbills, she made the decision (whether planned or otherwise) to lecture on her own experience. In this scenario, Mrs Jackson uses assimilationist *and* dissonant techniques in her performance and declares support for their white benefactor to appeal to – and sound genuine – to Victorian audiences. A subversive architect, Mrs. Jackson does not declare any form of allegiance to this benefactor however, as it is clear from her own courageous escape from

slavery and her involvement in their transatlantic tour she was anything but dependent or frivolous.[60]

Three years later, the Jacksons were still courting the British lecturing circuit. In a meeting in Exeter in January 1863, John Andrew Jackson gave a "thrilling" and "amusing" narrative of slavery and the Confederate forces in the United States. His "simple unvarnished tale was listened to with interest" and he demanded "their support in setting free his brethren, and striking the fetters from the helpless slave." Jackson then introduced his wife, who "modestly said she was no lecturer, but she would make a few remarks on slavery." Regardless of her background or experience as an official speaker, Mrs. Jackson declared her right to speak on a subject which she was well versed, and offered her own experience of slavery. She "spoke with earnestness in the cause" and "she did not spare those persons who pretended to be the friends of the slave, and having power did not use it to abolish slavery." She wanted to share her unique perspective as a black woman, and used her voice to challenge public perceptions of American slavery and black women in general. Mrs. Jackson used her radical feminist politics to speak on the public stage and denounced men and women who were in positions of power but yet still refused to use their white privilege to end slavery. Perhaps referring to prominent politicians, either in Britain or the United States or even transatlantic abolitionists, she did not want to work with those who made false promises and would only trust those who had a genuine interest in helping enslaved individuals or their communities.[61]

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[60] *The Gravesend Reporter*. 1 September 1860, 4.
[61] *Western Times*. 30 January 1863, 5.

Being married was not necessarily a benefit for Mrs. Jackson. Despite the gendered nature of Victorian society, Sarah Parker Remond – who was unmarried – conducted a very successful tour. However, unlike her husband or Remond, Mrs. Jackson was free from abolitionist control and calls for testimonials: in John Andrew Jackson's narrative, numerous white testimonials attesting to his credibility were printed, as was customary for formerly enslaved individuals and their experiences. Mrs. Jackson however is not mentioned in the work, and was probably one of the few formerly enslaved people to speak publicly without needing some form of white patronization towards her character. Because of gender and racial dynamics, she was not the central attraction to the lecturing circuit, and used this role as an advantage to speak freely and expertly on the subject she knew best with relatively little fear of reprisal or demands for her authenticity.[62]

Hence, Craft and Jackson practiced unique performances and radical feminist politics while battling a double embodiment of race and gender on the Victorian stage. These performative strategies shed new light onto our understanding of transatlantic abolitionism as the women I discuss were exploiting a gendered form of adaptive resistance, but also each woman relied on a different model of adaptive resistance. Ellen adopted three models including silence, courting political antislavery networks and establishing familial networks from her home in London that reached across the Atlantic. She was far removed from the quiet, submissive figure that historians have

[62] John Andrew Jackson, *The Experience of A Slave in South Carolina* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1862), 45-48.

painted her as, and her use of silence as a distinct performative strategy of adaptive resistance was in parallel to her creation and exploitation of antislavery networks in the private sphere. She boldly used her corporeal self to speak for her, preferring instead to speak out against racism in private circles. Amongst influential and upper-class circles whether in the United States or in Britain, Craft used every opportunity to employ dissonant language and denounce racism and frame her own dramatic and courageous escape in her own words. Until Ida B. Well's visit in the 1890s, Ellen and Sarah Remond were the only famous black women to appear on the antislavery circuit on a British stage, but this chapter has sought to recover Mrs. Jackson from her husband's shadow and place her in a radical black feminist transatlantic tradition. She was the first black American to speak on her experiences as an enslaved woman, and unlike her male or female counterparts, exploited her peripheral status to speak freely from white abolitionist control.

Mrs. Jackson and her husband continued to lecture against slavery in Britain during the American Civil War. Black activists could no longer ignore the worrying growth of pro-Confederate support, which was inexplicably linked to a rise in scientific racism. Convinced the war's outcome would mean either the survival or the death of slavery, lecturers campaigned with heightened urgency and tried to convince Britons to support the Union cause. Throughout the war years, activists subverted white racist thought on both an abolitionist and non-abolitionist stage and despite dwindling abolitionist

networks forged their own path to win support for abolition. The next chapter will explore these themes in more detail.

Chapter 6: "Have No Fellowship I Pray You, With These Merciless Menstealers:" Black Resistance Against the Confederacy and Scientific Racism During the Civil War (1861-1865)

In June 1861, John S. Jacobs, brother to activist and formerly enslaved individual Harriet Jacobs, wrote that while the "excitement" over the Civil War was "daily increasing," most Britons were "ignorant of the character of the slaveholder and of the cause of the disturbed state of the Union:"

> I am sorry to say, with all the blood and guilt of the slaveholders' souls, there are Englishmen here that dare express sympathy for them. I hope it is their ignorance, and not the want of humanity…If the American flag is to be planted on the altar of freedom, then I am ready to be offered on that altar, if I am wanted; if it must wave over the slave, with his chains and fetters clanking, let me breathe the free air of another land, and die a man and not a chattel.[1]

[1] John S. Jacobs to Isaac Post, 5 June 1861, in Peter Ripley, *The Black Abolitionist Papers: Vol. 1, The British Isles, 1830-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 491-492.

Jacobs was surprised that, given Britain's history of antislavery, the nation should ever entertain any form of pro-Confederate sympathy. He subtly attacked Britain's narrative of moral superiority, hoping this was mere "ignorance" rather than a lack of feeling. Regardless of how indecisive or disappointing Britain's narrative was however, he was willing to lay down his life for the Union, the symbol of freedom. Fugitive slave William Andrew Jackson concurred, and said he would "always stand up for the Constitution and the Union as it ought to be." Irrespective of America's flaws, formerly enslaved individuals like Jacobs and Jackson hoped the War would finally lead to a firm commitment to liberty in the United States, and they pledged to do all they could to stir up support for the Union in Britain.[2]

In his seminal book *Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War,* Richard Blackett argues that "no other international event…had such a profound effect on the economic and political life of Britain as did the war in America."[3] The War had a dramatic impact on the British political and economic landscape, particularly in counties such as Lancashire and Cheshire which were dependent on slave-grown cotton. When exports of cotton dried up, large numbers of workers were unemployed and in Burnley in 1862 for example, 10,000 out of 13,000 were unable to work. By the end of that year, thousands of working people held a large meeting in Manchester to show British support for the Emancipation Proclamation. Black men like Jackson encouraged working men and women to identify with his enslaved brethren,

[2] William Andrew Jackson to ? November 1862, in Clare Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists: An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974), 487.
[3] R.J.M Blackett, *Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University State Press, 2001), 6-7; 25-26.

connecting certain employers to exploitative and oppressive slave-owners. President Lincoln responded to a letter from this meeting, and celebrated their "sublime Christian heroism," and arranged several relief ships including the *George Griswold* that docked in Liverpool in early 1863 with food and money.[4] These supplies were welcomed by working class families who suffered from unemployment and lack of food, but despite this relief ship there was certainly no unanimous support for the Union. As Blackett points out, "support of the Confederacy turned on the issue of the right to economic and political independence, tinged as it not infrequently was by a sense of racial solidarity."[5]

The Cotton Crisis, together with mounting tensions both within and outside Parliament, led to a plethora of printed material from pro-Union and pro-Confederate groups who aimed to sway the public to their respective side.[6] While it is difficult to estimate how many African Americans in total gave lectures in Britain during the Civil War period, at least forty spoke out against the Confederacy and influenced hundreds of Britons across the country. Individuals such as Henry 'Box' Brown, John Williams, William and Ellen Craft, and William Howard Day had been in Britain before the War had commenced, but J. Sella Martin, T. Morris Chester and William Andrew Jackson (amongst others) travelled to Britain to target the South and its advocates abroad. Blackett states that although these men and women had differing opinions about the conflict, all were united in the concept that slavery had been the catalyst for the war. Black activists continued to use

[4] Alan Rice, "The Cotton That Connects, The Cloth That Binds," *Atlantic Studies* 4:2, (2007), 295-299.
[5] Blackett, *Divided Hearts* (2001), 7-9.
[6] *Ibid*, 6-7; 25-26.

whips and chains on the Victorian stage, showed illustrations of slave ships and reproduced iconography such as the image of the formerly enslaved man Gordon to highlight the brutality of slavery.[7] Ultimately, as Blackett argues, black Americans "played pivotal roles in the effort to rally public opinion to the cause of the Union" and they were the "dominant voice in the public debate over the war."[8] The "work of these African Americans put the Confederacy at a decided disadvantage, for although they did not speak with one voice about the cause of the war, they were a constant reminder that slavery was at the center of the conflict."[9]

In this chapter, I will build on Blackett's seminal work and argue that African Americans recognized and challenged the links between American slavery, pro-Confederate support and scientific racism in Britain. As a result, they operated with a greater sense of urgency: most African Americans (at least publicly) were confident that this conflict signaled the end of American slavery. At the same time, they operated in a climate of dwindling abolitionist networks, racism, and challenges from pro-Confederate supporters in Britain who were constantly distributing propaganda. Many abolitionists were forced to alter their rhetoric and performances to reflect and challenge this shift, and they became more vocal on both an abolitionist and non-abolitionist stage to challenge white supremacy. In 1861 for example, Henry Highland Garnet was concerned at the lack of antislavery sentiment and criticized pro-slavery Americans who had infected the British with their "leprous distilment" of

[7] *Ibid,* 132-134; 166-167.
[8] R.J.M. Blackett, "African Americans, the British Working Class and the American Civil War," *Slavery & Abolition* 17:2, (1996), 52-53.
[9] Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, (2001), 133-134.

racism.[10] Sarah Parker Remond also acknowledged this change in a letter to the *Daily News* in November 1865 stating that "attacks as ungenerous as they are unjust are made upon the negro race" and if a crime is committed "exact the full penalty, but do not make it the occasion of the most insulting and unjust attacks upon a whole race, on account of a difference of complexion."[11]

Pro-Southern support in Britain fed on growing racism towards black people, and on many levels made the Southern cause more acceptable. Since one of the aims of the Confederacy itself was to maintain and perpetuate slavery, black activists challenged the misconceptions of black inferiority and sought to remind the British of their antislavery past and prevent the nation from recognizing the South. Other activists were more explicit about the War's white supremacist aims. In December 1861, William Howard Day blamed the War on the egotism of the "Anglo-Saxon races" in which the African American voice was completely erased. Nelson Countee concurred, arguing that both sides were "twin brothers in the unholy transaction…an avaricious set of people [who] did not care who sank so long as they swam."[12]

The links between the Confederacy and scientific racism were made clear when Dr. James Hunt, President of the Anthropological Society of London (ASL), invited Confederate agents such as Henry Hotze to become ASL members. As Robert E. Bonner argues, Hotze became "an international racial propagandist" who sought to promote support for "the two primary

[10] Blackett, "African Americans, the British Working Class and the American Civil War," (1996), 55.
[11] Sarah Parker Remond to *The Daily News,* 7 November 1865, in Ripley ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers,* (1985), 568-569.
[12] Blackett, "African Americans, the British Working Class and the American Civil War," (1996), 57-58.

goals of Confederates – securing the sovereign independence of their new government and perpetuating slavery." Even before he was accepted as a member of the Anthropological Society of London, Hotze believed that "race was the most important pivot of human history." Following the ideas of Robert Knox, Josiah Nott and Arthur de Gobineau (whose work he translated into English), Hotze earnestly threw himself into compiling a defence of slavery and racial inferiority in the midst of a nation that had a deep-set tradition of antislavery.[13]

Black activists constantly challenged these theories in their writings and speeches. William Andrew Jackson, William Craft and Sella Martin used dissonant strategies to publicly and specifically attack Hunt's racial theories and denounced that black people were inferior. To them, the pro-Confederate Hunt represented the union between scientific racism and Southern sympathy. Craft and Jackson forced themselves into traditionally white spaces to target racialists in person; regardless, all were well aware such arguments bolstered pro-Confederate propagandists and they urged the British not to recognize the Confederacy as a separate nation. Frederick Douglass, ever the astute transatlantic activist, also seized the moment to employ assimilationist strategies and remind Britons of their obligation to support American abolition. These activists worked at the grassroots of British society to convince Britons slavery was an evil institution that would be destroyed once the war was over.

[13] Robert E. Bonner, "Slavery, Confederate Diplomacy, and the Racialist Mission of Henry Hotze," *Civil War History* 51:3, (September 2005), 290-296.

This chapter will begin with a background of scientific racism, then move on to a discussion of the ways in which activists exploited adaptive resistance. The first section will focus on antislavery networks during the Civil War. Although many abolitionist societies were fractured, black men and women built on the successes of their predecessors to establish as many influential networks as they could. Others exploited connections they had maintained for decades: Frederick Douglass utilized networks with the transatlantic press to publish an appeal to the British nation, urging a country he held dear to denounce the Confederacy. The last section will discuss the ways in which black activists used the performative strand of adaptive resistance to combat the growing scientific racism that was taking hold of the British imagination. William Craft and William Andrew Jackson publicly shamed Confederates and scientific racists, disrupting and intervening in white spaces on both an abolitionist and non-abolitionist stage, while J. Sella Martin used assimilationist language to praise British freedom but changed his performances to incorporate and challenge rising scientific racism as the war continued. These public acts of defiance were part of a reactionary tradition that coalesced to reach infinite heights during the Civil War.

"Frozen Relics of an Earlier Age:" The Hierarchy of Races

The seeds of scientific racism were sown in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but scientists added a new dimension to prevailing racial stereotypes in the mid nineteenth century: it had long been suspected people of African descent were inferior, but it was now supposedly possible to

biologically prove they were *innately* inferior through the use of anatomical measurements.[14] In Britain, James Cowles Prichard argued for monogenism, the common origin of all species. According to Efram Sera-Shriar, Prichard categorized "the various races of the world into a taxonomical system based on observable physical and cultural characteristics" and thus could "demonstrate how the differences observed in these racial groupings were of 'variety' and not of 'species.'" In comparison, Robert Knox believed in polygenesis – the different origins of the races – and thus "for him race was everything." He criticized Prichard for championing "false doctrines" like monogenesis and argued for a biological separation of the races.[15] By the 1850s, these debates between monogenism and polygenesis had become fierce and the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 only exacerbated these tensions. Peter Bowler argues that the most successful form of Darwin's argument amongst the scientific community was the "causal interpretation of the development of life" and after this, racial scientists confidently explained why certain racial groups were inferior: they remained in an earlier stage of evolution and had not advanced as far as Europeans on the progressive road to civilization. The emergence of social Darwinism relied on a hierarchy of races with the superior white, Anglo-Saxon race at the top and Africans at the bottom. If man had evolved from primates, people of African descent were in this early stage of progress compared to the European race, who had advanced more quickly towards civilization.[16] Darwin's theory

[14] Peter J. Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea (Revised Edition)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, 1989), 92-93.
[15] Efram Sera-Shriar, *The Making of British Anthropology* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), 23-30; 92-94.
[16] Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea,* (1983, 1989), 93-94; 190-196; 285. Scientists reasoned that contemporary savages were at the beginning of a linear form of progress towards civilization, and white, civilized Anglo-Saxons were further along the scale as demonstrated by their contributions to

of the survival of the fittest was applied to inferior races to justify their colonization, and in Bowler's words, these "lower races were dismissed as frozen relics of an earlier stage in the upward progress from the apes." Scientists such as Louis Agassiz used such theories to champion polygenesis and argue that the Anglo-Saxon and African races were distinct, and enslavement of an inferior people was natural and right.[17]

The onset of scientific racism in Britain reached a turning point when Dr. James Hunt formed the Anthropological Society in early 1863, shortly after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. Hunt completely rejected the philanthropic arguments regarding African people, particularly the mantra favored by abolitionists "Am I Not a Man and a Brother?" Under a new dawn of racial science, black people were inferior and a "deviation from the human standard."[18] Through Hunt's extensive scientific analysis, he firmly believed people of African descent were naturally inferior to the European. According to his scientific data, the following characteristics were endemic to black people: the "hips [were] narrow, the thighs laterally compressed, the fingers of hand long and flat, the thumb long and very weak, the teeth hard and the molars usually very large." He or she was "nearer [in] approach to the ape than the European." The African brain was smaller and "the brain both of negro and ape more resembled that of the European when

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industry and society. Some savages were destined to remain in a state of barbarism and their natural inferiority prevented them from progressing towards civilization, and certainly towards the Anglo-Saxons. See Theodore Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism and the Historical Imagination: Nineteenth-Century Visions of a Greater Britain* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2011), 211-220; Kevin Grant, *A Civilised Savagery: Britain and the New Slaveries in Africa 1884-1926* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Ronald Robinson, John Gallagher, with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1963); Helen Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory: Empire, Development and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge 1870-1950* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011).

[17] Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea,* (1983, 1989), 299-303.

[18] Desmond and Moore, *Darwin's Sacred Cause,* (2009), 332-333.

the latter was in an infant state than when older" as the African brain stopped maturing after puberty. Hence, the growth of intelligence was slow and stunted and there "was not a single instance of any pure negro being" of intelligence.[19] He proclaimed, "the negro is so organically inferior to the European that no process of education can ever bring him up to the European level."[20]

While some British scientists such as Thomas Huxley refused to identify with a particular side during the American Civil War, Hunt openly and brazenly supported the Confederacy.[21] The Anthropological Society's direction became very clear when three Confederates became part of the Society's committee (and were included on the payroll). Henry Hotze, a Confederate agent, was instrumental in disseminating articles from the Society and combined it with pro-Confederate literature, adorned with a Confederate flag. Hotze regularly criticized the antislavery society and organized *The Index* (which ran between 1862-1865), a weekly publication that waxed lyrical about the Confederacy, encouraged British support, and propagated Hunt's racial opinions about black people. Hotze used this to justify slavery and provide further scientific reasons why African Americans were inferior.[22] Robert E. Bonner argues that Hotze's association with the ASL provided "Confederates with an effective means of repelling assaults" from pro-Union supporters. Hunt encouraged Hotze to "take a strong interest in our objects, for in us is your hope that the negro's place in nature will ever be scientifically

[19] James Hunt, "On the Negro's Place in Nature," *Journal of the Anthropological Society of London* 2, (Royal Anthropological Society of London, 1864), xv-xvi.
[20] *The Leeds Mercury*. 2 September 1863, 2.
[21] Efram Sera-Shriar, "Observing Human Difference: James Hunt, Thomas Huxley and Competing Disciplinary Strategies in the 1860s," *Annals of Science* 70:4, (2013), 466-469.
[22] Desmond and Moore, *Darwin's Sacred Cause,* (2009), 332-333.

ascertained and fearlessly explained." In 1863, Hotze used a review of the ASL to reject "the most dangerous dogma of modern times, and that which, unconsciously to the majority of those who accept it, underlies every social, political, and religious heresy that mars our civilization, is the dogma of the equality of man." As well as rejecting monogenism, he lauded Hunt's paper on "The Negro's Place in Nature" and used carefully constructed language to highlight Anglo-Saxon superiority without explicitly stating this was a direct Confederate war aim.[23] He highlighted that African brains were smaller than the Anglo-Saxon but wrote that even "if anatomists had been silent we should still have known that the negro is inferior to the white man, though we should not have been aware of the immediate organic cause." The "negro has no history," is "indubitably inferior in intellect" and lives in such "savage brutality" in Africa that the most benevolent place for them would be in an enslaved condition. In the South, "the negro race has been in subordination to the white race, and the result is, that it has made wonderful progress…the guidance and the intellect and the will of the white man are indispensable to him."[24]

Scientists like Hunt distributed their theories through the Anthropological Society's networks, and welcomed those into their ranks – like Hotze – who believed black people were naturally inferior. Pro-Confederate support in Britain cannot be separated from the rise of scientific racism, and black activists worked to expose these connections and challenge

[23] Robert E. Bonner, "Slavery, Confederate Diplomacy, and the Racialist Mission of Henry Hotze," (2005), 300-303.
[24] Lonnie A. Burnett, *Henry Hotze, Confederate Propagandist: Selected Writings on Revolution, Recognition, and Race*, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2008), 200-202.

the misconception of black inferiority through an exploitation of abolitionist networks, print culture and performative strategies. The next section will focus on how individuals such as William and Ellen Craft and J. Sella Martin forged connections to make their testimony heard despite abolitionist divisions.

"An Antiquated Affair:" Antislavery Networks During the Civil War

The Civil War period in Britain witnessed the decline of organized abolitionist activity. Notwithstanding Sarah Remond's visit in the late 1850s which revitalized Garrisonian groups in cities such as Leeds, these societies were marginalized and unable to stir public support against American slavery as they had done a decade before. Richard Blackett argues that during the Civil War, the "movement was a mere shadow of itself" and "whatever cohesion existed was a tribute to Garrison's stature and influence."[25] Attempts to create one united abolitionist society failed, as the divisions between the British and Foreign Antislavery Society and Garrisonian societies were irrevocable, and many organizations collapsed under dwindling profits and public interest. However, the indefatigable George Thompson was as active as ever, this time supported by his journalist son-in-law Frederick William Chesson, a key figure in organizing antislavery meetings and events during the War. Chesson once again tried to form a central organization, but received in return only lacklustre efforts from the BFASS and other groups.[26] This was perhaps not surprising, as transatlantic abolitionists had spurned joint partnerships for

[25] Richard J.M. Blackett, "And There Shall Be No More Sea:" William Lloyd Garrison and the Transatlantic Abolitionist Movement," 13-40, in James Brewer Stewart ed., *William Lloyd Garrison at Two Hundred: History, Legacy, and Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 33-36.
[26] Clare Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists: An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974), 10-20.

several years: in October 1854, Garrisonian Samuel May wrote of his apprehension regarding "the projected union of the of *the true* anti-Slavery forces of Great Britain with those of New Broad Street, London [the BFASS]." The "idea of obtaining strength from an alliance with those who have been seeking our ruin, - and in every mean and covert way too – for fifteen years, is to me simply preposterous."[27]

Chesson was not helped in such matters by the reluctance of old stalwart abolitionists such as Richard D. Webb, who was skeptical of forming such an organisation in the first place. In the spring of 1859 he listed all those loyal to the Garrisonians who may have been interested. It was a short list: Wilson Armistead of Leeds, the Wighams in Edinburgh who were "as good as gold," Mary Estlin in Bristol, the Nichols, William Powell, and Chesson were among this "incongruous medley." Webb noted that several of those listed could not contribute financially and therefore could help only by "way of personal cooperation."[28] Several black activists noticed this change in British society and chastised Britons for abandoning their abolitionist sentiments, and even American activists noticed a significant decline in the British movement. However, antislavery spirit had not completely ceased: the transatlantic reaction to fugitive slave John Anderson, together with a meeting to welcome him in Exeter Hall in 1861 (six thousand people came to listen) indicates that all was not lost for black activists.[29] As Caleb McDaniel argues, although the Civil War tested transatlantic abolitionists, they endured because all were

[27] Samuel May to Richard D. Webb, 25 October 1854, in Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists* (1974), 412-413.
[28] Richard D. Webb to Samuel May, 10 March 1859, in Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists* (1974), 438-440.
[29] Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, (2001), 54-57.

united in their belief that slavery was the cause of the war. Their "strong bonds" and the "long history of intimate exchanges, correspondence and visits" could not be so easily forgotten.[30]

Despite Webb's misgivings, a new organization, the London Emancipation Society, did emerge, largely through the organizational efforts of William and Ellen Craft, Sarah Parker Remond, George Thompson, Chesson and William Farmer. Based in the capital, the organization had auxiliary groups in Sheffield, Liverpool, Leicester, and Bristol. The membership was formed from prominent Garrisonian abolitionists who had always rallied to the antislavery cause, including William Tweedie (a printer of antislavery materials including narratives), Eliza Wigham, Elizabeth Pease Nichols, Mary Estlin, Harriet Martineau and Harriet Lupton of Leeds.[31] Chesson's LES received much support, particularly after the Emancipation Proclamation which naturally led to a flurry of transatlantic activity. He reported that meetings and antislavery societies had been organized in "important towns" such as Manchester and Birmingham; "applications for meetings and deputations are pouring in from all quarters."[32] Chesson also wrote that these successful antislavery meetings symbolised "the true state of public feeling on this side of the Atlantic." He noted that certain "journals have remained true to the anti-slavery cause" including *The Star, The Daily News, The Nonconformist, British Standard, Westminster Review, Manchester*

[30] Caleb McDaniel, *The Problem of Democracy in the Age of Slavery: Garrisonian Abolitionists and Transatlantic Reform* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 214-215.
[31] Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, (2001), 76-78.
[32] Frederick W. Chesson to William Lloyd Garrison, January 1863, in Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists* (1974), 493-495.

Examiner, Birmingham Post, Newcastle Chronicle, and *The Caledonian Mercury*.[33]

Although frustrated by fewer antislavery connections, black abolitionist enthusiasm, dedication and activist spirit refused to die as long as slavery existed. Since the 1830s, black men and women recognized the importance of making friends with influential white benefactors, as well as other fugitive slaves to create a network of black community and solidarity. The Crafts remained in Britain during the War, and worked with the BFASS, the African Civilization Society, and performed leading roles alongside Chesson in the LES. According to Richard Blackett, their Hammersmith home was "one of the headquarters of antislavery activity in London" and American abolitionists usually dined and stayed with them. William Craft supported his fellow fugitive slave John Anderson in 1861, and lent his name and support to the Committee organized for his safe arrival and education in Britain. He also made strong links with the Free Produce movement, which put him into contact with antislavery activists and business men in Lancashire who were interested in supporting free-grown cotton. Ellen remained active in antislavery circles, accommodated Sarah Parker Remond on her lecturing tour, and supported female suffrage.[34]

J. Sella Martin also travelled to Britain in 1861 and exploited as many connections as he could to achieve support. Martin was born enslaved in North

[33] Frederick W. Chesson to William Lloyd Garrison, 9 January 1863, in Clare Taylor*, British and American Abolitionists* (1974), 493-494.
[34] R. J. M. Blackett, *Beating Against the Barriers: The Lives of Six Nineteenth Century Afro-Americans* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 104-107; 119-122.

Carolina in September 1832 and escaped to Chicago in the mid-1850s.[35] When the Civil War broke out, he received funds from prominent abolitionist Gerrit Smith and acquired a letter of introduction to the United States Ambassador to London, Charles Francis Adams. Initially, Martin found it difficult to raise support for the Union in Britain as tensions were high between the two countries, and abolitionist societies were in complete disarray of how to handle such a momentous conflict, particularly one that did not admit the real catalyst of the war.[36] As soon as he arrived in Britain, the BFASS ignored Martin's communications and Martin found their course of action – or rather lack of it – frustrating. He said the society was an "antiquated affair, the members of which met once a year for the purpose of instituting deputations, that did nothing but sprinkle rose water on the feet of a few conservative lords." Inactive and ineffective, the BFASS would never enact real change or stand for anything worthy of substance because of its worship of aristocratic lords and desire to place their needs above the enslaved.[37]

Regardless of BFASS inactivity, according to Blackett Martin was "floored by his reception and the hospitality he received." Influential businessmen and aristocrats, politicians, and religious men supported him and listened to his speeches. He was assisted by reformers such as John Stuart Mill, Richard Cobden, and John Bright, the latter of whom recognized Martin's huge impact on British society. Martin had done much to challenge pro-Confederate support in Britain, Bright noted, and "by his numerous and able letters to the newspapers, and his many eloquent speeches at large

[35] Blackett, *Beating Against the Barriers,* (1989), 185-190.
[36] *Ibid*, 202-203.
[37] *Ibid*, 202-204.

meetings in London and elsewhere, he has had a great influence upon public opinion here."[38] A meeting in London in 1863 further epitomised Martin's successful exploitation of antislavery networks. Martin found the climate in Britain much more receptive after the Emancipation Proclamation and the BFASS seemed to reawaken from its inactivity. Before the meeting in London, a society member distributed BFASS pamphlets to over five thousand homes in an attempt to stir up support amongst both the gentry and the working classes.[39] These efforts, apparently in accordance with "the great interest excited a year ago by Mr. Martin throughout the district" led to a "densely-crowded meeting." In an extraordinary fusion of networks, print culture, and performance, Martin and his supporters came to challenge the pro-slavery cause. Many were "unable to obtain admission;" those who managed to gain a seat were either from the "gentry of the neighbourhood" but also were the "hard-handed working men from the great railway works at Stratford, the ship-building yards at Blackwall, of the labourers from the docks and of the navvies from the outfall sewer works." Despite the fact Martin was laboring under illness, he lectured "with nearly all his old energy and fire, and with much of his natural humour." He directly linked anti-slavery agitation in Britain with anti-slavery victories in America (such as the abolition of slavery in Washington D.C.), highlighting how Britons had a deep impact on transatlantic society. To further this connection, he urged the chairman in a resolution to write to the Prime Minister and end the construction of Confederate ships in British ports.[40] Martin's appeal as a formerly enslaved individual bearing his testimony against slavery and the South attracted all

[38] *Ibid*, 204-205; 222-223.
[39] *Ibid*, 209-213.
[40] *Daily News*. 16 February 1863, 3.

audiences. This successful meeting – and Martin's success in Britain as a whole – rested on this combination of performance, antislavery networks and print culture which he deftly exploited to convince his audience slavery was the real catalyst of the war. Martin and his fellow abolitionists ensured this meeting was not only well attended via a carefully planned and sustained use of print culture but also that something concrete would emerge from it, as stated by the resolution.

When Martin returned to the United States in 1865, *The New York Times* published coverage of one of his lectures recounting his successful British tour. As he narrated his numerous accomplishments, Martin also pointed to the problems surrounding antislavery campaigning in Britain and described how his success was not easily won. For one thing, "England has the most supreme contempt for anyone who thinks he knows as much as she" and attacked the nation's self-grandiose language about abolition. The class structure also presented a barrier at times, and most meetings needed an influential "figure-head" which "wasn't easy to do." The complexities of British society would "always beset our movement until England's egotism can become our champion."[41] Martin deliberately targets the aristocracy here, shaming not only those in the upper class who refused to come forward and help antislavery meetings but also the structure of such formal antislavery meetings in general. Regardless of these problems, in the British Isles Martin was clearly not averse to exploiting assimilationist tactics and played to Britain's moral superiority to win support.

[41] *The New York Times*. 27 November 1865, 2.

Navigating Britain's complex antislavery networks and convincing the public of the War's true cause was a difficult and often tense objective. British neutrality and pro-Confederate sympathy alarmed many abolitionists, including those who had visited Britain before and had established a close relationship with the nation. Frederick Douglass in particular was concerned with Britain's position and manipulated Victorian print culture to maximize his warning to pro-Confederate supporters. Throughout the Civil War, British newspapers published articles and commentaries on African Americans and black soldiers, referring to Douglass as the leader or spokesman for black people.[42] His opinions were consulted on a range of issues from slavery to the decision to mobilize black soldiers in the Union Army. The War sparked tense relations with Britain, and it was unclear whether the latter would support the South because of its dependency on slave-grown cotton. In an attempt to rally the British people once again, he exploited transatlantic mediums to challenge pro-Southern sympathy and encourage the British not to abandon their antislavery principles.

In 1862, Douglass sent a treatise to be published in British newspapers entitled "The Slave's Appeal to Great Britain." In a masterful piece of writing, Douglass echoed the themes he espoused during his first visit to Britain: instead of revoking all fellowship with slave-holding churches this time though, Britain should revoke all fellowship with the Confederacy. Douglass

[42] The letters published in Leeds were likely those sent to Julia Griffiths Crofts, an English abolitionist and loyal friend to Douglass. Letters published in British newspapers throughout the war include: *The Leeds Mercury*. 16 February 1863, 3; *The Manchester Courier, and Lancashire General Advertiser*. 19 August 1864, 3; *The Leeds Mercury*. 2 February 1865, 4; *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*. 15 May 1865, 3; *The Manchester Weekly Times.* 20 May 1865, 5.

proclaimed the "inspiration of an enlightened Christianity" led to the end of slavery in the British Empire but the "tremendous crisis of American affairs" would lead to terrible suffering if Britain did not heed her humanitarian past.[43] As David Blight argues, Douglass "seemed to gather strength from attacking religious hypocrisy" which was a "spiritual disease" infecting American society. Christian slaveholders were the best soldiers in the Slave Power's army, but were also the Achilles Heel where abolitionists would launch their attack. Douglass kept returning to the theme of the Slave Power in his rhetoric (that slaveholders and what they stood for threatened white as well as black freedom), and in his Appeal, he argues it had spread its shadow over the Atlantic to infect the free soil of Britain too.[44]

In stirring and blistering language, Douglass argued that the British must be strong to resist the Confederacy and refuse to declare support for a treacherous government based on slavery:

> Oh! I pray you, by all your highest and holiest memories, blast not the budding hopes of these millions by lending your countenance and extending your honoured and potent hand to the blood-stained fingers of the impious slaveholding Confederate States of America. For the honour of the British name, which has hitherto only carried light and joy to the slave and rebuke and dismay to the

[43] *The Daily News*. 26 November 1862, 5.
[44] David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass' Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 9-10; 39-40.

> slaveholder, do not in this great emergency be persuaded to abandon and contradict that policy of justice and mercy to the negro which has made your character and your name illustrious throughout the civilised world. Your enemies have even been compelled to respect the sincerity of your philanthropy. Would you retain this respect, welcome not those brazen human fleshmongers – those brokers in the bodies and souls of men who have dared to knock at your doors for admission into the family of nations. Their pretended government is but a foul, haggard and blighting conspiracy against the sacred rights of mankind, and does not deserve the name of government. Its foundation is laid in the impudent and heaven-insulting dogma that man may rightfully hold property in man and flog him to toil like a beast of burden. Have no fellowship I pray you, with these merciless menstealers but rather with whips of scorpions scourge them beyond the beneficent range of national brotherhood.[45]

[45] *The Daily News*. 26 November 1862, 5. The speech was printed several times in northern England and Scotland, including in the *Dundee Advertiser*. 1 December 1862, 3; *The Elgin and Morayshire Courier*. 5 December 1862, 7; *The Hull Packet and East Riding Times*. 5 December 1862, 7; *The York Herald*. 13 December 1862, 5.

Douglass employed a key feature of the performance aspect of adaptive resistance here, namely assimilationist language. He praised Britain's history of abolition and argued everything Britain stood for in law, morals and customs represented the very opposite of slavery, "the vilest of all modern abominations." During his British sojourns Douglass always paid tribute to Britain's abolitionist past and exploited the antislavery sentiment within the nationalist narrative to highlight the tolerance, freedom and benevolence towards African peoples. Like Martin did in Britain, Douglass made a deliberate political decision to ignore any form of hypocrisy regarding the notion of British freedom. He relied on a stirring form of anglophilia to encourage Britons to champion American abolition after they had successfully abolished slavery in the Empire. Douglass tapped into his previous success of exploiting assimilationist tactics, and argued Britain had "sacrificed" a fortune for the destruction of the slave trade and it would be a great "dishonour" to support the Confederacy and ignore Britain's past. Douglass urged Britain not to form a brotherhood with the "blood stained" fingers of the Confederacy and to remain pure from the stain of slavery. Britain should relinquish "all false and selfish reasoning" and "bear aloft, higher than ever, that standard of justice and humanity which has justly exalted you to the head of civilised nations." Douglass cast the War – and the Union cause – as the righteous movement for justice against a corroded and corrupted government, which feasted on the souls of enslaved men, women and children. The Union was "making one grand effort, through blood and tears, through fire and death, to return to the ways of righteousness and peace." In hyperbolic language, Douglass argued that nation would very likely topple without the support of

Britain, whose decision to denounce the Confederacy would change the war's course. There is a sense of urgency here in Douglass' language: while Britain makes up her mind, the slave "trembles in the balance." "The North," continued Douglass, "is fighting on the side of Liberty and civilisation and the South for slavery and barbarism." Douglass frames the War in Machiavellian terms, a gigantic struggle between good and evil, civilization and savagery, light and darkness. The War was a sacrosanct endeavor where slavery would be destroyed and the Union would strike down any force or nation who came between that goal. The "dreadful scourge" and the blood of war would "make justice, humanity, and liberty permanently possible" in the United States.[46]

Douglass highlighted the tense relationship between Britain and the United States during the Civil War. His fame as an orator and writer, together with his recent visit to Britain, ensured his Appeal was published in numerous newspapers but it is difficult to measure its impact as a whole. What cannot be denied however, is the immediacy in Douglass' words, and the urgency in other black activist speeches during the Civil War. Rising racial discrimination towards black people in Britain also added to societal tensions. Formerly enslaved fugitive William Andrew Jackson declared "there was quite as much prejudice in England as in America;" William Watson, a black man from Kentucky, was violently assaulted in 1864, and the treatment of Thomas Arthur (a black man who was not allowed to enter his pew in a London church) led to a small flurry of activity in the newspapers and even a petition to Parliament.[47] Arguably, black men and women – like Douglass – exploited

[46] *The Daily News*. 26 November 1862, 5.
[47] Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, (2001), 40-41.

their antislavery connections and performances on stage to keep growing sympathy for the Confederacy and scientific racism at bay.

"To Rob my Negro Blood of all Credit:" African American Performative Techniques Against Confederate Sympathizers and Scientific Racism

Black activists employed several performative techniques to challenge racism on both an abolitionist and non-abolitionist stage. From bold rhetoric to publicly embarrassing Confederate supporters, William Andrew Jackson, William Craft and J. Sella Martin exploited adaptive resistance to win support for the Union cause and destroy the notion of black inferiority. As we have seen, pro-Confederate men such as Henry Hotze worked to create sympathy for the South and its racialist mission. In *The Index,* Hunt was careful not to upset British antislavery tradition and instead, shrewdly and delicately, worked to champion the superiority of the white race and in particular British colonialism in countries such as India. He exploited racial stereotypes and the success of thinkers such as Thomas Carlyle, who by the time of the Civil War, had done much to change British views on black people. He also emphasized the nobility of the Southern cause and worshipped leaders such as Robert E. Lee in order to bring a sense of respectability on what the South were defending.[48] Like black abolitionists, Hotze recognized the importance of befriending newspaper editors and had articles published in *The Morning Post*; as a result, "the columns of the journals to which I most desired access are open to me; and with this I have required the secret of the 'open sesame'

[48] Robert E. Bonner, "Slavery, Confederate Diplomacy, and the Racialist Mission of Henry Hotze," (2005), 297-303.

of the others I may need." *The Times, The Standard,* and *The Herald* all published articles by Hotze, spreading his pro-Confederate arguments and subtly upholding a racial hierarchy.[49]

However, Hotze and other Confederates in Britain were thwarted by African Americans who directly challenged Confederates and their supporters in person. Between 1862 and 1863, formerly enslaved individual William Andrew Jackson toured Britain and lectured about his escape from his slave-owner Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederacy. One evening in Leeds, Jackson spoke to a crowded audience and caused "hearty laughter" when he declared he had written to Davis informing him he was now allowed to do as he pleased and had full control over his actions. Jackson's link with Davis made him a celebrity, and his crafted performance not only represented a personal victory against slavery, but also a victory against the Confederacy in general. He embodied a dual form of resistance in which a formerly enslaved African American had escaped slavery and travelled to Britain, and was now challenging Confederate support three thousand miles away. Jackson used humor to impress upon his audience the wicked nature of the Confederacy and how they fought to restore slavery, the very institution that he had escaped from.[50] He also employed dissonant performance techniques in December 1862 when he asked to be introduced to Confederate commissioner James Mason at a lecture in London. *The Caledonian Mercury* reported:

[49] Burnett, *Henry Hotze, Confederate Propagandist*, (2008), 19-21.
[50] *The Leeds Mercury.* 25 March 1863, 4.

> Imagine the look of astonishment of the Southern aristocrat to be introduced to a nigger. 'Glad to see you here, sir' said Jackson 'I was lately coachman to your president Jefferson Davis.' That did not improve matters, but Jackson coolly walked out with the Senator and at the door of the mansion two men were found carrying a large wood-cut of a negro released in Missouri by Federal soldiers who had been tortured by having a collar fastened round his neck, with three long iron rods joined to it to prevent the poor wretch lying down to sleep.[51]

Jackson deliberately protested against the erasure of black voices literally and figuratively: he boldly walked up to Mason and introduced himself, altering the power balance between white and black. By intervening in such a space, Jackson gained the upper hand and challenged Mason as a racist but also as a representative of the Confederacy, which fought to erase black voices and bodies. The correspondent's skepticism indicates a certain apathy with abolition and black rights, despite some pity at the story of an enslaved person's torture. Potentially, Jackson's scene in London went too far in humiliating a public official and the men outside with woodcuts were creating too much of a spectacle, or perhaps the article is symbolic of the growing

[51] *The Caledonian Mercury*. 9 December 1862, 2.

racism in British society. Nevertheless, Jackson's assertiveness together with the activists outside the meeting with woodcuts illustrate the power of different forms of protest, including visual culture. Jackson declared independence from Mason (who represented the South) and fought against the passive stereotype of "Am I Not A Man And A Brother?" as he was a living representative of the woodcuts shown outside. At the same time, Jackson was deliberately making a statement so as not to be reduced to a silent, passive woodcut that claimed to represent millions of enslaved people. His use of humor and bold ownership of his former position and identity epitomizes adaptive resistance: an ability to *adapt*, craft and cultivate a moment in time (even just a few minutes) to his advantage and reject commodification of his black body.

William Craft also relied on his exploitation of adaptive resistance to challenge a racial scientist and Confederate supporter, Dr. James Hunt, in person in 1863. Using a non-abolitionist stage, he used humor and wit to mock Hunt's racial theories and refused to acknowledge or accept black people were physically and mentally inferior. Craft had sailed to Africa in 1862 to test if it was possible to develop a free-grown cotton industry under British rule. The aftermath of one of these missions led to a scheduled appearance at a British Association meeting in 1863. Lasting several days, the Association was held in Newcastle and a range of subjects were represented from science and geology to anthropology and history. Hunt presented a paper and attempted to argue that the African race was separate from the European race, "just as the zebra is a distinct species from the ass." Regardless of his education, an

African or African American could never reach the intelligence of the white man because of the "thick skull" and limited "frontal development." Craft was due to speak about his recent visit to Dahomey (present day Benin) but used his "keen wit" to refute Hunt's theories.[52] Craft declared himself of mixed heritage, but demanded he was "black enough" to respond to Hunt's paper, and stood up to recount a fable to the audience:

> A lion and a man were walking together along the road, and disputing as to which of the two could claim to belong to the superior race. By and by they came to a public house, the sign of which was a lion violently held down by a man. The man triumphantly pointed to this in confirmation of his superiority, but the lion sagely inquired who painted the picture.[53]

The fable teaches the audience about perceptions and stereotypes. The man assumes the lion is weaker, and this interpretation speaks volumes about how he sees the world: according to Patrick Rael, "the man was predisposed to see evidence of human superiority." Power partly depends on the ability to construct an image in this case of predisposed superiority, and a lack of ability to see the whole picture.[54] Craft casts himself and all people of African

[52] *The Leeds Mercury*. 2 Sept. 1863, 2.
[53] William Craft, *National Anti-Slavery Standard*. 26 Sept. 1863.
[54] Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 1-4. See also Rael, "A Common Nature, A United Destiny: African

descent as the lion, providing a rich imagery of a majestic, strong and powerful animal that in the wild has no enemies save man. Although on the surface Craft paints a picture of the lion as a victim being suppressed by the white man (in this case, Hunt) he goes beyond this: the history of African civilization has not been sufficiently told, and contemporaries refuse to acknowledge the intelligence and skill of the black race. The lion is a fighting animal, and Craft invokes its spirit to illustrate that men could try and suppress the black race but would ultimately fail. It was up to men like Craft to tell the lion's story and retain a sense of independence from his oppressor. The reference to violence relates to the barbarity of slavery, and perhaps comments on the notion that while African Americans appear to be held down in oppression, this is just a perception. Hundreds of black men, women and children resisted slavery every day and fugitive slaves (like Craft himself) proved they were powerful active agents in the assertion of their identity. Craft was being deliberately subversive in painting the white race as the ignorant man and the African race as the lion. Craft himself was living proof that a black man could be eloquent and powerful. The picture he wanted to leave in his audience's minds was one of *his* inherent superiority over men such as Hunt.

After recounting the fable, Craft challenged Hunt's paper and according to the local press, "supplied at the moment and on the spot a living refutation of Dr. Hunt's theory" and responded with "ready wit, pointed argument and a fluency that surprised his hearers." Craft embodies a form of

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American Responses to Racial Science from the Revolution to the Civil War," in Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer ed., *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism* (New York: The New Press, 2006), 183-200.

adaptive resistance here as his defence was not pre-conceived and he demonstrated his flexibility and skill at attacking Hunt "on the spot." Malleable in his rhetoric, he was flexible not only in his approach but also as a means to react within that moment. It was the "most direct and practical reply" to Hunt, and the "best possible appeal against the sentence of social excommunication he would pronounce against the negro race."[55] Although his audience was "surprised" that a black man could be eloquent, Craft was "loudly applauded" and the audience hissed Hunt when he tried to defend his arguments.[56] In her book *Laughing Fit to Kill,* Glenda Carpio analyzes the myriad ways in which African Americans used humor consciously and subversively to challenge the white racial schema, often mocking their white audience, unbeknownst to the latter. Black people "have faced racism, in its various manifestations and guises, with a rich tradition of humor that instead of diminishing the dangers and perniciousness of racism, highlights them." Carpio argues that laughter is essential as a release mechanism, to either enhance a sense of relief or to share in the communal feeling that "whites [were left] feeling the butt of the joke, but not sure how." As we saw in chapter 1, Carpio explores how black people used humor, theatricality and parody to criticize contemporary society, even absorbing stereotypes to challenge the (white) system from within. What makes this incident with Craft unique though, is a formerly enslaved individual openly mocked a white scientist on a very public stage: he was being a deliberately subversive

[55] *Daily News*. 1 September 1863, 4.
[56] *The York Herald*. 5 September 1863, 10.

architect and openly disrupting white paradigms, clearly highlighting that Hunt was the butt of the joke.[57]

Craft argued that regardless of how much European blood ran through African American veins, black men and women always showed intelligence and progression whenever they were given equal opportunities with whites. Using his so-far very successful tactic of mocking Hunt, Craft finished his speech with the hard-hitting statement, that during his time in Britain, he had found that "all Englishmen were not Shakespeares."[58] Craft had powerfully refuted not only Hunt's argument but also the notion that all white men were intelligent. He challenged the idea that all white men were superior and used satire to win support from the audience. He used flexibility as a tactic to immediately attack Hunt and his stunning rebuttal illustrates how African Americans were willing to seize control of the stage *and* the audience. Instead of appealing to white paternalism, Craft's use of mockery, wit and logic allowed him to maintain his strong sense of identity. His attempt to publicly exploit and mock racism drew attention even if it exposed Britain's shallow commitment to freedom.

J. Sella Martin also rejected white racism within the strict confines of a white Victorian society, and achieved this very effectively on an abolitionist stage.[59] In his speeches, Martin employed a careful balancing act of

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[57] Glenda Carpio, *Laughing Fit to Kill: Black Humor in the Fictions of Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4-5; 13-14; 32.

[58] William Craft, quoted in "Anthropology at the British Association," *The Anthropological Review,* 1:3, (November 1863), 408-410. Richard Blackett briefly discusses the incident with Hunt in *Building an Antislavery Wall* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983).

[59] Blackett, *Beating Against the Barriers*, (1989), 204-206. Martin received donations for his sister's freedom, together with her daughter, and returned to America to secure their release.

assimilationist and dissonant language to praise and chastise the British for abolition. While he played to British sympathies and declared "England had spent a large sum of money to give freedom to the slave" he also exploited their history of abolition to spurn the Confederacy and the "damnable institution of slavery." Britain should "return to their old traditions" and support antislavery in America, as it had done before. Nevertheless, racial "hatred was wafted, too, three thousand miles across the Atlantic."[60] Martin declared in another meeting that "slavery was not built upon complexion – he found it [in Britain] as well as in America" and argued racism did exist on British soil, contrary to their self-obsessed declarations of freedom.[61] Using both approaches often in the same meeting, Martin deftly praised and blamed Britain for its part in slavery: Britain could not hide behind abolition and claim its work was done, as American slavery survived *because* of British involvement. Racial discrimination also did exist in Britain and Martin subtly challenged the patriotic and xenophobic narrative in British society and exposed its flaws.

While the end of the slave trade was admirable and all people of color "felt his liberty" when on British soil, Martin hoped that Confederate sympathizers "had not yet been so successful as to blow sugar into their eyes, or cotton into their ears, and thus prevent them from seeing the horrors of slavery, and hearing the groans of the poor oppressed slave." He "took it for granted that no high-sounding phrases would be able to deceive them" even if

[60] *Bedfordshire Mercury*. 26 September 1863, 6.
[61] *The South London Chronicle.* 28 December 1861, 5.

they came from respectful or influential backgrounds.[62] A few months before Martin gave this speech, Hotze published "A Word for the Negro" in *The Index.* Arguing that slavery was the only logical and justifiable place for black people, he questioned whether the "conscientious philanthropist lay his hand on his heart, and ask himself whether during these fifty years of slavery, the negro has not made greater progress towards freedom than he can ever make under such liberty of license as the North offers him – license to plunder, to burn, and to murder?"[63] While Martin does not refer to Hotze in his speech, he directly attacks the narrative that Hotze and other Confederates sought to uphold, that black people were inferior and should be enslaved. Martin hoped the British public were not so foolish enough to be deceived by such pro-Confederate propaganda and said, "he was sure they would not be deluded by any such fallacious statements" by Southern advocates because this was "not only a war in America with arms" but "one of ideas." The War was "between freedom and slavery, and a question of civilization and humanity." Most crucially,

> They were not to rely on the evidence of men three thousand miles away from the scene of action concerning the causes and of circumstances of the war – men who gathered their information from one-sided newspaper articles and correspondence; but upon persons who had witnessed the atrocities of slavery.

[62] *The Preston Chronicle.* 5 September 1863, 7.
[63] Burnett, *Henry Hotze, Confederate Propagandist*, (2008), 192-194.

> They had heard people give their opinion
> about it, and he wished them to allow him, as
> a slave – as an ex-slave – to give his –
> (Applause.)[64]

In a bold rebuttal to the white racist schema – and by extension towards men such as Hotze – Martin declared his authority to speak and placed his valuable and important testimony above not only white men but slaveholders thousands of miles away. The British public should not be ignorant or choose to ignore black testimony when Martin stood in front of them, bearing the truth of what actually caused the war. He chastised people who received and believed second or third hand information, and it was his duty to give his opinion on a subject in which he knew the most about: slavery. Building on numerous African Americans such as Moses Roper, Frederick Douglass and Mrs. Jackson, Martin espoused his right to speak as an "ex-slave" and put forward his testimony to the judgment of British audiences. As an ex-slave and witness, he was there to ensure they were not "blinded" by sugar, or indeed, pro-slavery propaganda. If they were as abolitionist as proclaimed, the judgment would be a simple denouncement of the Confederacy. Within this speech, Martin also denounced the popular view the enslaved were "contented in their bondage" and demanded that "he, as an ex-slave, said they were not contented." It was easy for men with wealth and privilege to believe this, but Martin asked rhetorically "how could they know? Where did they learn it?" He, as a formerly enslaved man, "knew that they (the slaves) were not."[65]

[64] *The Preston Chronicle.* 5 September 1863, 7.
[65] *Ibid*, 7.

Like William Craft, Martin also wanted to ensure British audiences were not blinded by growing scientific racism or racist Confederates. During a Social Science Congress meeting in October 1865, Martin delivered a paper on the "Cotton Question" and free labor. During this speech, he used a non-abolitionist stage to address whether "the negro race [was] inherently and irretrievably inferior." The "assumed inferiority of the negro race was no argument for his enslavement" and if black people were not used to freedom, "that was the fault of those who kept him in bondage." He also "denied that the negro was lazy, for he had seen quite as much laziness amongst whites as could be found amongst blacks."[66] Just over a year later, Martin argued this point further and specifically mentioned Dr. James Hunt and racial science. Hunt had declared "the negro lacked a bone which the white man had" and if this difference did exist, "the white man might possess another bone of the nature of an ossified heart." He went on to prove black people were not innately inferior, and listed "several illustrious negroes" to reject Hunt's theories.[67] Martin lectured against the growth of scientific racism and his deliberate decision to name Hunt spoke to concerns about racism and pro-slavery sympathy in Britain. He had most likely heard of Craft's rebuttal of Hunt, either through the newspapers or from Craft himself. He used humor and wit – as Craft used against Hunt in person – to openly mock the concept that black people were innately inferior. Similarly, in a meeting in 1867, he mocked that "it was about a hundred generations since old Uncle Noah lived,

[66] *Manchester Times*. 14 October 1865, 3.
[67] *The Bradford Observer*. 6 December 1866, 6.

and he thought it about time the curse had run out." Equal opportunities were essential to right the "injustice done to the negro."[68]

Martin also objected to comments that his success rested on white blood in his veins. In an expert exploitation of print culture, Martin wrote a letter to the *Glasgow Herald*'s editor in February 1868 who attributed Martin's intelligence to white ancestry:

> I should still protest against your paragraph, when it tries to rob my negro blood of all credit…in regard to the whole question of negro inferiority, will you allow me to say the negroes do not regard that as a practical question at all, except when it is made a reason for their enslavement?...have we not a right to ask for a suspension of judgment upon the negro's place among races till education shall have done for him, what it has for other educated peoples, viz, tested their qualities and fixed their place?[69]

Martin objected to the concept that "negro blood" poisoned or diluted any intellectual capacity within himself, and boldly proclaimed his abilities rested on his African heritage. Martin argued that his mother was an "unmixed

[68] *The Leicester Chronicle and the Leicestershire Mercury.* 16 February 1867, 8.
[69] *Glasgow Herald*. 1 February 1868, 3.

African" and his father "was very dark," denouncing the idea he possessed white blood. He refused to let this insult stand as it implied his superior intellect and identity was not a result of his African heritage. His physical and mental capacity was innate and this was a direct result of his African, rather than Anglo-Saxon, blood. He also asked rhetorically whether white people should hold their criticisms because they have not given black people sufficient time to educate themselves. He was confident that if this was done, black people would prove their worth. By writing to the *Glasgow Herald*'s editor directly, Martin exploited a form of print culture to immediately address the question of racial science and the insult he had endured.

After visiting Britain numerous times, Martin noticed a great deal of prejudice towards black people in the late 1860s which had not been as apparent before. He declared he was "profoundly sad" at the "diminution of the anti-slavery feeling" in Britain, which had once "enjoyed the reputation of being the protectress of the negro race." He stated that now the enslaved had been freed, Britons "turned their backs upon their own work" and refused to help. Britons had "continued to enjoy the blessings and comforts produced by the slaves" and had used "rice, the sugar and the cotton which was grown in the negroes' blood and watered by his tears." Cities such as Manchester, Liverpool and Bradford had been "built upon the results of the cotton" and thus it was Britain's duty to help the freed men and women.[70] As Blackett notes, in complete contrast to his successful and heart-warming first visit seven years earlier, Martin "left Britain with a heavy heart" in 1868.[71]

[70] *The Leicester Chronicle and the Leicestershire Mercury.* 16 February 1867, 8.
[71] Blackett, *Beating Against the Barriers,* (1989), 227-231; 238-251.

Despite this growing influence of scientific racism, African Americans employed adaptive resistance during the Civil War to challenge Confederate sympathizers and racial scientists. Their rhetoric betrayed a deeper sense of urgency than ever before, and black men and women urged British audiences to seek non-fellowship with Confederate supporters. As Blackett argues, African Americans like William Andrew Jackson "were the embodiment of everything the Confederacy rejected" and when Jackson returned to the United States in 1863, one pro-Southern supporter "exaggerated only slightly when he wrote that the Union forces had lost their most potent weapon."[72] Thus, Jackson, Sella Martin, and William Craft engaged in distinct performances to publicly challenge men like Hunt, who represented the union of pro-Confederate support and scientific racism. They shared a bold attitude and a desire to rebel against white preconceptions of slavery and urged British audiences to keep the tide of racism and Southern support at bay.

While the major abolitionist networks had dwindled and resembled nothing like those of ten years previously, formerly enslaved African Americans utilized any connection necessary to organize meetings. Links with the LES, the BFASS and unshakable individuals such as George Thompson proved successful for some, and fugitives such as the Crafts solidified their own importance on the antislavery scene by becoming key figures in major antislavery meetings. Frederick Douglass and Sella Martin were just two activists who exploited such connections with newspapers to publish appeals

[72] Blackett, "African Americans, the British Working Class and the American Civil War," (1996), 65-66.

or remonstrances to the British public, urging them to support the Union. Activists built on the thousands of lectures given by their predecessors, and used both an abolitionist and non-abolitionist stage to denounce discrimination and scientific racism.

As Martin discovered, transatlantic audiences often viewed African American rights with an apathy that completely contrasted to the early 1850s. Garrisonian abolitionist William Robson noticed this in 1867. The Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865 had "openly shown the fearfully corrupt state of English feeling with regard to the rights of the black race" and while the "faithful few" tried to prevent the rise in racism, they were fighting a losing battle.[73] Even Harriet Beecher Stowe declared in the 1870s that "this great sorrow of slavery" was gone and black people were "happy in their lowly lot." Now that slavery had been abolished in law, African Americans were free and Stowe continued to espouse black stereotypes eagerly consumed by a transatlantic public. As Ethan J. Kytle acutely notes, it appeared "Uncle Tom's suffering…had died with the institution of slavery."[74] This narrative was rapidly subsumed by British society, which was fascinated with stories of the plantation South. The next chapter will focus on the next phase of black activism in Britain, and how individuals such as Josiah Henson – famous for his association with Stowe's novel – challenged Britain's growing desire to romanticize the South. He sought to remind British audiences of southern barbarities, and how slavery's legacy continued to infect transatlantic society.

[73] Sibyl Ventress Brownless, "Out of the Abundance of the Heart: Sarah Ann Parker Remond's Quest for Freedom," PhD Diss., (University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1997), 150.
[74] Ethan J. Kytle, *Romantic Reformers and the Antislavery Struggle in the Civil War Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 270-272.

Chapter 7: "My Name is Not Tom:" Josiah Henson, *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* and Adaptive Resistance After the Civil War 1876-1877

The cataclysmic end of the American Civil War signaled a major decline in black abolitionist transatlantic journeys to Britain. Between 1865 and 1895, only three activists received extensive coverage in the press: Josiah Henson, Frederick Douglass and Ida B. Wells. They exploited their travelling celebrity to remind British audiences that slavery was not dead and that its spectre continued to haunt not only them but all African Americans in the United States. While British interest in black activist missions waned, the popularity of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the fascination with the American South proved as popular as ever, and the novel was used as a springboard to discuss plantation life or the conditions black Americans faced. One review of a London performance in February 1875 commented:

> The black man is far less sentimentally viewed than formally. His wrongs have been very completely redressed, in so much that it is now perhaps rather the poor planter than the afflicted negro who is entitled to seek commiseration at the hands of the public.[1]

A few days later, another review went further and declared it "is like slaying the slain for George Harris now to protest against the atrocities of American slavedrivers" and Uncle Tom "for all his sanctity was something of a bore."[2]

[1] *The Pall Mall Gazette*. 17 February 1875, 12.
[2] *The Morning Post*. 13 February 1875, 6.

Stowe's novel had encouraged people to see the enslaved in a sympathetic light, but a decade after Civil War's end, the stereotype that black people were better off enslaved seemed further entrenched in British society. Since slavery was abolished and black suffering had ended with it, reports of African American inferiority, laziness and supposed lack of progress influenced society. Stowe's characters no longer evoked pity or empathy and there was little point in continuing to invest in the story because of abolition. The character of Uncle Tom in particular was a dull, submissive figure whose long-suffering mattered little in the contemporary climate.

Such reviews and commentaries sparked debate across the country and despite the lacklustre reviews above, performances of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* continued in abundance. Part of a wider trend within Britain's fascination with plantation life in literature, performances and travel narratives, the common theme uniting these was the erasure of slavery's reality, which became more entrenched as the appetite for such material increased. Diaries and travel accounts recording experiences in the South were published in the British press, where stories of "genuine niggers' in every variety of costume" formed a staple image in the public mind.[3] As Marcus Wood states, "slavery has been spectacularly mythologised within English culture" and the "perpetration of the trade [has been] overwritten with a triumphalist narrative." The "memory of the slave trade became the memory of glorious abolition…yet for each slave the experience was unrepeatable, irreducible and unreproducible." While Wood refers to European painters in particular, his statement that "the record

[3] *Manchester Times*. 8 January 1876, 14; *The Morning Post*. 6 September 1883, 6.

of slave experience is consequently a history fraught with irony, paradox, voyeurism and erasure" is an accurate one for Western society as a whole.[4]

Similarly, in relation to Britain's memory of transatlantic slavery, Katie Donington, Ryan Hanley and Jessica Moody argue that the distance between Britain and Caribbean slavery "enabled a distancing of the mind" and allowed "a great deal of mythologizing about slavery itself, and in particular a 're-framing' of the history of transatlantic slavery through the more morally comforting narrative of abolition."[5] Moody in particular argues that in regards to Liverpool, the city's dark history of the slave trade focused on "a displacement narrative shaped by triangles, via the 'triangular trade.'" Hence, "having ships leave and return with inanimate goods only, confining talk of slave bodies to the 'middle passage'" led to a "historical distancing of the human realities of the trade." Liverpudlian memory of slavery continues to reject and ultimately bury the city's central part in the slave trade.[6]

Narratives of displacement have their origins in the nineteenth century, and the late nineteenth-century author and activist Albion W. Tourgée wisely wrote that "a nation can never bury its past."[7] As Samuel Ward had discovered in the 1850s, the British obsession with American slavery remained an

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[4] Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America 1780-1865* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 7-8.
[5] Katie Donington, Ryan Hanley, and Jessica Moody, "Introduction," in Donington, Hanley, and Moody eds., *Britain's History and Memory of Transatlantic Slavery: Local Nuances of a 'National Sin'* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 10.
[6] Jessica Moody, "Liverpool's Local Tints: Drowning Memory and 'Maritimising' Slavery in a Seaport City," in Katie Donington, Ryan Hanley, and Jessica Moody eds., *Britain's History and Memory of Transatlantic Slavery: Local Nuances of a 'National Sin'* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 161-171.
[7] Albion W. Tourgée, "The South as a Field for Fiction (1888)," in Mark Elliott and John David Smith ed., *The Literary Undaunted Radical: The Selected Writings and Speeches of Albion W. Tourgée* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 171-178.

essential part of literary and performative stories. I term this narrative "superior displacement." Britain refused to acknowledge its role in the slave trade and slavery in the Caribbean in popular culture. Britain was seen to be an antislavery nation at heart and *morally superior* to America: the image of Britannia became a popular figure in visual, print and performance rhetoric when the opportunity arose to shame the United States into realizing their sin of slavery. As Edward Ziter argues of Victorian stories concerning the Orient, tales of the exotic set in the Middle East and Egypt were woven into narratives on stage that not only depicted Britain as culturally and racially superior, but also were popular because "of its spatial and cultural distance from London."[8] This geographical distance from the Caribbean and the United States allowed Britain to construct a narrative which ignored its own racial conflict in favour of the well-known story of American slavery.

The high regard many Britons had for plantation life in general can partly be explained by British investment in the sentimentalism and melodramatism which surrounded literary works and performances that used slavery and abolition as motifs. Stories about slavery and black life in the performance world were often as popular as visiting black lecturers. Melodramatic tales such as Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were inextricably linked to the romantic theatrical scenes within such performances. Immortalized in song, performance and illustrated playbills, the many illustrations of characters from Stowe's novel were sometimes interspersed with images or lyrics celebrating the freedom of Britain and sometimes even depicting Britannia herself. Novels, plays, and other performances emphasized

[8] Edward Ziter, *The Orient on the Victorian Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 11-19; 24; 45-46.

the world of slavery as a purely American issue, displacing any considerations of Britain's own part in the slave trade.[9]

Mocking America not only proved morally and culturally acceptable, but profitable too. Southern plantation life pre-and post-1865 was thus incorporated into a larger transatlantic cultural narrative where British land was – echoing abolitionist and jingoistic rhetoric – a place where slaves could walk free. The stories of formerly enslaved individuals remained popular as a part of this displacement myth, and these black figures were championed as fighters of freedom from American evils: many began to believe that the "story of the American negro would someday be regarded as the romance of our age."[10] The romance of Uncle Tom, enslaved individuals and the splendor of plantations bled into British society and became intertwined with racial thought and popular entertainment, perpetuating not only racial stereotypes but also the idea that slavery was dead and gone. As racial attitudes hardened in the mid to late nineteenth century in Britain due to the rise of scientific racism, depictions of the characters from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* – particularly on playbills and broadsides – were reduced to crude stereotypes.

It was this context that greeted formerly enslaved African American Josiah Henson during his visit to Britain in 1876-1877. Despite the fact that many abolitionist societies were disbanded and former antislavery activists had died, Henson exploited adaptive resistance in an entirely new age. To do

[9] Denise Kohn, Sarah Meer and Emily B. Todd, "Introduction," in Kohn, Meer, and Todd ed., *Transatlantic Stowe: Harriet Beecher Stowe and European Culture* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006), xi-xxi.
[10] *Western Mail*. (Cardiff) 8 January 1870, 7.

this, he needed to reawaken British interest and lecture about the memory of slavery from an entirely new angle. Thus, he manipulated his almost twenty-five-year association with Stowe's novel. He sought out remaining abolitionist friends and new connections to exploit the name of Uncle Tom: the social reformer John Lobb proved to be an indefatigable ally and organized meetings across the country, advertising that "Tom" was alive and well. Lobb also arranged for new editions of Henson's narrative, allowing Henson to manipulate the print culture strand of adaptive resistance.

Henson's decision to exploit his connection with the novel won him notoriety, new friends, and financial gain. Although his connections to reformers and print culture was essential to his successful visit, performance remained the most potent strand of adaptive resistance in this new era, and this will occupy most of the discussion in this chapter. Despite Josiah Henson's extraordinary celebrity in Britain, there was always a risk he would be identified by racial stereotypes as a suffering black body or music-loving simpleton. Through fiction and some dramatic performances of *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* Henson was a "memento," someone or something to remind others of American slavery and descriptions of him were often written in romantic language. His testimony implied he was a last remnant of slavery, a living memorial, and much like the melodramatic tableaux as represented by *Uncle Tom's Cabin* he was a static figure representing a memory of a system that was long dead. Henson's books were souvenirs to bolster the romance of abolition and served to represent a time in which an inevitable conflict took place. This extremely narrow field through which he navigated presented

complications, and Henson walked a tightrope between declaring his independence and accepting racist Victorian norms into his lectures. However, whenever he could, Henson used dissonance to subtly challenge the public's obsession with Uncle Tom and Lobb's heavy editing. He reminded British audiences of the climate of white supremacy and how they should not forget their role in the slave trade. Indeed, Henson's example reminds us of the complexities surrounding black activist exploitation of white racist narratives for their own advantage.

Henson's challenges to racism in his performances have often been dismissed by critics. In the 1930s for example, academic Benjamin Brawley argued that "any student of Henson's career is likely to be exasperated by his tendency to exploit himself."[11] As proved in this chapter, Brawley's statement is completely erroneous and denies Henson's ability to craft performances on the British stage and reject the racial epithet of Uncle Tom whenever it suited him. He sought to prove that formerly enslaved individuals were not just scarred bodies and despite his white benefactors' exploitation of his literary connection to Stowe's novel, Henson found any means necessary to reject a characterization that was not his own. He challenged audience perceptions that he was *the* Uncle Tom and fought against the passivity and unassertive nature of that character in myriad ways. He aimed to prove slavery was not entirely dead and its memory should be kept alive, and argued against the idea he or anyone else discussing slavery was akin to "slaying the slain." As Joseph Roach summarizes, forgetting "is an opportunistic tactic of whiteness," and he

[11] Richard Yarborough, "Strategies of Black Characterization in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Early Afro-American Novel," in Eric Sundquist ed., *New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 70.

quotes a Yoruba proverb which states "the white man who made the pencil also made the eraser."[12] In this chapter, I will argue that Henson sought to write over this cultural narrative of whiteness and reframe the concept slavery was long dead. As many activists had done before him, he wanted to combat the erasure of black testimony and challenge the racist caricatures of black people, all within a context of superior displacement. In short, while he was working in a different climate to his predecessors, his experience encapsulated the dilemma for black activists who employed adaptive resistance, as he used both assimilation and dissonance in his performances. The post-Reconstruction visits of Henson and other African American activists to Britain demonstrate their flexible performances and in a changing political climate, they both embraced and rebuffed audience attempts to define them. As Dwight McBride argues, "identity is not just about being in the body but about the body being in the world" and often, "the world signifies and re-creates the slave body."[13] Henson continually created opportunities to denounce comparisons with the fictional character and challenged how the world saw his "slave body."

The British Narrative of Superior Displacement

Published in 1849, Josiah Henson's narrative was sold on both sides of the Atlantic and was read by Harriet Beecher Stowe, who used it as inspiration for her novel. British audiences quickly became obsessed with the narrative and in

[12] Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xi; 6.
[13] Dwight A. McBride, *Impossible Witnesses: Truth, Abolitionism, and Slave Testimony* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 12.

October 1852 alone, there were ten different editions published in two weeks jumping to over forty editions by the close of 1853. Altogether, the novel sold roughly 1,500,000 copies in Britain, and the public eagerly consumed spin-off volumes, plays, merchandise and even wallpaper.[14] The novel further inspired paintings in the Royal Academy as well as Panoramas and by the end of 1852, there were eleven different dramatic interpretations of *Uncle Tom* being performed across the country, including four pantomimes in time for Christmas. In these circumstances, the story of abolition was a commoditized product that sparked huge interest in nearly every corner of Britain, in what Audrey Fisch describes as the "general commercialization of American abolitionism."[15]

Stowe wanted to target the hearts of her readers and wanted them to imagine the pain enslaved men and women felt.[16] As Augusta Rohrbach makes clear, slave narratives and "human suffering" were transformed into a publishing industry in which books and lectures by African Americans were devoured by a white public, leading to multiple editions. This print economy - part of the triad of techniques which black abolitionists relied on – was central to Henson and others' success in Britain, as narratives and novels were circulated in order to win support against American slavery. Henson himself exploited the profitable market for books related to Stowe's novel, and titled his extended autobiography *Truth Stranger than Fiction* (1858), which was a direct challenge to the novel's inconsistencies and racial stereotypes within the

[14] Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 21.
[15] Audrey Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England: Abolitionist Politics in Popular Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University of Press, 2000), 13-14; 52-55.
[16] Marianne Noble, *The Masochistic Pleasures of Sentimental Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 126-138.

novel. As a formerly enslaved individual, Henson wanted his work to represent the authentic slave experience in the face of racists or sceptics who dismissed the idea of slavery as a cruel system. As the title of his autobiography suggests, Henson wanted to own his story and teach others the truth about slavery.[17] Since other African Americans were also expected to situate their lives in relation to the novel (as it had become the primary touchstone for depictions of slavery), individuals such as William Wells Brown followed suit and used it as a discussion point to highlight the realities of plantation life, as we saw in chapter four.[18]

After the Civil War, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*'s influence in the United States waned amidst the climate of devastation, Reconstruction and eventual hopes for reconciliation. However, dramatizations of the story continued to be performed in America until the early twentieth century, from plays, to burlesque and the opera. Authors such as Thomas Nelson Page and Joel Chandler Harris exploited the characterisation of enslaved blacks as loyal servants, tapping into a culture already rife with minstrel characters and racist iconography that depicted Uncle Tom-like characters in various forms. As reconciliation between the North and South took precedence over any concerns about racial equality, the memory of slavery was reshaped into a romanticized fiction where the enslaved had been happy and dutifully served their white masters with pleasure.[19] Grace Elizabeth Hale argues that "the deep uncertainty of life" in America and in particular the South "sent many

[17] Augusta Rohrbach, "Making it Real: The Impact of Slave Narratives on the Literary Marketplace," *Prospects* 26, (2001), 137-138; 143; 154-157.
[18] Sarah Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania: Slavery, Minstrelsy and Transatlantic Culture in the 1850s* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 1-2; 163-166; 177-179.
[19] Adena Spingarn, "Writing the Old Negro in a New Century: James Weldon Johnson and the Uses of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *American Literature* 89:1, (2017), 31-37.

across the nation backward into imaginary pasts for the regrounding of authority." The "tales of past white southern glory became the legitimating narratives of origin for the culture of segregation" and by "reimagining the recent past, southern whites celebrated a plantation pastoral of racial harmony and a noble war of principle and valor." The "nostalgic celebrations of a golden age of racial innocence deflected present white southerners' hardships and hid rising racial violence…under a haze of moonlight and magnolias."[20]

Nina Silber argues the novel encouraged people to invest in the "romance of reunion" and the text was used almost as a reconciliatory device, despite increasing racial violence and discrimination towards black people. Southerners and northerners seized on themes of plantation romance, the novel became a nostalgic symbol and it was read as a distinct form of history and romance. The South's plantation romance became increasingly popular in performances and alternative literary forms, and new editions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were rebranded as a "homely plantation story," consumed by northerners, southerners and a growing western market. The new marketing strategy placed emphasis on the plantation, the loyalty of black slaves (for southern readers) and its role in the nation's history, as evinced by the book's central part in an exhibit at the Columbian Exposition in 1893.[21]

In Britain on the other hand, performances of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* continued throughout the century. Sarah Meer shows that from the 1850s other

[20] Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 59-60; 65-66; 69-73.
[21] Barbara Hochman, *Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Reading Revolution: Race, Literacy, Childhood, and Fiction, 1851-1911* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 2-3; 19-20; 132-150.

novels and performances spun-off from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sometimes took creative licence with the novel's plot, for example portraying slave revolts and violence: this was easier for British rather than American audiences to imagine because of the former's geographical distance from slavery. Plays mentioning Canada would result in cheers from the audience, as the popular notion that slaves walked free on British soil was celebrated. One production even quoted Douglass' "What to the Slave is the 4th of July" speech and others were self-congratulatory in their praise for British abolition.[22] However, historians including Meer in her seminal work on the novel's afterlife have neglected to consider the novel's impact on British society beyond the American Civil War, an impact that cannot be separated from the context of Henson's visit. There the characters of Tom and Topsy were twisted into racial stereotypes on stage: Tom was a passive and pious old man, whereas Topsy was a mischievous and wicked figure who loved to spurn white authority and speak in plantation dialect.[23]

Since the first publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* such images had always accompanied the text and became a staple in British editions. Indeed, we can trace the narrative of superior displacement around Stowe's work to these first British editions. During the mid-nineteenth century, the process of engraving became more efficient, and cheap illustrated novels became the norm. These illustrated versions in Britain were instantly popular, and sold more copies than other forms of the novel. The story of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* thus became inseparable from images depicting the central characters. These

[22] Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania,* (2005), 140-149.
[23] Ethan J. Kytle, *Romantic Reformers and the Antislavery Struggle in the Civil War Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 270-272.

illustrations would appear in the novel but also in magazines, song sheets, and advertisements, so Victorian society would have been extremely familiar with the figures of Topsy, Eva and Uncle Tom.[24] In these illustrated versions, Julia Thomas argues publishers were at pains to point out the differences between American and British society, particularly that slavery was a distinctly American problem. These images had a larger meaning in which themes of race, nationhood and identity influenced how they were read. British illustrated versions often employed notions of moral superiority to highlight American evils and society's sins. The London publishing houses Clarke & Company and Routledge, for example, changed the title from "Life Among the Lowly" to "Negro Life in the Southern States of America," and one version included a whipping scene on the back cover. Within these novels, illustrations reiterated this view and encouraged readers to associate slavery with the United States and assume that Britain was far removed from such cruelty and sin. References to the Declaration of Independence's hypocrisy and the female figure of justice (complete with scales) reinforced the idea that Americans should be harshly judged for supporting slavery. These images provided an ideology for the novel's readers, casting Britain, not America, as the land of the free.[25] As Fisch argues, the novel was framed around British moral superiority, stating that "this tradition of the pairing of abolitionism with nationalism" should come as "no surprise." The novel sparked debates about slavery, but confirmed that "whether or not England originated slavery in America, it [was] to the national detriment of the United States alone that it

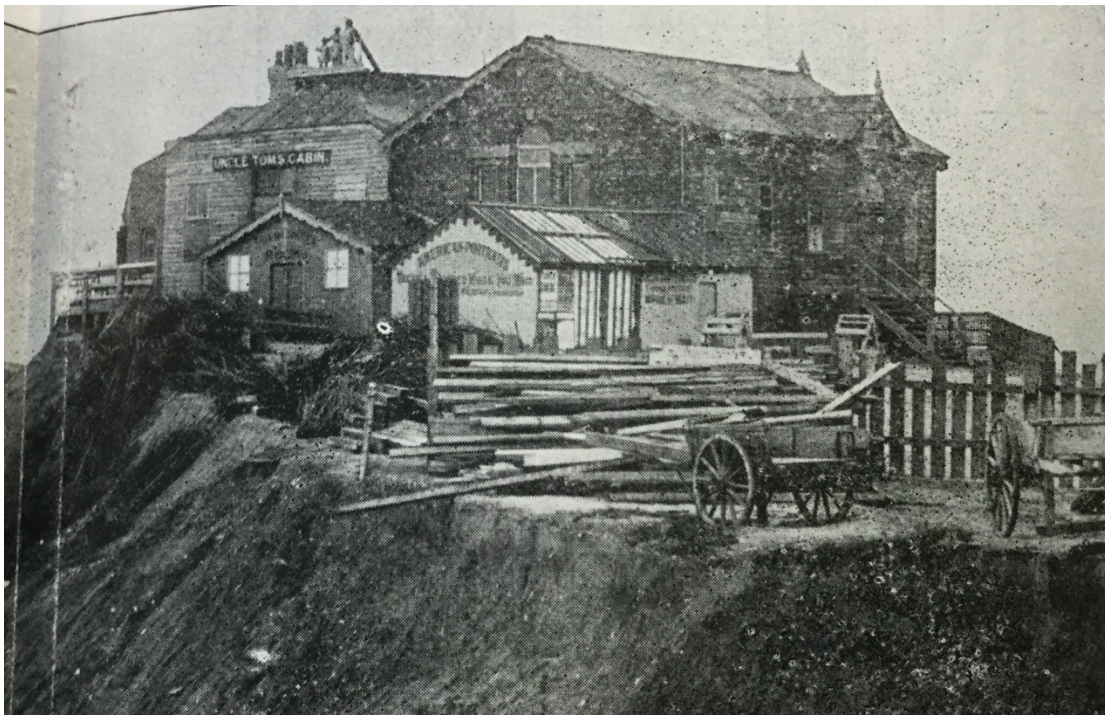
[24] Julia Thomas, *Pictorial Victorians: The Inscription of Values in Word and Image* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), 22-28; 34.
[25] *Ibid*, 38-51.

remains." England "appropriated Uncle Tom, pressing him into the service of contradictory ideological positions."[26]

Hence, the concept of superior displacement has a long history in relation to Stowe's novel and taking its cue from the performance world, it evolved in unusual ways. In Blackpool, the success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a literary and performative work was turned into an entertainment venue, when an enterprising family sought to capitalize on the novel and branded their premises with the same name and even transformed it to look like a cabin. Previously undiscussed by historians, this venue exploited this association and found numerous ways to provide more connections to its black characters. For example, a statue of a black man, said to have come from a ship's figure-head, was placed in the cabin's dancing room.[27] Uncle Tom's Cabin was a staple venue which employed musicians, dancers, and advertised itself as a haven for the working and middle classes who sought the view over the cliffs to the sea, a recreational drink or game of cricket. To emphasize the link even further, towards the later nineteenth century three more figures were placed on the venue's roof, symbolizing Tom, Eva and Topsy, which can be seen in the image below.[28] Outside the hut there was a small building advertising "American" portraits, which reinforced the venue's connection to American culture, and photography. Perhaps visitors could have their own photographs taken and purchase images of the novel's characters there too. While this

[26] Audrey Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 29-32.
[27] *Uncle Tom's Cabin in Blackpool: A Brief Illustrated History of one of Blackpool's Interesting Landmarks* (Blackpool: 'Times' Office, 1907), 13-16. Thanks to Nick Moore for sending some postcards of the building via email.
[28] Norman Cunliffe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin, Bispham's First Centre of Entertainment* (Fylde Historical Society, 1982).

venue may have been relatively unknown outside of Blackpool (and remains so today), it demonstrates the novel's success and how even on a local scale Britons were actively and literally building a new memory of American slavery, wherein Britain's history of slavery and its colonial legacy were completely ignored.



Uncle Tom's Cabin in Blackpool, c. early 1900s.[29]



Uncle Tom's Cabin in the foreground, c. early 1900s.[30]

[29] *Uncle Tom's Cabin in Blackpool: A Brief Illustrated History of one of Blackpool's Interesting Landmarks* (Blackpool: 'Times' Office, 1907), 8-9.
[30] *Ibid*, 15.

A "Negro Preacher" and a British Celebrity

The unusual venue at Blackpool highlights the immense popularity of Stowe's novel, a fact that Henson recognized when he returned to Britain. Aside from Marcus Wood and the art historian Jan Marsh, scholars have largely ignored Henson's high-profile visit to Britain, which is surprising considering Henson's popularity, the impact he had on British society and his active resistance to racism.[31] Henson visited Britain in 1876 to ask for British donations to pay off personal debt for his farm in Canada, and sought out reformers and old abolitionist friends to help him raise money to overcome these financial difficulties. The market for slave stories in Britain clearly experienced a revival in the 1870s as a direct result of Henson's visit and his fame reveals how British society interpreted the memory of slavery and abolition. As Wood states, the novel's "power and technical intricacy" was "drowned in a visual rhetoric of colossal vulgarity" that was heavily dependent on the victimization of black people. Henson exploited this "intense public desire to see Tom rise in flesh and blood from the page, to have the 'state of vision' become corporeal." He was "paraded around the country as the living embodiment of the good Christian ex-slave" and his visit created a "sensation," reawakening public interest in Stowe's novel and visiting black lecturers. As Wood succinctly argues the "memory of slavery [became] represented within the factualised fictions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*"[32] Formerly enslaved individuals had to perform memories that were not always their own

[31] Jan Marsh, "From Slave Cabin to Windsor Castle: Josiah Henson and 'Uncle Tom' in Britain," *19th Century Studies* 16, (2002), 37-50.
[32] Wood, *Blind Memory,* (2000), 143-144; 195-199.

construction, in the sense that white abolitionists crafted a cultural narrative based on Stowe's novel which black individuals were often expected to conform to. These cultural narratives primarily encouraged whites to pity formerly enslaved individuals and to empathize with their pain. Before the Civil War, this strategy of empathy was used to encourage whites to champion abolition, but hearing, seeing and sometimes touching a testifying slave remained a popular pastime on the Victorian stage.[33] Henson had to wrestle with these competing versions of Uncle Tom and provide a model of black performance and resistance at a time when fictional and racist depictions of black people had become the norm.

Unlike many of his predecessors who exploited abolitionist networks, many of Henson's friends by the 1870s had died and certain connections were closed to him. John Lobb (editor of *The Christian* Age) proved a useful ally, and Henson wrote that Lobb had "an extensive acquaintance with most of the evangelical ministers in London" who "arranged all my engagements, assisted me in addressing, at their request, very large audiences in public buildings, chapels, and places of worship." Henson gave Lobb full copyright of his narrative, and stated Lobb had "on every public occasion rendered me material assistance as my *Chairman.*" As we saw in chapter three with Frederick Douglass, this may be another instance where Henson was being taken by the hand and directed by Lobb in every aspect of his life. It is possible that by italicizing "*Chairman,*" Henson was being deliberately subversive: Lobb's micro-management stretched to every aspect of Henson's visit including

[33] Douglas A. Jones, Jr., *The Captive Stage: Performance and the Proslavery Imagination of the Antebellum North* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), 140.

publishing, lecturing schedule, and who to stay with. It is also entirely possible that Henson viewed Lobb's chaperoning as tiresome. Henson had to be accompanied by a white benefactor, a physical extension of white testimonial support in slave narratives. Lobb acted as chairman during that meeting, and had a hand in Henson's entire British tour.[34]

In his introduction to the *Young People's Illustrated Edition of Uncle Tom's Story of His Life,* Lobb also stated that Henson used any form of network that remained, and he visited Lobb's office with introductions to influential people (including the Earl of Shaftesbury, Samuel Morley and George Sturge) and asked for his help to "liquidate a debt of 800l on the Wilberforce Educational Institute in Canada."[35] Morley and Sturge, who had supported Henson during his previous visit, "were disposed to be [his] staunch, steadfast friends." Both men agreed to help Henson liquidate his debts, and started a fund to collect donations on his behalf. He was grateful for their "generosity, and for their abiding friendship:" their "influential names" together with £50 each was a strong beginning to what was to become a successful tour.[36] In Henson's new edition of his narrative in 1876, Sturge and Morley also provided a short introductory testimonial to the book and declared him a "remarkable man." George Sturge argued Henson's "life affords an encouraging *example* of what may be done, even by one who has laboured under the greatest disadvantages, who is earnestly desirous to benefit his race." Henson's "Christian simplicity, and the absence of all bitter feeling

[34] Josiah Henson, ed. John Lobb, *Uncle Tom's Story of his Life* (London: Christian Age, 1877), 209-210.
[35] Josiah Henson, ed. John Lobb, *Young People's Illustrated Edition: Uncle Tom's Story of his Life from 1789 to 1877* (London: Christian Age, 1877), Preface.
[36] Henson, *Uncle Tom's Story of His Life,* (1876), 204-205.

towards those who have oppressed him" were qualities to admire and those individuals should aspire towards. Sturge not only betrays racial stereotypes of black people, but also further engrained the stereotype of Henson as *the* Uncle Tom in the public mind. The character of Tom, renowned for his religiosity, morality and forgiveness was synonymous with the man himself. To make the connection believable, the man had to fit the mold.[37]

Partly as a result of these networks, Henson's new narrative edition was a phenomenal success. An advert placed at the back of the 80,000th copy run stated that 65,000 copies were sold in six months.[38] As a result of this and his famous association with Stowe's novel, Henson received over two thousand invitations to speak. Henson's speaking itinerary is extraordinary not only for its duration and number of speeches but also because of his age; he was in his late 80s at this point and travelled widely around the country in six months. He spoke to packed audiences in chapels and churches across London often numbering in the thousands, including Brixton, Stoke Newington, Epsom, and even lectured under a "tent" in Wood Green. His extensive lecturing tour also reached Glasgow, Sheffield, Nottingham, Portsmouth, Southampton, and the Isle of Wight. In Portsmouth, a dinner was held in his honor aboard the HMS Victory, and all the officers received copy of his image and an interview with him from Lobb's *Christian Age.*[39]

While Henson exploited the performance aspect of adaptive resistance in an entirely different climate after the Civil War, he remained a powerful

[37] *Ibid*, 8-9.
[38] *Ibid*, 238.
[39] *Ibid,* 210-211.

orator, and newspaper correspondents waxed lyrical about his impressive stage presence. Most press paragraphs discussing him were reprinted almost verbatim from London to Liverpool, describing how Henson – the "original" Uncle Tom – "pictured [slavery] in a very effective way." The scars on his back testified to the cruelty of that system, many noted, and bore witness to the truth of Stowe's story.[40] In Sheffield, Henson gave two lectures in one day to thrilled audiences, one beginning at the unusual time of 12pm, the other later in the evening, clearly demonstrating that demand was high. Crowds of people turned up an hour and a half early to get a seat despite the "hour and the inclemency of the weather."[41] A month later in the same city, hundreds of people were turned away as there was not even standing room left to hear him speak.[42] According to John Lobb, Henson addressed over 500,000 people during his 1876-1877 visit and many meetings were as popular as the one in Sheffield.[43]

Henson also drew a crowd in Nottingham, a meeting most likely arranged by the aforementioned social reformer Samuel Morley. It is also probable that Henson stayed with Morley – a man of considerable influence and wealth – and utilized his contacts in the surrounding area.[44] In this Nottingham meeting Henson "exhibited his infirmities to the company by taking off his coat, in which operation he was warmly cheered."[45] His decision

[40] *The Morning Post* (London). 6 September 1876, 4; *Liverpool Mercury*. 7 September 1876, 7; *Berrow's Worcester Journal*. 9 September 1876, 6; *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* (London). 10 September 1876, 8.
[41] *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*. 30 January 1877, 6.
[42] *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*. 3 February 1877, 11.
[43] Henson, *Young People's Illustrated Edition,* (1877), Author's Note.
[44] George Sturge and Samuel Morley, "Introductory Note," in Henson, *Uncle Tom's Story of His Life,* (1876).
[45] *Nottinghamshire Guardian*. 15 December 1876, 3.

to exhibit his scars attests to an assimilationist technique within adaptive resistance, as he was well aware that the audience voyeuristically desired to play witness to the brutality of slavery. The fight to end slavery and abolition itself was framed by violence and the decision to show his scars meant a confirmation of that abolitionist narrative. Cassandra Jackson argues the scarred black male body offered opportunities for white commodification and spectacle. Black male bodies were "already considered dangerous, volatile, and forbidden" and scars or wounds made "the body available to observation and desire." The white gaze involves a distinct power to look and control the black body, and the infamous photograph of the enslaved man Gordon testifies to the insatiable desire for scarred bodies and how the violence of slavery was represented as "readable proof" rather than hearing the testimony from individuals such as Gordon himself. The photograph acts "as a vehicle" where white audiences can "safely engage in this titillating sensory experience" and view "the suffering black male body as an object of white desire." Just as Stowe employed sentimentalism in her novel, photographers of scarred bodies encouraged white audiences to imagine black suffering and pain. The photograph and the scars act as a form of testimony against slavery, and as Jackson argues, audiences often "valued the 'mute testimony' of photography [and] its ability to tell without speaking."[46]

As we have seen, formerly enslaved individuals such as Moses Roper occasionally exhibited their scars to British audiences. White voyeurism

[46] Cassandra Jackson, *Violence, Visual Culture, and the Black Male Body* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 4-5; 12-15; 22. See also Colette Colligan, "Anti-Abolition Writes Obscenity: The English Vice, Transatlantic Slavery, and England's Obscene Print Culture," in ed. Lisa Z. Sigel, *International Exposure: Perspectives on Modern European Pornography 1800-2000,* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 67-99.

affected Roper in the 1830s to Henson's exhibitionism in the 1870s, and Henson's scars were a testament to his relationship to the character of Uncle Tom.[47] However, Roper's use of this technique was different to Henson's, notably because of the difference in time. Twenty-five years after slavery had ended, the display of scars was no longer seen as a trigger for sentimentalism or empathy, or even a call for action. They were not shown for pity, but were seen as an attraction and almost like a relic of a past when that form of cruelty existed. While the scars were still used to illustrate that brutality, audience cheers celebrated Henson's triumphs and the end of that cruel system, which was long dead. The Nottingham display obviously proved successful as the chairman asked the audience by a show of hands whether Henson should come back the following week (it was a unanimous yes).

Although Henson was a successful author in his own right (the first edition of his narrative sold over two thousand copies in 1849, and over six thousand in the first three years before Stowe's novel was published) it was undoubtedly his association with the novel that prompted an invitation to meet Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle in 1877.[48] In the 1850s, the Queen was advised not to meet Harriet Beecher Stowe in public, as ministers were fearful of upsetting southerners who sold and transported cotton to Britain.[49] By the 1870s, it was clearly safe for Henson to visit the palace and talk openly about

[47] Jennifer Putzi, "The Skin of an American Slave': African American Manhood and the Marked Body in Nineteenth-Century Abolitionist Literature," *Studies in American Fiction* 30:2, (Autumn 2002), 185-189.
[48] Calvin Schermerhorn, "Arguing Slavery's Narrative: Southern Regionalists, Ex-slave Autobiographers and the Contested Literary Representations of the Peculiar Institution 1824-1849," *Journal of American Studies* 46:4, (November 2012), 1030. Frances Smith Foster states that Henson's first narrative sold over 100,000 copies once Stowe credited his story with inspiring her novel. Foster, *Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Ante-Bellum Slave Narratives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 22.
[49] Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania,* (2005), 163-165.

a novel that had divided so many. Henson presented her with a copy of his autobiography and in return received the Queen's portrait. She then asked Henson and John Lobb to sign their names in an album in the castle. They toured the grounds and the state apartments, and left after roughly three hours.[50] The event was substantially covered in the press, and one newspaper – the *Birmingham Daily New* – described the meeting thus:

> There is something almost romantic in the meeting, in Royalty's own home, of the Queen of England with this humble and now aged Uncle Tom, whose only distinction arises from his sufferings, and the patient, sweet philosophy and great-hearted piety with which he bore the harshness of stern oppressors. We can picture the negro patriarch, now in his 88th year, passing up the corridor and into the Oak Room where her Majesty, surrounded by lords and ladies in waiting and officers of state, took him kindly by the hand and spoke generous words of sympathy for the sufferings he had undergone. The scene would be well worth immortalizing on the canvas of some great historic painter. Nothing could be more picturesque than the pageantry and grandeur of the surroundings of which this venerable negro was the central figure… The sweeping away of the slave system of the South was one of the noblest works ever achieved by any people;

[50] *Birmingham Daily Post*. 6 March 1877, 5; *Liverpool Mercury*. 6 March 1877, 7; *The Morning Post*. 6 March 1877, 5.

> and the fire and sword through which the reformers had to pass were the harrowing trials of their noble mission.[51]

The press was evidently thrilled that the so-called "Uncle Tom" was gracing British shores, and we see here the familiar patronizing trope of the pious, Christian suffering slave that is not only present in Stowe's novel but also in other white abolitionist literature. Henson's "only distinction" – that is, the main reason why he met royalty – was because of his sufferings as a slave, and any mention of his agency and resistance is completely extinguished. Henson is reduced to a scarred, unassertive slave who witnessed extreme cruelty and can now happily be found in a palace which he was almost unfit to see. He is described as gentle, good-natured, without a penchant for violence, and his "sweet" disposition plays into the minstrel lore of the nineteenth century. The concept of white people as saviours is evidently at work here, and the kindness shown to him by royalty reflects the (white) moral superiority of Britain as an abolitionist nation as well as the superiority of the white race. This cultural narrative reflects the "Am I Not a Man and a Brother?" imagery where a kneeling slave is saved and helped by white men and implies the black man is unable to pull himself up from his misery and suffering.

According to the *Birmingham Daily News,* the meeting was historic, worth painting and preserving as a symbolic episode in the noble destruction of slavery itself. The theme of superior displacement is strongly on display

[51] *Birmingham Daily Mail.* 6 March 1877.

here, as Victorians seem to have regarded this meeting as emblematic of Britain's history of abolishing the slave trade and slavery much sooner than the Americans, with the former openly welcoming any slave or black man on their free soil compared to the latter. Slavery was long-dead, and the image of a British monarch extending the hand of friendship and charity towards a former slave speaks to the deliberately constructed antislavery narrative Britons had woven into society since the end of slavery in the 1830s. Slavery was a sin, and the destruction of it in America (specifically creating and reframing that geographical distance) could only be achieved by the "fire and sword" and the language here infuses slavery with a sense of biblical portent: slavery was always doomed to die, as the war was a Christian struggle against the moral evil of slavery, but could not be won without the trials and suffering of "reformers." While the article is referring to Henson here, "reformers" as a group would also refer to white activists, despite the fact the "trials" of black and white individuals would have been vastly different.

Due to Henson's celebrity, his oratorical skill and interview with the Queen, his visit inspired numerous artistic creations, including a portrait bust by W. Charles May for the Royal Academy Exhibition in 1877.[52] In an unusual and unprecedented move, a second commemoration at Madame Tussauds led to a wax model of Henson being placed in the Exhibition's "Large Room" alongside royalty, military generals, literary heroes, infamous convicts and world leaders such as Martin Luther, Joan of Arc, Mary Queen of Scots, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, William Shakespeare, John

[52] Marsh, "From Slave Cabin to Windsor Castle," (2002), 45-46. Marsh states this bust is now held at the American Museum in Bath.

Bright, Daniel O'Connell and the Sultan of Turkey. His name was listed as one of these "great attractions" in the press and was described in the exhibition pamphlet as "Uncle Tom" and "the hero of Harriet Beecher Stowe's popular novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*." The statue was still in the exhibition hall in 1880, even though Henson had visited four years before.[53]

A permanent fixture in London from 1835, Madame Tussaud and her successors fused the world of popular culture with curiosity, education and entertainment.[54] The so-called great or large room where Henson's model was placed was 100 feet by 50 feet, with the walls elegantly decorated and the statues placed either in small groups or by themselves depending on their identities. Small sofas or chairs were interspersed throughout the room, giving the impression of an art gallery; the room opposite contained the "golden chamber" full of royal figures. While the exhibition did not often portray black figures (making Henson's model even more significant), they did exploit the public's interest in Africa by portraying David Livingstone and native Africans in 1872, as well as battles in the Zulu campaign. Unlike other institutional museums, visitors were allowed to touch the wax figures.[55] The concept of touching figures in this venue relates to audience desires to touch black bodies on abolitionist stages. For example, during Frederick Douglass' tour of Britain in the 1840s, his growing celebrity inspired audience desires to touch him. In the coverage of a meeting in Essex, the newspaper

[53] *The Morning Post* (London). 7 December 1877, 1; *Exhibition of Biographical Characters and Descriptions*, Madame Tussaud's Catalogue (1880), 15. Accessed 1 June 2016, www.archive.org.
[54] Pauline Chapman, *Madame Tussaud in England: Career Woman Extraordinary* (London: Quiller Press, 1992), 62-64; Kate Berridge, *Waxing Mythical: The Life and Legend of Madame Tussaud* (London: John Murray, 2006), 318-19.
[55] Pamela Pillbeam, *Madame Tussaud and the History of Waxworks* (London: Hambledon, 2003), 105-108; 128; 158-159.

correspondent made special reference to many people rushing forward to "shake hands with him."[56]

Wax models were created by a combination of sitting models and photographs, and each figure had to be retouched or repainted every six weeks. The clothes were sometimes replaced altogether, depending on how many times the public physically handled the statue. The Tussaud family were shrewd and paid close attention to whether people stopped by a certain statue, as if the public did not show interest, the model would be immediately removed.[57] Hence, this model of Henson - previously undiscovered by historians – indicates not only that he joined an illustrious roster of people, but he was also famous enough for his statue to last at least three years in the exhibition. Unfortunately, no image accompanies the description in the catalogue, but we can only assume that if Henson was not aware of it or refused to visit, his statue was constructed from a photograph or an image, most likely through his autobiography. We are left to wonder whether the statue itself betrayed racist facial features and how it was positioned – sitting, standing, preaching, or perhaps reading a copy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* Furthermore, in the exhibition catalogue, it does not say whether the instruments of slave torture were exhibited alongside Henson's body. The exhibition itself was no stranger to displaying torture weapons (as evidenced by the infamous Chamber of Horrors), and the commercialization of slavery or slave imagery had been popular since the eighteenth century.[58]

[56] *Essex Standard.* 19 March 1847, 2.
[57] Pillbeam, *Madame Tussaud and the History of Waxworks* (2003), 185.
[58] *Ibid,* 181-183.

Henson's statue thus raises questions about voyeurism and commodification in a different context. The interest around *Uncle Tom's Cabin* centered on an insatiable, voyeuristic appetite for the violent and the thrilling escape, something which the wax figure would epitomize according to white Victorians. The silent figure could not reject or reprimand audiences who believed him to be the unassertive Uncle Tom in real life. The wax figure also conjures uncomfortable images of interaction with the audience. In one edition of the *Illustrated London News* in 1872 for example, an image of a seated William Cobbett is surrounded by women either touching the model or trying to get as close as possible to do so.[59] This bodily commodification was representative of a culture in which black bodies were often exhibited. The wax figure symbolizes the solidification of his association with Uncle Tom, an immortalized static model which renders his performance mute. We see again how the melodramatic background of Henson's fictional alias comes to play here. The playbills, advertisements and images surrounding *Uncle Tom's Cabin* point to visual tableaux where key figures such as Topsy, Eliza and Tom are framed in set positions that fit their character (Eliza fleeing over the ice for example, or Topsy misbehaving). Madame Tussauds invested in melodrama, and Henson's statue is framed as theatrical tableaux: a quiet pose representing the conflict of slavery and abolition.

Henson's visit to Britain also sparked other artistic creations in the form of performance. In Dundee, Henson's arrival inspired locals to reimagine a new version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in "commemoration" of the original

[59] *Ibid,* 161-164.

Uncle Tom. According to one reviewer, the novel had proved to be a "thrilling narrative" which gave "a singularly graphic picture of negro life in the slave states of America." Stowe had wanted to "expose some of the terrible evils of negro slavery" to campaign on both sides of the Atlantic for its abolition. Slavery had now been abolished, continued the article, but the novel remained a "memento of that accursed system which is now happily numbered with the things of the past." The end of slavery seemingly put an end to African American problems, and it was interpreted as a cataclysmic event of the past which did not have an immediate legacy. Racism and racial violence were subsumed in a mythology in which the end of slavery brought physical and mental freedom for African Americans.[60] Henson himself and the exhibition of his scarred back served to remind others he was a physical memento, read as an object *and* a fictional character that played an important part in the history of slavery and its removal.

These artistic spaces in which Henson's legacy was enacted were completely different to those inhabited by previous abolitionists. His association with a fictional character inspired new artistic creations never before seen, and regardless of whether Henson sat for either his bust or for a wax model, he was operating in different performance spaces than his predecessors. All black abolitionists engaged with the structure and politics of antislavery meetings, and lectured after being introduced by white reformers. As we have seen in previous chapters, they used non-abolitionist spaces to

[60] *The Dundee Courier and Argus and Northern Warder*. 3 September 1878, 5. Henson was not alone in this, as Douglass's tour probably inspired a play about Toussaint L'Ouverture. See Jenna Gibbs, *Performing the Temple of Liberty: Slavery, Theater, and Popular Culture* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014), 213-216.

further their activism, and figures such as William and Ellen Craft exploited the Great Exhibition (both an educational and entertaining venue) to target American slaveholders. Henson's dual identity as both formerly enslaved person and fictional character meant he could cross the boundaries of formal abolitionist networks and polite society into the realms of theatre, performance, and the artistic worlds.[61]

"The Negro was Full of Music:" Minstrelsy as a Performative Technique

Regardless of whether Henson was aware of the wax model or plays based on his appearance in Britain, he recognized the immense popularity of Uncle Tom. Tapping into assimilationist strategies concerning the exploitation of this character for his own gain, he also employed adaptive resistance to win audience support and convince the British public of the dangers of relying on racial stereotypes and mythologizing slavery. In order to achieve this, he used an assimilationist technique by incorporating minstrelsy into his lectures. Other black abolitionists such as Moses Roper also relied on this trope during their time on British shores, and Henson used it to great success on several occasions, partly because his visit took place when minstrelsy had become entrenched as a cultural form in Britain.[62]

[61] As Henson's fame grew, it became much more difficult to control his image, as his identity was molded by artists in two different social and cultural settings seemingly without his consent. The problem of a lack of control and consent was highlighted by *Punch* magazine in 1919 with a satirical cartoon: "There once was a Madame called Tussaud; who loved the grand folk in Who's Who, so; that she made them in wax; both their fronts and their backs; and asked no permission to do so." Kate Berridge, *Waxing Mythical,* (2006), 323.

[62] Robert Nowatzki, *Representing African Americans in Transatlantic Abolitionism and Blackface Minstrelsy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 3-4; 10-11; 24-28.

Minstrel shows attempted to label themselves as a genuine slave troupe in the hope for higher profits, although some newspapers remained skeptical that some troupes ever had any connection to slavery, "their bony complexions being evidently due to 'burnt cork' rather than the hand of nature." Audiences responded well to "nigger breakdowns, jigs and burlesque sketches" and occasionally figures such as a "grotesque negro dwarf" (according to one press report) would entertain crowds throughout the year.[63] Stowe's descriptions of black characters in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* inevitably relied on racial stereotypes, and allowed minstrel shows to directly borrow or expand certain features. The character of Topsy for example, is well known for her minstrelesque mannerisms: her mischievous personality, her braided hair, wide eyes and statements akin to catchphrases such as "I's mighty wicked."[64] According to the press, audiences "laughed at [Topsy's] antics and encored her dance" and "the uncouth nigger [provided] no end of mirth."[65] In turn, Sarah Meer argues the character of Tom "was made the butt of minstrel jokes [and] lampooned in comic sketches" and became a laughable figure in several plays and performances.[66]

It was in this climate that Henson operated as a skillful performer and borrowed such minstrel tropes. For example, during a Sunday meeting in Sheffield in 1877, the "hall was crowded in every part [and] not even standing

[63] *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*. 6 February 1870, 8.
[64] Richard Yarborough, "Strategies of Black Characterization in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Early Afro-American Novel," in Eric J. Sundquist ed., *New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 47-55.
[65] *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*. 21 March 1878, 3; *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*. 2 October 1878, 8.
[66] Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania,* (2005), 14.

room [was] obtainable" as "hundreds were compelled to go away unable to obtain admission:"

> No sooner did he begin to speak of the love of God to man that his whole soul was stirred within him, and to such a height of enthusiasm did he reach that he literally "danced with joy." He carried his audience with him, and like a skilful player upon a harp he wrought upon their feelings, now by some quaint remark provoking them to laughter, then by relating a touching incident in his own career or appealing to their consciences, moving them to tears.[67]

The image of Henson as a passive formerly enslaved individual was part of his appeal to a Victorian audience, together with his distinct authority as a witness to the violence of slavery. The language used here, however, is infused with a musicality that betrays minstrelsy stereotypes, including how Henson "danced with joy" and spoke in a fashion akin to a musical instrument. Similarly, in a meeting in London in the spring of 1877, Henson promised to sing a "negro melody" since the audience "had heard the negro was full of music from his head to his heels." The use of music infused the meeting with a theatrical quality, as a formerly enslaved individual performed the "negro melodies" of old. The meeting was very popular, as the "church was crammed, not a crevice being unoccupied and about five hundred people were unable to gain admission." The "extreme crush" caused several women to faint and they were

[67] *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*. 3 February 1877, 11.

carried out.[68] On the surface, this might speak to a full assimilationist policy, but we must read deeper into Henson's actions and words. According to Patricia MacCormack, performativity – the act of performing an identity – "suggests a kind of hoodwinking or impostering" of the audience. Although "the body is abstracted from the performance," it does not mean the body is saved from the glare of the audience.[69] Playing on this definition, we can read behind Henson's language the code or 'doubleness' black people often employed to talk to white audiences: Henson was using music to literally *play* on the audience. They expected to hear "negro melodies" and to ensure his popularity, Henson obliged. By adopting assimilationist techniques and appealing to elements that Victorian audiences found familiar, he could use the opportunity at the same time to tell the truth about slavery. However, this left Henson exposed to audience stereotypes, particularly when he used music and humor in his speeches. In this second coverage of a speech, he used humor to describe his encounter with the Queen and several newspapers (including some American editions) printed accounts of his story:

> She was neatly dressed, so was I. [Laughter.] She came and made a very polite bow to me and so did I. [Laughter]… I was not (he proceeded to say) very nervous for I had just got one of the finest dinners I ever had [laughter] and I must say that both I and Mr Bowden [his companion] enjoyed it very much. [Laughter] There were three or four men bowing around us and I thought I had

[68] *Christian Advocate*. 5 April 1877, 52:14, 215.
[69] Patricia MacCormack, "The Theatre of Thought," in ed. Matthew Causey and Fintan Walsh, *Performance, Identity and the Neo-Political Subject* (London: Routledge, 2013), 51-52.

> got to a very fine place, as indeed I had. [Laughter] The Queen then sent for my better-half and Mr Bowden, and when they came up I found that he had found out the knack of bowing and scraping as well as myself. [Laughter] And so we kept up bowing and backing to our fill. [Laughter].[70]

The image of Henson looking smart in front of the Queen, and using exaggerated movements such as bowing repeatedly is almost comical. The joke was that Henson did not "belong" in a place of royalty, yet he was trying to appear respectable and polite. Henson was deliberately employing minstrel tropes in order to be successful. Furthermore, Henson's unique form of adaptive resistance extends to the Queen – his deliberately subversive tactics included extending his minstrel performance to include a figure of royalty. Traditionally the figure of white authority and representative of the Empire itself, the monarch's position is completely reversed into a position of fun. He disrupts contemporary racial dynamics by placing himself on the same level as royalty, and mocks her and by extension the Empire. He turns this performance of respectability politics into one of farce in an attempt to win support during this meeting. His particular retelling of the story – and his decision to include songs in his meetings – was a careful balancing act that required outwardly rejecting racist epithets but also embracing racist tropes such as minstrelsy, as Moses Roper had done in the 1830s. Henson would have been aware of minstrel shows and their popularity and the obsession with

[70] *Chicago Daily Tribune*. 8 April 1877, 3.

Uncle Tom as a character. By occupying the British stage and incorporating minstrelesque themes into his speeches, Henson alters the nature of *his* stage and re-crafts it to suit his needs. To make the three meetings successful, Henson showed his scars, sang songs, employed humor and pathos in equal measure and changed the meaning of the Victorian stage in all three performances, affirming the same message, which not only signified a departure from the fictional character of Uncle Tom but also the normal minstrel black on stage.

The Iron Through His Soul: Depicting Slavery in Performance and Print Culture

Henson's tour clearly demonstrates the complexity of adaptive resistance, and while he used the character of Tom to win support and raise money – and adopted assimilationist strategies such as exhibiting his scars and minstrelsy – there were times when his connection to that character grew tiresome. As a result, he employed dissonant strategies to challenge audience expectations. During a meeting in Glasgow, Henson was repeatedly described as Uncle Tom and the chairman noted that he had regaled British audiences with the "thrilling story of his life, the horrors of the slave system and his wonderful escape to the free soil of North America." This fame almost proved too much: as people rushed forwards to shake hands with him, "he was nearly overpowered by these manifestations of regard and was obliged from exhaustion, to desist."[71] During the meeting, Henson wanted to exploit this

[71] *The Rev. Josiah Henson in Scotland: Report of Farewell Meeting and Presentation in the City Hall* (Glasgow: George Gallie and Son, 1877), 6-25.

fame not only to challenge the character of Uncle Tom but also to combat the romantic language used to describe slavery. He rejected the idea that anyone could discuss slavery lightly:

> I look back from whence I came, and see by the eyes of my mind what you cannot see with your eyes, because you have not been there, and feel in my heart what you cannot feel, and I hope never will feel, and no one can feel it but the man who has had the iron through his own soul.[72]

Henson wanted to remind a white audience – and quite possibly by extension white authors – that no one could imagine how brutal slavery was unless you had lived through it. As Marcus Wood states, abolitionism and descriptions of slavery were often about "white fantasies of black lives and suffering." The "fetishized slave body as a site of torture" became the central focus within the antislavery movement. This pornographic desire to market lectures, narratives and photographs around the torture black people endured revealed an "eroticization of pain" that shocked and fascinated white audiences at the same time.[73] Building on this meeting, and perhaps his frustration with the racial epithet, Henson actively rejected it a month later in Dumfries:

> It has been spread abroad that 'Uncle Tom' is coming, and that is what has brought you here.

[72] *Henson in Scotland,* (1877), 11. *Dumfries and Galloway Standard*. 25 April 1877.
[73] Marcus Wood, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002), 21; 409-411.

> Now allow me to say that my name is not Tom, and never was Tom, and that I do not want to have any other name inserted in the newspapers for me than my own. My name is Josiah Henson, always was, and always will be. I never change my colours.[74]

Henson demanded to be recognized by his own name and was aware of the constant repetition of "Uncle Tom" by the press, and even his own supporters. Significantly, he began his speech with this declaration and wanted to clarify his true identity and position in front of a white audience. While this was a strong theme in Henson's activism that had been present since the 1850s, he denounced the association with Tom two decades later because of the ways in which the character had served minstrelesque stereotypes. Despite the heavy marketing campaign to connect him with the character, he relied on a resistance strategy of dissonance to subvert constant racism or the patronisation of his life-story. He did not write *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and was not "responsible" for it, only for his life-story.[75] Throughout his visit, he recognised the press' interest in him, and used it to bolster his self-image and performance on stage. He was constantly asked whether he regretted being born African American, but Henson stated, "he would not be anything else for the world" as regardless, "he was what he was."[76]

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[74] *Henson in Scotland,* (1877), 31.
[75] *Henson in Scotland,* (1877), 33. Jan Marsh also talks briefly about Henson's resistance against the 'Uncle Tom' epithet in "Slave Cabin," 16 (2002), 37-50.
[76] *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*. 23 September 1876, 8.

Despite repeating this resistance again in Dundee, Henson's rejection of the term would never be enough to stop its usage, as proved by the use of Uncle Tom as the main headline report of both meetings.[77] Some newspaper reports did not even feature his bold resistance. One piece of coverage (reported in the *Liverpool Mercury*) only made reference to how "Uncle Tom made a characteristic reply" and noted brief details of his speech. While the newspaper may have had restrictions around column space, it is significant that Henson's declaration is completely left out, possibly because the correspondent did not deem it important or significant enough. The restriction of the black voice not only makes archival work more complex but also reveals the numerous ways in which white supremacy operates.[78]

For black abolitionists on the British stage, there was always a tense relationship between appealing to Victorian audiences, praising British freedom and tolerance, as well as borrowing tropes they would find familiar and safe, and then completely rejecting those tropes when that narrative threatened to compromise the racism they had always fought against. This ongoing battle against Uncle Tom can also be seen through Henson's contributions to print culture. Indeed, the tension between activist and the static or muted Henson can be glimpsed in particular through the 1876 republication of his autobiography, entitled *Uncle Tom's Story of His Life, An Autobiography of The Rev. Josiah Henson 1789 to 1876* and edited by John Lobb. In this autobiography, Henson claimed:

[77] *Dundee Courier and Argus Warder*. 13 March 1877, 3.
[78] *Liverpool Mercury*. 23 April 1877, 7.

> From that time to the present, I have been called Uncle Tom and I feel proud of the title. If my humble words in any way inspired that gifted lady to write such a plaintive story that the whole community has been touched with pity for the sufferings of the poor slave, I have not lived in vain.[79]

Here is an explicit declaration of pride at the title of Uncle Tom. Although Henson likely believed the novel was a turning point in abolition and led to a new direction for the campaign against slavery, when confronted with a book about a formerly enslaved individual edited by a white benefactor, it is necessary to read between the lines (as one would with a speech in front of a white audience). Robert Stepto has written about "the former slave's ultimate lack of control" over their narratives, as a direct result of the "audience and [abolitionist] authentication."[80] Given Henson's strong rejection of the name on at least two occasions, it is unlikely he would embrace it in its entirety in book form. While the fictional association enabled profitable book sales and helped his financial problems, the decision to market Henson as Tom would have been encouraged and promoted by Lobb whenever possible, as he had such a strong hand in the editing of Henson's literary work. Anything with Uncle Tom in the title would have made it a strong marketable commodity, as proved by the extensive lecturing tour he organized for Henson. A few years later, Lobb heavily edited Frederick Douglass' third autobiography and

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[79] Henson, *Uncle Tom's Story of His Life,* (1876), 157-159. See also Josiah Henson, *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada, as Narrated by Himself* (Boston: Arthur D. Phelps, 1849). Henson refers to the problems he encountered with white men who tried to defame him in the 1850s. A committee of twelve white men was formed to ascertain whether Henson was an "imposter." Eventually, this was proven otherwise but is a significant example of how abolitionists could destroy a black person's reputation.

[80] Robert Stepto, *From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 16-18.

published it in Britain in 1882; paragraphs portraying Englishmen in a negative light and names of people unknown to British audiences were removed. Given this evidence of later editorial intervention, it is probably safe to conclude Lobb's editing hand with Henson was heavy.[81] Henson's revised narrative certainly had an anglicized dimension to it, with British social reformers introducing the text as well as Henson's numerous references to his visits abroad. Most importantly though, the character of Uncle Tom was known to British audiences, hence the title of Henson's new edition and his publicity as that character.

However, Henson manages to retain a sense of authorship over this work. He declared that Stowe had "made her hero die" and unlike the character, he still lived due to a "giant's constitution" bestowed upon him by God. Here is another scenario with black activists where we must read between the lines, as Henson celebrates the character and for the novel's hand in the Civil War, but clearly identifies a major difference between himself and Uncle Tom. His strength and sheer determination was the only reason he had survived, if not, he would "have died over and over again long before I reached Canada." His self-pride at his "remarkable" ability to "have rallied after so many exposures to all kinds of hardships" was a testament to his bravery and identity as a man.[82]

The association with Uncle Tom brought Henson fame, fortune and support for his endeavors. In financial terms, his visit was an extraordinary

[81] John R. McKivigan, ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series Two Autobiographical Writings, Vol. 3 Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 492.
[82] Henson, *Uncle Tom's Story of His Life,* (1876), 157-159.

success: Henson came to Britain with the aforementioned debt of 800l, and returned to America in 1877 with 2,000l.[83] Despite operating in a different climate to his predecessors, Henson successfully employed adaptive resistance: he created new abolitionist networks, and the friendship with John Lobb proved a useful tool in his arsenal to promote himself and his cause. Both men worked together to publish new literature not only to support Henson's mission but also to remind the British public slavery was not a thing of the past. Henson used any opportunity he could to exploit print culture in the heavily edited literary editions to denounce white supremacy. His greatest challenge however was the paradox he had created for himself. While he could not have been successful without it, he was restricted by the association with a fictional character who had been turned into a minstrel joke. He had to work within a racist framework to not only fight against British stereotypes of the character but also refute any insinuation he *was* that character. As an elderly man reflecting back on his life, it is likely Henson knew how the character of Uncle Tom had become twisted into a figure of fun, or one that came to represent passiveness or weakness. As Maurie D. McInnis summarizes, the character of Tom was popularized in Britain as "the man who because of his Christian faith could endure unspeakable horrors, never getting angry, and always [being] gentle, loyal and faithful."[84] While Henson was a religious man and had endured much suffering, he was the antithesis of a passive fictional character, rejecting the Victorian assumption he was that character. Uncle Tom jarred with reality: Henson relied on dissonant language and found every

[83] Josiah Henson, ed. by John Lobb, *Young People's Illustrated Edition: Uncle Tom's Story of his Life from 1789 to 1877* (London: Christian Age, 1877), Preface.
[84] Maurie D. McInnis, *Slaves Waiting for Sale: Abolitionist Art and the American Slave Trade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 198.

opportunity he could to defy racism in Britain (and elsewhere). His escape from slavery with his family alone was an act of death-defying resistance. He resisted being a memento or a static figure with little control of his actions or destiny, and challenged black erasure in stories of slavery to champion black memory and resist the erasure of black voices. On the other hand, when he was in Britain his schedule and campaign were in the hands of white editors and benefactors, who would have played on his association with the novel as they knew British audiences would respond to this form of popular culture. While he probably knew of the dependable marketability of the novel, it is unlikely he had full control over his tour's marketing strategy and opted for resisting the label of Uncle Tom on a public stage whenever the opportunity presented itself. Resisting entrenched racism was always going to be a difficult task, but he attacked the warped commercialization of slavery wherever and whenever possible: he cleverly used adaptive resistance to exploit Britain's obsession with superior displacement, particularly through the images within his literary works and oratory on the public stage, and challenged minstrelesque stereotypes of Uncle Tom and black people in general. Slavery was deemed a distinctly American problem and the novel and subsequent plays focused on the racial conflict of that country instead of confronting its own past in the Caribbean or present tensions in the Empire.

Following the success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the 1850s, Martin Delany furiously wrote to Frederick Douglass that if anyone was to benefit from that success, it should be Josiah Henson. The novel was based on his "living testimony" and his life and labors deserved more attention on both

sides of the Atlantic.[85] Henson's "living testimony" took on a different form in Britain, packaged and resold as the story of a fictional character that Henson sought to disprove or subvert in any situation he could. While his efforts would never be enough to change the entrenched racism, he made an extraordinary impact on British society after the Civil War and exploited new abolitionist networks, print culture and performance to force Britons to confront – however briefly – the dangers of depicting horrors only African Americans understood. Henson was not the only activist to do this after the Civil War, however. Black feminist Ida B. Wells travelled to Britain in 1893 and 1894 respectively to awaken British interest in black rights and educate Britons on the reality of lynching. She framed racial violence as a distinct legacy of slavery, and employed adaptive resistance successfully in order to challenge white supremacy.

[85] Martin Delany to Frederick Douglass, *Frederick Douglass' Paper*. 29 April 1853. Accessed 18 November 2016, http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/africam/afar03ot.html

Chapter 8: "The Black People's Side of the Story:" Ida B. Wells' and the Anti-Lynching Crusade in Britain 1893-1894

During an 1894 breakfast meeting in Parliament, activist and journalist Ida B. Wells spoke out against the legacy of slavery and lynching. She wrote an account of the gathering and described how prominent reformers pledged their support to her cause:

> I gave an address of forty minutes and then the great temperance advocate Sir Wilfrid Lawson, spoke for England, Mr. John Wilson of Scotland, and Mr. Alfred Webb for Ireland, expressing horror of lynching and promising to do all they could to bring influence to bear to have Americans move in this matter. The photograph of the lynching of C.J. Miller, which was reprinted in THE INTER OCEAN last summer and which I have in my possession, went around the beautifully decorated tables as I talked.[1]

Following in the footsteps of numerous nineteenth-century black activists before the Civil War, Wells exploited visual culture to stir the British public into action and urged the press and prominent individuals to bestow respectability upon her cause. Through her rhetoric and the photograph itself, she contrasted southern barbarity with the civilized meeting of influential

[1] *Daily Inter Ocean*. 25 June 1894, in Mia Bay, Henry Louis Gates Jr. ed., *The Light of Truth: Writings of an Anti-Lynching Crusader* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2014), 188-195.

politicians and "beautifully decorated tables," highlighting the absurdity of American freedom. Throughout the nineteenth century, formerly enslaved activists had shown their scars, exhibited whips and chains and read testimonies from state laws or southern newspapers, and Wells now used photography along similar lines to condemn white supremacy and oppression. Unlike previous male activists however, Wells had to navigate the double embodiment of race and gender on stage and perform as a genteel, humble woman who was forced into this public line of work because of lynching's barbarities. Raging denunciations of lynching would have threatened her reputation as a woman but also the content of her message.[2]

I argue in this chapter that Wells exploited adaptive resistance to refocus its attention from slavery to the *legacy* of slavery, incorporating discussions of lynching and racial violence in her rhetoric. She used previous abolitionist discourse in her rhetoric to convince disbelieving Britons about lynching. She employed a visual form of dissonance and reappropriated photographs conveying white supremacy to construct a narrative showing white rather than black men as the aggressor. As a result, she used photography to enact a more successful visit to Britain in 1894 than her first trip a year previously. Susan Sontag argues that photographs are taken to be "a record of the real – incontrovertible, as no verbal account however impartial could be – since a machine was doing the recording." Sontag quotes Virginia Woolf's phrase that photographs "are not an argument; they are simply a

[2] Patricia A. Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 25.

crude statement of fact addressed to the eye."[3] Echoing this, Wells used photography as a weapon against white supremacy and an example "of the real." As a factual documentation of lynching, she could persuade others to confront the reality of such barbarous violence through a medium associated with truth and the representation of truth.

Learning from other abolitionists like Frederick Douglass in particular she also exploited the remaining antislavery networks in Britain and forged her own connections to prominent men and women, ensuring herself and her message were met with credibility. She courted MPs, aristocrats, reformers, and newspaper editors to convince them of the horrors of racial violence in the United States. In doing so, she encouraged them to publicly shame Americans into admitting their wrongs. Wells used her own expertise as a journalist and editor to seek out important contacts and organized numerous meetings. In Newcastle for example, Wells was interviewed by five daily newspapers which wrote "extended accounts of the meetings."[4] Her skillful networking within a short amount of time allowed her to maximize the number of speeches and contacts she made. Hence, Wells borrowed performative strategies such as strong rhetoric and moral suasion; an ability to craft essential networks; and a shrewd ability to exploit print culture from the black American protest tradition.

This chapter will begin with Wells' performative strategies, including her use of photography as a form of visual dissonance together with her

[3] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (Penguin Books, 2013), 22-23; 33-34. Ebook.
[4] Alfreda M. Duster, ed., *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida. B. Wells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 168.

commanding rhetoric. Jacqueline Jones Royster argues Wells deserves to be studied for her oratory and her ability to convince others – persuasively and argumentatively – about the truth and the evils of lynching. She would use that truth to craft a position for herself on the lecturing stage despite the taboo of black women speaking on such a graphic subject. She presented herself as someone who would sacrifice anything in the pursuit of that truth, and her blunt message was cleverly designed to force her white listeners towards some form of action.[5] The second section of this chapter will focus on Wells' exploitation of reformist networks and print culture. She recognized the value of public opinion, and the two strands of adaptive resistance were inseparable in her mind. For example, she lost no time in promoting her association with Frederick Douglass to infuse her mission with respect and popularity, a move which proved essential when white reformist squabbling threatened her success.

"They Thought I was Crazy:" Wells' Performative Techniques and Adoption of Photography

Wells began her campaign against lynching after a close friend was killed in Memphis, Tennessee. Outraged at mob justice – and the press and pulpit which refused to condemn it – she decided to take action herself and wrote an editorial demanding justice in her newspaper *The Memphis Free Speech*. She realized that lynching was a direct form of white supremacy and was solely

[5] Jacqueline Jones Royster, "To Call a Thing by Its True Name: The Rhetoric of Ida B. Wells," in Andrea A. Lunsford ed., *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 171-78.

designed to attack black humanity and "keep the nigger down."[6] The white press began to call lynchings "negro barbecues," and historians estimate roughly 4,742 African Americans were lynched by mobs between 1882-1968. While enslaved black men, women and children suffered extreme violence and abuse under slavery, the rise of lynchings in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were set apart by the torture and mutilation of black bodies, all witnessed by a jubilant crowd.[7] Witnessing a lynching – in a crowd, a photograph or film – represented a form of white supremacy that aimed to teach black people their place. Most lynched victims were not accused of raping white women, but this rhetoric was always present since the image of a sexually aggressive black man had become entrenched in southern society since slavery. White men needed to protect their families but also their communities from such perceived threats. The spectacle as well as the lynching itself was designed to represent white terror and serve as a warning to the black population if they stepped out of line.[8]

The British press often reported on lynching cases, viewing the violence as a form of frontier vigilantism. Since the Civil War, Britons possessed a growing interest in racial violence that can be partly explained by the obsession with the Wild West. Between the 1870s and 1880s, the press eagerly consumed stories of frontier violence and Dime novels became a popular source of fantasy for the British public. American lawlessness proved

[6] Linda McMurry, *To Keep the Waters Troubled: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 130-149.
[7] Leon F. Litwack, "Hellhounds," in James Allen, Hilton Als, Congressman John Lewis, Leon. F. Litwack ed., *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (Santa Fe: Twin Palms Publishers, 2000), 8-12.
[8] Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 2-7.

to be an obsession, but when mobs tortured black victims in horrific fashion it was regarded as evidence of failed American values rather than any form of justice.[9] The American press were aware of British disapproval, and always stated in their reports the reasons as to why the criminal/victim deserved to die. American mobs were not anarchistic or uncontrollable, rather, lynching was necessary as an extra-legal form of policing.[10]

When Wells embarked on an anti-lynching lecture tour of the eastern states, she met British reformist Catherine Impey who invited her over to Britain. Wells saw the possibilities in emulating Douglass' successful 1845 tour, particularly because her lynching pamphlet *Southern Horrors* had been published in Britain, and the American press had grown silent on lynching despite her efforts.[11] Arriving in 1893, Wells sought transatlantic support against racial violence and wanted to shame Americans in front of an international audience. She employed dissonant language to convince Britons of the brutal spectacle of lynching, shocking audiences with graphic stories of mutilation and death. She carefully balanced this language with a performance of gentility: as a black woman, she was not expected to speak on stage or speak on such a violent topic, and she painted herself as a refined woman who was forced into her current position not through choice but through necessity. Only she could lecture on lynching because she had uncovered the true motivations behind it. Although this first mission was cut short by white reformist squabbling, her second trip, organized the following year, was comparatively more successful because of her active networking and reliance

[9] Sarah Sikley, *Black Woman Reformer* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 17-29; 44.
[10] Sikley, *Black Woman Reformer*, (2015), 6-7; 17-20; 44.
[11] McMurry, *To Keep the Waters Troubled*, (1998), 186-187; 190.

on a new performative technique, which it does not appear she used in 1893. She continued to rely on adaptive resistance and employed a visual form of dissonance – photography – to convince the British elite about lynching. Her message was "received with incredulity" in Britain, and she explained to an American reporter that lynching was "new to them" and,

> …they could not believe that human beings were hanged, shot and burned in broad daylight, the legal authorities sometimes looking on. But when they doubted I showed them photographs of the scenes of lynchings and the newspaper accounts published in the towns where these lynchings had taken place…They could not believe that these acts were done, not by savages not by cannibals, who at least would have had the excuse of providing themselves something to eat, but by people calling themselves Christian, civilized American citizens. I happened to have with me there a photograph…[where] shown some lads of about eight years old, looking up to the mutilated swinging body of the murdered negro. Sir Edward Russell did not see this photograph at first, he saw an illustration in an English paper and protested to me and to the English ladies who were with me that such pictures were demoralizing and should not be drawn and published. When I assured him that the picture was an absolute reproduction of a

> photograph and proved it by showing him the photograph he expressed the greatest astonishment.[12]

Wells elaborates further in another interview:

> They thought I was crazy when I told them how men and half-grown boys lynched innocent colored men and then mutilated their bodies, even cutting off the fingers and toes at times and carrying them around in their pockets for days as souvenirs of the occasion. They could not believe that bands of men after lynching a negro would actually stand around the suspended body and have a photograph of the group taken, until I showed them the photographs I had in my possession.[13]

Borrowing from other black abolitionists like Frederick Douglass who harnessed photography as a tool before 1865, Ida B. Wells used visual dissonance to convince the British public of lynching's horrors. Although her employment of photography in Britain has gone relatively unnoticed by Wells' biographers, she employed visual culture as a tactic to amplify and spread her message. It is likely she saved this strategy for smaller, more intimate gatherings (as seen in the introduction when she visited Parliament). Perhaps she passed the photograph around to sceptics at the end of meetings, although newspapers make no reference to this. Regardless, Wells was no

[12] *The Sun*. 26 July 1894, 7. This was also published in the American newspaper, *The Atlanta Constitution*. 29 July 1894, 8.
[13] *The Sun.* 30 July 1894, 2.

stranger to using photography as she used visual culture in her book *The Red Record* to convince others of southern barbarities, exploiting earlier abolitionist photographic culture. She used lynching photography to highlight the barbarity and normality of southern violence and pushed for such images to be published, despite misgivings by reformers that it would be "demoralising."[14] She refused to reframe or readjust her mission to better suit white Victorian sensibilities, and used all the tools in her arsenal to challenge white supremacy. Most famously, Douglass had used photography to demonstrate black humanity and reject ugly racist caricatures from the 1840s onward. Wells now used photography in a new way. Although lynching was a symbol of white supremacy, she turned lynching photographs into a weapon of visual dissonance for her activism, a form of testimony to prove that it happened. Wells used photographs taken by white people of the *actual* scene to convince others of lynching. Whereas formerly enslaved black men and women brought whips and chains to British audiences, Wells could not bring these weapons. Instead, she fashioned her own and used visual culture in place of physical weapons.[15]

Matthew Fox-Amato states that during the fight for abolition, antislavery activists used photography as a weapon of reform which "gave rise to modern visual politics." The use of "atrocity" photography included Jonathan Walker's "branded hand" and the image of formerly enslaved Gordon's "scourged back," which were widely distributed in the 1860s "to

[14] Matthew Fox-Amato, *Slavery, Photography, and the Birth of Modern Visual Politics in America* (London: Oxford University Press, 2017), 305-306.
[15] Fox-Amato*, Slavery, Photography, and the Birth of Modern Visual Politics* (2017), 4-5; 10-11. See also Celeste-Marie Bernier, Zoe Trodd and John Stauffer, *Picturing Frederick Douglass* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 2015).

serve as a social witness." At the same time, slaveholders used photographs to "build white identity and construct white-supremacist networks," which continued after the Civil War with lynching photography.[16] For example, the 1899 lynching of Sam Hose represented the spectacle and growing structure of a public lynching. Over two thousand white Georgians arrived in Newman to witness the lynching of Hose, who did not receive a trial in a court of law. The unmasked crowd were photographed, and influential Georgian citizens were named as having attended the lynching. Hose was tied to a tree and set alight; white members of the crowd sliced off his fingers, ears and genitals, and others slashed at his face and stabbed any part of his body they could reach. Hose's heart and liver were cut out of his body and his bones were reduced to ash to make souvenirs for the witnessing crowd.[17] The chain and the tree used to hold his body was sliced into pieces, and body parts were proudly displayed in a local shop window. The frenzied obsession with souvenirs led white Americans to purchase numerous images of Hose's death.[18]

Photographing the spectacle of lynchings was commonplace in the South. In 1915 in Tennessee, the lynching of Thomas Brooks led to "hundreds of Kodaks" which "clicked all morning…[and] picture card photographers installed a portable printing plant at the bridge and reaped a harvest in selling postcards."[19] Lynching photographs reinforced the spectacle of death and made the event seem familiar to the spectator's gaze. White people posed in smart clothes in front of a lynched body, the image itself representing a form

[16] Fox-Amato*, Slavery, Photography, and the Birth of Modern Visual Politics*, (2017), 16-20.
[17] Litwack, "Hellhounds," in *Without Sanctuary,* (2000), 8-12.
[18] Philip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 14-15.
[19] Litwack, "Hellhounds," in *Without Sanctuary,* (2000), 10-11.

of white supremacy as people could re-enact or re-witness what had happened. These images were made into postcards and often distributed within the community, particularly for those who did not attend the lynching as this represented a concrete example that the black victim had received justice. Rarely however, did lynching photographs show torture in action; instead the white crowd posed next to the body to highlight their spectacle of justice and this ensured the photograph could then be distributed in safety amongst white women, so they did not see the naked black body or the mutilation enacted upon it.[20] Amy Louise Wood argues that once these photographs were distributed to northern cities or regions where lynchings did not exist, national shame and embarrassment forced a decline in mob violence. Controlling photography and white terror surrounding lynchings became more difficult once such images were circulated outside of these spaces. Activists in particular used photographs in their anti-lynching pamphlets or postcards and decried the racial violence as well as the white women and children who watched lynchings with glee.[21] Activists – building on Wells' success – distributed the photographs in northern states and thus helped to eradicate their power.[22]

Wells' use of photography was a form of visual dissonance: it provided a shocking image of racial violence that few Britons could deny. She combined this tactic with a traditional abolitionist performative technique of reading facts from southern newspapers. A trait employed by many activists

[20] Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 75-86; 102-104.
[21] Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, (2009), 14.
[22] *Ibid*, 179-186.

including Frederick Douglass, these facts provided authenticity to the abolitionist message but also left no room for refutation. Wells believed that by reading these quotes, "out of their own mouths shall the murderers be condemned."[23] She pointed to the numerous cases where white men had raped black women and girls without justice, and their barbarous acts were the very opposite of Christian civilization. Wells argued that lynching not only attacked black manhood but threatened white masculinity in its savageness. White men were often the rapists themselves, rather than heroic saviours of white female virtue.[24] A Leeds audience were shocked to learn that in 1892, 169 black people including five women were lynched. From January to May 1894, fifty people were lynched, including one black woman who was burnt alive and another who was put in a box with "protruding nails in it and rolled down a hill." Wells argued:

> These things happened not during the days of the Spanish Inquisition, not during the dark ages of the world…but were committed in the glare of the nineteenth century civilization and by men who belonged to the Anglo-Saxon race, who boasted of their Christianity...The world, she believed had done so little regarding this matter because it knew so little. It was her mission to give to the world the black people's side of the story.[25]

[23] McMurry, *To Keep the Waters Troubled*, (1998), 216.
[24] *Ibid*, 158-159; 165-168.
[25] *The Leeds Mercury*. 6 July 1894, 3.

Wells argued that lynching was a constant evil, from ancient to modern history. Echoing black abolitionists, she used moral suasion to convince the British public of the violence and urged them to shame America. She mocked the supposed southern civilization and aligned the violence to white supremacy and by extension the white race. As Douglass had done before her, she used southern narratives of men "boasting of their Christianity" and criticized how white men, women and children reveled in brutality. Wells' use of the term "glare" sparked a visual image in the audience's mind and corresponded with her use of photography. She used photographs as a visual medium but also as visual *language* to shine a light physically on the horrors of lynching, as well as shining a light on the truth of her words. Wells explicitly stated that black reformers like herself were the only authority to speak on the violence that African Americans suffered. Placing herself in the black American protest tradition on the British stage, she protested against the erasure of black voices to tell "the black people's side of the story." She espoused the African proverb shared by William Craft that it was time to tell the story from the lion's perspective, not the hunter's. As we saw in chapter six, Craft had used the image of the lion to show African courage and strength, and how people of African descent had retained a sense of independence against their oppressor (the white hunter). Black people like Craft and Wells actively resisted racism and were powerful agents in the assertion of their identity. Both individuals were subversive architects in painting the white race as ignorant on black issues. It was time for them to hear the truth. Wells crafted her resistance to specifically adapt to British audiences, and combined printed and visual culture to challenge disbelievers. She censored the spectacle

and sensationalism associated with lynching by quoting facts from the southern press, infusing her lectures with a spirit of rationality and truth. With Wells' artful puppeteering, the British press made her into a celebrity and covered most of her lectures across the country. She courted controversy and like Douglass before her, turned every opportunity into a public space to argue against the dehumanization of black men, women and children, particularly how the southern press were perpetrators in sustaining the practice of lynching. Wells created a pedagogy that targeted white supremacy through the public, press and pulpit.[26]

Like other black women on the transatlantic stage, Wells' gender affected her employment of adaptive resistance. She was the very opposite of masculine conceptions of womanhood – a passive, weak figure content to remain in the domestic sphere – and her rhetoric heavily criticized white women who accused black men of rape, while their husbands indiscriminately raped black women. Lynching was not necessary or justified, since white women consented to relationships with black men who were not sexually aggressive by nature.[27] Black abolitionist women such as Harriet Jacobs had long understood that their authority would be questioned because of their double embodiment of womanhood and blackness. Through their interventions in the public sphere, black women were interpreted as outside of the norm. Wells did this and more – she explicitly targeted white supremacy and white

[26] Teresa C. Zackodnik, *Press, Platform, Pulpit: Black Feminist Publics in the Era of Reform* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 2011), 149-157. William Craft referenced the African proverb in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*. 26 September 1863.
[27] McMurry, *To Keep the Waters Troubled*, (1998), xiv; xv. See also Gary Totten, "Embodying Segregation: Ida B. Wells and the Cultural Work of Travel," *African American Review* 42:1, (Spring 2008), 47-60.

women in particular for threatening the black domestic sphere.[28] As we have seen, Teresa C. Zackodnik argues that there was a "politics of embodiment facing" black women and those who lectured crafted a space to negotiate between competing audience perceptions of a "self-effacing female body and the mythic black female body." Black feminists had to articulate a distinct aspect of femininity that did not threaten themselves or their message.[29] Previous female abolitionists such as Ellen Craft and Sarah Parker Remond faced numerous press descriptions that focused on their bodies rather than their message.[30] Remond's successful lecturing tour in the 1860s was partly due to her appeal to a white "sisterhood," encouraging all women to fight for black female victims of sexual violence and oppression. Remond's body became a focus in the press, and Zackodnik points out that this was the case with Wells too, as newspapers "distinguished Wells not only as an exemplary individual but also as an oddity." Building on the success of Craft and Remond before her, Wells created a performance specific not only for the city in which she lectured in but for British audiences in general.[31] She used moral suasion – a tactic Frederick Douglass had used to perfection – together with the networks established by former abolitionists to convince the public of lynching's immorality.[32]

In order to achieve support on a British stage, Wells exploited her celebrity and framed her speeches with a reformist desire to promote the black race instead of herself. Her own position as a fugitive and a potential lynching

[28] Frances Smith Foster, *Written By Herself* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 17; 180-182.
[29] Zackodnik, *Press, Platform, Pulpit,* (2011), xv-xvi; xxii.
[30] *Ibid*, 135-144.
[31] *Ibid*, 96-97; 131-132.
[32] Sikley, *Black Woman Reformer*, (2015), 55-57.

victim justified her action, rather than a desire to seek fame and fortune. Sarah Sikley argues that Wells' testimony and status as a black woman made her a leading figure on the subject of lynching and authorized her to speak on the violence black women and children faced. She was forced to leave her typically domestic role as schoolteacher and carer for her family and was pushed into activism. Wells had to craft a language to mixed British audiences about sexuality, as a single woman was not expected to know about sexual relationships. Instead, she focused on immoral white women and how the South had forced her to talk to Victorian audiences about an immoral subject.[33] Similarly, Linda McMurry argues that Wells had to be careful in her descriptions of lynchings as they "titillated the Victorian public for whom frank discussions of violence and sex bordered on pornography." By speaking in a "dispassionate" way, Wells deflected the torture she described. Her status as a single black woman added to the shocking nature of her subject, and Ellen Richardson (a friend from Douglass' speaking tour) remarked how a man could not have been successful on the same subject.[34] Wells encountered some difficulty however, in negotiating the boundaries of empathy: as Sadiya Hartman argues, empathy "merely places the self in its stead." She did not want her audiences to imagine themselves in the black woman's position or compare them to the debates over white slavery. Instead, Wells argued that white women destroyed the black domestic realm.[35]

[33] Sikley, *Black Woman Reformer*, (2015), 75-76.
[34] McMurry, *To Keep the Waters Troubled*, (1998), 216-217.
[35] Teresa Zackodnik, "Ida B. Wells and 'American Atrocities' in Britain," *Women's Studies International Forum* 28, (2005), 263-264; 267-268. Zackodnik quotes Sadiya Hartman: 267.

Wells' rhetoric and command of the platform had to keep within the lines of female domesticity, yet she also had to force audiences to act in response to a graphic subject. Navigating the complexities of gender restrictions, she claimed she was no expert at public speaking, although she had experience of elocution and acting in Memphis.[36] By appearing as a humble woman, she gave the impression of gentility, respectability and refinement since women were not expected to speak on the public stage. Sikley argues that Wells created a new persona as a "black lady reformer," negotiating the difficulties of appearing as a black woman on stage *and* as a female reformer. This gave Wells the opportunity not only to speak about violent subjects, but also the mobility to speak to different audiences across geographical and class lines. In response, the British press noted how respectful and sympathetic audiences were in her lectures, and enhanced her respectability by mentioning important men and women who attended.[37]

Together with her graphic subject matter, Wells' performance of a refined, humble woman both on and outside the lecturing stage could not fail to win support from reformers. The next section will analyze Wells' numerous connections in Britain which she designed to amplify her message. She used her skillful networking to seek friendships with the middle and upper classes, connecting with newspaper editors and aristocrats who would provide her with a platform in which to speak and share her mission.

[36] Patricia A. Schechter A., *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 19-20.
[37] Sikley, *Black Woman Reformer*, (2015), 75-79.

"Frederick Douglass Knows What I Say is True:" Wells' Exploitation of Print Culture and Abolitionist Networks

During her first visit in 1893, Wells was reliant on her friend Catherine Impey, who had invited her to Britain to give a lecturing tour. Since 1888, Impey, a social reformer and journalist, had tried to shine a light on racism through her newspaper *Anti-Caste,* and when she visited the United States she made connections with eminent reformers including Frederick Douglass, William Still and Booker T. Washington.[38] *Anti-Caste* focused on black, Asian rights and colonialism throughout the world, and through the stories of African Americans, Polynesians, Maoris, Indians, Zulus (among others), Impey could expose "British despotism." She wanted the British public to understand "the evils of caste as it prevails in countries where our white race habitually ostracizes those who are even partially descended from darker races." Committed to the non-white voice, she welcomed and published articles by African Americans and East-Indian individuals.[39] Impey was a pioneer in publishing lynching photographs in the context of both the American and British press, and like Wells, carried a copy of a lynching photograph with her to convince people of the barbarities of southern life. She showed it to a Scottish newspaper editor in March 1893 and while he did not print the image, he reprinted a description of a recent lynching instead.[40] Impey had actually published a lynching photograph in *Anti-Caste* in January 1893 before Wells

[38] McMurry, *To Keep the Waters Troubled*, (1998), 187-189.
[39] Carolyn L. Karcher, "Ida B. Wells and Her Allies Against Lynching: A Transnational Perspective," *Comparative American Studies An International Journal* 3:2, (2005), 138-139.
[40] Caroline Bressey, *Empire, Race and the Politics of Anti-Caste* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 117-121. The editor's reluctance to print the image may have resulted from a refusal to upset Victorian sensibilities; such a graphic photograph would either cause revulsion, disbelief or both. This is perhaps why Wells did not actively campaign for the inclusion of lynching photographs in the mainstream press.

toured Britain and her aim was to demonstrate the barbaric horrors black Americans suffered "in a way that perhaps only a photograph can do." This open denunciation of lynching laid the groundwork for Wells' visit a few months later.[41]

When Wells arrived in 1893, both she and Impey began their tour in Scotland. When they visited Aberdeen, they collaborated with Impey's friend Isabelle Fyvie Mayo to create the Society for the Recognition of the Brotherhood of Man (SRBM), which denounced racism and segregation in any form.[42] Wells gave a "vivid account" of lynching in the South, and described how "lawlessness was rampant." The "tyrant slavery had gone to work under a new name and a new guise," as black men, women and children were murdered. In a direct echo of Frederick Douglass' speeches regarding slaveholding, Wells rhetorically asked her audience how a Christian nation could commit these crimes. Again like Douglass, she argued for a "strong public sentiment" against lynching and urged British audiences to contribute to the moral war against the violence.[43] Away from the lecturing stage, Wells, Mayo and her East-Indian colleagues "threw themselves wholeheartedly into the work of helping to make preparations for [their] campaign," which included "writing letters, arranging meetings, seeing the press, helping to mail out ten thousand copies of *Anti-Caste,* which went out to inform the British people" about lynching. While Wells lectured, Impey went ahead to other locations to prepare for her visit and organize meetings, "working largely

[41] Karcher, "Ida B. Wells and Her Allies Against Lynching," (2005), 141-143.
[42] McMurry, *To Keep the Waters Troubled*, (1998), 186-187; 190.
[43] *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*. 25 April 1893, 4.

through the Society of Friends, of which she and her family were members."[44] As Caroline Bressey argues, Impey wanted *Anti-Caste* to be a vehicle through which "a community of activists" would challenge white supremacy, and Impey's networks were vital for Wells to exploit.[45] As a result of these networks, Wells lectured in numerous cities such as Liverpool, Manchester, Ashton-Under-Lyme, Newcastle, Darlington, Birmingham, Street, and London.[46] To bolster her reputation and to give the anti-lynching crusade integrity, Wells visited former abolitionists such as Eliza Wigham, the Richardson family in Newcastle and the grandson of Wilberforce; by doing so she placed herself in a narrative not only of antislavery discourse, but also of famous black activists who had lectured in Britain.[47]

Despite these connections, Wells – like other African American reformers – struggled with internal squabbles between white reformers. Wells had to play the negotiator when Mayo and Impey had a very public disagreement over a very private matter: Impey wrote and proposed to a male friend via letter and Mayo, outraged at Impey's impropriety, threatened to withdraw her support from Wells' tour.[48] Unfortunately, this momentum fell short and the broken relationship between Mayo and Impey inhibited Wells' long-term success. Mayo threatened to undermine Impey's reputation, and by association, Wells' mission. As a result, Wells struggled to attend meetings in London during the influential May season of meetings, which would have been a critical moment to gather support for her cause. As we saw with Moses

[44] Duster, *Crusade for Justice,* (1970), 89-91.
[45] Bressey, *Empire, Race and the Politics of Anti-Caste,* (2013), 23; 80-87.
[46] *Anti-Caste,* VI: 5-6, May and June 1893, 4-6.
[47] Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform,* (2001), 100-101.
[48] McMurry, *To Keep the Waters Troubled*, (1998), 191-193.

Roper in chapter one, this episode demonstrates that despite black activist independence on the British stage, they were still hampered by their dependence on white allies and if supporters or networks were threatened, it could impact the visit entirely. When Mayo in particular refused to compromise, she used her white privilege to place herself and Impey's conduct above the cause. Unwilling to be disloyal to Impey who had been a faithful friend, Wells decided to return to the United States.[49]

The following year, Mayo and her black business partner, Celestine Edwards, encouraged Wells to make a second tour of Britain and agreed to pay her from SRBM funds. Wells landed in Liverpool but when she refused to denounce Impey on Mayo's request, Mayo revoked her funding and left her with no assistance. For a second time, Mayo's white privilege threatened Wells' credibility and the entire mission itself. Although she gave a few addresses in Liverpool, she had to wait for a letter from Douglass testifying to her character: a single black woman travelling and lecturing about sexual violence needed to have respectable support in Britain.[50] Despite Mayo's frustrating lack of support, Wells created new networks from her base in Liverpool, befriending local minister Charles F. Aked who spoke to thousands of people in his popular weekly sermons. As a white, middle class man, Aked could move through circles Wells could not, and advertised meetings in the local press and helped her organize a lecturing schedule.[51]

[49] Sikley, *Black Woman Reformer*, (2015), 81-90.
[50] McMurry, *To Keep the Waters Troubled*, (1998), 207-209.
[51] Sikley, *Black Woman Reformer*, (2015), 88-97.

When Douglass' letter eventually arrived, Wells used his testimony to enhance her reputation. In a role reversal of formerly enslaved individuals requiring white testimony, Wells knew that by associating herself with Douglass on the British stage, she would win more support. She used it frequently: if someone doubted her or the cause which she represented, she would regularly draw his testimony out, and his name was so well-known in Britain that it silenced her critics. When one English journalist once questioned her speech on lynching for example, she replied "Frederick Douglass knows what I say is true" and presented the letter. As with lynching photography, Wells used the written word from a famous activist to solidify her reputation on the British stage.[52]

Armed with Douglass' testimonial and Aked's support, she used every tool in her possession to create networks and exploit Victorian print culture. At this early stage of her tour, she also carried one other source of support: before she arrived in 1894, she planned to maximize her mission and managed to secure a position as a foreign correspondent for the *Chicago Inter-Ocean.* By reporting on her British successes, the American newspaper could fuel support and hopefully gather momentum which Wells could exploit.[53] As an editor and journalist, Wells understood the power of the press and its ability to sway public opinion, and wrote extensive descriptions of her meetings, the people she met and her reception amongst British society.[54]

[52] Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform,* (2001), 22-26.
[53] Karcher, "Ida B. Wells and Her Allies Against Lynching," (2005), 143.
[54] Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform,* (2001), 99.

Echoing her activist forbears, Wells forged connections with newspaper editors to ensure favourable coverage of her lectures. She lost no time in exploiting Impey's friendship with the *Liverpool Daily Post*'s editor, Sir Edward Russell, who often reprinted sections of *Anti-Caste* in his heavily influential newspaper.[55] Russell pushed his paper to include lynching articles since Wells' first visit in 1893, and the following year, organized a meeting in the city with him as chairman. It was Russell who first noticed Impey's publication of a lynching photograph, and "wrote an editorial protesting against it as an illustration drawn from the imagination." Russell was "horrified to be told that it was a photograph taken from life and sent out by the lynchers themselves."[56] Photography had convinced him of lynching's horrors and meeting Wells enhanced his desire to help her and her cause.

In London, Wells' connection to Peter William Clayden reaped numerous rewards. Clayden was a *London Daily News* editor, the second largest-selling morning newspaper in the capital and by staying with Clayden and his wife in the city center, she had access to numerous influential contacts. Press reports of her meetings and lynching in general increased partly because of this connection, and Wells collected all favourable press cuttings of her meetings to send them to various supporters, transatlantic newspapers, state governors and even the President of the United States. She was helped in this endeavor by Clayden's wife and several black students from the University of London.[57] Wells was astounded at "the attention accorded to me by the London press" and she had "quite lost count of the number of times I have

[55] Bressey, *Empire, Race and the Politics of Anti-Caste,* (2013), 131-132.
[56] Duster, *Crusade for Justice,* (1970), 130-139.
[57] Bressey, *Empire, Race and the Politics of Anti-Caste,* (2013), 191-194.

been interviewed." Newspapers such as the *Daily Chronicle, Daily News, Westminster Gazette*, *The Sun, The Star* and the *London Echo* "have developed columns of space to interviews and discussion of the subject" and weekly newspapers such as *The Labour Leader, The Methodist Times, The Christian World, The Independent, The Inquirer* and *The Westminster Budget* "have interviews on the same line."[58] Wells argued that "from one end of the United States to the other, press and pulpit were stung by the criticism of press and pulpit abroad, and began to turn the searchlight on lynching as never before." As a result of her lectures, the lynching record of 1893 began steadily to decline and "has never since been so high." She attributed this to the "power of truth which the British people afforded me opportunity to present."[59]

Another factor that contributed to her success was Wells' ability to make friends with powerful aristocrats. In her dispatches for the *Daily Inter-Ocean,* Wells reported on her busy lecturing schedule, in particular the influential people she met. In Bristol, she spoke twice a day for a week and two meetings took place "at the homes of wealthy and influential persons" where "gathered the wealthiest and most cultured classes of society who do not attend public meetings." Dr. Miller Nicholson attended one of these meetings, who was the "pastor of the largest and most influential Presbyterian church in the city." Wells also met with Lady Jeune, "one of the most influential and cultured women of the British aristocracy." She was so impressed with Wells that she immediately organized a "drawing-room

[58] *Daily Inter Ocean*. 25 June 1894, in Mia Bay, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Ida B. Wells eds., *The Light of Truth: Writings of an Anti-Lynching Crusader* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2014), 188-195.
[59] Duster, *Crusade for Justice,* (1970), 185-190.

meeting" with her friends in London, and invited Wells to attend.[60] In another dispatch, Wells championed her connection with Dr. John Clifford in London. A Baptist minister of the Westbourne Park Chapel, Clifford was also head of the Polytechnic Institute. Wells believed that if Clifford supported a cause, it was to be a "success" and lost no time in organizing a meeting in his church.[61] She exploited connections with Parliament too, visiting once with Labour MP Keir Hardie, who interviewed her for his newspaper, *The Labour Leader*. She also lectured before the Protestant Alliance, the Women's Protestant Alliance, the Women's Protestant Union, as well as in churches such as Bloomsbury Chapel, Belgravia Congregational Church, and several others. She addressed "clubs, drawing-room meetings, breakfast and dinner parties" and spoke "not less than thirty-five times at different gatherings of different sorts" and found "more invitations that I can fill from people who are anxious to know the facts."[62]

These powerful connections sustained momentum and led to numerous speaking engagements, but her second trip was once again threatened by white privilege. Wells engineered a controversy between herself, Frances Willard (the leader of the Women's Temperance Union) and Lady Henry Somerset, an influential aristocrat and supporter of Willard. When Wells accused Willard of racism and printed an editorial in *Anti-Caste* about her, Somerset flew into a rage and threatened to hurt Wells' reputation as a visiting lecturer and demanded the newspaper retract the statement. She even wrote to Douglass to

[60] *Daily Inter Ocean*. 19 May 1894, in Wells, *The Light of Truth,* (2014), 172-178.
[61] *Daily Inter Ocean.* 28 May 1894, in Wells, *The Light of Truth,* (2014), 178-185.
[62] *Daily Inter Ocean*. 25 June 1894, in Wells, *The Light of Truth,* (2014), 188-195.

complain about Wells' conduct.[63] According to Wells, Somerset stated "she would use her influence to see that I got no further opportunity to be heard in Great Britain" and exploited her connections with the *Westminster Gazette* to publish an article praising Willard and attacking Wells. In retaliation, Wells wrote an editorial for the newspaper and boldly argued Willard did not have the interests of black Americans at heart, as the tone of Willard's article made clear, Willard was only protecting her reputation. Wells challenged Willard's white privilege by stating that "with me, it is not myself nor my reputation, but the life of my people which is at stake."[64] Like Douglass and other black activists before her, Wells used the medium of print culture to challenge Somerset and Willard's racism: she knew she was threatening a woman of considerable influence that may have jeopardized her mission, but Wells refused to back down and allow defamation towards black people to stand. Her desire to tell the truth involved exposing white supremacy in all its forms, from lynching, racial violence, and to racist language in reformist circles.

The incident with Willard and Somerset garnered some press attention but did not damage Wells' second visit to Britain. The important connections Wells made gave her respectability, reputation and most importantly an audience. She had backing from newspaper editors, religious bodies and their ministers, and urged them all to send remonstrances to their friends and brethren in America. For example, in June 1894, the provincial assembly of Presbyterian and Unitarian ministers and congregations of Lancashire and Cheshire unanimously agreed that the lynching of black people "calls forth the

[63] Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform,* (2001), 102-103.
[64] Duster, *Crusade for Justice,* (1970), 203-209.

reprobation of the civilised world." The assembly urged American churches "to take such steps through the press, the pulpit and public organised effort…to direct the forces of public opinion against these outrages."[65] Wells returned to America with further resolutions from British churches including the Baptist Union, Congregationalists, Unitarians, Quakers, temperance societies, and an appeal from the "leading clergymen" of the country, all of whom denounced lynching. Labour organizations in Bradford and Leeds passed resolutions urging British men and women to stay away from the South until lynching had stopped.[66] Furthermore, before Wells left for America, a meeting was held in Westminster Palace Hotel to denounce lynching, with several prominent MPs in attendance. Wells "described some shocking cases of lynching" and "appealed for English sympathy with the negroes" to morally shame America into granting a "full and fair trial" for black people.[67]

Wells' relentless and untiring activism led to the formation of the Anti-Lynching Committee in London. It boasted numerous influential supporters, including the Duke of Argyle, whose son married into royalty. The editors of important newspapers across the country including Clayden from *The Daily News* and Percy Banting from the *Contemporary Review,* also lent their support.[68] Other influential names of the Committee included Aked, Russell (editor of the *Liverpool Daily Post*), William Byles (a Bradford MP and editor

[65] *Liverpool Mercury*. 15 June 1894, 5.
[66] *The Sun*. 26 July 1894, 7.
[67] *Aberdeen Evening Express*. 7 June 1894, 4. This received substantial press coverage, and was reported in the *Glasgow Herald.* 7 June 1894, 8; *The Yorkshire Herald and the York Herald.* 8 June 1894, 6; *The Huddersfield Chronicle and West; Yorkshire Advertiser*. 9 June 1894, 3; *Lincolnshire Echo*. 7 June 1894, 4; *Western Times*. 7 June 1894, 4; *Derby Daily Telegraph.* 7 June 1894, 2; *Birmingham Daily Post.* 7 June 1894, 5; *Irish News and Belfast Morning News.* 7 June 1894, 5.
[68] *Daily Inter Ocean.* 7 July 1894, in Wells, *The Light of Truth,* (2014), 194-198.

of the *Bradford Observer*), A.E. Fletcher (editor of the *Daily Chronicle*), and MPs from Southampton, Nottingham and London boroughs.[69]

Wells' campaign influenced the British public, press and pulpit to act against lynching on a scale never seen before. The Eccleston Square Church in London signed a petition against lynching and forwarded it to John Milton Hay, the United States Ambassador to Great Britain, whose secretary was forced to delicately reply to avoid an international incident. The press began to print American newspaper accounts of recent lynchings and following Wells' tour, unanimously denounced the violence. Lynching was no longer a romantic or vigilante weapon, instead it was the tool of murderous white men in the South. Because Wells had been so successful, the American press could not deny lynching was a result of white supremacist violence and instead attacked her character, issuing remonstrances to the British press and promising to present the real facts of the case. This made little impact with most Britons because even after Wells had left, her careful presentation of facts as well as her highly influential friends supported her cause. For example, the London Anti-Lynching Committee sent a small deputation to the United States to record more information on lynching, much to the chagrin of the apoplectic American press. Governors of eighteen states objected to British committee meddling, with Missouri governor William J. Stone stating it was "an exhibition of superb cheek."[70] The governors of South Carolina, Georgia and Arkansas also wrote letters to British newspapers denouncing Wells. In the summer of 1894, Governor Fishback of Arkansas denounced her

[69] Duster, *Crusade for Justice,* (1970), 215-216.
[70] Sikley, *Black Woman Reformer*, (2015), 112-115; 122-123; 133-140.

as a "shrewd adventuress" who played on "British credulity and British ignorance."[71] Despite his defamations, her mission in 1894 was an extraordinary success, which was in large part due to her ability to exploit reformist networks and print culture, two essential strands of adaptive resistance, in a pattern that had not changed since the 1830s.

Unfortunately, when Wells returned to the United States, she could not court the same amount of support, and lost the momentum she had gained.[72] Interviewed by the American press, Wells did not lose hope and declared "I haven't quit yet," and made a promise never to do so.[73] Despite Wells' comparative lack of success in her land of birth, however, she had already joined the pantheon of African American activists who made their mark on the transatlantic lecture circuit. Wells – like Henson – extended the black American protest tradition in Britain after the Civil War, crafting their own mantle of fame regardless of its brevity. Audience fascination with black bodies was a central part of their appeal, but Wells returned to America armed with testimonials, support from British religious bodies as well as the newly formed Anti-Lynching Committee, all of whom were united in disgust at lynching's horrors.

Wells employed adaptive resistance and exploited the triad of abolitionist networks, print culture, and performance to publicly denounce lynching and racial violence. She found a British public woefully ignorant and sought to educate them on the sadism of white communities who tortured and

[71] *The Daily Picayune*. 10 August 1894, 2.
[72] Sikley, *Black Woman Reformer*, (2015), 140-141.
[73] *State Journal*. 8 June 1895, 3.

shot black men, women and children across the South. She used a visual form of dissonance – photography – in order to achieve this. Despite the different climate in which adaptive resistance operated after the war, the tools of resistance remained the same. In her performances, Wells employed powerful oratory and photography as a form of visual dissonance to challenge the white supremacist narrative of lynching. Together with this, she exploited connections with Victorian print culture to spread her message, befriending British editors to ensure numerous articles were written in favour of herself and her cause. She also courted old abolitionist networks and established new friends to win support on the British stage. Despite the problems between her white benefactors, her friendship with Catherine Impey was essential in allowing her to organize meetings and meet with influential British citizens.

After one of Wells' lectures in Sheffield in 1894, a local newspaper expressed horror at the barbarity of lynching and forewarned America were "creating with their own hand a Frankenstein which will one day assume a menacing attitude." The monster of Frankenstein represented the legacy of slavery, pervasive racism, and white supremacy.[74] Wells succeeded in making an intervention into British society, embracing, reshaping and exploiting the black American protest tradition in British society. She built on Moses Roper's foundations and disrupted comfortable notions of what slavery or racial violence appeared to be. In every action on the British stage, she fought Frankenstein's monster at every turn.

[74] *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*. 10 May 1893, 4.

Conclusion: "To Tell the Story of the Slave:" The Legacy of African American Transatlantic Resistance

In his third autobiography, *The Life and Times* (published in 1882 in Britain and again in 1893 in America), Frederick Douglass recounted his extraordinary public life and history of political activism. He declared:

> The time is at hand when the last American slave and the last American slaveholder will disappear behind the curtain which separates the living from the dead and when neither master nor slave will be left to tell the story of their respective relations or what happened to either in those relations. My part has been to tell the story of the slave. The story of the master never wanted for narrators. The masters, to tell their story, had at call all the talent and genius that wealth and influence could command. They have had their full day in court. Literature, theology, philosophy, law and learning have come willingly to their service, and, if condemned, they have not been condemned unheard.[1]

Conscious that the memory of antislavery activism was fading in a climate of rising racial violence, Douglass reminded transatlantic audiences that he – like many other African Americans – had fought "to tell the story of the slave." In sharp and searing language, Douglass argued that the African American

[1] Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written By Himself* (Boston: De Wolfe and Fiske Co., 1893), 581.

experience of slavery, racism and segregation made black testimony essential to abolitionist campaigns. Echoing Moses Roper who declared in 1838 "you have heard the Slaveholder's side" of the story, Douglass dismissed white southern accounts of slavery for their white narratives had shaped a culture that was founded on white supremacy.[2] Douglass cast himself as the prosecutor against white testimony, which not only had its "full day in court" but used every legal system to suppress the voices and bodies of black people. He – as a black man and formerly enslaved individual – condemned their racism and desire to make black contributions invisible to American society. Douglass argued in this extract that it was the black person's *duty* to speak out against white supremacy, since a white person's story was often biased or rooted in a white racist schema. As he himself had declared in 1847, he wanted to tell his version of the story; knowing equally that white testimony would be distorted and black testimony ignored, he declared he would submit his version of events, as he had done throughout his life on both sides of the Atlantic. The crimes of southern slaveholders would not be "condemned unheard."

I begin and close my thesis with Douglass because he – more than any other African American – exploited adaptive resistance so successfully. His performances and fiery rhetoric, extensive abolitionist networks and skilful manipulation of print culture combined to win him support, admiration and even veneration from British audiences. His fame in Britain and subsequent celebrity in America ensured he was a constant presence in the British press,

[2] *The Leicestershire Mercury and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties*. 19 May 1838, 2.

and several prominent British newspapers printed obituaries after his death in 1895. For example, *The Daily News* published a lengthy and lavish obituary to the "venerable" Douglass, "the famous coloured champion of the freedom of the slave." He devoted the "purity of his life and the brilliancy of his talents" to black rights, and "as an orator, or as a writer for the Press, his utterances reached to the farthest extremities not only of his own country, but of ours." African Americans and white people had lost "a comrade in the fight, not only for the legal emancipation of one race, but for the spiritual emancipation of all."[3] Despite the hyperbole, it was a fitting tribute to Douglass' talents as an orator and journalist, and all that he had tried to achieve.

It is impossible to calculate how many British people witnessed Douglass or other formerly enslaved people speak, but it was clear Britons were fascinated with stories regarding American slavery and displayed a distinct racial curiosity to see and hear black testimony in the flesh. Thousands of slave narratives and abolitionist pamphlets were sold, petitions were signed, hundreds of pounds were raised for societies or given directly to help purchase individuals or their family members from slavery. Thousands more crammed into chapels, town halls, school rooms and lecturing halls, often queuing for hours beforehand. Millions of words were written in response to black activists and their stories of slavery, including in the press, in songs and poetry, and physically on Free Church buildings during the controversy of 1846. Some historians such as Julia Sun-Joo Lee have even argued that black testimony influenced the wider British literary landscape, as authors like

[3] *The Daily News*. 22 February 1895, 4.

Elizabeth Gaskell, Charlotte Bronte, William Thackeray, and Charles Dickens borrowed language from formerly enslaved subjects' stories.[4]

While Britons flocked to these lectures because of racial curiosity or because the white working class identified with the enslaved population in their oppression (to name but two reasons), many possessed a genuine desire to support black men and women in their transatlantic missions, sometimes to their own detriment. As Alexander Crummell once said, "words are vital…they cannot enter the soul as passive and inoperative things," and it was clear formerly enslaved individuals really did stir some of the public's hearts and souls through their stories of resistance.[5] During Henry Highland Garnet's speech in Carlisle in 1850, a sailor stood up and declared that although he had witnessed scenes of slavery, "he had never looked upon them in the light in which he then saw them; and though he had used tobacco for nearly 30 years, he had chewed his last quid that night."[6] Whether the sailor kept his promise we cannot tell, but men and women – particularly the working classes – were deeply moved by black testimony. Before he left for the United States in 1860, Douglass was presented with 10 shillings, given to the chairman by a "humble washer woman" whose "admiration for Mr. Douglass was so strong, that even in her poverty she felt she must express her feelings."[7] One woman donated a penny to J. Sella Martin in the mid 1860s too, saying "every one of my family

[4] Julia Sun-Joo Lee, *The American Slave Narrative and the Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 21-30; 76.
[5] Stephen L. Thompson, 1999. "The Grammar of Civilization: Douglass and Crummell on Doing Things With Words," in *Frederick Douglass: A Critical Reader,* edited By Bill E. Lawson and Frank M. Kirkland. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd), 185.
[6] *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*. 7 December 1850, 3.
[7] *The Paisley Herald and Renfrewshire Advertiser*. 31 March 1860, 2.

[had] done without something [that] week in order to add to it."[8] While white abolitionists eagerly recounted these romantic stories, black activists were often overwhelmed by the support they received.

While it is difficult to measure black abolitionist success, the impact they had on certain locations and communities was often long-lasting. These activists challenged misconceptions of slavery, advanced the cause of abolition and mobilized public opinion. In this regard, all abolitionists were no doubt successful. In relation to the adaptive resistance framework however, those activists who possessed powerful connections and manipulated links with print culture ensured they were more successful than others. Through their interventions with the press, correspondents published black abolitionist letters, speeches and commentaries, and their message was spread often beyond their immediate reach. Individuals such as Douglass, William and Ellen Craft and Josiah Henson were very successful because they managed to exploit such connections.

Building on the seminal work by Alan Rice, Peter Ripley, Richard Blackett, and Audrey Fisch, I have argued in this thesis that nineteenth-century African Americans engaged in a complex and uniquely British strategy I have termed adaptive resistance.[9] What is central to this strategy are the three elements to black abolitionist missions I have recovered and explored here: the reciprocal exploitation of performance, abolitionist networks and

[8] R. J. M. Blackett, *Beating Against the Barriers: The Lives of Six Nineteenth Century Afro-Americans* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 204-206.
[9] Audrey Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England: Abolitionist Politics in Popular Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); R.J.M Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983); Alan Rice, *Radical Narratives of the Black Atlantic* (London: Continuum, 2003).

print culture. If an individual ensured an even balance between all three aspects of the triad, it was likely their visit was successful. But a range of personal and external factors meant the full deployment of this abolitionist triad was not always easy to achieve. From Moses Roper's dissonant language to the dwindling antislavery networks of the 1860s that threatened black success, we can analyze *why* certain individuals became celebrities and why, even in modern scholarship, certain individuals have been forgotten. As my discovery of various important new documents suggests, our understanding of black abolitionist missions and transatlantic abolitionism as a whole must now be viewed in a completely different light: the self-reflexive strategies of black men and women – from acting in plays based on their life to walking down a street wearing slave chains – indicates the myriad ways they challenged white supremacy rather than acting simply within its framework.

Black activists travelled extensively across Britain, and whatever the reason for their visit, they were united in their stalwart exploitation of adaptive resistance against white supremacy. They protested against the obfuscation of black voices and when possible challenged white conceptions of black corporeality. They intervened in spaces commonly denied to black individuals and altered the power balance between white and black, defying stereotypes of white superiority. They befriended newspaper editors, wrote letters to influential newspapers and exploited any connection they could to achieve a favourable coverage of their lectures. In relation to this, black activists exploited any links they could find with white abolitionists, their friends, business associates, neighbors and acquaintances to organize meetings and

advertise their lectures. Black men and women created opportunities to maintain antislavery momentum and remind British audiences their abolitionist work was not finished.

During their performances, black men and women employed both assimilation and dissonance strategies to win support on the Victorian stage. Malleable and adaptive in their approach, individuals such as Frederick Douglass, Moses Roper and Josiah Henson sometimes employed minstrelsy or plantation dialect in their speeches in order to appear familiar to Victorian audiences and Henson in particular played to white notions of what antislavery lectures were expected to look and sound like. In order to win support, most black activists exploited anglophilia and praised Britain's narrative of moral superiority in regard to abolition, and many others relied on traditional abolitionist tactics of exhibiting whips and chains, or sometimes even their scars.

On the other hand, abolitionists used dissonance to challenge Victorian norms and conceptions of what audiences imagined slavery to be. They sang a discordant tune and turned the tables on audience expectations to shock them into realising the brutality of slavery and the immediacy of their situation. Moses Roper – to his detriment on stage – employed a radical dissonance when he refused to downplay the violent nature of slavery, and his graphic language led to charges of inauthenticity. Others such as Samuel Ward criticised Britain's narrative of moral superiority, reminding Britons of their obligation to help black sailors sold into slavery. Henry 'Box' Brown defied

all expectations, and constantly adapted to his environment to maintain fame and success on the British stage. Black activists could employ both assimilation and dissonance in the same lecture, walking a tense tightrope between the two, negotiating and pushing the boundaries of both to fight traditional racial stereotypes. They were architects of subversion, intervening in white spaces to fight the erasure of black voices and the racial commodification of their bodies.

Adaptive resistance, as we have seen, was also deeply gendered, and Ellen Craft, Mrs. Jackson and Ida B. Wells had to navigate different battles on the Victorian stage than their male counterparts. While Ellen used silence as a public performative strategy (in parallel to her bold denunciations of racism in the private networks she cultivated), Mrs. Jackson and Wells carefully honed a performance and a rhetoric of humble women forced into activism where they had to defend the honor of black women in the face of rape and lynching. The double embodiment of gender *and* race did not allow many black women to reap the benefits of adaptive resistance on a British stage, but those that did performed it successfully.

Through their exploitation of adaptive resistance, these activists (beginning most significantly with Moses Roper) contributed to a black American protest tradition that continues today. Modern activists, like their ancestors, continue to protest against the outrages committed against black people as well as the persistent racial injustice that scars the transatlantic landscape. Activists like Paul Robeson, Martin Luther King, and Malcolm X

contributed to this black American protest tradition too. As Alan Rice points out, Robeson actually quoted Douglass during his visit to Manchester in 1956, and both men were "linked by a similar transatlantic trajectory." They were both "privotal figures in a black Atlantic radical tradition" and Robeson used technology such as the radio to spread his message as far as possible.[10] Unlike his predecessors, Malcolm X did not employ strategic anglophilia to win support or media coverage; when visiting Britain in 1965 he repeatedly criticized Conservative MP Peter Griffiths for secretly publishing pamphlets which were titled "if you want a nigger neighbour vote Liberal or Labour." Malcolm X argued he had "heard that the blacks in Smethwick [Griffiths' constituency] are being treated in the same way as the negroes were treated in Alabama – like Hitler treated the Jews."[11]

Tapping into the long history of adaptive resistance in British society, more recent black activists too rely on exploiting technology, performance, and networks to tell their stories. Black protestors, particularly those who are involved with the #BlackLivesMatter (BLM) movement, exploit *and* build on the tactics of adaptive resistance in the modern age. In a recent essay, Charles R. Lawrence III argues that contemporary black activists "look to the past for lessons from people's movements…[and] learn from those who fought for justice before them." He states that contemporary activists – like their forbears – "must be the agents of transformation" as they "have always been the

[10] Alan Rice, *Radical Narratives of the Black Atlantic* (London: Continuum, 2003), 174-180.
[11] Graeme Abernethy, "Not Just An American Problem': Malcolm X in Britain," *Atlantic Studies,* 7:3, (2010), 288-295.

authors of [their] own freedom," and will continue to fight racial injustice in all its forms."[12]

According to their official website, BLM "is a chapter-based national organization working for the validity of Black life" and "is not a moment, but a movement." It is "a call to action and a response to the virulent anti-Black racism that permeates [American] society" and "affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender spectrum."[13] BLM activists build and draw energy from their historical forebears: Patrisse Cullors, one of the founding members of BLM, wrote she was "in a relationship" with Harriet Tubman on social media, and stated "this work is not new…we have been among the most creative, persistent and resilient communities in fighting for ourselves."[14] Similarly, protestors often use quotes by historical figures during BLM rallies: Frederick Douglass' famous motto that "without struggle, there is no progress" is a common one to feature.[15]

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[12] Charles R. Lawrence III, "The Fire This Time: Black Lives Matter, Abolitionist Pedagogy and the Law," *Journal of Legal Education* 65: 2 (2015), 386-393; 401-404.
[13] BlackLivesMatter, "About Us." *Black Lives Matter,* accessed September 4, 2015, http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/
See also Keenanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016); Sylvanna M. Falcon, "The Globalization of Ferguson: Pedagogical Matters about Racial Violence," *Feminist Studies,* 41:1 (2015), 218-221; Russell Rickford, "Black Lives Matter: Toward a Modern Practice of Mass Struggle," *New Labor Forum* 25:l, (2016), 34-42.
[14] Linda Darnell Williams, "Column: A Long History of Proclaiming that Black Lives Matter," 22 October 2015, *Newsobserver,* accessed 1 March 2017, http://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/article41063694.html
[15] Wesley Lowery and Arelis R. Hernández, "Protestors Take to St. Louis Streets As Part of 'Weekend of Resistance." *The Washington Post.* 11 October 2014, accessed 1 March 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/protesters-take-to-st-louis-streets-as-part-of-weekend-of-resistance/2014/10/11/1aab8e3a-5185-11e4-babe-e91da079cb8a_story.html?utm_term=.1a856eb7e53e.
See also Frank M. Kirkland, "Ferguson's Political Imaginary & The Political Normativity of Black Lives Matter," *The Critique.* 14 July 2016, accessed 1 March 2017, http://www.thecritique.com/articles/fergusons-political-imaginary-the-political-normativity-of-black-lives-matter/.

Since this modern movement was born through social media (the new form of print culture), Facebook and particularly Twitter have reshaped BLM protests across the world. Technology – a new strand of adaptive resistance – is essential to the BLM campaign. By the end of August 2014 for example (the month Mike Brown was shot in Ferguson) the hashtag #Ferguson was tweeted more than eight million times, and contemporary activists have used this platform to speak out against injustice, police brutality and mainstream media bias.[16] As we have seen, Ida B. Wells used photographs of lynched bodies to convince British people about racial violence. She used the latest technology to expose the truth and reappropriated the photographs to use them as evidence against southern brutality, and inspired protests on both sides of the Atlantic. In a similar fashion, black activists exploit and *create* new activist networks through social media to attack injustice and expose racism towards black people. Modern activists use photographs and videos of black people killed by police as a source of evidence as well as a catalyst for further activism. Eric Garner and Walter Scott's deaths – both captured on camera – are used as a tool of truth.[17]

Contemporary black activists also employ performative strategies to expose white supremacy and thus continue a transatlantic collaborative spirit of protest. The best example of this can be seen in the Ferguson Solidarity Tour, which took place in Britain in early 2015. Visiting London, Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh and Oxford (to name a few), African

[16] Yarimar Bonilla and Jonathan Rosa, "#Ferguson: Digital Protest, Hashtag Ethnography, and the Racial Politics of Social Media in the United States," *Journal of the American Ethnological Society* 2:1, (2015): 4-17.
[17] Jill Lepore, "American Exposure," *The New Yorker,* 12 July 2016, accessed 1 March 2017, http://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/american-exposure

Americans active in the BLM movement joined with protest groups and the relatives of Britons who died as a result of police brutality.[18] These activists staged protests and provided workshops to educate people on unlawful arrests, stop and searches by police, and the death of individuals in the process of arrest or in police custody.[19] Joining the tour, Cullors stated that "Britain has done a great job as painting itself as the humanitarian, with the US being the torturer, [but] that shit ain't true." In contrast to Douglass and black abolitionists in the nineteenth century who played on British self-perception for antislavery support, Cullors directly targeted Britain's sense of moral superiority.[20] She bluntly destroyed the myth that Britain was built on the foundations of freedom and justice.

After the Ferguson Solidarity Tour, British campaigners, including Marcia Rigg (who lost her brother Sean to police brutality), were invited to California to take another step in fighting international racism. The #CaravanForJustice tour aimed "to start a global conversation on deaths in custody and state violence." British activists found that Americans had little idea of racism in Britain, and so wore T-Shirts with 1,518 printed, the number of people who have been abused or died as a result of police brutality.[21] According to Rigg, the public display of these statistics "shocked everyone from passers-by on the street to people we spoke to at rallies:" like Moses Roper, Rigg and other British BLM activists wanted to address racism by

[18] Ferguson Solidarity Tour, "List of Dates and Locations," accessed 1 July 2015, http://fergusonsolidaritytour.com/dates/
[19] Ferguson Solidarity Tour, "Launch statement," 16 December 2014, accessed 13 July 2015, http://fergusonsolidaritytour.com/2014/12/16/ferguson-solidarity-tour-launch-statement/
[20] Michael Segalov, "Interview with Patrisse Cullors," *Vice,* 2 February 2015, accessed 15 July 2015, http://www.vice.com/read/patrisse-cullors-interview-michael-segalov-188
[21] Ferguson Solidarity Tour, "#CaravanForJustice," 3 October 2015, accessed 5 January 2017, https://fergusonsolidaritytour.com/2015/10/03/caravanforjustice/

boldly *wearing* their grievances and engaging with complete strangers on the streets.[22]

Fellow activist Stephanie Lightfoot-Bennett, sister of Leon Patterson who died as a result of British state violence, argued the #CaravanforJustice tour led to people "joining together" across the Atlantic "to ensure [our] families' voices will be heard."[23] In order to tell their stories, black activists throughout the centuries have employed adaptive resistance to their advantage and used the power of oratory, exploited contemporary technology (print culture or twitter) and created reform networks to stir audiences in Britain and America. African Americans have used all the tools at their disposal to sustain a transatlantic spirit of activism and relied on their testimony to protest against white supremacy. From the 1830s to the present day, black men and women have fought to make their voices heard: Moses Roper demanded it was time for the enslaved to speak; Frederick Douglass, in blistering and searing testimony, urged transatlantic audiences to practice non-fellowship with "merciless menstealers;" Mrs. Jackson asserted her right as a black woman to speak against slavery in a male-dominated sphere; J. Sella Martin used his status as an ex-slave to speak out against Confederate sympathizers and scientific racists; Josiah Henson attacked the romanticization of slavery and Uncle Tom; and Ida B. Wells challenged the physical act of lynching but also the racist rhetoric behind it. The BLM movement has inherited this desire to speak – the act of bearing testimony in the face of a white racist schema –

[22] Marcia Rigg, "We Must Unite Globally Against Police Brutality," 9 November 2015, accessed 5 January 2017, https://fergusonsolidaritytour.com/2015/11/09/we-must-unite-globally-against-police-brutality-marcia-rigg-on-building-an-international-coalition/

[23] Ferguson Solidarity Tour, "UK Families to Join California #CaravanForJustice," 24 September 2015, accessed 5 January 2017, https://fergusonsolidaritytour.com/2015/09/24/uk-families-to-join-california-caravanforjustice-for-global-conversation-on-deaths-in-custody/

proving once and for all that people of color have always fought to tell, in the words of Wells, the "black people's side of the story."[24]

[24] *The Leeds Mercury*. 6 July 1894, 3.

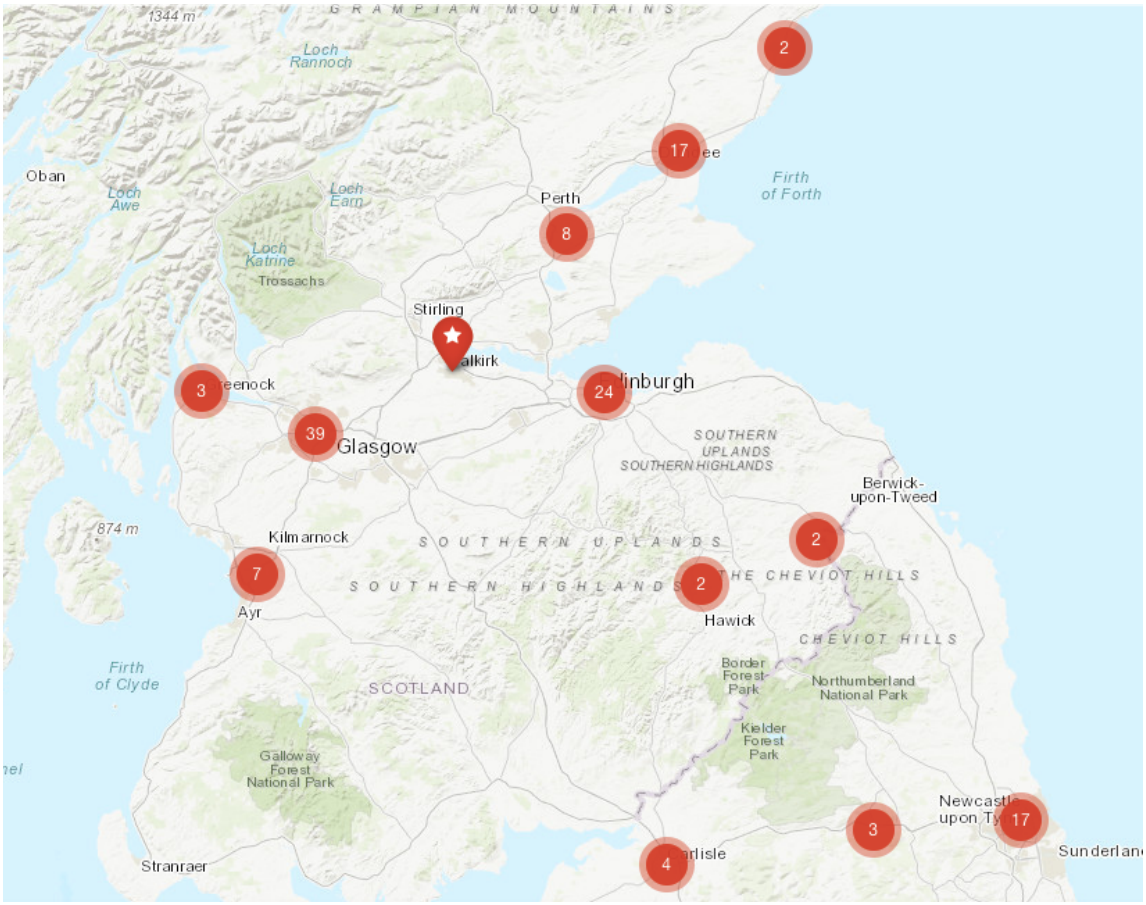
Appendices

Appendix 1: Map of Frederick Douglass' Speaking Locations

Below is a map showing an overview of Frederick Douglass' speaking locations, from the author's website, www.frederickdouglassinbritain.com

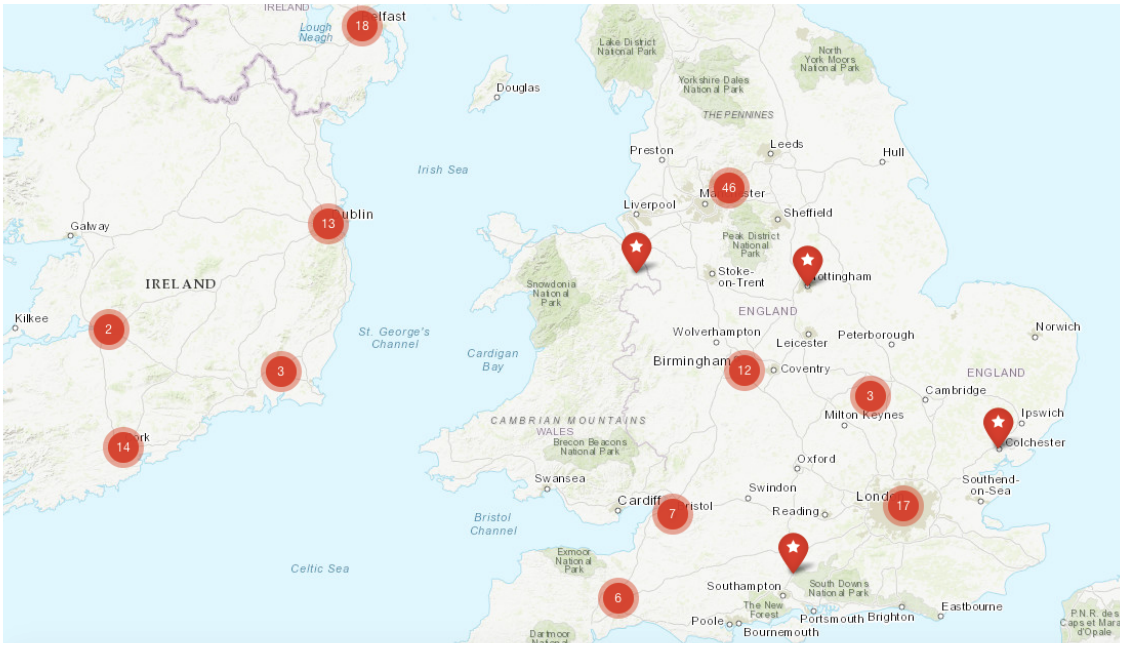


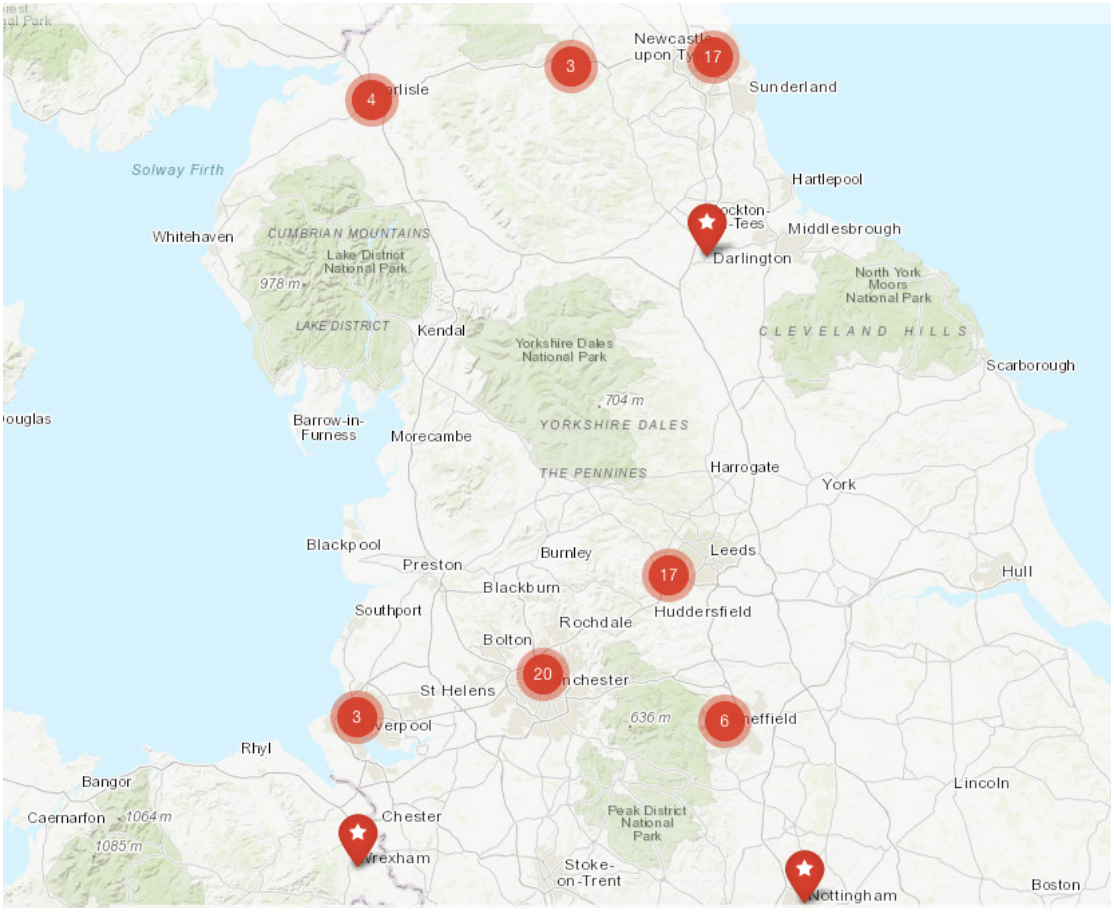
Each circle or star represents the number of lectures within the immediate location. From this scale, we can analyze that during his three trips, Douglass lectured the most in Scotland, the Midlands and certain parts of Ireland, rather than the south. The following screenshots show the map in more detail.

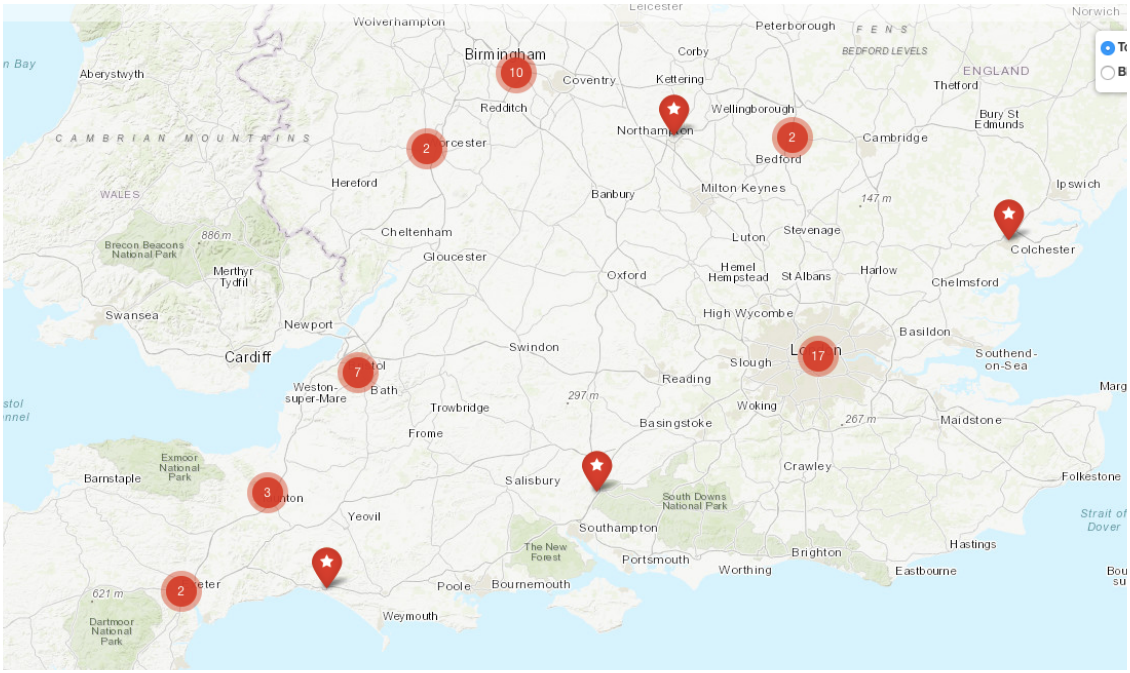


The image below is a close up of Glasgow: Douglass spoke there twenty-four times between 1846-1860. Each pinned location contains the date, subject, time of day and any other details from the lecture.




IRELAND
Lough Neagh
Belfast
Douglas
Irish Sea
Galway
Dublin
IRELAND
Kilkee
St. George's Channel
Cardigan Bay
Celtic Sea
Bristol Channel
Lake District National Park
Yorkshire Dales National Park
North York Moors National Park
THE PENNINES
Preston
Leeds
Hull
Liverpool
Sheffield
Peak District National Park
Stoke-on-Trent
Nottingham
Snowdonia National Park
ENGLAND
Wolverhampton
Leicester
Peterborough
Norwich
Birmingham
Coventry
Cambridge
Milton Keynes
Ipswich
Colchester
CAMBRIAN MOUNTAINS
WALES
Brecon Beacons National Park
Oxford
Swansea
Cardiff
Swindon
Reading
Southend-on-Sea
Exmoor National Park
Southampton
South Downs National Park
The New Forest
Poole
Portsmouth
Brighton
Bournemouth
Eastbourne
18
46
13
2
3
14
12
3
7
17
6


Newcastle upon Tyne
Sunderland
Carlisle
Solway Firth
Hartlepool
Whitehaven
CUMBRIAN MOUNTAINS
Lake District National Park
978 m
Middlesbrough
Darlington
North York Moors National Park
LAKE DISTRICT
Kendal
Yorkshire Dales National Park
CLEVELAND HILLS
Scarborough
704 m
YORKSHIRE DALES
Barrow-in-Furness
Morecambe
THE PENNINES
Harrogate
York
Blackpool
Preston
Burnley
Leeds
Hull
Blackburn
Huddersfield
Southport
Rochdale
Bolton
St Helens
Liverpool
636 m
Sheffield
Rhyl
Bangor
Caernarfon
1064 m
1085 m
Chester
Wrexham
Peak District National Park
Stoke-on-Trent
Nottingham
Lincoln
Boston
4
3
17
17
20
3
6


Wolverhampton
Birmingham
Coventry
Redditch
Hereford
Cheltenham
Gloucester
Aberystwyth
CAMBRIAN MOUNTAINS
WALES
Brecon Beacons National Park
Merthyr Tydfil
Swansea
Newport
Cardiff
Weston-super-Mare
Bath
Trowbridge
Frome
Yeovil
Barnstaple
Exmoor National Park
Dartmoor National Park
Poole
Bournemouth
Weymouth
Swindon
Oxford
Banbury
Kettering
Corby
Leicester
Peterborough
FENS
BEDFORD LEVELS
Norwich
ENGLAND
Thetford
Bury St Edmunds
Cambridge
Bedford
Milton Keynes
Luton
Stevenage
Hemel Hempstead
St Albans
Harlow
Chelmsford
Ipswich
Colchester
High Wycombe
Basildon
Slough
Reading
Woking
Basingstoke
Southend-on-Sea
Maidstone
Crawley
Folkestone
Salisbury
South Downs National Park
Southampton
The New Forest
Portsmouth
Worthing
Brighton
Hastings
Eastbourne
Strait of Dover
886 m
621 m
297 m
267 m
147 m
10
2
2
7
3
2
17

Appendix 2: List of Frederick Douglass' Speaking Locations

Date	Time	Venue	Location
27 August 1845		Steamship *Cambria*	Journey to Britain
30 August 1845			Celbridge, Ireland
31 August 1845		Prison (where Daniel O'Connell was confined)	Dublin, Ireland
3 September 1845	Evening	Royal Exchange	Dublin, Ireland
4 September 1845			Dublin, Ireland
9 September 1845		Friends Meeting House, Eustace Street	Dublin, Ireland
10 September 1845			Dublin, Ireland
12 September 1845	Evening	Friends Meeting House	Dublin, Ireland
17 September 1845	Evening	Music Hall, Abbey Street	Dublin, Ireland

21 September 1845	Day	Royal Canal Harbor	Dublin, Ireland
23 September 1845	Evening	Music Hall, Abbey Street	Dublin, Ireland
29 September 1845	Evening	Conciliation Hall	Dublin, Ireland
End of September 1845	Evening?		Cork, Ireland
1 October 1845	Evening	Music Hall	Dublin, Ireland
3 October 1845	Evening	Music Hall	Dublin, Ireland
7 October 1845	Evening		Wexford, Ireland
8 October 1845	Evening		Wexford, Ireland
9 October 1845	Evening		Waterford, Ireland
12 October 1845	Evening		Cork, Ireland
13 October	Evening	Global Lane,	Cork, Ireland

1845		Temperance Hall	
14 October 1845	8.30am	Lloyd's Hotel	Cork, Ireland
14 October 1845	2pm	City Court House	Cork, Ireland
17 October 1845	Afternoon	Wesleyan Chapel, Patrick Street	Cork, Ireland
17 October 1845	Evening	Independent Chapel	Cork, Ireland
20 October 1845	Evening	Temperance Institute	Cork, Ireland
21 October 1845	Evening?		Cork, Ireland
23 October 1845	2pm	Imperial Hotel	Cork, Ireland
27 October 1845	Evening	Independent Chapel	Cork, Ireland
28 October 1845	7:30pm	Saint Patrick's Temperance Hall	Cork, Ireland
3 November 1845	Evening	Independent Chapel, George's Street	Cork, Ireland
4 November 1845	2pm	City Court House	Cork, Ireland
10 November	Evening	Independent	Limerick,

1845		Chapel, Belford Row	Ireland
21 November 1845	Evening	Philosophical Rooms, Glentworth Street	Limerick, Ireland
5 December 1845	7:30pm	Independent Church, Donegall-Street	Belfast, Ireland
9 December 1845	Evening	Wesleyan Methodist Church	Belfast, Ireland
11 December 1845	Evening	Rev. Samuel Hanna's Meetinghouse	Belfast, Ireland
12 December 1845	Evening	Rev. Samuel Hanna's Meetinghouse	Belfast, Ireland
16 December 1845	Evening	Town Hall	Birmingham, England
23 December 1845	7:30pm	Independent Meeting House, Donegall Place	Belfast, Ireland
26 December 1845	Midday	Presbyterian Church, Donegall-Street	Belfast, Ireland
29 December	7pm	Presbyterian	Lisburn,

1845		Church	Ireland
1 January 1846	Evening	Methodist Meeting House, Donegall Place	Belfast, Ireland
2 January 1846	Evening	Methodist Meeting House, Donegall Place	Belfast, Ireland
6 January 1846	Morning	Commercial Rooms	Belfast, Ireland
10 January 1846	Evening		Glasgow, Scotland
13 January 1846	Morning		Cork, Ireland
15 January 1846	7pm	City Hall	Glasgow, Scotland
22 January 1846	Evening	City Hall	Glasgow, Scotland
23 January 1846	Evening	City Hall	Perth, Scotland
26 January 1846	Evening	City Hall	Perth, Scotland
27 January 1846	Evening	School Wynd Chapel	Dundee, Scotland
28 January 1846	Evening	School Wynd Chapel	Dundee, Scotland

29? January 1846	Evening	School Wynd Chapel	Dundee, Scotland
30 January 1846	Evening	Bell Street Chapel	Dundee, Scotland
9 February 1846	Evening	Tay Square Chapel	Dundee, Scotland
10 February 1846	Evening?	Trades' Hall	Arbroath, Scotland
11 February 1846	Evening?	Abbey Church	Arbroath, Scotland
12 February 1846	Evening?	Abbey Church	Arbroath, Scotland
18 February 1846	Evening	City Hall	Glasgow, Scotland
19 February 1846	Evening?	Thistle Hall, United Secession Church	Glasgow, Scotland
20 February 1846	Evening?	Thistle Hall, United Secession Church	Glasgow, Scotland
21 February 1846	Evening?	Thistle Hall, United Secession Church	Glasgow, Scotland
1 March 1846	1pm	Assembly Rooms	Glasgow, Scotland

First Week of March 1846	Evening		Dundee, Scotland
First Week of March 1846	Evening		Dundee, Scotland
7 March 1846	Evening		Dundee, Scotland
9 March 1846	7:30pm	Rev. H. Hyslop's Chapel	Montrose, Scotland
10 March 1846	Evening	George's Chapel, School Wynd	Dundee, Scotland
12 March 1846	7:30pm	City Hall	Perth, Scotland
16 March 1846	Evening		Dundee, Scotland
17 March 1846	Evening	Rev. William Nisbet's Church, Abbey Close	Paisley, Scotland
18 March 1846	Evening	Rev. William Nisbet's Church, Abbey Close	Paisley, Scotland
19 March 1846	Evening	Rev. William Nisbet's Church, Abbey Close	Paisley, Scotland
20 March 1846	Evening	Rev. William Nisbet's Church,	Paisley, Scotland

		Abbey Close	
23 March 1846	Evening	Relief Church	Ayr, Scotland
24 March 1846	Evening	Relief Church	Ayr, Scotland
25 March 1846	Evening		Kilmarnock, Scotland
26 March 1846	Evening		Paisley, Scotland
27 March 1846	Evening		Greenock, Scotland
30 March 1846	Evening	Secession Church, Abbey Close	Paisley, Scotland
31 March 1846	Evening		Bonhill, Scotland
c.1-14 April 1846	Evening		Hawick, Scotland
c.1-14 April 1846	Evening		Galashiels, Scotland
c.1-14 April 1846	Evening		Coldstream, Scotland
c.1-14 April 1846	Evening		Kelso, Scotland
4 April 1846	Evening		Kilmarnock,

			Scotland
6 April 1846	Evening	Secession Church, Abbey Close	Paisley, Scotland
10 April 1846	8pm	West Blackhall Street Chapel	Greenock, Scotland
15 April 1846	Evening		Glasgow, Scotland
16 April 1846	Evening		Glasgow, Scotland
17 April 1846	Evening	Exchange Rooms	Paisley, Scotland
21 April 1846	Evening	City Hall	Glasgow, Scotland
23 April 1846	1pm	Assembly Rooms	Glasgow, Scotland
23 April 1846	Evening		Glasgow, Scotland
25 April 1846	Evening		Paisley, Scotland
26 April 1846	Evening		Paisley, Scotland
27 April 1846	Evening		Edinburgh, Scotland
28 April	Evening	Rev. Mr.	Edinburgh,

1846		McGilchrist's Church, Rose Street	Scotland
1 May 1846	Evening	Music Hall	Edinburgh, Scotland
2 May 1846	Evening		Edinburgh, Scotland
5 May 1846	Evening	City Hall	Glasgow, Scotland
7 May 1846	Evening	Rev. Mr. McGilchrist's Church, Rose Street	Edinburgh, Scotland
8 May 1846	Evening	Music Hall	Edinburgh, Scotland
18 May 1846	Midday	Freemason's Hall, Great Queen Street	London, Scotland
19 May 1846	Evening	Finsbury Chapel, Moorfields	London, England
20 May 1846	Evening	Crown and Anchor Tavern, The Strand	London, England
21 May 1846	Evening	Exeter Hall	London, England

22 May 1846	Evening	Finsbury Chapel, Moorfields	London, England
24 May 1846	Evening		Edinburgh, Scotland
25 May 1846	Evening	Music Hall	Edinburgh, Scotland
26 May 1846	Evening	Music Hall	Edinburgh, Scotland
27 May 1846	Evening	Music Hall	Edinburgh, Scotland
29 May 1846	Evening	Music Hall	Fife? Scotland
1 June 1846	7:30pm	Bethelfield Chapel	Kirkcaldy, Scotland
2 June 1846	Evening	Music Hall	Edinburgh, Scotland
3 June 1846	Evening	Music Hall	Edinburgh, Scotland
4 June 1846	Evening	Music Hall	Edinburgh, Scotland
5 June 1846	Evening	Music Hall	Edinburgh, Scotland
9 June 1846	Evening	Music Hall	Edinburgh, Scotland
16 June 1846	Evening	Rev. Nelson's Church,	Belfast, Ireland

		Donegall-Street	
29 June 1846	Evening	Ebenezer Chapel	Birmingham, England
30 June 1846	Evening	Lecture Room, Natural History Society	Worcester, England
2 July 1846	11am	Town Hall	Manchester, England
3 July 1846	Evening		Manchester, England
5 July 1846	Evening?		Belfast, Ireland
8 July 1846	7pm	Primitive Methodist Chapel	Belfast, Ireland
10 July 1846	7pm	Methodist Chapel, Donegall Place	Belfast, Ireland
13 July 1846	Evening	First Presbyterian Church	Bangor, Ireland
22 July 1846	7:30pm	Independent Church, Donegall-Street	Belfast, Ireland
31 July 1846	Evening		Edinburgh, Scotland
2 August	Evening		Newcastle

1846			
3 August 1846	Evening	Salem Methodist Church, Hood Street	Newcastle
4 August 1846	Evening	Baptist Church, Howard Street	North Shields, England
6 August 1846	Afternoon	London Literary Institution, Aldersgate Street	London, England
7 August 1846	Evening	Covent Garden Theatre	London, England
10 August 1846	Evening	Crown and Anchor Tavern	London, England
13 August 1846	Evening	Salem Chapel	Newcastle, England
14 August 1846	Evening	Athenaeum, Lowther Street	Carlisle, England
17 August 1846	6:30pm	Crown and Anchor Tavern, The Strand	London, England
21 August 1846	Evening	Athenaeum	Carlisle, England
24 August 1846	Evening		Bristol, England
25 August	Daytime	Blind Asylum	Bristol,

1846			England
25 August 1846	Evening	Victoria Rooms	Bristol, England
26 August 1846	Evening	Victoria Rooms	Bristol, England
27? August 1846	Evening	Victoria Rooms	Bristol, England
28 August 1846	Evening	Subscription Rooms	Exeter, England
29 August 1846	Evening	Subscription Rooms	Exeter, England
30 August 1846	Evening		Taunton, England
31 August 1846	Evening	Public Rooms	Bridgwater
1 August 1846	Evening	Public Hall	Taunton
2 September 1846	Evening	Public Rooms, Broadmead	Bristol, England
3 September 1846	Evening	Lecture Room, Natural History Society, Foregate Street	Worcester, England
4 September 1846	Evening	Livery Street Chapel	Birmingham, England

5 September 1846	Evening		Birmingham, England
6 September 1846	Evening		Birmingham, England
7 September 1846	Evening	Athenaeum, Lowther Street	Carlisle, England
8 September 1846	Evening	Baptist Chapel	North Shields, England
10 September 1846	Evening		Sheffield, England
11 September 1846	Evening	Friends Meeting House	Sheffield, England
14 September 1846	6pm	Exeter Hall	London, England
18 September 1846	Evening	Athenaeum	Sunderland, England
22 September 1846	Evening		Greenock, Scotland
23 September	Evening	Secession Church	Paisley, Scotland

1846			
24 September 1846	Evening	Brighton Street Church	Edinburgh, Scotland
25 September 1846	Morning		Edinburgh, Scotland
25 September 1846	Evening		Edinburgh, Scotland
28 September 1846	Evening	Bell Street Hall	Dundee, Scotland
29 September 1846	Evening		Edinburgh, Scotland
30 September 1846	Evening	City Hall	Glasgow, Scotland
1 October 1846	Morning/ afternoon		Glasgow
1 October 1846	Evening		Glasgow
2 September 1846	Morning/ afternoon	Eagle Temperance Hall	Glasgow, Scotland

2 September 1846	Evening		Kilmarnock, Scotland
3 October 1846	Evening	Music Hall	Belfast, Ireland
6 October 1846	Evening	Independent Church, Donegall-Street	Belfast, Ireland
9 October 1846	Evening	Town Hall	Wrexham, Wales
12 October 1846	7pm	Free Trade Hall, Peter Street	Manchester, England
14 October 1846	Evening	Public Hall	Rochdale, England
15 October 1846	Evening	Public Hall	Rochdale, England
16 October 1846	Evening		Newcastle, England
19 October 1846	Evening	Concert Hall	Liverpool, England
21 October 1846	Evening	Brighton Street Church	Edinburgh, Scotland
22 October 1846	Evening		Kirkcaldy, Scotland
23 October 1846	Evening		Dundee, Scotland

24 October 1846	Morning?		Perth, Scotland
24 October 1846	Evening?		Aberdeen, Scotland
26 October 1846	Evening	Concert Hall, Lord Nelson Street	Liverpool, England
28 October 1846	7:30pm		Glasgow, Scotland
29 October 1846	Evening		Edinburgh, Scotland
10 November 1846	Evening	Public Hall	Rochdale, England
11 November 1846	Morning	Public Hall	Rochdale, England
11 November 1846	Evening	Public Hall	Rochdale, England
13 November 1846	Evening		Stockport, England
17 November 1846	Evening		Warrington, England
23 November 1846	Evening		Bacup, England
25 November 1846	Evening		Oldham, England

1 December 1846	Evening	Corn Exchange, Hanging Ditch	Manchester, England
4 December 1846	7:30pm	Corn Exchange, Hanging Ditch	Manchester, England
10 December 1846	Evening		Ashton, England
11 December 1846	Evening		Ashton, England
Mid December 1846	Evening		Birmingham, England
22 December 1846	Evening		Manchester, England
23 December 1846	Evening		Leeds, England
28 December 1846	Evening	Music Hall, Albion Street	Newcastle, England
29 December 1846	Evening	Music Hall	Newcastle, England
30 December 1846	Evening		Sunderland, England
31 December 1846	Evening		Hexham, England
1 January 1847	Evening		Carlisle, England

2 January 1847	Evening		Carlisle, England
4 January 1847			North/South Shields? England
11 January 1847	Evening	Assembly Rooms	Darlington, England
13 January 1847			Kirkstall, England
14 January 1847	7pm	Music Hall, Albion Street	Leeds, England
18 January 1847	Evening	Corn Exchange	Manchester, England
19 January 1847	Evening	Baptist Chapel, Grosvenor Street	Manchester, England
21 January 1847			Coventry, England
24 January 1847	Evening	Vicar Lane Chapel	Coventry, England
2 February 1847	Evening	St. Mary's Hall Chapel	Coventry, England
10 February 1847	Evening	Hall of Commerce	London, England
12 February 1847		British School Room	Pentonville, England

23 February 1847	Evening		Leamington, England
25 February 1847	Evening	Independent Chapel	Winchester, England
26 February 1847	Evening	Mansion House Chapel	Camberwell, England
4 March 1847	Evening	Finsbury Chapel	London, England
5 March 1847	Evening	Mansion House	Camberwell, England
6/7? March 1847	Evening		Colchester, England
8 March 1847	7pm	Exchange Rooms	Nottingham, England
9 March 1847	Evening	Mechanic's Lecture Hall	Warrington, England
17 March 1847	Evening		Cumberland, England
25 March 1847	Evening		Sheffield, England
29 March 1847	7:30pm	New Hall	Northampton, England
30 March 1847	6pm	London Tavern	London, England
31 March	Evening	Philosophical	Huddersfield,

1847		Hall	England
1 April 1847	Evening	Broadmead Rooms	Bristol, England
29 November 1859	Evening	Mechanics Hall?	Halifax, England
30 November 1859	Evening	Mechanics Hall	Halifax, England
7 December 1859	Evening	Mechanics Hall	Halifax, England
13 December 1859	Evening		Halifax, England
19 December	Evening	Temperance Hall	Sheffield, England
22 December 1859	8pm	Music Hall	Leeds, England
28 December 1859	Evening	Mechanics Hall	Halifax, England
4 January 1860	Evening	Mechanics' Hall	Halifax, England
6 January 1860	Evening	Mechanics' Institute	Bradford, England
12 January 1860	Evening	Corn Exchange	Wakefield, England
16 January	Evening		Sheffield,

1860			England
19 January 1860	8pm	Hope Hall	Liverpool, England
c.20 January-18 February	Evening		Perth, Scotland
c.20 January-18 February	Evening		Arbroath, Scotland
c.20 January-18 February	Evening		Kilmarnock, Scotland
26 January 1860	Evening	Abbey Close	Paisley, Scotland
30 January 1860	Evening	Queen Street Hall	Edinburgh, Scotland
31 January 1860	Evening		Glasgow, Scotland
3 February 1860	Evening?		Paisley, Scotland
6 February 1860	Evening		Paisley, Scotland
7 February 1860	8pm	Free Church	Falkirk, Scotland
7 February 1860			Dalkeith, Scotland
9 February 1860			Dalkeith, Scotland

10 February 1860	Evening		Montrose, Scotland
13 February 1860	Evening	Corn Exchange Hall	Dundee, Scotland
14 February 1860	7pm	John Street United Presbyterian Church	Glasgow, Scotland
19 February 1860	Afternoon	Lecture Room, Nelson Street	Newcastle, England
21 February 1860	Evening	Albion Assembly Rooms	North Shields, England
22 February 1860	Evening	Scotch Church	Hexham, England
23 February 1860	Evening	Nelson Street Lecture Room	Newcastle, England
24 February 1860	Evening	Independent Chapel	Morpeth, England
25 February 1860	Evening	Infant school room	Cullercoats, England
28 February 1860	Evening?	New Church, Square Road	Halifax, England
9 March 1860	Evening	Wesleyan Free Church	Greenside, Wortley, England

12 March 1860	Evening	Ramsden Street Chapel	Leeds? England
13 March 1860	8pm	Mechanics Institute	Bradford, England
16 March 1860	8pm	Stock Exchange Hall	Leeds, England
26 March 1860	Evening		Glasgow, Scotland
27 March 1860	Evening	U.P. Church, Catheart Street	Ayr, Scotland
28 March 1860	Evening	East Campbell Street Church	Glasgow, Scotland
29 March 1860	Evening		Glasgow, Scotland
5 October 1886	Daytime	Julia Griffith Crofts' School for Girls	St. Neots, England
12 October 1886	Daytime	Corn Exchange	St. Neots, England
15 October 1886	Evening	Town Hall, Bridport	Bridport, England

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