# *American and British Narratives of Enslavement in the Nineteenth Century*

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# ***Introduction***

*"Americans believe in the reality of 'race' as a defined, indubitable feature of the natural world. Racism - the need to ascribe bone-deep features to people and then humiliate, reduce, and destroy them - inevitably follows from this inalterable condition."*

- Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*[1]

The period between 1830 and 1860 was the most contentious time for debate around enslavement in the United States. Most commonly known are the differing opinions in this debate between whites in the Northern United States and the Southern United States, but not so well known are those of whites in Great Britain who felt entitled to speak on the issue after they abolished slavery in 1833. Whites in these three regions wrote periodicals, novels, plays, performances and political speeches that all reflected their regional differences and beliefs in the justification or condemnation of the enslavement of Blacks in the US. Furthermore, these works reflected the sometimes-contentious relationships between these regions and the need for each to defend their moral reputation regarding slavery by attacking another's. The vast majority of these debates and their histories do not include the voices of enslaved and freed Blacks, an omission which this paper attempts to correct.

This paper builds on many other historians who have explored the debate around enslavement during this time. Christopher Malone's *Between Freedom and Bondage* helps explain the paradoxical experience of Blacks in the North during this time who were no longer enslaved but not granted complete freedom when it came to political, economic, and social rights. Also, the works of Richard Yarborough and Douglas Jones have established the shortcomings of white Northern

[1] Coates, Ta-Nehisi. *Between the World and Me*. United Kingdom: Spiegel & Grau, 2015: 7.

abolitionists who often perpetuated racist stereotypes through plays and literature. This paper challenges the notion that white Northerners wanted racial equality and shows, through written works in periodicals, plays, literature, and political debates, that Northern whites were prepared to abolish slavery but not willing to move towards racial equality.

Manisha Sinha's *The Counterrevolution of Slavery* does a brilliant job explaining the nationalism that evolved in the South due to the challenges to enslavement. Her work argues that the defense of enslavement in South Carolina highlights the resentment that whites in the South felt towards Northerners. She argues that this resentment and this need to protect slavery culminated in Southern nationalism, an ideology that was anti-democratic. This paper will show how Southern nationalism played out into Southern periodicals, literature, political speeches, and performances and portrayed moral superiority compared to the North.

Other historians such as Sarah Meer have established the myths perpetuated by white Southerners that allowed them to defend slavery. In particular, many historians have discussed the notion of the "happy slave" and the pleasant conditions of plantation life that many white planters used as a means of defending slavery as a hospitable institution. This paper builds on these works on Southern plantation life by illustrating how these defensive responses evolved in response to attacks and threats to slavery from Northern abolitionists in periodicals, politics, and literature.

On the British side of this historiography, many historians have covered Britain's continued involvement in slavery well after abolition. Still, they have not delved deeper into how this highlights the hypocrisy of British commentary on American enslavement. Catherine Hall's *The Legacy of British Slave Ownership* does an excellent job explaining how the prominence of enslavement continued in Britain well after abolition through compensation of former enslavers and continued interests in slave labor. Hall's book discusses the amnesia that the British developed after abolishing slavery in their empire and challenges this amnesia while reassessing the role that slavery had on British society

well after abolition. Like Lisa Merrill, this paper seeks to highlight the intersections between British abolitionism and American abolitionism.

This paper adds to this work on Great Britain by arguing that a feeling of moral superiority inspired Britons during this time to comment on and intervene in American enslavement increasingly. Many Britons often felt superior to Americans after abolishing slavery in 1833. They made this known in their criticisms of American slavery in periodicals, literature, performances, and debates in Parliament. This paper asks how these ideologies in Great Britain were used in conversations surrounding American enslavement to highlighted the hypocrisy already established by historians like Catherine Hall.

This paper also owes much to the work of Jessica Johnson. Her article "Markup Bodies" describes the commodification of Black bodies and Black suffering in Scotland in the late 1700s. Johnson describes the "thingification"[2] of Black women, children, and men perpetuated by eighteenth-century abolitionists who often exploited stories of the enslaved for their self-righteous motivations. This paper highlights a similar concept in the setting of nineteenth-century American and British history. As Johnson has similarly done for eighteenth-century Scottish history, this paper will question the white archives of the nineteenth century by introducing Black authored works that "challenge the [white] reproduction of black death and commodification."[3]

This paper brings Black voices into this debate to show the reality of being Black in the nineteenth-century United States. While whites in the North, the South, and Great Britain had their ideas and beliefs about the experiences of being enslaved and Black, these Black voices describe the oppression and abuse they faced daily. Unfortunately, throughout history, these voices have often been neglected when the very fates of Black lives were being discussed, especially in the arena of

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[2] Johnson, Jessica. "Markup Bodies: Black [Life] Studies and Slavery [Death] Studies at the Digital Crossroads." *Social Text* 36, no. 4 (2018): 58.

[3] Ibid, 58-59.

politics. The works of Hannah Crafts, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Wilson, Mary Seacole, William Wells Brown, Ellen and William Crafts are all essential to this conversation surrounding what it meant to be Black in the nineteenth-century United States.

This paper is organized by genre, with the chapters being as follows: periodicals, literature, performances, and political debates. There are sections for each region's narratives of enslavement: North, South, and Great Britain. Each chapter also seeks to situate Black voices in response to what white voices in these same regions claimed about enslavement. These Black voices often challenge the white voices and bring a narrative of enslavement closer to reality.

Overall, this paper utilizes the voices of whites and Blacks throughout Great Britain, the Northern United States, and the Southern United States to illustrate how contentious the debate around enslavement had become in the 30 years leading up to the Civil War. While whites in the North often blamed the South for continuing enslavement, the South resented the North for threatening Southern plantation life. Simultaneously, whites in Britain often felt the need to establish moral superiority in the conversation by condemning American enslavement. The debates around enslavement between these three regions resulted in regional conflict and often only further perpetuated racial inequality. The voices of Blacks such as Frederick Douglass, Hannah Crafts, William Wells Brown, Harriet Wilson and many others attest to the authentic experience of being Black in the United States before the Civil War.

## A Brief History of Race

Crucial to this paper is also understanding the history of race in the United States and Britain. As Ta-Nehisi Coates writes, "race is the child of racism, not the father."[4] America and Britain's histories with race are rife with conflict, myths and oppression. To delve into the nineteenth-century debate surrounding enslavement and freedom, readers must first understand how the institution of enslavement was sustained and enforced through racial ideologies. As historian Catherine Hall has pointed out, during the first half of the nineteenth century, two significant ideologies were used by white Britons and Americans to justify their discrimination and bondage of Blacks. These ideologies were "cultural differentialism and biological racism." As their names suggest, these ideologies involved differentiating whites from Blacks through culture and biology.[5]

The theory of biological racism claimed that the biological superiority of whites led to cultural differentialism. This cultural differentialism included claims of European culture being more "civilized" and "developed" than that of Africa.[6] This civility and development were defined as "commerce, manufacturing, and agriculture" in European daily life.[7] This idea of "civilized" whites vs. "uncivilized" Blacks helped whites justify their dominance over Blacks in the United States, Great Britain, and across colonies.

As historian Roxann Wheeler has shown, climate also played into this differentialism through which many nineteenth-century whites believed complexion "arose from the interaction of climate and the bodily humors (blood, bile, phlegm, and choler)."[8] Complexion did not just refer to the skin color but also the anatomical makeup of humans. Therefore, many whites strongly believed

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[4] Coates, Ta-Nehisi. Between the World and Me. United Kingdom: Spiegel & Grau, 2015: 7.

[5] Hall, Catherine. "Men and Their Histories: Civilizing Subjects." History Workshop Journal, no. 52 (2001): 52. Accessed December 7, 2020.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid, 53.

[8] Wheeler, Roxann. *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture. (2000): 2. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press*.

that their colder or more temperate climates molded them into an advanced race with certain biological advantages of white skin, smaller noses, and smaller heads.[9] These supposed biological advantages of a more temperate climate in Europe were thought to have been reasons for Anglo-Saxons' "excellent government" and "active commerce" compared to non-Anglo Saxon nations.[10] For Britons and Americans, their "superior" race was due to their temperate climates, which created their more healthy complexion and anatomy and, in turn, also enabled them to create more advanced societies in comparison to peoples of color from hotter climates.

In addition to climate, it is also crucial to discuss how religion became another tool for racist ideology. Christianity was superior to all religions in the eyes of nineteenth-century Britons and Americans. For the British, "Anglicanism was a coordinate of identity that synthesized English patriotism and veneration of the Parliament-limited monarchy."[11] Similarly, Protestantism in the United States was a symbol of the religious freedom found in the thirteen colonies and the patriotism that won the Revolutionary War. Christianity was at the very core of the identities of both of these nations, and Britons and Americans believed it formed "the common basis of all groups in western society."[12] All non-Christians, including Blacks, were "heathens."[13] The religious difference became another reason for British and American racism during the nineteenth century.

Through this establishment of difference in regard to biological makeup, culture, climate, and religion, nineteenth-century Americans and Britons justified their enslavement of Blacks and colonization of Black nations. These racial ideologies were "intimately codependent," as historian Roxann Wheeler accurately writes, with colonialism and enslavement.[14] These theories of racism are

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[9] Ibid, 4.
[10] Ibid, 33.
[11] Ibid, 17.
[12] Hay, Denys. 1968: 56. *Europe: the emergence of an idea*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh U.P.
[13] Wheeler, Roxann. *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture*. (2000): 16. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
[14] Ibid, 11.

essential to understanding the reasonings behind the tremendous oppression and hardship that millions of enslaved and free Blacks suffered under American and British colonialism.

# ***Chapter One: Slave Narratives in American and British Periodicals***

One form of nineteenth-century popular culture that frequently featured the debate on enslavement between Northern and Southern Americans and Britons was newspapers. Each region had its newspapers that often reflected the consensus of the region's population. There were newspapers like the *Liberator* for the North, which reflected the white abolitionism in Northern politics in the mid-1800s. For the South, periodicals like the *Richmond Enquirer* captured the defensiveness and delusion of pro-slavery Southern whites who were intent on getting back at the North for threatening their plantation life. For the British, the *London Times* reflected the British sense of moral superiority in abolishing slavery before the U.S. These three periodicals, the *Liberator*, the *Richmond Enquirer*, and the *London Times,* encapsulate the conversation surrounding slavery between Britain, the South and the North. The typical pattern of this conversation entails the North blaming the South for continuing slavery, the South in response, highlighting the hypocrisy and racial inequality of the North. And Great Britain is looking down on both for not terminating slavery.

These three periodicals stand in stark contrast to Frederick Douglass' the *North Star,* a Black newspaper that included the stories of enslaved and freed Black men and women. While white newspapers in the North, the South, and Britain exploited slavery as a political tool in a competition of morality, the *North Star* illustrated the realities of Black men and women through their own voices. This sense of truth from the words of Blacks themselves was largely missing from the pages of the *Liberator*, the *London Times* and the *Richmond Enquirer,* which were all dominated by white men who ironically spoke on a subject that, due to their privilege, they could have never understood.

*The Liberator* was an abolitionist newspaper published from 1831 to 1865 in Boston, Massachusetts. It was the most widely circulated and well-known anti-slavery newspaper when the debate over enslavement in the United States was heating up.[15] William Lloyd Garrison, the editor, was known for his radicalism because he called for "immediate enfranchisement" of the enslaved[16] and condemned the Constitution for its legal protection of enslavement.[17] Garrison and his supporters - called "Garrisonians" - did not believe in working with their current political system at all. They called for a dissolution of the Union to start over without enslavement as a fundamental part of its economy and social structure.[18] The rhetoric of the *Liberator* thus called for the United States to address its long-standing history with human enslavement.

Such opinions made Garrison both loved and hated across the United States. A significant part of his audience was free Blacks, who made up seventy-five percent of his readers in the U.S.[19] In a letter written to Garrison by fellow abolitionist William Cooper Nell in 1865, Nell noted that in its first year, "the *Liberator*, was supported by the colored people, and had not fifty white subscribers."[20] Garrison's condemnations of the United States government and Constitution, combined with his calls for freedom and equality for Blacks, did not sit well with many white Americans, especially those in the Southern states. In Georgia, for example, a $5000 bounty was

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[15] "The Liberator." Accessed November 27, 2020. https://transcription.si.edu/project/11766.

[16] S, Jake. "The Liberator." Boston Public Library, July 26, 2018. https://www.bpl.org/blogs/post/the-liberator/.

[17] Finkelman, Paul. "Garrison's Constitution." National Archives and Records Administration. National Archives and Records Administration, 2000. https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2000/winter/garrisons-constitution-1.html.

[18] Ibid.

[19] "William Lloyd Garrison and The Liberator." ushistory.org. Independence Hall Association. Accessed November 27, 2020. https://www.ushistory.org/us/28a.asp.

[20] Nell, William C. (William Cooper), and William Lloyd Garrison. "Letter from William Cooper Nell, Boston, [Massachusetts], to William Lloyd Garrison, 1865 Oct[ober] 21." Correspondence. October 21, 1865. Digital Commonwealth, https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/2z1108970 (accessed November 27, 2020).

placed on Garrison's head for his capture and subsequent trial.[21] The *National Intelligencer*, a Virginian newspaper, claimed Garrison should be tried for "inciting southern slaves to insurrection."[22] It then urged violence upon Garrison if he was not to be brought to the court: "let the people of the South offer an adequate reward to any person who will deliver him, dead or alive."[23] Garrison was a controversial figure whose newspaper was applauded by Blacks and white liberals alike but loathed by white Southerners who feared his calls for freedom would threaten their livelihood.

In contrast to the radical abolitionism of the *Liberator* stands the major Southern newspaper, the *Richmond Enquirer*. Published in Richmond, Virginia, the future capital of the Confederacy, the paper vigorously defended the institution of slavery when faced with criticism from Northern newspapers like the *Liberator*.[24] The *Enquirer* had a readership of predominantly white Democratic Southerners who were seriously considering the possibility of seceding from the Union.[25] The paper fabricated narratives that boasted of the happiness of enslaved Blacks and their humane treatment that surpassed that of free laborers in the North and England to justify slavery.

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, a major newspaper was the *London Times*. The *Times* was read across the globe. Its readership dramatically increased from 10,000 in the 1830s to 60,000 in 1855 due to a reduction in newspaper duties in Great Britain.[26] The newspaper had little political

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[21] "The Liberator." The Liberator | Smithsonian Digital Volunteers. Accessed November 27, 2020. https://transcription.si.edu/project/11766.

[22] Protestant. "A writer in the National Intelligencer, from Virginia, talks of prosecuting Mr Garrison, editor of the Boston Liberator, for inciting southern slaves to insurrection in his paper." Liberator, November 5, 1831, 179. Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 27, 2020). https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/apps/doc/GT3005833076/NCNP?u=ucsantabarbara&sid=NCNP&xid=bee5f23e.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Humanities, National Endowment for the. "Richmond Enquirer. [Volume]." News about Chronicling America RSS. Thomas Ritchie. Accessed February 16, 2021. https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Hobbs, Andrew. "The Deleterious Dominance of The Times in Nineteenth Century Historiography." *Journal of Victorian Culture*. 2014: 5.

affiliation and tended to have varied opinions throughout its articles, but on the slavery issue, it was clear. The *Times* wrote numerous articles condemning the United States for not abolishing slavery.

Lastly, the *North Star* was a prominent Black newspaper in the North published by Frederick Douglass in Rochester, NY.[27] Named as an ode to the North Star, which guided enslaved Blacks to freedom, the newspaper was ardent in its opposition to slavery and described the realities of enslaved life through articles written by the enslaved themselves.[28] Douglass created the newspaper as a direct source for African Americans to read and write about their experiences in the US. The *Liberator* had done this on some occasions but had also fallen prone to being white-dominated.[29] The newspaper had over 4,000 readers, Black and white, in the US, Europe, and the West Indies.[30] In particular, Douglass highlighted the hypocrisy that was evident in all aspects (socially, religiously, politically and economically) of white American life.

Within the context of intense debate between the North and the South on slavery, Garrison wrote about abolishing enslavement in the *Liberator*. One particular article published in January 1832 laid out Garrison's beliefs and intentions for his publication. The newspaper title included an image of a family being sold to enslavers at a slave auction where a sign reads "Slaves, Horses, and Other Cattle to be Sold at 12:00."[31] This sign highlighted the dehumanization of the enslaved, who were likened to cattle and had their families separated by white enslavers at these auctions. After this image, there was Garrison's introductory address in which he wrote poetically, saying, "ours is a warmer theme that asks for warmer tears, a theme to rouse the patriot's ardent fears. By the deep

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[27] Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "The North Star." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, November 11, 2016. https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-North-Star-American-newspaper.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] "The Liberator." Liberator, January 7, 1832. Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 27, 2020). https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/apps/doc/GT3005833824/NCNP?u=ucsantabarbara&sid=NCNP&xid=8d884b2a.

wrongs of Slavery's cruel deeds, our country suffers, and our country bleeds." It is clear here that Garrison was inviting Americans to engage in this conversation about their country's history with enslavement and race and to look back on the original patriot's cause of liberty and equality.

In this 1832 article, Garrison heavily criticized the US government for enabling the evils of slavery. Speaking bluntly, he said, "Wo to that policy or system which has no other foundation than injustice, tyranny and wrong!"[32] He took this idea a step further by stating, "we are a nation blind, unrelenting, haughty, cruel, heaven-daring oppression. The chains which we rivet upon the bodies of two millions of our fellow countrymen are as galling and heavy as were ever forged for human limbs."[33] Unlike other white men during this time, Garrison was explicit in his criticism of enslavement and saw it as a form of oppression that had devastating effects in the United States.

After highlighting the issue of oppression of enslavement, Garrison argued who was to blame. In an article entitled "The Guilt of Slaveholders," Garrison explained, "for the crimes of their ancestors, I do not arraign [slaveholders], but for the adoption and extension of those crimes."[34] Going further and speaking more bluntly, he said, "to sum up my belief in a few words, I hold that every man, who possesses human beings as slaves or property... is as guilty as the original kidnapper."[35] Garrison made it clear that enslavers were to blame for the corruption and oppression within the United States and that they must address this.

In addition to enslavers, Garrison also blamed white New Englanders for perpetuating racial hierarchy and enslavement. He did this by asking his audience, "but what if it should appear, on a candid examination, that we are as guilty as the slave owners? That we uphold and protect a system

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[32] "The Liberator." Liberator, January 7, 1832. Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 27, 2020). https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/apps/doc/GT3005833824/NCNP?u=ucsantabarbara&sid=NCNP&xid=8d884b2a.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

which is full of cruelty and blood?"[36] He asked his white readers to self-reflect on how they were complicit within this system of oppression.

Garrison then raised the issue of future unrest in the South and the complexity of the North's position. He asked whether Northerners were "solemnly pledged to put down a black rebellion in the south?"[37] He warned of "the danger of slavery," which would push "slaves to desperation by their masters" and lead them to "rise" in frustration.[38] Garrison urges his readers and other Americans to recognize their part in this system and rectify it. As he concluded, he said, "we are all guilty- all guilty- horribly guilty."[39] White Americans had been active participants and complicit in enslaving Africans. As Garrison warned, they were paying the price for that with revolts that reflected the tremendous sufferings of the enslaved.

In an article published on August 2nd, 1850, the *Liberator* bluntly called out the hypocrisy within the United States' founding values. In the article entitled, "SLAVERY IN A REPUBLIC!" S.M. Hobbs angrily wrote, "Here in a land consecrated to all that is free in thought, and speech, and act... We talk of freedom and liberty" and yet he noted, "with four million of your brethren clanking and toiling, and literally bleeding and dying in chains!"[40] This was the most common argument utilized by abolitionists and anti-slavery Americans who saw their country as a fraud for preaching liberty while feeding slavery.

Historian Christopher Malone discusses the language used by Garrison and other Northern white abolitionists in his book, *Between Freedom and Bondage*. Malone highlights the racial paternalism

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Hobbs, S. M. "Slavery in a Republic!" *Liberator*, August 2, 1850, 122. *Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers* (accessed February 16, 2021). https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/apps/doc/GT3005866377/NCNP?u=ucsantabarbara&sid=NCNP&xid=6c647487.

widely used by abolitionists in their arguments for Black liberty and freedom. Malone argues that Garrison used a narrative that "consisted of the language of natural rights, of universal equality, and of the moral and physical uplift of the black race by whites," and this narrative was "one of the major reasons that Garrison's arguments resonated to the extent they did" with white Americans.[41] It was a narrative and an opportunity that Garrison proposed to whites to expand fundamental rights and take on a savior-like role in helping "civilize" Blacks.[42] While Northern states like Massachusetts took this opportunity to grant Blacks voting rights, integrate public places, and legalize intermarriage, the state remained one of the most radical and racism rooted in ideologies like paternalism remained an obstacle for the supposed Land of the Free.[43]

Interestingly, in a crossover between former foes, Northern abolitionists often looked to Great Britain as an example of how to abolish slavery. On March 23, 1833, the *Liberator* announced the beginning of British abolition of enslavement throughout the British Empire. In a section entitled "Cheering News!" Garrison explained, "the system of oppression, which has so long been tolerated in the British colonies, appears to be fast approaching."[44] Included after this announcement was an excerpt from the *London Globe,* which stated it was "the intent of Ministers to introduce a bill into the new Parliament for the immediate emancipation of the slaves in the W. Indies."[45] This legislation took time to pass and enforce, but the Slave Emancipation Act of 1833 eventually freed the enslaved in the British West Indies in 1834.[46] Garrison's enthusiastic

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[41] Malone, Christopher. *Between Freedom and Bondage: Racial Voting Restrictions in the Antebellum North*, 2002: 192.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid, 192-193.

[44] "Wm. Lloyd Garrison, Editor." Liberator, March 23, 1833. Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 29, 2020). https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/apps/doc/GT3005835920/NCNP?u=ucsantabarbara&sid=NCNP&xid=7b9aab3d.

[45] Ibid.

[46] "Emancipation." The National Archives. Accessed November 29, 2020. https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory/rights/emancipation.htm.

announcement of this historical event served as momentum. It inspired him and other abolitionists in the US to work towards abolishing enslavement in the South.

After the formal abolition of enslavement throughout the British Empire, the tone of British commentary on American enslavement shifted. This shift was evident in a letter to the editor of the *London Times* published on June 14, 1836. At the time, the *London Times* was becoming a very respected newspaper that leaned more liberal under its editor, Thomas Barnes.[47] In this particular letter in the *Times*, the writer praised the work of British abolitionists touring the United States. They spoke of Dr. Andrew Reed, an English Congregational minister and "unflinching abolitionist," who toured the US to carefully talk about the "monstrous anomaly" of "American slavery."[48] Besides Reed, Dr. Francis Cox and George Thompson were other British abolitionists mentioned who traveled to the US to "protest and declaim against the huge abomination of slavery in that 'land of liberty.'" Like many American abolitionists, the anonymous writer was alluding to the hypocrisy of the American values of liberty, equality, and justice when enslavement continued to exist as an oppressive system within American society. The writer's belief in British superiority due to their earlier abolishment of enslavement is a sentiment found throughout British commentary on American enslavement during this time.

Another article in the *London Times* on January 5, 1842, further criticized American involvement in enslavement. This article accused the United States of continuing to participate in the slave trade out of Africa when European powers agreed to the Treaty for the Suppression of the

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[47] "The Times." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., October 22, 2020. https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Times.

[48] A LOOKER-ON. "To The Editor Of The Times." Times, June 14, 1836, 6. The Times Digital Archive (accessed November 29, 2020). https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/apps/doc/CS101213902/TTDA?u=ucsantabarbara&sid=TTDA&xid=b1dedaf8.

African Slave Trade in 1841.[49] The writer asserted that by "refusing to suppress internal slavery," Americans were "presumptively indifferent to any measures that may tend to prevent its perpetuation."[50] Going further, they wrote that the slave trade in Africa was "carried on almost exclusively under American colours" and that, therefore, Americans were "upholding a system of serfship which the civilized world has denounced."[51] The British writer attempted to illustrate the backwardness of the United States and subsequent British superiority by highlighting continued US involvement in the slave trade when most other countries had stopped their own participation.

In contrast to this article from the *London Times*, however, historian Catherine Hall argues that the British were not wholly absolved of slavery after the 1830s. In her book *Legacies of British Slave Ownership*, Hall mentions, "there is evidence of British capital remaining active in the slave-trade after 1807 and in slavery after 1834 in the mining sector in South America."[52] Also, in slave colonies such as British Guiana, "new wealth, status, and privilege were being created" based on unfree labor.[53] Hall also highlights how former British enslavers were compensated after abolition, which allowed them to keep their wealth. In fact, "in every decade, the total proportion of wealth attributed to slavery fluctuated... between 15 to 20 percent" in Great Britain.[54] Hall's research illustrates the longstanding influence of enslaver wealth in Great Britain well after abolition in 1833 despite British claims of being morally superior to the United States.

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[49] "On any question affecting the maintenance or." Times, January 5, 1842, 4. The Times Digital Archive (accessed November 29, 2020). https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/apps/doc/CS67662373/TTDA?u=ucsantabarbara&sid=TTDA&xid=86e0463f.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] McClelland, Keith., Donington, Katie., Lang, Rachel., Draper, Nicholas., Hall, Catherine. Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2014: 97.

[53] Ibid, 13.

[54] Ibid, 49.

When it came to attacking the pro-slavery South, Northern American abolitionists and anti-slavery Britons often used the same arguments for freedom. Abolitionists in both regions often highlighted the hypocrisy of the fundamental American values of liberty, equality, and democracy that did not exist in the sphere of Southern slavery. However, in reaction to the increasing debate and conflict in the US between pro-slavery and anti-slavery, Great Britain often tried to establish itself as morally superior. Britons were quick to label Americans, both Northern and Southern, as backward and uncivilized for their continued involvement in enslavement. It seems that while American abolitionists looked to Britain for inspiration, Britons looked down upon the US as an immoral nation that had failed to provide the liberty and equality it supposedly had established after the Revolutionary War.

On the opposite side of this debate between Northern and British newspapers was the *Richmond Enquirer*, a prominent conservative newspaper published in the soon-to-be capital of the Southern Confederacy. In an article titled "Negro Slavery and the Constitution," published on January 10, 1856, an anonymous author wrote about their grievances with the North's version of racial paternalism that called for the rights of the Constitution to be extended to Blacks. The author proclaimed that the North was "dumb as an oyster" for believing "all slavery was against common right" and that the Constitution should be amended.[55] In dramatic contrast to Northern abolitionism, the author stated that "slavery is right, natural, and necessary" and "the institution of slavery, spreading over a mighty empire, and ramified with the feelings and interests of millions of whites, is vastly stronger than the Constitution."[56] In a rebuttal to Northern abolitionists who sought to "uplift" Blacks by extending rights, this author in the South believed that slavery would

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[55] *The Richmond Enquirer*. "Negro Slavery and the Constitution." *Charleston Mercury*, January 10, 1856. *Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers* (accessed February 16, 2021). https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/apps/doc/GT3005484348/NCNP?u=ucsantabarbara&sid=NCNP&xid=15f545a6.

[56] Ibid.

always take precedence over those rights outlined in the Constitution. Too many white people were greedily invested in it.

Furthermore, the author claimed that the free society of Western Europe was a "cruel failure," and British laborers suffered more hardships than the "cheerful slave population" of the South.[57] While the North may have sought to uplift Blacks by extending rights and privileges, this author claimed enslaved Blacks were already uplifted and content with their current conditions on Southern plantations. If given actual economic freedom to work for wages and establish a livelihood free from the abuse of enslavers, the enslaved would be worse off and suffer without the help of white male enslavers. This could be interpreted as another form of racial paternalism, albeit a version distinct from Northern abolitionism. In the view of this Richmond author, slaves were to be helped and cared for by white enslavers since they could not have content and successful lives on their own with political, social, and economic rights. In other words, this author believed Blacks were not ready or suitable for freedom, they were not independent, and they were not civilized.

As Manisha Sinha explains, these racist beliefs and the belief in the importance of slavery combined during this period to create an ideology of Southern nationalism. Similar to the pro-slavery ideas in the *Richmond Enquirer* article, Sinha explains how white Southerners often believed in John C. Calhoun's "definition of liberty as a 'reward' for the few rather than a universal right."[58] Southern white men did not view the right to freedom as a universal right as Northern abolitionists did. Their political ideology was focused solely on how to defend slavery best. As Sinha notes, "External challenges to slavery threatened to expose internal contradictions within slave society, seriously compromising a system whose integrity and security depended on the undisputed sway of

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[57] Ibid.

[58] Sinha, Manisha. *The Counterrevolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina*. United Kingdom: University of North Carolina Press, 2003: 87.

its master class."[59] The Southern upper class was desperate to defend their wealth, and their racial hierarchy and these motivations were reflected in their conservative ideology. A uniform Southern ideology was created due to threats to slavery, and Southern white men were intent on vindicating their Southern way of life that included enslaving Blacks.[60]

This article from the *Richmond Enquirer* illustrates how Southerners saw slavery as a foundation for their livelihood and an institution that could be more important than the Constitution. Southerners such as this author were not willing to throw around words like "liberty," "equality," or "democracy" because they did not see free society as a goal the way that Northern abolitionists did. They were reluctant to see the hypocrisy that the North and Great Britain described in the articles above. And so, they made up fabrications about the unhappiness and unsuccessfulness of free society versus the happiness of the enslaved to preserve the system of human bondage that brought tremendous suffering and torture upon Blacks. White Southerners, in an act of desperation to defend their way of life that Northerners and Britons were increasingly challenging, essentially turned to delusion.

Frederick Douglass spoke to all these varied opinions in his newspaper, the *North Star*. In an article entitled, "Our Paper and Its Prospects," published on December 3, 1847, Douglass spoke about the realities of Blacks' daily lives in the United States. After establishing the paper so that Blacks could have their own voice in a newspaper, Douglass wrote, "it has long been our anxious wish to see" a newspaper "under the complete direction and control of the... victims of slavery and oppression."[61] Being careful not to offend white abolitionists, Douglass continued by explaining,

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[59] Ibid, 188.

[60] Ibid, 221.

[61] "The North Star Shall Live". "Our Paper and Its Prospects." *North Star*, December 3, 1847. *Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers* (accessed February 16, 2021). https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/apps/doc/GT3012152667/NCNP?u=ucsantabarbara&sid=NCNP&xid=bd0039ce.

> "that the man who has *suffered the wrong* is the man to *demand redress* —that the man STRUCK is the man to CRY OUT—and that he who has *endured the cruel pangs of Slavery* is the man to *advocate Liberty*. It is evident we must be our own representatives and advocates, not exclusively, but peculiarly—not distinct from, but in connection with our white friends."[62]

Douglass was more than willing to work with white abolitionists, but he was adamant that Blacks be the leading voice in the conversation about slavery and freedom since it was their grievance and their suffering.

Douglass also challenged the Southern delusion of "happy slaves" in an article published on April 28, 1848. He provided quotes from Southern men who claimed that their slaves were "merry" since they danced and sang while they worked.[63] Douglass argued that "instead of considering the songs and dances as marks of their happiness," consider them "as physical symptoms of melancholy."[64] If they were pleased with their lives, Douglass argued that this would mean their souls were paralyzed. They have become "degraded" because they are happy without basic necessities and rights like "his body, mind, free choice, liberty, time, earnings, and all his rights, and while his life, limbs, health, conscience, food, raiment, sleep, wife and children, have no protection, but are subject every moment to the whims and passion-gusts of an owner, a manstealer."[65] While they live under the abuse and control of an enslaver, slaves could not indeed be happy, and Douglass made this very clear in this rebuttal to Southern fabrications of plantation life.

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[62] Ibid.

[63] "Happy Slaves." *North Sta*r, April 28, 1848. Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed February 16, 2021). https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/apps/doc/GT3013078772/NCNP?u=ucsantabarbara&sid=NCNP&xid=a367c903.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

Interestingly, Douglass spoke admiringly of Great Britain and looked to the country as an example of what the US could be like in the future. In an 1848 article entitled "Prejudice Against Color," the newspaper read, "prejudice against color has never existed in Great Britain, France, Spain... or in any part of the world where colored persons have not been held as slaves."[66] This is deeply problematic because although it was not on the same scale as the United States, there was still colorism and racism within Great Britain. In another article published in 1850, the *North Star* commended Great Britain after hearing an "account from Jamaica" that spoke, "earnestly of the importance of the people of Great Britain preferring free produce to slave-grown, and of the probability of a large supply of free cotton being grown in that colony."[67] Again, this is not necessarily wholly true, as plenty of the British were still involved in enslavement. Like white Northern abolitionists, Douglass spoke favorably of the British. He looked to the country as an example for a racially peaceful and more equal society even though this was not necessarily the reality for Blacks in Great Britain.

Periodicals from the 1830s to the 1860s illustrate the varied opinions around enslavement in the North, the South, and Great Britain. The *Liberator* often used racial paternalism as a tool for highlighting American hypocrisy surrounding liberty and equality while also pushing other whites to "uplift" Blacks in society. Southern newspapers like the *Richmond Enquirer* used a different form of paternalism that fabricated a narrative of happy slaves who were kept safe and provided for by their enslavers. While the *Liberator* was quick to look up to Great Britain as an example of abolishing

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[66] "Prejudice against Color." *North Star*, May 5, 1848. *Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers* (accessed February 16, 2021). https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/apps/doc/GT3013080100/NCNP?u=ucsantabarbara&sid=NCNP&xid=9c06cee6.

[67] "Free Labor Intelligence." *North Star*, December 5, 1850. Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed February 16, 2021). https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/apps/doc/GT3014141612/NCNP?u=ucsantabarbara&sid=NCNP&xid=8f74a250.

enslavement, the South felt the opposite and claimed that British free laborers were worse off than slaves in the South. All the while, British newspapers like the *London Times* were writing articles poking fun at American hypocrisy and backwardness since they felt morally superior after abolishing slavery across their empire before the US did.

Frederick Douglass's the *North Star* argued against Northern and Southern periodicals, but not Great Britain. Douglass highlighted the need for a Black newspaper like the *North Star* since white abolitionists in the North often drowned out Black voices when talking about Black enslavement. He also argued against the Southern fabrication of happy slaves. In Great Britain, however, Douglass was intrigued and saw the country as a racially equal society. While this was certainly not true for Black Britons, Douglass seemed to look at Great Britain as a utopian society that he hoped would be replicated in the United States.

All of these different newspapers illustrate the biases and truths that come with perspective and identity. While white anti-slavery Northerners were busy attacking white pro-slavery Southerners, Southerners became desperately delusional in their justification for their way of life that enslaved fellow human beings. Meanwhile, Great Britain seemed entertained at their former enemy's racial conflict and often took jabs in newspaper articles that mocked American democracy. In these three regions, whites used slavery as a tool for their self-interests. They exploited it as a political issue that could save or damage their reputation.

However, the *North Star* was not exploiting slavery but instead sincerely attacking it and condemning it for its evil. This difference in sincerity and authenticity is reflected across white-authored and Black-authored enslavement narratives during the mid-nineteenth century.

# ***Chapter Two: Slave Narratives in British and American Nineteenth-Century Literature***

Literature is a genre that reflects the divisions between the North and the South over enslavement, and the British need to comment on American enslavement in the nineteenth century. The works of white authors such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Harriett Beecher Stowe, and Caroline Lee Hentz illustrate a competition for moral superiority between Britain, the North and the South that resulted in fabrications of the Black experience in the US and the white involvement in it. In contrast, Black narratives written by Mary Seacole, Harriet Wilson, and Hannah Crafts provide the voices of those who were often drowned out in this conversation. These narratives illustrate that racial oppression continued in the North and the South despite these white authors' claims otherwise.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning was a British poet in the nineteenth century. She was also the daughter of a prominent enslaver in Jamaica. The Barretts were one of the wealthiest enslavers in Jamaican history who enslaved around 2000 Blacks to work on more than 10,000 acres of plantation land.[68] Elizabeth, however, was born and raised in England, far away from her father's lucrative and immoral business. As she got older, she began to question her family's pro-slavery beliefs. She became the lone radical in her family by believing slavery was immoral and had to be eradicated.

To address her anti-slavery stance, she wrote numerous poems on slavery, the most famous being "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point." Here Browning speaks from the perspective of an enslaved Black woman as the woman falls in love with an enslaved man only to witness him be killed by her master, who also rapes and impregnates her with his child. Throughout this gruesome

[68] Edward Moulton-Barrett (father). (n.d.). Retrieved January 12, 2021, from https://www.browningscorrespondence.com/biographical-sketches/?nameId=1253

and heart-wrenching story, Browning seems to romanticize the life of this enslaved Black woman by making themes of love the focal point of the story.

Themes of love and motherhood are introduced in the ninth stanza of the thirty-six-stanza poem, where the narrator meets eyes with another enslaved man. The narrator observes how "tender and full was the look he gave" and how from that moment on, "our spirits grew... we were two to conquer the world."[69] A few stanzas later, however, her lover is killed by his enslaver, leaving the narrator heartbroken and lonely until she finds she is pregnant. Once again, however, the narrator finds herself faced with another obstacle to love; this baby she bears has "far too white skin," which readers can assume means that she was most likely a victim of rape by her enslaver.[70] Rather than raise the child and risk the chance of them being ridiculed as a result of biracial relations, the narrator takes the life of her child or, as Browning puts it, "sucked the soul of that child."[71] Despite all this, the narrator is hopeful that she will reunite with the child in the afterlife "to join the soles of both of us."[72] This truly horrific and heartbreaking story of the trials of love was used by Browning as a captivating story while not further exploring why the narrator and other Black women faced these hardships. Browning seems to exploit the female enslaved as a dramatic and emotional storyline to persuade white men to change their ways instead of questioning the ability of white men to make decisions that governed the lives of Blacks in the United States.

While Browning makes brief allusions to the oppression based on race, she does not dive deeper into the suffering of Blacks. She does refer to the oppression that Blacks suffer in the United States while having her narrator say, "our blackness shuts like prison-bars."[73] She also briefly

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[69] Browning, E. B. (1849). *The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point*. London: Edward Moxon, Dover Street, XI-X.

[70] Ibid, XVII.

[71] Ibid, XXIII.

[72] Ibid, XXVIII.

[73] Browning, E. B. (1849). *The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point*. London: Edward Moxon, Dover Street, VI.

addresses the plight of the enslaved when she states, "whips, curses: these must answer to those! For in this Union, you have set two kinds of men in adverse rows, each loathing each; and all forget the seven wounds in Christ's body fair."[74] Browning does not analyze this oppression enough, and she would make romance and religion the central theme and solution of the story. It seems that while Browning had some knowledge of the suffering and hardships experienced by the enslaved and while she believed that white enslavers must "answer" to this suffering, she fell short on explaining how this solution should play out.

Historian Sarah Brophy has argued that Browning's purpose through this poem is to emotionally incite her white male readers to reconsider their treatment of Blacks. Brophy states that "'The Runaway Slave' indicates that change can only rightly be affected by male authority figures and that the moral and political role of women... is to exercise an emotional influence over men."[75] She believes there is a significant theme of white saviorism throughout the poem that "does not challenge the concentration of power in the hands of male authorities but focuses on persuading them to do good."[76] I would argue that Browning's work and many of her other works were empowering for women of the mid-1800s. Still, Browning's language in her poem did attempt to persuade white men in power to do good on the issue of slavery rather than label them as the cause of the problem for which they were. Rather than challenging these men and their positions of power, she appealed to them.

"The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" is an example of British white abolitionist literature written by a descendant of enslavers. While it may have been seen by many as a radical piece of work in the nineteenth century, it perpetuated conservative narratives of white saviorism that only

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[74] Ibid, XXXIV.

[75] Brophy, Sarah. "Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" and the Politics of Interpretation." *Victorian Poetry* 36, no. 3 (1998): 277. Accessed January 11, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40002430

[76] Ibid, 279.

vaguely urged the white man to "do good" without stating what precisely that would entail. Elizabeth Barrett Browning may have attempted to write this poem to assuage her guilt as the daughter of one of the wealthiest enslavers in Jamaica. Still, she failed to push past the limits of a white male-centered government and viewpoint. This poem inevitably became a white-centered story rather than a story that advocated for the rights and freedoms of Blacks in the US.

Similar to "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" is the infamous novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* written by Harriet Beecher Stowe. The story follows Uncle Tom, an enslaved Black man, who travels to New Orleans to be auctioned when he meets a little white girl, Eva, who he saves from drowning and whose father in return "purchases" him. Tom lives a happy life with the family, who treat him better than other enslavers, and Eva's father promises to give Tom his freedom but ends up passing away before he follows through. Tom is then sold to Simon Legree, who horrifically whips Tom to death when Tom refuses to give him information on runaway slaves. Throughout the story and up until his brutal murder, Tom keeps faith in God and Christianity that eventually all will be well, and he will find peace in the afterlife.

As with Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sees the Black experience become romanticized and made even to be humorful as a form of entertainment for white northerners. As historian Richard Yarborough argues, "although Stowe unquestionably sympathized with the slaves, her commitment to challenging the claim of black inferiority was frequently undermined by her own endorsement of racial stereotypes."[77] The infamous "mammy" stereotype was made famous by Stowe's novel which had multiple "mammy" older female characters who were portrayed as maternal, loving, and content with their life as a slave.[78] In addition, Black children in

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[77]Yarborough, R. (1986). *Strategies of Black Characterization in Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Early Afro-American Novel*. In 1151299846 865578897 E. J. Sundquist (Author), *New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Cambridge u.a.: Cambridge Univ. Pr. Pg. 47

[78] The Mammy Caricature. (n.d.). Retrieved January 13, 2021, from https://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/mammies/

the novel are described as the racist "picaninny" stereotype, which characterized them as wild, poorly dressed, and dirty children.[79] Lastly, Uncle Tom, the main character, is portrayed as a martyr and a subservient slave who constantly tries to please his enslavers even when they treat him horribly and violently.[80] Despite Stowe's good intentions to challenge the morality of enslavement, these stereotypes are problematic and perpetuated anti-Black, racist sentiment across the country. These stereotypes were made for entertaining white readers who had the privilege of not understanding what it meant to be enslaved and chose to make a mockery of the oppression of the enslaved.

Like Browning's poem, Stowe also incorporated a significant theme of white saviorism throughout her novel that failed to adequately challenge racial oppression. Instead of challenging the systems of racial hierarchy, Stowe "endorses" a "benevolent Christian maternalism."[81] This is evident at the end of the novel when a white enslaver, George Shelby, agrees to change his "slave plantation to a mid-Victorian landed estate," which will supposedly allow the enslaved on the property greater freedom and better treatment.[82] This illustrates once again the limits of white liberal writers in the first half of the nineteenth century. Both Browning and Stowe failed to challenge the systemic racism that occurred in all aspects of Black life, and that could not simply be fixed by well-meaning white people who treated their Black neighbors "well."

In the South, many whites became infuriated with their representation in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. They thought it unjust that they were being accused of such immoral behavior and wrote their own genre of literature in response called "Anti-Tom Literature." One of the most infamous of these

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[79] The Picaninny Caricature. (n.d.). Retrieved January 13, 2021, from https://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/antiblack/picaninny/homepage.htm

[80] The Tom Caricature. (n.d.). Retrieved January 13, 2021, from https://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/tom/

[81] Ibid, 47.

[82] Ibid.

works of plantation fiction was *Planter's Northern Bride* by Caroline Lee Hentz. Hentz was originally a Northerner born in Massachusetts, but after marrying Nicholas Hentz, the two moved to Chapel Hill, North Carolina.[83] They later moved to Kentucky and often traveled all around the South teaching young girls in girls' schools.[84] This was how Hentz grew to love the South and found an appreciation for its culture more so than the North's.

Hentz's novel follows a newly married woman, Mrs. Moreland, raised by an abolitionist but whose new husband, Mr. Moreland, was an enslaver in North Carolina. This tends to bother Mrs. Moreland in the beginning until she realizes how "merry" and "joyous" the slaves on Mr. Moreland's plantation are.[85] As was common throughout Southern popular culture during this time, whites were attempting to paint a picture of a happy and content slave to justify the sustainment of enslavement.

The Anti-Tom novel also contains a lot of bitter references to the North. For instance, when Paul, an enslaved man, attempts to escape Mr. Moreland's plantation, Moreland tells him of another enslaved man who had gone to the North where he thought whites, "being such friends to blacks," would have "perfect equality" only to find whites wouldn't "associate" with him.[86] Moreland goes even further by claiming free Blacks in the North are a "low, miserable set" compared to those in the South.[87] Southern plantation literature often attempted to shift the blame onto Northerners by highlighting their apparent hypocrisy of freedom with lack of equality.

Furthermore, direct criticism of Northern Christian abolitionism is present throughout the novel. Moreland seems to criticize Northern preachers such as Harriett Beecher Stowe's father

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[83] "Hentz, Caroline Lee Whiting." NCpedia. Accessed February 19, 2021. https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/hentz-caroline.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Hentz, C. L. (1854). *The Planter's Northern Bride: A novel ... With illustrations from original designs ..* Philadelphia: Parry & M'Millan. Pgs. 51-52.

[86] Ibid, 504.

[87] Ibid.

when he claims, "we Southerners are justified in preferring preachers educated among us to those raised at the North. We do not wish to expose our institutions to the undermining influences which you are well aware are at work against us."[88] In this section, Hentz is blaming Northern Christian abolitionists by claiming that they are inciting unhappiness and dissent among the Southern enslaved with their speeches of freedom and liberty.

Historian Sarah Meer explains Southern resentment towards the North and the Southern fabrication of "content" slaves in her book *Uncle Tom Mania*. She writes that Anti-Tom novels "attempt to blame white agitators for black discontent or they turn to blackface for images of carefree and contented slaves."[89] By claiming that the Southern enslaved were happier and enjoyed better treatment in the South than those in the North, white Southerners attempted to argue that it was indeed the North's fault for spreading false ideas of freedom and liberty that corrupted, angered, and tricked the enslaved of the South.

Anti-Tom literature like *The Planter's Northern Bride* were Southern attempts to shift the blame of racial oppression onto the North while fabricating stories of a racial hierarchy that allowed all Southerners, free and enslaved, to be content. The romanticizing of the content and loyal slave is ironically similar to the characters of Mammy and Tom in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the narrator of the "Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point." These white-authored stories made it seem that slaves could find love, happiness, and loyalty and therefore, their suffering could not be all that bad. In this way, whites, whether in Great Britain, the North, or the South, helped assuage their guilt for being complicit in this atrocious system of human bondage and racial oppression. In their opinion, these stories helped them justify the systems of racial hierarchy that existed in each of these regions regardless of the abolition of slavery or not.

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[88] Ibid, 407.

[89] Meer, Sarah. *Uncle Tom Mania : Slavery, Minstrelsy, and Transatlantic Culture in the 1850s*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005. Pg. 76

The white-authored novels and poems from above attempted to romanticize the life of enslaved Black men and women and stand in stark contrast to the actual narratives written by the enslaved themselves. Hannah Crafts, a Black woman, wrote *The Bondwoman's Narrative* to document her experience as a slave in North Carolina and her escape to New Jersey in the 1850s. In contrast to the sugar-coated, white-authored novels above, Crafts details the traumatic abuse she suffered by her enslavers in North Carolina. Talking about her enslaver, she says, "there was nothing liberal or democratic in his nature. Slaves were slaves to him... he regarded them not as men and women, but in the same light as horses... [he] discounted the ideas of equality and fraternity as preposterous and absurd."[90] She also describes times that she witnessed other enslaved men and women be abused at a tree on a nearby plantation saying "tortures and punishments were inflicted" so much so that the tree's "roots been manured with human blood. Slaves had been tied to its trunk to be whipped or sometimes gibbeted on its branches."[91] These descriptions of horrific violence inflicted on the enslaved offer a gruesome and more realistic look at plantation life in the South compared to fictional Anti-Tom Literature.

Furthermore, Crafts condemns the South and the North when criticizing the hypocrisy of the United States Constitution. She notes, "it must be strange to live in a world of civilization and, elegance, and refinement and yet know nothing about either... the Constitution that asserts the right of freedom and equality to all mankind is a sealed book to them, and so is the Bible, that tells how Christ died for all; the bond as well as the free."[92] Crafts explains how white men in the South and the North believed the Constitution to be fixed and unchangeable. In other words, they were unwilling actually to fulfill the promise that "all men are equal." Also, Crafts points out another

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[90] Crafts, H., Gates, H. L., & Hecimovich, G. A. *The Bondwoman's Narrative*. New York: Grand Central Publishing. (2014): 6.

[91] Ibid, 20-21.

[92] Ibid, 237.

hypocrisy of white men in government whose Christian beliefs seem to deny that the Bible says that Jesus Christ died for all peoples, enslaved and free.

Another Black woman, Harriet Wilson, also wrote a narrative entitled, *Sketches of the Life of a Free Black*, which details her life as an indentured servant in New Hampshire. Even though she was an "indentured servant" in the North, Wilson describes her mistress as "wholly imbued with southern principles."[93] When she was just a tiny child, Wilson was made by this mistress to wash countless dishes, milk cows, and feed the hens every day, and if she failed to these jobs, she suffered "' words that burn' and frequent blows on her head."[94] The abuse Wilson suffered did not stop there. She was also relentlessly bullied by Mary, the mistress' daughter, who took part in "beating" Wilson "inhumanely" with her mother.[95] Even as an indentured servant, Wilson faced intense labor and violence similar to the abuse enslaved Blacks suffered in the South.

When Wilson got older, she was able to leave this household and set up a life for herself elsewhere in the North, where she found herself gravely disappointed. On her journey, she "passed into the various towns of the state ... then into Massachusetts... Watched by kidnappers, maltreated by professed abolitionists, who didn't want slaves at the South...in their own houses, North." She further mocks these Northerners saying, "faugh! To lodge [a Black]; to eat with one; to admit one through the front door; to sit next to one; awful!" Wilson's experience shows the sustainment of racial prejudice after the North had outlawed slavery and the region's hypocrisy in condemning the South's enslavement when similar bondage occurred under "indentured servitude."

In addition to the accounts of Black enslaved women in the US, another narrative written by Mary Seacole, a Jamaican free woman of color, provides the Black British perspective of American

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[93] Wilson, Harriet E., 1825-1900. "Preface" in *Our Nig, or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black*. New York: Penguin Books, 2009.

[94] Ibid, 29-30.

[95] Ibid, 34.

enslavement. It is essential to recognize that Seacole was born a free woman to a Scottish father and a free Black mother.[96] She did not have the same perspective as enslaved Blacks, but her writing does provide valuable insight into the racism of white Americans and Britons.

In her autobiography, *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands,* Seacole describes her impression of white Americans she encountered while traveling in Central America. She writes, "my experience of travel had not failed to teach me that Americans (even from the Northern states) are always uncomfortable in the company of coloured people, and very often show this feeling in stronger ways than by sour looks and rude words."[97] She even describes an encounter she had with a "vicious" white American woman who treated the Black woman she kept enslaved "most inhumanly" while holding her "bound hand and foot, naked" and "severely" lashing her.[98] In her book, Seacole is quick to challenge American and British whites who deny these evils of racism and enslavement that she witnessed during her travels and in Jamaica. She writes: "knowing what slavery is; having seen with my eyes and heard with my ears proof positive enough of its horrors – let others doubt them if they will – is it somewhat surprising that I should be somewhat impatient of the airs of superiority which many Americans have endeavored to assume over me?"[99] Seacole alludes to the racism that she experienced at the hands of Americans during her travels while also questioning the denial that many white Britons and Americans used to essentially ignore the suffering they had caused for generations of Blacks in the US and across the British Empire through enslavement. Seacole's account provides readers with the perspective of a free Black woman in the British Empire who saw similarities between the British system of enslavement in Jamaica and slavery in the US.

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[96] "Read Mary's Story." Mary Seacole Trust, Life, Work & Achievements of Mary Seacole, October 21, 2020. https://www.maryseacoletrust.org.uk/learn-about-mary/.

[97] Seacole, Mary, and Sara Salih. 2005. *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands*. London: Penguin, 35.

[98] Ibid, 144.

[99] Ibid, 37.

Seacole further provided similarities between British and American racism. She goes on in her autobiography to identify with the enslaved in the South by stating, "I have a few shades of deeper brown upon my skin which shows me related – and I am proud of this relation – to those poor mortals whom you once held enslaved, and whose bodies America still owns."[100] She further illustrates the connection between American and British enslavement and racism while explaining why she left England after experiencing racial discrimination, which led her to question: "Was it possible that American prejudices against colour had some root here?"[101] Seacole saw a connection between the racism of white Britons and white Americans, which proved contrary to the tales of freedom that whites in both countries claimed about their countries' racial relations.

Crafts and Wilson's narratives allow readers to understand the experiences of Blacks in the North and the South, both enslaved and free. At the same time, Seacole's autobiography provides the perspective of a free woman of color in Britain who adds to these experiences of racism. These narratives stand in contrast to white-authored works that refused to detail the daily abuse and prejudice Blacks faced in the North and the South. They also lack the racist caricatures and stereotypes created by white Northern and Southern authors to make abolitionist and proslavery literature amusing as an easy pill to swallow for whites who were reluctant to face the truths of the systemic racism, in which they were complicit. This is not to say that works such as "A Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were not revolutionary in getting whites to rethink enslavement, but they did fail to address the core issue of enslavement which was racism. While Britons like Elizabeth Barrett Browning were quick to chastise the United States for enslavement and racial strife, while the North was quick to blame the South for enslavement, and while the South was quick to blame the North for hypocritically continuing racial inequality, all of these regions

[100] Ibid, 35-37.
[101] Ibid, 221.

inevitably played a part in the systemic racism that was at the heart of enslavement. The narratives written by Black men and women during the nineteenth century highlight this very point: it was not just enslavement but the racial hate at the core of it that barred them from true freedom in the United States.

In addition to the racial aspect of this history of narratives on American slavery, gender is a topic of fundamental importance. Further research is needed on this gendered aspect beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the most apparent realm of application of gender studies as a lens through which to view this pre-civil war history is literature. In the nineteenth century, women in the US were primarily restricted from journalism except for food and gossip columns.[102] American female playwrights were largely unheard of until the late 1800s.[103] Women were also largely excluded from politics with little political rights until 1920, when women finally gained the right to vote in the US.[104] Literature remained one of the few options for women writers to express themselves. Even then, they were often confined by their male editors to writing about family and household matters, or they were forced to write under a pseudonym for fear of men's reactions to their work.[105]

The novels and accounts of nineteenth-century female literary writers such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Harriett Beecher Stowe, Hannah Crafts, Harriet Wilson, Caroline Lee Hentz and Mary Seacole were radical in the sense that they publicly presented the thoughts of women and not only that, but these works published the thoughts and feelings of women on slavery. This controversial and often political topic was largely publicly debated only by men. It is important to

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[102] Voss, Kimberly Wilmot. *The Food Section: Newspaper Women and the Culinary Community*. United States: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014.

[103] Gipson, Rosemary. "Martha Morton: America's First Professional Woman Playwright." Theatre Survey 23, no. 2 (1982): 213–22. doi:10.1017/S0040557400008024.

[104] "Milestones for Women in American Politics." CAWP, May 3, 2019. https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/milestones-for-women.

[105] Howell, Samantha. "The Evolution of Female Writers: An Exploration of Their Issues and Concerns from the 19th Century to Today ." *Hohonu - University of Hawaii at Hilo* 13 (2014): 24.

note that the works of these women primarily focus on the familial and household effects of slavery since that is the topic nineteenth-century female writers were often forced to write about. However, their work remains ground-breaking and fundamental to this history of the narratives of American slavery. Women's literature of the nineteenth century provides the different perspectives of Black and white women in the North, the South and Great Britain on the issue of American slavery.

# ***Chapter Three: Slave Narratives Shown in British and American Stage Performances***

During the mid-nineteenth century, narratives of enslavement were often portrayed on the stage. White-authored plays and minstrel shows became a source of cruel entertainment for whites in the North and the South as they tried to sustain their racial hierarchy by mocking Blacks. In contrast, Frederick Douglass' speeches spoke to the realities of being Black in the US during this time, and he was explicit in naming the oppression and lack of rights for Blacks in both the North and the South. These differing portrayals and opinions of slavery seemed to culminate at the Great Exhibition in London in 1851.

Minstrel shows were a popular form of entertainment in the North and South during the antebellum period. The first minstrel shows were performed in New York in the 1830s, with Thomas Dartmouth Rice creating the infamous and racist character, Jim Crow.[106] When in character, Rice "darkened his face, acted like a buffoon, and spoke with an exaggerated and distorted imitation of African American Vernacular English."[107] Blackface, exaggerating vernacular English, racial slurs, and mockery were a part of all minstrel shows throughout the US which popularized racist stereotyping of Blacks by whites and perpetuated racial inequalities within the US.

Minstrel shows were created and most popular in the North but quickly spread to the South. It might seem ironic that these blatant displays of enslavement, mockery and racism took place in the North. Still, it reflected the hypocrisy of Northerners who may have gotten rid of slavery

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[106] "Blackface: The Birth of An American Stereotype." National Museum of African American History and Culture, November 22, 2017. https://nmaahc.si.edu/blog-post/blackface-birth-american-stereotype.

[107] "The Origins of Jim Crow." The Origins of Jim Crow - Jim Crow Museum - Ferris State University. Accessed February 3, 2021. https://www.ferris.edu/htmls/news/jimcrow/origins.htm.

but certainly did not believe in racial equality. Historian Douglas Jones argues, "the fact that the staging of slaves and ex-slaves took hold in the north, where slavery was (for the most part) no longer practiced, suggests... minstrelsy became a kind of aesthetic surrogate for the loss of slavery in the north."[108] Minstrel became a way for white northerners to enforce and maintain racial hierarchy and the dominance of whiteness. White Northerners would continue to oppose racial equality "because it would severely curtail the economic and political promise they affixed to whiteness."[109] Northerners used minstrels to highlight blackness as inferior to dispel the possibility of racial equality now that slavery was gone in the region.

Furthermore, these minstrel shows were not just against racial equality but were often pro-slavery as well. The famous minstrel, Thomas D. Rice, made his proslavery intentions clear in a curtain speech given in 1837 where he mocked the British for their beliefs in racial equality and abolition. He spoke to his audience, saying, "the British people were excessively ignorant regarding 'our free institutions.'... They were under the impression that negroes were naturally equal to the whites... but I effectually proved that negroes are essentially an inferior species... and they ought to remain slaves."[110] Rice, a native New Yorker, made it known that his Jim Crow character was created to show white audiences around the country, North and South, that Blacks are inherently inferior to whites and should remain in human bondage in the South. Furthermore, he seemed to take an arrogant view of British abolitionists as he claimed his shows stopped them from coming to the US when he said, "you will never again hear of an abolitionist crossing the Atlantic to interfere in our affairs."[111] Rice showed his disdain for British abolitionists and illustrated his annoyance at

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[108] Jones, Douglas A.. *The Captive Stage: Performance and the Proslavery Imagination of the Antebellum North.* United States: University of Michigan Press, 2014: 56.

[109] Ibid, 61.

[110] *The Baltimore Sun,* November 9, 1837. The review for The Baltimore Sun admits although these were not Rice's exact words, they capture "the substance of his address."

[111] Ibid.

their meddling in American enslavement. The creators of minstrels (often Northerners) had a racist agenda that sustained racial hierarchies through mockery and stereotypes, and some even characterized their work as pro-slavery.

Slave plays gained increasing popularity in the period leading up to the Civil War in the North. One such play was Dion Boucicault's *The Octoroon* which, opened in New York City in 1859. The play included numerous elements of romanticizing slavery and the North's role in opposing it that made it favorable to white audiences. The play tells the story of a doomed interracial couple in Louisiana. George Peyton, a white plantation owner, and Zoe, a woman who is an eighth Black, have fallen in love with each other, yet society forbids them from being anything more than secret lovers. When his plantation is threatened and his slaves taken, all George cares about is buying Zoe to have her as his mistress. In the play, Zoe seems to reciprocate these feelings but is more aware of the consequences of their being together. The couple does not end up together, and Zoe tragically dies after poisoning herself when she realizes her future with George could not exist.

There are many reasons why Boucicault's *The Octoroon* was problematic. Like many white-authored slave narratives, the play attempted to romanticize Southern plantation life while perpetuating racist stereotypes, all for the entertainment of white audiences. This romanticization was the sole focus of the story, and the play was mostly silent on the subject of slavery and race. Instead, the story focused on the tragedy of George losing his Southern estate and the forbidden love of himself and Zoe. There was not much mentioned of Blackness at all, only that Zoe has a "bluish tinge" and the "ineffaceable curse of Cain making her an "unclean thing."[112] Therefore, whiteness dominated the story while Blackness is only acknowledged as a curse.

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[112] Boucicault, Dion. *The Octoroon, or, Life in Louisiana*: a play in five acts. Salem, NH: Ayer Company Pub., Inc (1992): Act II.

Some white audiences were quick to label *The Octoroon* as controversial and anti-slavery, but details about the play and the beliefs of its playwright, Dion Boucicault, illustrate otherwise. Boucicault's story did not challenge slavery at any point, and as historian Sarah Meer has argued, the play seemed to "insist on the unbridgeability of racial divisions."[113] Boucicault was quoted by the *London Times* saying, "I found the slaves, as a race, a happy, gentle, kindly-treated population, and the restraints upon their liberty so slight as to be barely perceptible."[114] In essence, Boucicault took the position of many white Southerners who claimed the enslaved were content with their lives in bondage and that there was no need or the possibility of racial equality.

An interesting part of the story behind the performances of *the Octoroon* is that the play was not only shown in New York City but also London. The version in London was slightly shorter and notably had a different, happier ending. This new ending saw the final loving union of George and Zoe instead of Zoe's death. Boucicault claimed this new ending was prompted by "the hourly receipt of many letters" from Britons, who pleaded for a happier ending.[115] However, as Meer points out, Britons found this claim that they were "lukewarm on the slavery issue" "unjust and nationally insulting."[116] Britons felt that they could handle the realities of enslavement and racism in a West End play and were infuriated that Boucicault tried to paint them otherwise.

All in all, *the Octoroon* proved to be yet another white-authored narrative that pretended to have the best intentions for the enslaved Blacks in the United States but failed to address the racism that was embedded within the country adequately. As Jason Stupp has written, "The performance of slavery on the stage, such as... representative plays like Dion Boucicault's *The Octoroon* (1859),

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[113] Meer, Sarah. "Boucicault's Misdirections: Race, Transatlantic Theatre and Social Position in The Octoroon." *Atlantic Studies (Abingdon, England)* 6, no. 1 (2009): 83.

[114] "To the Editor of The Times," *The Times*, 20 Nov 1861, 5.

[115] 5. "Mr Boucicault," classified advertisement, *The Times* 9 December 1861, 6.

[116] Meer, Sarah. "Boucicault's Misdirections: Race, Transatlantic Theatre and Social Position in The Octoroon." *Atlantic Studies (Abingdon, England)* 6, no. 1 (2009): 85.

typically employed melodrama to evoke empathy from a mostly white audience, while leaving the interpretation of slavery firmly grounded in a white-authored narrative of slavery and freedom."[117] Once again, whites claiming to be anti-slavery used enslavement as a dramatic storyline while simultaneously failing to question and address the denials of freedom that existed for Blacks. Furthermore, these white-authored works such as *the Octoroon* perpetuated further racist beliefs and sentiments that kept slavery alive.

In contrast to white-written plays and shows, Blacks did not "perform" slavery on the stage in the ways that whites did. Some of the most compelling public displays that discussed the evils of slavery so poetically and profoundly were the speeches of Frederick Douglass given during the 1840s in Great Britain. Frederick Douglass was one of the most famous Black activists of the nineteenth century. After escaping from slavery in 1838, he became a spokesperson and advocated for US abolitionism.[118] He also wrote three autobiographies throughout the 1800s detailing his life as a Black man in the US, and he eventually took his advocacy for abolition abroad.[119] He stayed in Great Britain from 1845 until 1847 after fearing that he might be re-enslaved in the US.[120] During this time, he toured the United Kingdom, giving numerous speeches to anti-slavery societies and other Britons. One famous such speech was his "Farewell Speech to the British People." In it, he urged Britons to oppose American enslavement in every way they could while highlighting the hypocrisy of American liberty as he said,

> "Seventy years ago, they went to the battlefield in defence of liberty. Sixty years ago, they framed a constitution... in their celebrated Declaration of Independence, they made the

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[117] Stupp, Jason. "Slavery and the Theatre of History: Ritual Performance on the Auction Block." Theatre Journal 63, no. 1 (2011): 61. doi:10.1353/tj.2011.0009.

[118] Sundstrom, R. (2017, January 06). "Frederick Douglass." Retrieved March 11, 2021, from https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/frederick-douglass/

[119] Ibid.

[120] Fulkerson, Gerald. "Exile as Emergence: Frederick Douglass in Great Britain, 1845-1847." *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60, no. 1 (1974): 69.

> loudest and clearest assertions of the rights of man; and yet the identical men who drew up that Declaration of Independence... were trafficking in the blood and souls of their fellow men."[121]

Going even further, Douglass illustrated the hypocrisy of the North, who claimed to be anti-slavery, but Douglass asked his audience, "what is the actual position of the Northern States? If they are not actual slaveholders, they stand around the slave system and support it."[122] Douglass's speech shows how Blacks felt oppressed by the United States as a whole regardless of regionalism that claimed otherwise. The country had promised equality and liberty, but those ideals appeared only on paper while thousands of Blacks were kept in bondage.

Interestingly, Douglass claimed the opposite was true for racial relations in Great Britain. After his time spent in the country, he said, "In none of these various conveyances, or in any class of society, have I found any curled lip of scorn, or an expression that I could torture into a word of disrespect of me on account of my complexion; not one."[123] It seemed Douglass found racial equality more possible on the other side of the Atlantic as he stated that: "whatever estimate they may form of my character as a human being, England has no doubt with reference to my humanity and equality. That, however much the Americans despise and affect to scorn the Negroes, that Englishmen—the most intelligent, the noblest and best of Englishmen—do not hesitate to give the right hand of fellowship, of manly fellowship, to a Negro such as I am."[124] Douglass found the Britons to be more welcoming to Blacks than Americans. While racial relations in Great Britain were

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[121] FAREWELL SPEECH TO THE BRITISH PEOPLE,
at London Tavern, London, England, March 30, 1847
*Farewell Speech of Mr. Frederick Douglass Previously to Embarking on Board The Cambria Upon His Return to America, Delivered at the Valedictory Soiree Given to Him at the London Tavern on March 30, 1847,* London, 1847

[122] Ibid.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Ibid.

indeed not perfect, his experience makes some sense given the lack of deep and widespread racial conflict compared to the US.

Douglass even noted the tremendous support he had felt from the English during his time in their country. In his speech, he said, "I will tell my colored brethren how Englishmen feel for their miseries. It will be grateful to their hearts to know that while they are toiling on in chains and degradation, there are in England's hearts leaping with indignation at the wrongs inflicted upon them."[125] Douglass spoke admiringly and with great gratitude of the British, and he saw them in stark contrast to Americans, even Northern Americans who were continually failing to eradicate racial oppression.

The performances that put slavery on display for the general public in the forms of minstrel shows, slave plays, and public speeches from freed Blacks themselves show how different groups interpreted slavery. Minstrel shows created by the North and performed all over the United States became some of the most racist displays of Black stereotypes that attempted to justify continued racial inequality and even slavery. Slave plays often romanticized plantation life to entertain white audiences who wanted to feel better about themselves when such evil was still in existence. Public speeches from Frederick Douglass did what none of these other performances did- expose the hypocrisy of the United States' ideals. Douglass highlighted the continued racial inequality in both the North and the South and the racial oppression perpetuated by Northerners and Southerners alike. In his view, Great Britain was much more adept at treating Blacks equally.

The culmination of Northern, Southern and British opinions on American enslavement played out on the world stage in June 1851 during London's Great Exhibition. The Great Exhibition was intended to display "almost every marvel of the Victorian Age" while celebrating "a

[125] Ibid.

celebration of art in industry for the benefit of all nations."[126] Given its significance, many freed Blacks travelled to Britain to give speeches about their experience of abuse and bondage in the US.[127] William Craft, Ellen Craft, and William Wells Brown were among those freed Blacks who came to Britain hoping to draw sympathy and action for the antislavery cause.

William and Ellen Craft had recently escaped from enslavement in Macon, Georgia and fled to Philadelphia in 1848 before leaving the US for Britain after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850.[128] In William's narrative of their enslavement and escape, he wrote, "we could not understand by what right we were held as 'chattels'" and "therefore, we felt perfectly justified in undertaking the dangerous and exciting task of 'running a thousand miles' in order to obtain those rights which are so vividly set forth in the Declaration."[129] He also referred to the irony of the Declaration of Independence when he stated, "Oh! Shame, shame upon us, that Americans, whose fathers fought against Great Britain, in order to be FREE, should have to acknowledge this disgraceful fact."[130] Throughout the narrative, Craft maintained a favorable view of Great Britain as an alternative home for Blacks in the US and implored other Blacks in the US to "seek an asylum" in England.[131]

William Wells Brown, a freed Black man who was formerly enslaved in Kentucky, also wrote favorably of Great Britain as a place of refuge from the Fugitive Slave Law. In his book, *Three Years*

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[126] "The Great Exhibition 1851." Accessed January 26, 2021. https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/Great-Exhibition-of-1851/.

[127] "Revealing Histories: Remembering Slavery." Frederick Douglass anti-slavery activist | Revealing Histories. Accessed March 14, 2021. http://revealinghistories.org.uk/what-evidence-is-there-of-a-black-presence-in-britain-and-north-west-england/people/frederick-douglass-anti-slavery-activist.html.

[128] "The Great Escape From Slavery of Ellen and William Craft." Smithsonian.com. Smithsonian Institution, June 16, 2010. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-great-escape-from-slavery-of-ellen-and-william-craft-497960/.

[129] Craft, William., Schoff, S. S.. "Preface" in *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom;: Or, the Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery* .... United Kingdom: William Tweedie, 1860.

[130] Ibid, 91.

[131] Ibid.

*in Europe*, he wrote about the impossibility of returning to the US due to the Fugitive Slave Law, which would have forced him back into bondage. Despite not being able to return, however, he was able to promote "the cause of humanity in [Great Britain] where an intelligent representative of the oppressed coloured Americans is constantly needed, not only to describe... the wrongs inflicted upon his race in the United States but to prevent their bonds being strengthened in [Great Britain]".[132] The freed Blacks of the US found an audience eager to hear about the injustices of American enslavement in Great Britain.

This was certainly the case during their performance at the Great Exhibition in June 1851. Numerous white British abolitionists became involved in putting American slavery on display at the Great Exhibition. These abolitionists included William Farmer, who wrote a letter to Northern abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison describing what transpired during the Exhibition. Farmer noted how Brown and the Crafts were displayed as fugitive slaves next to a Virginian Slave statue that was a nod and companion to Hiram Powers' famous "The Greek Slave" statue.[133] The figure showed an enslaved Black woman naked and in chains with a plaque under her reading, "The Virginian Slave."[134] Farmer wrote that this display was a challenge to the white Southerners who attempted to perpetuate the notion of "the extreme happiness of the slave upon the plantation, and his almost perfect satisfaction with his condition."[135] As Farmer and other white abolitionists walked around the Exhibition, hand in hand with the Crafts and Brown, Farmer expressed his hope

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[132] Brown, William Wells. Three Years in Europe (EasyRead Comfort Edition). N.p.: Booksurge Llc, 2008. XXI.

[133] Bracewell, Joy Claire. "TRANSATLANTIC TECHNOLOGIES OF NATIONALISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: EXHIBITING SLAVERY IN HIRAM POWERS'S GREEK SLAVE, UNCLE TOM'S CABIN, PUDD'NHEAD WILSON, AND KING LEOPOLD'S SOLILOQUY," (2012): 41 .

[134] Ibid.

[135] Farmer, Wm., and W. L. Garrison. "Fugitive Slaves at the Great Exhibition." *Liberator*, July 18, 1851, 116. *Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers* (accessed January 26, 2021). https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/apps/doc/GT3005869008/NCNP?u=ucsantabarbara&sid=NCNP&xid=490bc8ed.

that they would show "we regarded them as our equals, and honored them for their heroic escape from slavery."[136]

This display of American enslavement and interracial companionship brought mixed reactions from the audience at the Great Exhibition. Not surprisingly, pro-slavery Southerners had, as Farmer described, "a malignant scowl and a sullen silence" that reflected their guilt, shame, and anger at this display which challenged their plantation way of life and their fabrications of happy slaves.[137] One such pro-slavery American even went as far as to take down the Virginian Slave statue without explaining why.[138] No bystanders seemed to care enough to reprimand him either.

Significantly as Farmer pointed out, it was not only Southerners who were silent on the subject of American slavery. So too were Northern spectators. He wrote that there was "not a word from a Yankee or Southerner."[139] He explained, "the garrulity of the North permitted itself to be silenced by three fugitive slaves."[140] Farmer illustrated the North's complicity in the continued atrocities of enslavement in the South. He went further by saying, "the North may for a time be content to be dragged through the mire in its copartnership with the South in the guilt of slavery" but, Farmer warned that they would soon regret it.[141] A critical reaction to this display of American enslavement in Britain was the lack of response from Northerners. They had claimed to be anti-slavery but could not find the words to engage in an honest discussion of the horrors and abuse of enslavement entailed.

Farmer's letter to Garrison also highlighted the problematic racial arrogance of some white abolitionists. Farmer showed this racism throughout his letter as he referred to the Crafts and

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[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid.

Brown as "specimens" who were to be displayed next to "the specimens of cotton, sugar and tobacco."[142] Farmer was perpetuating the racist idea that enslaved Blacks were American commodities rather than human beings. Going further, Farmer seemed to take all the credit for the exhibition idea as he wrote, the "idea appears to have arisen simultaneously in the minds of the abolitionists on both sides of the Atlantic – the propriety of exhibiting to the representatives of the civilized world... some specimens not merely of hams... revolvers, and firearms, but of the more peculiar staple of America – Slavery."[143] Farmer presented the performance of the Crafts and Brown as the work of himself and other white abolitionists from the US and Great Britain. Even more, he used the age-old racist notion that this display of freed Blacks would be in contrast to the "civilized world" of white societies, which would shock the audience of the Great Exhibition. Farmer's comments reflect the embedded racism in many white abolitionists on both sides of the Atlantic. The latter was eager to attack pro-slavery Americans but not as keen to self-reflect on their own problematic beliefs.

Despite Farmer's claim that the exhibition was the creation of white abolitionists, it is undoubtedly clear that William and Ellen Craft and William Wells Brown were intentional and deliberate with their performance. While this performance can be seen as problematic since Farmer writes that it puts "specimens" of American slavery on display, it can also be seen as a direct challenge to the silence of all white Americans and Britons on the subject of enslavement. As historian Lisa Merrill argues, the Crafts and Brown "adapted aspects" of "popular entertainments" that displayed ethnic others in order "to dramatize the plight of enslaved persons and place them before audiences to further the anti-slavery cause."[144] In other words, Crafts and Brown utilized the

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[142] Ibid.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Merrill, Lisa. "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." Taylor & Francis, May 21, 2012. Pg. 334 https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0144039X.2012.669907.

resources they had and understood that a controversial performance such as putting themselves on display as fugitive slaves would provoke a conversation about race.

Building on this assertion of Merrill, this paper argues that Blacks like the Crafts and Brown were the engineers behind white abolition. Many white abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison and William Farmer claimed to have been original creators of movements that pushed for eradicating enslavement. Still, these white abolitionists were not advocating for equal rights. It was the works of Hannah Crafts, Frances Hope, Frederick Douglass, and many other Blacks which prompted this conversation.

The varied opinions and narratives about enslavement portrayed in slave plays, minstrel shows, and speeches converged at the 1851 Great Exhibition in London. It was there that William Wells Brown, and Ellen and William Craft were displayed as fugitive slaves and provoked reactions from Americans and Britons alike. While most whites kept quiet, one Southerner notably tried to take the display down. While British abolitionists may have helped put this display together, it is clear that William Farmer falsely tried to take all the credit. Farmer's racist references to Brown and the Crafts and his downplaying of their role in their display is typical of many white abolitionists at this time who craved self-righteousness. However, it is clear that Brown and the Crafts were intentional with displaying their Black bodies, and without them, a conversation around race would not have been had.

This is evident throughout the history of the 1830s to the 1850s. Whether pro-slavery or abolitionist, whites were all too eager to speak ignorantly for the enslaved when the enslaved were perfectly capable of speaking for themselves. Their voices were drowned out by Southerners justifying enslavement by claiming slaves were happy and treated well or Northern abolitionists

eager to call for an end to slavery but were silent when it came to equality or British abolitionists who were too bogged down in their quest to criticize white Americans that they had forgotten that the center of this whole narrative was, in fact, the enslaved and Blacks themselves. This is why it is so crucial to include Black voices in this narrative because their voices were the only ones who could speak most accurately to the reality of being Black in the nineteenth-century United States.

# ***Chapter Four: Slavery in American and British Political Debates***

The 1850s were rife with tension and conflict between the North and the South as civil war seemed to loom. In this context, the Compromise of 1850 was made that settled the question of whether slavery would be allowed in new western territories. During the debates preceding the passing of the compromise, the various opinions of Northerners and Southerners can be heard. Britons in Parliament also felt it necessary to weigh in on the conflict as they felt a sense of superiority over the warring country. Unfortunately, during this time, Blacks did not have any political rights or voice in political settings. This lack of political power is evident in the conclusion of Dred Scott vs. Sandford. The regionalism between the North and the South and their disagreement on slavery ultimately led to civil war.

Senator Daniel Webster's infamous Compromise of 1850 speech shows the moderate Northerner's view on the continued existence of slavery in the United States. The speech was delivered on the Senate floor on March 7, 1850, during a time of intense debate between legislators on the status of slavery in newly acquired Southwest territories. Following the speech, Congress passed a series of bills that allowed California to enter the Union as a free state and abolished the slave trade in Washington D.C. while also passing the Fugitive Slave Act and letting other new territories decide their status as free or slave state by popular sovereignty.[145] This event set off a potential crisis for Southern states who felt their power as slave states in Congress was threatened.

Daniel Webster's speech illustrated his eagerness to abate Southern contempt and fear as he took on a moderate view of the situation and was hesitant to condemn slavery for the evil it was. Webster, a New Englander from New Hampshire, attempted to even identify with his Southern

[145] "Compromise of 1850: Primary Documents in American History: Introduction." Library of Congress. Accessed February 11, 2021.

countrymen and countrywomen when he explained, "all that has happened [with slavery] has been natural. It has followed those causes which always influence the human mind and operate upon it."[146] Going further on this point, he explained that in the South, slavery had evolved to become an "institution, a cherished institution in that quarter; no evil, no scourge, but a great religious, social, and moral blessing."[147] Webster's fallacious words seemed to be that of a Southerner, not a Northerner, but they reflected his purpose in appealing to Southern politicians to keep the Union. Webster even acknowledged that his words were not intended to speak on slavery but to preserve the Union of the United States. In his speech, he told his colleagues, "I wish to speak to-day, not as a Massachusetts man, nor as a Northern man, but as an American, and a member of the Senate of the United States."[148] He described his role as a moderate mediator in the contentious debate between North and South as he claimed the Senate was supposed to be "a body to which the country looks, with confidence, for wise, moderate, patriotic, and healing counsels."[149] Webster acknowledged how differently slavery had been discussed in the North versus the South and how the issue had become weaponized as a tool to divide further and criticize each other. He stressed the importance of recognizing this intense animosity around enslavement and the "consequence of the manner in which it has been discussed in one and the other portion of the country, has been a source of so much alienation and unkind feeling."[150] Webster's speech put him in the role of a moderate mediator who was much more focused on diffusing tensions between the North and the South than condemning the horror of slavery.

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[146] "Webster's Speech on the Compromise of 1850." Causes of the Civil War. Accessed February 11, 2021. http://civilwarcauses.org/clay-res.htm.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Ibid.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Ibid.

Webster continued his speech by discussing the history of slavery in the United States, mainly how the Founding Fathers felt about it. Webster seemed himself to hold the same racist beliefs of many whites in the US at the time as he alluded to "a natural and original difference among the races... and the inferiority of the black... race." Still, he set himself apart from Southern planters by stating that despite this racism, there isn't "any close process of logic" that shows "the more intelligent and the stronger had therefore a right to subjugate the weaker."[151] Referring to the end of the Revolutionary War, Webster claimed that the Founding Fathers had always hated slavery and felt it was a remnant of their former mother country, Great Britain. Webster stated, "they ascribed its existence here, not without truth, and not without some acerbity of temper and force of language, to the injurious policy of the mother country, who, to favor the navigator, had entailed these evils upon the colonies."[152] Webster blamed Great Britain for the evils of slavery even though the US had every opportunity to abolish it.

Webster even used the Constitution as a justification for the Fugitive Slave Act. He implored his fellow Northerners saying,

> "I put it to all the sober and sound minds, at the North as a question of morals, and a question of conscience. What right have they, in their legislative capacity, or any other capacity, to endeavor to get round this Constitution, to embarrass the free exercise of the rights secured by the Constitution to the persons whose slaves escape from them?"[153]

What about the free exercises of the enslaved and freed Blacks? In this aspect, Webster answered: "The South has been injured in this respect, and has a right to complain."[154] Webster had little

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[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid.

regard for getting rid of the evil of slavery that he believed to be the sole fault of Great Britain, and he did not care about slaves escaping to freedom and seeking a safe haven in the North.

Lastly, Webster aimed for the abolitionist societies of the North as he criticized their incitation of the division between the North and the South. In Webster's opinion, these societies "produced nothing good or valuable," and they only "excited feelings."[155] He blamed abolitionists for "the violence of the press," which only furthered the divide between the North and the South. While Northern abolitionist societies had motives to humiliate and condemn the South, they also had clear intentions of ending the evils of slavery that moderate Northerners such as Webster were so hesitant to address in fear of losing the Union.

Daniel Webster's Compromise of 1850 speech illustrates the moderate white Northern man's opinion on preserving the Union rather than addressing the racist beliefs and system of slavery that kept Blacks in bondage. Webster took little responsibility or accountability as a white man and instead pinned the blame on Great Britain for starting slavery in the Thirteen Colonies. He further justified the Fugitive Slave Act by claiming that slaves were property and, thus, have to be returned to Southern enslavers under the Constitution. Webster's motives to diffuse tensions between the North and the South were evident, especially when he went as far as to condemn Northern abolitionists for further inciting a North/South rift. In a moderate Northerner's opinion, the narrative of enslavement and the suffering it caused for Blacks was put second to save the relationship between the North and the South.

In contrast to Daniel Webster, Senator William Seward took a more radical approach to this specific debate on the existence of slavery in the United States. Where his colleague Webster hoped for a compromise between anti-slavery Northern senators and pro-slavery Southern senators,

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[155] Ibid.

Seward scoffed at such an accommodation. As Seward said in his famous speech delivered on March 11, 1850, to the Senate, he advised against any compromise on the issue of slavery as it would be "radically wrong and essentially vicious."[156] Arguing against Webster's claim that slavery was a "cherished institution," Seward stated, "freedom is equally an institution... a perpetual, organic, universal one" and "slavery is only a temporary, accidental, partial, and incongruous one."[157] Seward's speech illustrates a radical Northerner's perspective on no longer compromising but moving to terminate slavery altogether.

Seward continued his argument by pointing to Great Britain's abolition. In his speech, he stated, "there is no Christian nation, thus free to choose as we are, which would establish slavery. I speak on due consideration because Britain, France, and Mexico, have abolished slavery, and all other European states are preparing to abolish it as speedily as they can."[158] Seward was looking to the example of Great Britain and other countries as a way to implore his fellow Senators to not compromise on the issue of slavery and to abolish it entirely. Great Britain was once again tied into this debate about enslavement, except where Webster quickly blamed the former mother country for spreading slavery. Seward praised Great Britain as an example of an anti-slavery nation.

Perhaps the most famous part of Seward's speech is his appeal not to the Constitution but to a universal code of ethics. While other senators were looking to the Constitution as the means to a solution about the slavery question, Seward stated that he believed "there is a higher law than the Constitution, which regulates our authority over the domain... by the Creator of the universe... we are his stewards, and must so discharge our trust as to secure in the highest attainable degree their

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156 "Classic Senate Speeches." U.S. Senate: Classic Senate Speeches, October 21, 2019. https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Speeches_Seward_NewTerritories.htm.

157 "William Henry Seward's Higher Law Speech." Furman University: Seward's Higher Law Speech. Accessed February 12, 2021. http://history.furman.edu/~benson/docs/seward.htm.

158 Ibid.

happiness."[159] Unlike many patriotic Americans, Seward did not see the Constitution as the sole source of governmental guidance. But instead, he believed in a universal law of humanity that did not recognize slavery as a just institution.

Seward closed his speech differently than Webster by calling not for a compromise but an end to slavery. He to spoke to his Southern delegates as he warned, "emancipation is inevitable." His last sentence referred to future generations of Americans, hopefully saying, "You found it free, and conquered it to extend better and surer freedom over it. Whatever choice you have made for yourselves, let us have no partial freedom; let us all be free; let the reversion of your broad domain descend to us unencumbered, and free from the calamities and from the sorrows of human bondage."[160] Seward was straightforward and determined in his call for an end to slavery and not just a compromise. Unlike Webster, he wasn't concerned with preserving the Union and saw slavery as a moral issue on a grander scale than the Constitution.

Seward's speech contains the perspective of a more radical anti-slavery Northerner who was not so much so interested in compromising with the South but abolishing slavery and its evils. Moderate Northerners such as Webster were very hesitant to upset the South on slavery for fear of civil war, so they did not push for its abolishment. Seward saw the issue as more important than merely keeping the Union, and he saw human bondage as a significant violation of ethics that was gradually diminishing around the globe. So, it had to end in the US as well.

On the other side of this debate that preceded the Compromise of 1850 is the Southern legislator's perspective. John C. Calhoun is arguably the most famous Southern politician of the mid-nineteenth century. Calhoun was a South Carolina native, a prominent Southerner who had a

[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid.

plantation of over 1000 acres and enslaved 70-80 Blacks to work on the land.[161] Given his lifestyle, it is not surprising how much of an advocate Calhoun was for slavery and how hard he pushed for the continuation of human bondage for the South's economy.

In a speech Calhoun gave back in 1837, he showed his true feelings on slavery. One of the most important and infamous parts of this speech to the senate is Calhoun's justification for enslavement as he said, "I hold that in the present state of civilization, where two races of different origin" are brought together, "the relation now existing in the slaveholding States between the two, is, instead of an evil, a good—a positive good. I feel myself called upon to speak freely upon the subject where the honour and interests of those I represent are involved."[162] He went on to say, "Never before has the black race of Central Africa, from the dawn of history to the present day, attained a condition so civilized and so improved, not only physically, but morally and intellectually."[163] Like many pro-slavery Southerners and Americans, Calhoun believed that slavery was not as evil as Seward and Webster stated it was. Calhoun even seemed to think that whites were doing good by enslaving Blacks and "civilizing" them. This idea of enslavement as a "positive good" was a facet of paternalism that allowed for the justification of slavery as it claimed that the lives of Blacks were improved by their enslavers instead of the truth, which was the mental and physical torture and trauma that occurred as a result of men like John C. Calhoun.

Southern politicians like Calhoun often talked about enslavement in positive terms and fabrications to justify its horrors. These fabrications were the only way to sustain slavery and make

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[161] "John C. Calhoun." John C. Calhoun | Founder and Key Historical Figures | History | About | Clemson University, South Carolina. Accessed February 12, 2021. https://www.clemson.edu/about/history/bios/john-c-calhoun.html.

[162] "John C. Calhoun's Speech to the Senate. "The 'Positive Good' of Slavery."' St. Olaf College. 1837. Accessed February 12, 2021. https://www.stolaf.edu/people/fitz/COURSES/calhoun.html.

[163] Ibid.

the enslaver feel good about his abuse and wrongdoings. Calhoun, like most Southern enslavers, really did not have much to defend himself with. So he and other enslavers stuck to fallacies of happy and content slaves who were treated well and educated by their enslavers. Calhoun attempted to create a paternalistic narrative of the white race helping the Black race out of benevolence and kindness. These lies are a central theme throughout Southern writings and media to sustain pro-slavery lifestyles that Northern politicians were gradually threatening.

Throughout these Congressional debates, Blacks were kept out even when their fate and livelihood were being debated. This is evident in the fact that during all of these debates in Congress discussed above, no Black person spoke, and in fact, no Blacks spoke before Congress until 1869.[164] Blacks could also not vote on any legislation that decided their freedom or bondage. They suffered from whatever fate white men decided for them, and this was made clear in the Dred Scott decision of 1857.

In March 1857, the Supreme Court decided a case involving Dred Scott, an enslaved Black man living in Missouri, and his white enslavers. After his enslavers took him to Illinois and Wisconsin, Scott sued for his freedom stating that he had been on free soil and, therefore, must be free.[165] However, the Supreme Court decided otherwise and upheld many racist beliefs about Blacks in the United States. For instance, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney argued that "It is obvious that they [blacks] were not even in the minds of the framers of the Constitution when they were conferring special rights and privileges upon the citizens of a State in every other part of the Union."[166] Taney

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[164] "The First African American to Speak in the House Chamber." US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives. Accessed March 13, 2021. https://history.house.gov/Historical-Highlights/1851-1900/The-first-African-American-to-speak-in-the-House-Chamber/.

[165] Missouri Secretary of State - IT. "MISSOURI STATE ARCHIVESMissouri's Dred Scott Case, 1846-1857." Missouri Digital Heritage: Dred Scott Case, 1846-1857. Accessed March 13, 2021. https://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/resources/africanamerican/scott/scott.asp.

[166] Trent, Noelle. "'"...They Had No Rights Which the White Man Was Bound to Respect..."'." AAIHS, January 4, 2015. https://www.aaihs.org/they-had-no-rights-which-the-white-man-was-bound-to-respect/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CThey%20had%20for%20more%20than,might%20justly%20and%20lawfu

looked to the Constitution as proof that Blacks should not be considered even when their very fate and freedoms were being decided. Even more heinous is how Taney echoed the racism of many white Americans as he stated,

> "They had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect; and that the negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit."[167]

Taney, a southerner from Maryland whose family had enslaved Blacks, showed a similar argument to many other Southerners.[168] He paternalistically believed that slavery was beneficial to Blacks because, in his mind, they were inferior and could not make a life for themselves of their own free will.

Ultimately, Taney made the atrocious decision of not recognizing Blacks as citizens of the United States. In his closing statement, he wrote:

> "We think ... that [black people] are not included, and were not intended to be included, under the word "citizens" in the Constitution, and can therefore claim none of the rights and privileges which that instrument provides for and secures to citizens of the United States. On the contrary, they were at that time [of America's founding] considered as a subordinate and inferior class of beings who had been subjugated by the dominant race, and, whether emancipated or not, yet remained subject to their authority, and had no rights or privileges but such as those who held the power and the Government might choose to grant them."
> — *Dred Scott, 60 U.S. at 404–05.*

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[167] Ibid.

[168] "Roger Taney." Dickinson and Slavery. Accessed March 13, 2021. http://housedivided.dickinson.edu/sites/slavery/people/roger-taney/.

In 1857, amidst the fierce debate of abolition and freedom, the Supreme Court decided that Blacks were not citizens of the United States and essentially had no rights. While Taney himself may have been anti-slavery, he, like many other anti-slavery white Americans, was unwilling to put equality into action. White abolitionists were often willing to end slavery as an institution, but they were not willing to have their white supremacy challenged as a result. They were not ready to challenge the racism deeply embedded in their country's founding. They may have been anti-slavery, but they were unwilling to invite the enslaved Blacks themselves into the courts or the Capitol to speak about their personal experiences with enslavement. Whether they be Northern or Southern, white men in politics were willing to use enslavement as a weapon against one another but not address the racism at the root of it. Slavery may have been a political tool for them. Still, for Blacks, it was their reality. It was part of the racial oppression they faced every day that culminated in the Dred Scott decision, which denied them any political rights in their country.

The impact of the Dred Scott decision was immediately felt, with a civil war now seeming all the more inevitable. Northern Republicans were outraged with Taney's closing statements. Many prominent Republican politicians, including soon-to-be president Abraham Lincoln, publicly denounced the decision while passing laws in Northern states that opposed it by making it possible for enslaved Blacks to claim freedom in certain Northern states.[169] Many white Southerners, in contrast, took the decision as a "vindication of their constitutional rights" to keep their "property."[170] The tense divisions between the regions were only deepening.

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[169]Dr. Roberta Alexander*, "2007 CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUE: ARTICLE: Dred Scott: The Decision That Sparked a Civil War," *Northern Kentucky Law Review,* 34, 643 (2007). https://advance-lexis-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/api/document?collection=analytical-materials&id=urn:contentItem:4S9D-X810-00CV-R0H1-00000-00&context=1516831.

[170] Fehrenbacher, Don. *The Dred Scott Case: Its Significance in Law & Politics*, 712 n. 24 (Oxford University Press 1978).

The Dred Scott decision was a trigger for both Northern and Southern fears. For the North, the decision brought paranoia that Southern slavery might become nationalized and protected by the land's highest court.[171] For the South, Northern Republicans' reaction to the decision triggered a fear that the North would not be stopped, even by the highest court, in their quest to terminate slavery.[172] The final straw was the 1860 election of a Northern Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, who was unwavering in his condemnation of the Dred Scott decision and his intentions to stop the spread of Southern slavery to western territories.[173] White southerners felt dismayed and desperate. Just a month after the election, South Carolina seceded from the Union, followed quickly by Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas.[174] Soon after, the Civil War began in April 1861 when South Carolina's military shot Lincoln's troops carrying supplies to Fort Sumter.[175] The next four years would be the bloodiest of American history, with 620,000 American soldiers, 40,000 of whom were Black, dying on the battlefield.[176] The politics of sectionalism between the North and South that exploited slavery in a competition of morality proved deadly and relentless.

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[171] Dr. Roberta Alexander*, "2007 CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUE: ARTICLE: Dred Scott: The Decision That Sparked a Civil War," *Northern Kentucky Law Review,* 34, 643 (2007): 15.

[172] Ibid.

[173] "Overview of the Civil War." Digital History- . Accessed March 13, 2021. https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/era.cfm?eraid=7&smtid=1.

[174] "1861 : Time Line of the Civil War : Articles and Essays : Civil War Glass Negatives and Related Prints : Digital Collections : Library of Congress." The Library of Congress. Accessed March 13, 2021. https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-war-glass-negatives/articles-and-essays/time-line-of-the-civil-war/1861/#:~:text=The%20secession%20of%20South%20Carolina,the%20Confederate%20States

[175] Ibid.

[176] "1861 : Time Line of the Civil War : Articles and Essays : Civil War Glass Negatives and Related Prints : Digital Collections : Library of Congress." The Library of Congress. Accessed March 13, 2021. https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-war-glass-negatives/articles-and-essays/time-line-of-the-civil-war/1861/#:~:text=The%20secession%20of%20South%20Carolina,the%20Confederate%20States%20of%20America.

In 1862, amid the American Civil War, Members of Parliament spoke on what they believed to be the true causes of the rift between the North and the South. On July 18, 1862, Sir William Henry Gregory stood up in Parliament. He stated that the North and the South were engaged in a civil war, not over slavery itself, but over the issue of vengeance, with each side yearning to take revenge on the other after decades of differences. Gregory's motive in making these statements was to highlight the immaturity and inferiority of the US in comparison to European countries like Great Britain. Gregory's words illustrate the common theme of the British feeling of moral superiority over the United States that continued during the Civil War.

During this particular debate in 1862, another member, James Whiteside, agreed with Gregory on the actual cause of the war. He acknowledged the South's heinous institution of slavery but also stated, "the evil of slavery- which the North never did abate when it had the power- ... is not the cause of the quarrel."[177] He argued that the conflict between the North and the South was one of regionalism and power struggle. Whiteside and Gregory's words were proven right. While slavery played into the Civil War, it was not the sole cause. This paper had emphasized how slavery was exploited and weaponized as a tool that each side – North and South – used to blame one another for its evils. As is evident throughout the mid-nineteenth century, whites in the North and South used pro-slavery and anti-slavery rhetoric as a way of distorting the truth to protect their regions' moral reputations while also attempting to damage the reputation of the other.

[177] Ibid.

# ***Conclusion***

The period between 1830 and 1860 was a time of intense debate around American enslavement. The three regions that mainly took part in this debate were the Northern United States, the Southern United States, and Great Britain. These three regions had distinct values and motives surrounding enslavement and racism. They each blamed each other for the existence and perpetuation of enslavement while trying to absolve themselves of any guilt. This moral competition is evident in periodicals, literature, performances, and political speeches in each region. Ironically, while trying to absolve themselves of the guilt of racial bondage through these works, they simultaneously reinforced racial dominance and further exploited the enslaved. White authors of plays, novels, political speeches and newspaper articles often used slavery as a tool to defend their regional reputation and morals without having any real intention of establishing racial equality.

As historians, there is a much better opportunity for understanding the experiences of the enslaved by looking at what is not said in these white-authored works as well as looking at what is said in Black-authored works such as slave narratives by Harriett Wilson and Hannah Craft, political speeches by Frederick Douglass, and the articles of Black-owned newspapers such as the *North Star*. The work of this paper makes it evident how history has often been distorted and manipulated by its authors to perpetuate myths that glorify the white man. This thesis is a challenge to this distortion and a rewriting of history that includes the voices of Black women and men who endured the hardships of white-perpetuated slavery.

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