

“DUSKY POWDER
MAGAZINES”
THE *CREOLE* REVOLT (1841) IN
NINETEENTH CENTURY
AMERICAN LITERATURE

By Celeste-Marie Bernier

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This thesis is dedicated to my beloved mother,
Maureen Bernier,
whose passion for these stories has been, and is,
my best thing

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines literary and historical accounts of the *Creole* slave ship revolt (1841) by Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, Lydia Maria Child and Pauline E. Hopkins. The introduction debates the generic status of government testimony and press reportage and identifies the fundamental theoretical issues of the dissertation which include those of intentionality, intertextuality and “signifyin(g).” Chapter I traces the traditions of black and white abolitionism which influenced Douglass’s adaptations of the mutiny and researches his representations of the heroic slave figure, Madison Washington, in speeches which he gave in Britain and America during the 1840s. Chapter II analyses the major critical questions surrounding Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave* (1853) while exploring its previously neglected theatrical conventions. This chapter also compares this work with Douglass’s recently discovered second version, *The Heroic Slave: A Thrilling Narrative of the Adventures of Madison Washington in Pursuit of Liberty* (1853/63?). Chapter III contextualises Brown’s (re)modelling of the black historical figure by examining the varying types of forum – including both periodical and historical volumes – within which he published “Madison Washington” (1861, 1863) and “Slave Revolt at Sea” (1867). This chapter discusses Brown’s experimentation with an antislavery panorama and interweaving of literary, biographical and historical techniques to revise existing formal conventions. The final chapter interprets Child’s biography of “Madison Washington” published in *The Freedmen’s Book* (1866), and Hopkins’s short story, “A Dash for Liberty” (1901), in terms of their interventions into gendered representations of slave heroism. Child’s text is considered alongside her earlier journalism on the *Creole* revolt and her short story on insurrection, “The Black Saxons” (1846), and contextualised by an analysis of its publication in an educational tract. This chapter also discusses Hopkins’s “Famous Men and Women of the Negro Race” (1901-2), and her textual borrowings from Brown’s “Slave Revolt at Sea” (1866) to demonstrate the political imperatives guiding her dramatisations of black history. Finally, the conclusion explores the mid-twentieth century version of this revolt, *Madison* (1956), a musical composed by the black playwright, Theodore Ward, to indicate the importance of this approach for re-evaluating intertextual relationships across black and white abolitionist authors, throughout the nineteenth century and after.

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gum” tea, and Eddie Izzard. I would also like to thank Claire Roberts and Tash Waterman, my best friends, for their great faith and sustaining sense of humour. Champa Patel and Lisa Rull have been sympathetic, challenging, supportive and wonderful, while Anna Notaro has always been so understanding and so kind. A long time ago now, but I would like to thank Simon Brown for incredible support and the “great Cambridge escape.” I am deeply indebted to Richard Anderson, Tracey Bennett, Janice Burrow, Daniel Cordle, Jill Farrow, Dave Foster, Jeongmee Kim, Rebecca Lloyd, Maha Marouan, Steve Moore, Sahar Nasief, Leigh Powell and Tricia Welsh. I would also like to dedicate this thesis in loving memory of my grandmothers, Cecilia Mary Bernier and Sadie McKeever.

ABBREVIATIONS

The process of dealing with a diversity of texts in this dissertation has made it difficult to contextualise and categorise this material in a manageable form. The strategies employed for easier recognition and analysis of primary works include the abbreviations given below which are listed alphabetically. Footnotes provide additional information.

APC

Frederick Douglass. “American Prejudice Against Color: An Address Delivered in Cork, Ireland, 23 October 1845.” Rpt. *The Frederick Douglass Papers. Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*. Ed. John Blassingame. Vol. 1. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979. 59-70.

ASP

Frederick Douglass. “American and Scottish Prejudice Against the Slave: An Address Delivered in Edinburgh, Scotland, on 1 May 1846.” Rpt. *The Frederick Douglass Papers. Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*. Ed. John Blassingame. Vol. 1. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979. 243-49.

DL

Pauline E. Hopkins. “A Dash for Liberty.” *Colored American Magazine* Aug. 1901, 243-7.

FB

Lydia Maria Child. *The Freedmen’s Book*. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866.

HS

Frederick Douglass. *The Heroic Slave. Autographs for Freedom*. Ed. Julia Griffiths. Vol. I. Boston: John P. Jewett, 1853. 174-239.

HSTN

Frederick Douglass. *The Heroic Slave, a Thrilling Narrative of the Adventures of Madison Washington, in pursuit of Liberty*. N.p.: n.p., 1853/63?

M

Theodore Ward. *Madison*. New York: Hatch-Billops Archive, 1956 [unpublished typescript].

MW

William Wells Brown. “Madison Washington.” *The Black Man, His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements*. 1863. Rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1969: 75-85.

MWFB

Lydia Maria Child. “Madison Washington.” *The Freedmen’s Book*. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866: 147-54.

MWPP

William Wells Brown. “Celebrated Colored Americans: Madison Washington.” *Pine and Palm*. 17 Aug. 1861.

OPV

William Wells Brown. *A Description of William Wells Brown's Original Panoramic Views*. London: C. Gilpin, 1852.

SRR

Frederick Douglass. "The Slaves' Right to Revolt: An Address Delivered in Boston, Massachusetts, on 30 May 1848." Rpt. *The Frederick Douglass Papers. Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*. Ed. John Blassingame. Vol. 2. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979. 130-32.

SRS

William Wells Brown. "Slave Revolt at Sea." *The Negro in the American Rebellion: His Heroism and His Fidelity*. 1867. Rpt. New York: Johnson Reprint Company, 1968: 26-36.

SSV

Frederick Douglass. "Slavery, the Slumbering Volcano: An Address Delivered in New York, New York, on 23 April 1849." Rpt. *The Frederick Douglass Papers. Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*. Ed. John Blassingame. Vol. 2. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979. 148-58.

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Title-page, *A Description of William Wells Brown’s Original Panoramic Views*, 170

INTRODUCTION

“Introducing the *Dramatic Personae*:” Explorations of Genre and Critical Representations of the *Creole* Revolt

Douglass’s strategy is as simple as it is effective.

Robert B. Stepto (1986)¹

Brown’s unsubstantiated description of the events of the insurrection in the flamboyant and hyperbolic style of the time and genre, differs on many important points in the many depositions taken later.

Edward Jervy and Harold Huber (1980)²

Child’s aims were in part didactic.

John Greusser (1996)³

Hopkins ultimately falls back on the conventions of the sentimental romance.

Richard Yarborough (1990)⁴

This thesis examines representations of the *Creole* slave ship revolt (1841) in literary and historical accounts written during the nineteenth century. The principal authors include Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, Lydia Maria Child and Pauline E. Hopkins.⁵ Their accounts cover a significant time frame from the publication in 1853 of the first written version by Douglass entitled, *The Heroic Slave*, to the appearance of Hopkins’s short story, “A Dash for Liberty,” in the black edited, *Colored American Magazine*, in 1901. This time frame is complicated by the fact that Douglass gave

¹ Stepto (1986) 147. This essay describes *The Heroic Slave* (1853) in simplified terms as “the countercomposition” (ibid., 137) to Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* while Cooley also argues that “Douglass... was writing his narrative in direct response to Stowe’s” (2001) 138. However, detailed research into Douglass’s text pinpoints a more significant relationship to Stowe’s second abolitionist novel, *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856. Rpt. Newman, ed. 1992).

² Jervy and Huber (1980) 197. This article treats Brown as a conventional historian and dismisses his incorporation of material from articles in *The Liberator* and reproduction of motifs included in Douglass’s first version of *The Heroic Slave* (1853).

³ Greusser (1996) 102.

⁴ Yarborough (1990) 178.

many speeches on this mutiny in the 1840s, prior to *The Heroic Slave*'s first publication date, and also by a consideration of the mid-twentieth century, critically neglected musical, *Madison* (1956), written by the black playwright, Theodore Ward. The focus of this dissertation is upon all known English language versions of the *Creole* revolt that have been produced within a North American context.⁶ However, it is not the intention of this thesis to portray North American practice as exceptionalist.⁷

Throughout this dissertation, my research has necessitated the recovery of previously undiscovered and under-discussed material. The *Creole* revolt itself received very little notice in newspapers and the periodical press, particularly in comparison with the *Amistad*. However, the four authors discussed in this thesis all chose to write extended works on the *Creole* revolt rather than the *Amistad*. This preference may be explained by the former's historical ambiguities and overtly American connection. It is because very little can be verified concerning the events on board the *Creole* that this event lends itself to imaginative adaptation. Similarly, in contrast to the *Amistad*'s African slaves and their Sierra Leone born leader, Joseph Cinqué, the *Creole* mutineers and Madison Washington in particular, could all prove

⁵ Ibid. I would like to express my gratitude to Yarborough for this essay which provided the brief discussion of the various versions of the *Creole* revolt produced by Brown, Hopkins and Child which became the starting point of my research.

⁶ Therefore, this dissertation omits any mention of European and foreign language accounts which would include, among others, Gustave de Beaumont's *Marie, ou l'Esclavage aux Etats-Uni, Tableau de mœurs américaines*. 2 vols. (1835. Rpt. *Marie, or Slavery in the United States*, trans. Chapman, Ferguson, ed., 1999). This text echoes the versions under discussion in this thesis by a shared focus upon domesticity and the sentimental form in the "tragic mulatta" plot. Also, Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko: Or, the Royal Slave. A True History* (1688. Rpt. Lipking, ed., 1997), provides a useful generic template for representations of black male slave heroism. In its imitation of classical models, Behn's description can be considered alongside Douglass's portraits of Madison Washington. Finally, Prosper Mérimée's short piece, "Tamango" (1829) in *The Venus of Ille and other Stories* (trans. Kimers, Raitt, ed., 1966), employs similar subject-matter. Mérimée adopts a complex narrative style to dramatise a slave ship revolt and represent black slave violence, while positioning black female sexual vulnerability as the catalyst for black male slave heroism as do the authors in these texts.

⁷ Paulson's work on artistic representations of the French Revolution provides a relevant interpretative model for this thesis. His argument that, that which "we call the 'history' of the French Revolution consists already of artistic representations framed and shaped by aesthetics, ideology and historical narrative," reflects the discussion in this thesis of the generic instability within these works and across authors which problematises hierarchical distinctions between literary and historical discourse. See Paulson, *Representations of Revolution 1789-1820* (1983) 27.

their claims to an explicitly American heritage.⁸ Regardless of the fact that Frederick Douglass is now a major figure in historical and literary assessments of North American slavery, this research has led to the recovery of a text entirely untreated by critics: *The Heroic Slave, a Thrilling Narrative of the Adventures of Madison Washington, in Pursuit of Liberty* (1853/1863?).⁹ Equally, Douglass's speeches on the *Creole* revolt and its main heroic figure, Madison Washington, have suffered from unmerited neglect. This is despite the major points of comparison they provide concerning both black abolitionist interpretations of historical events and processes of narrative construction, in representations of the black heroic slave.

This thesis uncovers a large amount of material by Brown, Douglass's little discussed but highly significant contemporary, and examines his three volumes of black history, his periodical literature, his antislavery panorama, his single work of drama and his various versions of a novel. An investigation into these texts illuminates the nature of Brown's relationship to Douglass and confirms his significance in reshaping black historical and literary forms. In addition, later research explores the questions surrounding gender issues raised in work by Child and Hopkins. Thus, although Child has attracted significant critical interest due to her editorial involvement in Harriet Jacobs's pseudonymously produced slave narrative, much of her shorter and generically diverse material has been neglected.¹⁰ Therefore, this dissertation considers Child's biography of Madison Washington in her educational primer for newly emancipated slaves, and provides comparative analysis

⁸ Maggie M. Sale provides a useful account of the *Amistad* in her recent book, *The Slumbering Volcano: American Slave Ship Revolts and the Production of Rebellious Masculinity* (1997), as does Howard Jones in his article, "The Peculiar Institution and National Honor: The Case of the *Creole* Slave Revolt" (March 1975): 28-50. Various interesting primary documents include: Barber, "A History of the *Amistad* Captives" (1840), rpt. *American Transcendental Quarterly* 22 (1974): 109-20, "Amistad Captives," *Antislavery Almanac* (New York: n.p., 1841) 22-23 and Child, "The Iron Shroud" (1842. Rpt. Karcher, ed., 1997), and.

⁹ Chapter II discusses the two possible dates for this text and suggests that there is evidence in favour of both. However, attempts to prove either 1853 or 1863 with any certainty have proved inconclusive.

of her short stories on slave insurrection and the trope of the “tragic mulatta.”¹¹ This thesis examines Pauline Hopkins’s short story on the *Creole* revolt in order to reassess the complex intertextual relationships which she shares with Child and Brown. Although an accomplished writer and significant editorial force, Hopkins has remained a shadowy figure in recent scholarship.¹² The works under discussion in this thesis, including Hopkins’s short fiction, polemical tracts and historical novels, identify a source rich in comparative material. These texts shed light on her revisions of black male and white female abolitionist traditions in terms of their chosen subject-matter, and preferred strategies of historical interpretation and literary representation.

The fact that this research engages in a bibliographical recovery of previously neglected material and a literary re-interpretation of texts, confirms the twofold approach of this dissertation. From a practical point of view, the obscurity of much of this material has made it necessary to introduce and provide bibliographical information concerning the origins, publication, authorship and intended audience of these texts, before examining literary matters. This double focus is intentional and essential because it provides a useful framework within which to investigate the effects, for different audiences, of specific contexts upon literary analysis. Overall, this thesis counters contemporary critical interpretations which have failed to consider the intersection of form with content and style in these versions. In particular, a tradition of severing this material from a diversity of original contexts has produced the distorted readings of these four authors cited at the head of this introduction.

This decontextualised approach has encouraged Robert B. Stepto’s interpretations of Frederick Douglass’s narrative style as one-dimensionally linear,

¹⁰ Child, ed., *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861. Rpt. Yellin, ed., 1987).

¹¹ Child, *The Freedmen’s Book* (1866) and “The Quadroons” and “The Black Saxons,” both published in *Fact and Fiction: A Collection of Stories* (1846).

and nurtured assumptions of a direct equivalence between Brown's strategies for dramatising black history and the "white official record" by the historians Edward Jervy and Harold Huber. A neglect of context similarly lends itself to John C. Greusser's acknowledgement of Child's didacticism which tends to underplay her reinvention of conventions embedded in the educational tract. Finally, Richard Yarborough's reading of Hopkins's design as straightforward adoption, rather than self-conscious parody culled from previous versions, misrepresents her critical engagement with romantic conventions of sentimentality. Overall, these critics attach too little significance to fundamental questions. When were these texts published and where were they produced? What was their target audience? What impact did questions of readership have on thematic considerations and choice of form? If published more than once, were the texts altered to suit differing political contexts and influence competing audience demands? How do these writers manipulate and extend their choice of form? How did they respond to the interpretations of previous authors to an identical historical event?

This thesis explores the ways in which investigations into various versions of the *Creole* revolt both reposition and reinforce literary and historical abolitionist relationships across texts and writers. This approach also suggests the importance of employing these authors' shorter historical fiction (less well-considered although often more radical) as an appropriate lens through which to reinterpret their mainstream material. Therefore, this dissertation identifies the need to re-adjust authorial relationships following the discovery of their intertextual connections with unconsidered works, while also addressing the usefulness of tracing relationships between form and varying political contexts of production. The intention is that this

¹² Greusser and McKay have edited the only collection of essays to have been produced on Pauline Hopkins entitled, *The Unruly Voice: Rediscovering Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins* (1996).

approach will produce informed readings and make it possible to appreciate fully the extent to which these writers participated in a dynamic literary and historical exchange. This research has implications for establishing models within which material by other nineteenth century (African) American writers, both male and female, can be read. These include, for example, David Walker's *Appeal* (1829), Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856), Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno* (1855) and Martin R. Delany's *Blake, or, the Huts of America* (1859).¹³ It should be recognised that these are large questions and that, throughout this dissertation, it will be necessary to justify them carefully, and with close attention to detail.

This dissertation analyses experimentation with form as each author was engaged in an aesthetic and ideological resculpting of generic formulas throughout these various versions. All four writers extend conventions of the sentimental and domestic novel to incorporate historiographical questions and biographical research which contribute to their production of "authentic" discourse, educational tracts and magazine serials. However varied their eventual constructions of genre, these texts testify in equal measure to their self-conscious manipulation of the slave narrative form. This not only concerns the slave narrative's origins as an isolated generic category, but also the ways in which it has been adapted and altered according to context. The approach in this thesis resists rigid definitions of the term and, in

¹³ Chapter I compares Douglass's speeches with the militant rhetoric adopted by David Walker in his *Appeal* to protect the rights of the black male. See *Walker's Appeal* (1829. Rpt. Garnet, ed., 1969). Any investigation into Douglass's representations of Madison Washington has implications for Stowe's constructions of the "Old Testament" slave hero, "Dred," in her novel of the same name and aids understanding of her innovations upon previous black heroic figures such as Tom in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. See *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856. Rpt. Newman, ed., 1992). The details of the *Creole* revolt, in addition to those of the *Amistad*, were incorporated by Melville in *Benito Cereno*, most obviously in his representations of the chained, nevertheless physically indomitable figure of Atufal. See *Benito Cereno* (1855. Rpt. 1993). Finally, Martin Delany's unfinished novel, *Blake, or, the Huts of America* (1859. Rpt. Miller, ed., 1970), includes a highly pertinent scene of black prowess during a violent slave ship insurrection.

heightening an awareness of its fluidity, confirms the possibility of experimentation with the slave narrative form, along blurring rather than exclusively racialised lines. William L. Andrews's *To Tell a Free Story* confirms the slave narrative's complexity: "[the slaves'] actual life stories frequently dispute, sometimes directly more often covertly, the positivistic epistemology, dualistic morality, and diachronic framework in which antebellum America liked to evaluate autobiography as either history or falsehood."¹⁴ Thus, for Andrews, the slave narrative form encapsulates tensions between white expectations and black subjectivity, and occupies an indeterminate generic category in straining against its status as "authentic" autobiography or history. This flexible appraisal of a generic format is useful for negotiating these versions' varied manipulation of historical veracity, literary form and audience expectation. In more specific terms, as far as current research surrounding the existence of a black readership is concerned, it is important to recognise the limitations of sociological statistics for this period. Any attempts to record in scientific terms, the extent and character of black audiences in the antebellum period have proved illusory; by comparison, Hazel Carby provides a useful discussion of studies which document a growing black elite readership in the North in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁵ This thesis emphasises the greater importance of a black readership for works produced by Brown, Child and Hopkins in the 1860s-70s and early 1900s in comparison with Douglass's material disseminated widely in the 1840s and 50s.

The manipulation of the slave narrative form by all four authors in these texts confirms their incorporation and adaptation of techniques associated with tropes of

¹⁴ Andrews (1986) 6. For further research into the slave narrative form, see Davis and Gates Jr., eds., *The Slave's Narrative* (1985) and Sekora and Turner eds., *The Art of Slave Narrative: Original Essays in Criticism and Theory* (1982).

¹⁵ Carby (1987). For a consideration of black audiences, see her final two chapters on Hopkins in particular.

sentimentality and domesticity.¹⁶ The investigation into these works in terms of their “sentimental” and “domestic” aspects privileges context and borrows from Philip Fisher’s view that, “sentimentality was a crucial tactic of politically radical representation throughout Western culture.”¹⁷ This research also pinpoints the importance of audience responses to material by arguing that “the Sentimental Novel depends upon experimental, even dangerous, extensions of the self of the reader.”¹⁸ This view attaches great significance to the processes by which these authors manipulate the didactic potential of their texts, for example vis-à-vis their abolitionist position, and agendas aimed at converting their readers to antislavery. The sentimental form also reflects a democratic impulse in its processes of characterisation which extend “full and complete humanity to... figures from whom it has been socially withheld.”¹⁹ By drawing historical attention to the black male and female slave’s full participation in familial and domestic relations, the sentimental form fulfils a political function and “reverses the process of slavery itself.”²⁰ This position resonates with Jane Tompkins’s belief that the sentimental novel’s “stated purpose is to influence the course of history” by providing “an act of persuasion aimed at defining social reality.”²¹

Gillian Brown examines domesticity’s significance as feminist discourse in a comparison of the “domestic figure [to]... a runaway, a rebel.”²² This analogy echoes

¹⁶ In the twentieth century, there has been a comprehensive re-evaluation of sentimentality and domesticity as political statements, and representative works include: Baym, *Woman’s Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870* (1978); Brown, *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth Century America* (1990); Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (1987); Fisher, *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (1985); Romero, *Home Fronts: Domesticity and Its Critics in the Antebellum United States* (1997); Tompkins, “Sentimental Power: *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and the Politics of Literary History” (1978. Rpt. Ammons ed., 1994).

¹⁷ Fisher (1985) 92.

¹⁸ Ibid., 98.

¹⁹ Ibid., 99.

²⁰ Ibid., 100.

²¹ Tompkins (1978) 505, 518.

²² Brown (1990) 6.

the imagery produced in these versions to explicate an individual male runaway slave's physical defence of the black family. Equally, Brown's suggestion that "in the context of nineteenth century abolitionism, [domesticity] signifies a reformist politics," can be compared to Lora Romero's interpretation of domesticity as indivisible from "theories of hegemony and resistance."²³ In their political and racialised dimensions, such sentimental narrative forms endorse the techniques adopted by these authors to blur public and private domains in their texts, as they develop the representative status of their chief-protagonist, Madison Washington, as archetypal black heroic slave figure.

Maggie M. Sale's *The Slumbering Volcano* (1997) addresses some of the same material analysed in this dissertation. Her research also investigates literary and historical representations of the *Creole* revolt and discusses material by Frederick Douglass, including his novella, *The Heroic Slave* (1853), and his core speech on the mutiny, "Slavery, the Slumbering Volcano" (1849). Sale's intentions, however, are fundamentally different from those of this thesis. Her research places much more emphasis upon legal debates and definitions of the artificial dichotomy between "white" revolution and "black" rebellion whereas this dissertation explores the relationship between authors and texts. Sale is interested in the processes by which "white supremacy was made an explicit aspect of U.S. national identity" and upon constructions of "normative masculinity" which excluded black male and female slaves.²⁴ Nevertheless, in her evaluation of liberal theory and "the changing meaning of the trope of revolutionary struggle," she embeds the following relevant theoretical point: "Meaning changes depending upon the position of the speaking/writing

²³ Brown (1990) 8; Romero (1997) 1. In contrast to Fisher, Gillian Brown maintains that despite sentimentality's significance "as a representational tactic for extending human rights to the disenfranchised, it nevertheless retains the slave or woman or child within the inventory of human proprietorship" (1990) 41.

subject.”²⁵ Thus, her interpretative strategy exists in parallel with the premise of this dissertation which considers texts and contexts, not only as indivisible from, but actively shaped by, form and content.

However, Sale’s analysis of the *Creole* revolt and *The Heroic Slave* suffers in comparison with her exhaustive examination of the *Amistad* mutiny (1839) and Herman Melville’s *Benito Cereno* (1855).²⁶ While she provides a useful overview of reports on the *Creole* revolt in the newspaper and periodical press, she fails to consider in any depth the main source of government testimony, *The Senate Documents*.²⁷ The greatest problem posed by her research exists in her reliance upon white accounts for representations of black heroism and her failure to mention the various versions subsequently produced by Brown and Hopkins.²⁸ Overall, the major difference between her book and this thesis is that she neglects to consider Douglass’s second written version of this revolt, *The Heroic Slave: A Thrilling Narrative of the Adventures of Madison Washington, in Pursuit of Liberty*, and only very briefly alludes to his many other speeches dramatising black male slave heroism.²⁹

At the risk of only cataloguing for the moment, it is possible to summarise the main preoccupations of these versions of the *Creole* revolt which will be discussed in the following chapters. These texts include an extended revisioning of the “octoroon” and “noble savage” archetypes in their varying subscription to and thwarting of “tragic mulatto/a” plots. In connection with this motif, they also manipulate a

²⁴ Sale (1997) ix, 3.

²⁵ Ibid., 25, 20.

²⁶ For example, Sale’s second chapter, which considers the *Amistad* mutiny, is triple the length of her section on the *Creole* revolt (1997) 58ff. and 120ff.

²⁷ *Senate Documents* (1841-42) 1-46.

²⁸ In the “Afterword,” Sale very briefly discusses Child’s version of this mutiny, “Madison Washington,” (1866) which is given extended treatment in chapter IV of this thesis. She invokes the piece simply to argue that Child was “concerned with the violence inherent not only in the rebellions, but in the discourse of national identity” (1997) 209.

²⁹ Ibid., 178-79. I am indebted to Sale for the specific details confirming that “Douglass gave a least six speeches in which he mentioned Madison Washington” (241).

discourse of natural imagery to deconstruct prescriptive gender conventions and subvert straightforward demarcations between white revolutionary heroism and black “insurrectionary” barbarism.³⁰ Furthermore, all four authors examine the symbolic connotations of slave ship insurrection as literary figure and its connections to performance via the “spectacle.”³¹ They attach to narrative explorations of black violence and black nationalism, critiques of gendered and racialised strategies of abolition which produce an objectifying and eroticised discourse of the black body. Finally the later versions by Brown, Child and Hopkins interrogate postbellum politics, as they argue in favour of replacing white individualistic heroism with black community activism.

From existing legal reports of the *Creole* revolt, it is possible to provide the following outline of events in connection with this incident which had presaged potentially international consequences. According to the testimony of the officers and crew provided in the *Senate Documents*, the revolt was led by the “head cook of the slaves,” Madison Washington, who became the subject for debates concerning

³⁰ Thomas R. Dew’s essay, “Abolition of Negro Slavery” (1832), written in response to Nat Turner’s revolt analyses the racialised dynamics of the terms “insurrection” and “revolution.” His aim was to separate both along racial lines: “And had it come at last to this? That the hellish plots and massacres of Dessalines, Gabriel, and Nat Turner, are to be compared to the noble deeds and devoted patriotism of Lafayette, Kosciusko, and Scynnecki?... The true theory of the right of revolution we conceive to be the following: no men or set of men are justifiable in attempting a revolution which must certainly fail; or if successful must produce *necessarily a much worse state* of things than the pre-existent order... No man has ever yet contended that the blacks could gain their liberty and an ascendancy over the whites by wild insurrections.” In agreement with contemporary rhetoric, Dew effectively equates “white revolution” with the successful attainment of “natural rights,” and “black insurrection” with barbarous and “unnatural” resistance which is necessarily destructive and invariably fails. This essay is reprinted in Faust, ed., (1981) 59-60.

³¹ William Lloyd Garrison’s assessment of Nat Turner’s insurrection as “spectacle” in an article which he simply titled in generic terms, “The Insurrection,” and published in *The Liberator* is relevant here (1831. Rpt. Cain, ed., 1995) 81. Garrison affirms the legitimacy of black insurrection by evoking natural imagery: “The first drops of blood, which are but the prelude to a deluge from the gathering clouds, have fallen... What was poetry – imagination – in January, is now a bloody reality” (81). In his speeches discussed in chapter I and in his versions of *The Heroic Slave* considered in chapter II, Douglass includes natural symbolism to situate Madison Washington within a revolutionary tradition of Romantic heroism.

competing representations of the black male slave in these versions.³² Just off the coast of Virginia on the night of 7th November 1841, the “mutineers and murderers” or “immortal nineteen” led by Madison Washington and a handful of other slaves, successfully rose up against the white crew on the ship’s journey from Hampton Roads to a slave auction in New Orleans.³³ The ship was “laden with manufactured tobacco, in boxes, and slaves” and under the command of Captain Robin Ensor.³⁴ In order to defend themselves against charges of negligence, crew members were keen to establish that on departure in October 1841, the “vessel... was tight and strong, well manned,... and equipped for carrying slaves.”³⁵ Their depositions clearly stated that male and female slaves were separated and no allusion was made to the existence of Susan Washington.³⁶ Nonetheless, she is subsequently written into the story as she plays a role which is central to the texts produced by these four authors. Each of the

³² *Senate Documents* (1841-42) 24. This testimony, provided by white witnesses for a government publication, offers the primary source for “authentic” information on this revolt. Another longer article produced slightly later assesses the validity of insurance claims in cases of insurrection and devotes a large section to the *Creole* revolt. See “Thomas McCargo v. The New Orleans Insurance Company,” (March 1845): 201-354. It is possible to identify a tradition of black insurrectionary cooks in literature including those depicted in Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838. Rpt. Kopley, ed., 1999) and Solomon Northup’s *Twelve Years a Slave* (1853. Rpt. Eakin and Logsdon, eds., 1968). Poe’s text dramatises a mutiny led by an unnamed “black cook”, described as a “perfect demon” (48), who commits atrocities: “[he] lifted him [a ship-hand] up in his arms as he would a child, and tossed him deliberately into the sea” (47). By comparison, although Northup’s slave narrative poses problems for verifying black authorship, he provides material useful for considering the connections between black revolutionary heroism and violence. Thus, Northup confides his own heroic status by the fact that “I was appointed to superintend the cooking” (42) and narrates the proposed insurrection as “an occurrence, which I never call to mind but with sensations of regret. I thank God... that... I was prevented from imbruing my hands in the blood of his creatures” (43). Northup’s desire to gain white audience sympathy for his slave narrative makes it difficult to read this extract as either confessional or equivocal. Furthermore, in their recent book, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, Linebaugh and Rediker describe the “black cook” as a lynchpin to maritime resistance, arguing that he “was so common as to become a stereotype in nautical fiction” (London: Verso, 2000) 312.

³³ The first phrase was popularised by an article entitled, “Mutiny and Murder,” published in the proslavery newspaper *New Orleans Daily Picayune* 3 Dec. 1841. The second was included in *The Liberator*’s short piece, “Madison Washington: Another Chapter in His History,” 10 June 1842, reprinted from *The Friend of Man*. This second text evokes Washington’s “name [one which] will be remembered as belonging to the leader of the ‘Immortal Nineteen’” to provide the “very large and strong slave” with a white revolutionary heritage. This phrase, “Immortal Nineteen,” also connects this event with John Brown’s 1859 Harper’s Ferry raid as he and his followers were identified by the same appellation in the press.

³⁴ *Senate Documents* (1841-42) 36-37.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

versions under discussion in this thesis introduce and revise the figure of Susan, Madison Washington's wife, as she is used to represent the widespread violation of the black female slave during slavery. In this connection, while the press speculated as to her existence (see discussions below), Douglass was the first to give Washington's possible wife a name and a significant literary function. In total, there were 135 slaves on board, eight crew members, five sailors and six white passengers.

Near Abaco in the West Indies, the brig was "laid to" and it was discovered that Madison Washington, owned by Thomas McCargo and described in generic terms as "a very large and strong slave" had "gone aft among the women."³⁷ The first mate, Zephaniah Gifford, and a passenger in charge of the slaves, William Henry Merritt, went down to the hold. On finding Washington there, Merritt interjected: "'is it possible that you are down here! you are the last man on board of the brig I expected to find here.'"³⁸ Displaying his heroism, Washington easily overpowered white opposition in both a defiant use of language and superlative physical prowess: "'Yes, sir, it is me', and instantly... got on deck, saying, 'I am going up, I cannot stay here:' he did so in spite of... resistance.'"³⁹ The revolt which took place is then dramatised in the following manner:

Madison then ran forward, and Elijah Morris fired a pistol, the ball of which grazed the back part of Mr. Gifford's head. Madison then shouted, "We have commenced, and must go through; rush, boys, rush aft; we have got them now:" calling to the slaves below, he said, "Come up every damned one of you; if you don't and lend a hand, I will kill you all and throw you overboard."⁴⁰

This excerpt raises questions concerning the "objectivity" of the white historical record, both as concerns its distorted representations of black male heroism, and

³⁶ Ibid. It was stated that the "slaves were permitted to go on deck, but the men were not allowed at night to go into the hold aft where the women were."

³⁷ Ibid., 38, 37.

³⁸ Ibid., 37.

³⁹ Ibid.

prejudices against the legitimacy of slave insurrection. Madison Washington's central role in the mutiny and the importance of male rebels, as he calls upon the "boys" for aid, is acknowledged.⁴¹ However, any endorsement of black revolutionary male slave heroism is ultimately withheld. This report encourages the reader to equate the black male figure with senseless insurrectionary violence as confirmed in Washington's warning to the slaves "if you don't lend a hand, I will kill you all." The black leader's threat is included to emphasise disintegration within the ship's black community and to strip the revolt of any potential audience identification on the grounds of ideological justification. This text was attacked by both legal and abolitionist contemporaries for evident biases.⁴² While recorded as government evidence, "The Protest," nevertheless adopts a dramatised and literary style which highlights questions of narrative and genre that forestall the later experimentation of these versions.

Upon gaining control of the ship, the slaves' actions were characterised by a magnanimous impulse as only one crew member was killed.⁴³ They succeeded in changing the ship's course to Nassau, New Providence in the Bahamas with the result that on their arrival, the British authorities freed all 135 slaves. This sparked a furious exchange between Daniel Webster, Secretary of State for the United States, and the British government.⁴⁴ Their correspondence demonstrated that a key bone of

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ In contrast to the literary and historical versions of this revolt, throughout the *Senate Documents* Madison Washington was presented as only one of four ringleaders and not the sole mastermind of the rebellion.

⁴² J.C. (April 1842) 104. This article was keen to critique the bias of the "Protest" recorded at New Orleans by suggesting that it was "altogether an *ex parte* statement, and [represents]... the strongest case, that can be made... in favour of those [with an]... interest in the rescued slaves."

⁴³ In the *Senate Documents*, Merritt emphasised Washington's magnanimity as he was "menaced with instant death by... Ben Blacksmith... [but] Madison Washington, interceded for him, and his life was spared" (25). This interpretation of Washington as a heroic leader disinclined to violence is subsequently taken up by Douglass, Brown, Child and Hopkins in their versions of this revolt.

⁴⁴ Jones (March 1975) 28-50. In this article, he provides an overview of the ensuing diplomatic negotiations as well as a meticulous reconstruction of events in.

contention was the United States' sense of enslavement to British tyrannical rule.⁴⁵ However, any attempt to conflate their identity with that of their own slaves proved ultimately impractical due to a racist code of white Southern honour.⁴⁶ Chivalric language dominated contemporary reports as Britain was castigated for demonstrating "the grace of a courtier, who acknowledges a convenient virtue."⁴⁷ As a result, during negotiations the spectre of war in defence of Southern honour and in opposition to "the absolute connivance at their crimes" which they argued was exhibited by "British authorities" became a tangible reality.⁴⁸ However, any illusion of superior British morality was quickly undermined by an Anglo-American Claims Commission's decision to award compensation in the amount of \$110,330 in 1855 to "the owners of the liberated slaves, thereby vindicating the Southern position... in the controversy."⁴⁹ Furthermore, "The Protest" of the crew was also keen to emphasise that "Three women, one girl, and a boy, concealed themselves on board of the *Creole*, and were brought to New Orleans," further speculating that "the female slaves would have... come to New Orleans, had it not been for the commands of the magistrates."⁵⁰ This extract emphasises the preference in this testimony for passive constructions of the black female slave, which are then reproduced in representations of Susan Washington by Douglass only to be challenged by Brown, Child and Hopkins.

⁴⁵ Jay (1842). Daniel Webster asks "what right had the British authorities to inquire into the cargo of the vessel, or the condition of persons on board... what duty or power... had they to inquire at all?" (8).

⁴⁶ Greenberg argues that codes of white Southern honour defined the slave's exclusion: "Honor and dishonor, like mastery and slavery, were total conditions" (1996) 62.

⁴⁷ "The *Creole* Case" (July 1842) 68.

⁴⁸ These citations represent the "Mississippi Resolutions on [the] *Creole* case" and are quoted by W. E. B. Du Bois in his painstakingly researched and meticulous work, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade To the United States of America, 1638-1870* (1896. Rpt. 1999) Appendix B, 271. The international ramifications of this revolt were not only a source of great lamentation in the abolitionist press, as they argued it discredited a self-proclaimed "democratic" government before other nations, but proved of continuing interest for later black historians in their designs to illustrate white injudicious practices.

⁴⁹ Jones (1975) 47.

⁵⁰ *Senate Documents* (1841-42) 43-44, 44.

Following the legal denouement of the event, Madison Washington disappeared from the historical record. Frank Sanborn's edited collection, *The Life and Letters of John Brown* (1885), contains the only biographical information so far which sheds light on this heroic leader after the mutiny: "a fugitive slave Thomas Thomas... was... sent by Brown to look up Madison Washington... who was wanted as a leader among the colored recruits that were to join the band of liberators; but Washington, when found, proved to be an unfit person for such a task."⁵¹ Thus, the sole reference to Washington after the *Creole* revolt, however ignoble in its connotations, connects him to black insurrectionary activity in an invitation to join John Brown's 1859 Harper's Ferry raid.⁵² However, the ambiguous connotations of the phrase "Washington proved unfit" may suggest that ill-health, or possibly even an escalating antipathy towards violence as a legitimate form of resistance, precluded his participation.

It is important to add to a discussion of the historiography of this mutiny, a brief indication of the ways in which Madison Washington and the incident itself were portrayed in pro/antislavery newspapers and the periodical press. The case of the *Amistad* having established a precedent for media interest in shipboard insurrection, the *Creole* attracted much contemporary attention.⁵³ William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator* published many reports including: "Madison Washington:

⁵¹ Sanborn ed., (1910) 133.

⁵² I am indebted to Stanley Harrold for his recent essay which drew my attention to this source in his situation of Madison Washington's heroism within a "natural rights" philosophy: "the potential of putting romanticism to practical effect was never better stated than by John Brown, who, according to his confidant Franklin B. Sanborn, actually located Madison Washington and unsuccessfully sought to enlist him in the Harpers Ferry raid." See "Romanticizing Slave Revolt: Madison Washington, the *Creole* Mutiny, and Abolitionist Celebration of Violent Means" in McKivigan Harrold, eds., (1999) 101-02.

⁵³ See chapter IV of this dissertation. Child argues that "the *Amistad* case... prepared the way for the *Creole*. A few years ago Madison Washington would have been dismissed by the American press as a 'base wretch,' 'a cut-throat,' &c. Now the press of the free States..., utters no condemnation... The spontaneous gushings of the popular heart in favour of the *Amistad* captives doubtless performed a large share of this work." "The Iron Shroud" (1842) in Karcher, ed., (1997) 219. Thus, abolitionists

Another Chapter in his History,” (1842) “The Creoles – Strike for Liberty! – The Hero Mutineers,” (1842) and the “Protest of the Officers and Crew” (1841).⁵⁴ The first of these is similar in content and style to an article published anonymously in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* during the period in which Child acted as editor.⁵⁵ Titled “Madison Washington” (1842) this text introduces the main concerns of her later version of this mutiny which bears the same title and places an equal emphasis upon domesticity (see chapter IV). Preoccupied with establishing that “Madison lost his own liberty, in trying to secure that of his wife” Child’s piece speculates on Susan’s fate as integral to political developments: “We would give much to learn whether she was on board the Creole. It would be curious indeed, if this little sub-plot of domestic love should set in motion a great game of nations, with England and the United States for actors.”⁵⁶ The article printed in *The Liberator* imitates this style and focus: “One question... we greatly wish to have answered. Is he [Madison] still without his beloved wife?... Yes, and this grave Creole matter may prove to have been but a part only of that grand game, in which the highest stake was the liberty of his dear wife.”⁵⁷ Both articles echo each other in historical non-specificity and parallel phrasing: “grand game” and “great game.” They adopt conventions of sentimentality as a way of situating black male heroism within a white ideological framework, while also mitigating its potential militancy. In condemning the United States’ predilection for war, one abolitionist tract invoked domesticity to express the

rewrote black individual acts of insurrectionary “barbarism” to establish a militant and revolutionary historical tradition of resistance.

⁵⁴ *The Liberator* 10 June, 1842; 7 Jan., 1842; 31 Dec., 1841.

⁵⁵ “Madison Washington,” *National Anti-Slavery Standard* 28 Apr., 1842: 187.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ “Madison Washington: Another Chapter in his History,” *The Liberator* 10 June, 1842.

ultimate violation of individual rights: “It is now brought home to *our* business and bosoms, to *our* firesides and bedsides.”⁵⁸

Both articles blur separate generic definitions of historical and literary discourse by including fictionalised storytelling devices in their reports. For example, the first uses phrases such as “celebrated hero,” “sub-plot” and “actors,” while the second includes: “Another Chapter in his History” (from the sub-title), as well as “scene,” “character” and “sequel.” These devices invite parallels between insurrection and performance in their characterisation of the *Creole* revolt as drama, which are further underscored in their casting of the two nations as “actors.” The fictional nature of these accounts introduces historical ambiguities and the importance of a dramatic literary (re)interpretation of the mutiny, both in the periodical press and these versions more generally. These texts also introduce one of the main considerations of this study which confirms the need to disrupt an interpretative perspective guided by a sense of history as the original source, and literature as a secondary and therefore less reliable adaptation.

The issue of the impact of forum on form, as revealed in an examination of these various texts throughout this dissertation, can be extended to an analysis of newspaper reports. Thus, it is possible to contrast these abolitionist texts with, “Mutiny and Murder” (1841), an earlier piece which was devoted to the *Creole* revolt and included in the proslavery Southern newspaper, *New Orleans Daily Picayune*.⁵⁹ The title immediately renders obvious this article’s differing agenda from the abolitionist material discussed above which details a “strike for liberty.” These descriptions of the revolt as a “desperate affray” impute black “barbarous” practices in *ad hoc* organisation and gratuitous violence. In a variation upon the “Protest,” the

⁵⁸ Jay (1842) 12, emphasis not mine.

⁵⁹ “Mutiny and Murder,” *New Orleans Daily Picayune* 3 Dec. 1841.

writer portrays this incident as an “outrage” and excludes specific references to Madison Washington. Both “the slaves commenced the attack” and “The negroes came forward, obstructed the passage from the cabin, exclaiming ‘we’ve got ’em, kill ’em as they come out,’” summarise the moment of rebellion in dismissive terms.⁶⁰ However, black homogeneity is set against a hagiographic account of individual white heroism: “Mr. Hewell, a passenger, killed one negro... and fought afterwards like a tiger until he was killed.”⁶¹ By deliberately juxtaposing generic representations of the “negroes” with an inverted evocation of bestial imagery, the author enhances exemplary descriptions of white individual resistance. This excerpt also underscores the unsophisticated racist polemics endorsed by both author and intended audience in this piece. Equally, the decision to (re)present slave language in a colloquial form serves to belie, in its insinuations of insurrectionary rather than revolutionary designs, Washington’s heroic stature. Thus, the determined rhetoric of “We have commenced, and must go through; rush, boys, rush aft; we have got them now” in the “Protest,” is reduced to murderous intent “we’ve got ’em kill ’em as they come out.” The fact that “Mutiny and Murder” applauds superior canine heroism – “It is worthy of remark that a dog, belonging to the captain, fought furiously against the negroes” - graphically illustrates the article’s fundamental racism, symptomatic of much contemporary Southern (and Northern) popular opinion.⁶²

Throughout this dissertation, it is necessary to distinguish between differences which result from precise authorial connections and those which are produced simply by processes of generic variation. The question of authorship and ownership of texts is fundamental to investigations into intertextual relationships between these works.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

In this respect, Robert Levine's recent introduction to a new edition of William Wells Brown's *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* provides an important starting point.⁶³ He argues that Brown's narrative practice throughout *Clotel*, which is characterised by reproductions and repetition from other texts, makes it "useful to think of Brown as a kind of plagiarist."⁶⁴ Levine's assessment borrows heavily from previous research by Ellen Weinauer on the etymology of "plagiarism:" "*Plagiare* is the Latin verb for 'kidnap;' a *plagiarius* is a kidnapper. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a 'plagiary' is 'one who abducts the child or slave of another, a kidnapper; a seducer; also... a literary thief.'"⁶⁵

This definition provides a useful model for exploring the relationship between authors and texts in different versions of the *Creole* slave ship revolt. In particular, an examination of the term "plagiarism" is relevant to Child's and Hopkins's authorial processes by which they copy, with more or less emendation, whole passages from Brown. Equally, Brown's texts themselves not only signal his indebtedness to Douglass for plot structure and thematic content, but also his extensive borrowing of material from longer works by Child. Levine restores the importance of the original definition of plagiarism to combine Brown's authorial status as authoritative "trickster" with that of political activist: "we could regard the slave masters themselves as 'plagiarists,' and Brown's taking of texts as a kind of kidnapping and trickery characteristic of a liberator."⁶⁶ This reconceptualisation of Brown's role seems rather forced, however, because it applauds his authorial accomplishments in overly idealistic terms. No doubt Brown copied and revised existing material with the polemical intention of seeking to undermine white racist representations of the black

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Levine (2000) 3-27.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁶⁵ Weinauer (1997) 699.

male and female slave. Yet, an examination of his oeuvre also confirms that he included sections from previous texts in an uncritical manner, simply to expedite his production of large amounts of material for circulation in abolitionist literary and political circles. In this respect, Brown repeatedly pillaged from his own material, not only to reinforce the primacy of his own experiences but also to cut corners in his research.⁶⁷

Nevertheless, Levine's view that *Clotel* "can be read as a stunning example of literary pastiche" suggests parallels with readings in this thesis, in particular, of Brown's, Child's and Hopkins's synthesis of different genres within their individual material as they "borrow[ed]... from or imitat[ed]... other works and styles."⁶⁸ In contrast to plagiarism's elisions of origins, this technique acknowledges its sources so that the reader can appreciate in full its complexities of construction.⁶⁹ This style of composition can be identified closely with the "(post)modernistic technique of bricolage" which is defined by Levine as "(re)assembling those 'found' cultural materials into something new."⁷⁰ The application of this theoretical framework to these various versions makes it possible to interpret authorial repetition across works not simply as straightforward stealing, which in some cases there is no doubt that it was, but also as autonomous statements of black male and white female narrative production.

This study considers a vast amount of excavated and recovered material which largely prevents a detailed excursus into theory. However, it is necessary to provide some working definitions of intentionality, intertextuality and signifyin(g). These

⁶⁶ Levine (2000) 6.

⁶⁷ Compare, for example, not only Brown's various versions of *Clotel*, but also his three volumes of black history which all reuse the same material in very similar ways.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 7.

⁶⁹ Weinauer (1997) 697. She argues that the "plagiarist... does not merely copy a work; she or he pretends to be its source."

terms are fundamental to a dissertation which investigates contextual and generic relationships across a variety of material. Questions of intentionality inform different types of intertextuality. First, there is that which identifies the intertextual practice of the author by analysing the core similarities and differences between all four works. This approach searches for specific internal evidence to suggest that each writer had read the other's version/s of the *Creole* revolt. Second, it is important to address the intertextual analysis undertaken, both by the critic and the reader, in a recognition of the material's borrowings from shared "stock" rhetorical and generic conventions. These were frequently drawn from material made available in the arsenal of abolition, and which resulted in the racialised production of heroic archetypes befitting to a pre-existing mould. For example, Brown's preface to his first volume of black history introduces his revised constructions of black heroic figures: "If this work shall aid in vindicating the Negro's character, and show that he is endowed with those intellectual and amiable qualities which adorn and dignify human nature, it will meet the most sanguine hopes of the writer."⁷¹ In the interests of securing black equality, Brown's statement identifies the need to revise popular stereotypes which provided the impetus for the sum total of texts produced by Douglass, Brown, Child and Hopkins during this period. In this assessment of various intertextual relationships, a cautionary note may be sounded in the need to distinguish between changes which result from self-conscious aesthetic and structural adaptation, and those which are produced by obfuscation or, put more simply, human error.

A variety of critics have produced interesting work on intertextuality and those most relevant for the purposes of this study include Jay Clayton, Eric Rothstein, Julia

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Brown, *The Black Man, His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (1863. Rpt. 1969) 6.

Kristeva and Ashraf Rushdy.⁷² Clayton and Rothstein critique Harold Bloom's theory of influence as laid down in his seminal work, *Anxiety of Influence*.⁷³ Their reformulation of an intertextual approach occupies an antagonistic position in relation to Bloom's linear understanding of "poetic influence, or the story of intra-poetic relationships."⁷⁴ In Bloom's description, the "Battle between strong equals" results in an emphasis upon "*the poet in a poet*, or the aboriginal poetic self."⁷⁵ In practice, Clayton and Rothstein isolate Bloom's narrow model of influence as contradictory to their theory of intertextuality on three accounts. First, they critique his elitism in over-emphasising the subject; second, they condemn his nonreferentiality in a straightforward disregard of subject-matter; and, third, they reject the rationale behind his production of a "severely limited canon."⁷⁶

Clayton and Rothstein's extended definition of intertextuality is useful because it broadens the scope of "influence" to "take into account the multifarious relations that can exist among authors."⁷⁷ Their model allows for relationships which can be explored along mutually inclusive rather than strategically hierarchical lines. They appeal to a wider context to demonstrate multiple influences instead of the single factor or monocausal focus posited by Bloom. Their approach uncovers the pluralist dimension of this thesis which presents a number of relationships all of equal strength. They argue that political and social realities should be considered together in their redefinition of 'the term influence to include... context,... allusion, and... tradition [which] allows one to shift one's attention from the transmissions of motifs

⁷² Clayton and Rothstein, "Figures in the Corpus: Theories of Influence and Intertextuality" in Clayton and Rothstein, eds., (1991) and Rushdy (1999).

⁷³ Bloom (1973).

⁷⁴ Ibid., 5.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁷ Clayton and Rothstein (1991) 6.

between authors to the transmutation of historically given material.”⁷⁸ This outline of intertextuality engages with the premise of this dissertation which argues for connections between a changing political context and external pressures of production, as informed by the self-conscious manipulation of generic forms.

As a crucial proponent of the term, Julia Kristeva figures prominently in debates concerning competing theories of intertextuality. For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to underline two aspects of her initial summary. First, she argues that the “text... is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another” and second, that there is a need “to replace the former, rhetorical division of genres with *a typology of texts*; that is, to define the specificity of different textual arrangements by placing them within the general text (culture) of which they are part and which is in turn, part of them.”⁷⁹ In this assessment, Kristeva highlights two of the main theoretical tenets of this study. On the one hand, she provides analysis of the internal innovations and revisions between these authors which are made clear in textual comparisons of core material. On the other, she indicates the importance of expanding and questioning generic boundaries by setting up a dynamic between formal devices and changing social, political and cultural contexts.

In her work on postcolonial fiction, Judie Newman underlines the problematics of readership in order to extend the dialogical nature of Kristeva’s term. She argues that the “intertext of a given story may be defined as the set of plots, characters, images and conventions which it brings to mind for a given reader.”⁸⁰ This view can be set alongside Michel Riffaterre’s assessment that the “term indeed refers to an operation of the reader’s mind, but it is an obligatory one, necessary to

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Kristeva (1980) 36.

any textual decoding.”⁸¹ Newman’s and Riffaterre’s preoccupation with the structural involvement of a given readership in the production of textual meaning, is relevant to this dissertation which researches works, authors, contexts and their connections to a manipulation of various audiences.

Andrews extends previous considerations of the importance of context in the production of textual meaning in order to assess intertextuality’s significance as a model within which to explore the competing formal and thematic strategies between black and white writers: “we are not likely to reckon adequately with the relationship of black and white letters in the South without first reexamining our assumptions about the ways in which authors and texts interact and/or influence each other.”⁸² In his determination “to show how a concept of intertextuality can be applied to southern writing in its earliest biracial manifestations,” Andrews draws attention to the inseparability of racialised imperatives contained within this term.⁸³ These are made evident in his coining of the term “inter(racial)textuality” to register a formal duality and point towards black theories of “signifyin(g)” which operate along equally polarised lines.

Rushdy’s recent work, *Neo-Slave Narratives: Studies in the Social Logic of a Literary Form*, builds on Andrews’s material and contributes significant scholarship to the debates surrounding questions of racial representation and intertextuality. He presents “a model for intertextual relations accounting for the complex interplay among literary texts, social processes, and cultural imperatives, showing how literary form contributes, and is partially derived from, the processes of racial formation.”⁸⁴ His framework uncovers the unavoidable racist biases in evidence within

⁸⁰ Newman (1995) 2.

⁸¹ Riffaterre (1984) 142.

⁸² Andrews in Clayton and Rothstein eds., (1991) 299.

⁸³ Ibid.

interpretations of intertextuality which presume an ideologically neutral position. He seeks to redefine intertextuality more broadly in order to consider social and political contexts: “To read intertextually is to discern how a given text creatively alludes to and possibly rewrites a predecessor text, evokes the political dynamic in the field of cultural production, and inscribes into that dialogue its concerns with the social relations in the field of power.”⁸⁵ Thus, Rushdy’s restoration of the significance of context builds on Kristeva’s and Andrews’s concerns and confirms the limitations of models of intertextuality, which produce depoliticised readings, in their sole concern with internal comparisons between works.

In his representation of the significance of race, Rushdy expands on Kristeva’s consideration of a social context and a “typology of texts.” He indicates the importance of power relations and the need to theorise the processes of marginalisation in approaches to this material. He prefers a theoretical model which “allow[s]... us to focus on the social forces that condition the relationships between (and within) texts.”⁸⁶ This approach echoes work by Riffaterre which defines an “intertext... [as] a corpus of texts, textual fragments, or text like segments of the sociolect that share a lexicon and... a syntax with the text we are reading (directly or indirectly).”⁸⁷ Both Rushdy and Riffaterre identify the interdependence of literary and social texts, as the latter become significant as a site of competing textual signifiers.

In any consideration of intertextual relationships between American and African American works, it is necessary to discuss Henry Louis Gates’s seminal work, *The Signifying Monkey*, and his descriptions of black theories of

⁸⁴ Rushdy (1999) 7.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 14.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 15.

⁸⁷ Riffaterre (1984) 142.

“signifyin(g).”⁸⁸ This book has proved influential in establishing the framework for a number of critics whose area of research is black literature.⁸⁹ Gates makes explicit the link between intertextuality and “signifyin(g).” He signals his “intention... to define an indigenous black metaphor for intertextuality as configured in Afro-American formal literary discourse.”⁹⁰ Gates’s definitions of “signifyin(g)” are rooted in a binary categorisation and conceptualise the “(poetical, semantic) confrontation between two parallel discursive universes: the black American linguistic circle and the white.”⁹¹ Thus, in imitation of Andrews’s coinage of “Inter(racial)textuality,” Gates’s theoretical position exposes embedded racist imperatives which are commonly neutralised in the term “intertextuality.” His aim is both to explore constructions of racial difference and to destabilise the hegemony of a white dominant order.

Gates’s focus is primarily on racialised constructions of language and his theoretical distinction between white “signifying” and black “signifyin(g)” reinscribes the essentialism he seeks to evade.⁹² He explicates the complexities of identity formation: “The... g [erased]... stands as the trace of black difference in a remarkably sophisticated and fascinating (re)naming ritual... The absent g is a figure for the Signifyin(g) black difference.”⁹³ His sustained complication of linguistic practices “challenge[s] through a literal critique of the sign the meaning of meaning.”⁹⁴ As far

⁸⁸ Gates Jr., (1988).

⁸⁹ These include: Euell, “Signifyin(g) Ritual: Subverting Stereotypes, Salvaging Icons,” *African American Review* 31.4 (1997): 667-75; Lubiano, “Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and African American Literary Discourse,” *New England Quarterly* 62.4 (December 1989): 561-72; Lyne, “The Signifying Modernist: Ralph Ellison and the Limits of the Double Consciousness,” *PMLA* 107.2 (March 1992): 319-30.

⁹⁰ Gates Jr., (1988) 59.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 46.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

as points of contact between his theories of signification and wider interpretations of intertextuality are concerned, Gates summarises as follows:

Signifyin(g) is black double-voicedness; because it always entails formal revision and an intertextual relation... I find it an ideal metaphor for black literary criticism, for the formal manner in which texts seem concerned to address their antecedents. Repetition, with a signal difference, is fundamental to the nature of Signifyin(g).⁹⁵

“Signifyin(g)” represents simultaneously linked intertextual relationships between black authors and also the “ambiguities of language” via improvisation and verbal play.⁹⁶ For Gates, both aspects combine to refute white constructions of a direct correlation between the signifier and the signified. This effect is produced in the constant deferral of referential meaning: “Signifyin(g) turns on the play and chain of signifiers, and not on some supposedly transcendent signified.”⁹⁷

There is no doubt that Gates’s racially demarcated theories of “signifyin(g)” reconceptualise white Euroamerican investigations into intertextuality in useful ways. One of the major benefits results from his exposure of insidious strategies which aim to naturalise ideological positions in the production of textual meaning. However, while not engaging directly with Gates, this dissertation resists his theory on three major points. First, as a result of the investigation in this study into the relationship between ambiguities of racial representation and generic forms, this research counters his view, affirmed by the repeated phrase “double voiced,” that racial identity is structured in dichotomised ways in these texts. This polarisation is refuted by blurrings of authorial identity, varied narrative positioning, and the adoption of alternative and racialised narrative voices in these versions. Second, this dissertation argues for the importance of class and gender considerations in order to dismiss

⁹⁵ Ibid., 51. Gates’s emphasis in this text on “Signifyin(g) as the slave’s trope” (52) provides another important point for consideration.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 52.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Gates's oversimplified focus on race as the primary theoretical factor. Finally, it is possible to contest his straightforward distinction between "signifyin(g)" as an oral medium, and "intertextuality" as characteristically literary, by examining dialect conventions and the literary representations of black orality more generally.

Questions such as those surrounding the maritime setting of the *Creole* revolt abound in this thesis and, in particular, present the sea and the ship as occupying a distinct, ideological space. A variety of critics, including Maggie Sale, Michel Foucault, and Paul Gilroy, interrogate the aesthetic and structural implications of this context in connection with the possibilities of resistance. Sale positions the ship as an alternative social structure which empowers a marginal group: "Ships are bounded spaces with limited and relatively set, though changeable, populations, characteristics that increased the likelihood of successful revolt."⁹⁸ She demonstrates their metaphoric significance in literary terms as the "confined space, limited population, and mobility of ships made them also an unusual symbolic space in which fiction writers were able to imagine situations that could not be posed as plausibly on land," and describes their operation as showcases for (black) male heroism by noting that these "ships were masculine spaces."⁹⁹ Thus, she situates shipboard rebellions within a fluid and undefined political and social space which is nevertheless rigorously demarcated by gender.

Michel Foucault describes the ship as "the heterotopia *par excellence*."¹⁰⁰ His analysis of various "heterotopian" models describes "the boat... [as] a floating piece a space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea... [and is] simultaneously the

⁹⁸ Sale (1997) 58.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁰⁰ Foucault (1986) 27.

greatest reserve of the imagination.”¹⁰¹ This interpretation is useful for texts which dramatise the ship as a liminal space in order to collapse rigid social distinctions and encourage an indeterminacy of ideological meaning in an “unreal” place, predicated on the “real.”¹⁰² Furthermore, Paul Gilroy presents the sea and the ship as indispensable to his theoretical framework extending the scope of national paradigms for black history. In *The Black Atlantic*, he explains that “I have settled on the image of ships in motion... as a central organising symbol for this enterprise and as my starting point.”¹⁰³ In his research, ships represent “micro-systems of linguistic and political hybridity” and as such they “need to be thought of as cultural and political units rather than abstract embodiments of the triangular trade.”¹⁰⁴ This study engages with Gilroy’s sense of the ship in two ways: both in relation to his emphasis upon the sea as an alternative symbolic space and its representative significance as an intersection of cultural boundaries in the “transatlantic” model.

For contemporary white commentators on the *Creole* revolt, the sea offered both niceties of legal distinctions and a significant backdrop for the performance of exemplary and “natural” heroism. Thus, Daniel Webster invoked the sea to resist British political interference: “English soil... is the appropriate sphere for the operation of English law. The ocean is the sphere of the law of nations.”¹⁰⁵ However, with a different emphasis, one abolitionist applauded “the free, the untamed sea, [which] disdains the puny grasp of the mightiest of earthly despots – [and] laughs to scorn ‘the peculiar institutions.’”¹⁰⁶ This assessment echoes the polemics of Frederick

¹⁰¹ Ibid. Foucault’s working definition of heterotopia is as “a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live” (24).

¹⁰² Sale (1997). She argues that “Ships by their very nature are liminal spaces that move between state and national boundaries” (28).

¹⁰³ Gilroy (1993) 4.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 12, 17.

¹⁰⁵ Webster’s letter to Lord Ashburton in *Correspondence between Mr. Webster and Lord Ashburton... on McLeod’s Case... on the Creole case... on the subject of impressment* (Washington, 1842) 27.

¹⁰⁶ Jay (1842) 20-21.

Douglass's speeches on this revolt, which represented the sea as transcendental natural law: "The restless waves will not permit those bloody statutes [of slavery] to be recorded there; those foaming billows forbid it; old ocean gnawing with its hungry surges upon our rockbound coast preaches a lesson to American soil."¹⁰⁷ Thus, for Douglass, the sea provided a suitable forum within which to articulate and enjoy individual rights unimpeded by artificial social constructions.

This thesis provides an extended treatment of Douglass's oratorical and written versions of the *Creole* revolt because he produced an enormous wealth of untreated and/or insufficiently considered material. Chapter I considers his relevant speeches of the 1840s and 1850s in order to analyse his strategies for dramatising black male slave heroism and insurrection before transatlantic and racially diverse audiences. This chapter also investigates Douglass's abolitionist antecedents, the influential figures of David Walker, Henry Highland Garnet and Gerrit Smith, to examine his narrative practice and the formal processes by which he imitated, extended and innovated upon, traditions established previously. Chapter II explores in depth Douglass's written texts, *The Heroic Slave* (1853) and, *The Heroic Slave, A Thrilling Narrative of the Adventures of Madison Washington, In Pursuit of Liberty* (1853/1863?). While the first section of this chapter discusses his novella, *The Heroic Slave* (1853), in terms of its heavy borrowings, previously unnoticed, of the dramatic form, the concluding section compares this text with a recently discovered second version which introduces a range of bibliographical and literary ambiguities. In this latter discussion, a major point of analysis concerns whether Douglass himself was involved in the many editorial changes made, or whether this piece represents a "pirate" edition.

¹⁰⁷ Douglass (SSV 158).

The second half of this dissertation considers works by Brown, Child and Hopkins to analyse the intertextual relationships between their versions of the *Creole* revolt. This research confirms the extent to which these three authors were indebted to Douglass for their literary-historical interpretations of this event. Chapter III discusses Brown's texts on the *Creole* revolt, "Madison Washington" (1861, 1863) and "Slave Revolt at Sea" (1867), to contextualise their publication, not only in a post-emancipation context but also in varying arenas, including "pioneering" volumes of black history and a black northern race periodical. This chapter considers historical material produced contemporaneously by the black abolitionist and historian, William C. Nell, to demonstrate Brown's innovations upon established generic conventions. This research also investigates his antislavery panorama which represents one of the earliest antebellum texts to discuss the *Creole* revolt, and raises debates concerning Brown's experimentation with form, representation of the black male and female historical figure, and engagement with diverse audiences. Furthermore, this research into Brown's material on the *Creole* revolt provides a useful case study by which to (re)interpret his intertextual relationships with Hopkins and Child.

The final chapter of this dissertation combines research into Child's and Hopkins's accounts of the *Creole* revolt as they both revised Douglass's and Brown's earlier representations of gender. In particular, both authors engaged with the ways in which slavery violated the black female slave in their critique of black, as well as white, male interpretations of the revolt. Child's "Madison Washington" (1866) and Hopkins's "A Dash for Liberty," (1901) award Susan Washington greater agency than she had previously been given by either Douglass or Brown. However, this chapter also debates Child's publication of her version in *The Freedmen's Book* (1866) which confirms her accommodationist political stance when compared with Hopkins's text,

published in a radical black northern magazine. This research examines “Madison Washington” and “A Dash for Liberty” in relation, not only to each other, but also to Brown’s texts published previously, as they corroborate the existence of a diverse literary-historical exchange. Finally, this thesis discusses the most recent adaptation of this mutiny, *Madison* (1956), a never-performed musical written and composed by the black playwright, Theodore Ward. This research raises questions of black theatricality and performance in relation to varying dramatisations of black heroism, while also drawing together the investigation in this dissertation into Douglass’s, Brown’s, Child’s and Hopkins’s versions of the *Creole* revolt.

Thomas W. Higginson introduces this dissertation and its title in one of his essays which debates black slave heroism: “No doubt, there were enough special torches with which a man so skilful as Denmark Vesey could kindle up these dusky powder-magazines; but, after all, the permanent peril lay in the powder.”¹⁰⁸ His literary casting of black slaves as “dusky powder magazines” restores black individual subjectivity, while his argument that “the permanent peril lay in the powder” impresses a sense of latent physical slave power. His comment set out in the title of this introduction - “introducing the *Dramatic Personae*” - prefaces his account of Denmark Vesey’s resistance and constructs the theatrical stage upon which to represent black slave rebellion.¹⁰⁹ Thus, Higginson’s statement introduces the theoretical framework for this study which, not only juxtaposes form with context, but also introduces questions of spectacle and performance in discursive representations of the black male and female slave body.

¹⁰⁸ Higginson, “Denmark Vesey” (June 1861) 743. Higginson wrote a number of other articles devoted to male slave insurrectionists which were published in the *Atlantic Monthly* and variously titled, “Gabriel’s Defeat,” (Sep. 1862): 337-45 and, “Nat Turner’s Insurrection,” (Aug. 1861): 173-87. He later published all three articles alongside a narration of maroon communities in Jamaica. See *Black Rebellion: Five Slave Revolts* (Rpt. McPherson, ed., 1969).

¹⁰⁹ Higginson (June 1861) 730.

CHAPTER I

“A Fine Young Negro:” Language as a Double-Edged Tool and the Black Heroic Slave in Frederick Douglass’s Speeches on the *Creole* Revolt

... allow me to say that there has been a little misunderstanding between myself and the Reporter of one of your papers... the Reporter took occasion to speak of me as a fine young Negro. Well, that is the mode of advertising in our country a slave for sale. I took occasion to allude to the apparent sweeping manner in which I was spoken of; but I find from information which I have received that the gentleman... had no intention to sneer or speak slightly of me or the Negro race at all. I am glad to know it.

Frederick Douglass (1845)¹

This chapter compares and contrasts Frederick Douglass’s major speeches on the *Creole* revolt which he gave shortly before, during and after, his first visit to Britain in the mid-1840s. Douglass’s oratorical material testifies to the dramatic features which recur in his narration of this mutiny, both in his speeches and his various written texts, which have been previously overlooked by critics. These dramatic conventions are revealed not only by an examination of internal evidence, in an analysis of the dynamics at play within Douglass’s written works, but also by a consideration of external factors. These include a comparative investigation of Douglass’s written material with dramatic works by his contemporaries, including William Wells Brown, Lydia Maria Child and Pauline Hopkins for example (see chapter II), as well as by situating his texts within a context of his previous work as an abolitionist orator. Thus, Douglass’s addresses on the *Creole* revolt possess an

ambiguous generic status as they functioned both as oral performances, given as part of Douglass's lecturing tours in Britain and America, and written texts, circulated for contribution to debates in the abolitionist press. As such, they provide insights into Douglass's innovations upon various generic forms such as the slave narrative, as well as his preferred approach which included historical research and fictional adaptation, for example.

Douglass's speeches, in their varying presentation of the same material, debate the relationship between black heroic representation and dramatic spectacle, audience identity and reader response. His awareness of the differing ways in which his material would be understood in both an immediate and a more enduring context, had many implications for critical interpretations of these texts in relation to his intended audience. This chapter examines Douglass's selective development of literary motifs to argue in favour, not only of his narrative complexity in works on the *Creole* revolt, but also of the dramatic elements in his written material. Furthermore, specific investigations into Douglass's speeches confirm, first of all, his decision to situate black male slave heroism within a framework of white revolutionary rhetoric to destabilise the exclusivity of white rhetorical claims to an "American" national identity. Second, this research shows that his minimal descriptions of black violence were designed to convert his audience to black equality, and to refute discourses suggestive of black "barbarity" current in common parlance. Third, these speeches testified to Douglass's changing didactic agendas as he manipulated the "electrical effects" of a transatlantic context by knowingly juxtaposing British and North American audiences.²

¹ Douglass (*APC* 66).

² Douglass (*SSV* 156). Douglass employs dramatic imagery to emphasise the international implications of the *Creole* slave ship revolt: "The news came across the Atlantic with electrical effect."

Douglass's 1853 version of *The Heroic Slave*, published in the first volume of the antislavery giftbook, *Autographs for Freedom*, and edited by Julia Griffiths, has received by far the most significant amount of critical attention in comparison with his other texts on the *Creole* revolt. This attention must preface investigations, not only into the dramatic elements of *The Heroic Slave* (see chapter II) but also Douglass's adaptations and innovations with form and context in his speeches, as it indicates the superficiality of readings which underplay his generic innovation. *The Heroic Slave*'s generic composition combines the oratorical form of Douglass's addresses with a highly literary style which includes significant borrowings from the slave narrative form. These are evident in his choice of narrative structure, inclusion of documentation designed to authenticate his experience, preoccupation with abolitionist conversion through moral suasion, and representations of the chief-protagonist as heroic male slave exemplar along pre-set lines. An in-depth analysis of Douglass's narrative structure in *The Heroic Slave*, when considered alongside an assessment of generic experimentation in his speeches, refutes critical readings such as those posited by Robert Stepto, which understand his literary "strategy... as [as] simple as it is effective."³

An overview of the critical material on *The Heroic Slave* reveals that it has been dismissed as inferior literature by many readers, including Mary K. Davis, due to "Douglass's reliance on summary rather than scene... [which] suggests that it is not the medium but the message that counts here."⁴ This text has also been understood as a reworking of slave narrative conventions to the exclusion of the ways in which authorial complications defy such an exclusive adherence to this form. For example, William L. Andrews argues that "*The Heroic Slave* reads in some ways like a

³ Stepto (1986) 147.

⁴ Davis (1984) 49.

historical novel pared down to the basic plot of the slave narrative, the quest for freedom.”⁵ Similarly, in Maggie M. Sale’s view, the text can be categorised as a “fictionalised slave narrative.”⁶ Nonetheless, implicitly, both Andrews and Sale acknowledge *The Heroic Slave*’s complicated inclusion of the slave narrative form as they describe additional elements designed to fictionalise and historicise. In his account, Eric Sundquist equates authorial self with text, Frederick Douglass with Madison Washington. He suggests that Douglass’s “one short story, ‘The Heroic Slave,’ offered [him]... the opportunity to revise the previous account of his life and publish a new ‘edition’ of himself.”⁷ William McFeely dismisses Douglass’s characterisation more generally as superficial by stating that, in comparison with Melville’s *Benito Cereno*, “Madison [has]... no ambiguity and far less depth.”⁸ However, McFeely’s descriptions of this work as “historical fiction” broadens this definition to underscore the importance of the *Creole* revolt while drawing attention to Douglass’s source material.⁹

Paul C. Jones’s recent essay on *The Heroic Slave* confirms that he is the only reader to recognise, to any great extent, Douglass’s complex manipulation of narrative form. Jones interprets this text “as an attempt by a black writer to employ the traditionally white genre of historical romance... to examine the complicated relationship between ‘master genres’ and black efforts to write within those genres.”¹⁰ In this view, he has very recently been joined by Thomas Cooley who describes, but does not really develop, his assessment of Douglass’s work as “the first extended

⁵ See Andrews’s comparison of Douglass’s text with Brown’s *Clotel* and Frank Webb’s *The Garies* in his article, “The Novelization of Voice in Early African American Narratives” (1990) 27.

⁶ Sale (1992) 702.

⁷ Sundquist (1993) 105.

⁸ McFeely (1991) 175.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁰ Jones (2000) 79.

‘black’ historical romance, or romance of black history.”¹¹ As a critic of this work, in recognising its generic sophistication and diversity, Jones also identifies Douglass’s techniques which communicate a self-conscious and “stark departure” from received tropes of the southern historical romance.¹² However, Jones’s argument that *The Heroic Slave* “is a conscious imitation, or copy, of a white form” repeats previously overly simplistic interpretations of Douglass’s composition, and neglects to consider his interventionist stance in a blurred appropriation of various genres reminiscent of literary “pastiche.”¹³ Furthermore, Jones’s analysis is tinged with essentialism in his automatic assumptions concerning “the subversion that occurred when a black writer simply picked up a pen and wrote in the dominant mode.”¹⁴ However, his explicit analysis of Douglass’s engagement with, and intervention into, a contemporary “Southern” genre acts as a useful precedent for this research which argues for his previously unconsidered adaptation of dramatic forms.

Thus, while the slave narrative, “Southern” romance, and elements of historical discourse can be found in *The Heroic Slave*, in the context of Douglass’s preferred theatrical style in his speeches on the *Creole* revolt, it would seem more important to consider this text’s deliberate introduction of identifiable dramatic conventions. Shelley Fisher Fishkin and Carla Peterson’s contention that the work illustrates Douglass’s turn to “techniques of fiction to accomplish what factual writing would not allow him to do,” provides an apposite starting point for this discussion.¹⁵ Despite the critical debates which surround Douglass’s use of generic form in *The Heroic Slave*, no critic has ever considered this text as a highly dramatic piece of writing, much less as a play. Some critics have gone even further in readings

¹¹ Cooley (2001) 138.

¹² Jones (2000) 81.

¹³ Ibid., 79.

¹⁴ Ibid., 89.

designed to challenge critical consideration of *The Heroic Slave*'s complexity. As "a short story," Davis claims that Douglass's work is "simply structured, and almost void of dramatic action. What the story lacks in dramatic action... it makes up for in sentiment."¹⁶ In contrast to the preferred interpretation of this and the next chapter, Davis posits sentimentality and dramatic construction as mutually exclusive techniques. Ann-Marie E. Karlsson condemns "the static feel of the novella" to dismiss Douglass as "an inexperienced writer of fiction."¹⁷ It is this negative view of Douglass as incompetent author which this research seeks to challenge. In the development of a theoretical approach which emphasises the remarkable subtlety and artistry of composition of *The Heroic Slave* and his speeches on this mutiny, Douglass's interweaving of various generic forms and dramatic techniques can be understood as testifying to his accomplishments as an author, rather than as evidence of his limitations.¹⁸

Prior to his first formal written adaptation of the *Creole* mutiny in 1853, Maggie M. Sale suggests that Douglass gave "at least six speeches" on this event.¹⁹ She lists the following titles: "American Prejudice Against Color" (Ireland, October 1845), "America's Compromise with Slavery and the Abolitionists' Work" (Scotland, April 1846), "American and Scottish Prejudice Against the Slave" (Scotland, May 1846), "Farewell to the British People" (London March 1847), "The Slaves' Right to Revolt" (Boston, May 1848), and "Slavery, the Slumbering Volcano" (New York,

¹⁵ Fishkin and Peterson in Sundquist, ed., (1990) 198.

¹⁶ Davis (1984) 15, 46.

¹⁷ Karlsson (1995) 19, 17.

¹⁸ There is far less critical scholarship on Douglass's *The Heroic Slave*, than there is on reworkings of his various autobiographical texts. Nevertheless, in terms of the authors under discussion in this dissertation, *The Heroic Slave* is given by far the most consideration.

¹⁹ Sale (1997) 241.

April 1849).²⁰ Due to their very brief treatment of the revolt, this chapter devotes less attention to “America’s Compromise with Slavery” and “Farewell to the British People.” However, as a result of this research, it is now possible to extend Douglass’s “oeuvre” to include two additional texts on the *Creole* revolt which he delivered and/or composed at much later dates. Thus, he gave his address, “West India Emancipation” (New York, May 1857) at the height of North American abolitionist pamphleteering, while he performed “A Black Hero” (August 1861) amidst the turmoil of Civil War.²¹ These later texts are notable for their separatist politics, as they provide a dedicated espousal of a black militant tradition and view Madison Washington as one of many “Negro heroes.”²²

The extant texts for each of Douglass’s addresses on the *Creole* revolt vary substantially and confirm the influence that changing political, social and historical contexts had on his method of composition and selection of material. They facilitate the placement of his activism within a tradition, frequently adversarial, of black and white male abolitionism, including such influential figures as David Walker, Henry Highland Garnet and Gerrit Smith. These addresses also provide competing dramatisations of Madison and Susan Washington, while they revise and extend the

²⁰ For Douglass’s speeches on Madison Washington and the *Creole* revolt before 1853, see the following texts: “American Prejudice Against Color: An Address Delivered in Cork, Ireland, October 23, 1845” in Blassingame, ed., (1979) 1: 59-70; “America’s Compromise with Slavery and the Abolitionists’ work: An Address Delivered in Paisley, Scotland, on 6 April, 1846” in Blassingame, ed., (1979) 1: 209-15; “American and Scottish Prejudice against the Slave: An Address Delivered in Edinburgh, Scotland, on May 1, 1846” in Blassingame, ed., (1979) 1: 243-49; “Farewell to the British People: An Address Delivered in London, England, on March 30, 1847” in Blassingame, ed., (1979) 2: 19-52; “The Slaves’ Right to Revolt: An Address Delivered in Boston, Mass., May 30, 1848” in Blassingame, ed., (1979) 2: 130-32; finally, “Slavery, the Slumbering Volcano: An Address Delivered in New York, on April 23, 1849” in Blassingame, ed., (1979) 2: 148-58.

²¹ Douglass published “A Black Hero” in *Douglass’ Monthly* (1861. Rpt. Foner, ed., (1950) 3: 132-35.

²² For example, “A Black Hero” (1861) dramatises William Tillman’s “daring and heroic deeds” during the Civil War, to emphasise that a “Love of liberty alone inspired him [Tillman]... as it had inspired Denmark Vesey, Nathaniel Turner, Madison Washington, Toussaint L’Ouverture, Shields Green, Copeland, and other negro heroes before him” (Rpt. Foner, ed., 1950) 3: 134. Similarly, Douglass’s “West India Emancipation” distinguishes between “black” insurrection and “white revolution” to argue that “Madison Washington who struck down his oppressor on the deck of the *Creole*, is more worthy to be remembered than the colored man who shot Pitcairn at Bunker Hill” (Rpt. Foner, ed., 1950) 2: 438.

available formal conventions within which black male and female slave heroism could be portrayed. Overall, Douglass's decision to include this material succeeded in countering white racial stereotyping of the black male slave. Throughout, he developed Madison Washington as a representative figure, an individual heroic exemplar, nonetheless keen to preserve black community interests as identified in these texts by his need to secure the rights of the black domestic family.

As the only critic to discuss Douglass's speeches on the *Creole* revolt in any depth, Sale's suggestion that he "act[ed]... the part of [the] historian, retelling the rebel leader's story and interpreting its significance for his audience" provides a good starting point from which to consider his oratorical material.²³ However, while identifying Douglass's complex status as a "historian" engaged in translating important events for his audience, this view neglects to consider the role played by these works in assessing his importance as a slave narrator and storyteller. Thus, his addresses were distinctive for their engagement with techniques which fictionalised and dramatised this event in order to serve his changing political agenda. Cooley provides some discussion of these speeches in his analysis of *The Heroic Slave*; he argues, for example, that Douglass "could be more bold in his fiction than in his speeches to white audiences, where he sometimes seemed to concede 'the inferiority of our race.'"²⁴ This chapter's examination of Douglass's speeches is contextualised by a consideration of his importance within influential black and white abolitionist

²³ Sale (1997) 197. Sundquist compares Douglass's speeches with *The Heroic Slave* in terms of their competing agendas: "Whereas Douglass's speeches place some emphasis on Madison Washington's African features, his blackness, and on his relationship to other black rebels such as Turner and Cinque, 'The Heroic Slave' is carefully modulated to appeal to a white antislavery audience and dwells more on the principles of revolution than on the actual revolt aboard the *Creole*" See Sundquist (1993) 117-18. Sundquist's view is limited, first, because he neglects to consider Douglass's complex targeting of both black and white audiences in his speeches and second, as he fails to see that Douglass's speeches and his novella dramatise the moment of insurrection in equally abbreviated form.

²⁴ Cooley (2001) 142. He discusses Douglass's speech, "American Prejudice Against Color" (1845), in terms of racial equivocation and suspected inferiority, while paying cursory attention to a couple of the others (which remain unspecified) in his analysis of the *Creole* revolt.

traditions, as well as his development of dramatic tropes which were to assume fundamental significance in his written texts on the *Creole* revolt.

The few but important speeches which Douglass gave on the *Creole* revolt confirm his technical and thematic borrowings from militant black and white abolitionists such as David Walker, Henry Highland Garnet and Gerrit Smith. His written material shows the political and aesthetic influences of Walker and Garnet, while Smith's essential financial support exerted its own pressures. Overall, a study of their oratorical and pamphlet material is relevant for an examination of Douglass's complex polemics and contributions to an evolving, explicitly black and overtly male, abolitionist discourse. An earlier forebear, Walker established a powerful insurrectionary pamphleteering style which evoked a separatist code for black masculinity derived from white revolutionary values that proved indispensable to Douglass. Walker's style furnished a useful model for the radical rhetoric Douglass employed in his oratorical set pieces on this revolt while, in his written versions of this mutiny in particular, he awarded due recognition to both Garnet and Smith. Douglass included Garnet as a central black advisory figure to Madison Washington in some of his speeches, while he mentioned Smith in *The Heroic Slave* as the moral guide for his character, the satirically named white abolitionist, "Listwell."²⁵ The fact that Douglass chose to present the life of Madison Washington, self-emancipated leader of a slave ship revolt, across a range of genres confirms his preference for dramatising successful black heroism before white and black audiences. His aims

²⁵ McKivigan considers the relationship between Gerrit Smith and Frederick Douglass in his article, "The Frederick Douglass-Gerrit Smith Friendship and Political Abolitionism in the 1850s" in Sundquist, ed., (1990) 205-32. According to McKivigan, this friendship "solidified in the early 1850s and contributed to Douglass's acrimonious break with his original abolitionist associates, the followers of... William Lloyd Garrison" (205). He emphasises a direct connection between Smith's financial support of Douglass and his increasing aesthetic autonomy: "Smith's financial assistance put Douglass's newspaper on a more secure footing and gave him the opportunity to improve his journalistic skills... Douglass found his... friendship with Smith, more acceptable to his growing sense

were both to secure white conversion to abolitionism by identifying black resistance with a “white” natural rights philosophy, and to serve a didactic agenda and inspire in his audience additional black heroism through the projection of role models.

Walker’s influence on Douglass can be inferred from an analysis of his controversial text, *Appeal, in Four Articles, Together With A Preamble, to the Colored Citizens of the World, but in particular, and very expressly to those of the United States of America*.²⁶ This work, as reprinted by Garnet, is reproduced from the second edition published in 1830 (three versions were written by Walker in total). The frontispiece to this tract confirms Walker’s editorial control as he supplied his own “corrections.” His designated audience - “the Colored Citizens of the World” - emphasises his interest, largely unprecedented, in reaching a black readership, both slave and free. This phrase registers a preoccupation with a black male audience in the same way that Douglass’s title for his 1853 text, *The Heroic Slave*, points to the gendered (male) nature of his “hero:” namely, by the omission of gender markers. By way of further corroboration, Walker’s most bitter invective betrays a prescriptive interest in gender: “Are we MEN!! – I ask you, O my brethren! are we MEN.”²⁷

Peter P. Hinks acknowledges Walker’s extensive marketing strategies in positing his “covert communication network in the South” as “one of the boldest and most innovative plans for slave empowerment and resistance ever executed in

of personal self-confidence and racial pride,” (205) while drawing attention to the key point that Smith “did not demand subservience from the black editor” (224).

²⁶ Walker (1830. Rpt. 1848. Rpt. 1969). In his “Preface,” Garnet describes this text as, “among the first, and was actually the boldest and most direct appeal in behalf of freedom, which was made in the early part of the Anti-Slavery Reformation” (iii). For a good recent study of this text which considers Walker’s contribution to contemporary debates concerning the legitimacy of black violence and black representation, see Hinks (1997). Hinks situates “Walker in the context of the South” (xv), in order to redress current critical thinking by positioning “Walker and his booklet [within]... the mainstream of the blossoming black reform movement of the late 1820s” (109).

²⁷ Walker (1848) 27.

America.”²⁸ In this view, one of the most radical implications of Walker’s text concerns the fact that he succeeded in reaching a Southern slave audience. Thus, while Walker’s *Appeal* was circulated as a written text, his intention was that it should also be reproduced in oral form to reach a wider (and most likely, largely illiterate) black audience. This design reflects Lydia Maria Child’s preferred strategy for distributing her educational tract, *The Freedmen’s Book* (1866) to an ex-slave audience. One of the corrections which Walker includes in a footnote to his second edition laments the fact that “Some of my brethren..., do not take an interest in enlightening the minds of our more ignorant brethren respecting this *Book*, and in reading it to them.”²⁹ He believed that his *Appeal* should function as a social text and that, reproduced in oral form, it would succeed in being distributed by and contributing to established community relationships.

Walker’s *Appeal* is distinctive for its initial deployment of tropes which became central to the literary and historical texts produced by Douglass during the later abolitionist period. These devices include irony and a self-conscious manipulation of bestial imagery. Thus, the statement “But we, (colored people) and our children are *brutes!!* and of course are and ought to be SLAVES,” can be juxtaposed with motifs which recur in both Douglass’s speeches and his novella.³⁰ For example, in *The Heroic Slave*, he manipulates animal imagery for purposes of inversion, in order to reflect the degeneracy of the black male body during slavery back onto white slaveholders. Thus, Madison avows: ““They [slaveholders] had transformed me into a brute”” (*HS* 195). In order to reinforce abolitionist tactics

²⁸ Hinks (1997) xiv; xv. For a further investigation into this view, see Eaton (1936) 322-34. While characterising Walker as a “fanatic” (324), Eaton concludes that this “pamphlet represented virtually the first impact of incendiary literature on the Southern states” (333).

²⁹ Walker (1848) 81. Hinks’s previously mentioned critical biography on David Walker drew my attention to Walker’s signposting of his intended audience in the third edition. See Hinks (1997) 107.

³⁰ Walker (1848) 17.

preoccupied with subverting white constructions of black manhood in bestial terms, Douglass argues in his perhaps most famous speech, “‘What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?’” (1852), that “The manhood of the slave is... admitted in the... enactments forbidding... the teaching the slave to read or to write.- When you can point to any such laws, in reference to the beasts of the field, then I may consent to argue the manhood of the slave.”³¹ His manipulation of legal evidence condemns white attempts to equate black slaves with animals and highlights their acceptance, if only in judicial terms, of black humanity.

In his *Appeal*, Walker legitimises black violence by reiterating the connection between manhood and resistance: “The man who would not fight... ought to be kept with all of his children or family, in slavery, or in chains.”³² However, Hinks refutes potential misinterpretations concerning Walker’s evocation of violence in this extract. He argues instead that this text placed the onus upon rhetorical protest and “pertained much more to spreading knowledge among blacks and uplifting their characters than it did to violent resistance and slave revolt.”³³ While this reading holds good, and it is possible to conclude that the significance of Walker’s text as an abolitionist tract lay in its intention to effect (white) conversion to black equality solely through moral suasion, there is no doubt that he also hoped to incite practical resistance. In this context, the militant connotations of “fight” are undeniable. An understanding of Walker’s polemical intent explains the attempts of his white racist contemporaries to establish a cause and effect relationship between this work and Nat Turner’s slave rebellion in 1831.

Hinks’s reading points to the ways in which Walker’s militant rhetoric anticipated Douglass’s voicing of a radical relationship between language and

³¹ Douglass, “‘What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?’”(1852) in Andrews, ed., (1996) 117.

³² Walker (1848) 23.

performance in his representations of physical rebellion in this material. For example, in, “Men of Color, To Arms!” (1863), a speech rallying black troops to join the Civil War, Douglass employed rousing rhetoric to support his campaigns for black military recruits: “Words are now useful only as they stimulate to blows... Liberty won by white men would lose half its lustre. Who would be free themselves must strike the blow.”³⁴ Douglass’s inclusion of this quotation from Byron’s *Childe Harold* and his emphasis upon Patrick Henry’s phrase, “Liberty or death,” are repeated features in his written and oratorical material on the *Creole* revolt. At the start of Part IV which dramatises the moment of rebellion in *The Heroic Slave*, Douglass reproduces this same citation from *Childe Harold* (HS 225). His later speech, “West India Emancipation,” (discussed above) also echoes this material: “The general sentiment of mankind is, that a man who will not fight for himself... is not worth being fought for by others, and this sentiment is just... ‘Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow.’”³⁵ Douglass’s phrasing in these texts has the effect of questioning abolitionist investments in complex relationships between language and action, communal and individual heroism, and rhetoric and representation.

In terms of form, significant parallels exist between Walker and Douglass in their shared evocation of natural imagery to endorse black violence as a legitimate form of resistance. It is useful to compare Walker’s emphasis upon the inevitability of insurrection to secure the overthrow of slavery - “As true as the sun ever shone in its meridian splendor, my colour will root some of them [whites] out of the very face of the earth” - with Douglass’s incorporation of natural phenomena in order to

³³ Hinks (1997) 108.

³⁴ Douglass, “Men of Color, To Arms!” (1863) in Andrews, ed., (1996) 224.

³⁵ Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 225 and “West India Emancipation” (1857) in Foner, ed., (1950) 2: 435-36.

condemn white racist agendas.³⁶ Douglass's critique of white tendencies to exclude Madison Washington from the historical record in *The Heroic Slave* evokes a Romanticised setting: "like the gray peak of a menacing rock on a perilous coast, he is seen by the quivering flash of angry lightning, and he again disappears covered with mystery" (*HS* 175). An earlier speech confirms his association of the "spectre" of black freedom with natural symbolism as a way of tapping into white audience fears: "From the round top of your ship of state, dark and threatening clouds may be seen... That *bolt* drawn, that *chain* broken, and all is lost."³⁷ Thus, Douglass's manipulation of natural imagery underscores the inevitability of vengeance and develops a paradigm for black heroic representation contingent upon the practical enactment of a "natural" rights philosophy within a Romanticised context. Similarly, his incorporation of maritime imagery and established clichés, such as a "ship of state," confirm his preference for a specific seaboard setting in his analysis of society in microcosm.

The "transatlantic" focus of Walker's *Appeal* anticipates Douglass's cultivation of the practical support of British audiences in his speeches: "The English are the best friends the colored people have upon earth... notwithstanding they have treated us a little cruel."³⁸ This equivocal view can be read alongside Douglass's simplified eulogy of British intervention in the *Creole* revolt in one of his addresses: "The British Lion refused to send the bondsman back" (*APC* 68). Similarly, he extends Walker's hatred of white colonisation schemes (dubbed "the colonizing trick") in his core speech on the *Creole* mutiny given before a black audience, "Slavery, the Slumbering Volcano" (1849). This address provided the cornerstone speech during a meeting protesting the schemes of the American Colonization Society

³⁶ Walker (1848) 31.

³⁷ Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" (1852) in Andrews, ed., (1996) 117.

which Douglass characterised as “the joint product of slaveholders of the South and negro haters of the North” in his announcement that “we are here to expose and denounce this Janus-faced enemy” (*SSV* 149-50). The effect of contextualising Douglass’s material within an overtly black militant tradition of resistance is not only to underscore his previously critically undermined radicalism, but also to establish political and historical connections between otherwise isolated and/or marginalised figures.

The works of the black abolitionist Garnet provide a useful point of comparison with material by Douglass by playing a significant role in his speeches on the *Creole* revolt. In “American Prejudice Against Color” (1845), Douglass describes Garnet as a black abolitionist who seeks to discourage Washington’s “effort to save his wife and children” (*APC* 67) by returning to the South. Thus, he illustrates the ideological tensions between black abolitionists: “Mr. Garrett [sic]; a highly intellectual black man,... admonished [him] not to go... He went on however to Virginia” (*APC* 67). In his later speech, “Slavery, the Slumbering Volcano,” Douglass replaces references to “Garrett” with allusions to Robert Purvis. He portrays Purvis as another representative black abolitionist who “advised him [Washington] not to go... but when he left... Purvis... the thoughts of his wife in Slavery came back to his mind to trouble his peace and disturb his slumbers” (*SSV* 155). Douglass’s evocation of various black abolitionists, whose advice Washington subsequently rejects, testifies to his reluctance to simplify the complexities which characterised competing strands of black antislavery thought.

Furthermore, Douglass’s conclusion to “American Prejudice Against Color,” which awards centre stage to Garnet, endorses alternative models of black heroism:

³⁸ Walker (1848) 53.

It has been said that it is none but those persons who have a mixture of European blood who distinguish themselves. This is not true. I know that the most intellectual and moral colored man that is now in our country is a man in whose veins no European blood courses – 'tis the Rev. Mr. Garrett; ...[he] has no taint of European blood (*APC* 69).

His repetition of the phrase “European blood” and its subsequent conjunction with the word “taint,” distorts any “natural” white pretensions to superiority. Douglass’s decision in his speeches to situate Madison Washington within a supportive network of black heroic figures, operates in direct contrast to the onus placed upon white abolitionists in *The Heroic Slave*. The fact that, in his oratorical material, Douglass refuses to provide a role model for the white abolitionist reader, confirms his varying treatment of his subject-matter and different targeting of audiences across these works. This excerpt unambiguously acknowledges Garnet’s blackness - “no European blood” - only to defer consideration of Madison Washington’s racial heritage. In this manner, Douglass denies any straightforward associations of the black male figure with stereotyped racialised markers.

Garnet extends the black abolitionist canon by concluding his edition of Walker’s *Appeal* with a reprint of his controversial text, “Address to the Slaves of the United States of America.”³⁹ An examination of this piece further compounds Douglass’s interest in Garnet in his speeches on the *Creole* revolt. This address was originally delivered before a black (male) audience and so Garnet adopts a rhetorical standpoint which acknowledges the need for black self-help in terms very close to those offered by Douglass: “you must act for yourselves. It is an old and true saying, that ‘if hereditary bondmen would be free, they themselves must strike the blow.’”⁴⁰

³⁹ Garnet, “An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America (Rejected by the National Convention, 1843)” in *David Walker’s Appeal* (1830. Rpt. 1848. Rpt. 1969) 89-96. Garnet’s view was that it was rejected because “it was war-like, and encouraged insurrection” (89) and also because “those delegates who lived near the borders of the slave states, would not dare to return to their homes” should it be adopted.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 93.

As discussed above, Douglass's repetition of this quotation from *Childe Harold*, in both his oratorical and written material on the *Creole* revolt, not only endorses black violent protest but also articulates an independent insurrectionary ethos. Furthermore, Garnet similarly promotes constructions of black heroism within a rhetoric of sentimentality. Thus, it is possible to contrast - "behold the bosoms of your poor children! Remember the stripes your fathers bore. Think of the torture and disgrace of your noble mothers" - with Madison Washington's lament in *The Heroic Slave*: "Oh! oh! 'tis impossible that I can leave poor Susan!" (HS 180).⁴¹ Both Garnet and Douglass, the latter to a much greater extent in descriptions of Susan Washington as a "poor wife," employ a rhetoric of sentimentality to polemical ends. This technique produces a strategy of identification between author and audience on domestic grounds in their constructions of the exemplary black heroic figure.

Garnet's conclusion to this speech adopts hagiographic language which testifies to an alternatively defined "patriotic" pantheon of (black) heroes, including figures such as Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner.⁴² Atypically for the abolitionist period, he also considers the slave ship rebel leaders, Joseph Cinque and Madison Washington. In contrast to Douglass's invective against the fundamental racism of the white historical record in *The Heroic Slave*, Garnet defines history as ideologically untouched: "Many a brave hero fell, but History, faithful to her high trust, will transcribe his [Vesey's] name on the same monument with Moses, Hampden... Toussaint L'Ouverture[sic], Lafayette and Washington."⁴³ When read in relation to Garnet's framework, which presents history as apolitical and an unproblematic source of black memorialisation, Douglass's revisionist uncovering of the "chattel records" in *The Heroic Slave* (HS 175) becomes a redundant exercise.

⁴¹ Ibid., 94.

⁴² Ibid.

In imitation of Douglass and Walker, Garnet's speech reworks the conventional racism which is evident in reproductions of bestial imagery by white and black narrators. For example, conventional descriptions of Joseph Cinque in this speech present a harmonious African setting as set against a dehumanising American context: "He was a Native African, and... he emancipated a whole ship-load of his fellow men on the high seas. And he now sings of liberty on the sunny hills of Africa... where he hears the lion roar."⁴⁴ In the following tribute he provides one of the first detailed references to Madison Washington which it has been possible to trace in abolitionist discourse: "Next arose Madison Washington, that bright star of freedom, and took his station in the constellation of freedom... Nineteen struck for liberty or death. But one life was taken... Noble men!"⁴⁵ Garnet's inclusion of Patrick Henry's repeated phrase - "liberty or death" - eulogises black slave heroism and reflects Douglass's dramatisation, in *The Heroic Slave*, of black reluctance to commit violence within a white revolutionary context. This emphasis also signals the importance of black male activity in securing individual and communal emancipation during slavery.

Garnet's final paragraph echoes Walker on the question of violence: "are you men?... Let your motto be RESISTANCE! RESISTANCE! RESISTANCE!"⁴⁶ This text suggests that definitions of manhood are inseparable from violent resistance and focuses attention upon the extent to which Douglass reshaped available black heroic male slave models in order to convey Madison Washington's magnanimity. By way of corroboration, the white sailor in *The Heroic Slave* voices Washington's rationale for insurrection and physical rebellion as follows: "I could have killed you a dozen

⁴³ Ibid., 95.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 96.

⁴⁵ Ibid. Coffin briefly mentions Madison Washington in the concluding paragraph to his pamphlet, *An Account of Some of the Principal Slave Insurrections* (1842).

times..., and could kill you now. You call me a *black murderer*... We have done that which you applaud your fathers for doing, and if we are murderers, *so were they*” (HS 234-35, emphasis not mine). This quotation simultaneously introduces the threat of black power in the promise of violence, while also containing its “barbaric” potential by its legitimisation within a white revolutionary setting: “if we are murderers, so were they.” Although Douglass’s speeches revise *The Heroic Slave*’s preferred indirection by reporting this revolt directly, they are nevertheless conservative in choosing to describe the incident only briefly. For example, one speech confines Madison Washington’s heroism to the following sentence: “he [Washington] darted out of the hatchway, seized a handspike, felled the Captain – and found himself with his companions masters of the ship” (APC 68). In his oratorical performances of the *Creole* revolt and also his written material, Douglass was either uninterested in providing or unable to provide, due perhaps to censorship constraints, graphic and detailed representations of black violence.

Garnet’s reparation of imbalances in abolitionist practices by nominating a Southern slave audience in his “Address,” introduces the audience targeted by white abolitionist, Smith, in his similarly titled, “Address to the Slaves of the United States” (1842).⁴⁷ Published only one year after Garnet’s speech, Smith’s text critiques overtly paternalistic abolitionism: “[we must] vindicate publicly our duty to be your [the slaves’] advisers, comforters, and helpers.”⁴⁸ He read the tendency of abolitionist “labours for the slave... [to] be expended directly upon his master” as evidence that “they are not yet entirely disabused of the fallacy, that slavery is a legitimate institution” and, that they were ultimately unwilling and/or unable to recognise that

⁴⁶ Garnet (1843) 96.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 90.

⁴⁸ Smith, “Address to the Slaves of the United States,” *National Anti-Slavery Standard* 24 Feb. 1842, 149.

“the slave is a man, and not a chattel.”⁴⁹ Smith’s endorsement of radical abolitionism confirmed his desire to communicate directly with and to empower an enslaved black male audience. This focus also accentuated differences between his approach and those of other white abolitionists including Douglass’s “mentor,” William Lloyd Garrison.

Child, a staunch advocate of Garrisonian abolitionist politics, denounced Smith’s approach as both inflammatory and impractical in a critique printed in the same issue of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*. Child’s authoritative counter argument suggested that “being addressed to slaves... [the address] will never reach its destination... It will meet the master’s eye... and will redouble the vigilance and precaution of tyranny.”⁵⁰ Her focus upon the practical inefficiencies of this material confirmed that this text would not only fail to convert its target audience, but that it would have the related adverse effect of tightening slaveholding measures for the suppression of black rebellion.

Smith’s speech undoubtedly represents the text most directly relevant to Douglass’s written version on this revolt, *The Heroic Slave*. He anticipates Douglass’s complex meditations on abolitionism by offering a scathing denunciation of conciliatory practices: “To make the abolitionist most odious, he is charged with... communicating with the slave – and the abolitionist, instead of insisting on the right to do so... implicitly disclaims it.”⁵¹ Douglass similarly condemns his white abolitionist Listwell, in *The Heroic Slave*, for ideological expediency in assuming the guise of a slaveholder for personal safety: “While he would not avow himself a

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 150. Child argues that this speech will “diminish what little confidence there is in the discretion and practical wisdom of abolitionists” and also protests against providing support for individual runaways as “our funds and our energies must be concentrated on the destruction of the system” (emphasis original).

⁵¹ Ibid., 149.

purchaser of slaves, he deemed it not prudent to disavow it... Bodily fear, not conscientious scruples prevailed” (*HS* 214). The act of reading Smith’s “Address” alongside *The Heroic Slave* problematises interpretations of Listwell as an “ideal abolitionist,” and invites readings of Douglass’s text as a satirical exposure of white complicity in the perpetuation of ideological racism.

Furthermore, Smith’s description of the *Creole* revolt in this “Address” stresses the need for unequivocal abolitionist agitation:

The northern press... pronounces the recent insurrection on board the *Creole* to be justifiable and heroic. But had this insurrection occurred before that on board of the *Amistad*, scarcely any other than an abolition newspaper would have failed to denounce and stigmatize it. No less extensive conquests of public opinion will be achieved by the future instances of our intrepidity.⁵²

Thus, the two slave ship revolts are set against each other as an effective strategy by which to measure changing trends in popular opinion, while rendering moral suasionist tactics indispensable for audience conversion. Smith later concludes that these events represent divine intervention: “Wounded, writhing, slavery still cries, ‘Let me alone... such providences as the insurrections on board of the *Amistad* and *Creole*, show that God will not let it alone.’”⁵³ Therefore, it is possible to read Smith’s legitimising of these revolts by divine providence as contradicting his later direction to the slaves to forbear violence: “it is on the condition that you shall not stain it with blood, that you will be entitled to expect that we shall continue to advocate your cause.”⁵⁴ The contradictory opinions concerning black violence which this speech provides generally betrays white ambivalence on the subject.

Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave* not only includes specific references to Smith’s “Address,” but also substantially revises this speech in order to grant heightened

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

aesthetic and ideological autonomy to his protagonist, Washington, the black male “heroic slave.” For example, his dramatisation of Washington’s escape from slavery affirms Smith’s “conviction that the abolitionist has a perfect moral right to go into the South, and... promote the escape of ignorant and imbruted slaves.”⁵⁵ However, in contrast to Smith’s view that the white abolitionist should assume the dominant role, in Douglass’s text, the black slave independently manipulates moral suasionist tactics to secure white conversion. For example, Part I concludes: “The speech of Madison rung through the chambers of his [Listwell’s] soul... ‘From this hour I am an abolitionist’” (HS 181-82). Thus, Douglass’s didactic narrative structure produces philosophical arguments concerning the “natural rights of man” which convert the white reader both to a belief in black male equality and political activism.

Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave* debates the fugitive slave’s right to steal as Listwell responds to Madison’s statement - “I did not scruple to take bread where I could get it” (HS 195) - by alluding to Smith and this speech: “‘a conversation with Gerrit Smith, (a man by the way, that I wish you could see, for he is a devoted friend of your race, and I know he would receive you gladly,) put an end to all my doubts on this point’” (HS 195). Thus, Listwell’s authority as white advisory figure to the black slave is undercut by deferential references to Smith. The section of Smith’s speech to which this excerpt refers provides an interesting point for comparison: “Do not, however, suppose that we forbid your innocent yieldings to necessity... take, all along your route... so far as is absolutely essential to your escape.”⁵⁶ Overall, Douglass’s speeches and his written text, *The Heroic Slave*, demonstrate his complex manipulation of debates, among previous and contemporary abolitionists, and his engagement with racialised traditions of representation. In general, his “cameo”

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

evocation of Smith signals the aesthetic and political constraints imposed upon his material by those, mainly white “patrons,” who provided financial aid and moral authentication.

Given the widespread intertextual relationships which were produced by traditions of male abolitionism, as outlined above, it is necessary to situate Douglass’s major speeches on the *Creole* revolt within their specific literary and historical contexts. The fact that they were given between his first two major works, his best-selling slave narrative, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845), and his novella, *The Heroic Slave* (1853), informs research into the blurrings of oral and literary techniques between these various texts and Douglass’s addresses. While his *Narrative* was produced primarily to satisfy white demands for authenticity and verification, *The Heroic Slave* signalled an autonomous statement by rejecting these demands and opting to fictionalise, quite self-consciously, the life of an obscure historical figure. Douglass’s speeches on the *Creole* revolt can be read as independent aesthetic and political statements which confirm the irrelevance of white prescriptive demands and extend, in their largely unprecedented subject matter and approach, the boundaries for the composition of black abolitionist literature.

It is useful to compare Douglass’s *Narrative* and *The Heroic Slave* which, in conjunction with his speeches, illustrate the oratorical style used to narrate the development of individual black male subjectivity. For example, Douglass’s soliloquy in the *Narrative* which describes ships in the Chesapeake Bay as “so many shrouded ghosts,”

“O that I was free!... O, why was I born a man, of whom to make a brute!... Let me be free!... Why am I a slave? I will run away. I will not

stand it. Get caught, or get clear, I'll try it... I had as well be killed running as die standing... It cannot be that I shall live and die a slave"⁵⁷

can be positioned alongside Madison Washington's meditation on liberty (HS 176) in

The Heroic Slave:

"But what is freedom to me, or I to it? I am a *slave*, - born a slave, an abject slave... How mean a thing am I... But here am I, a man, - yes, a *man*! ... I neither run nor fight, but do meanly stand... Can it be that I *dare* not run away?... *Liberty* I will have, or die in the attempt to gain it" (HS 177-78).

Both excerpts employ oratorical rhetoric in order to convey with equal emphasis the cultivation of black equal masculinity regardless of chattel slavery. The close similarities between this material corroborate current critical thinking which positions Douglass's constructions of Madison Washington as intended to "revis[e]... Douglass's own story," and which reads *The Heroic Slave* as "its author's fantasy of his own heroism."⁵⁸ However, while comparisons can be made between Douglass's processes of self-construction and his dramatisations of Madison Washington, this view can only be supported in part.

Their contrasting narrative styles explain the significant differences between these excerpts which produce varied characterisation and lend credence to the view that *The Heroic Slave* is more literary and dramatic than Douglass's *Narrative*. The above extracts confirm heightened complexities of syntactical construction in *The Heroic Slave*. Thus, it is useful to compare - "O that I was free!" with "But what is freedom to me, or I to it?" - and "It cannot be that I shall live and die a slave" with "*Liberty* I will have, or die in the attempt to gain it." *The Heroic Slave* is much more structurally innovative than his earlier text as Douglass begins to intervene into white

⁵⁷ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave Written by Himself* (1845. Rpt. Baker, ed., 1982) 106, 106-7.

⁵⁸ McFeely (1991) 175. Other critics keen to conflate Douglass's representations of Madison Washington with his own heroism are discussed in chapter II of this dissertation.

established conventions for representations of black heroism in this piece. In its formal ambiguity, characterised by structural disjuncture, *The Heroic Slave* resists the confining nature of white expectations concerning black representation. This text exhibits Douglass's autonomous positioning as author, rather than as an autobiographical self, structurally prescribed by white abolitionist dictates of authenticity. His speeches discussed in this chapter testify to his autonomous development of varied subject-matter and imaginative narration.

Given that the *Creole* mutiny took place in 1841, while by no means performed in the immediate aftermath of the event, Douglass's speeches were sufficiently contemporaneous to exploit its existence in a wider cultural memory.⁵⁹ This was probably less of an issue by the time of *The Heroic Slave's* composition and publication in 1853, and can certainly be discounted as a significant motivating factor as late as 1863, one of the proposed dates for the recently discovered second version of Douglass's piece, discussed in chapter II. His decision to dramatise this mutiny may result from his interest in describing a transatlantic political event familiar to his audiences, as opposed to narrating his individual experiences of slavery in an unknown context. From this standpoint, retellings of this event in oral form may have been chosen to meet the need, expressed by Douglass, for abolitionist campaigns continually to publicise and reinforce the relevance of antislavery activism before a British audience. Sale's understanding that - "Douglass's repeated use of Washington as a heroic... figure demonstrates both the significance of and tension produced by

⁵⁹ Unless otherwise stated, for the purposes of this dissertation, the transcripts for Douglass's speeches are those collated by John Blassingame. This is for the simple reason that they are readily accessible, exhibit consistencies of style, a unified editorial practice and reliable production standards. This chapter investigates the most significant of Douglass's addresses to dramatise the revolt and analyses his later speeches which consider Madison Washington in the context of individual black heroism. The brief titles for the principal texts are: "American Prejudice Against Color," (Ireland, October 1845) "American and Scottish Prejudice Against the Slave," (Scotland, May 1846) "The Slaves' Right to Revolt," (Boston, May 1848) and "Slavery, the Slumbering Volcano" (New York, April 1849).

evocations of rebel slave leaders” – undervalues major questions connected to the historical and political context and audience.⁶⁰

In “Farewell to the British People” (1847) given in London, Douglass described it as “a matter of the utmost importance that the subject of slavery in America should be kept before the British public.”⁶¹ His specific nationalising of his audience confirms his preoccupation with the *Creole* revolt as a way of juxtaposing British and American abolitionists in order to undermine the latter by eulogising the former: “the slave... is *welcomed*... by the British authorities... not as a bondman, but as a freeman; not as a captive but as a brother.”⁶² This extract offsets his lamentation that “the Americans do not know that I am a man... But here, how different! Why, sir, the very dogs of old England know that I am a man!”⁶³ Douglass’s analysis of this mutiny in his speeches underlines an autonomous aesthetic position. His mediation between competing discourses of British and American nationalism allows for his concomitant development of a rhetorical model, within which to articulate the complexities of black individual manhood.

As far as current research indicates, Douglass’s first recorded address to explore the *Creole* revolt was given in Ireland in 1845 and entitled, “American Prejudice Against Color.”⁶⁴ Douglass narrated the *Creole* incident in order to refute white arguments in favour of “the inferiority of the slave” (*APC* 59). Borrowing from the gender-non-specific title of his work, *The Heroic Slave*, his references to “the slave” here can be understood as “the male slave.” Indeed, this gendered rhetoric is rendered more pronounced in his direct appeal to audience responsibility: “[slavery] belongs to the whole nation of America; and to the Irishman, not because they are

⁶⁰ Sale (1997) 179.

⁶¹ Douglass, “Farewell to the British People” (1847) in Blassingame, ed., (1979) 2: 44.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 39.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 51.

Irish, *but because they are MEN*” (APC 60). Douglass nominates a male audience and subscribes, in overtones of Walker, to a code of masculinity which transcends racial considerations, in the production of individual black male heroic exemplars.

Yarborough’s assessment of *The Heroic Slave* as a text in which it is possible to “identify a mythology of masculinity analogous to the Cult of True Womanhood... partially grounded... in the... sentimental tradition,” can be adapted for critical explorations of his speeches.⁶⁵ Thus, Douglass’s rhetoric of equality is not only gendered, but proposes a modified construction of black masculinity characterised by sentimentality: “I am here but to urge the right of every man to his own body, to his own hand and to his own heart” (APC 61). His decision to associate black male identity with emotional concerns signals a modified representation of the black heroic male which is more in line with moral suasionist arguments of abolition.

Douglass contextualises his discussion of the *Creole* revolt and characterisation of Madison Washington in “American Prejudice Against Color,” by narrating the attempts of “slaveowning” passengers to prevent his antislavery speech on the ship *Cambria* during its passage from America to England: “Some said I should not speak, others that I should – I wanted to inform the English, Scotch and Irish on board on Slavery – I told them blacks were not considered human beings in America” (APC 64). Douglass’s self-consciousness in describing the conditions under which his previous speeches had been given, coupled with the fact that the immediate context for his recital of the *Creole* mutiny was a seaboard setting, articulates his ambiguous discursive position and specific targeting of an international audience. The fact that he specified individual national identities within his audience

⁶⁴ Douglass, “American Prejudice against Color” (1845) in Blassingame, ed., (1979-92) 1: 59-70.

⁶⁵ Yarborough (1990) 168.

itself, indicates his sensitive engagement with the artificial boundaries of individual “patriotic” affiliations.

Poised between two competing British and American contexts, Douglass was able to manipulate his own perspective with greater autonomy and detachment: “I sat with my arms folded, feeling in no way anxious for my fate. I never saw a more barefaced attempt to put down the freedom of speech” (*APC* 64). His discussion of a slave ship mutiny while aboard ship confirms a metatextual point as it granted Douglass a liberated space within which to articulate protest. The fact that, at the moment of delivering this speech, he was aboard ship in the Atlantic ocean (and not on either British or North American soil) destabilises rigid interpretative frameworks. As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, the sea and ships occupy an empowered liminal space which allows for greater freedom in the performance and articulation of individual identity. Similarly the effect of Douglass’s preoccupation with the difficulties of speaking when Americans are present flatters his later Irish audience, to whom he narrates this experience and thereby differentiates between diverse national strands of abolitionism.

Throughout this speech, Douglass indicted his American critics by suggesting that their racist scepticism forced him in the previous address to authenticate his testimony according to prescribed conventions: “since what I have said has been pronounced lies, I will read not what *I* have written but what the southern legislators themselves have written - ... the law... this raised a general clamour” (*APC* 64). This quotation corroborates his earlier use of legal evidence in the interests of the *Creole* revolt: “Now let me read a few of the laws of that democratic country” (*APC* 61). The privileging of legal evidence as ultimate objective authority, as “facts” (*APC* 64), situates Douglass within a transatlantic tradition of philanthropists, including such

figures as William Wells Brown, Lydia Maria Child and even Charles Dickens.⁶⁶ By extension in his later address, “Farewell to the British People” (1847), he cites “the American code of laws” to argue that “Every page is red with the blood of the American slave... Their history is nothing but blood! blood! blood!”⁶⁷ Thus, Douglass reconstitutes his characterisation of black history in terms of legal evidence to symbolise physical violation in the black body’s metonymic operation as a text, further connoted by graphic allusions to “page.”

This speech confirms Douglass’s understanding of the direct correlation between oral discourse and material verification in a subscription to abolitionist conventions: “The Captain threatened the disturbers with putting them in irons if they did not become quiet – these men disliked the irons – were quieted by the threat; yet this infamous class have put the irons on the black. (Mr. Douglass showed the slave-irons to the meeting)” (*APC* 65-66). Douglass produced emblems of slave torture in order to fulfil white criteria for the authenticity of black performance and to synthesise, in visual terms, his technique of juxtaposing the content of two speeches (the speech within a speech) to produce a damning commentary. Thus, he confirms the extent of white American barbarism, by an appeal to theatrical conventions, in the dramatic use of properties to punctuate the significant thematic aspects of his recital. Washington appropriates a similar device during *The Heroic Slave* in his rehearsal of the “fugitive slave story:” “I, with this strap, (pulling one out of his old coat-pocket,) lashed myself to a bough” (*HS* 195). Both excerpts reveal Douglass’s manipulation of narrative authority in order to play down, if not erase entirely, his own

⁶⁶ See for example, Brown “Extracts from the American Slave Code” in *Narrative of William Wells Brown, A Fugitive Slave* (1848. Rpt. Andrews, ed., 1993) 96-109, and chapter two of Child’s *An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans* (1833. Rpt. Karcher, ed., 1996). Dickens adopted a similar approach by including runaway slave advertisements and reports from southern newspapers, so that “we may have no partial evidence from abolitionists in this inquiry” in *American Notes for General Circulation* (1842. Rpt. Ingham, ed., 2000) 255-65.

interpretative role which produces a semblance of objective testimony to secure greater audience conversion. He frames this speech by an analysis of white racist disbelief and underlines his awareness, and subsequent manipulation of, the influential role played by audiences in the production of black abolitionist rhetoric.

Douglass extends his interest in southern legislation later in “American Prejudice Against Color” by using British newspapers to introduce the ways in which questions of race problematised strategies for black representation. He cites the incident quoted at the beginning of this chapter to critique the processes by which white and black dialogic exchange is characterised by misrepresentation. Thus, Douglass exposes a newspaper reporter’s decision to “speak of me as a fine young Negro. Well, that is the mode of advertising in our country a slave for sale... I find... that the gentleman who wrote it had no intention to sneer or speak slightly of me or the Negro race at all. I am glad to know it” (*APC* 66). This excerpt illustrates the discursive instability of linguistic figures for black representation during the abolitionist period. Clearly, indeterminate factors such as context and authorial intentionality structure interpretative dynamics. This incident addresses the significant disjuncture produced in Douglass’s rhetorical position in the differences between his individual identity and his role as spokesman: “I am... devotedly engaged in advocating the cause of my oppressed brethren... and in that character, as their representative.”⁶⁸

The final section of this speech provides a dramatic narration of the *Creole* revolt and characterises Madison Washington as the practical embodiment of Douglass’s earlier conceived connections between constructions of manhood and conventions of sentimentality: “Why, but a short time ago we had a glorious

⁶⁷ Douglass, “Farewell to the British People” (1847)) in Blassingame, ed., (1979) 2: 27.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

illustration of affection in the heart of a black man – Maddison [sic] Washington” (*APC* 67). Douglass situates Washington’s revolutionary activity within a black male tradition of defending the black slave family in his use of the key term “affectionate.” Thus, he argues as follows: “his wife was perpetually before him, he said within himself - I can’t be free while my wife’s a slave” (*APC* 67). This quotation echoes Washington’s melodramatic conclusion in *The Heroic Slave*: ““I could almost hear her [his wife’s] voice, saying, “O Madison! Madison! will you then leave me here?”” (*HS* 219) Douglass’s work confirms the centrality and legitimacy of domesticity for defining a black male slave identity.

An important point in Douglass’s speeches concerns the fact that Washington’s wife remains unnamed, while she is identified as Susan Washington and awarded a significant function in his written text, *The Heroic Slave*. Indeed, it can be argued that in the latter piece, she becomes the textual marker inextricably embedded in literary-historical constructions of Madison Washington’s heroism. This is rendered evident in Washington’s declaration given at a definitive moment in *The Heroic Slave*: “I... stood my ground, and awaited their attack over her dead body” (*HS* 220). Douglass downplays his focus upon Washington’s children in this speech - “he left his... little ones in slavery” (*APC* 67) – in comparison with his emphasis in *The Heroic Slave* upon his chief-protagonist’s rescue of his wife: ““Oh! oh! ‘tis impossible that I can leave poor Susan!”” (*HS* 180) In both his speeches and *The Heroic Slave*, Douglass presents a revised model for black male individualism which incorporates sentimental concerns. The evidence for Douglass’s continued emphasis upon the black slave family opposes critical arguments suggesting that these issues were deliberately elided in *The Heroic Slave*.

In “American Prejudice Against Color,” Douglass exposes the tendency by white slaveholders to position the black slave body in commodified terms: “the iron-hearted owners [who were] contemplating joyfully the amount of money they should gain by reaching the market before it was glutted” (*APC* 68). This passage can be juxtaposed with Douglass’s meditation on Washington’s heroism: “Maddison [sic] Washington succeeded in getting off his irons... he seemed inspired with the love of freedom... As he came to the resolution he... seized a handspike, felled the Captain – and found himself with his companions masters of the ship” (*APC* 68). He therefore confines the violence of the entire insurrection to one sentence and concludes by flattering a British audience: “[he] saved a sufficient number of the lives of those who governed the ship to reach the British Islands” (*APC* 68). Douglass also adopts this strategy in his next speech to mention the *Creole* revolt, “America’s Compromise with Slavery and the Abolitionists’ Work” (April 1846). In this text, Douglass’s description of the insurrection is monumental and replete with black caricature, “Madison Washington, who braved the dangers of the deep... with one mighty effort, burst asunder the chains of one hundred and thirty-five fellow-men, and after much fatigue and severe struggles, steered them into a British port;” Douglass continues by complimenting Britain: “Washington... [is] basking under the free sun amid the free hills and valleys of a free monarchical country.”⁶⁹ In this excerpt, he describes black violence vaguely as “severe struggles” while applauding individual heroism only in its capacity to secure the interests of the community. “America’s Compromise with Slavery” is distinctive as the only speech to describe the *Creole* revolt in connection with a defence of abolitionist accomplishments and their exposure of slavery in “all its horrid colours, its unjust and inhuman oppressions,” and determination “to make

⁶⁹ Douglass, “America’s Compromise with Slavery and the Abolitionists’ Work” (1846) in Blassingame, ed, (1979) 1: 211, 211-12.

the whole world see the villainy of such a system.”⁷⁰ Douglass’s use of language in this speech translates specific events into rhetorical figures for moral conversion to abolitionism.

“American Prejudice Against Color” confirms Douglass’s interest in reclaiming a heroic tradition for black slave leaders by using his narrative practice to thwart associations of blackness with “barbaric” activity. Thus, in his later speech, “A Black Hero,” (1861) Douglass situates the heroism of an “obscure Negro... William Tillman” explicitly within a black exemplary tradition: “Love of liberty alone inspired him... as it had supported Denmark Vesey, Nathaniel Turner, Madison Washington, Toussaint L’Ouverture... he walked to his work of self-deliverance with a step as firm and dauntless as the noblest Roman of them all.”⁷¹ Douglass’s decision to document an exemplary black heroic tradition by using classical terms, “noblest Roman,” forestalls his comparison of Madison Washington to Hercules in *The Heroic Slave* (HS 179). In both texts, Douglass’s evocation of a classical paradigm situates the heroic slave revolutionary within a white tradition, not only to convince his (white) audience concerning Washington’s legitimacy, but also to conflate a sense of racial difference. Equally, for his black audience, this technique acts as a spur to emulation in the production of heroic role models.

Douglass juxtaposes conventionally oppositional historical figures as a means to re-evaluate and reverse the racist paradigms employed in conventional narrative frameworks for heroic interpretation: “our Congress was thrown into an uproar that *Maddison* [sic] *Washington* had in imitation of *George Washington* gained liberty” (APC 68). Such paralleling emphasises Douglass’s full exploitation of the American revolutionary associations contained within Washington’s name. Furthermore, he

⁷⁰ Ibid., 213.

⁷¹ Rpt. Foner, ed., (1950) 3: 132-33, 134.

expands Washington's protection of the individual black family to confirm the existence of community based traditions for black resistance: "We are branded as not loving our brother and race. Why did Maddison Washington leave Canada where he might be free...?" (*APC* 69) Thus, Douglass's development of a model for black male solidarity against white oppression undermines critical emphasis upon his interest in lone heroic figures. His manipulation of black abolitionist oratorical and narrative forms suggests that he is much more keen to reinterpret Madison Washington's position within a white revolutionary tradition, than is evident in his written versions of this mutiny.

In two much briefer speeches, the first given to a British audience and titled "American and Scottish Prejudice Against the Slave," (Scotland, May 1846) and the second, "The Slaves' Right to Revolt" (Boston, May 1848), Douglass adapts and extends narrative conventions. First of all, however, it is important to note the potential difficulties posed by the extant texts for these speeches. "American and Scottish Prejudice Against the Slave" is reported entirely in the third person, as confirmed by references in the text to "Mr. Douglas[s] was received with much applause," (*ASP* 244) and the use of abbreviations such as "(Mr. D.)" (*ASP* 247). While this is less intrusively the case for "The Slaves' Right to Revolt," nevertheless third-person reportage frames an otherwise first-person narration. Douglass's opening invective aimed at condemning audience complicity confirms this point: "I say to you, exclaimed Mr. Douglass, get out of this position of body-guard to slavery!" (*SRR* 131) Therefore, for readings of these texts, two main notes of caution may be sounded. First, an interventionist editorialising practice confirms the strategies of selectivity and abridgement in these printed versions of Douglass's speeches, already signalled by the fact that both texts are extremely short. Second, both pieces exhibit slight

differences of style in comparison with his other addresses on the revolt which suggest a syntactical restructuring of material. However, his speeches are recorded in sufficient detail to facilitate their consideration alongside Douglass's other oral representations of this revolt.

Douglass's "American and Scottish Prejudice" (1846) expands on the agenda of his earlier speech, "American Prejudice Against Color" (1845), by maintaining his innovations in narrative design. He adapted his attack upon white charges of black "inferiority" to expose instead "the inveterate prejudices which existed against the coloured population... [as they] were looked on in every place as beasts rather than men" (*ASP* 244). Rather than reading this prejudice as unique to the United States in a rhetorical compliment for his British hearers, Douglass tacitly admits that the "feeling of prejudice... against the slave was not altogether confined to the United States" (*ASP* 247). In light of the fact that this speech is addressed to a Scottish audience, Douglass complicates his previously polarised value assessments of British and American abolitionism and communicates his sensitivity to national tensions.

Douglass's almost immediate introduction into "American and Scottish Prejudice" of - "the case of Maddison[sic] Washington, an American slave, who with some others escaped from bondage, but was retaken, and put on board the brig *Creole*," (*ASP* 244-45) - foregrounds Washington's national birthright in the phrase, an "American slave." In a tactic designed to conflate authorial consciousness with that of his protagonist, Douglass echoes not only his earlier speech which compares Madison to George Washington, but also the subtitle to the first edition of his slave autobiography, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1845). The phrase "American slave" registers Washington's indebtedness to a white tradition of heroism, while also substantiating his obligations to the black community

in references to “some others” and, his having “communicated to some of his fellow-captives his plan of operations” (*ASP* 245).

Following his discussion of the *Creole* revolt in this speech, Douglass relates a personal anecdote which took place during his journey in an American stagecoach:

It was dark... and they [the passengers] had no opportunity of examining into his [Douglass's] features; and during the night a spirited conversation was kept up – so much so that he absolutely for once began to think he was considered a man... But morning came,... which enabled his companions to ascertain the color of his skin, and there was an end to all their conversation (*ASP* 246).

Douglass's satire on white racism and its reliance on the stereotypical materiality of blackness indicates his general concern, in narrations of this mutiny, to resist white stereotypes for black commodification. By directly juxtaposing his own private experiences of racism with treatment received by the historical heroic figure, Madison Washington, in contrast to *The Heroic Slave*, Douglass's speeches provide a rhetoric of black manhood which conflates differences between authorial consciousness and strategies of characterisation.

Furthermore, in this speech, Douglass exposes the overt racism in North American rhetoric by labelling the revolt a “national insult” (*ASP* 245), and reads their desire to “characterise... the noble Maddison[sic] Washington as... a murderer, a tyrant, and a mutineer” (*ASP* 245), in terms of wilful ignorance. Douglass's statement that - “what was an outrage on the part of the black man was an honour and a glory to the white” (*ASP* 245) - extends his frame of reference to consider Washington's representative status. He depicts the *Creole* revolt with customary brevity: “He [Washington] got on deck, and seizing a handspike, struck down the captain and mate, secured the crew, and cheered on his associates in the cause of liberty; and in ten minutes was master of the ship” (*ASP* 245). This excerpt testifies to Douglass's continuing engagement with the problems encountered by black

authors, in producing accurate representations of black violence, while also revealing his own preference for the event's diplomatic and political ramifications rather than its immediate context.

Douglass's 1848 speech, "The Slaves' Right to Revolt," denies white charges of black "*cowardice* for being slaves" (SRR 130), while supporting Garrison's disavowal of the Constitution as a proslavery document. Therefore, Douglass's material on the *Creole* revolt confirms his initial unequivocal support of Garrisonian politics because, in later works including his second autobiography, he signalled his autonomy from white injunctions solely to narrate "facts." Douglass directed his invective towards his audience: "I must say to you that, by the support you give to that instrument, you are the enslavers of my southern brethren and sisters" (SRR 130). Thus, he indicted his Northern audience's passive support of slavery as a means to promote their conversion to abolitionism. In privileging the efficacy of black heroism, the title of this speech, "The Slaves' Right to Revolt," underlines Douglass's figuring of black resistance as crucial in the overthrow of slavery, and as indispensable for rewriting the slaves' legitimate entitlement to a white revolutionary heritage. He also inserts ambivalence into his representations of the individual heroic exemplar by focussing upon communal resistance in references to "the slaves."

However, Douglass confirms his preoccupation with securing white Northern practical aid for black emancipation by his inclusion of the following prophecy in this text:

... oh, men of the North, I know there is a spirit among the slaves which would not much longer brook their degradation and their bondage. There are many Madison Washingtons and Nathaniel Turners in the South, who would assert their right to liberty, if you would take your feet from their necks, and your sympathy and aid from their oppressors (SRR 130-31).

Thus, he emphasises the need for a collaborative heroism by interweaving a direct appeal to his white Northern male audience to resist slavery, with evidence which testifies to the existence of independent black revolutionary activity. Furthermore, in references to more than one heroic figure, Douglass attempts to minimise Washington's exceptionality, in order to emphasise his significance as a generic embodiment of "typical" black heroic traits.

Douglass adopts rhetorical questioning which juxtaposes black insurrection with white revolutionary campaigns and destabilises racist categories: "How was he [Nathaniel Turner] treated, for endeavoring to gain his own liberty, and that of his enslaved brethren, by the self-same means which the Revolutionary fathers employed?" (*SRR* 131) This technique forecloses audience interpretation, except along his preferred lines, while Douglass's decision to consider Nat Turner as a precursor of the *Creole* revolt, establishes black traditions of militant resistance which foreshadow Brown's later strategies of heroic representation in his historical works. In imitation of his other speeches, Douglass uses gender to situate the black male slave within a universalised cult of true manhood: "You may pile up statutes against us and our manhood as high as heaven, and still we are not changed thereby. WE ARE MEN" (*SRR* 131). His recognition of the need to instil in his abolitionist audience an understanding of black equal manhood demands white support while encouraging a sense of pride in his black (male) readership. Thus, in his gendered rhetoric, Douglass deploys conventions of black heroic representation which are subsequently revised by Child and Hopkins.

Furthermore, narrative perspective shifts as the reporter of this speech, in references to "us," identifies his intended readership: "Douglass reminded us of the degradation of the Anglo-Saxon race in England, under this Norman conquerors;... of

that very race which... assumes to plunder or enslave all others” (*SRR* 131). In his focus upon the interchangeability of heroism by juxtaposing contexts, Douglass adapts a technique employed by Child in her earlier short story, “The Black Saxons” (1846). She similarly invites comparisons between black and white modes of oppression as a way of exposing the arbitrary, rather than innate, production of (black and white) inferiority under slavery: “The brave and free-souled Harolds,... the fair-haired Ediths... all sank to the condition of slaves [and]... tamely submitted to their lot.”⁷² The fact that “American and Scottish Prejudice Against the Slave” is narrated in the third person, makes it possible for the editor to comment within the text upon the manner in which it was received: “Those who have never heard Frederick Douglass’s sarcastic tones... can have but a poor idea of... its [his speech] overwhelming effect upon the audience” (*ASP* 132). This focus upon Douglass’s oratorical prowess emphasises these speeches as spoken performances and recognises the largely unrecoverable nature of their extra-textual dimensions and impact upon contemporary audiences.

Finally, the principal speech which dramatises this revolt, “Slavery, the Slumbering Volcano” (1849), is distinctive both for an overtly militant and pseudo-separatist agenda.⁷³ The immediate context of this address is significant because it was the first of Douglass’s speeches on the *Creole* revolt to be delivered to an all black audience, specifically to defend black rights against white racism. Thus, in continuation of Walker’s denunciations, Douglass’s immediate political aim was to resist the “assaults” (*SSV* 149) of the American Colonization Society. The following extract signals his particular opposition to the extension of this society in a British context: “Our humble words on the strong wings of the winds, will be speedily wafted

⁷² Child, “The Black Saxons” (1846) 190.

to the shores of England. They will... defeat the schemes of our subtle foe” (*SSV* 150). Douglass’s reiterated transatlantic focus reveals his overall narrative design which was to reach and convert European, specifically British, opinion in oratorical representations of the *Creole* revolt.

Douglass’s “Slavery, the Slumbering Volcano” adopts overtly polemical language employing phrases such as - “there is no end to the devises [sic] of our enemies” (*SSV* 149) - to set up clearly defined and racialised binaries. His desire to expose the “most deceitful and cunning scheme” (*SSV* 150) of the colonisationists, which he recognises as the “Janus-faced enemy” (*SSV* 150), concentrates upon their misrepresentation of black identity: “The agents, and presses, and reports of that Society carefully kept out of sight all the evidences of our improvement and only represented us as degraded, ignorant and besotted” (*SSV* 151). Douglass’s exposure of white duplicity positions his representation of black heroism in relation to campaigns to refute racist processes of vilification. His use of the first person plural “us” suggests his erasure of individual narrative voice in favour of articulating a communal perspective. Douglass conflates authorial and audience perspectives to provide an empathetic articulation of their concerns and to illustrate his appreciation of his role as spokesman.

In a direct attempt to map black militant protest onto white revolutionary ideals, Douglass posits the following resolution: “Resolved, That if it be left optional with a slave to go to Africa or not, we advise him not to go, but rather to remain here and add to the number of those who may yet imitate the example of our fathers of ’76” (*SSV* 151). In this manner, he rejects a separatist agenda of recolonisation in Africa in favour of encouraging black exhibitions of heroism within a North

⁷³ Sale (1997) 179. She identifies this speech as including “the longest version of Washington’s story” (179-80).

American context. By continuation, his adoption of apocalyptic imagery foreshadows the inevitability of black violent retaliation: “The slaveholders are sleeping on slumbering volcanoes, if they did but know it; and I want every coloured man in the South to remain there and cry in the ears of the oppressors, ‘Liberty for all or chains for all’” (*SSV* 151). Douglass’s references to “every colored man” and the need for universal black male rebellion, stipulated later in this speech in recognition of a “*state of war*” (*SSV* 153) in the South, confirms his endorsement of violent retribution. His graphic statement - “those who have given us blood to drink for wages, may expect that their turn will come one day” (*SSV* 152) - privileges the “bloody” reality of violence above that of rhetorical reinterpretation. This excerpt echoes his earlier speech, “Farewell to the British People,” (1847) in which he adopts parallel phrasing to emphasise black equality: “Slavery never sleeps or slumbers. The slaveholder... is conscious that there is intellect burning... within the bosoms of the men he oppresses, who... will... mete out justice to the wretch who had doomed them to slavery.”⁷⁴ In contrast to his previous equivocation on the issue of black violence, this speech is characterised by Douglass’s focus upon the need for “black men” to prove their manhood and rebel against white “wretches” in the interests of individual and communal emancipation.

Douglass introduces into the form of “Slavery, the Slumbering Volcano” an awareness of his different audiences:

I know that I am speaking now, not to this audience alone, for I see reporters here, and I learn that what is spoken here is to be published, and will be read by Colonizationists and perhaps by slaveholders. I want them to know that at least one coloured man in the Union... would greet with joy the glad news... that an insurrection had broken out... I want them to know that a *black man* cherishes that sentiment... and that it is not impossible that some other black men (a voice – we are all so here) may... put this theory into practice. Sir, I want to alarm the slaveholders, and not to alarm them by mere declamation or by mere bold assertions, but to

⁷⁴ Douglass, “Farewell to the British People” (1847) in Blassingame, ed., (1979) 2: 31.

show that there is really danger... I want them to know that there are some Madison Washingtons in this country (*SSV* 153).

This excerpt establishes Douglass's autonomous status as author in his consistent adherence to black rebellion, as set against his appreciation of the diverse ways in which his audience receives and interprets his material within varying contexts. When considered against its immediate setting, this speech operates as a rallying cry for his black audience by affirming the potential power of black manhood. Douglass's acknowledgement that his speech will be reproduced in both oral and textual forms - "what is spoken here is to be published" - may potentially confirm his control over his material and the scope of its readership. He also realises that it will reach an unsympathetic readership - consisting of "colonisationists" and "slaveholders" - as well as a supportive black audience. Thus, he dramatises tensions in this material between the production of black heroic models and their resistance to white racist commodification. Similarly, his various references to himself as both "one colored man" and "a black man" identifies Douglass with his black male audience. They suggest his significance as racial representative which is ultimately affirmed in his above quoted interest in unifying a black "voice - we are all so here."

Thus, while Douglass explicitly considered black physical retribution, as connoted by "insurrection," his primary concern was with moral suasionist arguments which synthesise competing aspects of public opinion. Douglass adopts this strategy in a later speech, "A Black Hero," (1861) in which he employs rhetorical questioning: "When will this nation cease to disparage the Negro race? When will they become sensible of the force of this irresistible Tillman argument?"⁷⁵ By conflating black manhood with linguistic manipulation, Douglass emphasises Tillman's textual status above that of historical insurrectionary activist. Similarly, the above extended excerpt

broadens references to the *Creole* leader (“some Madison Washingtons”) in order to confirm his representative status as archetypal black hero. Such a lack of individual specificity invites parallels between Washington and Douglass as he refers to himself ambiguously as “one of the fugitive slaves.” Douglass manipulates the literary-historical figures, Madison Washington and William Tillman, to translate historical events into figures of rhetorical persuasion and political action.

The final section of this speech provides the most detailed analysis of the *Creole* revolt to be found among any of Douglass’s oral texts. Guided by the desire to resist white assumptions of black inferiority in racist arguments that “there is no fight in us” (*SSV* 154), Douglass aligns himself with a black communal perspective: “As an illustration of the spirit that is in the black man, let me refer to the story of Madison Washington” (*SSV* 154). He uses the *Creole* revolt to provide a template for black slave heroism which transcends stereotyped boundaries and corroborates his adaptation of this material to consider its universal applicability. His assessment in this speech that the - “treatment of that man [Washington] by this Government was such as to disgrace it in the eyes of the civilized world” (*SSV* 154) - can be juxtaposed with his focus on British abolitionism in Washington’s escape to Canada: “nestled in the mane of the British Lion, the American Eagle might scream in vain above him, for from his bloody beak and talons he was free” (*SSV* 154). This manipulation of bestial imagery aids in readings of later descriptions of Madison Washington during the mutiny: “He leapt from beneath the hatchway, gave a cry like an eagle to his comrades beneath, saying, *we must go through*” (*SSV* 155). Douglass restructures the customary racism embedded in the animal imagery often deployed to represent the black male, in associations of Madison with the patriotic American symbol of the

⁷⁵ Douglass, “A Black Hero” (1861) in Foner, ed., (1950) 3: 134.

“eagle,” to confirm that his actions are indivisible from national and revolutionary ideals.

The form of this address privileges the visual and dramatic in order to engage with white processes of objectification: “he [Madison] was brought manacled upon the auctioneer’s block... We see nothing more of Madison Washington, until we see him at the head of a gang of one hundred slaves destined for the Southern market” (*SSV* 155). Douglass’s narrative practice of accentuating the visual, in references to that which is “seen” and the black body as white commodified spectacle, is further substantiated by his descriptions of the “slave-dealer – I sometimes think I see him – walking the deck of that ship freighted with human misery” (*SSV* 155). However, Douglass undermines any sense of a direct correlation between the visual and an uncomplicated fulfilment of the criteria for “authentic” evidence by indicating ambiguity:

On the 8th day it seems that Madison Washington succeeded in getting off one of his irons... The same day he succeeded in getting the irons off the hands of some seventeen or eighteen others. When the slaveholders came down below they found their human chattels apparently all with their irons on, but they were broken (*SSV* 155).

Douglass’s technique engages with black performances of enslavement by disrupting a direct correlation between the visual and reality in which the former provides the most accurate marker of representation. He also emphasises the problematics of black identity construction before a white audience. Child provides a similar focus upon black performance in her version of this mutiny, “Madison Washington,” (1866) in which she describes: “[the slaves] continued to wear their chains, and no one suspected that they could slip their hands and feet out at their pleasure” (*MWFB* 152). Thus, this latter extract shows Child’s parallel preoccupation with parodying straightforward interpretations of the visual as irrefutable proof within abolitionist rhetoric.

Furthermore, while this speech employs the customary conventions of Douglass's addresses on this revolt, including both a mention of Washington's desire to recover his family from slavery and a concluding eulogy on British justice, "Slavery and the Slumbering Volcano" expresses Douglass's most significant departure in his physical representations of Madison Washington which, on the surface, confirm the conventions of existing racist discourse:

He leapt from beneath the hatchway, gave a cry like an eagle to his comrades beneath, saying, *we must go through*. (Great applause.) Suiting the action to the word, in an instant his guilty master was prostrate on the deck, and in a very few minutes Madison Washington, a black man, with woolly head, high cheekbones, protruding lip, distended nostril, and retreating forehead, had the mastery of that ship (*SSV* 155).

While indicating its borrowings from government testimony in reproducing Washington's exclamation, "we must go through," printed in *The Senate Documents*, this passage is significant as far as Douglass's explicit racialising of his protagonist within conventional codes for black representation is concerned. Sale argues that he portrayed Washington as "stereotypically African" in order to "contest... the racist assumption... that the spirit of liberty inheres in white rather than black blood."⁷⁶ Thus, he subverts white racist caricature in order to present a hero identified with a black race in an exaggerated, unambiguous and highly stylised form. This narrative approach draws attention to debates surrounding theatricality, minstrelsy and audience as his stylised representations of blackness reproduce those "coined" in performance. The key phrase - "suiting the action to the word" - confirms Douglass's explicit connection between moral suasion and political activism, which is also articulated in the need to stimulate practical self-efforts for emancipation in his black audience, as well as to promote self-interrogation among his white readers.

⁷⁶ Sale (1997) 179.

Douglass concludes his dramatic narration of this revolt in “Slavery, the Slumbering Volcano” with a moral obviously intended to flatter his black audience concerning the existence of slave heroism, and a warning to his white readership that there “are more Madison Washingtons in the South, and the time may not be distant when the whole South will present again a scene something similar to the deck of the *Creole*” (SSV 156). The connotations of “scene” further confirm Douglass’s theatrical focus in his recognition of the dramatic and visual potential of this material. This excerpt emphasises his overt didacticism in these speeches as he is keen to educate his white audience concerning black character and capabilities. Douglass’s narrative practice is characterised by techniques of defamiliarisation and identification, in order to offset and interrogate both white and black readerships simultaneously.

The *Creole* slave ship revolt, as retold by Douglass, pinpoints this dissertation’s concern with the dynamic relationship between form and context in representations of the black heroic slave figure in these and later works. This research can be applied to his dramatisations of other successful black insurrectionists including, for example, Toussaint L’Ouverture. Douglass produced four untitled manuscripts during the 1880s which provided both complementary and contradictory portraits of this historic rebel leader. Produced in a postbellum context and for an entirely different purpose, nonetheless these texts furnish a great deal of material relevant to this thesis. They uncover Douglass’s use of natural imagery in descriptions of black violence; they register his ambivalence towards white abolitionist philanthropy; they record his satirical resistance to the confines of available historical discourse; they present the necessity, due to L’Ouverture’s obscurity in the white historical record, of fictionalising black heroism; they engage with the existing

templates within which to represent black male resistance and find them lacking; they interrogate the available discourses within which to dramatise the black male body; lastly, they complicate attempts made by white abolitionists to appropriate black masculinity as a spectacle for voyeuristic consumption.⁷⁷ As these works are undated and unnumbered, they also present the customary difficulty within abolitionist discourse of producing an authoritative text.

The investigation in this chapter into Douglass's speeches on the *Creole* revolt betrays his fundamental narrative indeterminacy, complex depictions of black male slave heroism and ideological interrogation of white racist discourse. He revises and restructures his material, according to changing political contexts, diverse generic forms and varying platforms for publication. Because these speeches have been critically neglected, it is important to recover them, as a means of extending Douglass's presently fixed canon. These speeches on the *Creole* revolt by Douglass underscore his desire, not only to juxtapose American and European abolitionist contexts, but also to articulate his understanding of, and distance from, differing strands of American abolitionism. In one of the newly uncovered texts to mention this mutiny, "West India Emancipation" (1857), Douglass provides insights into the pressures involved in narrative representations of black heroism: "Your humble speaker has been branded as an ingrate, because he has ventured to stand upon his own right, and to plead our common cause as a colored man, rather than as a Garrisonian."⁷⁸ This statement can be applied to Douglass's literary-historical

⁷⁷ Douglass's four untitled versions on "Toussaint L'Ouverture" are included on Reel 19 of the Library of Congress's microfilm series, *Frederick Douglass's Papers*. These texts constitute Douglass's drafts for an introduction which he intended to write to an American edition of the French abolitionist, Victor Schoelcher's biography of *Toussaint L'Ouverture* (*Vie de Toussaint L'Ouverture*. 1889. Rpt. Adélaïde, ed., 1982). Whether this edition ever appeared is unknown. Douglass's material on "Toussaint L'Ouverture" is fascinating and it is to be hoped will form the basis for my next research project. I am indebted to Cynthia Hamilton for her suggestion that I read this material.

⁷⁸ Douglass, "West India Emancipation, Speech Delivered at Cannandaigua, New York, August 4, 1857" in Foner, ed., (1950) 2: 437.

adaptations of the heroic slave figure, as he positions himself as a “colored man” rather than a “Garrisonian” and, as an independent black man rather than a subordinate “other.” This tension was to become more pronounced in his dramatisations of Madison Washington in his written material on the *Creole* revolt, under discussion in the following chapter. Finally, these speeches record Douglass’s development of theatrical techniques committed to the systematic dismantling of white attempts to authorise and appropriate, according to their own dictates, black male intellectual activism and physical heroism.

CHAPTER II

“Arms Like Polished Iron:” Theatricality of Form and Narrative Ambiguities in Frederick Douglass’s Two Versions of *The Heroic Slave* (1853, 1863?)

Madison was of manly form. Tall, symmetrical, round, and strong. In his movements he seemed to combine, with the strength of the lion, a lion’s elasticity. His torn sleeves disclosed arms like polished iron.

Frederick Douglass *The Heroic Slave* (1853)¹

Madison was of manly form. Tall symmetrical, round and strong. In his movements, he seemed to combine with the strength of the lion, the lion’s elasticity. His torn sleeves, displayed arms like polished iron.

Frederick Douglass *A Thrilling Narrative* (1853, 1863?)²

This research builds on the previous chapter’s examination of Frederick Douglass’s speeches on the *Creole* revolt by considering his later written texts, *The Heroic Slave* (1853) and his recently discovered second version, *The Heroic Slave, A Thrilling Narrative of the Adventures of Madison Washington, In Pursuit of Liberty* (1853/1863?). The first part of this chapter assesses the relationship between Douglass’s original forums for publication of *The Heroic Slave* and his choice of form, in order to measure the efficacy of his narrative strategies with different contemporary audiences. This research into *The Heroic Slave* is complemented by a discussion of Douglass’s second slave narrative, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), in order to engage with his manipulation of autobiographical and historical

¹ Douglass (*HS* 179).

generic conventions in constructions of the black heroic slave. This chapter situates *The Heroic Slave* within an abolitionist tradition of black and white dramatic readings and plays which was continued on into the twentieth century. Such an approach makes it possible to read Douglass's text as an example of pioneering black dramatic writing and positions critical misunderstandings of his narrative style as part of their failure to consider his adaptations of theatrical conventions in *The Heroic Slave*.

This chapter does not seek to deny the influence of other genres, but to direct critical emphasis away from Douglass's formal ambiguity and/or compositional deficiencies in readings either of his speeches on the *Creole* revolt or of his novella. As far as current research indicates, *The Heroic Slave* was never produced or performed in dramatic form.³ Nevertheless, there are key identifiable aspects of *The Heroic Slave* which encourage readings of this piece as specifically intended for the stage or, at least, as a dramatic reading to form part of an abolitionist lecture. An interpretation of this work according to theatrical conventions reorients previous critical understandings of *The Heroic Slave* as inferior literature due to its disjointed structure. Thus, it becomes more accurate to read Douglass as intent upon constructing a series of interlocking but independent scenes or set pieces. These gain their dramatic energy from a complex manipulation of dialogue rather than linear narrative progression. Apart from C. Paul Jones, Shelly Fisher-Fishkin and Carla Peterson are the only critics to touch upon the positive significance of Douglass's formal innovations: "Douglass is able to create not only dialogues but full-blown characters... who interact dramatically in scenes spun from his imagination."⁴ This

² Douglass (*HSTN* 5) In order to avoid confusion, references to the second version will be made throughout by the brief title, *A Thrilling Narrative*.

³ It may well be difficult to trace records for the performance of this play due to a number of factors, including the possibility that Douglass was not listed as author, and also that the piece may have been retitled for the purposes of dramatic adaptation.

⁴ Fishkin and Peterson (1990) 198.

critical assessment introduces useful material from which to explore Douglass's interrogation of form. Some useful insights can also be gleaned from Robert B. Stepto's otherwise critical view: "after dismissing the florid soliloquies which unfortunately besmirch this... we find that the novella is full of craft,... of the sort which combines artfulness with a certain fabulistic usefulness."⁵ In direct contradiction of Stepto's opinion, this chapter argues that Douglass's exhibition of "craft" in *The Heroic Slave*, directly stems from those too easily discounted "florid soliloquies."

The following dramatic features make it possible to interpret Douglass's *The Heroic Slave* in theatrical form. He employs representational archetypes and a self-conscious interweaving of abolitionist tableaux in these versions as he includes, for example, the following stock characters - the runaway, the "ideal" abolitionist and the slave rebel/revolutionary - along with identifiable standard material: the fugitive slave story, moral conversion of a white male abolitionist, recapture and a slave sale and perhaps the least conventional and most difficult to represent, a slave revolt. Douglass's interest in both parodying and satirising conventional archetypes, including that of the heroic slave figure, is further corroborated in his evocation of stylised scene-setting and manipulation of natural imagery. It may be possible to argue that his manipulation of natural imagery was to allow for the production of "spectacle" in a dramatic sense. In this case, his description of the fire in one of the main scenes of *The Heroic Slave* may have been rewritten with a view to its visual and iconographic reproduction on stage. Douglass also includes many familiar conventions drawn from dramatic works such as "asides," soliloquies, disguise and mistaken identity.

⁵ Stepto (1982) 360.

The final section of this chapter compares in detail Douglass's first version of *The Heroic Slave* with his second text which I recently discovered, *A Thrilling Narrative*. Produced in pamphlet form, this work introduces ambiguities concerning Douglass's and/or the publisher's adaptations and involvement in processes of production. The major issues under discussion in relation to *A Thrilling Narrative* are as follows: the publication date, the extent to which Douglass was involved as author despite its pseudonymous publication, and the aesthetic and/or political rationale for this work's introduction of two significant additions to the original. These take the form of an illustration of two ships (Fig. 5) and a poetic piece, also anonymous, and simply titled "Slavery" (Fig. 6). An important point is the necessarily tentative nature of any conclusions on this material. The fact that excavational questions surrounding *The Heroic Slave* remain outstanding affects not only attempts to authenticate the depicted subject-matter, but also to establish its source, abolitionist or otherwise.

Published in 1853, *The Heroic Slave* can be understood as Douglass's most sustained piece on the *Creole* revolt. This text inspires significant critical interest because it provides the major source for later adaptations by Brown, Child and Hopkins. The process of assessing Douglass's form and content in this text, necessitated research into detailed background information concerning its various arenas of publication within Britain and North America. The discussion in this chapter is based on the version of *The Heroic Slave* included in the U.S. edition for *Autographs for Freedom* (1853) which is the authoritative text for the purposes of this

thesis.⁶ However, the version of this giftbook which was published contemporaneously in Britain included a variant text.⁷

The British edition of *Autographs for Freedom* was misleadingly marketed as written “By Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Thirty-five other Eminent Writers.”⁸ This was inaccurate because, despite Stowe’s involvement in “certain editorial activities,” Julia Griffiths acted as the main editor. She was responsible not only for writing the “Preface” included in both editions, but also for raising sufficient funds and soliciting contributions.⁹ The version of Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave* which can be found in the British volume is identical to that which was printed in its U.S. counterpart, with one notable exception.¹⁰ Part III of this work includes an additional illustration which highlights Washington’s recapture in the South and punctuates Douglass’s textual direction: “a slave gang on their way to market” (see Fig. 1).¹¹

This illustration may have been inserted in order to complement Douglass’s representation of the visual in textual terms: “while running his [Listwell’s] eye up

⁶ See chapter II for a discussion of the status and potential significance of the recently discovered second version of this written text.

⁷ A version of *The Heroic Slave* was also serialised in 1853 in Douglass’s newspaper, *The North Star*. If it could be proved that the version used was that included in *The North Star*, it may perhaps suggest that the editors of this text did not know of its subsequent publication in *Autographs for Freedom* (1853), and were therefore keen to distribute it in pamphlet form to reach a wider audience. By extension, this view may favour the earlier date for this publication of 1853.

⁸ Harriet Beecher Stowe et al., *Autographs for Freedom* (1853). In terms of major differences between this and the U.S. edition, this text includes additional and different illustrations while omitting others. For example, it is notable that Samuel May’s piece “The Heroic Slave-Woman” is unillustrated in this version. As well as retaining Julia Griffiths’s Preface to the U.S. edition, this volume also includes a specific “Preface to the English Edition” (v) which capitalises on Harriet Beecher Stowe and Frederick Douglass’s transatlantic reputations in particular: “Mrs. Stowe... who has aroused thousands to a sense of guilt and wrong of slavery,” (ibid.) and “Frederick Douglass, who has experienced all those horrors whose bare recital has made us shudder” (ibid.). The last major difference worth noting is that the British text concludes with an appeal “To the Friends of Negro Emancipation” (183-92) reprinted from “the ‘*Uncle Tom’s Cabin Almanack*’” (183), which foregrounds the formative role of Stowe’s text in the abolition of slavery, as well as of Douglass’s speeches (187, 190).

⁹ Stepto (1986) 143. He also quotes from an advertisement in *The North Star* written by the Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society which confirms Stowe’s involvement in the publication of this text by their subsequent adoption of her choice of title: “the gifted authoress of ‘*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’ has christened it ‘*Autographs for Freedom*’ and we willingly accept her baptism” (ibid.).

¹⁰ In addition to insignificant presentational and spelling differences between these texts, the British edition includes an entirely different “Afterword.” See *The Heroic Slave* in *Autographs for Freedom* (Harriet Beecher Stowe et al, ed., 1853).

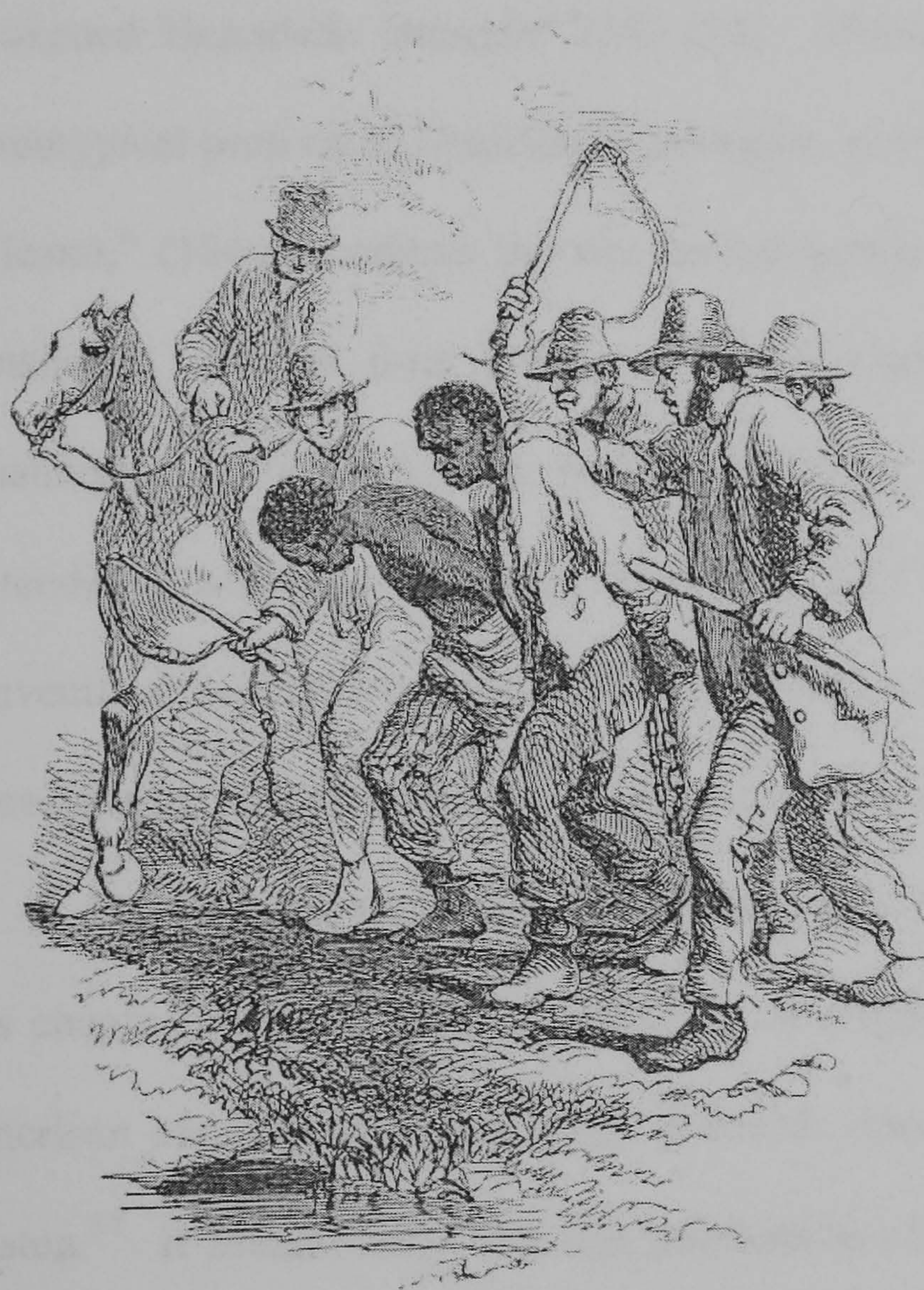
¹¹ Ibid., 149. This caption can be found under the additional illustration provided in this text.

and down the fettered ranks, he met the glance of one whose face he thought he had seen before... It was MADISON WASHINGTON! Here was a scene for the pencil!"¹² The fact that subsequent editors decided to illustrate this scene echoes Douglass's textual punctuation - "a scene for the pencil" - and demonstrates the enduring significance of the visual in *The Heroic Slave*. This new material underscores the ease with which familiar generic material, such as that of a "slave coffle," was reused and adapted for competing interpretative contexts with few if any alterations. In the same way that the illustration of the two slave ships in *A Thrilling Narrative* cannot be specifically connected to Douglass's retelling of his event (see discussions below), this engraving which purports to dramatise Washington's capture

betrays a similarly indeterminate relationship to its immediate context.¹³

Fig. 1. "A Slave Gang on their way to Market" (London, 1853) 149; in Harriet Beecher Stowe et al, *Autographs for Freedom* (London: Sampson Low Son and Co., John Cassell, 1853).

In the composition of this additional illustration, the two central black male figures are



A SLAVE GANG ON THEIR WAY TO MARKET.—Page 148.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ For an investigation into the use of illustrations in the abolitionist movement, see Wood (2000). In general terms, his focus is upon identifying conventions for representing slave escape and the ways in which they are reused and redeployed in vastly different forums with competing agendas.

chained and their bodies in attitudes of degradation as they are bent forward. Corresponding to Douglass's characterisations in the text of a "horrid trio" (HS 217), three slave drivers with aggressive expressions and whips in hand furnish the immediate surround. However, this illustration registers a significant departure from Douglass's *The Heroic Slave* in alternative representations of the slaves. Their physical aspect, characterised by exaggerated features, corresponds to white racist stereotypes for black representation during this period. Thus, the detail provided not only contrasts, but also substantially undercuts, Douglass's implementation of a classical model to provide racially non-specific descriptions of Madison in *The Heroic Slave*: "Tall, symmetrical, round and strong... His whole appearance betokened Herculean strength" (HS 179). However, Douglass's previously noted stereotypical portrait of Madison Washington in his speech, "Slavery the Slumbering Volcano," (1849) confirms the similarities between this illustration and markers of minstrelsy. In oral form before a militant black audience, Douglass represented Washington as "a black man, with woolly head, high cheek bones, protruding lip, distended nostril and retreating forehead" (SSV 155) and thereby paralleled the conventions deployed to signify blackness in this illustration. Indeed, this engraving represents the British edition's only change to *The Heroic Slave*.

For the purposes of discussing Douglass's 1853 version of *The Heroic Slave* in this chapter, it is important to return to its original publication forum in the North American edition of the antislavery giftbook, *Autographs for Freedom*, published in Boston.¹⁴ It seems likely that this publication of the giftbook was the original and

¹⁴ A second volume of *Autographs for Freedom* was produced a year later also by Julia Griffiths (1854). This volume included material by Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, Gerrit Smith, Joshua Giddings, and of course, Harriet Beecher Stowe. Julia Griffiths's "Preface" is much more brief and applauds "the progress made, during the past year, by the cause to which the book is devoted" (v). Much briefer than his *The Heroic Slave*, Douglass's contribution consists of a short extract from one of his speeches given in 1852, denouncing the extent of American racism: "were I a white man, speaking

earliest forum for Douglass's piece, and it provides the standard text for subsequent reprints by Andrews and Ronald Takaki.¹⁵ Griffiths's previously discussed role as editor represents the general significance of white female abolitionists, in this case the "Rochester Ladies Antislavery Society," in the production of this piece. Thus, in a slight variation upon the customary slave narrative format which demanded white male approval, white female abolitionist intervention shapes black authored material in this antislavery giftbook. Griffiths's "Preface" contextualised this material by an investigation into its forum for publication and explicated the purpose behind "the publication of this collection of Anti-slavery testimonies."¹⁶ Thus, she indicated "the influence which must ever be exerted by persons of exalted character, and high mental endowments... to ameliorate the condition of the injured race amongst us [and to]... sweep away from this otherwise happy land, the great sin of SLAVERY."¹⁷ In this context, Douglass's and Samuel May's production of black male role models in their respective texts, *The Heroic Slave* and "The Heroic Slave Woman" (see discussion below), can be situated within a wider frame of reference. They form part of a

for the right of white men, I should in this country have a smooth sea and fair wind" (252). Another noteworthy piece, William Wells Brown's "Visit of a Fugitive Slave to the Grave of Wilberforce" provides complementary insights into Douglass's interest in racialised representations and constructions of monumentalism. For example, he describes his visit to Nelson's column in Trafalgar Square in the following terms, revealing for considerations of competing paradigms for black and white male heroism: "I perceived among the figures... a full-blooded African, with... all the... peculiarities of feature that distinguish that race from the rest of the human family, with musket in hand... which told that he had been in the heat of battle... as soon as I saw my sable brother, I felt more at home" (70-71). The fact that Brown closes his extract with a eulogy on British abolitionism, "Here was the Negro, as black a man as was every imported from... Africa, represented in his proper place by... Lord Nelson, on one of England proudest monuments... How different... was the position assigned to the colored man on similar monuments in the United States" (71), parallels Douglass's interests in the *Creole* revolt as a way of effectively juxtaposing U.S. and U.K. abolitionism.

¹⁵ Andrews, ed., (1996) 131-61; Takaki, ed., (1972).

¹⁶ Griffiths (1853) v.

¹⁷ Ibid.

giftbook informed by the definite purpose of creating black archetypes in order to convince a white audience concerning the existence of slave heroism.¹⁸

Furthermore, Griffiths's "Preface" specified, in sentimental terms, her intended readership: "Should this publication be instrumental in casting *one* ray of hope on the heart of one poor slave, or should it draw the attention of one person... to the deep wrongs of the bondman... the kind contributors... will feel themselves gratified and compensated."¹⁹ Such references to "one poor slave" suggest a major difference in the expected readership of abolitionist texts as she nominates a previously unconsidered audience. Griffiths's stipulation that this text was designed, not only to reach potential white Northern abolitionists, which would have included Douglass's character Listwell in *The Heroic Slave*, but also a black Southern slave population, is noteworthy. In this manner, Douglass's heroic constructions of Madison Washington signal his intention to convert black slaves to an awareness of their equal humanity and superior heroism.

The overtly religious packaging of *Autographs for Freedom* impacts upon the text's explicit didacticism. For example, the facing page to the frontispiece includes an illustration of a suppliant black male slave reminiscent of Josiah Wedgwood's engraving.²⁰ In this illustration, the slave kneels before a white Christ-like figure, underneath which the following is quoted: "He is not ashamed to call them Brethren."²¹ Thus, the focus in this work derives from the "civilising" didacticism of a white paternalistic and Christian ethos. Ostensibly adopting an antislavery position, such a religious construction articulates a prescriptive and racist conceptualisation of

¹⁸ Brown, Child and Hopkins also adopt this approach. However, in their case, the emphasis is slightly altered to adhere to a didactic imperative in their self-reflexive production of black role models for the practical instruction of their intended black audience.

¹⁹ Griffiths (1853) v-vi.

²⁰ For a reproduction of Josiah Wedgwood's abolitionist seal, see Wood (2000) 22.

²¹ Griffiths (1853) ii.

black slave character. Similarly, Griffiths's final comment in her "Preface" that all profits "will be devoted to the dissemination of light and truth on the subject of slavery" suggests, in an evangelical emphasis, explicit parallels between religion and antislavery zeal.

This publication's borrowings from the didactic tract format is useful for interpreting religious symbolism in Douglass's text. For example, Madison Washington's delivers his "sermon" on the evils of slavery in *The Heroic Slave* "within hearing of the solemn peals of the church bells" (HS 176). He refers to Listwell in Part I as "half hoping, half fearing the return of the sable preacher to the solitary temple" (HS 181). This imagery explicitly connects processes of antislavery conversion with those of religious awakening. Furthermore, Madison Washington describes the "awful conflagration" (HS 193) in apocalyptic overtones: "it appeared to me that the day of judgment had come; that the burning bowels of the earth had burst forth, and that the end of all things was at hand" (HS 193). In this reading, the black slave adopts prophetic rhetoric to condemn white perfidy. Thus, Douglass associates slavery with divine retribution in Madison's confession: "I ran alike from fire and from slavery" (HS 194).

In recognition of Douglass's manipulation of the associations of fire with violence, it is possible to argue that a narration of this "conflagration" was inserted by Douglass to intimate Madison Washington's forthcoming significance as an insurrectionary leader. This view is corroborated by his much later speech, "The Negro Exodus from the Gulf States," (1880) in which he draws a direct parallel between revolution and fire: "This is no time to trifle with the rights of men. All Europe today is studded with the material for a wild conflagration."²² Finally, in *The*

²² Douglass, "The Negro Exodus from the Gulf States" (May 1880) 20.

Heroic Slave, Douglass justifies Listwell's rationalisation of his decision not to openly reveal his abolitionist identity by an overt appeal to an early modern religious dissenter: "Having as little of the spirit of a martyr as Erasmus, he concluded, like the latter, that it was wiser to trust the mercy of God for his soul, than the humanity of slave-traders for his body'" (HS 214). Thus, Douglass situates white expediency within a religious framework as confirmation of his own educational prowess in biblical learning, as well as to illustrate the black ambivalence towards white equivocation produced by slaveholders' intimidation even of powerful whites.



Fig. 2. "The Heroic Slave Woman" (Boston, 1853) 160; in Julia Griffiths, ed., *Autographs for Freedom* (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1853).

Both North American and British editions of *Autographs for Freedom* contain an interesting short piece by Samuel May entitled, "The Heroic Slave Woman." The title of this text introduces its significance for consideration alongside Douglass's *The Heroic Slave*. Its literary importance is compounded by the fact that regardless of its brevity (it occupies only a few pages) this work is one of the few illustrated pieces in

this collection.²³ Due to the expense involved, the selection of this text for illustration suggests its competing significance as a major contribution (see Fig. 2). The fact that this work has been totally neglected by critics is symptomatic of their lack of interest in contextualising Douglass's material. The juxtaposition of "The Heroic Slave Woman" with Douglass's sets in motion a debate which reorients his racialised and gendered constructions of individual male slave heroism. In contrast to *The Heroic Slave*, May's piece depicts an alternative black female heroism predicated on conventional codes of domesticity. The unnamed, and therefore archetypal "Heroic Slave-Woman," refuses to take the proffered freedom of abolitionists at the North: "For... I promised mistress that I would go back with her and the children."²⁴ Thus, the black female slave's "heroic virtue" is defined by racial self-sacrifice.²⁵ Rooted in preserving her own conscience, she privileges the domestic harmony of the (white) family above her own freedom: "was there ever a slave that did not wish to be free? I long for liberty. I will get out of slavery, if I can, the day after I have returned, but go back I must, because I promised that I would."²⁶

The accompanying illustration depicts the slave woman with two white male abolitionists, holding clasped to her chest the "very valuable gold watch and chain, which her mistress has committed to her care" (Fig. 2).²⁷ Hence, the two media highlight the role of the reader in structuring competing interpretations of the enslaved black female. On the one hand, her equation with a material object in this piece visually underlines her comparable status as property. On the other hand, however, May's prose invites recognition of black female subjectivity in his audience by

²³ May's piece was illustrated in the North American edition of *Autographs for Freedom* but not the British edition; however, in the latter, Douglass's *The Heroic Slave* was illustrated (see discussions below).

²⁴ Yarborough (1990) 163.

²⁵ Ibid., 164.

²⁶ Ibid., 163.

emphasising her individual sense of moral responsibility: she insists that “fidelity to a trust was of more consequence to her soul even than the attainment of liberty.”²⁸ Thus, this text demonstrates the slave woman’s moral superiority to the corrupting influence of white manhood as she preserves inviolate her promise. May’s dramatising of a “moral sensibility” provides an ideologically distinct heroic model to Douglass’s construction of Madison Washington as revolutionary exemplar.²⁹ In *The Heroic Slave*, a much more ambitious and complexly crafted text, domesticity is delineated as a site of physical resistance, not passive acceptance, in order to protect the black family. This interpretation is supported by Madison’s avowal: ““if I were free, - my arms my own, - I might devise the means to rescue her [Susan]”” (HS 181).

For the purpose of assessing the extent to which Douglass adapts theatrical conventions, it is useful to engage with the major critical debates surrounding his incorporation of autobiographical material in *The Heroic Slave*. This question can be raised by considering the literary and historical similarities produced in comparable authorial constructions of Madison Washington and Douglass. For example, while considering Douglass’s “whitening” of his black heroic slave, in his comparison of Madison Washington with presidential figures in *The Heroic Slave* (175), Sundquist argues that the text underscores his desire to “revis[e]... his life story while immersing it rhetorically in the ideology of the Revolution.”³⁰ In contrast, John Stauffer suggests Madison Washington operates as Douglass’s “fictive counterpart” and in support of a more literal view, Herman Beavers reads this black heroic figure as “a mirror image of Douglass himself.”³¹ However, while accepting some parallels, in appreciation of the formal complexity and aesthetic innovation of the piece, it is

²⁷ Ibid., 164.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 163.

³⁰ Sundquist (1993) 30.

necessary to differentiate between Frederick Douglass as authorial voice and Madison Washington as literary-historical construct.

Douglass's substantially revised and extended second version of his autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), confirms the similarities between processes of self-construction and representations of Madison Washington in *The Heroic Slave*.³² For example, this text reveals shared preoccupations by providing similar dramatisations of Douglass's and Washington's awakenings to a consciousness of their enslavement. Douglass comments in Chapter IX of *My Bondage and My Freedom*: "I was more and more filled with a sense of my wretchedness... [this] led me... to wish I had never been born. I used to contrast my condition with the black-birds, in whose wild and sweet songs I fancied them so happy!" This confession can be mapped onto Madison Washington's meditations in *The Heroic Slave*: "'it [life] is aimless and worthless, and worse than worthless. Those birds... sounding forth their merry notes... are still my superiors... But what is freedom to me, or I to it? I am a *slave*,- born a slave, an abject slave'" (HS 176-77).³³ *The Heroic Slave* adopts oratorical techniques, including those of rhetorical questioning and repetition with variation, to produce heightened literary and dramatic effects. A close examination reveals that *The Heroic Slave* is more complex than *My Bondage and My Freedom*. This view corroborates the argument of this chapter that authorial intention is characterised by experimentation with generic form. It is possible to argue that, while both texts demonstrate similarities of theme, it is in a competing manipulation of genre and rhetoric that they differ.

In view of an identifiable intertextual relationship between these works, Douglass's development of his chief protagonist in *The Heroic Slave* focuses upon

³¹ Stauffer (1999) 258; Beavers (1996) 228.

³² Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855. Rpt. 1969).

Washington's exceptional heroism in celebratory terms. However, in marked contrast, when conveying his own personal development in literary form, Douglass is confined by autobiographical conventions of self-representation. Thus, his brief confession in Chapter XI of *My Bondage and My Freedom* that "I almost envied my fellow slaves their stupid contentment" can be contrasted with Madison's extended avowal: "Although I envied their seeming contentment,... I despised the cowardly acquiescence in their own degradation which it implied" (*HS* 190).³⁴ Therefore, in *The Heroic Slave*, textual additions to parallel phrasing make it possible not only to distinguish between Washington and the "typical" slave, but also between Washington and Douglass. In his slight shiftings of authorial construction, which are demonstrated above by the substitution of "stupid contentment" with "seeming contentment," Douglass intimates the heightened aesthetic freedom gained by a change of generic form and thematic content.

These texts offer further points for comparison in their representations of slave violence. In *My Bondage and My Freedom*, Douglass closes Chapter XVII which dramatises his physical confrontation with the "slavebreaker" Covey as follows: "I had made up my mind to do him serious damage, if he ever again attempted to lay violent hands on me./'Hereditary bondmen, know ye not/Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow?'"³⁵ Thus, in this excerpt, Douglass echoes *The Heroic Slave* by including an identical citation to preface slave ship insurrection (*HS* 225). Furthermore, in Chapter XIX of the later text entitled "The Runaway Plot," Douglass underscores his personal significance as insurrectionary leader:³⁶

These meetings must have resembled..., the meetings of revolutionary conspirators, in their primary condition. We were plotting against our (so

³³ Ibid., 133.

³⁴ Ibid., 160.

³⁵ Ibid., 249.

³⁶ Ibid., 273.

called) lawful rulers; with this difference – that we sought our own good, and not the harm of our enemies... we had now come to think that we had a right to liberty.³⁷

Thus, it is possible to compare this material with Madison Washington's speech to Tom Grant upon securing command of the *Creole*: “‘God is my witness that LIBERTY, not *malice*, is the motive for this night's work... We have done that which you applaud your fathers for doing, and if we are murderers, *so were they*’” (HS 235). Both excerpts suggest similarities between Douglass's decision to situate himself and Washington within a paradigm of white revolutionary activity as they emphasise magnanimity vis-à-vis black violence. They also communicate the comparable design of encouraging, if not wholeheartedly advocating, the legitimacy of black rebellion to gain freedom. However, this material provides significant variations in formal construction due to the fact that Douglass's rebellion failed while Washington's succeeded.

Perhaps more than any other material written by Douglass during this period, *The Heroic Slave* can be interpreted as preparing the reader for his autonomous development as an antislavery author. *My Bondage and My Freedom* makes this explicit. In Chapter XXIII, Douglass explains that the fact that “Mr. Garrison followed me, taking me as his text,” led to his subsequent resentment: “I was generally introduced as a ‘*chattel*’ – a ‘*thing*’ – a piece of southern ‘*property*’ – the chairman assuring the audience that *it* could speak.”³⁸ In view of his bitter denunciations of white processes of objectification - “I had the advantage of being a ‘*brand new fact*’ – the first one out” - it is accurate to read *The Heroic Slave* as Douglass's statement of independence, both from white slaveholders and paternal

³⁷ Ibid., 280.

³⁸ Ibid., 358, 360.

abolitionism.³⁹ Furthermore, his resentment towards Garrison in particular, highlighted by the fact that he is the only white abolitionist to be named in this context, explicates the major difference between *The Heroic Slave* and his speeches on the *Creole* revolt. Douglass's addresses were largely given during the 1840s when he fully supported Garrisonian abolitionist politics and their demands for "authentic" discourse and interpretation of the Constitution as a proslavery document. However, produced in the 1850s, *The Heroic Slave* and *My Bondage and My Freedom* signal his split from Garrisonian ideology and financial support. This is compounded in these works' analysis of the oppressive nature of white and black abolitionist relationships and their interest in non-verifiable "fictionalised" testimony, as well as in references in *The Heroic Slave* to Gerrit Smith, a bitter opponent of Garrisonian ideology (see chapter I).

Although *The Heroic Slave* can be interpreted as a reaction to white processes of black confinement, the work should be read instead as an independent, complexly crafted piece which contains literary and historical significance beyond its determination to resist straightforward (white) abolitionist categorisation. Douglass's comment in *My Bondage and My Freedom* that "It was impossible for me to repeat the same old story month after month, and to keep up my interest in it" substantiates his reasons for choosing to dramatise historical events and figures beyond his own immediate experience in *The Heroic Slave*.⁴⁰ For Douglass, literary and dramatic revisions of the *Creole* revolt opened up an alternative discursive platform. His changing subject-matter conveyed a determination to control, not only constructions of self, but also to revise the conventions for black representation while exerting autonomy in the selection of material.

³⁹ Ibid., 361.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Any understanding of Douglass's text as drama makes it necessary to situate *The Heroic Slave* within a tradition of abolitionist dramatic readings and plays. This contextual approach not only helps to explore this work's stylised manipulation and melodramatic structuring of stock characters and events, but also inserts this text within a tradition of black polemical theatrical composition. A convincing case can be made for establishing the existence of an influential black authored dramatic tradition during the antebellum period. For example, James V. Hatch and Leo Hamalian single Brown out as "the first [African American] to publish a play."⁴¹ The text to which they refer is his piece, *The Escape: or, A Leap for Freedom*, printed in 1858. Prior to this date, Hatch and Hamalian state that Brown gave public readings of this piece as early as 1847. This date confirms that *The Escape* is earlier than *The Heroic Slave*. Therefore, Douglass may himself have been present during one of Brown's readings, or even given one himself.⁴² Brown's readings were not only drawn from this play but from others which he is known to have written but for which no texts remain, including an earlier work entitled, *Experience; or, How to Give a Northern Man a Backbone* (1856).⁴³ In a consideration of this material which became oral performances, it is difficult to establish, or even procure, an authoritative text.

Brown received high commendations in the contemporary press for his many dramatic readings in both Britain and North America. Reviewers applauded his

⁴¹ See Hamalian and Hatch, ed., (1991) 39.

⁴² Ibid. They argue that "*The Escape* was... introduced to the public in a reading Brown gave in Salem, Ohio, on February 4, 1847."

⁴³ Farrison provides a detailed investigation into Brown's lesser known drama in his two well-researched articles: "Brown's First Drama," (December 1958) 104-10, and "The Kidnapped Clergyman and Brown's *Experience*," (June 1975): 507-15. The following review provides a useful plot summary of Brown's *Experience* for which we do not have the manuscript: "He [Brown] pretty effectually took off the mask from the consummate doughface... Nehemiah Adams... whom he represented as having been kidnapped and sold into slavery after the publication of his famous 'South-Side View' of the 'peculiar institution.' As the practical application of his own doctrine, Dr. Adams is made to get down on his knees before his master, and, as the lash was falling on his back, to acknowledge the justness of his doom" (see "Mr. Brown's Drama," *National Anti-Slavery Standard* 10 May 1856).

production of “amusing and instructive Drama.”⁴⁴ One report described his recital of *The Escape* as follows: “The Drama is written with much power, and Mr. Brown reads it with a most happy dramatic effect.”⁴⁵ Another newspaper commended his earlier drama, *Experience*, as a “capital hit.”⁴⁶ Brown’s plays “were probably never performed on the stage” and were instead included as the cornerstone of his antislavery lectures.⁴⁷ In their repeated oratorical performances, these texts illustrated their popularity and enduring mass appeal. While, on the whole, Brown’s plays have been given insignificant critical treatment, John Ernest and Harry J. Elam have recently provided interesting scholarship on *The Escape*.⁴⁸ Ernest argues that the “dramatic mode enables Brown to emphasize... the extent to which identity is a performance on the cultural stage.”⁴⁹ He also exposes its generic diversity by drawing attention to *The Escape*’s status as a “recontextualization, a significant rearrangement, of established conventions.”⁵⁰ Elam assesses Brown’s didactic interests as he used his role as a black performer to “provoke the audience to reconsider the social, cultural, and historical meanings of blackness.”⁵¹ He argues that Brown also saw this text as an opportunity to reclaim black subjectivity due to self consciousness: “[the] black orator performing before a sea of white spectators was extremely conscious of himself as theatricalized ‘spectacle.’”⁵²

A brief discussion of Brown’s play, *The Escape*, is useful for interpreting Douglass’s dramatic structuring and characterisation in *The Heroic Slave*. Thus, his five act play, *The Escape*, includes a “Playwright’s Preface” in which he outlines its

⁴⁴ “William Wells Brown,” *National Anti-Slavery Standard* 23 Aug. 1856.

⁴⁵ See Henry C. Wright’s aptly titled, “William Wells Brown – His Dramas – Their Power for Good,” *The Liberator* 8 Oct. 1858.

⁴⁶ See the anonymously written, “William Wells Brown.” *The Liberator* 13 June 1856.

⁴⁷ Hamalian and Hatch ed., (1991) 39.

⁴⁸ Ernest (1998) 1108-21 and Elam, Jr., in Elam, Jr. and Krasner, eds., (2001) 288-305.

⁴⁹ Ernest (1998) 1110.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Elam (2001) 289.

reception and continuing success. He communicates that having “read it privately... to a circle of my friends... the drama has been given in various parts of the country.”⁵³ Furthermore, he complicates easy generic definitions by incorporating into his play the authenticity demands of the slave narrative form. He confirms its autobiographical status in the following: the “main features of the drama are true... Many of the incidents are drawn from my own experience.”⁵⁴ However, Brown’s conclusion to his “Preface” exhibits aesthetic autonomy in registering his indifference to potential audience criticism: “The play, no doubt, abounds in defects, but as I was born in slavery, and never had a day’s schooling in my life, I owe the public no apology for errors.”⁵⁵ The fact that in this text Brown reproduces with variation many of the incidents in his much later work, *My Southern Home*, emphasises his incorporation of autobiographical motifs.⁵⁶ This parallel material includes: comparable descriptions of the white slave mistress’s brutality; reproduced characters, as suggested in repeated representations of the slave trader identically named “Walker;” shared incidents, such as the “examination of the slaves” for sale; and an emphasis upon racial ambiguity in discussions of “white” slaves and mistaken identity.⁵⁷

Brown’s text shares a particular intertextual relationship with Hopkins’s much later post-Reconstruction drama, *Peculiar Sam, or the Underground Railroad*

⁵² Ibid., 290.

⁵³ Brown, *The Escape: or, A Leap for Freedom* in Hamalian and Hatch, eds., (1991) 42.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 43.

⁵⁶ Brown, *Narrative of William Wells Brown, A Fugitive Slave* (1848. Rpt. Andrews, ed., 1993).

⁵⁷ At repeated textual points, *My Southern Home* fills out in much greater detail identical material to that which is explored earlier in Brown’s *The Escape*. Brown not only names his characters identically he also reproduces similar events. Among others, these include: the same scene in which the black slave Cato comically impersonates the white doctor Mr. Gaines (*The Escape* 46ff.; *My Southern Home* 138ff.), the whipping of the female slave Hannah by Mrs. Gaines (*The Escape* 56ff.; *My Southern Home* 147ff.), and a slave examination by the slave trader Walker (*The Escape* 62ff.; *My Southern Home* 192ff.).

(1879).⁵⁸ In contrast to Douglass and Brown, Hopkins was known as a theatrical performer - “Boston’s Favorite Soprano” - and her plays were performed to high critical acclaim. Her first version of this piece titled, *Slaves’ Escape; or The Underground Railroad*, was “produced as a musical drama by the Hopkins’ Colored Troubadours... Hopkins’s parents were in the cast and she herself sang a leading role.”⁵⁹ Among the possible reasons for Hopkins’s retitling of this piece may have been her desire “to distinguish the title from Brown’s,” and to suggest her revisions rather than repetition of his material.⁶⁰

Due to space constraints, it is impossible to do full justice to *Peculiar Sam*’s significance and complexity; however, it is possible to offer some general points of comparison. In contrast to Brown’s and Douglass’s texts, Hopkins chooses to narrate her theatrical adaptation of fugitive slave escape primarily by a heavy use of “slave dialect.” Thus, the use of dialect in the principal character’s subversive lament of white slaveholding hypocrisy and inclusion of bestial imagery exemplifies racial difference and black resistance: “‘An’ dats’ de way they treats dar slabes! An’ den they tells how kin’ dey is, an’ how satisfied we is, an’ den thar dogs an’ horses.’”⁶¹ Hopkins also consolidates her accomplishments as a performer by an explicit manipulation of the visual. For example, detailed stage directions focus upon dance, “(POMP strikes up lively dance, each takes a turn)” and various tableaux, including the creation of a “fugitive slave” set piece in the following: “(They pick up their bundles... and form tableau in door around VIRGINIA and MAMMY).”⁶² These

⁵⁸ Hopkins, *Peculiar Sam, or The Underground Railroad: A Musical Drama in Four Acts* in Hamalian and Hatch eds., (1991) 100-23. Among other plays written by Hopkins but not known to have been produced are the following: “a musical drama” (96) *Aristocracy* (1877); “a five-act play” (96) *Winona* (1878), and *One Scene from the Drama of Early Days* (held in the manuscripts division of Fisk University Library).

⁵⁹ Hamalian and Hatch, eds., (1991) 96-7.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 97.

⁶¹ Ibid., 103.

⁶² Ibid., 101, 108.

stage directions indicate Hopkins's engagement with stock, representative characters and situations.

In the context of this chapter's investigations of Douglass's use of content and style, Brown's *The Escape* bears a close relationship to *The Heroic Slave* in terms of generic form. In the same way that Douglass presents Madison Washington's return to the South to rescue his wife, Brown produces dramatic tension in his text by the successful escape of a married slave couple who similarly possess romanticised names in "Glen" and "Melinda." In particular, Brown makes explicit similarities of characterisation between Glen and Madison in a comparable choice of rhetorical language and oratorical form by both authors. For example, Glen's soliloquy similarly delivered in a natural setting ("Forest scenery") in Act III, Scene 4,

"Oh, God! thou who gavest me life, and implanted in my bosom the love of liberty... Oh, pity the poor outraged slave!... What is death, compared to slavery? Oh, heavy curse, to have thoughts, reason, taste, judgment, conscience and passions like another man, and not have equal liberty to use them!"⁶³

can be compared with Madison's lament in Part I:

"*Liberty* I will have, or die in the attempt to gain it. This working that others may live in idleness! This cringing submission to insolence and curses!" (HS 178)

Thus, both texts not only share conventions for black heroic representation, but also dramatise an equally highly flown rhetoric for black male revolutionary self-expression. Furthermore, the defining impetus to both works derives from their fusion of a rhetoric of sentimentality and dramatic motifs. One reviewer of Brown's *The Escape* concentrated upon its heightened use of sentiment in comparison with his earlier play: "There is less satire, and more emotion; it gratifies less one's sense of

⁶³ Ibid., 73.

justice, but stirs the deeper sensibilities of the soul.”⁶⁴ Furthermore, Elam saw this use of language as evidence of Brown’s technique which “works against existing stereotypical images of blackness.”⁶⁵

In demonstration of a more explicit intertextual connection, Glen’s later soliloquy in *The Escape* delivered “in chains” recalls Douglass’s speeches on this revolt.⁶⁶ The following recalls the title of his key address before a black audience, “Slavery, the Slumbering Volcano” (1849): ““Oh! there is a volcano pent up in the hearts of the slaves of these Southern States that will burst forth ere long. When that day comes, woe to those whom its unpitying fury may devour!””⁶⁷ Thus, Brown and Douglass equate black revolutionary fervour with a destructive natural subversion of the cultural order. In addition, both texts adopt a paralleled manipulation of scene setting. Thus, Act V of *The Escape*, set in a “Bar-room in the American Hotel – travellers lounging in chairs,” parallels Douglass’s symbolic representation of an “ancient and famous public tavern” (HS 205) complete with “*hangers on*” (HS 207) in Part III of *The Heroic Slave*.⁶⁸

Brown revises such an archetypal Southern setting by providing a heroic, as opposed to expedient, representation of the Northern abolitionist figure. He names his character “Mr. White,” in distinction to the allegorical appellation of “Listwell” which Douglass adopts in *The Heroic Slave*. In contrast to Douglass’s protagonist, Brown’s unequivocally states his antislavery sentiments: ““the worst act that a man can commit upon his fellow-man is to make him a slave.””⁶⁹ However, Douglass’s remains silent

⁶⁴ See the anonymous piece, “William Wells Brown,” *National Anti-Slavery Standard* 14 Feb. 1856. Other interesting reviews of Brown’s dramas and their enormous popularity include: “Anti-Slavery Drama,” *National Anti-Slavery Standard* 19 Apr. 1856; “Anti-Slavery Dramas,” *The Liberator* 21 Nov. 1856; “Anti-Slavery Drama at Salem,” *The Liberator* 28 Nov. 1856.

⁶⁵ Elam (2001) 292.

⁶⁶ Hamalian and Hatch, eds., (1991) 76.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

and thereby encourages an ambivalent interpretation: “he... thought it best to say nothing” (*HS* 214). These comparisons between Douglass’s and Brown’s “dramatic” texts reveal the former’s preference for withholding straightforward representations of scenes and characters in order to complicate generic expectations and stimulate a range of reader responses.

However, Brown’s representation of the black female slave figure in *The Escape* is much more radical than Douglass’s characterisation of Susan Washington in *The Heroic Slave*. For example, Brown furnishes his audience with much greater insight into Melinda’s perspective in contrast with Douglass’s heroine. Melinda exhibits successful and determined resistance to sexual violation from her white master by demonstrating superior moral force: “let me warn you that if you compass my ruin, a woman’s bitterest curse will be laid upon your head.”⁷⁰ Melinda also signals independence from black male overprotection: “Glen, you are always thinking I am in tears.”⁷¹ Thus, black female characterisation in this text can be set against Douglass’s conventional and passive representations of Susan Washington in *The Heroic Slave*. Overall, in Douglass’s construction, the female slave heroine says very little; instead she “screams and faints” (*HS* 219) during Madison’s escape attempt and so contributes to his recapture. However, as a means to redeem this problematic view, Washington’s statement - “I... stood my ground, and awaited their attack over her dead body” (*HS* 220) - is suggestive of the processes by which the black female body in *The Heroic Slave* can be read as a necessary text without which black male subjectivity would remain undefined. In general, *The Escape* contains a much more obviously dramatised structure in comparison with Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave*. This is demonstrated in *The Escape*’s formal characteristics, which include its

⁷⁰ Ibid., 75.

⁷¹ Ibid., 50.

explicit division into acts and detailed stage directions, as well as its focus upon comical set-pieces and manipulation of theatrical conventions, including minstrelsy. However, a range of shared motifs and similarities of rhetorical phrasing, make it possible to underline their shared dramatic quality.

Also in the year that Brown's *The Escape* was published, Child produced *The Stars and Stripes: A Melodrama* which, in a comparable manner to Douglass's *The Heroic Slave*, was also included in an antislavery giftbook.⁷² In further corroboration of Douglass's technique, Child instantly contextualises the escape of a fugitive slave couple, also at the centre of Hopkins's and Brown's texts, by a white revolutionary setting: "The fourth of July.... Nearby, is an arch made of evergreens, with the word LIBERTY interwoven with flowers."⁷³ In imitation of Douglass's narration of an actual event, the fact that Child names her two chief protagonists, William and Ellen, associates her material with the Crafts' highly publicised escape of 1848 and shows her preference for historically rather than fictionally based sources.⁷⁴ Child's text provides evidence of the possible influences of white abolitionist dramatic traditions. Thus, Douglass's composition of *The Heroic Slave* is heavily indebted to dramatic material which borrows from an oratorical tradition. This work is informed by his experiences as an antislavery lecturer in his development of abolitionist preoccupations with the visual. *The Heroic Slave* shares a characteristic tendency within the antislavery movement to effect audience conversion via a manipulation of the spectacle and performance in antislavery lectures. For example, Henry "Box"

⁷² *The Liberty Bell; by Friends of Freedom* (1858) 122-85. Thompson discusses this antislavery giftbook, its contents and production details in his article, "The Liberty Bell and other Anti-Slavery Gift-Books," (March 1934) 154-68.

⁷³ Child "The Stars and Stripes: A Melodrama" in *The Liberty Bell; by Friends of Freedom* (1858) 122.

⁷⁴ William Craft, *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom: The Escape of William and Ellen Craft* (1860. Rpt. Blackett, ed. 1999).

Brown and William Wells Brown both gave addresses, primarily in Britain, which were illustrated by antislavery panoramas (see chapter III).

These investigations into *The Heroic Slave*'s manipulation of generic form reveal Douglass's aesthetic intervention and ideological restructuring of the abolitionist text. He divides *The Heroic Slave* into four untitled parts, each introduced by an epigraph, the sources for all of which are given by Douglass, with one exception. The first quotation, adopting an immediately meditative strain which aligns the narrative structure with constructions of Washington's subjectivity, is unreferenced: "Oh! child of grief, why weepest thou!/Why droops thy sad and mournful brow?/Why is thy look so like despair?/What deep, sad sorrow lingers there?" (*HS* 174) Thus, a useful way in which to interpret *The Heroic Slave* is by reading it as a heavily dramatised piece and the four parts as reflecting in key ways, four acts.

Part I of *The Heroic Slave* opens with an introductory section, separated visually by a space from the rest of this material. In terms of Douglass's deliberate textual demarcation and chosen thematic content, it is possible to consider the opening paragraphs as a "Dramatic Prologue." This introductory material provides an exposition of the major issues to be explored throughout *The Heroic Slave*. The most prominent include his authorial invective against white prejudice and the structural impossibility of accurately capturing black heroism. Douglass focuses attention upon his sense of outrage at the obloquy cast upon black heroism: "By some strange neglect, *one* of the truest, manliest, and bravest of her [Virginia's] children,... holds now no higher place in the records of that grand old Commonwealth than is held by a horse or an ox" (*HS* 175). In direct contradiction of white abolitionist demands for authenticity, he argues towards the close of this "Prologue" not only for the necessity

but the suitability, of a fragmented authorial practice: “Speaking of marks, traces, possibles, and probabilities, we come before our readers” (*HS* 176). Thus, his text directly refutes abolitionist conventions which require authenticity of narration. His previously mentioned interweaving of literary epigraphs substantiates the view that Douglass sought to perform his literacy while exhibiting his preference for a fictional approach. Therefore, his subscription to dramatic imperatives operates in direct opposition to abolitionist preoccupations with “authentic” modes of speech and strictly verifiable experience.

Following on from introductory material which provides a theoretical and generalised investigation into white racism, as corroborated by dismissive references to the “chattel records” (*HS* 175), Douglass describes his black male slave figure and white male abolitionist hearer in disembodied terms. Unnamed and undescribed, Washington is initially introduced in abstract terms as a “human voice” (*HS* 176) and a “solitary speaker” (*HS* 176). His delivery of a “soliloquy” (*HS* 176) leads him to be discovered by a “Northern traveller” (*HS* 176), Listwell the abolitionist, who remains similarly unidentified: “the man whose voice had arrested his attention” (*HS* 176). The fact that both characters remain unnamed at this stage demonstrates their operation as generic types in this text as well as Douglass’s imitation of the play form in a preferred focus upon dialogue. In particular, the location of Washington himself solely as a “human voice” indicates his representative status as he effects white abolitionist conversion by moral suasion rather than bodily testimony.

Henry Louis Gates draws attention to Douglass’s deliberate separation of the corporeal and the symbolic in *The Heroic Slave* by considering his privileging of voice: “Douglass... was Representative Man because he was Rhetorical Man.”⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Gates, Jr. (1987) 108.

Gates's view can be applied to readings of Douglass's narrative practice as producing textual similarities between Washington and himself. Washington's and Douglass's comparable manipulation of language confirms the latter's intended symbolic, although never literal, connections with his protagonist. Douglass focuses upon the black voice and its effects upon white consciousness: "The speech of Madison rung through the chambers of his soul, and vibrated through his entire frame" (*HS* 181). However, later descriptions of Madison as exemplary heroic specimen of "Herculean strength" (*HS* 179), racially marked in the biblical reference "'black, but comely'" (*HS* 179), extend Gates's interpretation. Douglass's representation of the black slave figure throughout *The Heroic Slave* emphasises the interdependency of both linguistic dexterity and visual significance.

In terms of *The Heroic Slave*'s display of accomplished rhetorical play, the fact that the first "scene" is characterised by Douglass's manipulation of ornate and literary language - "tall pines" and "wilderling woods" - positions this piece within a romanticised and idealised discursive space. Douglass underscores his concentration upon literary dimensions, by his previously mentioned evocation, in the opening of *The Heroic Slave*, of a melodramatic quotation. In his choice of dramatic backdrop, Douglass manipulates "fairy tale" conventions in order to exaggerate differences between character and geographical locations, as well as to shape audience responses in his incorporation of set archetypes and generic material. His phrases such as "a sparkling brook, near the edge of a dark pine forest" (*HS* 176) and a "weary and thirsty steed," (*HS* 176) corroborate his manipulation of a generic template. Indeed, Douglass's use of archaic vocabulary ("brook" and "steed") suggests an Arcadian space and betray attempts to remove his contentious material from an immediately recognisable context in historical non-specificity. Listwell's concealed witnessing of

Washington's speech reflects the single moment of dramatic irony for the audience in this section and is characteristic of Douglass's reproduction of dramatic forms: "Madison cast around a searching glance, as if the thought of being overheard had flashed across his mind" (*HS* 181). The fact of black male self-consciousness, concerning his psychological and physical functioning as spectacle for audience consumption, satirises abolitionist imperatives tending towards objectification.

Douglass adopts processes of defamiliarisation and identification which reconfigure the parameters for representing the black slave body in *The Heroic Slave*'s interrogation of genre. He positions the heroic slave figure within an elevated natural context in order to make the familiar strange. Thus, he constructs black identity within an abstract context which is less reliant on stereotyped representations of black male physicality. Harrold's recent essay on Douglass's interweaving of romance motifs in *The Heroic Slave* historicises and contextualises abolitionist responses to the *Creole* revolt in the newspaper press. His argument in favour of the centrality of "romantic sentimentality [which] overpowered white abolitionist intellectual commitment to nonviolence and their racist reservations concerning black character" summarises Douglass's narrative practice in this piece.⁷⁶ His evocation of an unspecified Romantic context for his discussion of this material and his self-conscious development of his heroic insurrectionary leader displaces his subject-matter from an isolated historical event. This approach promotes audience acceptance of Douglass's ideological stance, according to abstract and internalised paradigms, and explicates connections between his literary citations from Romantic poets and a "rights of man" philosophy.

⁷⁶ Harrold (1999) 96.

Furthermore, Harrold's exploration of Douglass's *The Heroic Slave* suggests that as far as constructions of black heroism are concerned, he "used romantic themes to portray Washington as a prototypical black leader and to make him appealing to whites."⁷⁷ The physical description of Washington in this text confirms this critical view in his display of superlative revolutionary rhetoric:

Madison was of manly form. Tall, symmetrical, round, and strong... he seemed to combine, with the strength of the lion, a lion's elasticity. His torn sleeves disclosed arms like polished iron. His face was 'black, but comely'. His eye, lit with emotion, kept guard under a brow as dark and as glossy as the raven's wing. His whole appearance betokened Herculean strength; yet there was nothing savage or forbidding in his aspect... But his voice, that unfailing index of the soul, though full and melodious, had that in it which could terrify as well as charm (*HS* 179).

Douglass's use of a biblical and classical template confirms the initial readings in chapter I of this dissertation which pinpoint the mutually exclusive terms for black heroic representation within his speeches and written material. Yarborough offers a damning critique in arguing that this description "fall[s] more in line with conventional Anglo-American conceptions of ideal masculinity...[as] Douglass retreats from his attack upon the racist stereotypes that he had earlier successfully undercut."⁷⁸ However, Robyn Wiegman interprets Douglass's revised technique as demonstrating the text's complex meditations on "the problematic of visibility" which are embedded in nineteenth century constructions of race.⁷⁹ In a discussion of the same passage in *The Heroic Slave*, Wiegman contends that "By aestheticizing the black body as a classical masculine form 'The Heroic Slave' adjudicates the slave's social and specular particularity by evoking a familiar aesthetic ideal."⁸⁰

In Wiegman's reading, Douglass's deliberate withholding of visual markers of representation exemplifies his radical subversion of audience expectations concerning

⁷⁷ Ibid., 97.

⁷⁸ Yarborough (1990) 173.

⁷⁹ Wiegman (1995) 72.

black identity, rather than his unwitting capitulation to the norms of a white heroic paradigm. She argues that, in *The Heroic Slave*, the “domination of the visible... underwrote the slave’s propertied status... the problematic of visibility, corporeality, and commodification... It is within this problematic that the slave’s turn toward the textual to undo the commodification of bondage inextricably rests.”⁸¹ In his physical descriptions of Washington, Douglass’s agenda is characterised by the desire to conflate differences between his protagonist and his audience, while also resisting prescriptive dictates of authenticity. Thus, his determined expansion of formal conventions for descriptions of Washington in *The Heroic Slave* detaches the audience from an uncomplicated identification with his material in order to facilitate a more wide-ranging critical response.

In affirmation of Listwell’s “conversion” experience as a result of illicitly witnessing Washington’s soliloquy, Part I emphasises the representative, as opposed to individual, significance of this experience: “He [Listwell] had long desired to sound the mysterious depths of the thoughts and feelings of a slave. He was not, therefore, disposed to allow so providential an opportunity to pass unimproved” (*HS* 179). This is further confirmed in Listwell’s speech which concludes Part I: “From this hour I am an abolitionist. I have seen enough and heard enough, and I shall go to my home in Ohio resolved to atone for my past indifference to this ill-starred race” (*HS* 182). Thus, while the traveller (unnamed and racially unidentified) fulfils the text’s didactic imperatives in his conversion to abolitionism, a more satirical undertone tending towards objectification of the black slave experience is conveyed in the connotations of the earlier extract: “providential an opportunity” and “unimproved.” These confirm Douglass’s view that abolitionists popularly supported antislavery activism while

⁸⁰ Ibid., 74.

⁸¹ Ibid., 70.

denying black subjectivity and complicates critical readings of Listwell, including that of Thomas Cooley who sees this character as proving that Douglass “had no difficulty imagining the ideal white man.”⁸² He adds that “Listwell... is barely credible as a ‘real’ character... so transparently does he represent an ideological point of view.”⁸³ Overall, his objective in abandoning an action-packed plot line for a preferred manipulation of visual and rhetorical set pieces is to encourage, in abstract and theoretical terms, not only white audience conversion to abolitionism, but also a meditation on the racist imperatives embedded within antislavery ideology. Part I of *The Heroic Slave* acts as a model to Part II in terms of a parallel structure as both examine the practical results of abolitionist conversion via moral suasion. Thus, Listwell’s above cited resolution to aid in slave emancipation is fully tested by Washington in his “fugitive slave escape.”

Douglass’s decision to open Part II of *The Heroic Slave* with a quotation from Shakespeare’s *Henry VI Part II* lends credence to readings of this text as drama. The quoted material, associating “darkness in the air” with “foul contagions,” (*HS* 182) provides a theatrical context for Douglass’s stereotypical characterisation for dramatic effect of Madison Washington as the fugitive slave identified with “the spirit of the restless night” (*HS* 183).⁸⁴ This material focuses upon scene-setting: “loud-howling wolves” and “tragic melancholy night” (*HS* 182). Douglass chose to exclude the rest

⁸² Cooley (2001) 146.

⁸³ Ibid., 148. He develops his argument further to suggest that Listwell “embodies what Douglass perceived to be a new social mind, that of the Westerner, the man of the border states soon to be personified for many by President Lincoln... If this new regional mind - more democratic in its virtues and vices... could be shaped and directed to the cause of abolition, Douglass calculated, the rest of the country might be obliged to follow” (ibid.). Cooley’s work tends later to develop unsustainable separatist narrative constructs in which he positions Listwell as being given by Douglass a “superior ‘black’ mind... as he assigns to Madison Washington a superior ‘white’ mind” (ibid., 149). Clearly, there are limitations to such an artificially demarcated understanding which reduces the ambiguous layering of racial representation presented in this text.

⁸⁴ Douglass actually misquotes Shakespeare in this citation: “‘blabbling’” (*HS* 182) should read “blabbing” (ibid.), and “‘foul contagions’” (*HS* 182) should be “foul contagious” (ibid.).

of this speech (from *Henry VI Part II*, Act IV Scene I) which makes explicit references to slavery:

Therefore bring forth soldiers of our prize,
For whilst our pinnace anchors in the Downs
Here shall they make their ransom on the sand,
Or with their blood stain this discolour'd shore.
Master, this prisoner freely give I thee;
And thou that art his mate make boot of this;
The other, Walter Whitmore, is thy share.⁸⁵

This description by the captain of their human bounty, “soldiers of our prize” and “prisoners,” refers directly to those of enslaved and/or of captive status. This extract also includes the potential threat of physical violence in suggestions that “their blood [will] stain this discoloured shore.” Douglass may have chosen to exclude this material because it makes literal and physical connections between the slave and physical violation which therefore renders too explicit issues which he preferred to narrate indirectly and in archetypal heroic terms.

Douglass’s descriptions of Listwell and his “kind lady” (*HS* 186) in Part II as “The happy pair [who] seemed to sit in silent fascination, gazing on the fire” (*HS* 183) can be juxtaposed with his visual delineation of the fugitive slave figure’s exclusion from the sentimental frame: “Listwell... saw by the light that streamed out into the darkness, a tall man advancing slowly towards the house, with a stick in one hand, and a small bundle in the other” (*HS* 184). Douglass reproduces the iconography popular in generic tableaux representing the “runaway” slave figure in newspaper woodcuts and slave advertisements.⁸⁶ Therefore, this text identifies Madison Washington’s accomplished performance of the role of the archetypal fugitive male slave. Washington’s characterisation as the ‘noble fugitive’ (*HS* 185) and self-confessed

⁸⁵ *Henry VI: Part II* (Rpt. Cairncross, ed., 1957) Act IV, Scene I, 101.

⁸⁶ For further investigations into slave advertisements and their “disempowering” visual representations of the male and female runaway slave as well as subsequent abolitionist subversions of this

attempts ““to conceal what I supposed to be the manner of a fugitive slave”” (*HS* 187) paradoxically confirm, in his attempts to resist the performance of a familiar “type,” his participation despite efforts to the contrary in existing conventions for representing the runaway slave figure.

The dramatisation of Listwell’s and Washington’s meeting in Part II of *The Heroic Slave* modifies Douglass’s initial focus upon the oral. Thus, he problematises the visual as a straightforward fulfilment of authenticity demands: “Instantly Mr. Listwell exclaimed, (as the recollection of the Virginia forest scene flashed upon him,) ‘Oh, sir, I know not your name, but I have seen your face, and heard your voice before’” (*HS* 185). In these “natural” associations between Washington and “the Virginia forest scene,” this excerpt reinforces a dramatic quality and also the significance of both an American context and a natural setting in contextualising black heroism. Listwell’s confession to Madison that ““from that hour, your face seemed to be daguerrotyped on my memory”” (*HS* 188) similarly incorporates a significant play on the visual. Douglass privileges individualised portraits of the black male heroic slave to secure the desired abolitionist response. Therefore, *The Heroic Slave* is informed by a manipulation of rhetorical and spectacular forms which emphasise their inextricable connections with sentimentality.

Madison Washington narrates a familiar story of redemption through suffering in descriptions of himself as “victimised slave” in order to legitimise his escape, and as a means to develop the generic conventions characterising this scene-setting material: ““I had... suffered a cruel lashing; had been tied up to the limb of a tree, with my feet chained together, and a heavy iron bar placed between my ankles... I received on my naked back forty stripes”” (*HS* 188). In this manner, black bodily violation

representation, see chapter three entitled “Rhetoric and Runaway: the Iconography of slave escape in England and America” in Wood (2000) 78-142.

becomes the necessary text upon which white male abolitionism inscribes its antislavery conversion and ensuing individual heroism. In a further emphasis upon antislavery oratorical conventions, Washington's description of the fire which destroys his refuge in the woods during a failed escape attempt, follows a customary abolitionist format in an alternation between concealment and display. It is possible to contrast his comment that - "I will not harrow up your feelings by portraying the terrific scene of this awful conflagration" (HS 193) - with his paradoxical inclusion of exhaustive detail:

"The scene was overwhelming, stunning, - nothing was spared... Oh, I shudder when I think of it! Many a poor wandering fugitive, who, like myself, had sought among wild beasts the mercy denied by our fellow men, saw... his dwelling-place and city of refuge reduced to ashes forever" (HS 194).

In these excerpts, Douglass conflates natural imagery with the abolition of slavery and incorporates symbolic imagery in bestial and biblical references. In Washington's descriptions of himself as one of "many poor wandering fugitives," Douglass emphasises his consistent desire to expand the frame of reference for material in this text to reflect wider preoccupations. In terms of audience, descriptions of the effects of this narrative on the Listwells - "both speaker and hearers were deeply moved by the recital" (HS 194) - signals authorial preoccupation with readerly response and its necessary structural involvement in black narrative production.

Listwell's role in Part II in scripting the black fugitive slave's representation of experience according to pre-determined conventions is relevant to readings of *The Heroic Slave* as drama: "we are deeply interested in everything which can throw light on the hardships of persons escaping from slavery... are there no incidents that you could relate of your travels hither? or are they such that you do not like to mention them" (HS 194). This excerpt communicates Douglass's exposure, in

characterisations of Listwell, of white tendencies towards voyeurism. He indicates white male cravings for salacious detail and addresses the extent to which “authentic” black testimony is shaped by white intervention. Madison’s opening response noting the absence of dramatic action, “For the most part... my course has been uninterrupted; and... at times even pleasant” (*HS* 194), suggests that his subsequent narration of “one narrow escape during my whole journey” (*HS* 195) given at Listwell’s bidding (“Do let us hear of it” [*HS* 195]) is awarded undue emphasis and betrays a staged quality in its highly performative aspect. Thus, Listwell’s comments make it appropriate to read Washington’s processes of narration, including his confiding of his story to another black man for aid during his escape attempt (see *HS* 198-99), as designed to subvert white conventions in alternative representations of black identity.

As further proof of his narrative autonomy, Douglass provides ambivalent representations of Washington’s heroism. Thus, he narrates Washington’s decision not to save the black man who had aided him: “I felt... like rushing out in the midst of them; but considering that the old man would be whipped the more for having aided a fugitive slave... I disobeyed this impulse” (*HS* 200). The inclusion of material which describes potentially non-heroic feats questions Washington’s exemplary status, previously unproblematically represented, while corroborating the legitimacy of black slave testimony in the introduction of human fallibility and tropes of realism. Douglass characterises his narrative design in *The Heroic Slave* by the need to include material which exhibits black autonomous manipulation of self-representation. His structural layering complicates readings of ostensibly straightforward statements in this text, including generalisations which characterise black slave labourers and their “uncontrolled laughter for which we, as a race, are remarkable” (*HS* 197).

Douglass's technique of framing Washington's story by a problematic white "listener" makes explicit his differentiation between Listwell and his desired reader response.

It is at this point in *The Heroic Slave* that the satirical significance of Listwell becomes more pronounced, as he provides insights into Douglass's complex manipulation of narrative construction and characterisation. In the interests of strongly resisting popular critical opinions concerning Listwell in *The Heroic Slave*, it is indispensable to acknowledge Douglass's multifaceted narrative explorations of the white abolitionist. Thus, Beavers's assessment of Listwell as "the paradigmatic abolitionist," and Wiegman's similar suggestion that he is "the paradigmatic reader," fail to acknowledge Douglass's introduction of ambiguities which prohibit straightforward interpretations of Listwell.⁸⁷ In addition, P. Gabrielle Foreman positions "Listwell as the co-protagonist" while Robert Levine recognises his "key role in the novella," yet both neglect to consider Listwell's operation as a marker for narrative indeterminacy.⁸⁸ Robert Stepto's suggestion that "the creation of Listwell is possibly the polemical and literary achievement of the novella" approaches nearer to Douglass's complicated authorial design which produces interpretative instability in this text.⁸⁹ However, Stepto's later summary in the same essay which describes Listwell as the "moral storylistener" withholds the potential radicalism of his position by adopting a reductive viewpoint.⁹⁰ The contention of this chapter is that Douglass's complex construction of Listwell provides a case study for his innovations of narrative form and representation in *The Heroic Slave*.

Symptomatic of complex structural mirroring, Parts III and IV of *The Heroic Slave* complement Parts I and II by literally removing the narrative setting from the

⁸⁷ Beavers (1996) 223; Wiegman (1995) 72.

⁸⁸ Foreman, (1996) 195, and Levine (1992) 83. Levine dismisses Yarborough's scholarship on the grounds that it "overgeneralises and... dehistoricises" (84).

⁸⁹ Stepto (1982) 365.

North to the South. Part III's opening epigraph from Byron's *Childe Harold* which focuses upon sentimentality and male subjectivity - "His head was with his heart,/And that was far away!" (*HS* 205) - intimates the quotation taken from the same poem introducing revolutionary resistance in Part IV: "-Know ye not/Who would be free, *themselves* must strike the blow" (*HS* 205).⁹¹ From an analysis of Douglass's epigraphs, it is possible to conclude that the thematic focus for *The Heroic Slave* is produced in a gendered evocation of black violence, both as a legitimate and specifically male mode of rebellion within a literary and theatrical context characterised by sentimentality.

Douglass's manipulation of symbolism in this material offers insight into his representations of the South in Part III via detailed references to a "somewhat ancient and famous public tavern" (*HS* 205). This is subsequently distinguished as "the grand resort for... the leading gamblers, horse-racers, cock-fighters, and slave-traders" (*HS* 205) and clarifies his narrative practice:

This old rookery, the nucleus of all sorts of birds, mostly those of ill omen, has, like everything else peculiar to Virginia, lost much of its ancient consequence and splendor... Its fine old portico looks well at a distance... but... it must... soon be numbered with the things that were (*HS* 205-6).

This excerpt directly parodies the eulogy opening Part I, in descriptions of white American achievement and the privileging of Virginia in particular, as indivisible stage for the performance of white heroism. Thus, the hagiographic aspect of his panegyric on the "great ones of the Old Dominion" (*HS* 174-75) and consideration that "With Virginia for his birth-place, even a man of ordinary parts... easily rises to eminent stations" (*HS* 174), is withheld by his focus upon black male exclusion.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ For the first quotation, see Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: A Romaunt* (1812. Rpt. McGann, ed., 1986). It is important to note the original's variant construction: "his eyes/Were with his heart, and that was far away" (Canto IV, Verse 141, lines 1261-62). In terms of the second quotation, drawn from Canto II, Verse 76, lines 720-21, Douglass's only change is to italicise "themselves."

Washington's soliloquy in Part I incorporating bestial imagery - "Those birds... are still my superiors" (HS 176) - echoes the metaphoric constructions of "birds of ill omen" cited above which Douglass suggests characterise the South. His decision to situate his critique of Southern society within a public tavern, rather than a domestic location, subverts ideological imperatives embedded in the familiar contemporary "convention of American public language... to speak of the Union and relationships among Americans in familial and domestic terms."⁹²

In support of *The Heroic Slave*'s critique of an abolitionist emphasis upon authenticity, this extract extends Douglass's earlier complication of the visual as accurate testimony to black slave experience. He develops a significant discursive slippage between the visual and reality; thus, his constructions of "appearance" (HS 206) in relation to the tavern as undermined by "a nearer view" (HS 206) confirm his association of physical decay with moral corruption in the South as a result of slavery. Douglass's references to "Old Dominion" here and in his later lamentation that the stable had been "a fine old structure in its day, [giving]... comfortable shelter to... the noblest steeds of 'the Old Dominion,'" (HS 206-7) is suggestive by its repeated placement within inverted commas. This is in direct contrast to Douglass's use of the term in Part I throughout which he provides unpunctuated references to the "great ones of the Old Dominion" (HS 174-5). Such examples provide evidence of Douglass's highly nuanced use of language and satirical layering of material in *The Heroic Slave* which contributes to reshaping audience interpretations.

In the same manner, Douglass's references to a "number of loafers" (HS 207) outside the tavern introduce comic relief in support of theatrical conventions intrinsic to the tragic dramatic form. They also provide a practical example of his preferred

⁹² On the adaptation of private familial language within a public and political context see Forgie (1979).

interpretation of white manhood in Virginia in bathetic terms: “They are... *hangers on*... All the great names of Virginia they know by heart, and have seen their owners often” (*HS* 207-8). This excerpt can be juxtaposed with earlier material (cited above) which considers the “great ones of the Old Dominion” in order to confirm an ambiguity of narrative framing in the interests of producing competing audience interpretations concerning white and black heroism.

Part III supports potentially ironic readings of Listwell as the model abolitionist in *The Heroic Slave* by providing an ambiguous context. For example, the following exchange between Listwell and one of the “loafers” named Wilkes is significant:

Loafer. “...it’s rumored hereabouts, that there’s to be the greatest sale of niggers at Richmond to-morrow... and I’ll be bound you’re a going there to have a hand in it.”

Listwell. “Why, you must think, then, that there’s money to be made at that business?”

Loafer. “... it stands to reason that it’s a money making business; for almost all other business in Virginia is dropped to engage in this... I never see’d a nigger-buyer yet that hadn’t as plenty of money... ginerally speaking, they’s men of edication, and knows all about the government... I alloys like to hear ’em talk, bekase I alloys can learn something from them” (*HS* 209-10).

The layout of this exchange confirms Douglass’s structural acknowledgement of the play form in *The Heroic Slave*. In his deliberate omissions of descriptive clues concerning intonation and context, his spare style places a great deal of emphasis upon audience interpretation, while illustrating his attention to dialogue in the dramatic exchange between two characters.

Douglass includes Wilkes to satirise white heroism: the use of a “low” white character to endorse the accomplishments of “nigger-buyers” has the paradoxical effect of undermining such exclusivity. Douglass’s validation of Wilkes as an interpretative reader of character is further attested to by the fact of his shrewd

recognition of slavery's economic significance as a "money making business." Thus, Douglass legitimises Wilkes's reading of Listwell as a slavetrader, while Listwell's failure to resist this false identification undermines his abolitionist status. The persistent reference in the above extract to Wilkes as the "Loafer" (*HS* 209, 210) even when we have been told his name, emphasises his representative status. By way of very tentatively echoing a Shakespearean manipulation of the "fool" figure, Wilkes similarly performs the role of the peripheral, comical character nevertheless capable of illuminating the moral weaknesses of the chief protagonist.

Wilkes's appraisal of Listwell as subtle interpreter of situations - "I see you don't say much, but you've got an insight into things" (*HS* 210) - contributes to material in *The Heroic Slave* designed to expose the constructed nature of the latter as naive caricature of the benevolent abolitionist. Such a view encourages recontextualisation of earlier material straightforwardly representing Listwell's heroism. For example, in this context his earlier statement - "if it cost my farm, I shall see you safely out of the States, and on your way to a land of liberty" (*HS* 202) - can be understood, not as testimony to his abolitionist credentials, but as revealing instead his concern with material self-preservation. Part III of *The Heroic Slave* provides further confirmation of this view; following his meeting with Washington on the slave-gang, Listwell rhetorically wonders "may I not even now be in some way compromised in this affair?" (*HS* 218), while his final words of advice to Washington withdrawing a visual connection are unequivocal in their self-interest: "I shall see you at Richmond, but don't recognize me" (*HS* 221).

In corroboration of Douglass's accomplished manipulation of scene-setting to complicate characterisation, he manipulates constructions of the South in Part III to test Listwell's ideological and practical commitment to abolitionism. Thus, his

emphasis upon the omniscient significance of Listwell's room, "private to the eye, but not to the ear," (*HS* 211) enabling him to eavesdrop on the "disagreeable company below...[which] as you shall see, ... furnished him important hints as the manner and deportment he should assume during his stay at that tavern" (*HS* 211), emphasises the importance of context in underscoring individual moral fallibility. Furthermore, in his position as illegitimate witness, Douglass invites structural parallels with Listwell's overhearing of Madison's soliloquy in Part I, in order to emphasise the latter's moral superiority in comparison with Southern white storytellers.

Furthermore, Wilkes's characterisation of Listwell as "a *nigger*-buyer" (*HS* 212) in this overheard conversation encourages the latter's subsequent performance of this role:

Mr. Listwell said he had heard enough... to convince him that a buyer of men and women stood the best chance of being respected. And he... thought it best to say nothing which might undo the favorable opinion that had been formed of him... Bodily fear, not conscientious scruples, prevailed (*HS* 214).

He intimates satirical authorial undertones in references to a "favorable opinion" in view of the fact that the poor whites in this scene have been previously discredited as legitimate arbiters of morality. Furthermore, Douglass undermines Listwell's heroic stature by his preoccupation with physical survival which contrasts with Washington's heroism characterised by self-sacrifice. Effecting his escape in order to save his family, *The Heroic Slave*'s plot structure confirms Madison's fulfilment of his initial resolution: "if I were free, my arms my own, - I might devise the means to rescue her [Susan]" (*HS* 181). In a text predicated on the political significance of language and dialogue, Douglass's inclusion of the statement, "it was hard for him [Listwell] to admit to himself the possibility of circumstances wherein a man might, properly, hold his tongue on the subject," (*HS* 214) suggests a condemnatory authorial stance.

The emphasis placed in the above extracts upon the oratorically constructed aspects of this text, demonstrated both in his authorial address “as you shall see” and allusions to his source material in “Mr. Listwell said,” creates immediacy and the illusion of authenticity. This technique suggests a direct line of communication between the “actors” in this “drama” and Douglass’s reinterpretation. In general, Part III interrogates the practice of storytelling between Southern whites to draw attention to the text’s narrative processes of construction. His descriptions that “the company amused themselves by drinking whiskey, and telling stories” (*HS* 213) conflates habits of intemperance with moral depravity.⁹³ The offensive nature of their storytelling material is such that Douglass confirms the necessity for censorship:

... the... stories... consisting of quarrels, fights, *rencontres*, and duels, in which distinguished persons... and frequenters of that house, had been actors. Some of these stories... were told... with a relish which bespoke the pleasure of the parties with the horrid scenes they portrayed. It would not be proper to give the reader any idea of the vulgarity and dark profanity which rolled as “a sweet morsel,” under these corrupt tongues (*HS* 213).

Thus, his satirical references to “distinguished persons,” in conjunction with his refusal to include these “stories” in their entirety, distances his authorial perspective from that of this material. Douglass also privileges autonomy in processes of selectivity and demonstrates his intention to revise contemporary preconceptions concerning white Southern masculinity. In combination with an interest in storytelling, and therefore the importance of dialogue between characters, Douglass’s evocation of theatrical terms in “actors” and “scenes,” underscores his preferred inclusion of dramatic techniques.

In order to build upon his exposure in Part III of the mythical and illusory nature of white Southern chivalry, Douglass provides a graphic description of a slave gang: “A loud and confused clamour, cursing and cracking of whips, and the noise of

⁹³ Levine notices Douglass’s “use of temperance themes” in this text (1992) 83.

chains startled him [Listwell] from his bed... There was loud laughing... and yet there seemed to be weeping and mourning in the midst of all" (HS 213-14). As a tactic designed to emphasise the reader's imaginative engagement with this text, it is significant that this passage is narrated from Listwell's point of view; he is necessarily conditioned by the fact that he can only hear, but not see, events unfolding. Thus, Douglass betrays his continued interest in producing dramatic tension by juxtaposing visual and oral techniques in order to critique narrative codes for "authentic" black slave representation.

Douglass complements the above descriptions, dramatically conveyed by familiar sounds such as those of the whip, by producing a familiar tableau of the "slave sale:"

Mr. Listwell saw... a slave-gang on the way to market. A sad sight truly. Here were one hundred and thirty human beings... men and women, with hearts, minds, and deathless spirits, chained and fettered, and bound for the market, in a christian country, - in a country boasting of its liberty, independence, and high civilization!... As he gazed upon this revolting and heart-rending scene, our informant said he almost doubted the existence of a God of justice! (HS 215-16)

Douglass's interweaving of oral and visual media exhibits his fusion in *The Heroic Slave* of the antislavery lecture, complete with rhetorical repetition and polemical critique, with conventions of theatricality in a manipulation of spectacle. Furthermore, his layered narration of the "slave gang," involving recourse to visual and oral modes, shows his symmetrical narrative practice. In satirical denunciations of a "Christian country," Douglass deploys a religious framework as a means to expose white hypocrisy and to suggest his inclusion of a rhetoric of sentimentality. Thus, in maintaining the sanctity of the black domestic unit, he legitimises the necessity for black rebellion to secure its protection, as connoted by "deathless spirits." In references to "our informant," Douglass suggests generic similarities within this text

between historical reportage and fictive framing, while still maintaining its dramatic significance in repeated references to “scene.” In further corroboration of his dramatic focus, Douglass narrates that during the “scene between Mr. Listwell and his friend Madison... the other slaves stood as mute spectators,” (*HS* 217) which thereby confirms his concentration upon performative dimensions and their sculpting of audience responses, both internal and external to the text.

Furthermore, Washington’s narration to Listwell ““of the story in brief”” (*HS* 219) in Part III, concerning his recapture and failure to rescue his wife from slavery, inverts Part II’s trajectory in which Douglass traces the generic “fugitive slave story,” describing a northward journey and emancipation. Washington’s oral testimony exposes white society’s preoccupation with visual categorisation in representations of the black slave body. He describes how white slaveholders used his body as spectacle in order to warn his slave audience: ““All the slaves, for miles around, were brought to see me. Many slave-holders came with their slaves, using me as proof of the completeness of their power, and of the impossibility of slaves getting away”” (*HS* 220). Thus, Douglass’s decision to withhold the voyeuristic potential of black slave bodies as violated spectacle later in Part III - “we need not narrate every application of the lash to those who faltered in the journey” (*HS* 223) - signals his desire to regain autonomy over constructions of black physicality. Throughout this text, his narrative practice resists white audience conversion to abolitionism based on a sympathetic, but objectifying, appropriation of the black body. He extends earlier techniques in Part II intended to represent black male subjectivity to indicate his resistance of available conventions: ““We pass over the thoughts and feelings... that revolved in the mind of Madison... The reader will be content to know that nothing occurred to endanger his liberty, or to excite alarm”” (*HS* 203). The assertive connotations of the “reader will be

content to know” in particular, confirm Douglass’s deliberate demarcation of the boundaries for readerly interpretation.

Douglass’s opening invective to Part IV, denouncing the “smooth and gliding phrase, AMERICAN SLAVE TRADE,” (*HS* 225) is prefaced by quotations from Byron and Moore. This material contextualises his references towards the close of Part III to “our Baltimore built American slaver,” (*HS* 223) and “the long, low, black slaver, [which] with her cargo of human flesh, careened and moved forward to the sea” (*HS* 224).⁹⁴ Such generic references to the *Creole* slave ship, as it remains unnamed in the above quotations and in subsequent references to “the Virginia slave brig, which the reader has seen move off to sea so proudly with her human cargo” (*HS* 226), broadens its specificity. Thus, Douglass narrates the ship’s symbolic significance as it reflects in microcosm the different practices of the slave trade, set against those of domestic slavery. Furthermore, his decision to trace the origins of the slave ship’s construction to Baltimore is revealing in view of the fact that his *Narrative* admits his own employment as a “caulker” in its various shipyards.⁹⁵

Part IV deploys an international context to extend Douglass’s focus in Part I upon the national operation of slavery:

... how strange and perverse is that moral sentiment which... brands as piracy... the carrying away into captivity men, women and children from the *African coast*; but which is neither shocked nor disturbed by a similar

⁹⁴ Douglass’s first citation (*HS* 225) forms the opening five lines of the first stanza of Thomas Moore’s poem, “Oh! Where’s the Slave.” See Thomas Moore, John Dorrian, ed., *The Poetical Works of Thomas Moore* (1888) 88-89. Douglass’s inclusion of quotations from Byron and Moore suggest white authentication of the legitimacy of black insurrectionary resistance.

⁹⁵ In Chapter VII of his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, Douglass describes how he learnt to read while working at “Durgin and Bailey’s ship-yard” (1845. Rpt. Baker, ed., 1982) 86. Thus, he saw “ship carpenters...write on the timber the name of that part of the ship for which it was intended” (*ibid.*). Later in Chapter X of this same text, Douglass narrates how he was “hired... to Mr. William Gardner, an extensive ship-builder... engaged... in building two large man-of-war brigs, professedly for the Mexican government,” (130) and then following a bloody conflict with the other workers, was removed to the “ship-yard” run by Walter Price (134). In the earlier excerpt, the key word seems to be “professedly” which suggests a troubling vagueness concerning the destined usage of these ships. Marifrances Trivelli’s recent research asserts that, “At least three vessels built in the Price yard while Frederick was a caulker there are known to have entered the slave trade.” See her essay, “‘I Knew a Ship from Stern to Stern’: The Maritime World of Frederick Douglass” (1995) 104.

traffic... characterized by even *more* odious peculiarities on the coast of our MODEL REPUBLIC (HS 225).

In *The Heroic Slave*, Douglass moves from a specific case study, demonstrated in Part I's exposure of Virginian double standards concerning white and black masculinity, to a much broader context in order to corroborate his sense of the pervasiveness of white racist arguments concerning the significance of black slave identity. Therefore, Douglass's narrative practice is characterised by varied techniques, including those of paralleling and revisioning of material, which seek to redress contemporary racist myopia.

Douglass's dramatisation of Part IV of *The Heroic Slave* as a dialogue between two white sailors caricatured as "*ocean birds*" (HS 226), has provoked substantial critical controversy. The exchange takes place between Jack Williams, a "regular old salt" (HS 226), and Tom Grant, described as a "manly looking person" (HS 226) and "firmly knit personage" (HS 226). The former challenges the latter to refute his view that the "whole affair... was... disgracefully managed. Those black rascals got the upper hand of ye altogether" (HS 226). Karlsson posits that Douglass's use of dialogue "disarms the revolt by making it seem less emplotted, less violent, and less threatening."⁹⁶ Similarly, Yarborough suggests that this narrative process adversely affects his audience because he "cuts us off not just from Washington's heroic violence but from his emotional responses to the dramatic events."⁹⁷ Furthermore, Levine points to the structural implications of this scene for representations of black slave resistance by suggesting that "Douglass tones down the violence."⁹⁸ One of few critics to applaud this narrative design, Davis concludes that "Douglass's most

⁹⁶ Karlsson (1995) 12. Furthermore, her argument that "the author cares very little about the maritime location of the revolt" (16-17) seems wholly inaccurate in the light of previous and following discussions in chapters I and II of this dissertation.

⁹⁷ Yarborough (1990) 182.

⁹⁸ Levine (1992) 83.

significant invention,... is his dramatic ending,” which complements readings of his choice of form in this chapter.⁹⁹ In consideration of *The Heroic Slave*’s intended theatricality, Douglass’s reliance upon oratorical techniques to describe the mutiny itself may simply derive from the practical difficulties involved in a potential re-enactment of this event in visual and dramatic form.

Douglass’s decision to narrate black insurrection in *The Heroic Slave* as a dialogue between two white Southern characters provides an unequivocal strategy for authenticating black heroism to a white audience according to white conventions. In a comparable manner to his initial manipulation of Listwell as exemplary auditor of black suffering and therefore, in some sense, a model for white male abolitionists to emulate, Jack Williams and Tom Grant exemplify a didactic authorial design: namely that of structuring the scepticism of a reluctant white reader into the text in order to effect conversion. In order to underscore differences between these characters and Listwell, Douglass distances Grant and Williams from any antislavery sympathies. Thus, to Williams’s charge that, “‘I’ll be hanged if you’re not as good an abolitionist as Garrison himself’” (*HS* 230), Grant responds: “‘The mate now rose from his chair... *‘That man does not live who shall offer me an insult with impunity’*” (*HS* 230). This intimation of the connection between white violence and the defence of individual manhood evokes parallels with Washington’s heroic defence of black “natural rights” by insurrection. The fact that Williams then qualifies his statement with the suggestion that “‘you *might* have put down them black mutineers and murderers, but your conscience held you back,’” (*HS* 230) thereby provoking Grant’s confirmation that, “‘I did all that any man with equal strength and presence of mind would have done,’” (*HS* 230) corroborates Douglass’s preference for white male

⁹⁹ Davis (1984) 66.

legitimisation of black slave heroism in order to convert his white male readership. Overall, this technique presents a form of ventriloquism as Douglass includes in *The Heroic Slave* generic caricatures which voice the potential anxieties of his audience. His decision to rely on oral testimony authenticates his material by suggesting an immediate source which can be verified.

Furthermore, in a passage central to Part IV, Grant draws specific points of comparison between black and white male heroism. He emphasises the significance of the sea as alternative discursive space for the performance of black male identity and the interchangeability of human behaviour in parallel contexts:

“I deny that the negro is, naturally, a coward, or that your theory of managing slaves will stand the test of *salt* water... It is one thing to manage a company of slaves on a Virginia plantation, and quite another thing to quell an insurrection on the lonely billows of the Atlantic, where every breeze speaks of courage and liberty... I’ve some doubts whether *you*, Mr. Williams, would find it very convenient were you a slave in Algiers, to raise your hand against the bayonets of a whole government” (HS 228).

Grant positions Williams as a “white slave” to express Douglass’s undermining of artificial concepts of racial difference in this material. He corroborates this approach later in Part IV by showing the significance of Washington’s heroism in erasing preconceptions concerning inferiority in Grant’s assessment: ““I forgot his blackness in the dignity of his manner, and the eloquence of his speech. It seemed as if the souls of both the great dead (whose names he bore) had entered him”” (HS 235). In this extract, black heroism is not only situated within a white revolutionary tradition, but also provides a necessary context within which to destabilise its exclusivity. Grant’s erasure of difference suggests a moral glossing of Williams’s stereotypical racist constructions of black physicality, demonstrated for example in his references to the slaves as ““every woolly head of them”” (HS 231). In continuation, Washington’s oratorical defence of his insurrectionary activity privileges ideological similarities:

“We have done that which you applaud your fathers for doing, and if we are murderers, *so were they*” (HS 235). In view of Douglass’s chosen narration of this event via dialogue, Washington’s speech confirms the indivisibility between rhetorical justification and black and white violence throughout *The Heroic Slave*. The fact of the sea as a significant ideologically liberated space provides one of the major themes in Douglass’s addresses on this revolt.

The fact of a white narrator for the moment of slave insurrection facilitates a much more graphic account of the mutiny than that which is to be found by black narrative perspectives, including those provided in Douglass’s speeches:

“...the very deck seemed covered with fiends from the pit. The nineteen negroes were all on deck, with their broken fetters in their hands... I was knocked senseless to the deck. When I came to myself... there was no a white man on deck... while Madison himself stood at the helm unhurt” (HS 233-34).

Grant’s employment of racist terminology, “fiends from the pit” and references to Washington as “a *black murderer*” (HS 234) and “the imp at the helm” (HS 234), not only reveals Douglass’s engagement with white prejudicial fear of black “barbaric” vengeance, but also indicates his manipulation of sceptical white audience responses by an equivocal use of language.

Douglass counters such an impression of black barbarity by including Grant’s explicit praise of Washington’s heroism. This is demonstrated in his focus upon the importance of naming for legitimating black heroism according to a white precedent/president: “The name of this man,... (ominous of greatness,) was MADISON WASHINGTON” (HS 232). His communication of Washington’s linguistic sophistication and dexterity serves to confirm his status as a conventional “white” figure, a black hero in “whiteface.” “His words were well chosen, and his pronunciation equal to that of any schoolmaster” (HS 233). Thus, Grant’s conclusion

exposes the artificiality of racist hierarchical constructions: ““Our difference of color was the only ground for difference of action. It was not that his principles were wrong in the abstract; for they are the principles of 1776”” (HS 237-38). Douglass’s decision to distance the reader from sympathising with either Williams or Grant by presenting obviously racist material, facilitates an investigation into the significant role of the audience in interpreting his preferred subject-matter. Cooley uses this technique to confirm that he was engaged in “challenging... racial stereotypes... but not the psychological imperatives upon which those stereotypes rested.”¹⁰⁰ In *The Heroic Slave*, Douglass produces a generically diverse text which depends upon reader interpretation for an appreciation of its innovative structure and complex treatment of thematic issues.

As the introduction to this chapter suggests, in the process of researching Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave* (1853), I uncovered a second version which had been entirely overlooked by critics. Thus, the final part of this chapter provides a detailed description of this critically neglected version, identifies the major differences between these texts, and begins to assess the significance of these revisions and their implications for both dating this text and establishing its author. This pamphlet, published with the substantially revised and extended title, *The Heroic Slave; A Thrilling Narrative of the Adventures of Madison Washington, in Pursuit of Liberty*, is held in the Rare Books and Manuscripts division of the Schomburg Center in New York. To date, it would appear that this work is entirely unique as no trace has been found of this specific edition at any other library, either in Europe or North America.

¹⁰⁰ Cooley (2001) 136.

For a facsimile reproduction of the cover page see Fig. 3.¹⁰¹ The substance of the research which follows was published recently as an article in *Slavery and Abolition*.¹⁰² However, it has now become necessary to revise my original conclusions on the grounds of personal examination, I recently visited the Schomburg Center, and because of fresh evidence concerning both the publication date and the illustration of the slave ship (Fig. 5). Thus, while my initial arguments led to the argument that this text was published in 1863, a closer look at the original pamphlet has given pause for thought and now makes it necessary to construct an argument in favour of the much earlier date of 1853. However, it is still impossible to decide categorically in favour of either date. The impossibility of arriving at any definitive conclusions concerning the origins, intended readership, and publication history of this work accentuates the riddling and puzzling dimensions of this text and proves its importance as a subject of continuing research enquiry.

This second version is a thirty-one page, tightly-bound pamphlet with a yellow paper cover. Printed on very thin, poor quality paper, the text is undoubtedly an original edition, printed either in 1853 or 1863, which has been bound within modern hardback brown covers. This version contains one illustration of two ships by an unidentified illustrator, simply referred to as “Strong” (see Fig. 5) and there are no specific particulars with which to identify either ship detailed on the engraving as the *Creole*. Very little can be verified at this stage concerning the origins of this text. The archivist at the Schomburg Center, Diana Lachatanere, confirms the impossibility

¹⁰¹ Diana Lachatanere, archivist in the Rare Books division of the Schomburg Center provided me with a xerox of this text which I examined on a subsequent research visit. The cover page of *A Thrilling Narrative* was reprinted in Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* 1925 (rpt. Arnold Rampersad, 1992) xxxiii. Its source is given as “Negro Americana: Title Pages from the Schomburg Collection.” This facsimile reproduction is significant not only because it is the sole known twentieth century reprinting of any part of this text, but also because Douglass’s name is nowhere mentioned. The cover page is listed under the “Contents Page” as from a “Slave Narrative” (ibid., 28) which confirms the way in which the marketing strategy of omitting Douglass’s name as author encouraged the reader to interpret the work as an “authentic” piece.

of establishing a provenance as they hold no acquisition records for this title. Curiously, the text is also characterised by handwritten markings sporadically throughout, conceivably lettering, which would appear to be contemporaneous with its original publication (they seem to be of the period) and which may even represent a signature of some kind.

A study of the frontispiece to this edition poses many questions. The writing in pencil which it is perhaps possible to read in this reproduction (Fig. 3), “[By Frederick Douglass] Autographs for Freedom. Ed. Julia Griffiths. Boston, 1853], seems without a doubt, to have been written by a librarian for cataloguing purposes and, almost certainly, did not form part of the original. Thus, the title-page does not bear Douglass’s name as author. Instead, the deliberate marketing devices suggest the title has been self-consciously (re)presented as a slave narrative: a retelling of the life of Madison Washington by Madison Washington (see Fig. 4). Although the title does not incorporate the phrase “Written by himself,” no reference is made to any other contributor, editor, or otherwise. The extended title’s focus on literary imperatives - “a thrilling narrative” and “in pursuit of liberty” - encourage interpretations of this text as a reconstructed slave narrative. Douglass carefully avoids such generic ambiguity in his 1853 version by his heavily publicised placing of *The Heroic Slave* within an antislavery giftbook and later in his newspaper, *The North Star*. As a famous ex-slave narrator whose own story was well-known to the primarily white abolitionist audience, he was able to fictionalise the story of another without encouraging misreadings of his text as a conventional slave narrative. Furthermore, by giving this work a non-specific title, *The Heroic Slave*, Douglass provides a

¹⁰² See Bernier (2000) 69-86.

generic representation of black male heroism which is not necessarily rooted in individual portraiture.

With regard to this second version, fundamental problems exist concerning verification of the publication date. While the frontispiece clearly states “published 1853,” the date on the inside title page has been previously read as “published 1863” (see Fig. 4) which is also in agreement with the Schomburg’s catalogue entry which confirms this later date. However, following my examination of this text, I am more and more convinced that the date provided by the Schomburg library is incorrect as an examination of the original title-page, which is less disfigured than the reproduction included here, reveals that the date is more than likely “1853.” Nonetheless, as far as current research indicates, it is important to make the case on both sides as it is impossible to provide categorical evidence to support either view. Because these different dates situate *A Thrilling Narrative* within either an antebellum or postemancipation context, this ambiguity has important implications concerning its abolitionist status (or otherwise). Convincing arguments can be presented on both sides. The argument that this is, in many respects, a pirate edition and produced almost simultaneously and at minimum cost, in order to undercut publication of this story in expensive antislavery giftbook form, supports 1853. The curious physical markings on the text, which seem to be a signature of some kind, also point to the view that this may be a signed text, conceivably even by Madison Washington himself.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ A detailed examination of the obverse side of Fig. 4 reveals a handwritten signature which may, indeed, represent Madison Washington’s own signature as it seems to read “MWashington.” However, a substantial amount of further research must be undertaken in order to verify or disprove this point.

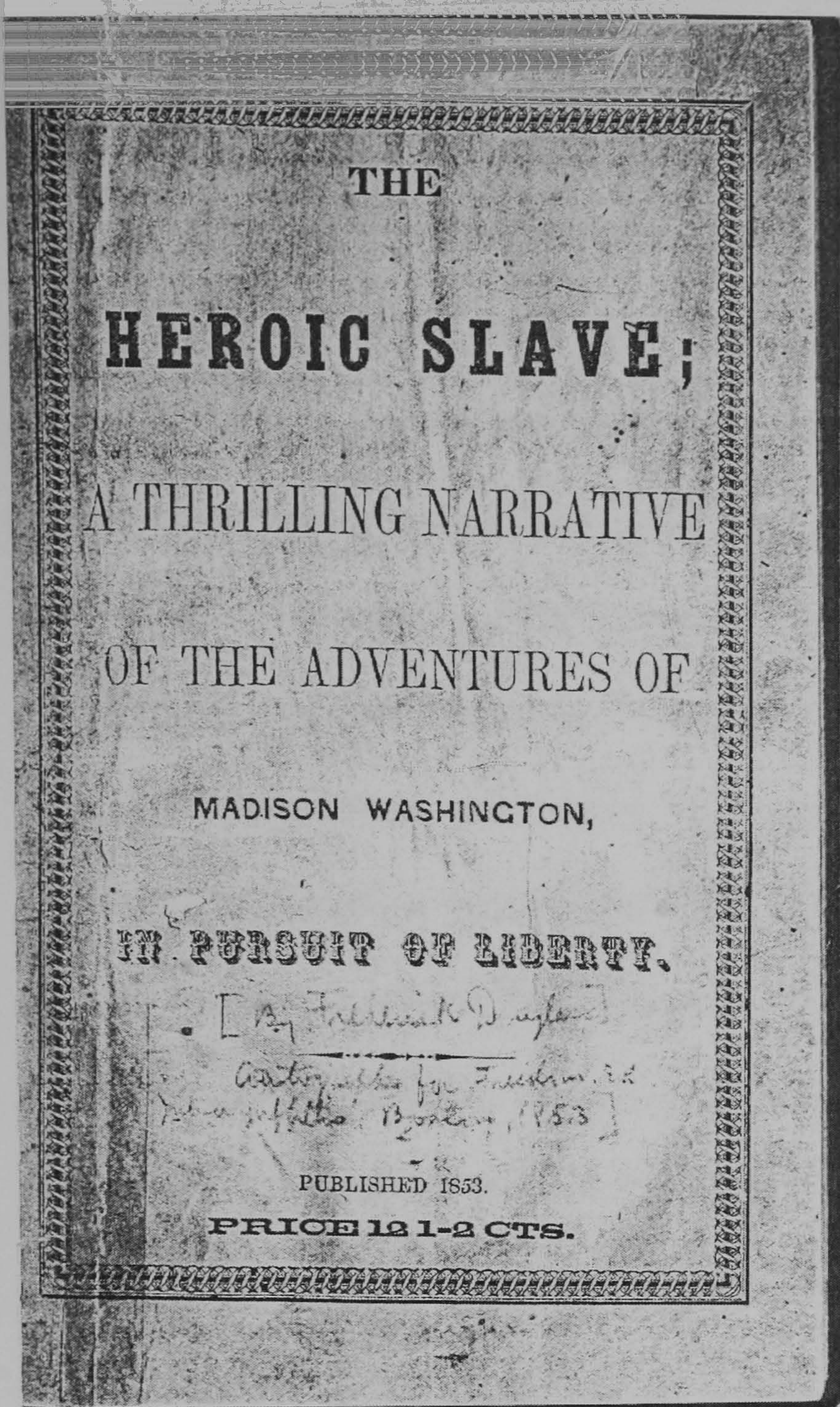


Fig. 3. Frontispiece, *The Heroic Slave; A Thrilling Narrative of the Adventures of Madison Washington, in Pursuit of Liberty* (N.p.: n.p., 1853/1863?) 1.

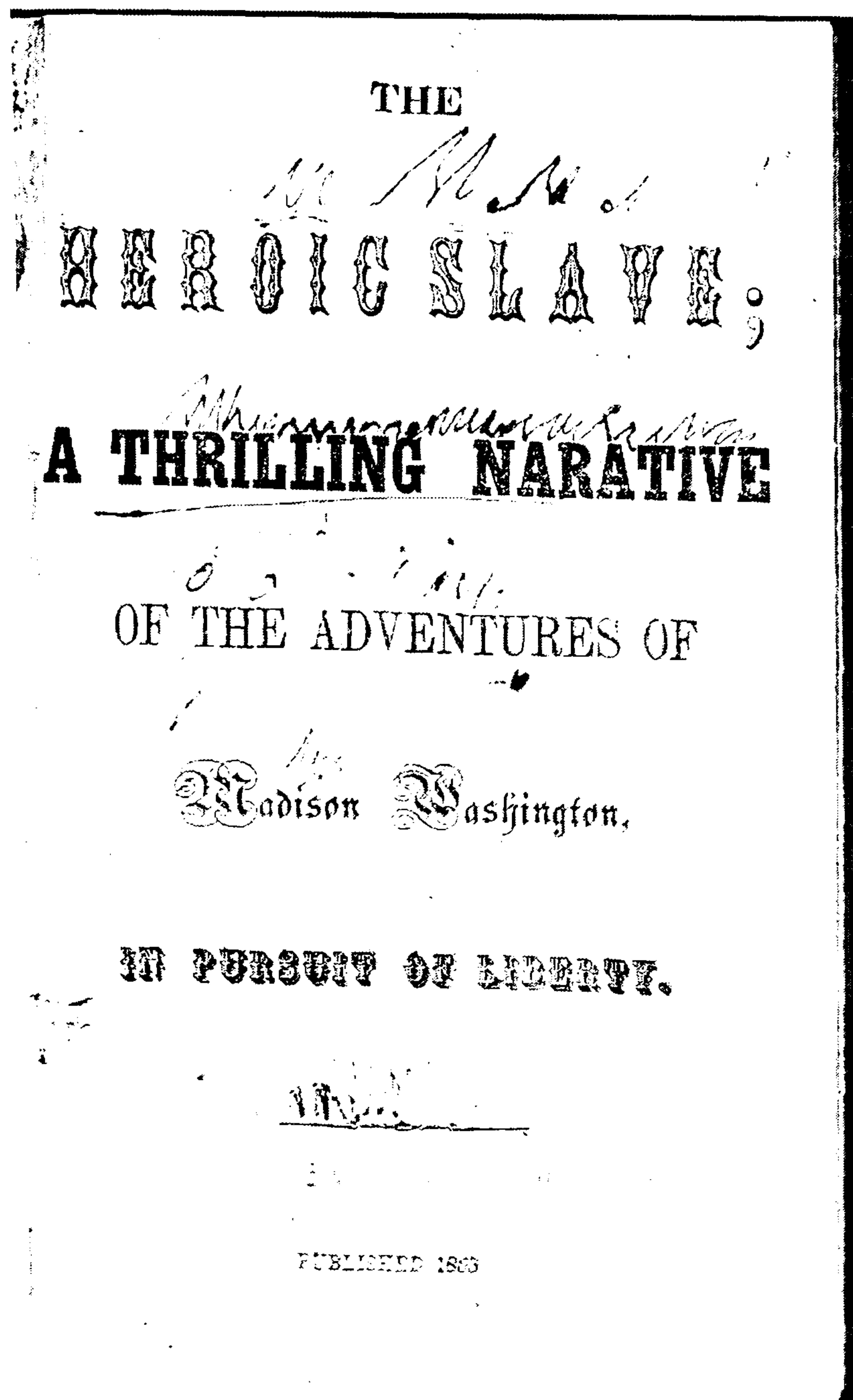
On the other hand, internal changes which remove specific references to slavery from the text and which seem to be simplifying the presentation of material support the later date for this work. Their suggestion of

complex formal changes as a result encourages the view that Douglass was involved in its production. It is important to establish the correct date to shed light on research in this dissertation into the defining ways in which context intersects with content and style in the production of textual meaning. In short, ambiguities of dates influence changing audience agenda, varied political context and authorial intent. In an attempt to verify the date of this edition, one method currently under exploration is to use economics by contextualising the price provided on the frontispiece: “12 1-2 CTS” (see Fig. 3). While it is difficult to be absolutely sure, an examination of the original suggests that the date does in fact read “1853” on both the frontispiece and the title-page.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ The original copy at the Schomburg Center is less disfigured than the xerox included in this thesis and this makes it possible to conclude with greater certainty that the text reads “Published 1853” (my emphasis).

A Thrilling Narrative is a much more careless production than *The Heroic Slave*. While they do not make a case in themselves for alternative readings of this additional version, nonetheless many inconsistencies of spelling and presentation, such as missed words and altered punctuation, form a marked feature of this text. For example, there is a spelling error even as early as the elaborately executed title-page: “A Thrilling Narative” (Fig. 4). Similarly, the text itself carelessly reproduces epigraphs: “What *deep, sad* sorrow lingers there?” (*HS* 174), as contrasted with “What *deepened* sorrow lingers there?” (*HSTN* 3, emphasis added). Unfortunately, I have as yet been unable to verify which is the “correct” version. Also, the work frequently omits descriptive words - compare “grand *old* Commonwealth” (*HS* 174) with “grand Commonwealth” (*HS* 3, emphasis added) – and alters pronouns. For example, Madison’s use of a visual aid to authenticate his narrative of fugitive escape to the abolitionist Listwells makes this clear: ““I, with this strap, (pulling one out of *his* old coat-pocket),”” (*HS* 195) in the first version is changed to ““I, with this strap, (pulling one out of *my* old coat-pocket)”” (*HSTN* 12, emphasis added). While this switching of pronoun makes little grammatical sense, the change nevertheless works effectively not only to conflate authorial voice with that of the black male protagonist, but also to underscore the inextricable relationship between the visual and the oral. In turn this reveals the processes by which antislavery testimony is produced in the dynamic fusion of physical events with rhetorical symbolism. Overall, the effect of these various discrepancies is to suggest an edition unrestricted by rigorous standards of production, and instead preoccupied with textual shortening and simplification.

In most cases, internal omissions between these works are sufficiently revised in order to encourage alternative readings. For example, textual changes between versions of Madison Washington's speech confiding his decision to become a



runaway are revealing. His resolution in *The Heroic Slave* that, “I must *not* stop to describe my feelings on taking this step,” (HS 188, emphasis added) is redefined in *A Thrilling Narrative* by a key omission: “I must stop to describe my feelings on taking this step” (HSTN 9).

Fig. 4. Title-page, *The Heroic Slave; A Thrilling Narrative of the Adventures of Madison Washington, in Pursuit of Liberty* (N.p.:n.p., 1853/1863?) 2.

This ellipsis in the text produces a shift in meaning and highlights the repeated tension within abolitionist narrative practice concerning a tendency towards simultaneously confiding and withholding information in the complex interplay of display and concealment.

Douglass adopts this technique as early as 1845 in his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* in which he represents in graphic detail the whipping of his Aunt Hester by “Master Anthony:” “I have often been awakened...

by the most heart-rending shrieks of an own aunt of mine, whom he used to... whip upon her naked back till she was literally covered with blood.”¹⁰⁵ He then qualifies this extract by the following disclaimer: “It was a most terrible spectacle. I wish I could commit to paper the feelings with which I beheld it.”¹⁰⁶ Examples such as these anticipate Douglass’s ambiguous representation of the “awful conflagration” in both of his written versions dramatising this revolt. Both texts demonstrate dramatic irony as Douglass juxtaposes Madison’s pretensions to silence on the subject - “I will not harrow up your feelings by portraying the terrific scene” (*HS* 193, *HSTN* 10) - with detailed descriptions of this event. This ambiguous narrative device underscores Douglass’s self-conscious manipulation of audience expectations and his display of autonomous narrative authority.

While they seem rather minor, textual changes between these works are suggestive. They not only indicate a lack of proof-reading and low production standards, but also a general absence of any constraints which demand an “authentic” copy of Douglass’s original for *A Thrilling Narrative*. There are obviously differences between a text produced for a lavish antislavery giftbook and a cheaply produced, low-budget pamphlet, both in terms of significance and intended function. These points all suggest an edition with which Douglass himself was not directly involved, regardless of the date of its publication. Such changes frequently seem to be made not in the interests of aesthetic and ideological restructuring, but as a result of carelessness, changing political context and varied choice of form.

In addition to quibbles of presentation, there are numerous substantial changes between these texts. For example, it can be argued that the ostensibly slight differences between archetypal heroic descriptions of Madison Washington do signal

¹⁰⁵ Douglass, *Narrative* (1845) 51.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

a significant shift in dynamics of black representation. The first edition which reads - “His torn sleeves *disclosed* arms like polished iron... He was just the man *you* would choose when hardships were to be endured” (*HS* 179) - can be contrasted with the second: “His torn sleeves, *displayed* arms like polished iron... He was just the man *we* would chose [sic] when hardships were to be endured” (*HSTN* 5, emphasis added). One possibility is that the alteration of the crucial word here (“displayed” for “disclosed”) simply registers a phonetic typing error resulting from quick production. However, it seems more likely that this exchange dramatises changes in economies for representing the black male body.

The use of “disclosed” in *The Heroic Slave* is well-suited to a text structured by a series of conversations and events overheard and paralleling each other. Notably, the structure of this piece is characterised by a series of disclosures which reflect Douglass’s deliberate discursive ambiguities. The black male body becomes a complex and highly politicised sign which, when packaged for consumption according to the dictates of white abolitionist imperatives, must conform to dominant codes of white American masculinity. This narrative preference renders the black male body easily accessible and acceptable, according to both visual and textual dictates, for assimilation by the white male reader. In contrast, the connotations of “displayed” in *A Thrilling Narrative*, present the black male body as empowered spectacle for consumption by a black audience and confirm black independent pride rather than reluctant exposure: as further registered in the substitution of “you” for “we.” However, it is plausible to complicate the bifurcation of meanings for these two terms by arguing that Douglass’s manipulation of the term “displayed” possesses a more ambivalent register. It can be argued that the resonances of this latter term reveal his unconscious connections with white abolitionist strategies which co-opt the

black male body as spectacle in order to serve a separate, and frequently paternalistic, agenda.

These narrative differences confirm shifts in authorial identification and an inscribed audience identity in *A Thrilling Narrative*. The movement in this text away from an emphasis upon a white audience and towards privileging a black perspective provides insights into its innovations upon form and content. This narrative process closes the discursive gap between black authorial voice and black audience to reveal the changing dictates of censorship and representation which may, in themselves, be suggestive of a later context. This is further substantiated by the fact that Douglass (or those in control of the reprinting of his text), may have been keen to provide examples of exemplary black military prowess in order to bolster the drive to recruit black soldiers for the Civil War. Thus, some of the many textual changes between these works facilitate the dating of *A Thrilling Narrative*. In favour of readings of this text as published in 1863, the following evidence can be presented. For example, upon hearing Madison Washington's speech in *The Heroic Slave*, Listwell resolves: "I shall go to my home in Ohio resolved to atone for my past indifference to this *ill-starred* race, by making such exertions as I *shall be able to do, for the speedy emancipation of every slave in the land*" (HS 182, emphasis added). By contrast, in *A Thrilling Narrative*, Listwell's philanthropic declaration is significantly modified: "I shall go to my home in Ohio resolved to atone for my past indifference to this *illustrated* race, by making such exertions as I *can for their amelioration*" (HSTN 6, emphasis added). Another type-setting mistake - "ill-starred" for "illustrated" - illuminates the dynamics of production. However, this error could result from misreadings of a hand-written manuscript, and therefore tend towards 1853 as this version's date by putting the case that it was prepared for publication from the

original. Alternatively, it is plausible to argue that it was copied from a poor printing of the text, thereby verifying the later date.

A Thrilling Narrative moves away from explicit references to slavery and abolition in a preferred focus on “ameliorating” current conditions. This text introduces a deliberate vagueness concerning historical context which contributes to the case for the later date for *A Thrilling Narrative*. Thus, confirmation of the second text’s date as 1863, supports readings which emphasise the significance of *A Thrilling Narrative* as an interpretative bridge between abolitionist imperatives and the preoccupations and problematics which would become increasingly interwoven with Reconstruction politics. There is also a self-conscious altering of tense - for example “Mr. Listwell says” (*HS* 211) becomes “Mr. Listwell said,” (*HSTN* 18) - which downplays a sense of contemporary immediacy. Thus, some of the textual changes facilitate readings of *A Thrilling Narrative* in terms of this varying context as they register, not only differences of content, but also complex shifts of authorial and audience identification.

In addition to offering clues for attempts at dating *A Thrilling Narrative*, select but significant changes of vocabulary suggest a modified stance towards race and class. This second text effects stylistic changes conceivably with a post-emancipation, newly-literate audience of ex-freedmen in mind. Indeed, evidence that this simplifying of material is part of a strategy to target a specifically black audience, rather than to make the work generally more widely accessible, is emphasised by the decision to reprint a text with highly racialised subject-matter. In terms of explicit strategies of simplification, compare “made such an impression upon him [Listwell] as can never be erased” (*HS* 179-80) with, “made such an impression upon him as he can never forget” (*HSTN* 5). Similarly, references to “the slave-coffle” and “the brig”

(HS 223) in *The Heroic Slave*, are changed to “the slave-gang” and “the ship” (HSTN 23), while “They deliberately gathered up their baggage” (HS 238) is adapted to, “They deliberately *took up* their baggage” (HSTN 31, emphasis added).

This substitution of vocabulary may register an altered shift in audience expectations. While Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave* sought to convert a primarily white audience to abolition by a focus upon rhetorical set pieces which translated black superior humanity in conventional terms, the narrative strategy in *A Thrilling Narrative* reflects a conscious effort to adapt this material in the interests of dramatising black history to a black audience. The depersonalisation of Madison’s suffering in this text reiterates this point of view. Thus, it is possible to compare “I was taunted, jeered at, and berated by them, in a manner that pierced *me* to the soul” (HS 220, emphasis added) with, “I was taunted, jeered at, and berated by them, in a manner that pierced to *the* soul” (HSTN 22, emphasis added). The removal of the pronoun “me” here indicates a movement from localised to generic models of racial brutality.

Also much of the content in *A Thrilling Narrative* seems to have been condensed for a more immediately digestible prose style. For example, “it was the part of wisdom to let her go” (HS 191) in *The Heroic Slave* is later abbreviated to “it was wisdom for her to go” (HSTN 10), while “what snatches of sleep he got, *were interrupted by dreams which* were anything than pleasant” (HS 213, emphasis added), has been pared down to just “what snatches of sleep he got, were anything than pleasant” (HSTN 19). Furthermore, the text reduces “All the great names *of Virginia they know by heart, and have seen their owners often. The history of the house is folded in their lips*” (HS 207-208, emphasis added), simply to “All the great names seen their lips” (HSTN 16). While these excerpts perhaps reflect the altered dictates

of form in the space constraints of a pamphlet, as well as printing errors (such as omitting a line of text), the latter two examples in particular may represent a modified editorial policy. There is a general preoccupation in this text, both to minimise literary reconstruction of events (as in the exclusion of “dreams”), as well as to downplay the chivalric tradition of white Southern gentry (in removing references to the “great names of Virginia”).

In addition, some slight changes more finely nuance thematic objectives. For example, innovations to Madison Washington’s comment on the subject of a possible black betrayer are revealing. Thus, his avowal in *The Heroic Slave* - ““I cannot believe that the old man was to blame”” (HS 199) - is significantly revised: ““*I do not think* the old man was to blame”” (HSTN 13, emphasis added). The revision here suggests that Madison Washington is less sure of black solidarity in the second text. Thus, *A Thrilling Narrative*’s modifications to phrasing complicate earlier idealised portraits of black community relations. Examples such as these point to this work’s movement towards more realistic representations of black character as the privileging of racialised stereotyping is reduced.

A Thrilling Narrative supplies more egalitarian representations of black and white social exchange by removing the textual markers of black deference to white authority in *The Heroic Slave*. While Madison Washington outwardly shows respect to white authority in the first text - ““On reaching Canada,... *sir*, my thoughts turned to my poor wife”” (HS 219, emphasis added) - this appellation is subsequently removed in *A Thrilling Narrative* so the text reads simply: ““On reaching Canada,... my thoughts turned to my poor wife”” (HSTN 21). Therefore, narrative authority shows a notable lack of interest in courting a white “superior” audience which possibly consolidates interpretations in favour of the later date. If the later date is

favoured by the concomitant development of a black autonomous narrative position, it may be plausible to conclude that Douglass himself was involved in the production of this second edition of his novella.

For various reasons, *A Thrilling Narrative* omits much of the material in *The Heroic Slave*. For example, it is suggestive that it includes Listwell's words only selectively. Contrast "Mr. Listwell at once frankly disclosed the secret; *describing the place where he first saw him*; rehearsing the language which he had used" (*HS* 187, emphasis added), with "Mr. Listwell at once frankly disclosed the secret; rehearsing the language which he had used" (*HSTN* 8). In this excerpt, physical descriptions providing a geographical location are omitted, in favour of privileging the functions of language and rhetoric. Furthermore, there is a potentially illuminating omission in poignant descriptions of the slave-gang. See for example, *The Heroic Slave*'s description of "All sizes, ages, and sexes... all huddled together on their way to market to be sold and separated from home and from each other *forever*," (*HS* 215) with the same moment in *A Thrilling Narrative*: "All sizes, ages, and sexes... all huddled together on their way to market to be sold and seperated [sic] from each other *forever*" (*HSTN* 20, emphasis not mine). The significant omission of the word "home" in the second text points to the status of *A Thrilling Narrative* as a post-abolitionist text. This can be argued from a diminished preoccupation with tropes of sentimental discourse, previously integral to the slave narrative form.

However, as already mentioned, since this research was published I have now undertaken a close examination of this text which suggests that it is just as likely that the blurred date which appears on this xeroxed title-page (see Fig. 4), does indeed read "1853" and not "1863." Therefore, it is important to present possible arguments as to why this edition was produced simultaneously with the original. The decision to

make this text available at the same time as Douglass's *The Heroic Slave* was included in *Autographs for Freedom* in Boston, must suggest a different intended audience. The fact that it is held in a library in New York is perhaps not coincidental, given that the text has so far proved untraceable in any other archive, and may indeed suggest that *A Thrilling Narrative* was intended for circulation among abolitionist audiences in this city as well as Boston. This encourages a reading of this edition as not intended to be in direct competition with Douglass's original novella. The decision to reproduce it in pamphlet form and not as an antislavery giftbook may substantiate this view as it could have been printed to accompany a speech given – as many pamphlets were (see the discussion of William Wells Brown's in chapter III) – either by Douglass or even Madison Washington himself.

The mystery of this text imitates the shadowy nature both of Madison Washington's literary and, to a much greater extent, historical identity. Upon close examination of the artefactual properties of this text, it would appear that the handwritten markings which appear on the title-page (Fig. 4) of *A Thrilling Narrative* in fact represent the "bleeding through" of a signature – the original of which is printed on the reverse of the text's title-page.¹⁰⁷ While it is impossible to verify with any degree of certainty the author of this signature, it is not absolutely beyond the realms of possibility to make the rather startling claim that it belongs to Madison Washington himself.¹⁰⁸ If it was ever possible to prove that this was a copy signed by Washington himself, and at this stage it is not, this might help to explain the text's

¹⁰⁷ I have not reproduced this in the thesis due to the necessary distortion produced by scanning; however, my xeroxes can be made available on request.

¹⁰⁸ I have conducted a very close and intense examination of this signature and am more and more convinced that it reads "Mwashington." However, it has been impossible to prove this and I only present it here as a very tentative, but nonetheless plausible, suggestion. By way of beginning to prove my case, although I do realise that I am still on very thin ice, there are markings on various other pages of the text and not only the title-page which all seem to represent the initials "MW." See also the frontispiece (Fig. 3) and the handwritten lettering at the top above the text's border and pages 28 and 29, as well as the reverse side of page 31.

uniqueness and the reason behind its being kept while all others have been lost and/or destroyed (if indeed, they ever existed).

It would be possible to present much more material to analyse the reworkings of form between these two texts. For example, while Douglass divided *The Heroic Slave* into four parts, *A Thrilling Narrative* adds a fifth division in a separately demarcated “Introduction.” This newly produced section concludes on the following sentence which describes the preferred authorial approach: “Speaking of marks, traces, possibles, and probabilities, we come before our readers” (*HSTN* 4). Thus, *A Thrilling Narrative*’s slight change in narrative structure draws attention to narrative strategies which fictionalise historical ambiguities common to both works. Furthermore, the reordering in *A Thrilling Narrative* of the scene in Part III of *The Heroic Slave* which establishes Listwell’s relationship to the “poor white loafer” Wilkes has potentially greater significance. The dialogue between these two characters provides a useful interpretative key for understanding individual agendas within white abolitionism and inseparable racist paradigms. The repositioned piece takes the form of the following character assessment of Listwell by Wilkes: “I am willing to bet any man in the company that *that* gentleman is a *nigger*-buyer. He didn’t tell me so right down, but I reckon I knows enough about me to give a pretty clean guess as to what they are arter’” (*HSTN* 18). While this excerpt concludes the banter between Wilkes and others in the bar in the first text (*HS* 212) by contrast, in *A Thrilling Narrative*, it forms an aside uttered by Wilkes which articulates his initial perception of Listwell in proslavery terms. This results in not only fixing audience perceptions of Listwell in terms of compromised morality much earlier in the text, but also in opening up a challenging disjuncture between authorial voice and narrative structure that characterises the radical impetus common to both texts.

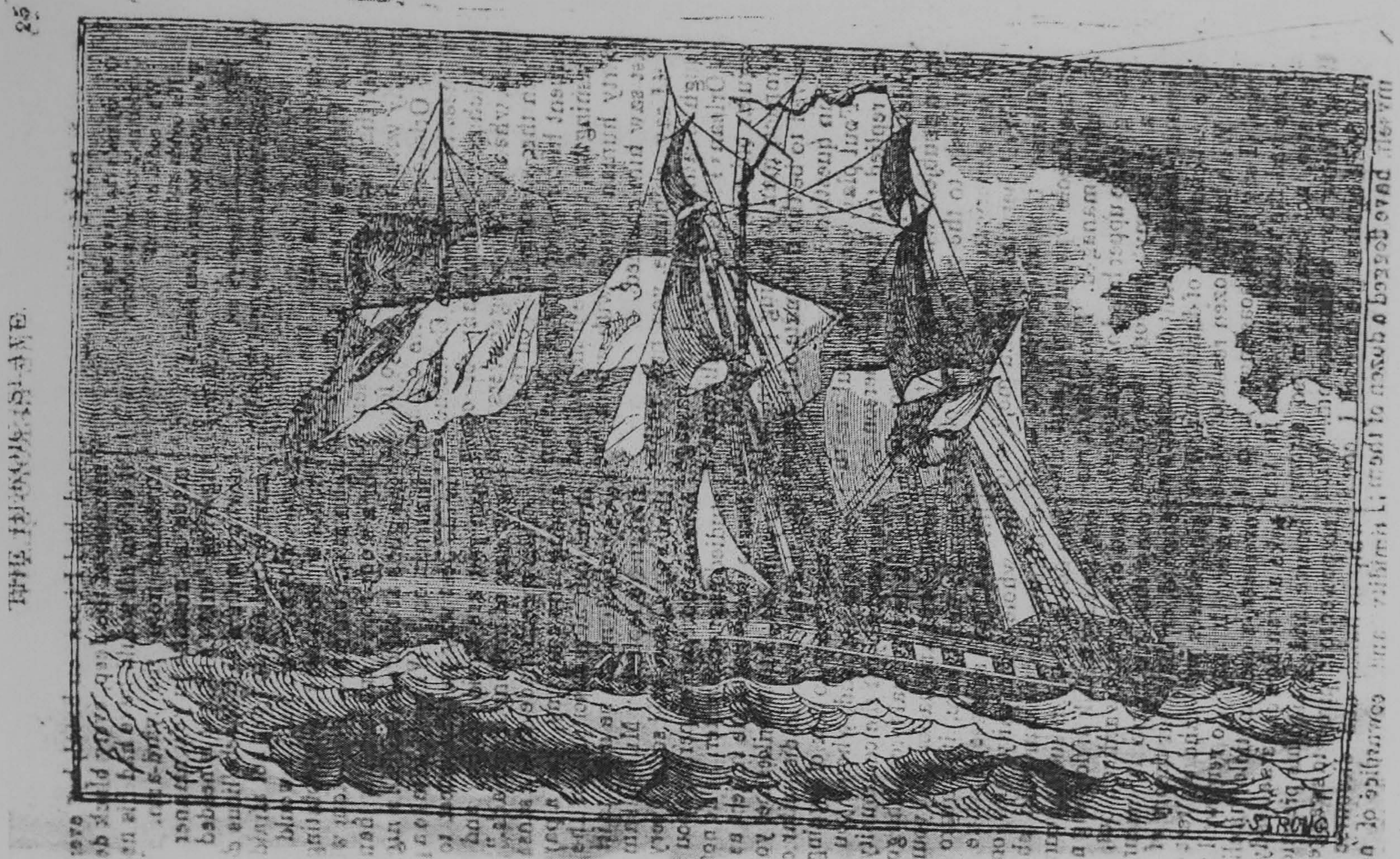


Fig. 5. Illustration by “Strong,” *The Heroic Slave; A Thrilling Narrative of the Adventures of Madison Washington, in Pursuit of Liberty* (N.p.: n.p., 1853/1863?) 25.

The most striking revisions of *The Heroic Slave* by *A Thrilling Narrative* are expressed in physical terms and include the illustration of two unnamed ships signed by an unknown illustrator as “Strong” (Fig. 5) and a poem entitled “Slavery” (Fig. 6). At this stage, very little is known about the sources of this material and as can be seen from the discussions above, the project of verifying original publication information is ongoing. An initial investigation would suggest that neither of these pieces was composed specifically for this edition as it seems more likely that both were drawn from generic material available in the arsenal of abolition. This supposition fits neatly with interpretations of *A Thrilling Narrative* as a quickly produced and cheaply marketed text. For example, there are no distinguishing

features to either ship depicted on the illustration which would suggest which is the *Creole*, or even that either is engaged in the slave trade (Fig. 5). In general terms at this stage, the interpretative possibilities for this illustration are various. Of the two ships, the ship on the left (Ship A) is more than likely intended to represent a slave ship which seems to have suffered damage, as depicted in the torn sails, as a result of conflict of some kind with the ship on the right (Ship B).

According to one expert, various possibilities can be tentatively proposed.¹⁰⁹ In favour of an early date for this engraving, it could be suggested that Ship B is a British naval ship which has overtaken Ship A, the slave ship, as a result of its involvement in suppressing the outlawed slave trade. Another possibility which was put forward previously, and which supports a later date for this text, interprets the confrontation between the two ships as depicting a Civil War naval fight as the illustrations of single ship duels were popularly reprinted during this period. It has even been argued that the engraving has been altered in some way, as perhaps one ship has been superimposed on the other, thereby furthering the view that this is a cheaply and quickly produced text. While the historical records of the *Creole* revolt provide minor references to the involvement of other ships, remarkably Douglass's retelling prefers to exclude any mention of them.¹¹⁰ This point supports opinions that this illustration has been "borrowed" from another source and adapted to fit this publication without any consideration of its relevance or suitability. However,

¹⁰⁹ As regards interpretation of this illustration, I would like to acknowledge the very kind help of Dr. Robert Cockcroft in the English Department at the University of Nottingham. He provided a great deal of the information on the various possibilities for reading this illustration listed here.

¹¹⁰ The major source for this mutiny, the government *Senate Documents* discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, refers to British ships which came to greet the *Creole* at Nassau and protect the slaves from U.S. intervention. For example, in his report, John Bacon the U.S. Consul at Nassau confirmed that "I saw a large collections of boats near the brig." See *Senate Documents* (1841-42) 3. This source also describes thwarted attempts by an American ship, the *Louisa*, commanded by Captain Woodside, to try to regain control of the ship and the slaves (11). I am very grateful to Wendy Schnur, Reference Assistant at the Mystic Seaport Museum, for her help in trying to answer the question of the additional ship in this illustration, and its possible relevance to the *Creole* mutiny.

further research into this illustration leads me to conclude that these two ships were drawn from one of the many plates representing the conflict between British navy ships and slavers, as they undertook widespread suppression of the Slave trade in the early-mid-nineteenth century. W. E. F. Ward's history, *The Royal Navy and the Slavers*, reproduces many illustrations which documented this conflict and were

popularly reprinted during the period.¹¹¹

Therefore, this evidence might encourage the view, despite the American pricing on the cover ("12 1-2 CTS") that this pamphlet was originally produced in Britain and only reprinted in the U.S. upon popular demand.

Fig. 6. "Slavery," *The Heroic Slave; A Thrilling Narrative of the Adventures of Madison Washington, in Pursuit of Liberty* (N.p.:n.p., 1853/1863?) 24.

Nonetheless, the research into this illustration continues, as many of the unanswered questions concerning its date, source and type may provide a

THE HEROIC SLAVE.

SLAVERY.

Why come those sounds of mourning
Far o'er the distant seas?
Those piercing notes of anguish
Borne wildly on the breeze?
Why are those groans ascending
From many a southern clime,
The God of love beseeching,
To avenge their wrong and crime?

Ah! 'tis the wretched Slave, that 'neath
The Tyrants galling yoke,
Upon the head of brutal men,
Such curses doth invoke.
But *men* alone in *outward* form,
Souls blackened, dyed in sin,
With demon passion seeking
The blood of fellow-men.

With fiend-like fury binding,
'Round frail and suffering ones,
Their hellish chains of torture,
Then *smiling* at their moans.
Rendering, regardless, every tie
That to their souls is dear,
Teaching their dark minds, only,
Their master's lash to fear.

The God that formed the *owner's* soul,
Alike the captive made;
Yet, as some worldly merchandize,
'Tis sold in *human trade*.
Thou dreadful curse; oh, slavery!
When will thy influence cease,
And in those sunny regions reign
God's universal peace?

¹¹¹ Ward (1969) 81ff.

useful way of verifying, not only the date for this text, but also key imperatives guiding processes of production.

The main rationale behind the inclusion of this poem (Fig. 6) would seem to be superficial: primarily as a space filler. In order to include additional eye-catching material, the illustration was likely decided upon first (Fig. 5). Then for the purposes of production practicalities, material was needed for insertion on the opposite page: hence, the poem was added. While generally unremarkable, the concluding verse to this poem provides corroborating evidence for the later dating of *A Thrilling Narrative*: ““Thou dreadful curse; oh, slavery!/When will thy *influence* cease,/And in those sunny regions reign/God’s universal peace?”” (*HSTN* 24, emphasis added). Thus, a preferred focus on slavery’s “influence” invites readings of this text beyond the immediate context of slavery, as resistance to a non-specific form of black suffering is articulated. Indeed, it seems more topical and apposite to consider this poem against a backdrop of Civil War, as underscored by the final appeal to “universal peace” at the end of this poem. It is quite plausible to argue that this is perhaps an earlier poem which may just have been chosen in 1863 for its evocation of war. However, given the now more likely date of 1853, it can be argued that this is firmly an abolitionist work, interpreting slavery’s impact more generally to gain universal sympathy for black suffering.

Douglass introduces an important structural change to the later text in order to accommodate this added material. In *A Thrilling Narrative*, both the poem and the illustration are inserted into the text between his invective satirising the “model republic” which closes Part III (*HSTN* 23), and the start of Part IV (*HSTN* 26), which begins with quotations from Moore and Byron and then provides details of the slave ship mutiny. In *The Heroic Slave* on the other hand, Part IV opens with Douglass’s

polemic (*HS* 225). The effect of this structural change in *A Thrilling Narrative* is to introduce the more generic material (the poem and the illustration) by way of Douglass's wide-ranging attack on "the smooth and gliding phrase, AMERICAN SLAVE TRADE" (*HSTN* 23). This reworking situates the new material more neatly within a broader tradition of abolitionist activity while expanding the historical implications of the *Creole* slave ship revolt.

These textual ambiguities provoke a whole plethora of questions concerning the identity and agendas of the contributor/s involved in editorial changes to Douglass's original text. Additional questions abound which are currently answerable only in speculative terms, if at all. Where was this edition sold, on what occasion and to whom? How did its producers establish that there would be a market for it? How many copies were sold? Was it profitable? What criteria drew the editors to this text? Did they realise that it was originally written by Douglass and therefore copy it from *Autographs for Freedom*? If Douglass was not expressly involved in it, did he know of its existence? Can any case be made to support the view that this may have been Madison Washington's signed copy?

At this stage, it seems impossible to verify where this text was published, although I would suggest New York as the most convincing possibility. As a primary focal point for antislavery activity, there would be the ready market there and also, if it was published contemporaneously with *The Heroic Slave*, it would not be in direct competition with *Autographs for Freedom*, which was primarily circulated in Boston. One line of inquiry which may be worth pursuing, takes into account the fact that Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom* was published in New York in 1855 by Miller, Orton and Mulligan. I am currently trying to trace whether there are any records of this publisher's lists, just in case *The Heroic Slave* may also have been a

title they would have published. Washington D.C. may also be a contender as it is possible to read, scribbled by hand on the top left-hand corner of this text: “(Washington) D” (*HSTN* 3).¹¹² However, my recent personal examination of this text would suggest that this was handwritten by the librarian at the Schomburg center, it matches the handwriting on the frontispiece (Fig. 3) and that it represents “(Washington)” as in Madison Washington and “D” simply for Douglass.

In terms of the date for *A Thrilling Narrative*, if it is 1863, there are many outstanding questions, including why this specific date? Aside from the fact that it was the same year as Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, it is perhaps significant to bear in mind that it was also the year Douglass himself was involved in recruiting black volunteers in New York, in the wake of successes by the Fifty-Fourth regiment.¹¹³ This was not an easy endeavour due to the excessively poor treatment received by black soldiers in the army. Thus, perhaps it is plausible to read the new version of *The Heroic Slave* as aimed at the recruitment of heroic fighting men, hence the simpler language, or perhaps even to be sold to raise funds for the regiment. It is interesting to note McFeely’s observation that “members of the Confederate Congress on May 1, 1863, put through a formal declaration that black men bearing arms would be subject to the laws of the state where they were captured... [that] they would be treated as insurrectionary slaves. The punishment would almost certainly be death.”¹¹⁴ Hence, white racist thought concerning black violence instantly equates black military valour with fearful insurrection against the dominant order. Furthermore, if it is 1853 as this recent research would seem to suggest, then why was it printed in a variant

¹¹² Another view is that “(Washington) D” may simply refer to a librarian’s shorthand for “(Madison Washington) Douglass” so it is still rather difficult at this stage categorically to affirm either interpretation. Similarly, Judie Newman has argued that the “D” may refer to a Roman numeral which thereby suggests a print run of 500 copies.

¹¹³ McFeely (1991) 226-27.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 227.

form? Was it intended to convert New York audiences? Did Douglass know of it? Which was the original text? Is it purely an unfounded assumption that *The Heroic Slave* in *Autographs for Freedom* is the original text: to the contrary, perhaps *A Thrilling Narrative* came first as conceivably Douglass tried out this novella there, assessed the sales, and then decided it was fit material for inclusion in the antislavery giftbook. The general point must be made at this stage concerning the need for a great deal more research into, and sophisticated analysis of, existing American antislavery tracts and pamphlets.

As far as current research indicates, it is impossible to suggest whether the text was profitable, while it is plausible to assume from its hastily produced quality that it was intended for a large audience and thus expected quick sales. Furthermore, the text maps so closely onto *The Heroic Slave* as produced for *Autographs for Freedom*, that it seems almost certain that one edition served the template for the other, although the order of origins is by no means clear. However, *A Thrilling Narrative* could have been copied from the version printed contemporaneously in *The North Star*. In the latter case, presentational errors may be reproduced from this version. Without a doubt, it is necessary to complete additional comparative work in order to verify or dismiss this speculation. If it could be established that the editors of *A Thrilling Narrative* copied the text from Douglass's newspaper instead, alternative questions of context and production agendas may become relevant. Overall, and largely from the fact that his name is nowhere to be found on or in *A Thrilling Narrative*, it seems unlikely that Douglass was involved in this text, either in terms of receiving payment or having any hand in textual changes made. In the final analysis, a convincing argument can be made that the existence of *A Thrilling Narrative* provides an alternative interpretative framework, across a range of editorial and publication issues,

within which not only to analyse *The Heroic Slave*, but also to assess its position and rhetorical function within abolitionist discourse more generally.

In concluding these two chapters on Frederick Douglass's representations of black male slave heroism and generic complexities of formal construction, I should emphasise that due to the wealth of material which has been excavated and discussed, it has not been possible to answer all the questions which the recovery of this material demands. For example, one significant omission includes the limited consideration of representations of Susan Washington in this text, and the complex and almost uniformly negative critical debates surrounding Douglass's historical invention and literary development of the black female slave heroine more generally. However, investigations into the *Creole* revolt and debates concerning gender representation will feature more prominently in chapters III and IV of this dissertation. By comparison, these chapters investigate a range of Douglass's material across varied generic and temporal boundaries and encourage a substantial re-evaluation of his oeuvre. This approach calls for a heightened appreciation of his complexities as an accomplished author engaged in subverting and challenging abolitionist narrative practices and politics of production. Douglass's speeches and written versions retelling the *Creole* revolt and testifying to Madison Washington's heroism set up a tradition of black heroism and generic innovation which are maintained and challenged by Brown, Child and Hopkins.

CHAPTER III

“Celebrated Colored Americans:” William Wells Brown’s (Re)modelling of the Black Historical Figure in “Madison Washington” (1861, 1863) and “Slave Revolt at Sea” (1867)

Had the ‘Creole’ revolters been white, and committed their noble act of heroism in another land, the people of the United States would have been the first to recognize their claims. The efforts of Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, and Madison Washington to strike the chains of slavery from the limbs of their enslaved race will live in history, and will warn all tyrants to beware of the wrath of God and the strong arm of man.

William Wells Brown (1867)¹

This chapter introduces the second half of this dissertation which examines literary-historical representations of the *Creole* revolt by William Wells Brown, Lydia Maria Child and Pauline E. Hopkins. All three authors bear a very close relationship to each other and significant debt to Frederick Douglass as literary antecedent, in his decision to select this event as apt subject-matter for black dramatisation and political discussion. This research investigates Brown’s written texts on the *Creole* mutiny, published during and after the American Civil War in the 1860s, which supplied the major inspiration for later interpretations by Child and Hopkins. The publication of Brown’s material during this decade had the result that, with the possible exception of *A Thrilling Narrative*, his texts were produced much later than Douglass’s oral and written versions. As a result of their participation in antislavery lecturing tours throughout Britain in the late 1840s and early 1850s, both writer-orators courted

British abolitionist sensibilities in their treatment of the *Creole* mutiny, in order to gain greater international support for the movement. Thus, this research assesses Douglass's and Brown's literary and historical significance within a British and North American transatlantic context. The chronology of textual production, in particular of Child's and Brown's versions which were produced simultaneously, is also significant in terms of the overall concern throughout this dissertation with intertextual relationships between authors. This chapter extends research into literary and historical representations of Susan Washington, as variously presented by Douglass and Brown, to suggest the ways in which Brown revises Douglass's representation of the female slave, in an anticipation of Child's and Hopkins's manipulation and interrogation of the "tragic mulatta" plot.

This research examines a wide range of neglected and unconsidered texts, almost exclusively by Brown, and addresses many excavational issues including those of artefactual, as well as formal and structural, significance. This detailed discussion of textual production and publication is necessary on two accounts. First, because this information has been previously neglected by critics and dismissed as irrelevant to discussions of Brown's aesthetic preoccupations; and second, because it provides further confirmation of the theoretical contention, maintained throughout this dissertation, that there are identifiable patterns of influence, in terms of context and thematic content, between all works on the *Creole* revolt. Above all, Brown's versions of this mutiny shed light on black narrative production and heroic representation within nineteenth century abolitionist and post-emancipation literary-historical traditions. They provide multifarious texts which not only revise each other in their complicated internal dynamics, but which also elude any fixed generic

¹ Brown (SRS 36).

categorisation, as they interweave biographical testimony and journalistic reportage with historical and literary narrative practices.

Brown's first piece, "Madison Washington," appeared twice: first, in August 1861 when it was published in a black northern "race" periodical, *The Pine and Palm*, edited by James Redpath, and second, in 1863 when it was included, with the same title and few amendments, as one of the early chapters of his "pioneering" and best-selling volume of black history, *The Black Man, His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements*.² The second major version, "Slave Revolt at Sea," formed one of the early chapters to Brown's second volume of black history, *The Negro in the American Rebellion* (1867).³ This work's change of title, from "Madison Washington" to "Slave Revolt at Sea," revised the biographical focus of previous versions by replacing individual portraiture with a wide-ranging historical framework within which to narrate black heroism. In contrast to "Madison Washington," this piece dramatises slave insurrection and its implications in non-specific terms, while developing a generic template for feats of black heroism.

Although this chapter is indebted to John Cullen Gruesser's research which rescued "Slave Revolt at Sea" from obscurity, his assessment that Brown "wrote two versions of the story" is misleading as he clearly wrote at least three, and possibly even four, interpretations of this historical event.⁴ Both texts entitled, "Madison

² 1863. Rpt. 1969. Farrison comments that the first edition quickly sold out so that Brown published a "revised and enlarged" second edition, followed by third and fourth reprintings. See Farrison (1969) 372. This chapter identifies Brown's first historical work throughout by the short title, *The Black Man*.

³ 1867. Rpt. 1968. This chapter identifies this volume throughout by the short title, *The Negro*.

⁴ Gruesser (1996) 102. It may even be possible to make a case for a fourth version as Brown's work, "Heroism at Sea" was published as the thirty-ninth chapter of his third and final volume of black history, *The Rising Son; or, the Antecedents and the Advancement of the Colored Race* (1874. Rpt. 1970) 325-28. This short text dramatised the *Amistad* and *Creole* revolts and presented Joseph Cinque, the leader of the *Amistad*, in terms very similar to those used to represent Madison Washington: compare, for example, representations of Cinque as "one of the finest specimens of his race" with Madison as "one of the handsomest of his race" (SRS 26). Although, this piece provides only a short description of the *Creole* revolt, Brown incorporates a deeply resonant phrase – "The hero on this occasion was Madison Washington" (*The Rising Son* 328) - to indicate the interchangeability of black

Washington” (1861, 1863), are almost identical in terms of content and yet differ greatly as far as context is concerned. For example, as has been noted, “Madison Washington” (1861), was written for a northern race periodical before it was later included in Brown’s first volume of black history, thereby necessitating the examination of competing agendas of audience and genre undertaken in this thesis. In view of Brown’s decision to print his narratives representing Madison Washington’s heroism in very different places - variously in northern periodicals and his own historical volumes – he was nonetheless consistent in placing them within a series of “heroic” biographies testifying to literary paradigms of individual black resistance.

The citation from “Slave Revolt at Sea” which opens this chapter confirms the differences which exist between this last text and Brown’s earlier versions of the *Creole* revolt, both titled “Madison Washington” yet published two years apart (1861, 1863). This excerpt is taken from three paragraphs which Brown added to these earlier texts and exposes, in far less equivocal terms than previously, the biases and double standards which he, like Douglass, perceived to be at work within the white historical record, and his consequent celebration of triumphant black heroism to rectify such racist oversights. This material emphasises the significance of seemingly slight changes between “Madison Washington” (1861, 1863) and “Slave Revolt at Sea” (1867) which have been too quickly discounted by critics. These textual differences revise Brown’s previous interpretations of this revolt and pinpoint intertextual similarities between his and Douglass’s material. Thus, in their works on the *Creole* revolt, Douglass and Brown both sought to counter the racism of the official historical process and their white audiences, by awarding full individual subjectivity to Madison Washington as a black historical figure.

male heroism and the importance of a black exemplary tradition while anticipating his other works

Any critical assessment of Brown confirms his literary and historical status as a much less significant figure than Douglass: by comparison, his works have received scant attention. William Farrison, whose research was undertaken in the 1950s and 1960s, still stands as Brown's major biographer and the most comprehensive critic of his life and works.⁵ He supplies information concerning the publication history and source material for both major and obscure texts by Brown, yet his critical opinions are limited due to their descriptive tone and tendency to view the aesthetic properties of individual works in simplified terms. Furthermore, as the majority of Farrison's research is excavational and engaged in recovering Brown's neglected works, his conclusions exclude important literary and historical questions fundamental to the approach of this thesis such as: When were these works produced? Where were they published? Which sources did they rely upon? What evidence is there that they adapted and/or remained faithful to their sources? What was their political motivation in republishing different versions of the same text? Who were the intended audience?

Critics have tended to focus upon Brown as the author of the first novel by an African American, *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (1853), as recently demonstrated by Robert Levine in his new edition of this text and, as a best-selling slave narrator, as shown by reprintings of the different editions of *Narrative of William Wells Brown* by William Andrews.⁶ However, this has resulted in a straightforward dismissal of Brown's prolific out-pouring of historical literature and generically diverse and unclassifiable material. Richard Lewis is among the few recent critics to discuss Brown's "literary conventions" as he applauds his creative

such as "Slave Revolt at Sea," which also describe Washington as "the hero of the occasion" (SRS 26).

⁵ Farrison's major articles and works on Brown include: "Brown's First Drama," (December 1958): 104-10, "The Origin of Brown's *Clotel*," (1954): 247-54, and a full-length biographical study, *William Wells Brown: Author and Reformer* (1969). See the bibliography to this dissertation for a full list.

⁶ Robert S. Levine, introduction, ed., (1853. Rpt. 2000) 3-27. Brown's *Narrative of William Wells Brown, A Fugitive Slave* was a best-seller which almost rivaled Douglass's various slave narratives in

transgression of generic boundaries: “he often slips across the line from traditional romantic fiction into an emphatically historical mode of fiction.”⁷ This view supports readings in this chapter of Brown’s deliberate narrative strategy of simultaneously blurring generic conventions of drama, tragedy and romance in his texts on the *Creole* revolt. However, Lewis’s reading that Brown’s “novels suffer from underdeveloped characterisation” fails to recognise his self-conscious manipulation of stereotypes according to context.⁸ For example, Brown’s interrogation of literary conventions for depicting the black female slave heroine can only be understood by comparing the competing representations provided in his four versions of *Clotel; or, The President’s Daughter*, and the publication dates and varying types of forum within which they appeared.⁹ These texts document Brown’s developing strategies for black male heroism as, for example, he revises his representations in the 1853 edition of a white “mulatto” hero, named George which in its associations with American presidency confirms his archetypal embodiment of black heroism, to descriptions in *Miralda; or, the Beautiful Quadroon* (1860-61) and the 1867 post-emancipation *Clotelle; or, the Colored Heroine*, of an overtly stylised African character, named Jerome, with visibly “African” features.¹⁰

sales and was reprinted in numerous editions (1848. Rpt. Andrews, ed., 1993).

⁷ Lewis (1985) 153.

⁸ Ibid., 134.

⁹ Brown produced four book length versions: *Clotel; or, The President’s Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States* (1853. Rpt. 1989); *Miralda; or, the Beautiful Quadroon. A Romance of American Slavery, Founded on Fact* (*The Weekly Anglo-African* 1 Dec., 1860-16 Mar., 1861); *Clotelle: A Tale of the Southern States* (1864. Rpt. Heermance, ed., 1969); *Clotelle; or, the Colored Heroine: A Tale of the Southern States* (1867. Rpt. 1969). As the variations of title suggest, all four works modified their representations of black female violation during slavery and their dramatisation of black male physical resistance according to their competing political and historical contexts.

¹⁰ In his first version, *Clotel; or, The President’s Daughter* (1853), Brown presents George’s “father [as] an American statesman” and supports connections between black heroism and American presidents, not only by choice of naming, but by the fact that “No one would suppose that any African blood coursed through his veins” (210). By contrast, in his later version, *Miralda*, Brown renames this character Jerome, in a self-conscious disassociation of black heroism with white origins, further compounded by his being described as “of pure African origin,... perfectly black, very fine looking, tall, slim, and erect as any one could possibly be” (n.p.). Brown’s changing representations of the male slave figure parallels Douglass’s vacillation between classical depictions of Madison Washington in his

The bulk of existing critical opinion on Brown assesses his capabilities as a historian, to argue that his use of history was deeply politicised and ideologically charged. Thus, Edward Coleman exposes Brown's "tendency to indulge in moralizing, sentimental, or philosophical digressions," to suggest that he was "an able and relentless crusader, rather than... an objective and scientific historian."¹¹ Farrison states that for Brown "the value of history consisted primarily not in what it was but in what it did – in the extent to which it influenced the course of human affairs."¹² He also specifies Brown's flawed historiographical methodology by describing his texts as "fraught with defects... inaccuracies in details and considerable repetition."¹³ Both opinions identify Brown's use of historical events as characterised by expediency because he gave incidents artistic shape, in order to comment and reflect back upon the contemporary black political situation. This emphasis was also maintained in Brown's decision to dramatise the *Creole* revolt and use it as a case study for analysing narrative processes of black heroic representation, the legitimacy of black rights and the inevitability of black physical resistance. In defence of Brown, an examination of these versions and their innovative narrative practice indicates the superficiality of critical opinions which overgeneralise his works. Guilia Fabi recognises Brown's interrogation of historical representation and literary adaptation in her interpretation of his novel, *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*, which confirms the "close connection between early African American literature and historical events" and, as such, provides one of the most accurate analyses of Brown's narrative

written works, as compared with his use of minstrelsy conventions in some of his speeches.

¹¹ Coleman (1946) 51, 58.

¹² Farrison (1969) 445.

¹³ Ibid., 444. Farrison also argued that none of Brown's works "evinced any study of manuscripts of many official documents [as]... many of the references in these works are either vague or inaccurate" (ibid.).

strategies to date.¹⁴ Brown's versions of the *Creole* revolt were intended not only to convince white opinion of black humanity, but also to inspire and educate his black readership to an emulation of such exceptional deeds in a post-emancipation era. The conclusion to this dissertation demonstrates that this narrative tradition was maintained in the early and mid-twentieth century by black revolutionary playwrights, in their politicised dramatisation of black historical figures as role models for stage-adaptations performed before black (and white) audiences.

Brown's versions, "Madison Washington" (1861, 1863) and "Slave Revolt at Sea" (1867), do not represent his isolated treatment of the *Creole* revolt or black revolutionary heroism more generally. He included this mutiny over a decade earlier in the pamphlet, *A Description of William Wells Brown's Original Panoramic Views* (1852), while he developed the historical paradigms within which he represented black heroism in his lecture, *St. Domingo: Its Revolutions and Its Patriots* (1855).¹⁵ Brown's decision to focus upon Toussaint, ex-slave leader of the black revolution which established Haiti as an independent state in this lecture, illustrates the narrative processes of (re)modelling the black male historical figure and his preoccupation with the same subject-matter as Douglass, Child and Hopkins, all of whom produced literary adaptations of this figure.¹⁶ Furthermore, the fact that he gave this text as a lecture before he reprinted it in pamphlet form to reach a wider audience, imitated Douglass's incorporation of the *Creole* revolt into his lecturing tours, before it was adapted for his written versions. Farrison described it as Brown's "first attempt to

¹⁴ Fabi (1997) 640.

¹⁵ Brown, *A Description of William Wells Brown's Original Panoramic Views* (1852) and *St. Domingo: Its Revolutions and Its Patriots, A Lecture* (1855).

¹⁶ Douglass, "Toussaint L'Ouverture" ([four versions]. *The Frederick Douglass Papers* (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1997: no. 19) N.p.: n.d, n.p; Child, "Toussaint L'Ouverture" (1866) 33-83; Hopkins, "Toussaint L'Ouverture" *Colored American Magazine* (Nov. 1900) 9-24.

write history” which introduces its importance in terms of the ambiguous generic status of “Madison Washington” (1863) and “Slave Revolt at Sea” (1867), and their inclusion in his volumes of black history.¹⁷

Published in 1852, Brown’s discussion of the *Creole* revolt in *A Description of William Wells Brown’s Original Panoramic Views* bears a much closer chronological relationship to Douglass’s speeches and novella/s on this mutiny than any of his later texts. This investigation into Brown’s “panorama” substantiates the argument in this chapter that his material exhibits narrative complexities, generic adaptability and political subtlety, as he adopted an experimental framework within which to fictionalise historical material and represent the black male heroic figure. Thus, *Original Panoramic Views* provides an overview of slavery as an institution and situates the *Creole* mutiny within a history of slave ship rebellion. Brown was not only keen to emphasise Washington’s individual significance as an exemplary figure but also to contextualise his heroism by a history of black resistance. This pamphlet was first published in Britain, designed as a written accompaniment to the visual images presented in his antislavery panorama, and titled in full as follows: *A Description of William Wells Brown’s Original Panoramic Views of the Scenes in the Life of an American Slave, from His Birth in Slavery to His Death or His Escape to His First Home of Freedom on British Soil*.¹⁸ This phrase - “*His First Home of Freedom on British Soil*” - introduces Brown’s target transatlantic audience in explicit references to British philanthropy and support for black emancipation, in contrast to

¹⁷ Farrison (1969) 258. Brown’s lecture on Toussaint L’Ouverture presents the following parallels with his material on the *Creole* revolt: an interweaving of literary antecedents (often identical to those used by Douglass), parallel phrasing concerning the legitimacy of black rebellion (also incorporated by Hopkins), a preoccupation with the problematics for representing black male violence, a focus on apocalyptic imagery and prophecy to suggest the inevitability of black insurrection in response to white oppression, an emphasis upon the injustices of the white historical record, and finally, parallel physical descriptions of Toussaint L’Ouverture and Madison Washington.

¹⁸ I am indebted to the Moorland-Spangarn Center, Howard University, for access to the original

North American institutionalised enslavement. Overall, Brown's antislavery panorama raises important political and formal questions including those of spectacle, form, context and audience, which are relevant to this chapter's research into the *Creole* revolt, in terms of his deployment of historical iconography and spectacular dramatisation of the black male body.

Farrison argues in favour of the panorama's "direct appeal to the British people" in his brief consideration of *Original Panoramic Views* which represents one of Brown's many texts suffering from unwarranted critical neglect, despite many points of aesthetic and ideological interest.¹⁹ Indeed, Farrison's case that Brown turned to the panoramic form and depersonalised subject matter because he "had begun to realise that lest the public might lose interest in his lectures, he had better vary his activities for a while" is compelling.²⁰ Such a view that Brown may have commissioned an antislavery panorama simply to spice up the presentation of his antislavery material during lectures, confirms the reading in this thesis that, for antislavery texts, form, content and context were intertwined. This interpretation may also explain the rationale behind Douglass's decision to interweave material on the *Creole* revolt in his speeches and written works, simply as a desire to vary his subject-matter. Thus, Douglass moved from representations of an individual autobiographical slave life to literary dramatisations of a black historical exemplar. The popularity of Brown's panorama among audiences is impossible to gauge yet Farrison suggests that its success was "doubtful."²¹

edition. Page references, however, are taken from C. Peter Ripley's reprinting of this text. See Ripley, ed., (1985) 1: 190-224.

¹⁹ Farrison (1969) 174. I have been unable to locate any other discussion of this text.

²⁰ Ibid., 172. Farrison also argues that Brown commissioned his antislavery panorama to counter "the very mild manner" in which "a panorama of the Mississippi River on exhibition in Boston... had portrayed slavery" (173). Thus, there is scope for a great deal more research into nineteenth century panoramas exhibited both in Britain and North America and their chosen subject-matter.

²¹ Ibid., 176.

First exhibited in London and then Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Brown's panorama presented to the contemporary viewer a series of pictorial scenes drawn from slavery and key tableaux within abolitionist discourse.²² These included slave rebellions, slave auctions, "whippings" and examples of white overseer brutality, instances of black male and female heroic escape, and individual fights for freedom. Thus, he titled his various "views" as follows: "*Plantation in Virginia – A Slave Speculator*" (OPV 192), "*The New Orleans Calaboose – Sale of Slaves – Mode of Punishment*" (OPV 198), "*An Attempt of a Slave to Escape with His Wife and Child – They are attacked by Wolves*" (OPV 204), and "*Escape of Leander, the Heroic Slave*" (OPV 205). These descriptions of generic and unnamed individuals, interpreted as representatives of the "Peculiar Institution," are off-set by autobiographical testimony, sections titled "*First View in the Life of WILLIAM WELLS BROWN*" (OPV 201) and "*W.W. Brown and His Mother Arrested, and Taken Back into Slavery*" (OPV 210), the inclusion of "runaway slave advertisements" (OPV 202), and excerpts from abolitionist poetry (OPV 194). Thus, this work's formal composition is characterised by generic ambiguity as Brown interweaves slave narrative techniques with those of drama and literary (re)interpretation.

Brown's *Original Panoramic Views* was characteristic of antislavery panoramas more generally and their perpetuation of standard tableaux which relied upon the existing "stock" images and events embedded within anti- and pro-slavery rhetoric. This interest in shared material was endorsed by other slave narrators, including Douglass, as many illustrations were inserted into the British edition of *The Heroic Slave* (1853) and the North American publication, *A Thrilling Narrative*

²² Farrison writes that Brown's antislavery panorama was at London for "five or six weeks [after which he]... took it to Newcastle Upon Tyne, where he opened it during the last week in October" (1969) 176. Brown's structures *Original Panoramic Views* by a preface, a description of all twenty-four panoramic "views," and a separate "conclusion."

(1853/1863?), which had been borrowed from various contexts and their meaning entirely changed as they were adapted according to differing agendas. Thus, Marcus Wood's analysis of Henry Bibb's illustrated slave narrative, which argues that it "can be used as a test case to reveal how the deployment of pictures in slave narratives can resist, or recast, the established illustrational and graphic codes which permeate white abolition publication," is relevant in the context of Brown and Douglass's material on the *Creole* revolt.²³ This interpretation suggests that black and white abolitionist usage of varying images produced complicated texts of subversion and resistance as their original contexts were displaced and rendered indeterminate. This technique was adapted by Douglass, Brown, Child and Hopkins in their versions of the *Creole* revolt as the literary and historical processes, guiding the inclusion of visual and textual material, reproduced familiar scenes from antislavery iconography and literary discourse for varying political agendas. Wood uses Bibb's slave narrative to critique this process; he suggests that the "multiplication of these woodcuts" reveals an absence of a "pictorial language to do justice to the horror of slave life, [as they testify only to]... a series of well-circulated, well-digested stereotypes."²⁴ However, in the light of this dissertation, such an interpretation oversimplifies complex intertextual relationships, which not only repeated but also substantially revised shared subject-matter, as they participated in a dynamic abolitionist literary and historical exchange.

In *Original Panoramic Views*, Brown states his processes of selecting material: "I... collect[ed]... a number of sketches of plantations in the Slave States, illustrating the life of the Slave, from his birth, to his death in bondage, or his flight from the 'Stars and Stripes' to the British possessions of North America" (*OPV* 191)

²³ Wood (2000) 118. He confirms that none of Bibb's illustrations were specific to his slave narrative as the "woodblocks used had already appeared in a variety of other publications, or had been adapted from earlier woodcuts and etchings in abolition literature."

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 120, 134.

which were then “copied by skilful artists in London” (*OPV* 192). Thus, he emphasises his combination of autobiographical testimony with an uncut (“from birth to death”) representation of the generic male “Slave.” His “Preface” justifies the intended aesthetic and political implications of his chosen medium: “it occurred to me that a painting, with as fair a representation of American Slavery as could be given on canvass, would do much to disseminate truth upon this subject, and hasten the downfall of the greatest evil that now stains the character of the American people” (*OPV* 191). Brown argues for a significant connection between the visual image and authenticity in black abolitionist discourse which sought to convert white opinion by moral suasion and a sentimental engagement with a “fair representation.” This is in contrast to Audrey Fisch’s description of black fugitive slaves who “displayed enormous panoramas depicting scenes of American slavery” in Britain, as pandering to prejudices which commodified black identity because “each displayed in ‘its’ objectified turn in front of the English public as an exotic spectacle.”²⁵ However, in his work, Brown interrogated slavery as an institution and transformed white complicity into a dramatic spectacle via an antislavery panorama which maintained generic ambiguity. His inclusion of diverse genres such as autobiography, biography, history, fiction, drama, reportage for example, in *Original Panoramic Views* provided a fragmented discourse which encouraged his audiences to challenge accepted conventions for representing black physicality in abolitionist iconography.

The “antislavery” panorama was by no means unique to Brown as the form became popular among other American fugitive slaves in Britain as a medium within which to communicate reformist politics to a wide audience. Indeed, the history of

²⁵ Fisch (2000) 5, 70. Fisch’s research builds on earlier work by Lorimer on representations of slaves and their reception in Britain. See David Lorimer, “Bibles, Banjoes and Bones: Images of the Negro in the Popular Culture of Victorian England” in Gough, ed., (1975) 31-50 and *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-nineteenth Century* (1978).

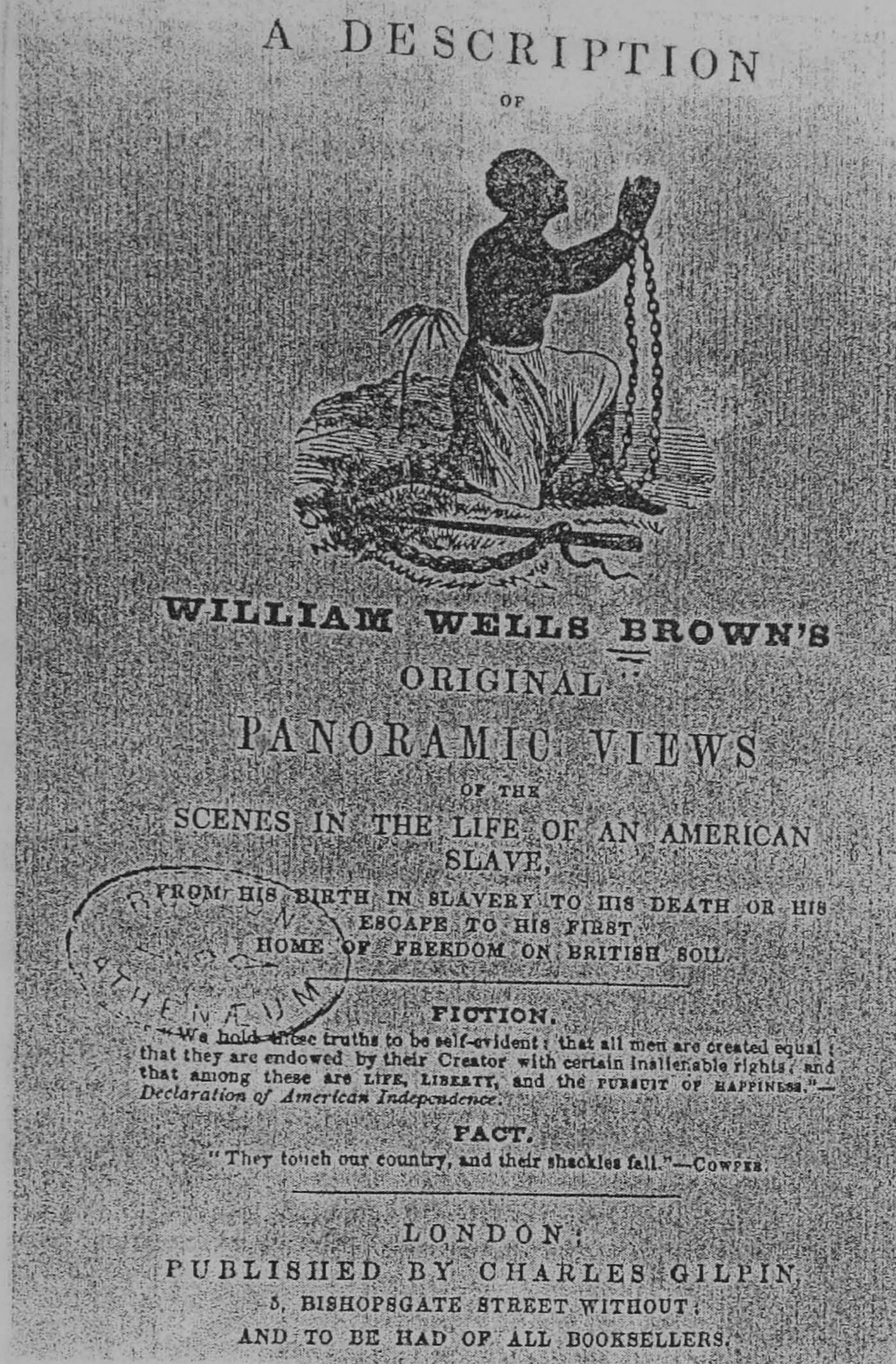
the “panoramic” genre was peculiarly suited to the dissemination of nineteenth century black antislavery politics as it had its roots in a single white male individual’s experience of captivity.²⁶ Only one year prior to the publication of *Original Panoramic Views*, the populist, ex-slave writer-orator, Henry “Box” Brown, appended reviews of his “travelling” panorama, “Mirror of Slavery,” to the British edition of his *Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown* (1851).²⁷ According to one commentator, “Box” Brown’s panorama was “a perfect facsimile of the workings of that horrible and fiendish system” and, as such, left “an unfading impression upon the heart and memory, such as no lectures, books or colloquial correspondence can produce.”²⁸ This opinion underscores the preferred technique among abolitionist writers of using visual images to give a sense of authenticity and an accurate documentation of slavery; they presented iconographic tableaux as straightforward representations of “scenes from slavery” in the interests of converting audiences in large numbers.²⁹

²⁶ Friedberg (1993). She writes that the technique for the display of images in panoramic form was patented in the late eighteenth century by Robert Barker, “an Edinburgh painter,” during his imprisonment for debt (ibid., 21). Friedberg borrows from Olive Cook’s view that in “1785 he [Barker] was put into prison for debt and was confined to a cell lit by a grating let into the wall at the junction of wall and ceiling... he was reading a letter and... carried it below the grating. The effect when the paper was held in the shaft of light falling from the opening was so astonishing that Barker’s imagination was set working on the possibilities of controlled light flung from above upon pictures of large dimensions” (ibid.). The fact that the panoramic technique of lighting images was conceived in one individual’s experience of slavery resonates powerfully with the subject-matter of antislavery panoramas.

²⁷ See the letter from “Justin Spaulding” to “Rev. Messrs. Pike and Brooks” in Henry “Box” Brown, *Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown, Written by Himself* (1851). “Box” Brown first exhibited his panorama in Boston and shortly after in Britain as the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act caused him to flee North America. As part of his lecturing tour in Britain, he re-enacted his famous escape from Southern slavery by placing himself in a “box” and allowing himself to be “posted from Bradford to Leeds.” This became popular subject-matter for cartoons including an illustration by an anonymous artist which was given the grandiose title, “The Resurrection of Henry Box Brown,” dated 1850 (Rpt. Wood [2000] 104). For further information see his *Narrative*. While the original paintings for “Box” Brown’s work have never been traced, nonetheless we know a great deal more about his painter than we do about the “skillful artists” which William Wells Brown commissioned. Osgood’s research confirms that Brown’s artist was Josiah Wolcott and reprints “Box” Brown’s scene by scene index of the panorama which was first published in *The Liberator*. See Osgood (1998) 15, 17-18.

²⁸ Henry “Box” Brown, *Narrative* (1851) iv.

²⁹ Friedberg maintains that the panorama was a “low cultural” art form in the nineteenth century which aimed to give the “panoramic observer... an *imaginary* illusion of mobility” (1993) 4. These traditional associations of the form with instability encourage the possibility of reform by suggesting an interpretative framework for change and a non-fixed and therefore indeterminate moral position on the part of the reader. Equally, her belief that panoramas satisfied “a social desire... to have visual mastery



Thus, the title of "Box" Brown's panorama, "Mirror of Slavery," created the illusion that such pictorial images "reflected" events accurately and did not exhibit any preference for manipulating the viewer by an ulterior design.

Fig. 7. Title-page, *A Description of William Wells Brown's Original Panoramic Views* (1852. Rpt. *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The British Isles, 1830-1865*. Ed. C. Peter

Ripley. Vol. 1. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985) 190.

In contrast to the fact previously noted that Farrison is the only critic of *Original Panoramic Views*, "Box" Brown's "Mirror of Slavery" has received some substantial attention, in particular concerning its fusion of moralistic content and voyeuristic presentation.³⁰ Cynthia Wolff's assessment that "Box" Brown's panorama

over the constraints of space and time" emphasises the inseparability of the panoramic form from social, political and historical contexts (ibid., 28).

³⁰ Fisch wrote of Henry "Box" Brown's panorama that "even though the panorama might have provided its audience with titillation... the commentary is able to describe it as acceptable moral entertainment, in part by stressing its artistic merit and in part by stressing its moral project" (2000) 70. Cynthia Wolff also commends this work as "bold, instructive and censorious, and... different from a written autobiography...[because it] could not be 'consumed' by its audience... [as] they were at a distance from it." See Wolff (1996) 31.

transformed “the audience... [into] the spectacle” can be applied to readings of William Wells Brown’s panorama as a transgressive art form. Her suggestion that “Box” Brown “emulated the multiple transformations of the age by escaping its previously accepted boundaries,” supports the view that William Wells Brown, in turn, refused to grant his audience detached moral superiority as they became implicated in narrative processes of black representation.³¹

As none of the original paintings of Brown’s panorama have survived, the written descriptions he provides in *Original Panoramic Views* represent the only insights into his pictorial content for this exhibition.³² This fact pinpoints a potentially major problem for Brown’s text as the textual “commentary cannot be assumed to be a full and accurate representation of the painting” and thus any assumptions concerning pictorial content remain speculative.³³ Instead, however, Farrison argues in favour of textual independence by maintaining that *Original Panoramic Views* exists as a text in its own right because the “sketches and stories in the catalogue are interesting in themselves as well as because of the information they give about the twenty-four panoramic views.”³⁴ While none of the original paintings can be located, the cover of the pamphlet which has survived reproduces familiar abolitionist iconography in Josiah Wedgwood’s medallion (Fig. 7). This engraving detailed the suppliant male slave naked to the waist, chained and accompanied by a whip at his feet, symbolising white brutality and compounding a sense of black vulnerability, while a palm tree in the background identified a Southern geographical location.³⁵ Thus, as this visual material confirms, in *Original Panoramic Views*,

³¹ Wolff (1996) 23, 29.

³² This seems to have been characteristic for all antislavery panoramas of the period as Audrey Fisch writes that “none... are known to have survived” (2000) 5.

³³ Wood (2000) 119.

³⁴ Farrison (1969) 174.

³⁵ For example, Brown included in “View Twentieth” “a representation of [a]... fugitive, with her child

Brown maintained a sentimental framework which included “many touching incidents in the lives of Slaves” (*OPV* 192) and was committed to an authentic, but highly selective and censorious, representation of slavery: “While I have endeavoured to give a correct idea of the ‘Peculiar Institution,’ I have refrained from representing those disgusting pictures of vice and cruelty which are inseparable from Slavery” (*OPV* 192). This statement differentiates his panorama from “Box” Brown’s which, in David Lorimer’s view, was considered “indecent” by some audiences because it conveyed “the whipping of both men and women slaves, and the burning of one slave alive.”³⁶ William Wells Brown’s panorama combined historical evidence, personal testimony and fictionalised heroic dramatisations, to create a generically ambiguous text which challenged white abolitionist definitions of black narrative production and standards of authenticity.

In “View Fifth” of *Original Panoramic Views*, subtitled “*Alexandria – Brig Creole – Schooner Pearl – Schooner Franklin*,” Brown includes his earliest known reference to the *Creole* revolt:

We have here a distant view of Alexandria, the nearest seaport to Washington. The brig before us is the *Creole*. This vessel sailed from Richmond, Virginia, in 1842, laden with Slaves. Three days after sailing, the Slaves arose, took possession of the vessel, and carried it into Nassau, New Providence... The Slaves were, of course, free as soon as they set foot upon British soil. Thus were one hundred and thirty-four persons made free by the intrepidity of one slave (*OPV* 197).

This extract adopts a journalistic style in a factual narration of events and omits any direct references to Madison Washington’s individual heroism, described only as the “intrepidity of one slave.” This indicates Brown’s interest in the *Creole* revolt in this work as evidence of communal rather than individual resistance, further connoted by

in her arms, crossing the river” (*OPV* 211) which later formed a fundamental dramatic moment in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Farrison argues that this retelling “helped to publicise it a year before... Stowe made it famous” (1969) 176.

³⁶ Lorimer (1978) 54.

“the Slaves arose.” This strategy also indicates the generic interchangeability of slave heroism as one individual’s participation in this insurrection is not presented as a unique example of black heroism. Thus, Brown minimises the violence of the revolt and underplays Madison Washington’s literary and dramatic exceptionality, in favour of a spare narrative style, suggestive of greater authenticity and objectivity in comparison with his later adaptations.

Brown’s decision to frame his description of the *Creole* mutiny by references to the North American capital – “Alexandria, the nearest seaport to Washington” – emphasises U.S. government complicity in institutionalised slavery. He contextualises the *Creole* revolt by discussing another slave ship insurrection aboard the *Pearl* in which “seventy-seven Slaves made an attempt to escape from Slavery in the spring of 1848, at the very time when the Slave-holders... express[ed]... their sympathy with the Republicans of France” (*OPV* 197). Thus, his decision to juxtapose slave rebellion in an American context with European traditions of resistance, not only reiterates his transatlantic focus but also reinforces a sense of U.S. “gross inconsistency” (*OPV* 194) as “Slave-holders” embraced racist models of individual rights. Brown concludes “View Fifth” by confirming that the “horrors of the African Slave-Trade are perpetrated in the national domain” (*OPV* 196) and by highlighting yet further differences between North American and European governments: “the schooner *Franklin*, owned by... Slave-dealers... has on board a cargo of Slaves; and is bound for the Southern slave-market of New Orleans, or Charleston” (*OPV* 197). Thus, regardless of Brown’s objective factual style of narration, his textual summaries in *Original Panoramic Views* were calculated to influence audience responses to visual images.

Brown juxtaposes North American and British contexts in his *Original*

Panoramic Views to maintain Douglass's "contrast between the two countries [which] complimented their British friends, and denounced the prejudice of their fellow Americans."³⁷ Lorimer's reading oversimplifies, however, as Brown did not shy away from exposing transatlantic complicity in the national origins of slavery; instead he announced that "Slaves were first brought from the Coast of Africa... when Virginia was a colony of Great Britain" (*OPV* 192). Brown also represented European dependence on the slave economy in the contemporary era by statements such as "the foreign demands for [slave]... products is very great" (*OPV* 192) and "a large portion of this cotton is consumed by the people of Great Britain and other countries in Europe" (*OPV* 200). This inclusion of detail complicates Brown's panegyric on the arrival of fugitive slaves in Canada, which concludes "View Twenty-fourth," and invites a direct identification on the part of his intended readership: "You must now imagine yourselves as... standing, with the Slave, upon the soil over which the mild sceptre of Queen Victorian extends... O, Britons!... continue to cherish and extend that spirit which has...melted the fetter of the Slave in your own islands" (*OPV* 213). Thus, Brown's national rhetoric satirises the "Model Republic" (*OPV* 193), sets American and British abolitionist movements against each other, and elicits an empathetic response from his audience to secure their financial aid, moral conversion and political commitment. Brown's use of patriotic language is punctuated by autobiographical testimony as he later combines individual experience - "a representation of the writer... travelling in the direction of the North Star" (*OPV* 211) - with a generic statement establishing British philanthropy: "the English Government furnishes an asylum for the hundreds of fugitive Slaves that escape yearly from the Slave States" (*OPV* 211). Therefore, Brown reiterates his

³⁷ Ibid., 47.

identification with British reformist politics and consequent disassociation from flawed North American republicanism.

Throughout *Original Panoramic Views*, Brown interweaves set pieces from his own slave narrative with extended depictions of black male exemplary heroism in his portrait of the slave hero, Leander. This figure is in many ways a literary invention, paralleling his fictionalised and historicised representations of Madison Washington in “Madison Washington” (1861, 1863) and “Slave Revolt at Sea” (1867).³⁸ Brown’s technique of mapping his own life onto that of an historical exemplar reflects the debates surrounding Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave*. Some critics argue that Douglass’s motivation in representing Washington was to examine and “revise” his own heroism with greater critical detachment. Thus, Brown juxtaposes two “views” dramatising “the writer and his mother, attempting to escape from Slavery” (*OPV* 208) and their subsequent recapture as “they were taken up and returned to their masters” (*OPV* 210) with sections entitled, “*Escape of Leander, the Heroic Slave*” (*OPV* 205) and “*Leander’s Return to Kentucky, and His Wonderful Escape with Matilda*” (*OPV* 208). The classical associations of Brown’s choice of naming in Leander illustrates his interweaving of literary invention with historical subject-matter, and a continuation of the literary paradigm for dramatising black male heroism favoured by Douglass who describes Madison Washington in *The Heroic Slave* as possessing “Herculean strength” (*HS* 179).

Brown’s representations of Leander in both “views” anticipate those used to depict Madison Washington in his later versions. He presents an equivocal endorsement of the legitimacy of physical retribution as Leander, in anticipation of

³⁸ In *Original Panoramic Views*, Brown cites his own slave narrative to impress a sense of his material as verifiable fact: see for example his literary asides “See *Narrative*, page 66” (*OPV* 208) and “See *Narrative*, page 70” (*OPV* 210).

“the heroic slave” George Green in *Clotel; or, The President’s Daughter* (1853), has a history of black violent involvement by having participated in “Nat Turner’s insurrection” (OPV 206). However, he was “averse to shedding blood” with one condition: “if [slave]... owners should attempt to take them back into Slavery, it would be right in the Slaves to resist” (OPV 206). Similarly, in “Slave Revolt at Sea,” Brown specifies the inseparability of Madison’s endorsement of violence and a pursuit of individual rights - “But in this he did not mean revenge, only the possession of his freedom and that of his fellow-slaves” (SRS 34) – as he satirises white myths of racial superiority: “[this] act of humanity raised the uncouth son of Africa far above his Anglo-Saxon oppressors” (SRS 36). Brown also describes Leander’s and Madison’s return for their wives in parallel terms; in *Original Panoramic Views*, he writes that “he [Leander] promised her that he would never rest contented until he should succeed in effecting her escape... and told her that she might soon expect him to return for her” (OPV 208), while in “Slave Revolt at Sea,” Madison’s speech provides comparable material: “‘I have come to the rash determination to return to Virginia for my wife’... The heroic man had made up his mind and nothing could move him” (SRS 28-29). Furthermore, both heroes meet “a company of Slaves who were going to a ‘corn-shucking’” (OPV 209, SRS 30) as a result of which they “gained information” (SRS 30, OPV 209) concerning the location of the wives.³⁹ These similarities confirm Brown’s technique in versions of the *Creole* revolt - echoed by Douglass, Brown, Child and other abolitionist authors - of adopting language, motifs and events which were popularly circulated in antislavery literary and oratorical circles, in order to convey political agendas in dramatic and persuasive form.

³⁹ For a detailed investigation into the similarities and close textual repetition between these texts, compare closely *Original Panoramic Views* (209ff.) and “Slave Revolt at Sea” (30ff.). These similarities have never been discussed by critics, despite the fact that they confirm Brown’s circulation and repetition of material later included in his versions of the *Creole* revolt, much earlier in antislavery

In *Original Panoramic Views*, Brown relies upon sensational stories within abolitionism as his presentation of Leander's escape from slavery is indebted to the disguise and gender transgression manipulated in William and Ellen Craft's successful flight: "a tall lady... removed her veil and her long gown; and, after washing the paint from her face, appeared in proper character as the Fugitive Slave Leander" (*OPV* 207).⁴⁰ Thus, the sixteenth "view" incorporates theatrical tropes of disguise, minstrelsy (face-painting) and cross-dressing, which were all familiar to Brown's representations of black male heroism in his different versions of *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*, and which destabilise the boundaries between factual and fictional discourse. In an attempt to verify this romanticised and heavily melodramatic sequence for his audience, Brown substantiates his "history of Leander" by arguing that it "was given by him to the writer" (*OPV* 207) and, therefore, constitutes reliable oral testimony. Brown's final discussion of this heavily fictionalised historical figure fuses his own heroism with that of Leander's in "View-Twenty-second," "Rescue of a Fugitive Family – A Battle for Freedom" (*OPV* 211). Thus, he juxtaposes his own involvement - "The writer of this feels... a degree of pleasure at ... having been one of those who saved that family of Slaves" (*OPV* 212) – with Leander's superlative prowess: "Among those who took a prominent part in the recapture was Leander... He is a tall, strong man, and you will readily recognise him... represented as he is... in contest with a white man" (*OPV* 212). Brown's description of Leander in *Original Panoramic Views* coincides with his physical engagement with a white man and, in imitation of Douglass's representations of Madison's ambiguous parental origins in *The Heroic Slave*, omits any categorical

literature prepared for vastly different forums and audiences.

⁴⁰ For further information on William and Ellen Craft's escape from slavery, see William Craft, *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom: The Escape of William and Ellen Craft* (1860. Rpt. Blackett, ed., 1999).

representation of racial characteristics. Therefore, in parallel with Douglass's written versions of the *Creole* revolt, Brown prefers to describe black masculinity according to ambiguous, rather than stereotypical, racial codes in order to displace audience expectations in representations of black heroism.

Overall, antislavery panoramas performed a fundamental aesthetic and political role within the abolitionist lecture circuit. They exploited the significance of the visual as spectacle and the black female and male body as an image for consumption to convert audiences to their political message; in so doing, they reclaimed black subjectivity by a self-conscious manipulation of genre. As both exhibitions and texts, such works which included Brown's *Original Panoramic Views*, succeeded in creating the illusion of an "authentic" representation of slave experience. This semblance of realism and pseudo-factuality was punctuated by the use of artefactual evidence, not only as represented by the paintings themselves, but also in the objects of degradation which were donated by various "slaves" and interwoven into literary discourse. Thus, in "View Thirteenth," Brown verifies the escape of an unnamed slave woman with the aid of a "Free colored young man" (*OPV* 204) by exhibiting the "collar worn by this woman at the time of her escape" with claims that it "was given to the writer in the summer of 1843, and can be seen at the close of each exhibition of the Panorama" (*OPV* 204). This technique echoes Douglass's method for narrating the *Creole* revolt in his speeches on the mutiny as well as the white British abolitionist, Granville Sharp's, earlier understanding of these proofs as providing an "'Iron Argument.'"⁴¹ This interrogation of the visual and

⁴¹ Gerzina examines British abolitionist strategies of moral suasion in *Black England: Life Before Emancipation* (1999). She includes evidence from an eighteenth century "letter book" as follows: "'Mr. Granville Sharp... begs leave to [provide]... a further proof of the monstrous Wickedness of Tolerating Slavery. It is, indeed, an Iron Argument, which must... convince all those whose Hearts are not of a harder metal, that Men are not to be entrusted with an absolute Authority over their Brethren. The instrument is called a Mouth Piece and...[is] used... for Punishment, when Negroes are what they

appropriation of familiar tableaux, such as the slave auction and the “tracking” of the runaway slave among others, displaces their original racist contexts. Such a strategy also confirms the instability of interpretations as the placing of visual images within vastly different narrative frameworks invited alternative readings by contemporary audiences.

Brown’s versions of the *Creole* revolt, “Madison Washington” (1861, 1863) and “Slave Revolt at Sea” (1867), rely heavily on the journalistic articles which reported this event as similarities of phrasing exist between these texts and the following *Liberator* reports: “The Creoles - Strike for Liberty!” (1842) and “Protest of the Officers and Crew” (1841).⁴² Thus, Brown’s description of Madison during the mutiny in “Slave Revolt at Sea” is an almost exact reproduction of that to be found in the first of the above mentioned articles: “His commanding attitude and daring orders, now that he was free, and his perfect preparation for the grand alternative of liberty or death which stood before him are splendid exemplifications of the true heroic” (*SRS* 34).⁴³ Brown’s decision to copy details of the revolt from those given in press reports into the most dramatic moment in his adaptation, reflects the fictionalised nature of available journalism on the *Creole* revolt, as well as his literary and historical representation of available evidence. This narrative practice may also highlight expediency or plagiarism as Brown incorporated representations of the revolt

call *sulky*” (99, emphasis not mine). Thus, artefactual evidence concerning barbaric practices upon slaves served a useful function in order to convert audiences by moral suasion derived from “verifiable” proofs of experience.

⁴² “The Creoles – Strike for Liberty!” *The Liberator* 7 Jan. 1842 and “Protest of the Officers and Crew,” *The Liberator* 31 Dec. 1841.

⁴³ “The Creoles – Strike for Liberty!” *The Liberator* 7 Jan. 1842. The original in this article reads: “his commanding attitude and daring orders, when he stood a freeman on the slaver’s deck, and his perfect preparation for the grand alternative or liberty or death, which stood before him, are splendid exemplifications of the true heroic.” Although in general, Brown straightforwardly copies this material, he makes slight changes by substituting “stood a freeman” with “now that he was free” as he provides a more immediate sense of emancipation in his later text which was on the eve of Civil War.

provided in the press in order to minimise his own efforts of literary invention. Whatever his motivation, his technique resulted in texts which emphasised the permeability of generic categories and problematised structures of signification.

Brown's decision to draw some of his material from specific newspaper reports confirms his interest in the "factual" specifics of the mutiny. For example, he gives much more detail concerning the owners of the ship, the cargo on board and the overall incidents in the revolt, in comparison with Douglass's versions. Such a variation in focus suggests the generic differences between both authors as Brown's decision to break new ground, by producing a volume of black history, signals his departure from Douglass's complicated aesthetics designed to reshape the short story form. As literary texts composed during and after the Civil War, they indicate that Brown's target audience for his different versions, which included an educated black as well as white Northern readership, allowed for much greater aesthetic autonomy, generic experimentation and innovations of formal expression, than could be accomplished by Douglass given his predominantly white antebellum audience.

As further confirmation of critical attempts to oversimplify Brown's generically ambiguous narrative practice, Edward Jervy and Harold Huber, recent historians of the *Creole* revolt, rely almost exclusively upon his texts in their research.⁴⁴ In contrast to Howard Jones's earlier assessment of the mutiny in terms of its potential and actual diplomatic ramifications which relied upon the *Senate Documents* (1841-42) and contemporary political correspondence, Jervy and Huber's article interprets Brown's "Slave Revolt at Sea" as important source material and verifiable historical testimony.⁴⁵ Thus, they quote directly from Brown's physical

⁴⁴ Jervy and Huber (1980) 196-211.

⁴⁵ Jones (March 1975) 28-50. Jervy and Huber's article dates "Slave Revolt at Sea" incorrectly as they claim that it was published in "1866" (197); the fact that this text was published one year later as part of *The Negro in the American Rebellion* (1867), complicates yet further the reliability of their

descriptions of Madison Washington: "From all accounts, he [Washington] was very large and extremely strong. William Wells Brown... declared that 'he was one of the handsomest of his race. His dignified, calm and unaffected features announced at a glance that he was endowed with genius, and created to guide his fellow men.'"⁴⁶ This article not only fails to distinguish between or even specify the other "accounts," used in representations of Madison Washington, but also cites Brown's celebratory and heavily fictionalised description of this black heroic figure as objective source material. This tendency to treat Brown's text unquestioningly is made clear elsewhere in phrases such as - "According to Brown" and "Brown states" - which emphasise the authoritative status of his version, and by implication, the limitations of Jervy and Huber's research which fails to recognise his fictional adaptation of historical discourse.⁴⁷

However, despite having interpreted Brown's "Slave Revolt at Sea" as an authentic summary of biographical information on Washington, Jervy and Huber challenge his account of the revolt itself. They dismiss his summary as an "unsubstantiated description... written in the flamboyant and hyperbolic style of the time and genre" which "differs on many important points with the many depositions taken later... and is heavily biased toward the 'heroic' and 'noble' slaves."⁴⁸ This critical stance, with regard to Brown's representation of the mutiny, which in any case was far more factual than versions by Douglass, jars with their endorsement of "Madison Washington [as] without a doubt the leader."⁴⁹ Although a problematic source in itself, the *Senate Documents* were far less certain of Washington's

research.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 197.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Jervy and Huber defer to Brown's authority: "According to Brown, Madison Washington was born into slavery... married... escaped to Canada, but later went back to get his wife... was recaptured... and sold... on the *Creole*" and that "Brown states that the men were kept in chains."

⁴⁸ Ibid.

exceptional status; the “eyewitness” depositions revealed that “four [slaves]... took the most active part in the fight, viz. Ben Blacksmith, Madison Washington, Elijah Morris, and D. Ruffin.”⁵⁰ Thus, in their article, no less than in Brown’s “Slave Revolt at Sea,” Jervy and Huber present exemplary individual black male heroism regardless of contradictory source material. The fact that both Jervy and Huber’s research is so indebted to Brown’s text emphasises the unavailability of verifiable evidence on the *Creole* mutiny, as both writers are forced to rely upon dramatically inspired retellings as documentary evidence. By neglecting to study the context of “Slave Revolt at Sea,” as it was published in Brown’s second volume of black history, Jervy and Huber fail to note his politicised narrative strategies, designed to convert black readers to emulation by providing examples of exceptional black heroism.

The existence of three different versions of this revolt by Brown, “Madison Washington” (1861, 1863) and “Slave Revolt at Sea” (1867), complicates attempts to establish an authoritative text. Farrison is the only critic to describe Brown’s first version of “Madison Washington” (1861) published in the northern periodical, *The Pine and Palm*, which predated its inclusion in his first volume of black history, *The Black Man*, in 1863.⁵¹ This text was advertised in *The Pine and Palm* as the second in a series devoted to “Celebrated Colored Americans” which was described as follows: “Wm. Wells Brown and Wm. C. Nell will write for our columns Biographies of Celebrated Colored Americans which will be regularly published from week to

⁴⁹ Ibid., 200.

⁵⁰ *Senate Documents* (1841-42) 40.

⁵¹ *The Pine and Palm* 17 Aug., 1861, n.p. This was a weekly periodical whose title symbolised its intention to represent both Northern and Southern affairs; the “pine” was chosen to represent the North while the “palm” was symbolised the South. Brown contributed other significant articles to *The Pine and Palm* including his series, “The Colored People of Canada,” which provides an account of an industrious black community. See issues 7, 14, 21, 28 Sep., 19 Oct., 30 Nov., 7 Dec., 1861. Rpt. Ripley, ed., (1986) 3: 461-98.

week.”⁵² As far as current research indicates, Brown only ever supplied two portraits including “Nat Turner,” the first in the series and “Madison Washington,” his final contribution.⁵³ He then reprinted both pieces, in the same order and with only very minor presentational changes, as part of his historical work, *The Black Man*.⁵⁴

Although the content for both versions of “Madison Washington” was remarkably similar their contexts varied with the result that Brown’s initial publication of this 1861 version alongside works by William C. Nell, the other main contributor to the “Celebrated Colored Americans” series, must be noted. Almost a decade prior to his publication of “Lambert Latham and Jordan Freeman” as part of the “Celebrated Colored Americans” series for *The Pine and Palm*, Nell published two historical works.⁵⁵ The first was a pamphlet titled, *Colored Americans in the Wars of 1776 and 1812* (1852) and the second was one of, if not the first, full-length volumes of black history by a black historian, which predates Brown’s earliest historical works and is titled in full as follows: *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution, with Sketches of Several Distinguished Colored Persons: To Which is Added a Brief Survey of the Condition and Prospects of Colored Americans* (1855).⁵⁶ Nell’s pamphlet evokes Brown’s volumes of black history in his similarly motivated representation of black male heroism - “to stem the tide of prejudice against the

⁵² *The Pine and Palm* 17 Aug., 1861, n.p. Farrison notes that Brown held an important position with regard to this periodical as, for the first few issues, his “name was listed among those of the ‘Special Contributors.’” See Farrison (1969) 334.

⁵³ “Nat Turner,” *The Pine and Palm* 3 Aug. 1861, n.p.; “Madison Washington,” 17 Aug., 1861, n.p. I am indebted to the Rare Books Division of Boston Public Library for supplying xeroxes of these texts.

⁵⁴ “Nat Turner” and “Madison Washington.” Rpt. *The Black Man* (1863) 59-75, 75-85.

⁵⁵ William C. Nell, “Celebrated Colored Americans: Lambert Latham and Jordan Freeman,” *The Pine and Palm* 21 Sep. 1861, n.p.

⁵⁶ Nell, *Colored Americans in the Wars of 1776 and 1812* (1852. Rpt. 1902) and *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution* (1855. Harriet Beecher Stowe, introduction. Rpt. 1968). This second text repeated some of the information which Nell included in “Lambert Latham and Jordan Freeman” (for example, see page 136). James W. C. Pennington had written a historical “textbook” much earlier than any texts produced by Brown or even Nell, *A Textbook of the Origin and History of the Colored People* (Hartford, Conn.: C. Skinner, 1841). However, Pennington’s work was much less comprehensive in its treatment of black history and depiction of black heroic role models. I am indebted to the Moorland-Spangarn Research Center for granting me access to this text.

Colored race” - and thereby counter assumptions concerning black moral inferiority.⁵⁷ Thus, in his “Preface” to *The Black Man*, Brown also writes that he designed his biographical “sketches” to refute charges maintained by the “calumniators and traducers of the Negro.”⁵⁸ In his pamphlet, Nell adopted classical imagery, familiar to representations of Madison Washington by Douglass and Brown, as he described the War of 1812 prisoner, Richard Seavers, as a “black Hercules [who] commands respect, and...[whose] subjects tremble in his presence.”⁵⁹

Furthermore, Nell included in his pioneering volume of black history a short piece entitled, “Madison Washington,” which he inserted between accounts of Nat Turner’s “Insurrection at Southampton” and “The Virginia Maroons.”⁶⁰ This work can be added to material on the *Creole* revolt by Douglass, Henry Highland Garnet and Gerrit Smith produced in the 1850s, and confirms Nell’s status as a rare antebellum historical commentator of Madison Washington as historical figure.⁶¹ By placing this text between monumentalised heroic slave insurrectionists, Nell endorsed Brown’s preferred strategy in *Original Panoramic Views* and “Slave Revolt at Sea,” of situating this mutiny within overt traditions of black violent resistance. This short work represents the details of the mutiny, as reported in newspapers and government testimony, while also hinting at connections with Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave*, published three years earlier. Thus, Douglass and Nell use parallel language to emphasise the *Creole*’s associations with the U.S. government, in comparable descriptions of the ship as an “American slaver” and assessments of Washington’s

⁵⁷ Nell (1852) 17. The Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University, provided me with access to this text.

⁵⁸ Brown, *The Black Man* 5.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Nell (1855) 226-27. The second half of Nell’s text is almost identical to the representations of Madison Washington’s heroism given by William Jay (1842. Rpt. ed. Scott, 1919).

⁶¹ Nell (1855) 226-27. He also inserted into a chapter describing Denmark Vesey’s rebellion, a much abridged and rewritten version of Child’s “Black Saxons” (see 247-53).

motivations solely in terms of a desire for “freedom.”⁶²

Nell’s “Madison Washington” adopted the (by now familiar) black abolitionist pattern for recounting this mutiny, established by Douglass and maintained by Brown. This included the following standard motifs: an abbreviated dramatisation of violence in a preferred focus upon black magnanimity; representations of Madison Washington as black heroic exemplar whose “sagacity, bravery and humanity... do honor to his name;” a description of communal resistance motivated by egalitarian principles as “the blacks... declared... that all they had done was for their freedom;” an exposure of the injustices of the white historical record as Washington “but for his complexion, would excite universal admiration;” and, finally, a juxtaposition of British philanthropy with North American Southern barbarism: “the British authorities... refused to consign the liberated slaves... to perish on Southern gibbets.”⁶³ Nell’s single innovation upon this narrative formula consists in his emphasis upon black sexual honour as “[the captain’s] wife, child and niece were unmolested.”⁶⁴ Overall, Nell’s participation in existing abolitionist frameworks for narrating the *Creole* revolt confirms the existence of discursive conventions, which were revised and innovated upon, but which nonetheless constituted the point of reference for previous and subsequent authors of this mutiny.

In imitation of Brown’s “Madison Washington,” Nell’s text which was published as part of the “Celebrated Colored Americans” series, “Lambert Latham and Jordan Freeman,” was also subtitled “Written for” *The Pine and Palm*.⁶⁵ This

⁶² It is possible to contrast Nell (1855) 226 and 227 with Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave* 226 and 235.

⁶³ Nell (1855) 227.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ *The Pine and Palm* 21 Sep. 1861, n.p. This was published in the same issue as an installment of William Wells Brown’s series, “Colored People of Canada.” The only other biography, written for the “Celebrated Colored Americans Series” which it has been possible to trace, is a piece entitled, “Rev. Daniel Coker,” written by Bishop Payne (*The Pine and Palm* 14 Sep. 1861, n.p.); however, this text does not have the phrase “Written for *The Pine and Palm*” under its title which suggests, coupled with

piece followed Brown's narrative practice, exhibited in "Nat Turner" and "Madison Washington," of documenting neglected black figures and their exceptional heroism; Nell describes the "historical revolutionary reminiscences in which colored men... distinguished themselves."⁶⁶ He also testifies to the significance of black manhood in military action according to an ostensibly objective historical framework: "Impartial American historians have established the fact beyond contradiction that in the wars of 1776 and 1812, colored Americans bore their part with the whites in the public defence."⁶⁷ Thus, Nell presented black valour according to "impartial American historians" to counter charges of "black inferiority," which originated from race prejudice on behalf of "the sons of the dominant present population" who had "sadly degenerated so far as the recognition of the colored man's equality is concerned."⁶⁸ Nell's aims for this work were much the same as Brown's for his text in this periodical, as he sought to convert white audiences to a sense of black humanity via descriptions of Lambert Latham and Jordan Freedman, as "two brave colored American patriots," martyred in military duty.⁶⁹ Furthermore, Nell echoes Brown's critique of white practices for memorialising black heroism in the second volume of *Autographs for Freedom*; he writes that "on a marble tablet... the names of these two colored soldiers are last, and... a blank space is left between them and the whites in genuine keeping with the 'negro-pew' distinction."⁷⁰ Thus, Brown describes an American memorial to "the brave Americans who fell at the storming of Fort Griswold" which included "the names of two Africans... colonized off, and a line

the fact that it is the last article in the series, that Brown and Nell did not write any others and therefore, that the editor needed a space filler.

⁶⁶ *The Pine and Palm*, 21 Sep. 1861, n.p.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

drawn between them and the whites.”⁷¹ Nell’s conclusion to this text imitates Brown’s narrative strategies in versions of the *Creole* revolt which appealed to a black audience: “Let no colored man despair, but... press on, determined never to forget, nor... allow the community... to forget, the services of his ancestors in the wars of their common country... the day is not far distant when in the struggle for enfranchisement, victory is destined to perch upon his banner.”⁷² Nell’s rallying cry was designed to boost black male individual and communal morale, by emphasising the inseparability of black traditions of heroism from efforts to ameliorate contemporary race politics.

As published in this periodical, both Brown’s “Nat Turner” and “Madison Washington” were accompanied by the identical sub-title “Written for the Pine and Palm.”⁷³ This phrase confirms that Brown’s original intended audience and context for this material was this magazine rather than, as has been assumed by critics, his first volume of black history, *The Black Man*. Brown’s publication of this text in *The Pine and Palm* can be compared to Douglass’s serialisation of *The Heroic Slave* in his own newspaper, the *North Star*.⁷⁴ Brown’s reprinting of this piece, first in a periodical and subsequently in book form, suggests his interest in mass-producing literary-historical representations of individual black heroism to a wide audience. Furthermore, his decision to place works on Nat Turner and Madison Washington together indicated to his readership the continuing importance of black historical traditions of resistance. This legacy became the subject of other contributions to the same issues of *The Pine and Palm* which Brown did not write, but which likewise

⁷¹ Brown, “Visit of a Fugitive Slave to the Grave of Wilberforce” in *Autographs for Freedom* (Griffiths, ed., 1854) 2: 71. Brown satirises such a white strategy of black exclusion as “in keeping with American historical injustice to its colored heroes.”

⁷² *The Pine and Palm*, 21 Sep., 1861, n.p.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 3, 17 Aug., 1861, n.p.

⁷⁴ Douglass, *The Heroic Slave*. *The North Star* 4, 11, 18, 25 Mar. 1853.

testified to black heroism. For example, in the same issue as “Nat Turner,” various articles including “Heroism of a Man of Color,” which narrated William Tillman’s successful wresting of the “schooner S. J. Waring” from the Confederate army and, “Letter from John Brown, Junior,” communicating the latter’s decision to join the Civil War to secure black emancipation, confirmed cross-racial heroism.⁷⁵ Similarly, in the same issue as “Madison Washington,” the article, “A Story of Slavery,” appeared which shared many parallels with Brown’s text by dramatising the violent attempt of a black heroic male slave to save his wife from sexual violation.⁷⁶ However, in contrast to Brown’s subversive denouement which dramatised Susan’s escape and survival, in itself a significant revision of Douglass’s versions, this piece concluded with the death of the female slave and endorsed a conventional fulfilment of the “tragic mulatta” plot.⁷⁷

As the first text in the “Celebrated Colored Americans” series, Brown’s “Nat Turner” was, in all probability, written prior to Brown’s first known version of “Madison Washington” and, as such, introduced his preferred thematic content and methodological framework:

Biography is individual history, as distinguished from that of communities, of nations, and of worlds. Eulogy is that deserved applause which springs from the virtues and attaches itself to the characters of men. This is not intended either as a biography or a eulogy, but simply a sketch of one whose history has been hitherto neglected, and to the memory of whom the American people are not prepared to do justice.⁷⁸

This excerpt explicates Brown’s motivations for representing black male heroism in these works as a desire to restore a “neglected” history, or recover the “chattel records” used by Douglass to describe Madison Washington’s suffering from

⁷⁵ Ibid., 3 Aug., 1861, n.p.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 17 Aug., 1861, n.p.

⁷⁷ Ibid. Following the acts of violence committed by the black male slave in order to protect her, the female slave “Lucy” “flew... down the rocky path; then a splash in the deep, dark river, and all was still.”

“undeserved obscurity” (HS 175) in *The Heroic Slave*. Brown’s disassociation of his “sketch” of Nat Turner, from definitions of “biography” as “individual history” and “eulogy” as the “deserved applause” resulting from instances of male heroism, indicates his resistance to the politics of black exclusion from the white record. In both “Nat Turner” and “Madison Washington,” Brown employed literary and historical discourse to counter the injustices committed against black “memory” by the (white) “American people.”

An investigation into Brown’s representations of black male rebels in “Nat Turner” indicates his development of a template for slave heroism which informed his later dramatisation of Madison Washington and the *Creole* revolt. For example, his use of language confirming racial differences, in descriptions of Nat Turner as “under the middle size, long armed, round-shouldered, and strongly marked with African features,” was extended in his representation of Washington as “Born of African parentage, with no mixture in his blood” (MWPP n.p.). Elsewhere in this text, Brown’s incorporation of sentimental rhetoric presents the acts of violence committed by Will - “the most unfeeling of all the insurrectionists” – in similar terms to those executed by Washington. Both are rooted in acts of white injustice committed not only against himself – his “back was covered with scars” – but also against black domesticity as he “had seen a dear and beloved wife sold.”⁷⁹

Brown also repeats his technique, presented earlier in *Original Panoramic Views*, of including “authentic” source material as he reprints excerpts from Thomas Gray’s “confessions” of “Nat Turner” in this work.⁸⁰ He suggests that “Well might he [Gray] feel the blood curdle in his veins, when he remembered that in every southern

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid. Brown writes in this work that “even the planters... believed him honest and sincere; for Mr. Gray... had known Nat from boyhood” and then quotes directly from Gray’s edited volume of Nat

household there may be a Nat Turner... The slaveholder should understand that he lives upon a volcano, which may burst forth at any moment, and give freedom to his victim.”⁸¹ In direct parallel to Douglass’s speech, “Slavery, the Slumbering Volcano” (1849), Brown’s use of natural imagery confirms the inevitability of black retribution for white racism, while implicitly acknowledging his white audience in references to the “slaveholder” and a desire to secure their “understanding.” Brown’s view that Gray may feel “the blood curdle in his veins,” demonstrates his inclusion of white testimony, not for purposes of verifying his material but to satirise white fears in an acknowledgement of black justification in resistance. Thus, he provides a frank acceptance of the consequences of black violence in the political quest for emancipation as he writes that “If the oppressor is struck down in the contest, his fall will be a just one, and all the world will applaud the act.”⁸² Brown’s closing sentence - “Every eye is now turned towards the south, looking for another Nat Turner” – echoes Douglass’s statement in one of his speeches that “there are some Madison Washingtons in this country” (*SSV* 153), and indicates Brown’s shift, from readings of Nat Turner as an exceptional black historical figure, to his developing significance as a rhetorical emblem of black heroism used to debate contemporary political concerns.

Farrison argues that, in comparison with “Nat Turner,” Brown’s “Madison Washington” which appeared in *The Pine and Palm* just one month later, was shorter and less informative.”⁸³ He suggests that this lack of detail was due, not to authorial negligence, but inevitable because “not much information about Washington and the

Turner’s narrative.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., 339.

mutiny was available to Brown.”⁸⁴ However, while Farrison excuses Brown’s lack of factual detail in “Madison Washington” on the grounds of historical ambiguity, he critiques his use of genre: “Brown adapted the facts known about Washington’s life... into a... conventional story of a slave who escaped to Canada, returned to Virginia to get his wife, and was recaptured and sold.”⁸⁵ Furthermore, he isolates Brown’s development of a sentimental plot in the “fortuitous reunion of Washington and his wife” which concludes “Madison Washington,” to draw parallels between this text and the literary motifs employed in his works of fiction. Farrison argues that this was the “same kind of chance reunion, whether actual or imaginary, by which the stories of George Green and Mary and Jerome Fletcher and Miralda were made to end happily.”⁸⁶ Farrison’s speculation between “actual” versus “imaginary” content, reference to “stories” and use of the phrase “were made to,” adheres to exclusive definitions of “authentic” history. Therefore, Farrison fails to understand Brown’s deliberate blurring of discursive conventions in his dismissal of this text as well-rehearsed fiction and of diminished historical significance, due to its literary contrivance and artificial ending.

Furthermore, Farrison suggests that, like Douglass in “Madison Washington” (1861), Brown’s representations of black violence were understated as he “gave but few details about the mutiny itself and none about the slaves involved in it.”⁸⁷ He also argues that Brown neglected to draw attention to “the significance which the story... had in common with the story of Nat Turner and his insurrection.”⁸⁸ This is a significant point as the textual material which Brown includes in “Slave Revolt at Sea” (1867), and which is cited at the opening of this chapter, rectifies this oversight

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 340

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

in “Madison Washington” (1861, 1863), by situating the *Creole* revolt within the context of slave revolts led by Nat Turner and Denmark Vesey. Overall, Farrison’s interpretation of “Madison Washington,” (1861) which measures its historical authenticity in exclusive terms, fails to recognise Brown’s manipulation of generic ambiguity. In this text, Brown deliberately interweaves literary and historical material by borrowing from conventions of journalism, sentimental fiction, “heroic” biography and the slave narrative. Published two years prior to Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, Brown’s “Madison Washington” (1861) is closest to the antebellum literature on this mutiny and exhibits an antislavery agenda reminiscent of Douglass’s narrative design in *The Heroic Slave* (1853). Both writers sought to convert white audiences to a sense of black equal humanity by providing fictionalised historical accounts of black male heroism, rooted in factual testimony, but heavily mythologised as they developed literary paradigms of black resistance.

Any comparison of Brown’s two versions of “Madison Washington,” published variously in *The Pine and Palm* and *The Black Man* (1863), solely in terms of content, reveals that they are identical, apart from minimal changes of grammar and the substitution of one or two words.⁸⁹ However, their differing places of publication - a magazine and a historical text – had a significant impact upon audience interpretations. In contrast to Brown’s publication of “Madison Washington” in *The*

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Farrison (1969) 369. His statement that Brown’s “Madison Washington” and “Nat Turner” published in *The Pine and Palm* were “reprinted in the book with only minor changes,” is borne out by a close comparison of both works. The extent of textual differences between 1861 and 1863 versions of “Madison Washington” can be identified as follows: Brown substitutes “earnings” for “money,” “40 of the slaves” becomes “forty of the slaves,” he changes “134 others” to “one hundred and thirty-four others,” and he revises his references to white betrayal by substituting “they proved ungrateful” for “they nevertheless proved ungrateful” in 1863. Thus, these editorial changes are minor and concerned with style rather than content. However, he make a more significant alteration to his statement that the white crew “had nearly lost command of the vessel before they attempted to use them[their weapons]” which in the 1863 text becomes “before they attempted to use their weapons;” this revision is important because in his final version, “Slave Revolt at Sea” (1867), Brown uses his original phrasing and, therefore, emphasises that his 1861 version was far more authoritative than his second.

Pine and Palm alongside “Nat Turner,” and one or two pieces by Nell and others, *The Black Man* included fifty-seven biographies devoted to the lives of Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, Toussaint L’Ouverture and Douglass, among others.⁹⁰ Brown dedicated this work to “the advocates and friends of negro freedom and equality,” while he included an autobiographical “memoir” and an introduction testifying to an exemplary tradition of black heroic prowess.⁹¹ Although Brown had published much of the content included in *The Black Man* previously, not least “Madison Washington” and “Nat Turner,” he included new material such as a portrait of “Joseph Cinque” and the *Amistad* revolt.⁹² Furthermore, Brown’s piece, “Denmark Vesey,” is useful for investigations in this thesis, not only because of its comparable development of natural imagery to present the inevitability of insurrection, but also because this text confirms intertextual connections between Brown’s and Hopkins’s versions on the *Creole* revolt.⁹³ For example, Hopkins, like Brown in this work, cited Thomas Wentworth Higginson’s article on Denmark Vesey’s insurrection as a major source for “A Dash for Liberty” (1901).⁹⁴

Brown’s “Preface” locates his research for *The Black Man* within a

⁹⁰ See in particular the following biographies which Brown included in *The Black Man*: “Denmark Vesey” (142-48), “Nat Turner” (59-75), “Toussaint L’Ouverture” (92-105), and “Frederick Douglass” (180-87).

⁹¹ Ibid. See pages 1-50 in particular. Brown’s inclusion of a “Memoir of the Author” (11-30) repeated his interest, demonstrated in *Original Panoramic Views*, of situating his own heroism within a wider context of black male insurrection and rebellion.

⁹² Ibid., 124-28. In his biography of “Joseph Cinque” he uses similar language to dramatise ship board insurrection as he does in “Madison Washington.” He writes that “Cinque... the leader of the revolt, leaped on deck, seized a capstan bar, and attacked the captain, whom he killed at a single blow, and took charge of the vessel; his authority being acknowledged by his companions” (126-27). Thus in this work and his versions of the *Creole* revolt, Brown confines his narration of the moment of black insurrection to just a couple of lines. This description of the mutiny can be compared to Brown’s description of Madison Washington’s heroism (*MW* 83).

⁹³ This work also opens with a comment upon the inevitability of black violence which echoes Douglass’s representations of the *Creole* revolt in “Slavery, the Slumbering Volcano” (1849) in his use of natural imagery: “Human bondage is ever fruitful of insurrection, wherever it exists, and under whatever circumstances it may be found. Every community... feels that it lives upon a volcano” (ibid., 142).

⁹⁴ Brown reveals his source material at the end of “Denmark Vesey” as follows: “The best account of this whole matter is to be found in an able article in the *Atlantic Monthly* for June, 1861, from the pen

transatlantic context “ amidst the archives of England, France, and... the West Indies,” which, he argues, gave him “the advantage of information respecting the blacks seldom acquired.”⁹⁵ Thus, he situates his historical representations of the “black man” in North America within a much wider geographical framework, encompassing a continuing legacy of European and Caribbean involvement in the international slave trade. Despite Brown’s careful emphasis upon a disinterested treatment of sources, his polemical intent is unmistakable, however, as he uses this material to counter the racism endemic to contemporary politics: “If this work shall aid in vindicating the Negro’s character,... it will meet the most sanguine hopes of the writer.”⁹⁶ Brown’s representation of heroic male exemplars illustrates his didactic and revisionary imperatives, designed to educate his white audience and correct their preconceptions concerning “Negro character,” while also inspiring his black readership to the emulation of “heroic” deeds. Brown’s essay which introduces the heroic biographies in this volume titled, “The Black Man and His Antecedents,” contrasts the “power and skill of the ancient Egyptians” with the “rude and barbarous” Anglo-Saxons to argue that “Ancestry is something which the white American should not speak of, unless with his lips to the dust.”⁹⁷ Brown uses this material to destabilise straightforward racist assumptions which equate blackness with barbarism and whiteness with civilisation. He also testifies to his abolitionist agenda by outlining the benefits of British West Indian Emancipation which has “fulfilled the expectation of the friends of freedom throughout the world” and thwarted predictions of “inevitable” black violence as “not a drop of blood was shed by the enfranchised

of that eloquent friend of freedom T. W. Higginson, and to which I am indebted for the extracts contained in this memoir of Denmark Vesey” (ibid., 148).

⁹⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 32, 33, 34.

blacks.”⁹⁸ His conclusion to this essay associates the emancipation of slaves in North America with a rhetoric of black self-reliance: “All I demand for the black man is, that the white people shall take their heels off his neck, and let him have a chance to rise by his own efforts.”⁹⁹ Brown’s rhetoric, like Douglass’s, restores black subjectivity by disassociating itself from white paternalist abolitionism which objectified the black male slave body as spectacle - symbolised earlier in Wedgewood’s medallion – and denied heroic black individualism.

The Black Man has received much more contemporary and recent critical attention than Brown’s later historical works. Thus, “Madison Washington,” as published in *The Black Man*, has been the subject of much more debate than either his earlier version of the same title or his later work, “Slave Revolt at Sea”(1867). Among the contemporary reviewers of *The Black Man*, Douglass hailed it as “a valuable contribution to the colored literature of the country” and applauded its revisionary politics: “The Negro needs defence everywhere but no where as in the United States. The sentiment in... Europe...is more just than here.”¹⁰⁰ Thus, he uses Brown’s text to critique North American racism concerning “Negro” character while complimenting European “justice” in idealised terms. Douglass justifies the right of Brown’s historical work to an audience not only on racial grounds – as “a man of color – [Brown]... has a positive claim to be heard” – but also as set against more objective criteria: the “Book... wholly independent of its Author may well rest upon its own merit.”¹⁰¹ He commends Brown’s content which “abound[s]... in fact and argument” and his narrative style – “replete with eloquence, logic and learning – clothed with simple yet elegant language” - only to question their historical accuracy:

⁹⁸ Ibid., 39.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 48.

¹⁰⁰ Douglass, Rev. of “The Black Man,” *Douglass’ Monthly* (1863. Rpt. Foner, ed., 1952) 3: 313, 312.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 313.

“it is hard to repress the enquiry whence has this man this knowledge?”¹⁰²

Douglass’s emphasis that this work “should find its way into every school library” and that “especially should every colored man possess it” draws attention to the importance of a young, black male readership for this work in order to inspire black heroism by the production of role models.¹⁰³ This preoccupation reinforces Douglass’s campaign during the early 1860s to recruit black troops for the American Civil War, which adopted propagandistic rhetoric concerning the superlative performance of black military valour.¹⁰⁴ Brown echoes this stance in *The Black Man* by emphasising a history of black patriotic heroism: “Whenever the rights of the nation have been assailed, the negro has always responded to his country’s call.”¹⁰⁵ Thus, Christopher Mulvey’s argument that Brown “celebrate[d] militant and military black heroes” can be applied to this text.¹⁰⁶ In general, recent commentators applaud *The Black Man* as “one of his ablest and best-known works” and argue that it is upon this text that his “chief claim to distinction as a writer of history depends.”¹⁰⁷ Farrison maintains that Brown’s biographical portraits in both *The Black Man* and his last volume of black history, *The Rising Son* (1874), critique received definitions of American heroism. He writes that they extended the existing canon as he supplied a “dictionary of Negro biography” which “gave information about many who... might have been forgotten.”¹⁰⁸

As stated above, Brown’s “Madison Washington,” (1863) published in *The Black Man*, has received significant critical attention in comparison with Brown’s

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, Douglass’s speech entitled, “‘Men of Color, To Arms!’” (1863. Rpt. Andrews, ed., 1996) 223-25.

¹⁰⁵ Brown, *The Black Man* 49.

¹⁰⁶ Mulvey (1994) 106. He also writes that Brown’s admiration of the “slave-insurgent” was a theme which he applied to his first extended work of fiction, *Clotel; or, The President’s Daughter* (1853).

¹⁰⁷ Coleman (1946) 50. He argues that Brown’s reputation is based on his last volume of black history,

earlier version printed in *The Pine and Palm* and his last text, “Slave Revolt at Sea” (1867). Richard Yarborough, one of the rare critics to consider, however briefly, versions of the *Creole* mutiny by all four authors discussed in this dissertation, treats “Madison Washington” (1863) as if it was Brown’s only version.¹⁰⁹ He uses this text to highlight the unequivocal endorsement by Brown, Child and Hopkins of the legitimacy of black insurrection, in comparison with Douglass’s self-imposed censorship of the subject as they “all treat Madison Washington’s violence more directly.”¹¹⁰ However, he singles out Brown’s text, both because he “does not qualify the slave’s fierce resistance” and because he “differs sharply from Douglass by locating his hero at the very centre of the violence.”¹¹¹ He also suggests that Brown’s significant revision of Douglass’s text consists in his representation of the black female slave as “Susan received an even more elaborate description than does Washington himself.”¹¹² He emphasises Brown’s endorsement of the inseparability of sentimental values from projects of black self-emancipation by arguing that, in this work, “liberation leads to a restoration of the integrity of the domestic circle, the black family unit.”¹¹³ Brown confirmed his preference for such a narrative strategy, not only in differing versions of his slave narrative and his antislavery panorama, but also his earlier volumes of black history.

The more recent critic, Ann-Marie Karlsson, uses “Madison Washington” (1863) to dismiss Brown’s historiography which “lacks proper documentation, has no

The Rising Son.

¹⁰⁸ Farrison (1969) 443.

¹⁰⁹ Yarborough (1990) 166-88.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 176-77.

¹¹¹ Ibid., (1990) 177. This view of Brown’s text as the more violent version in comparison with Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave* is corroborated by Sundquist’s view that “Brown made his hero more central to the violence of the revolt” (1993) 118.

¹¹² Yarborough (1990) 177.

¹¹³ Ibid., 178.

obvious structure, and is flagrantly subjective and moralistic.”¹¹⁴ She invites a comparison between this work and Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave* (1853) to argue that “Brown’s own life merges with... the historical characters in his black history” and that his narrative structure “disrupt[s] the conventions of history writing and... debunk[s] the race-biased logic of previous narratives of American history.”¹¹⁵ Thus, she emphasises Brown’s deliberate interweaving of authorial self with historical persona, as well as his revisionist imperative designed to counter white racism.

Brown’s final version, “Slave Revolt at Sea” (1867), was included in his second volume of black history, *The Negro in the American Rebellion*. For the purposes of this thesis, “Slave Revolt at Sea,” represents the authoritative text through which both versions of “Madison Washington” (1861, 1863) are analysed, on the grounds of its longer length, additional material and direct intertextual relationship with material by Douglass, Child and Hopkins. Indeed, this work confirms the extent to which Brown revised Douglass’s material and influenced representations of the black female heroic figure by Child and Hopkins. Published shortly after the end of the American Civil War and based on “the most reliable information that could be obtained,” *The Negro* was “anxious to preserve for future reference an account of the part which the Negro took in suppressing the Slaveholders’ Rebellion.”¹¹⁶ Thus, in his “Preface,” Brown justified his incorporation of antebellum material, including the *Creole* revolt, in order to contextualise black heroism: “it occurred to me that a sketch of... the race previous to the commencement of the war would not be uninteresting to the reader.”¹¹⁷ He also highlighted his narrative authority by emphasising his

¹¹⁴ Karlsson (1995): 35.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Brown, *The Negro* v.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., v.

selective narrative process: “I did not feel bound to introduce an account of every little skirmish in which colored men were engaged.”¹¹⁸ In both this work and *The Black Man*, Brown repeated and adapted material on black insurrections, such as the *Creole* mutiny and land based revolts led by Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner, to highlight a tradition of black revolutionary heroism which would inspire the contemporary black political struggle for emancipation.¹¹⁹

As its title suggests, *The Negro in the American Rebellion* documents feats of black heroism in the American Civil War.¹²⁰ Farrison argues that in this work, Brown “proved himself a pioneer... in the writing of the military history of the American Negro.”¹²¹ Thus, Brown titled an early chapter in *The Negro*, “Heroism of Negroes on the High Seas,” to celebrate the black man William Tillman’s, successful recapture of the “schooner ‘S. J. Waring,’” previously stolen by the Confederate Army.¹²² Brown’s description of Tillman’s revolt has many parallels with his narration of the *Creole* mutiny: “Armed with a heavy club,... He [Tillman] strikes the fatal blow... another blow is struck, and the black man is master of the cabin... The African... puts the enemy in irons, and proclaims himself master of the vessel.”¹²³ Thus, while Brown endorses the legitimacy of black violence to secure individual and communal rights, he confines descriptions of its execution to short phrases, such as “the fatal blow,” to

¹¹⁸ Ibid., vi.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. See chapters II, III and IV. For example, in chapter VI, he describes “The John Brown Raid” as the catalyst for subsequent events: “the little band of heroes dashed themselves to bloody death, but, at the same time, shook the prison walls from summit to foundation, and shot wild alarm into every tyrant-heart in all the slave-land” (44).

¹²⁰ Ibid. See Brown’s chapters variously titled: “The First Gun of the Rebellion” (50-56), “The Black Brigade of Cincinnati” (100-09), and “Raising Black Regiments at the North” (142-47).

¹²¹ Farrison (1969) 411. He also argues that Brown was indebted to a number of sources which he reproduced verbatim for large sections (ibid., 411-12) and suggests that “the work is discursive and without chronological order – as if Brown recorded the information as it became available to him and without much concern for coherence” (413). In considering this work as a pioneering work of history, it must also be remembered that Nell had published his historical volume, *The Colored American Patriots of the American Revolution*, over a decade earlier in 1855.

¹²² Ibid. See chapter 11 (74-82).

¹²³ Ibid., 75.

avoid explicit detail and escape white racist stereotyping of black barbarity. Brown's references to Tillman – variously as “the African” and the “black man” - emphasise his cultivation of separatist models of black heroism and his representative status as a historical figure. The connotations of “the African” differentiate black heroism from the white American heroic paradigms maintained by Douglass in his versions of *The Heroic Slave* as he awards Madison Washington an ambiguous racial heritage. Brown also employs sentimental rhetoric to explicate Tillman's motivation to resist: “The negro thinks of home and all its endearments: he sees in the dim future chains and slavery.”¹²⁴ Thus, he juxtaposes white brutality with black moral justification according to the black domestic values which also informed his representations of Madison Washington's heroism.¹²⁵

Although a sensitive analyst of texts by Brown and Hopkins, in contrast to Farrison, John Cullen Greusser compares “Slave Revolt at Sea” (1867) with “Madison Washington,” as published in *The Black Man* (1863), to the exclusion of the earlier version published in *The Pine and Palm*.¹²⁶ He also argues that the differences between “Madison Washington” (1863) and “Slave Revolt at Sea” (1867) are negligible: “Apart from the deletion of the final sentence of ‘Madison Washington’ and the addition of one paragraph to the beginning and three paragraphs to the end of ‘Slave Revolt at Sea,’ the versions are identical.”¹²⁷ However, this assessment neglects the importance of Brown's different contexts for the publication of these

¹²⁴ Ibid., 74.

¹²⁵ Brown also testifies to the importance of the visual: “Pictorials vied with each other in portraying his features, and in graphic delineations of the scene on board the brig... Tillman has been sketched as an embodiment of black action on the sea, in contrast with... white inaction on land” (ibid., 75-76). This excerpt illustrates Brown's awareness of the symbolic ramifications of visual images for representations of black male heroism as he uses them to contrast white passivity with black activity and self-reliance. Thus, Brown emphasises the connections between pictorial images and audience responses to generic depictions of the black male body.

¹²⁶ Greusser (1996) 98-118. His list of “Works Cited” excludes any reference to Brown's “Madison Washington” (1861) while he writes that he “actually wrote two versions of the story” (102).

¹²⁷ Greusser (1996) 102.

works, and fails to give due weight to his inclusion of additional material which revised his earlier literary-historical focus. For example, the “three paragraphs” which conclude “Slave Revolt at Sea,” confirm a direct intertextual relationship between this work and Hopkins’s “A Dash for Liberty” (1901). Furthermore, when taken together with his new opening paragraph, they broaden the specific frame of reference for this mutiny to argue in favour of black violence and the legitimacy of slave insurrection as a general principle of resistance.

Greusser extends his abbreviated assessment of “Madison Washington” (1863) and “Slave Revolt at Sea” (1867) as “early attempts to write black history,” to argue that *The Black Man* was “more ambitious than its successor,... [because it] stresses continuity by beginning in antiquity and concluding with portraits of notable African Americans.”¹²⁸ He also pinpoints similarities between Douglass’s and Brown’s audience for their versions of the *Creole* revolt as he suggests that, due to “literacy rates and socio-economic conditions... Brown, like Douglass, was still writing mainly for a white audience.”¹²⁹ While this was partly accurate, there is, however, no doubt that the fact of a postbellum, post-slavery context for Brown’s last version, “Slave Revolt at Sea,” provided him with a significantly liberated forum within which to represent his subject-matter. As they were published at varying periods roughly a decade later, it is likely that the entirety of Brown’s texts on the *Creole* revolt were read by larger numbers of black readers than Douglass’s antebellum written material. Equally, the backdrop of the American Civil War provided Brown with a legitimate forum within which to express graphic descriptions of black violence, in comparison with Douglass whose written and oratorical texts were written and performed within an antebellum context of slave insurrection and white paranoia. “Slave Revolt at

¹²⁸ Ibid.

Sea,” Brown’s single work on the *Creole* revolt written shortly after the Civil War, situates Madison Washington as a black heroic exemplar within a black historical tradition for the education and/or emulation of his white and increasingly black Northern audience.

Brown’s representation of the heroic male slave figure in both versions of “Madison Washington” (1861, 1863) and in “Slave Revolt at Sea” (1867) shares similarities with Douglass’s portrait of his “heroic slave:”

[Washington’s] tall figure, firm step, and piercing eye attracted at once the attention of all who beheld him. Nature had treated him as a favorite. His expressive countenance painted and reflected every emotion of his soul. There was a fascination in the gaze of his finely cut eyes that no one could withstand. Born of African parentage, with no mixture in his blood, he was one of the handsomest of his race. His dignified, calm, and unaffected features announced at a glance that he was endowed with genius, and created to guide his fellow-men. He called himself Madison Washington, and said that his birthplace was in the ‘Old Dominion’ (*MW* 75, *SRS* 26).

Thus, Brown uses the same language as Douglass to describe Washington as possessing an “expressive countenance” (*HS* 178), and establish his connections by birth to the “Old Dominion” (*HS* 174-75), in confirmation of his legitimacy as an “American” historical figure, unjustly excluded from “American annals” (*HS* 174). Both authors award the male slave an equally prepossessing figure and exceptional heroism; for Brown he is “created to guide his fellow-men,” while Douglass contends that he had “the head to conceive, and the hand to execute” (*HS* 179). Brown’s description also indicates black individual subjectivity as the phrase - “He called himself” - establishes Washington’s autonomous choice of naming.

Brown’s emphasis upon Washington’s “African parentage, with no mixture in his blood,” represents a significant revision of Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave*. Brown’s overt descriptions of the black heroic figure’s racial lineage operates in marked

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 101-2.

contrast to Douglass's aestheticised and ambiguous representations of Washington's parental origins. Douglass portrays the black male body obliquely using religious imagery - "black, but comely" (*HS* 179) - and in highly romanticised form: Washington possesses a "brow as dark and as glossy as the raven's wing" (*HS* 179). Thus, Douglass's preferred representation of Washington's racial heritage, in symbolic rather than literal terms, reflects his interest in converting white audiences to black equal humanity by the erasure of difference. Any straightforward readings of Douglass's and Brown's representations of black male heroism in dichotomised terms are complicated by their equal adoption of natural imagery to emphasise the heroic male slave's articulation of a Romantic "natural rights" philosophy. Thus, in *The Heroic Slave*, Douglass's hero proclaims that - "Those birds... are still my superiors. They *live free*, though they may die slaves" (*HS* 176-77) - while in Brown's "Slave Revolt at Sea" Washington laments as follows: "The birds in the trees and the wild beasts of the forest made me feel that I, like them, ought to be free" (*SRS* 27-28). Both works are equally preoccupied with the indivisibility between the performance of black male subjectivity and their command of rhetorical and dramatic language.

Brown refutes Douglass's potentially assimilationist argument by portraying Madison Washington in artificially separatist terms as an "African" figure capable of inspiring black audiences and convincing a white readership of his black equal humanity, set apart from existing literary conventions as he possessed "no mixture in his blood." Brown's "Slave Revolt at Sea" celebrates difference and confirms Washington's representative status as he inverts racist assumptions by describing this figure as an "uncouth son of Africa [who was] far above his Anglo-Saxon oppressors" (*SRS* 36). The critic, Nancy Bentley's interpretation of these texts as presenting "a forceful black protagonist of full African descent" misreads Douglass's and Brown's

different aims.¹³⁰ Yarborough's interpretation is more compelling as he compares Douglass's *The Heroic Slave* with Brown's "Madison Washington" (1863), to argue that the latter's "description of Washington is far more ethnically specific than Douglass's... [and] recalls Brown's treatment of Jerome in 1864 *Clotelle*."¹³¹ This comment can be applied to all of Brown's versions of the *Creole* revolt as Yarborough's descriptions of his borrowings from fictional representations of black heroism in his literary works, interrogate Brown's deliberate blurring of genre and narrative form in these texts.

All three of Brown's versions revise Douglass's speeches and written material on the *Creole* revolt, in their replacement of the white Northern abolitionist, "Listwell," by the "farmer" (*SRS* 27), Mr. Dickson. In "Slave Revolt at Sea," Brown portrays Mr. Dickson as sympathetic but as incapable of providing succour to the black male condition: "Madison began to show signs of discontent. In vain his employer tried to discover the cause" (*SRS* 27). In contrast to Washington's receipt of "three strong *files*" (*HS* 223) from Listwell in Douglass's *The Heroic Slave*, not only in Brown's, but also Child's and Hopkins's texts, Madison "provided himself with files, saws, and other implements with which to cut his way out of any prison... [and] armed with them, the fugitive felt sure he should escape again were he ever captured" (*SRS* 29).¹³² Thus, in comparison with Douglass, Brown (likewise Child and Hopkins) privileges black self-reliance by detaching the performance of slave heroism from white philanthropic aid. Furthermore, later in "Slave Revolt at Sea" and as a

¹³⁰ Bentley (1993) 515.

¹³¹ Yarborough (1990) 186.

¹³² Child, "Madison Washington" (1866), in *The Freedmen's Book*: "He also purchased several small files and saws, which he concealed in the lining of his clothes. With these tools he thought he could effect his escape from prison, if he should be taken up on the suspicion of being a runaway slave" (149) and Hopkins, "A Dash for Liberty" (1901): "Madison received the wages due him, and armed with tiny saws and files to cut a way to liberty, if captured, turned his face toward the South" (244). These textual revisions emphasise Child's close imitation of Brown's text in contrast to Hopkins's innovative

preface to his narration of the revolt, Brown juxtaposes black solidarity with white passivity by emphasising that the “miniature saws and files were faithfully used when the whites were asleep” (*SRS* 32). This change of detail in Douglass’s treatment, makes a political point concerning literary and historical race relations in antebellum and post-emancipation periods, and the constraints placed upon Douglass as a result of his earlier context. Brown, Child and Hopkins all reject Douglass’s narration of an abolitionist paternalist ethos of black dependency, in favour of Reconstruction and early twentieth-century preoccupations with black male and female political and aesthetic autonomy. In contrast to Listwell in *The Heroic Slave* who offers Washington practical aid, Mr. Dickson’s significance in “Slave Revolt at Sea,” lies in his role as a sentimental reader of black experience: “The recital of the [Washington’s] story had already brought tears to the eyes of the farmer, ere the fugitive had concluded” (*SRS* 28). Thus, Brown aims to convert white opinion to an understanding of the black historical figure by developing black narrative techniques indebted to abolitionist strategies of moral suasion.

Brown’s reinterpretation in “Slave Revolt at Sea” of the black male body and slave violence in Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave* is due, for the most part, to a later post-abolitionist historical and literary context. He extends Douglass’s text by including additional fictional material as, for Brown, Washington remained in the South not only due to fears for his wife’s safety, but also because ““I hoped to get up an insurrection of the slaves, and thereby be the means of their liberation”” (*SRS* 28). Brown’s references to premeditated black violence as a means to secure black rights, extraneous to his narration of the revolt itself, places a much greater emphasis upon black individual heroism and its implications for the black community than does

Douglass. Thus, as a means to justify Washington's participation in the *Creole* revolt, Brown later commends the fact that Washington "had... gained his own liberty, and that of one hundred and thirty-four others" (*SRS* 35).

In his representations of black violence in "Slave Revolt at Sea," Brown also inserts additional violent conflict into existing historical reports and Douglass's versions of this mutiny. He dramatises the thwarted attempts by white sailors to "retake the vessel:" "Nothing but the heroism of the negro leader saved the lives of the white men... Madison threw himself between them and their victims, exclaiming, 'Stop! no more blood!...' By the kind and noble bearing of Madison, the vile slave-traders were again permitted to go unwhipped of justice. This act of humanity raised the uncouth son of Africa far above his Anglo-Saxon oppressors" (*SRS* 35). This textual moment illustrates Brown's pseudo-theatrical juxtaposition of white barbarous practice with black judicial action and provides further evidence of Washington's "magnanimity" in victory. In this excerpt, Brown's deliberate contrast between Madison's "kind and noble bearing" and the "vile slave-traders" illustrates his use of impassioned language and partial discourse. Thus, Brown's emphasis upon black philanthropy, rather than black physical resistance, can also be seen in his closing material to his first and second versions titled, "Madison Washington" (1861, 1863): "Not many months since, an American ship went ashore at Nassau, and among the first to render assistance to the crew was Madison Washington" (*MW* 1863). The fact that this is the only sentence to be excluded by Brown from "Slave Revolt at Sea," from earlier texts on this revolt illustrates his preferred emphasis, in his newly added material, upon a black tradition of heroic resistance and an underplaying of black philanthropic aid.

In contrast to *The Heroic Slave*'s indirect narration of the *Creole* mutiny, as a

dialogue between two white sailors to privilege black rhetorical justification above violent process, in “Slave Revolt at Sea,” however, Brown supports black physical resistance prior to the moment of insurrection. Brown describes Washington’s conflict with white slaveholders upon his thwarted return for his wife as follows: “the heroic slave did not yield until he with a club had laid three of his assailants upon the ground with his manly blows; and not then until weakened by loss of blood” (*SRS* 31). In anticipation of Hopkins’s description of Washington as the “intrepid leader” (*DL* 247) and “the Negro” (*DL* 244), Brown’s references to his chief-protagonist as the “heroic slave,” confirm the inseparability of his representative status and acts of black heroism. His use of the phrase, “the heroic slave,” also suggests an intentional intertextual relationship between *The Heroic Slave* and “Slave Revolt at Sea” as Brown employs identical phrasing and focuses upon Washington as a historical figure. Elsewhere in the text, Brown repeatedly describes Washington as “the fugitive” (*SRS* 27) and “the heroic man” (*SRS* 29) to emphasise his exemplary status within familiar abolitionist tableaux. Washington’s decision not to surrender until overpowered in Brown’s text, is suggestive of his equal weighting of ideological justification and physical prowess in representations of the “heroic” slave.

Brown’s representation of black violence in “Slave Revolt at Sea,” raises themes of disguise and black performance as, for example, he narrates white misreadings of black male physicality - “Madison... seemed very cheerful, and his owners thought that he had repented... and... would prove a more easily governed chattel” (*SRS* 32) - to confirm the artificiality of a “slave” identity which operates as a mask rather than representing any actuality. Brown’s description that the “appearance of the slaves all at once... so completely surprised the whites” (*SRS* 33), indicates the importance of black male physical rebellion as spectacle in order to

inspire fear in his white audience. He also employs theatrical language - “Madison had been busily engaged in the selection of men who were to act parts in the great drama” (SRS 32) – to draw attention to his interweaving of diverse genres and rejection of prescriptive formal conventions which distinguish between literary and historical motifs. Furthermore, in imitation of Douglass he cites Shakespeare to dramatise “white surprise” prior to black rebellion and document a political subversion of the “natural order.”¹³³ Despite the claims of Yarborough and others which emphasise Brown’s comparatively radical representations of black violence, in direct imitation of Douglass, Brown’s level of explicit content is minimal: “so swift were the motions of Madison that they [whites] had nearly lost command of the vessel before they attempted to use them [their weapons]” (SRS 34). He also tempers Washington’s militant representation by emphasising his magnanimity and his decision to forbid the “shedding of more blood” while “with his own hands [he] dressed their [the sailors’] wounds” (SRS 34-35).

However, Brown’s literary language celebrates Washington’s heroism during the *Creole* revolt in much more graphic terms than Douglass: “The battle was Madison’s element, and he plunged into it without any care for his own preservation or safety. He was an instrument of enthusiasm, whose value and whose place was in his inspiration” (SRS 34). Thus, Brown’s references to physical conflict as “Madison’s element” prompts readings of black rebellion, less as a result of self-preservation, and more as a premeditated attack designed to overthrow white authority. The connotations of “instrument” encourage interpretations of Washington

¹³³ In “Slave Revolt at Sea” Brown includes the following unreferenced quotation: ““They spake not a word;/But, like dumb statues or breathless stones,/Stared at each other, and looked deadly pale”” (SRS 33). Brown reproduces this citation, slightly misquoted, from Shakespeare’s *King Richard III* which dramatises Buckingham’s attempts to convince English citizens of Richard’s rightful claim to kingship: “they spake not a word,/But like dumb statues or breathing stones/ Star’d each on other, and look’d deadly pale” (Act III, Sc. VII, lines 24-26. Rpt. Hammond, ed., 1981) 246. I am indebted to Sarah

as representative archetypal figure rather than as individual subject. Brown's decision to include Madison's killing of the white man, Hewell "who knew that the defiant looks of these men meant something," differentiates his text from Douglass's *The Heroic Slave* which preserves the white crew member, Tom Grant, to legitimate black heroism. The fact that Brown's "Slave Revolt at Sea" withholds an endorsement of black heroism according to white testimony makes a radical political statement concerning black independence from white authority in comparison with Douglass's text.

Brown's literary-historical innovations upon Douglass's representations of the black male slave can be read in conjunction with his radical re-interpretation of the black female slave figure. This investigation not only confirms Brown's reshaping of Susan Washington in Douglass's *The Heroic Slave*, but also Child's and Hopkins's indebtedness to Brown in their interrogation of the available conventions for black female representation. In "Slave Revolt at Sea," Brown describes Susan as follows:

... among the slave-women, was one whose beauty at once attracted attention... she yet had a majestic figure. Her well-moulded shoulders, prominent bust, black hair which hung in ringlets, mild blue eyes, finely-chiselled mouth, with a splendid set of teeth, a turned and well-rounded chin, skin marbled with the animation of life, and veined by blood given to her by her master, she stood as the representative of two races (SRS 33).

Brown's use of statuesque language - as connoted by "majestic figure," "well-moulded," "prominent bust" and "finely-chiselled" - illustrates his continuing preoccupation with the visual in his versions of this mutiny. Hopkins later critiques his preferred conceptualisation of the black female body in terms of display and spectacle in "A Dash for Liberty" (1901). In this text, Brown includes evidence from newspaper reports, confirming the separation of male and female slaves and

speculating upon the possibility that Washington's wife was on board the *Creole*.¹³⁴ Thus, Brown revises Douglass's *The Heroic Slave* by placing Susan on board the ship as a means to introduce an element of theatrical suspense, maintained by Child and Hopkins, as he narrates that neither she nor Madison were aware of each other until after the revolt: "The meeting of the hero and his beautiful and accomplished wife, the tears of joy shed, and the hurrahs that followed from the men, can better be imagined than described" (SRS 35). Thus, Brown interweaves tropes of sentimentality and melodrama which Hopkins subsequently challenges in her intertextual interrogation of his text in "A Dash for Liberty." Brown's representation of the black female slave evokes ambiguous gender politics because he describes "Susan, the object of his [Washington's] affection" as "a woman every way worthy of his love" (SRS 30) and as "devoted to Madison as she was beautiful and accomplished" (SRS 33). Hopkins's later text engages with such a stereotyping of black female identity in Dickson's comment to Washington, "'may she prove worthy'" (DL 244). Thus, while much more radical than Douglass in their texts as they grant greater agency to Susan Washington as a literary-historical figure, both Brown and Hopkins represent the black female slave according to prescribed notions of respectable behaviour, omitting any references to her sexuality, and emphasising her exceptionality in elitist terms: "Her language was far more correct than that of most slaves" (SRS 33).

Brown's use of language in "Slave Revolt at Sea" confirms his narrative preoccupation with gender ambiguity in representations of the black male and female slave. Thus, in the above extract, he associates Susan with black male heroism as his references to her "majestic figure" can be compared with Douglass's representations of Madison in *The Heroic Slave* as "of manly form" (HS 179) and "Tall, symmetrical,

¹³⁴ See, for example, "The Creoles – Strike for Liberty!" *The Liberator* 7 Jan. 1842: 1 and "Madison

round” (*HS* 179). However, in *The Heroic Slave*, Douglass disassociates Susan from feats of black heroism: Madison describes her as ““a poor thing”” (*HS* 180) and she is murdered before Washington’s recapture: ““my poor wife fell by my side dead, while I received but a slight flesh wound. I... awaited their attack over her dead body”” (*HS* 220). In Douglass’s text, Susan’s “body” operates as the textual site upon which Washington is able to inscribe his physical prowess and heroic status. In direct contrast, Brown’s narrative strategy conflates black male and female difference as he counters Douglass’s descriptions of Washington as the “child” of the “great ones of the Old Dominion” (*HS* 174-75), by placing the black female within such a male revolutionary tradition: “It was said that her grandfather had served his country in the Revolutionary War, as well as in both Houses of Congress” (*SRS* 32). In his preferred emphasis throughout upon Susan Washington as an ““octoroon”” (*SRS* 32), Brown introduces the abolitionist literary convention of the “tragic mulatta.”¹³⁵ Both Child and Hopkins focus upon Susan as the “beautiful octoroon slave” (*MWFB* 147, *DL* 245), as a means to sentimentalise the vulnerability of the black female slave body in slavery, and to assert the political function of a rhetoric of black domesticity more generally in abolitionist literature.¹³⁶ In “Slave Revolt at Sea,” Brown characterises Susan not only as a “quadroon,” but also as a figure for transgressive politics as she expresses simultaneously indeterminate boundaries of race, sexuality and gender.

Finally, the additional material which Brown includes in “Slave Revolt at

Washington: Another Chapter in his History,” *The Liberator* 10 June 1842.

¹³⁵ For further information on this convention see Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (1987) and Zanger, “The ‘Tragic Octoroon’ in Pre-Civil War Fiction,” (1966) 63-70.

¹³⁶ Brown’s short article, “A True Story of Slave Life,” *The Antislavery Advocate* Dec. 1852, 23, provided the template for his later representations of Susan Washington as a tragic mulatta. His references in this text to a “white slave girl,” described as “tall, with prominent features, dark hair, hazel eyes, Grecian nose... a fine set of teeth as white as snow, a turned and well-rounded chin,” can be contrasted with his description of Susan Washington in “Slave Revolt at Sea” as possessing “a majestic figure... mild blue eyes, finely-chiselled mouth, with a splendid set of teeth, [and] a turned and well-rounded chin” (32).

Sea,” namely a new opening paragraph and three additional sections at the end, revises his earlier versions of “Madison Washington” (1861, 1863) in important ways. He displaces his earlier opening sentence in the first and second versions - “Among the great number of fugitive slaves... was one whose tall figure, firm step, and piercing eye attracted... attention (*MW* 75) – to describe instead the mutiny’s notoriety in the contemporary press: “The revolt on board of the brig “Creole,” on the high seas, by a number of slaves... created at the time a profound sensation throughout the country” (*SRS* 26). Brown’s phrase on the “high seas” (*SRS* 26), privileges the “sea” as an alternative “heterotopian” space within which to perform black heroism, while his emphasis upon the involvement of a “number of slaves” situates his narration of an individual exemplar within a network of resistance.¹³⁷ Thus, he introduces a sense of historical context and national significance for this event while he emphasises his dramatic re-interpretation of Madison Washington: “Before entering upon it [the *Creole* revolt]... I will introduce to the reader the hero of the occasion” (*SRS* 26). Brown had used this phrase, “hero of the occasion” in previous descriptions of Madison Washington’s heroism, to testify to the interchangeability of black traditions of resistance to white authority.¹³⁸

Furthermore, Brown’s material which he uses to conclude “Slave Revolt at Sea” confirms Washington’s significance within a separately defined tradition of black heroism. Thus, his earlier versions, “Madison Washington” (1861, 1863) end as follows: “Not many months since, an American ship went ashore at Nassau, and among the first to render assistance to the crew was Madison Washington” (*MW* 85). In “Slave Revolt at Sea” however, as stated above, Brown omits this sentence entirely – his only cut from this text – as he chooses to satirise American racism instead: “But

¹³⁷ For an investigation in the sea and the ship as a “heterotopian space,” see Foucault (1986) 22-27.

the noble heroism of Madison Washington and his companions found no applause from the Government, then in the hands of the slaveholders. Daniel Webster... demanded of the British... the surrender of these men, claiming that they were murderers and pirates: the English, however, could not see the point” (SRS 36). These extracts reveal Brown’s substitution of an earlier emphasis upon black philanthropy, ministering to “American” needs, to an indictment of U.S. slaveholding “government” practices in comparison with British principles in favour of defending black individual rights. Thus, he maintains Douglass’s preoccupation with using British reformist politics, regardless of their motivation, to highlight American racism which reduces the black historic figure to caricature, as a “murderer and a pirate.”

Brown’s penultimate paragraph, unique to his final version, “Slave Revolt at Sea,” and cited at the start of this chapter, makes an identical point to Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave* concerning the “chattel records” (HS 175) and “American” racist practices conspiring to displace the black historic figure: “Had the “Creole” revolters been white... the... United States would have been the first to recognize their claims” (SRS 36). As stated above, Brown concludes this paragraph by celebrating Washington’s heroism within a tradition of black resistance: “The efforts of Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, and Madison Washington... will live in history, and will warn all tyrants to beware of the wrath of God and the strong arm of man” (SRS 36). Thus, his additional material provides a rallying cry to black physical resistance and is particularly fitting, given the publication of this text in a black historical volume documenting *The Negro in the American Rebellion*.

In his final paragraph to “Slave Revolt at Sea,” Brown contextualises his prophecy of black rebellion by providing a moral justification of black heroism:

¹³⁸ See footnote number 4 in this chapter.

“Every iniquity that society allows to subsist for the benefit of the oppressor is a sword with which she herself arms the oppressed. Right is the most dangerous of weapons: woe to him who leaves it to his enemies” (*SRS* 36). He broadens the specificity, not only of the *Creole* revolt but also of acts of black resistance by various historic figures, to confirm the existence of generic paradigms of injustice which extend beyond questions of race, and appeal instead to an abstract concept of morality. Thus, Brown’s text works to convert the reader to black moral authority by erasing narrative and symbolic constructions of racial difference. This last paragraph also establishes the intertextual relationship between authors in representations of the *Creole* revolt by providing the substance, in both shape and form, for Hopkins’s conclusion to “A Dash for Liberty” (1901).

This chapter demonstrates the accuracy of Russ Castronovo’s suggestion that Brown “argued against slavery and racial prejudice... by manipulating the discourses of American politics and history.”¹³⁹ This research illustrates the ways in which an analysis of Brown’s material on the *Creole* revolt borrowed heavily from, while revising substantially, Douglass’s representations in his written versions of *The Heroic Slave*. By extension, although Douglass provided the major source of literary and historical inspiration for all four writers of this mutiny, this research attests to Brown’s fundamental role in shaping versions produced by Child and Hopkins. Brown’s representation of the *Creole* revolt in his three versions, as well as his antislavery panorama, interrogated the available conventions within which to represent the black historical figure as they experimented with diverse generic forms. Brown’s “Madison Washington” (1861, 1863) provided the template for Child’s “Madison Washington” (1866) while “Slave Revolt at Sea” (1867) was the major

¹³⁹ Castronovo (1993) 526.

source for Hopkins's "A Dash for Liberty" (1901). As chapter IV attests, Brown established a narrative practice which, in particular, enabled Child and Hopkins, to critique the conventions endorsed by white racist commentators and black abolitionist authors alike (including Douglass), in their subsequent representations of the black female historic figure.

CHAPTER IV

“Fire and Romance:” Gendered
Restructuring of Abolitionist
Discourse in Lydia Maria Child’s
“Madison Washington” (1866)
and Pauline E. Hopkins’s
“A Dash for Liberty” (1901)

[Susan’s]... black hair... hung in ringlets, mild blue eyes, finely-chiselled mouth... skin marbled with the animation of life, and veined by blood given to her by her master, she stood as the representative of two races.

William Wells Brown (1861, 1863, 1867)¹

[She was]... a beautiful octoroon slave named Susan... the daughter of her master... the blood of the white race predominated in several of her ancestors. Her eyes were blue, and her glossy hair fell in soft, silky ringlets.

Lydia Maria Child (1866)²

... the long black ringlets, finely-chiselled mouth and well-rounded chin,... the marbled skin veined by her master’s blood, - representative of two races, to which did she [Susan] belong?

Pauline E. Hopkins (1901)³

This chapter investigates Lydia Maria Child’s and Pauline E. Hopkins’s representations of the black female slave figure in their various versions of the *Creole* revolt. Both authors interrogate existing accounts by black male abolitionists as, for example, they revise Frederick Douglass’s tendency towards black female objectification in *The Heroic Slave* (1853). They also exhibit close intertextual

¹ Brown (*MWPP* n.p., *MW* 81, *SRS* 32).

² Child (*MWFB*147).

³ Hopkins (*DL* 246).

relationships with William Wells Brown's texts on this mutiny by adopting parallel phrasing and a similar use of language. Child's piece was published in 1866, shortly after the American Civil War and, in direct imitation of Brown's first and second versions, was also titled "Madison Washington." This exemplary biography formed part of her popular, but financially problematic, post-emancipation educational primer, *The Freedmen's Book*.⁴ Published in 1901 and, therefore, at a later date than any text by Douglass, Brown or Child, Hopkins's short story, "A Dash for Liberty," inserted the mutiny into Reconstruction debates and race politics at the turn of the twentieth century. This version appeared in the black periodical, *Colored American Magazine*, popularly circulated in the North among an elite black audience, and for which Hopkins wrote prolifically as well as serving as editor.⁵

Child's "Madison Washington" (1866) can be distinguished from versions of the *Creole* revolt by Douglass, Brown and Hopkins on two accounts: first, this text was the only extended treatment of this mutiny produced during this period by a white female author and second, as published in a "freedmen's book," her target audience consisted of ex-slaves. By ignoring the publishing context of "Madison Washington," critics fail to discuss the ways in which Child's engagement with a readership drawn from a Southern, primarily rural community, influenced her choice of genre and narrative technique. This chapter contextualises Child's representations of black violence and the black slave body in "Madison Washington," by examining her earlier short story dramatising black insurrection, "The Black Saxons" (1846).

This research also discusses two additional texts in which Child considered the

⁴ Child, *The Freedmen's Book* (1866).

⁵ For further information on her role as editor, see the anonymous article, mostly likely written by Hopkins, "The Colored American Magazine: Edited by Pauline Hopkins," *Colored American Magazine* Mar. 1904.

Amistad and *Creole* revolts - “Letters from New-York, Number 12” (1841) and “The Iron Shroud” (1842) - to demonstrate that her earliest versions of this mutiny predated by more than a decade, texts on this event by Douglass and Brown. Child’s “Through the Red Sea into the Wilderness” (1865) acknowledges the role played by changing political, social and historical contexts in the publication of *The Freedmen’s Book* (1866). This chapter considers *The Freedmen’s Book*, alongside other educational primers produced during this period, in order to assess its generic innovation, literary effects, historical adaptation and political interpretation. Furthermore, this research analyses Child’s borrowings from Brown’s versions, “Madison Washington” (1861, 1863), in her own text of the same title published in 1866, to challenge the unbalanced critical view that he stole heavily from her material. For example, critics such as William Farrison, argue that Brown copied from Child’s short story, “The Quadroons” (1846) in his first novel, *Clotel; or, The President’s Daughter* (1853), in order to “invest... the story... with... sentimentalism.”⁶

With the exception of Theodore Ward’s *Madison* (1956), Hopkins’s “A Dash for Liberty” (1901) represents the final version of this revolt. As such, it demonstrates a close intertextual relationship with works produced by Douglass, Brown and Child as Hopkins interweaves motifs from their adaptations of the *Creole* revolt and revises their representations of black male and female slave heroism. This chapter contextualises “A Dash for Liberty” in order to investigate Hopkins’s dramatisations of black slave heroism in earlier and contemporaneous material. These include two series published in the *Colored American Magazine*, conceivably inspired by Brown’s volumes of black history, as they document the lives of “Famous Men”

⁶ Farrison, introduction, *Clotel; or, the President’s Daughter* (1853. Rpt. Farrison, ed., 1969) 250. For a detailed examination, see his article, “The Origin of Brown’s *Clotel*,” (1948) 13-23.

and “Famous Women” of the “Negro Race” (1900-02).⁷

Throughout her work, Hopkins appealed to earlier abolitionists as, for example, in her first novel, *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South* (1900), when she includes a character modelled on Douglass whom she represents as an unparalleled black male orator. Hopkins’s later article, “Heroes and Heroines in Black” (1903), critiques a canonical notion of black heroism by dismissing well-known historical figures in favour of obscure individuals. Thus, she produces a generalised template for the performance of “romantic” black heroism which eulogises, as a point of principle, “the noble trait of heroism, in the Negro race, which is defined as gallantry, valor, courage.”⁸ Throughout “A Dash for Liberty,” Hopkins revises Douglass, Brown and Child as follows: she revises Douglass’s definitions of a black revolutionary ethos based on white male values; she interrogates Brown’s attempts to produce fixed notions of a black heroic identity and, she critiques Child’s representations of the black female slave as an iconographic image in abolitionist discourse. These investigations into Hopkins’s “A Dash for Liberty” confirm her adaptation of Brown’s “Slave Revolt at Sea” (1867) and shed light on her tendency, unnoticed by critics, to revise and/or even repeat wholesale, parts of his material.⁹

⁷ Hopkins, “Famous Men of the Negro Race,” *Colored American Magazine* (Nov. 1900-Oct. 1901) and “Famous Women of the Negro Race,” *Colored American Magazine* (Nov. 1901-Oct. 1902). For a full list of the individual titles for each biography, see the bibliography to this dissertation. In order to compare Hopkins’s black profiles with those produced by Brown see his volumes of black history, *The Black Man, His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (1863. Rpt. 1969) and *The Negro in the American Rebellion: His Heroism and His Fidelity* (1867. Rpt. 1968).

⁸ *Colored American Magazine* Jan. 1903, 206.

⁹ Due to space constraints, it is impossible to provide a full list, so far as current research indicates, of Hopkins’s extensive borrowings from Brown’s material in her texts. However, it is useful to list Hopkins’s intertextual debts to Brown’s *Narrative* (1848. Rpt. Andrews, ed., 1993) and *My Southern Home* (1880. Rpt. Andrews, ed., 1993). For example, in her serialised novel, *Winona* (1902. Rpt. ed., Carby, 1988), Hopkins repeats Brown’s whipping scene from his *Narrative* (50-51)), and adapts it so that the black slave protagonist becomes a martyr figure in *Winona* (318-19, 327). Similarly, Hopkins included and rewrites Brown’s gambling scene from chapter six of *My Southern Home* (160ff.) as she

In comparison with versions of the *Creole* revolt by Douglass and Brown, Child's "Madison Washington" (1866) and Hopkins's "A Dash for Liberty" (1901) have been dismissed by critics. Carolyn L. Karcher's and Robert C. Morris's consideration of Child's *The Freedmen's Book* as an educational tract fails to research its specific biographies, while John Cullen Greusser's recent essay represents the sole examination of Hopkins's "A Dash for Liberty."¹⁰ In his analysis of Douglass's *The Heroic Slave*, Richard Yarborough considers Child's and Hopkins's material in conjunction with Brown's versions, to show the differences between these texts concerning "the handling of violence in the story, the depiction of Susan... and the role of whites."¹¹ He suggests that in relation to Brown's "Madison Washington" (1863), "Child's depiction of Susan manifests an added concern with the beautiful slave as the embodiment of endangered womanhood."¹² The investigation into the various versions produced by these three authors in the second half of this dissertation, supports Yarborough's view that "there are several instances where Brown, Child and Hopkins employ remarkably similar phrasing."¹³ However, Yarborough neglects to discuss, not only Brown's intertextual relationship with Douglass's *The Heroic Slave*, but also Child's and Hopkins's intentional restructuring of both male abolitionist authors in their representations of black female slave heroism.

transforms the black slave into a trickster figure in her serialised novel, *Hagar's Daughter* (1901-02, Rpt. Carby, ed., 1988) 27ff. Furthermore, Brown's plot and characterisation of the escaped slave, Mark Myers in chapter sixteen of *My Southern Home* (224ff) formed the basis for Hopkins's examination of black manhood in her short story, "The Test of Manhood. *A Christmas Story*," (Dec. 1902), 113-10 [published as Sarah A. Allen]. Hopkins's plagiarism of Brown's texts may be explained in terms of expediency as, Hopkins, desperately in search of material to meet her tight deadlines as a magazine editor, resorted to simple acts of stealing in her adaptations and revisions of Brown's works.

¹⁰ Karcher (1994) and Morris (1981). For research into Hopkins, see Greusser (1996) 98-118.

¹¹ Yarborough (1990) 176.

¹² *Ibid.*, 178.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 187.

Nancy Bentley uses Brown's and Child's texts on the *Creole* revolt to research representations of the "mulatto hero" as emblematic of the "symbiosis between... domestic sentimentalism and heroic adventure."¹⁴ She employs Child's "Madison Washington" to convey the problems posed by the female slave heroine's white heritage: "the sexual oppression that produces her [Susan's] Europeanized 'beauty' also makes her the victim of the next cycle of abuse."¹⁵ Bentley interprets the similarities between Child's and Douglass's representations of the black female as betraying a direct intertextual relationship: "Child is speaking of Madison Washington's wife Susan in Frederick Douglass's novel *The Heroic Slave*."¹⁶ However, it is impossible to substantiate this reading because internal evidence fails to confirm that Child had read Douglass's piece. Indeed, the wealth of similarities between them make it far more likely that Brown's "Madison Washington" (1863) was Child's major source for her own work, "Madison Washington" (1866). Bentley raises an important point concerning the varying politics of black female representation across works by these authors. She suggests that, for Douglass and Brown, Madison Washington's marrying of the "light skinned" female "who resemble[s] the conventional imperilled Mulatta slave," confirms the limitations of "the black writer's revisionism – which redescribed the slave hero but not the slave heroine."¹⁷ However, this comment oversimplifies Brown's self-conscious rejection of the "tragic mulatta plot" that formed the basis for Child's and Hopkins's reinvention of black female slave heroism.

Anne-Marie Karlsson suggests that, in contrast to Douglass, "neither Brown

¹⁴ Bentley (1993) 503.

¹⁵ Ibid., 504.

¹⁶ Ibid., 520.

¹⁷ Ibid., 516.

nor ... Child rejects the sentimental potential of the *Creole* affair.”¹⁸ Contrary to this view, it is not only clear that Douglass himself did not reject this event’s sentimental implications, but that Child extended Brown’s rhetoric to situate the black historical figure within a domestic framework. For example, in “Madison Washington” (1866), Child evokes sentimental discourse to individualise collective slave suffering: “Each had a little private history of separation and sorrow” (*MWFB* 151). This reading supports Karlsson’s argument that Child’s “Madison Washington” (1866) “follow[s]... Brown’s story closely,” while she “additionally stresses the communal efforts of the slaves to liberate themselves.”¹⁹ Karlsson recognises the interdependence between Child’s intended ex-slave audience, “the black community... [and] the purpose of...[her] publication,” which was designed “to teach literacy, foster black pride, and promote suffrage.”²⁰

As far as the debates surrounding Brown, Child and Hopkins and the legitimacy of insurrection are concerned, Karlsson suggests that Child provides “straightforward representations of violence.”²¹ However, an examination of her work, in conjunction with her earlier material documenting black heroism, reveals that Child’s position on black physical resistance was much more equivocal. Karlsson’s discussion of Hopkins’s “A Dash for Liberty,” evokes context to argue that, by 1901 “racial violence could be treated much more directly than in the earlier narratives.”²² She maintains a direct relationship in this text between heroic black violence and a defence of black female sexuality: “the strike for liberty has been

¹⁸ Karlsson (1996) 38.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 39.

replaced by a retaliatory strike against a white rapist.”²³ Both Child and Hopkins displace black male physical resistance in “Madison Washington” (1866) and “A Dash for Liberty” (1901), to explicate their preferred literary depiction of the black female slave heroine.

Child’s short story, “The Black Saxons” (1846), provides useful comparative material by which to contextualise her later representations of black slave heroism in “Madison Washington” (1866).²⁴ This text was not only published in her collection of short stories, *Fact and Fiction*, but was also re-titled and simplified for inclusion alongside “Madison Washington” in *The Freedmen’s Book* (1866), and reprinted in William C. Nell’s *Colored Patriots of the American Revolution* (1855).²⁵ “The Black Saxons” is set during the “war with Great Britain” of 1812 and documents the thwarting of a black rebellion by a white slaveholder named “Mr. Duncan.” Child’s choice of title equates black insurrection with a history of white resistance; Mr. Duncan measures the process by which ““that bold and beautiful [Saxon] race became slaves,”” against the legitimacy of black rebellion: ““Was not the spirit that gleamed forth as brave as *theirs*?””²⁶ Thus, Child legitimates black violence within a historical framework of white resistance. In imitation of Douglass and Brown, she critiques the biases within the historical record by suggesting that “Troubadours rarely sing of the defeated and conquerors write their own History,” and that ““base Saxon churls””

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ This text was published alongside “The Quadroons” in Child’s *Fact and Fiction: A Collection of Short Stories* (1846).

²⁵ Child, “Meeting in the Swamp” in *The Freedmen’s Book* (1866) 104-10 and Nell, “The Black Saxons” in *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution* (1855) 247-53. Nell writes below the title of this text that it is taken “from the writings of Lydia Maria Child” (247).

²⁶ “The Black Saxons” in *Fact and Fiction* (1846) 190, 204 (emphasis not mine).

exist “on the outskirts of history.”²⁷

Child’s setting for “The Black Saxons” in “the swampy depths of some dark forest” anticipates Harriet Beecher Stowe’s “resinous” use of the swamp in *Dred: A Tale of The Great Dismal Swamp* (1856).²⁸ For Stowe and Child, the “swamp islands” offer an alternative geographical space for social subversion as they nurture black slave heroism. Child situates black resistance in relation to nature by describing that “in this lone sanctuary of Nature... assembled many hundreds of swart figures” and, by including such symbolic references as, “the sound of the wind among the trees was like the unsheathing of swords.”²⁹ Mr. Duncan’s status as an illegitimate witness who gains entry to the meeting, having “purchased a complete suit of negro clothes, and a black mask well fitted to his face,” confirms tropes of disguise and theatricality in this text which displace whiteness and present racial identity as performance.³⁰

Following debates among the slaves as to whether they should leave their “masters” and join the British, “The Black Saxons” introduces an unnamed, and therefore, representative “bleeding youth:” “an athletic, gracefully proportioned young man... [stood]... before the assembled multitude... his back and shoulders [were] deeply gashed by the whip, and still oozing with blood... [he] exclaimed, ‘Boys! *Shall* we not murder our masters?’³¹ This extract illustrates Child’s preoccupation with black male heroism, as confirmed by violated physicality, and demonstrates the process by which this figure functions as an abolitionist icon, signifying antislavery polemics for white audience conversion. She also engages with the eroticised dynamics of the black male slave’s scarred body - emphasising his

²⁷ Ibid., 191.

²⁸ Ibid., 192. See Stowe, *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856. Rpt. Newman, ed., 1992).

²⁹ Ibid., 196, 203.

³⁰ “The Black Saxons” (1846) 192, 195.

athleticism and “graceful proportions” – to mitigate his militancy. Child deconstructs the black body as an object in order to reclaim black subjectivity by eliciting moral outrage from the spectator: his graphically portrayed physical wounds confirm his psychological suffering in enslavement. She also emphasises this particular slave’s mixed racial heritage as “the reputed son” of a white slaveowner and his exceptionality in terms which echo her later representations of Madison Washington. Thus, the description of this slave whose “high, bold forehead, and flashing eye, indicated an intellectual too active and daring for servitude,” can be compared to her description of the chief-protagonist in “Madison Washington” (1866), as “a being that would never consent to wear a chain” (*MWFB* 147).³²

Child tempers any black resolution to commit violence in “The Black Saxons,” however, by including an “aged” slave’s panegyric to education: ““But I say nigger *can* conjure buckra. How he do it? Get de knowledge!””³³ Her didacticism confirms the political importance of black literacy in order to resist white authority by ascribing to the “bleeding youth,” a “fluent speech and [an] appropriate language [which]... formed his education on another model than the rude jargon of slaves.”³⁴ Such a representation of the black male slave as exceptional in comparison with others, anticipates Child’s representation of Madison Washington as spending “every leisure moment in learning to read and write” (*MWFB* 148), and repeats Douglass’s and Brown’s construction of the heroic male slave as detached exemplar. This technique anticipates Hopkins’s “A Dash for Liberty” which differentiates the black female, Susan, from the other slaves according to education and social position: “[she

³¹ *Ibid.*, 199, 198-99 (emphasis not mine).

³² *Ibid.*, 201.

³³ *Ibid.*, 201 (emphasis not mine).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 200.

was] a lady's maid, well-educated, and can sing and dance'" (DL 245-46).

Child's references to "the docility of African temperament" in "The Black Saxons," which responds to educational rather than violent reform, illustrate in their negative associations, her frequently racist stereotyping of black character.³⁵ Child's decision to reprint this text in *The Freedmen's Book* further contextualises her emphasis upon education and political activism. Throughout *The Freedmen's Book*, Child represents black heroism prescriptively, in biographies which eulogise and simplify individuals, to elicit anticipated responses from her audience. Finally, Child's authentication of "The Black Saxons" as follows - "I have told it truly, with some filling up by imagination, some additional garniture of language" - can be mapped onto her narrative strategy in "Madison Washington" (1866) which defines abolitionist testimony as both historical discourse and literary reinvention.³⁶

Prior to her publication of *The Freedmen's Book* (1866), Child's "Letters from New-York, Number 12" (1841) and "The Iron Shroud" (1842), both dramatised black male and female resistance aboard the *Amistad* and *Creole*.³⁷ During the postbellum era she also published, "Through the Red Sea into the Wilderness" (1865), which assessed from the position of hindsight, the efficacy of white abolitionist strategies of moral suasion to secure audience conversion.³⁸ These journalistic pieces testify to Child's detachment from the black radical polemics of Douglass, Brown and Hopkins, in favour of white paternalistic practices of narrative production. Thus, in "Letter from New-York, Number 12," Child interprets the mutineers of the *Amistad* as evidence of "some remarkable individuals among the colored population," while she

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 204.

³⁷ "Letters from New-York, Number 12" (1841) and "The Iron Shroud" (1842) in Karcher, ed., (1997) 209-15; 216-22.

acknowledges her own changing attitudes to black heroism:

In the days of thoughtless romance, I might have smiled at such an idea, or have introduced it with some playful apology; such as the fact in natural history, that lions are black in Africa, and that she has her black swans also. But I have thought too deeply of this people's wrongs, and have discovered in them capabilities too high, to admit of merriment.³⁹

This excerpt confirms Child's paternalism which, despite her innovative narrative design, admits to a prior sense of "natural" black inferiority, as suggested by bestial rhetoric such as "black African lions and swans." The fact that she revises her opinions due to a sense of black suffering - "this people's wrongs" - rather than any recognition of racial equality, endorses the problematics of abolitionist discourse which predicates white audience conversion on black violation.

Furthermore, in this "Letter from New-York," Child documents her attendance at "a farewell meeting" of "the brave Cinquez, and his thirty-four associates," chaired by "Mr. A. T. Williams," their white teacher.⁴⁰ She confesses that Williams's justification for the *Amistad* mutiny "jarred slightly on my feelings" because he suggests that "they did not rise against their masters, for cruel treatment; but in consequence of being tormented by the cook, who told them they would be cut up and salted for sale."⁴¹ Williams's desire to represent black rebellion, as motivated by self-preservation, rather than as resistance to white injustice on a point of principle, displaces their heroic status and ideological justification. Child objects because it presents black slave resistance in "unheroic form:" "It knocked in the head all my *romantic* associations with Cinquez, as a brave soul, preferring death to slavery... However, I am not disposed to quarrel with fact, because it is not romance."⁴²

³⁸ "Through the Red Sea into the Wilderness," (1865) in Karcher, ed., (1997) 278-83.

³⁹ "Letters from New-York, Number 12" (1841) 210.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

Child's distinction between "fact" and "romance," interrogates the relationship between authentic representations and dramatic (re)interpretations of the black historic figure. Her "romanticising" of material adheres to white abolitionist conventions which script the black historical figure according to pre-existing definitions of black male physicality and political ideology. Her objection to Williams's interpretation, however, signals her rejection of accommodationist white abolitionism conflating black identity with passivity.

Borrowing from Douglass's and Brown's representations of black male rebellion in their versions of the *Creole* revolt, Child's "Letter from New-York" juxtaposes traditions of white and black male heroism to indict racist historical practices: "Why... should an assembly... be assured, in tones of apology, that Cinquez had not done what Washington and Kosciusko would have done... If any people on earth have a right to fight in self-defense, the captured and enslaved negro has most peculiarly that right."⁴³ Thus, Child calls upon a black abolitionist tradition of rhetorical questioning, both endorsing Douglass's exposure of "chattel records" in *The Heroic Slave* and Brown's accusation, in "Slave Revolt at Sea," that the North American government despised the *Creole* mutineers as "murderers and pirates" (SRS 36), according to racial definition. Child, however, mitigates her emphasis upon a black "right to fight" by opposing violence for religious reasons: "I believe all war to be a violation of the gospel."⁴⁴ This statement signals her ambivalent position concerning black violence, later maintained in "Madison Washington" (1866), which contradicts her above cited opinion that "the captured and enslaved negro" has the

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

right to “fight in self-defense.”⁴⁵

Throughout this “Letter from New-York,” Child contrasts paternalistic language, describing the Mendenhall rebels as “untutored Africans” and “poor children of the sun,” blessed with a “*naïve* earnestness,” with an exemplary portrait of the leader, Joseph Cinque, as the “great man.”⁴⁶ She commends the theatricality of his oratory: “His style of eloquence was perfectly electrifying. He moved rapidly... his eyes flashed, his tones were vehement, his motions graceful, and his gestures, though taught by nature, were in the highest style of dramatic art. He seems to hold the hearts of his companions chained to the magic of his voice.”⁴⁷ Thus, Child corroborates the need for a black male exemplar to subscribe to a heroic ideal according to predefined, racialised conventions: Cinque’s “natural” use of rhetoric and linguistic authority are supported by the spectacle of his physicality. His conversion of his white audience by moral suasion anticipates Douglass’s representation of Washington’s conversion of Listwell to abolitionism in *The Heroic Slave*, by his “speech... [which] rung through the chambers of his [Listwell’s] soul, and vibrated through his entire frame” (HS 181).

An editorial for the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Child’s “The Iron Shroud,” (1842) imitates Gerrit Smith’s “Address to the Slaves of the United States” (1842), which she had reprinted in this same periodical just one month earlier and had dismissed in disparaging terms.⁴⁸ This piece evokes the notoriety of the *Amistad* and *Creole* slave ship mutinies in the press to confirm that, in addition to moral suasionist arguments, “*events* are closing upon it [slavery] with tremendous power” (emphasis

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 211, 212.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 213.

⁴⁸ Smith, “Address to the Slaves of the United States,” *National Anti-Slavery Standard* 24 Feb. 1842,

not mine).⁴⁹ Child celebrated the “remarkable case of the Amistad” to debate public representations of the *Creole* revolt and to establish black traditions of insurrection: “the Amistad case... prepared the way for the Creole. A few years ago, Madison Washington would have been dismissed by the American press as a ‘base wretch,’ ‘a cut-throat,’ &c. Now the press... utters no condemnation, while very many pour forth expressions of sympathy,... [and] admiration.”⁵⁰ This text demonstrates the importance of earlier, sentimentalised and romanticised, portraits of black slave heroism which influenced and shaped public acceptance of black insurrection.

As previously stated, Child’s *The Freedmen’s Book* (1866) in which she published “Madison Washington,” was designed to educate an audience of newly freed and semi-illiterate slaves.⁵¹ Child interpreted the publication of this text in itself as an indication of the “marvellous changes” produced by abolition, the Civil War and emancipation.⁵² She confides in her article, “Through the Red Sea into the Wilderness” (1865), that the “‘Freedmen’s Book’ is printed at the best press in the country... without exciting... any distaste... over its significance with regard to my abused brother Sambo I do exult mightily.”⁵³ Therefore, this work’s publication was made possible by a changing political context, while its endorsement by a major publishing house, Ticknor & Fields, demonstrated the reformed literary tastes among readers during this later period. Child’s use of familiar language in “my abused brother Sambo” both undermines racial difference while upholding popular stereotyping of black character. Elsewhere in this letter, Child argues that, had she

149-51. For a discussion of this piece and Child’s responses, see chapter I of this dissertation.

⁴⁹ “The Iron Shroud” (1842) in Karcher ed., (1997) 217.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 219. This can be contrasted with Smith’s comments in his “Address to the Slaves of the United States” (1842) 149. See chapter I of this dissertation.

⁵¹ *The Freedmen’s Book* was also reprinted in 1968 by Arno Press and edited by James M. McPherson but it has proved impossible to obtain a copy of this edition.

⁵² “Through the Red Sea into the Wilderness” (1865) in Karcher ed., (1997) 278.

produced this work in an antebellum context, in order to “encourage the black men of the South, and to diminish prejudice against color at the North, I could have only got it before a very small public.”⁵⁴ This admission invokes the literary and social ostracism she experienced from her earlier publications such as, *An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans called Africans* (1833), which articulated black rights.⁵⁵

Child’s recognition of the differences between antebellum and post-emancipation historical contexts in *The Freedmen’s Book*, illustrates the difficulties encountered by earlier black authors, such as Douglass, in translating black heroism before a white audience, without incurring disapprobation. Brown, however, like Child, benefited from a post-Civil war context in his versions of the *Creole* revolt. Child’s celebration that, in the contemporary era - “the black man is introduced to me in every form of art and literature” - confirms this position and echoes earlier abolitionist practices: “The electricity of anti-slavery was attracted toward heroic natures, and its touch made them more heroic. Would that the record of the brave unknown could have been preserved!”⁵⁶ She, therefore, posits a direct relationship between heroic black male representation and those “early Abolitionists” who “dreamed of great miracles to be wrought by moral influence.”⁵⁷

An investigation into Child’s correspondence reveals her practical and aesthetic motivations with regard to *The Freedmen’s Book*. For example, in a letter to her publisher, James T. Fields, she defined her audience and paternalistic agenda for

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Rpt. Karcher, introduction, *An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans* by Lydia Maria Child (1833. Rpt. Karcher, ed., 1996): xix-lxii. Karcher provides further information concerning the public controversies surrounding Child’s publication of this text. In his analysis of *The Freedmen’s Book*, Morris argues that this text was “an outgrowth of some of her earlier polemical writings” which included, most prominently, *An Appeal* (193).

⁵⁶ Ibid., 278, 282.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 281.

this work: “I wrote it *solely* for the Freedmen, and aimed continually to bring myself down near to their state of cultivation” (emphasis not mine).⁵⁸ She satirised those she excluded by subverting class conventions: “I am taking more pains with it than I should if it were intended for young princes, or sprigs of what men call nobility.”⁵⁹ However, in the process of educating a black audience, she also anticipated large sales from the white community: “I think that we might with certainty calculate upon the sale of more than 500 copies among the white people.”⁶⁰ Karcher interprets this emphasis as “designed to counteract white prejudice... by showcasing examples of black literary talent and intellectual achievement.”⁶¹ She assesses Child’s appeal to a white readership as motivated, in imitation of Douglass’s and Brown’s techniques, by a determination to revise white associations of black character with “inferiority.” Child’s stated aims for this work - “to encourage, stimulate, and instruct” the Freedmen - confirm her moral designs for this text while her admission – “I hope it will perform its mission” – forestalls the religious rhetoric of evangelical conversion which Julia Griffiths used to rally antislavery support in her first volume of *Autographs for Freedom*.⁶² Child’s tailoring of her material to reach a black audience so that it would have a practical effect upon black Southern communities, far outweighs her courting of a white audience.

In letters to abolitionists, Child explained the financial and aesthetic reasons which shaped her interventions in genre in *The Freedmen’s Book* as she “re-wrote all the biographies of colored people,” to convey “as *much* as possible in the *smallest*

⁵⁸ “Lydia Maria Child to James T. Fields” (1865) in Meltzer and Holland, eds., (1982) 459.

⁵⁹ “Lydia Maria Child to William Lloyd Garrison” (1865) in Meltzer and Holland, eds., (1982) 456.

⁶⁰ “Lydia Maria Child to James T. Fields” (1865) in Meltzer and Holland, eds., (1982) 459.

⁶¹ Ibid., 496.

⁶² “Lydia Maria Child to Sarah Shaw” (1865) in Meltzer and Holland, eds., (1982) 457; Griffiths, ed., *Autographs for Freedom* (1853).

space, and to give it in a very clear and simple form” (emphasis not mine).⁶³ Her claim to authorship - “they are... so completely and entirely told in my own way, that I cannot... ascribe them to anyone else” – communicates her narrative authority to the reader.⁶⁴ Child’s selectivity - narrating “the *most interesting* facts only” - emphasised pragmatic concerns above those of aesthetics to fulfil her political obligations: “I want economy rather than beauty consulted in the whole getting up; but I want the materials to be *strong*.”⁶⁵

Child identified one or two of her biographical portraits in order to establish their accuracy; she claimed that “William and Ellen Crafts [sic] [is] the most interesting” and that “James Madison Washington [sic] is also very romantic, and every word of it true.”⁶⁶ Child’s emphasis upon the veracity of “Madison Washington” (1866) authenticates this piece according to conventions of abolitionist discourse. However, her misquoting of Washington’s name - as “James Madison Washington” rather than “Madison Washington” – exposes her literary reinterpretation of this historical figure. Child’s presentation of black heroism is supported by the contemporary reviewer, Ephraim Peabody, who saw slave testimony as the raw material of “poetry and romance:” “There is that in the lives of men who have sufficient force of mind and heart to enable them to struggle up from hopeless bondage to the position of freemen, beside which the ordinary characters of romance are dull and tame.”⁶⁷ Child’s romanticised representation of male and female slave

⁶³ “Lydia Maria Child to Sarah Shaw” (1865) and “Lydia Maria Child to William Lloyd Garrison” (1865) in Meltzer and Holland, eds., (1982) 457, 456.

⁶⁴ “Lydia Maria Child to James T. Fields” (1865) in Meltzer and Holland, eds., (1982) 459.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 459, 458-59 (emphasis not mine).

⁶⁶ Ibid., 459. It is unclear why Child refers to Madison Washington as “James Madison Washington” in this letter as this name does not appear in any of the literary or historical material on the *Creole* revolt while in her version, “Madison Washington” (1866), she names him without exception as Madison Washington.

⁶⁷ Peabody (1849) 62.

heroism in “Madison Washington” (1866) borrows, in particular, from Douglass’s interweaving of the black slave body, performance and theatricality, as well as his deployment of grandiose rhetoric and romanticised scene-setting in *The Heroic Slave* (1853).

As stated above, Karcher’s and Morris’s research investigates *The Freedmen’s Book* in detail while C. K. Doreski and Greusser examine Child only in association with Hopkins.⁶⁸ Thus, Greusser summarises Child’s narrative strategy as both paternalistic and revisionary because, while her “aims were in part didactic, she clearly regarded the volume as historically significant.”⁶⁹ Morris’s sociological study, however, contextualises Child’s *The Freedmen’s Book* by reviewing black education systems which developed in the Reconstruction period in the South. He counters charges levelled at “freedmen’s teachers” by contemporary Southern whites, that they “used their classrooms to belittle the South, to stir racial hatred, and to propagandize on behalf of the Republican party.”⁷⁰ Instead, Morris maintains, their educational practices were far more conciliatory and equivocal than has been supposed: “Southern whites tended to over-estimate the extent of ‘radical’ or ‘partisan’ instruction in bureau schools.”⁷¹ In his defence of *The Freedmen’s Book* as a “pioneering textbook for freedmen,” he appraises its content as conciliatory: “Instead of publishing... acid indictments of slavery or segregation, Mrs. Child extracted a homiletic lecture to the freedmen of Charleston [and her]... main emphasis was on the ‘duties’ of a free people.”⁷² Although published in the mid-1860s, Morris uses *The Freedmen’s Book* as

⁶⁸ Karcher (1994) and Morris (1981).

⁶⁹ Greusser (1996) 102.

⁷⁰ Morris (1981) 177. He argues as a general principle that “Textbooks written especially for freedmen are excellent sources of information on exactly what message authors and publishers wanted to convey to those making the welcome but difficult adjustment to a new condition” (188).

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 181.

a case study for teaching practices because it is “representative of the type of teaching materials used throughout the reconstruction era.”⁷³ However, any examination of this text in comparison with other educational tracts produced contemporaneously, reveals their competing agendas of selectivity and interpretation.

Child’s major competitor for *The Freedmen’s Book* was the religious philanthropic organisation, the American Tract Society, which published a series of “Freedman’s Readers.”⁷⁴ They monopolised the freedmen’s schools market with the “exception...[of] Child’s *The Freedmen’s Book*” because their texts were published at minimum cost.⁷⁵ Therefore, their superior financial resources meant that Child’s text “could not compete financially” as “freedpeople were too poor... to purchase the book.”⁷⁶ Despite these practical difficulties, however, Karcher confirms that *The Freedmen’s Book* was a major success as it was “a clear preference” among black students because it “analysed and historicised as well as articulated the experience of oppression.”⁷⁷ Morris identifies freedmen’s textbooks as a genre characterised by the following motifs: the downplaying of the adverse effects of slavery, a sympathy towards and forgiveness of ex-slaveholders, an endorsement of the view that, for black freedmen, “moral and economic improvements were their only weapons against race prejudice” and, a focus upon black historical figures and the production of

⁷³ Ibid., 182.

⁷⁴ According to Morris, the American Tract Society’s “publication policies concerning slavery precipitated serious divisions within the organization” as “abolitionism was one of the ‘isms’ [they]... avoided” (189, 188). In 1858, the Boston branch of the American Tract Society “declared independence” from New York and afterwards bought materials “from antislavery publishers” (189).

⁷⁵ Ibid., 190. Morris confirms that “Prices were set low enough to encourage widespread use” (198).

⁷⁶ Karcher reported that Child asked Lewis Tappan, founder of the American Missionary Association, if they would use her book in freedmen’s schools; they agreed on condition that should would “‘cut out several articles, and in lieu thereof insert orthodox tracts’ on Christian doctrine, Child indignantly declined” (ibid., 504).

⁷⁷ Ibid., 503, 504.

“heroic” narratives for individual and communal identities.⁷⁸ Karcher’s definition of Child’s *The Freedmen’s Book* recognises its generic diversity and broadens Morris’s definition to suggest that it was a “Primer, anthology, history text, and self-help manual rolled into one.”⁷⁹

A comparison of *The Freedmen’s Book* (1866), with the *Freedman’s Third Reader* (1865-6) produced by the American Tract Society, sheds light on Child’s intervention into this genre which can be summarised as follows: an innovation in abolitionist race politics; a relocation of historical discourse; an experimentation with form, an engagement with her readership (black and white); and an interrogation of the literary conventions within which to articulate black male and female slave heroism. The *Freedman’s Third Reader* (1865-6) was edited by Israel P. Warren, an American Tract Society member, who had produced two earlier texts, *The Freedman’s Spelling Book* and *The Freedman’s Second Reader*.⁸⁰ These volumes were much less radical than Child’s *The Freedmen’s Book*: not only because they referred to the “freedmen” in the third-person, rather than addressing them directly, but also because they included didactic portraits of black domesticity designed to inculcate a sense of social responsibility for a young audience, according to white paternalistic constructions of black identity.⁸¹ The *Freedman’s Third Reader* is the

⁷⁸ Ibid., 191, 193.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Warren, ed., *Freedman’s Third Reader* (1865-6. Rpt. 1980). This text was produced by the more radical Boston branch of the American Tract Society.

⁸¹ Warren, ed., *The Freedman’s Spelling Book* (1865-6. Rpt. 1980) and Warren, ed., *The Freedman’s Second Reader* (1865-6. Rpt. Warren, ed., 1980). *The Freedman’s Spelling Book* contained very little pertaining specifically to race politics with the exception of its prefatory “Note:” “while spelling and reading are the first thing to be taught in a spelling-book, it is believed that much practical information is also imparted, which cannot fail to be of great value to the freedmen in the new condition in to which Providence has raised them” (1865-6, 2). Thus, this text anchors an acquisition of literacy with black individual rights as well as religious dispensation. This text’s references to the “freedmen” in the third person encourages the view that this text was aimed exclusively at a white audience while Child’s dedication of *The Freedmen’s Book* “To the Freedmen” confirms her radical and direct appeal to a black readership. *The Freedman’s Second Reader* combined religious instruction with information

most complex of the series and includes complementary biographical material to Child's *The Freedmen's Book*. Morris establishes the *Freedman's Third Reader* as the major competitor to Child's text because both provide "discussions of contemporary issues."⁸² His recommendation that, while the *Freedman's Third Reader* "stressed racial accommodation, it did include selections that were likely to antagonise some Southern whites," argues for a radical polemic which close readings of this text fail to substantiate.⁸³ However, Morris's point that the readers produced by this society were "extremely mild" in comparison with *The Freedmen's Book's* "antislavery tenor," holds good upon an examination of internal evidence.⁸⁴

At the outset, the *Freedman's Third Reader* advertises its religious content, as part of a series of "Christian Readers" aimed to "supply the Freedmen with religious truth," and political importance, by combining "interesting biographies of colored persons" with "elementary instruction in respect to the history and government of our country."⁸⁵ This work supports Morris's interpretation of American Tract Society educational texts as presenting "Negro biographies" according to prescribed conventions which deflate any potential radicalism: they present heroic individuals as typically "pious, industrious, humble, and eager to obtain an education."⁸⁶ Thus, the *Freedman's Third Reader* combines accounts of "Creation" and various parables with

concerning the "freedman's condition;" for example, "Lesson XV" was titled "The Freedman's Home" and included an illustration of a prosperous black family which adhered to paternalistic dictates associating "freedmen" with sentimentality and adopted a highly didactic tone: "Boys and girls, do you know that you can all help to make just such a home as this? If you will listen to me, I will tell you how" (1865-6) 36.

⁸² Morris (1981) 199.

⁸³ Ibid., 199-200.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 202. Morris argues that freedmen's texts produced by the American Tract Society "contained few of the passionate antislavery references found in... Child's *The Freedmen's Book*... which dealt explicitly with the worst aspects of the South's peculiar institution."

⁸⁵ *Freedman's Third Reader* (1865-6) ii.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

a narration of black and white heroism, political upheaval and colonisation.⁸⁷

By comparison, Child's variant choice of title - *The Freedmen's Book* - alerts the reader to her intention to reach a community of "freedmen" rather than the isolated individuals preferred by the American Tract Society's focus upon the "freedman." Child's opening epigraph situates her tract within a context of radical abolitionism by citing the poet and activist, John Greenleaf Whittier: "O dark, sad millions,.../And Freedom's Song/Breaks the long silence of your night of wrong" (*FB* i). Thus, she foregrounds black injustices and moral justification, rather than a white philanthropic struggle. Child's dedication of *The Freedmen's Book* - "To the Loyal and Brave Captain Robert Small, Hero of the Steamboat Planter" (*FB* ii) - confirms her determination to reach a black audience, regardless of intervening white educators, and to inculcate in her readership a sense of racial pride. Child's emphasis upon shaping her material to benefit her black audience counters the illustration reproduced on the *Freedman's Third Reader's* frontispiece. This lithograph depicts a white male teacher, surrounded by black children represented according to minstrelsy conventions, while notices behind him titled - "The Ten Commandments" and "The Lord's Prayer" - endorse religious values as fundamental to black citizenship.⁸⁸

Child's "Preface" "To The Freedmen" (*FB* iii) in *The Freedmen's Book* signals her radical position concerning audience and method of distribution: "I have prepared this book expressly for you, with the hope that those of you who can read will read it aloud to others, and that all of you will derive fresh strength and courage

⁸⁷ The *Freedman's Third Reader* incorporates an extended three part section on the history of North America, variously titled: "The Discovery," "How it was Settled" and "The Revolution." See Lessons XXIX, XXX and XXXI, 57-62. In explication of the causes of the American Revolution, Lesson XXX stated: "The British king and parliament cruelly oppressed the American people" (60). This text reveals its bias towards white heroism by advertising in its prefatory "Note," its dramatisation for the benefit of the "Freedmen" the "life and works of ABRAHAM LINCOLN." See "Lesson LIX" 110ff and "Lesson LX" 111ff.

from this true record of what colored men have accomplished under great disadvantages” (*FB* iii). Thus, Child is committed to a black audience, in practical as well as aesthetic terms, as she is realistic about the limited literacy and funds of ex-slaves and recommends its oral and written dissemination in the black community. Child also specifies black manhood – a “record of colored men” - and articulates their rights to citizenship in the Reconstruction era. In her appeal to a black readership, Child’s tone is characterised by condescension and self-sacrifice as she demonstrates her financial disinterestedness - “I take nothing for my services” (*FB* iii) – and authenticates her right to give advice, by describing herself as “Your old friend” (*FB* iii).

Karcher interprets the *Freedman’s Third Reader*’s black heroic biographies as accommodationist in advancing religious values and nationalistic rhetoric, represented as “evangelical piety” and “unquestioning patriotism.”⁸⁹ She argues that the editor, Warren, diminished black agency and displaced black violence by portraying his historical figures as “recipients of white bounty” whose “acts of rebellion” were “minimise[d].”⁹⁰ This view is borne out by close analysis as, for example, Warren’s first slave biography, “How Father Henson Learned to Read,” betrays a didactic focus upon Henson’s attainment of literacy solely so that he “can read His [God’s] holy Word.”⁹¹ Similarly, his biography of “Phillis Wheatley” endorses spiritual conversion as indispensable to black humanity: “The life of Phillis Wheatley gives most interesting proof of... the love of Christ, - to raise one from the lowest position.”⁹²

⁸⁸ *Freedman’s Third Reader* (1865-6) n.p.

⁸⁹ Karcher (1994) 502, 503.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 503. Karlsson notes that “the account of the *Amistad* captives devotes one sentence to their uprising.” However, this is not unique as earlier representations of the *Creole* revolt by Douglass and Brown were similarly equivocal in their discussion of the legitimacy of black violent rebellion.

⁹¹ *Freedman’s Third Reader* (1865-6) 22.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 77.

However, Warren's biography, the "Life of Paul Cuffee," is much more radical than Karcher's assessment allows because it not only condemns white "transatlantic practices of black kidnapping – Cuffee's father was "dragged from his home in Africa" – but also justifies Northern black activism by acknowledging the race prejudice suffered by "freemen:" "Paul... saw and felt the injustice under which the free people of color in Massachusetts labored, and resolved to make an effort in behalf of his race."⁹³ However, this biography's radical race politics are ultimately tempered by its endorsement of colonisation schemes which Douglass had condemned earlier in speeches on the *Creole* revolt: "Paul... made several voyages to Africa, and... assist[ed] in colonizing some of his people there."⁹⁴ The *Freedman's Third Reader* also includes an extended biography of "Toussaint L'Ouverture," an enduringly significant literary and historical figure for Douglass, Brown, Child and Hopkins. This work's description of Toussaint as having "no feelings of revenge to gratify" defines black heroism according to non-violence and echoes Child's view that Madison Washington "fought for freedom, not for revenge" (*MWFB* 152).⁹⁵ Although, in contrast to *The Freedmen's Book*, the *Freedman's Third Reader* makes no mention of the *Creole* revolt, it does, however, summarise the rebellion of "The Amistad Captives."⁹⁶

Child's *The Freedmen's Book* introduces her black readership to "model" black intellectuals, activists, writers and revolutionaries by the following

⁹³ Ibid., 50, 52.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 55. See Douglass, "Slavery, the Slumbering Volcano" (1849. Rpt. Blassingame, ed., 1979) 2: 148-58.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 83.

⁹⁶ This work describes how "the slaves... had broken their chains, risen upon the crew, and taken possession of the vessel" (ibid., 105) while also describing Joseph Cinque in exemplary terms as "a man of extraordinary natural capacity." In this text, a biography of Frederick Douglass reduces his militancy to a condescending description of his oratorical skills as he is noted for his conversion to Christianity and "public speaking in behalf of the slave" (208).

“biographies:” “Ignatius Sancho,” “Benjamin Banneker,” “Toussaint L’Ouverture” and “Phillis Wheatley,” “Madison Washington” and “Frederick Douglass.”⁹⁷ In addition to the texts Child contributed herself, she also included material by radical white abolitionists and writers, such as William Lloyd Garrison and Harriet Beecher Stowe, as well as many black authors: Frances E. W. Harper, Frederick Douglass, Phillis Wheatley, George Horton and Harriet Jacobs prominent among them.⁹⁸ The “contents” page to *The Freedmen’s Book* records that the “names of the colored authors are marked with an asterisk” (*FB* v). Child’s recognition of a black narrative voice constitutes the major innovation of *The Freedmen’s Book* in comparison to the *Freedman’s Third Reader*, because it demonstrates her practical acknowledgement of black educational equality and her interest in endorsing a black narrative tradition.

Karlsson interprets Child’s inclusion of black authors in *The Freedmen’s Book* as “offering a variety of role models for the freedpeople to emulate” and legitimating a radical race politics to inspire resistance to “inferiority drummed into [them] by racist ideology.”⁹⁹ Karcher’s definition of Child’s texts on Madison Washington and William and Ellen Crafts in particular - as “fiction [rather] than biography” - provides a useful starting point from which to consider Child’s manipulation of genre expectations and structural ambiguity.¹⁰⁰ However, Karcher criticises Child for

⁹⁷ *The Freedmen’s Book* (1866) 1ff., 14ff., 33ff., 86ff., 147ff., 156ff. Child compiled all of these biographies herself.

⁹⁸ For example, Child reprinted an unequivocal poem by Frances E. W. Harper entitled, “Ethiopia,” which exhibits a radical sense of injustice and suffering: “Redeemed from dust and freed from chains,/Her [Ethiopia’s] sons shall lift their eyes;/From cloud-capt hills and verdant plains/Shall shouts of triumph rise” (*MWFB* 24). She also entered into correspondence with Douglass requesting his permission to divulge the full story of his escape. While he commended “with grateful pleasure” her texts “on the question of slavery” he politely refused: “Use the story of my life in any way you see fit. I am sure it will not, in your hand, be employed to the injury of myself or the cause of my people. I do not think it well to make known the manner of my escape from slavery. No good end could be served by such publication and some evil might possibly come of it.” “Frederick Douglass to Lydia Maria Child” (1865. Rpt. Foner, ed., 1950) 4: 171, 170.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 497.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 507.

excluding “among her African American authors a voice summoning the slaves to take up arms against their oppressors.”¹⁰¹ Morris also condemns Child’s black heroic portraits on the grounds that they confirm the “character traits she sought to encourage among Southern blacks... - industry, morality, charity, humility, and moderation.”¹⁰² Both critical views can be shown to be reductive by close readings of the radical polemics of Child’s biographies, written not only written by black contributors but by herself.

A fundamental difference between *The Freedmen’s Book* and the *Freedman’s Third Reader*, consists in the latter’s emphasis upon an audience of white educated teachers, as set against Child’s production of a text for independent use by black readers within black communities. She summarises her narrative approach in *The Freedmen’s Book* as following a “continuous plan:”

[*The Freedmen’s Book*] begins with Ignatius Sancho, because he was the *first* intelligent black of whom we have a record. It passes along through the groans and aspirations of slaves [and] the prayers... of their friends, till Toussaint L’Ouverture makes an *opening* for them. Then Emancipation in the West Indies. Then fugitive slaves hunted in the U.S. Then Emancipation in District of Columbia. Then Lincoln’s Proclamation. Then jollification and jubilee.¹⁰³

Thus, Child’s conception of this work originated in black identity and consciousness, as she “records” the life of Ignatius Sancho and describes Toussaint’s “opening,” to document black agency in the performance of exceptional heroism. Child’s emphasis upon the “hunted fugitive slave” juxtaposes white barbarous practices with an

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 501.

¹⁰² Morris (1981) 205. He interprets Child’s text as politically accommodationist because “despite her militant abolitionism, [she]... produced a textbook almost as moderate as those published by the ATS. Close analysis of her work fails to support the charge that she taught racial hatred or encouraged blacks to abuse their newly acquired freedom... she advised freedmen to forgive their masters and to return to work on the plantation” (206). Karcher corroborates this view by describing this text as a movement towards “less overtly political modes of discourse” as Child aimed “to help equip the freedpeople for their new lives, to mobilize public support for black suffrage, and to create the consciousness appropriate for a multiracial egalitarian society.” See Karcher (1994) 489, 491.

¹⁰³ Ibid. “Lydia Maria Child to James T. Fields.” 459.

acknowledgement of British and North American “emancipation.” Although they possess an ironical undertone, the connotations of “jollification and jubilee,” exhibit white abolitionist tendencies to oversimplify the limited practical effects of Lincoln’s 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, which would come to fruition in the 1865 Fifteenth Amendment, in the early Reconstruction period.

In *The Freedmen’s Book*, Child presents black individuals as “racial representatives” in order to inculcate race pride in her black audience and to raise political consciousness in a recognition of individual rights. For example, she concludes her biography, “Benjamin Banneker,” by stating that “the friends of freedom have quoted him everywhere as a proof of the mental capacity of Africans” (*FB* 23). In imitation of the *Freedman’s Third Reader*, however, her extended portrait of “Toussaint L’Ouverture” highlights black humanity rather than violent retribution as “he made it the business of his life to conquer freedom for his race; but never in a bloodthirsty spirit” (*FB* 47). Furthermore, Child parallels Toussaint’s concern with the black family – “No trait... was stronger than his domestic affections” (*FB* 48) – in her version of the *Creole* revolt which documents Madison Washington’s quest for “domestic happiness” (*MWFB* 153). However, her representation of violence in “Toussaint L’Ouverture,” is much more graphic than in “Madison Washington:” “The blacks, infuriated by revenge and dread of Slavery, killed white men, women, and children without mercy” (*FB* 69). Her concluding remarks - “Well may the Freedmen... take pride in Toussaint... [because] by the greatness of his character and achievements [he] proved the capabilities of Black Men” (*FB* 83) – demonstrate *The Freedmen’s Book’s* cultivation of black male heroism in terms similar to those argued

by Brown in his black historical volumes.¹⁰⁴

The biography, “William and Ellen Crafts,” can be compared to “Madison Washington” in *The Freedmen’s Book*, not only because Child discussed them together in her correspondence, but also because similarities of characterisation exist between representations of black female heroism, in the “quadroon girl” (*FB* 180), Ellen Craft, and Susan Washington, “the beautiful octoroon slave” (*MWFB* 147). Child’s physical description of Ellen - “Her handsome dark eyes were apt to attract attention; her hair was straight, and her skin was so nearly white” (*FB* 180) – can be contrasted with her portrait of Susan, cited at the start of this introduction: “the blood of the white race predominated... Her eyes were blue, and her glossy dark hair fell in soft, silky ringlets” (*MWFB* 147). The similarities between these descriptions confirm the existence of conventions, within abolitionist discourse, for presenting the black female as a mixed race figure. Both biographies document acts of black male and female heroism, not only to preserve black domestic ties, but also to protect the black female slave from sexual violation, variously described in these texts as the “insult and wrong” (*MW* 147) or “degrading influences of Slavery” (*FB* 180). Thus, both works present the black female slave according to conventions associated with “true” white womanhood as they are portrayed in terms of moral and physical purity. Child’s didacticism is illustrated in her final statement to this biography: “I think all who read this romantic but true story will agree with me in thinking that few white people have shown as much intelligence, moral worth, and refinement of feeling as the fugitive slaves William and Ellen Crafts” (*FB* 204). Thus, Child maps “romantic” tropes onto abolitionist testimony in order to dramatise black identity according to white paternalistic conventions. She also emphasises her appeal to both black and

¹⁰⁴ See Brown, *The Black Man* (1863) and *The Negro in the American Rebellion* (1867).

white audiences as they are invited, regardless of racial identity, to recognise black heroism on equal terms.

Child's "Advice from an Old Friend" which concludes *The Freedmen's Book* explicates her privileged position, as "an Old Friend," and her focus upon black self-help in emancipation: "I have made this book to encourage you to exertion by examples of what colored people are capable of doing" (FB 269). Thus, Child appeals exclusively to her black readership to posit a direct relationship between education and political activism. She argues that her biographies "prove that the power of *character* can overcome all external disadvantages, even the most crushing of all disadvantages, Slavery" (FB 269, emphasis not mine). In corroboration of Morris's earlier view that Child ultimately advocates accommodationist politics, she adopts a superior tone by recommending their need to be "sober, industrious, and honest" (FB 270) to form an exemplary black character. She does, however, broaden the political context for this work in acknowledging the wider social implications of individual based reform: "while you are serving your own interests, you will be helping on the emancipation of poor weary slaves in other parts of the world" (FB 270).

Child's decision, throughout *The Freedmen's Book*, to direct her "advice" to a black male readership, parallels Douglass's and Brown's preferred audience for their versions of the *Creole* revolt: "Never allow yourselves to say or do anything in the presence of women of your own color which it would be improper for you to say or do in the presence of... white ladies" (FB 270-71). Thus, she endorses prescriptive and racist notions of "suitable black behaviour," rooted in narrow-minded notions of "refined" white society. Although, in general, she advises that black men should hold

positions of responsibility, in matters concerning educational systems and public administration she favours female employment: “it would be wise to have both men and women on the committees” (*FB* 271). Child problematises her gender politics further by representing black female sexual violation as a matter for concern solely between white and black men: “If they [former masters] propose to women such connections as used to be common... teach them that freedwomen not only have the legal power to protect themselves... they [also]... have pride of character” (*FB* 274). Thus, an examination into Child’s *The Freedmen’s Book* contextualises the politics of her biography, “Madison Washington,” as she adheres to abolitionist conventions to narrate the black female. In direct contrast, Hopkins’s “A Dash for Liberty” confirms her literary reinterpretation and innovations of the black female slave in representations of Susan Washington.

Child’s “Madison Washington” as published in *The Freedmen’s Book* (1866), opens with a statement which develops a generic model of heroism in its non-specificity: “This man was a slave, born in Virginia” (*MWFB* 147). The immediate accessibility of this phrase introduces Child’s narrative practice which adopts a basic and economic use of language to encourage her intended ex-slave audience. Child’s unchallenging prose style confirms her preference for presenting material in an accessible and simplified form to educate a black readership, which was subsequently rejected by Hopkins who condemned such a stance in “A Dash for Liberty” as prescriptive. Child’s innovations upon previous versions of the *Creole* revolt in “Madison Washington” can be explained in terms of its publication in a “freedmen’s” educational primer. Thus, her emphasis upon Madison’s acquisition of literacy -

“He... occupied every leisure moment in learning to read and write” – paraphrases Brown’s text - “His leisure hours were spent in learning to read and write” (*MW* 76) – and reiterates the importance of raising black consciousness by education. This opening paragraph also confirms Child’s intertextual relationship with Brown as, for example, his description in “Madison Washington” (1861, 1863) that “Nature had treated him [Washington] as a favorite” (*MW* 75), can be compared to her assessment that “Nature had... made him too intelligent and energetic to be contented in Slavery” (*MWFB* 147). Thus, in contrast to Hopkins’s “A Dash for Liberty” (1901) which relied heavily upon Brown’s “Slave Revolt at Sea” (1867), there can be no doubt that, for “Madison Washington” (1866), Child read and borrowed extensively from Brown’s versions of the same title.¹⁰⁵ Overall, both Brown’s and Child’s versions of “Madison Washington” testify to the didactic function of exemplary black biography which served to inspire black audiences to emulation, both during the Civil War and in its immediate aftermath.

Child’s “Madison Washington,” destabilises Douglass’s and Brown’s constructions of black male and female slave heroism and anticipates Hopkins’s interrogation of gender categories in “A Dash for Liberty.” Although her representation of Susan Washington legitimates literary stereotypes of black female identity according to tropes of the “tragic mulatta” plot, Child also undermines the conventions established by black male abolitionist discourse:

She [Susan] was the daughter of her master, and the blood of the white race predominated in several of her ancestors. Her eyes were blue, and her glossy dark hair fell in soft silky ringlets. Her lover was an unmixed black, and he was also handsome. His features were well formed, and his large dark eyes were very bright and expressive. He had a manly air, his motions were easy and dignified, and altogether he looked like a being

¹⁰⁵ Child could not have based her version on Brown’s last version, “Slave Revolt at Sea” (1867) simply because it was published a year later than “Madison Washington” (1866).

that would never consent to wear a chain (*MWFB* 147).

This extract exhibits parallel phrasing and content which confirm Child's intertextual borrowings from Brown's "Madison Washington" (1861, 1863). Her description of Madison as an "unmixed black" simplifies and abbreviates Brown's explanation that he was "of African parentage, with no mixture in his blood" (*MW* 75), and endorses a similar politics of black separatism affirming black independence. Similarly, her references to Madison's "bright and expressive eyes," simplifies Brown's articulation of the "fascination in the gaze of his finely cut eyes" (*MW* 75) in order to make her text more accessible to her audience. In this excerpt, Child's major innovation upon Brown's text consists in her displacement of the black male slave's centrality to heroic resistance and an independent articulation of black rights. The fact that Child not only describes Susan first, but also introduces Washington in relative terms as "Her lover," restructures Douglass's and Brown's interpretation of the black female as a secondary consideration. Thus, close examinations of their versions of the *Creole* revolt reveal that, for Douglass Susan is a "poor thing" (*HS* 180), while for Brown, her identity is inseparable from Madison's and qualified in those terms: "[Susan was] the object of his [Madison's] affections... every way worth of his love" (*MW* 78). Child omits this statement while Hopkins incorporates the phrase - "may she prove worthy" (*DL* 244) in "A Dash for Liberty" for satirical effect. "Madison Washington" by Child establishes a sentimental framework which articulates black male heroism as secondary to black female characterisation.

In conjunction with the quotations which open this chapter, the above citation confirms remarkable similarities between Brown's and Child's representations of the female slave body: Child copies Brown's description of Susan's "mild blue eyes"

(*MW* 81) and “black hair which hung in ringlets” (*MW* 81). However, at a more complex level, while Child’s emphasis that “the blood of the white race predominated” in Susan can be contrasted with Brown’s comment that “veined by blood given to her by her master, she stood as the representative of two races” (*MW* 81), both writers betray a different emphasis. Thus, while Child condemns white male culpability by presenting Susan’s mixed racial identity, Brown exposes the constructed nature of fixed categories by introducing her ambiguous status as “representative of two races.” Both authors, however, juxtapose Susan’s fragmented racial identity with Madison’s possession of an “unmixed” heritage.

In contrast to Brown’s versions published in his volumes of black history, Child’s “Madison Washington” cultivates both white and black audiences; she provides generalised statements intended both to educate her black audience and manipulate white interpretation. For example, she states that “a handsome woman, who is a slave, is constantly liable to insult and wrong, from which an enslaved husband has no power to protect her” (*MWFB* 147). This explanation is unnecessary if her intended readership for *The Freedmen’s Book* is solely represented by a recently emancipated black audience, because they would have had far greater and more personal insights into black female violation during slavery than she could have done. Therefore, this extract may suggest Child’s determination to educate a white audience concerning black experience by adopting abolitionist conventions of sentimental rhetoric. She adopts this approach later in “Madison Washington” in a didactic explanation that “there are many difficulties in the way of slaves communicating with each other at a distance” (*MWFB* 148). Elsewhere in “Madison Washington,” Child employs sentimental discourse to dramatise the suffering of vast numbers of slaves in

addition to her black heroic exemplar: “There was many a bleeding heart there, beside the noble heart that was throbbing in the bosom of Madison Washington” (*MWFB* 151). Thus, in this text, Child situates the black male exemplar in a context of black communal suffering in order to emphasise the social obligations of individuals.

Although she portrays Susan in many respects as a conventional heroine, Child attributes greater agency to the black female slave when compared to material by Douglass and/or even Brown. Therefore, in “Madison Washington” (1866), the black female slave plays an integral role in Madison’s escape to the North: Child states that “His wife knew where he was” (*MWFB* 148) and “succeeded in conveying some messages to him” (*MWFB* 148). She also portrays Susan as intent upon self-preservation rather than self-sacrifice: “She persuaded him not to wait for a chance to take her with him” (*MWFB* 148). Therefore, these extracts diminish a sense of Susan’s passivity and “tragic mulatta” plight as they instead articulate her indispensable role in the performance of black male heroism. By comparison, Brown portrays Madison in isolation as he confides that ““I escaped to the woods, where I remained during many weary months. As I could not bring my wife away, I would not come without her”” (*MW* 77). However, in contrast to Brown’s and Child’s texts, Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave* provides a radical vision of male and female relationships: Madison narrates that ““my wife came laden with provisions... We mutually determined... that I should remain in the vicinity”” (*HS* 192). This excerpt complicates Douglass’s dismissal of the black female slave in *The Heroic Slave* by portraying black male heroism as indebted to black female resistance. In “Madison Washington,” Child adapts Brown’s representation of Madison’s resolution - ““Liberty is worth nothing to me while my wife is a slave”” (*MW* 78) - as follows:

“freedom does me no good unless Susan can share it with me” (*MWFB* 149). These excerpts demonstrate that both Brown and Child predicated black masculinity upon black domesticity and the preservation of the black female body.

Child’s narration of Madison’s return for Susan in “Madison Washington” dramatises black heroism:

He fought hard, and knocked down three of them in his efforts to escape. But they struck at him with their bowie-knives till he was so faint with loss of blood that he could resist no longer... His long-cherished hope of being reunited to his dear wife vanished away in the darkness of despair (*MWFB* 151).

This extract can be compared with Brown’s descriptions in “Madison Washington” (1861, 1863):

... the heroic slave did not yield until he with a club had laid three of his assailants upon the ground with his manly blows; and not then until weakened by loss of blood (*MW* 80).

Both authors represent Madison Washington as a black heroic exemplar who prefers death to slavery in his attempt to “escape with his wife” (*MW* 80). Brown’s text borrows from Douglass’s rhetoric in *The Heroic Slave* by describing Washington similarly as “the heroic slave,” capable of superlative heroism in “manly blows.” Therefore, Brown places much greater emphasis upon black male physicality and generic templates for the performance of black heroism than does Child, as he appeals to universalised, or racially neutralised, codes of masculinity. By comparison, Child’s version situates Washington’s status as heroic exemplar within a romanticised and sentimental framework: phrases such as “long-cherished hope,” “dear wife” and “darkness of despair” foreground black female experiences.

Furthermore, there are major points of comparison between Brown’s and Child’s representations of the slave ship mutiny in their versions. In Brown we have:

Madison had struck him [Hewell] with a capstan bar... The battle was

Madison's element... "If the fire of heaven was in my hands, I would throw it at these cowardly whites," said he... But in this he did not mean revenge, only the possession of his freedom and that of his fellow-slaves" (*MW* 83).

This can be contrasted with Child's text:

Madison Washington struck at him [Hewell] with a capstan bar, and he fell dead at his feet. The first and second mates both attacked Madison at once. His strong arms threw them upon the deck wounded, but not killed. He fought for freedom, not for revenge; and as soon as they had disarmed the whites and secured them safely, he called out to his accomplices not to shed blood (*MWFB* 152).

Both texts dramatise black male physical resistance as motivated by ideological principles and confined within acceptable limits, as Brown and Child document Washington's violence in terms of a fight for individual and communal "freedom" rather than a desire for "revenge." In an acknowledgement of a tradition established by Douglass, both authors abbreviate and minimise their representations of black violence, symbolised metonymically in both extracts by the "capstan bar." Both authors interpret this event in terms of Madison's transcendence of an enslaved to a liberated and empowered position: Child writes that "The man who had been a chained slave half an hour before was now master of the vessel" (*MWFB* 153).¹⁰⁶ Child's statement that, after the mutiny - "With his [Madison's] own hands he dressed the wounds of the crew" (*MWFB* 152) – repeats, almost verbatim, Brown's language in "Madison Washington" and, thereby confirms that both writers played down black militancy in favour of their humanity.¹⁰⁷ Thus, Child's focus on Washington's magnanimity destabilises rigid gender constructions and feminises his "manly character" by emphasising his nursing qualities. Regardless of their publication across a variety of historical contexts, Child's and Brown's versions of this revolt

¹⁰⁶ Brown's text reads: "he that had worn the fetters an hour before was master of the brig Creole" (*MW* 84).

were as equivocal as Douglass's in their representation of black violence.

However, Brown and Child introduce a twist to the familiar story of the *Creole* revolt as they narrate the attempt of the white crew to "regain possession of the vessel and the slaves" (*MWFB* 154), following Madison's insurrection. This event was undocumented by any source, including government testimony, newspaper reportage or even Douglass's versions, and was omitted subsequently by Hopkins. Therefore, it is likely that it was an invention of Brown's which was then copied by Child into "Madison Washington" (1866). In imitation of Brown's earlier version, Child's text reads: "The blacks were so exasperated by this attempt, that they wanted to kill all the whites on board. But Captain Washington called out to them: 'We have got our liberty, and that is all we have been fighting for. Let no more blood be shed!.... They have shown that they are not worthy... but let us be magnanimous'" (*MWFB* 154).¹⁰⁸ Thus, this "attempt" by whites to recover the *Creole* enables both writers to justify black insurrection as they juxtapose white barbarism with black humanity: the crew members were clearly motivated by revenge while the black slaves consistently fought only for "liberty." Furthermore, Washington's speech, which advises non-violence and pleads for white survival, confirms his exemplary status and superior morality in comparison both with the black slaves and white crew.

Child's "Madison Washington" (1866) interrogates the abolitionist connection between the black slave body and performance as she disrupts the straightforward and highly presumptuous relationship between appearance and reality posited by white racist discourse. She extends Brown's text which reads -"The miniature saws and

¹⁰⁷ Brown's text reads: "with his [Madison's] own hands he dressed their wounds" (*MW* 153).

¹⁰⁸ Brown's text reads: "Nothing but the heroism of the negro leader saved the lives of the white men on this occasion, for as the slaves were rushing into the cabin, Madison threw himself between them... exclaiming, 'Stop! no more blood... They have proved themselves unworthy... still let us be

files were faithfully used when the whites were asleep” (*MW* 81) – to suggest that the slaves “still continued to wear their chains, and no one suspected that they could slip their hands and feet out at their pleasure” (*MWFB* 152). Thus, Child intimates black strategies which subvert white paradigms of representation objectifying the black male and female body as spectacle for white consumption. She extends Brown’s references to Madison’s “selection of men who were to act parts in the great drama” (*MW* 81) to emphasise role-playing, masking and discursive slippages between white abolitionist images of black subjectivity and white interpretation.

Child’s ending to “Madison Washington” borrows from Brown’s focus upon a romance plot as she maintains elements of suspense. Thus, she substitutes Brown’s “little did he [Madison] think that the woman for whom he had risked his liberty and life would meet him at the breakfast table” (*MW* 84) with the following: “And who do you think was among them? Susan, the beautiful young wife of Madison, was there!” (*MWFB* 153) Child’s overly didactic language – “And who do you think” – is emphasised by a use of questioning which directs reader interpretation and suggests her use of oversimplified and paternalistic idioms. She extends Brown’s summary that “Susan was safe” (*MW* 84) to celebrate the fact that “he had his beloved Susan in his arms, carrying her to a land where the laws would protect their domestic happiness. He felt richer at that moment than any king with a golden crown upon his head” (*MWFB* 153). The connotations of “king with a gold crown” not only indicate Child’s engagement with tropes from “fairytale” genres but also her deliberate simplifying and signposting of material and its interpretation for a black readership. In contrast to Brown’s “Madison Washington” which concludes with black male acts of heroism, Child’s final focus for her piece is upon black domesticity and familial

reunion: “at Nassau... he and his beloved Susan are living under the protection of laws which make no distinctions on account of complexion” (*MWFB* 154). Therefore, her version ultimately legitimates black identity by its inclusion within sentimental discourse. As published in *The Freedmen’s Book*, “Madison Washington” gives a practical endorsement of Child’s final “Advice” to freedmen to be “a credit and example to your race” (*FB* 272). For Child, the politics of black male and female biographical portraiture in this text were coded in terms of racial and social “uplift:” “Those who come after you will... place... strong, smooth rails for the steam-car called Progress of the Colored Race” (*FB* 276).

“A Dash for Liberty” (1901) by Hopkins provides the theoretical, ideological and aesthetic key to versions of the *Creole* revolt by Douglass, Brown and Child. She contributes to texts produced within an abolitionist tradition by adding Reconstruction politics and twentieth century preoccupations. Hopkins’s narrative strategy and thematic focus in “A Dash for Liberty” confirms, not only that she had read widely in Douglass, Brown and Child, but also their literary-historical influence upon her material. A close examination of “A Dash for Liberty” in relation to earlier versions of the mutiny, reveals the literary continuity and clear line of influence which can be traced in the intertextual relationships between Douglas’s, Brown’s, Child’s and Hopkins’s works. Hopkins’s oeuvre repeatedly celebrated abolitionist figures for their political activism and literary prowess. For example, in her first novel, *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life, North and South* (1900), Hopkins engaged with Douglass as a source of literary inspiration and historical

emulation for her audience.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, critics have tended not to notice that a wide range of Hopkins's material shares close intertextual relationships with texts by Brown. A comparison of Brown's and Hopkins's material reveals parallels in terms of their shared thematic content which are borne out by evidence that they had met early in Hopkins's literary career. Thus, Hopkins's essay written at the age of fifteen, "The Evils of Intemperance and their Remedy" (1874), won first prize in an essay competition which was both financed and presented by Brown.¹¹⁰ Karcher also commends Hopkins for restoring Child's literary reputation at the turn of the century by reprinting a selection of her letters in a biographical account of her life.¹¹¹ Hopkins uses Child to confirm the political importance in the early twentieth-century of an abolitionist tradition: "Were she [Child] living to-day, her trenchant pen would do us yeoman's service in the vexed questions of disfranchisement and equality for the Afro-American."¹¹²

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, Hopkins produced for the *Colored American Magazine* two biographical series titled, "Famous Men" and "Famous Women" of the "Negro Race," and "Heroes and Heroines in Black."¹¹³ These texts

¹⁰⁹ Hopkins, *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life, North and South* (1900. Rpt. Yarborough, ed., 1988). Douglass provides the template for Hopkins's characterisation of the radical black orator, Luke Sawyer, as "a man of majestic frame, rugged physique... Men of his physiological development – when white – mould humanity and leave their own characteristics engraved upon the pages of... history" (255). Thus, Hopkins combines Sawyer's exemplary physical attributes and commitment to abolitionism with rhetorical prowess and a belief in moral suasion. Her references to "history" reiterates Douglass's exposure of racist practices which erase black masculinity by producing "chattel records" (HS 175).

¹¹⁰ McKay (1996) 2. This event was sponsored by the Boston Congregational Publishing Society for whom Brown acted as representative.

¹¹¹ Karcher (1997) 18. See also Hopkins, "Reminiscences of the Life and Times of Lydia Maria Child," *Colored American Magazine* (Feb. 1903) 279-84, (Mar. 1903) 353-57; (May/June 1903) 454-59. She uses this piece to argue that "If the influence of... such great-hearted Anglo-Saxons as she could radiate through space, and enwrap the Negro youth round about, how different would be the lots of a dependent race."

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ "Famous Men of the Negro Race," (Nov. 1900-Oct. 1901); "Famous Women of the Negro Race," (Nov. 1901 and Oct. 1902); "Heroes and Heroines in Black: I. Neil Johnson, American Woodfolk, et al," (Jan. 1903) 206-11.

re-inserted previously neglected or distorted black heroic figures into the historical record to encourage the *Colored American Magazine's* black readership to emulation. Hopkins's first three biographies, included in "Famous Men of the Negro Race," dramatised Toussaint L'Ouverture, Frederick Douglass and William Wells Brown.¹¹⁴ Hopkins's opening to "Toussaint L'Ouverture" interrogated the constraints of form: "The extraordinary fortunes of Toussaint L'Ouverture bespeak for him more than the passing interest of a dry biography, yet how few the words, how stifled must be the feelings of the heart when we endeavour to cramp the passionate flow of holy emotion aroused by... the character of our hero, within the narrow limits of a magazine article."¹¹⁵ Hopkins's emphasis upon generic limitations in representations of black male heroism, and the connotations of "character of our hero," signal her exploration of diverse narrative forms in "A Dash for Liberty" as she interweaves conventions of romance, historical discourse, melodrama and literary adaptation.

In "Toussaint L'Ouverture," Hopkins substantiates Douglass's critique of black heroic obscurity as Madison is "enveloped in darkness" (*HS* 175) and can only be expressed in terms of "possibles, and probabilities" (*HS* 176). Thus, Hopkins documents "the record or non-record which indicates the supposed inferiority of the Negro" as she searches "blindly in the darkness that envelops all that pertains to him."¹¹⁶ Both Douglass and Hopkins employ identical phrasing – "enveloping darkness" to indict a white racist displacing of black heroism.¹¹⁷ However, Hopkins's narration of black heroism is much more overtly politicised and unequivocal because she advocates a discourse of racial separatism. Thus, her statement that – "brothers in

¹¹⁴ *CAM* Nov. 1900, 9-24; Dec. 1900, 121-32; Jan. 1901, 232-36.

¹¹⁵ *CAM* Nov. 1900, 9.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* Hopkins also writes that Toussaint "left hardly a line for history to feed upon" (14).

blood, though speaking different languages, we should clasp our hands in friendship when we look back upon our past” – appeals, not only to a transatlantic context but also argues for a diasporic black identity which originates in essentialist definitions of race to operate across cultural differences.¹¹⁸

Hopkins’s “Frederick Douglass” and “William Wells Brown” exhibit concerns which mirror those articulated in “A Dash for Liberty.” These biographies confirm her familiarity with Douglass’s and Brown’s lives and works and her substantial intertextual debt to both authors. They also illustrate the fundamental role played by black male historical and literary exemplars within a turn-of-the-century political and social context. For example, Hopkins’s portrait of Brown testifies to the contemporary relevance of black resistance to slave conditioning; she shows respect for those who “accomplished an almost impossible task in surmounting the training received in slavery.”¹¹⁹ Hopkins also evokes Brown to counter white theories of “natural black inferiority” which Douglass similarly rejected in his dramatisations of Madison Washington in his speeches on the *Creole* revolt.¹²⁰ Similarly, Hopkins’s representation of Douglass as a romanticised “hero [who] comes unheralded and unsung in the solitude of poverty and communes with nature” betrays parallels with Douglass’s representation of Madison Washington as a “sable preacher” (*HS* 181) who articulates black rights on the “edge of a dark pine forest” (*HS* 176).¹²¹

Furthermore, in “Frederick Douglass,” she echoes Douglass’s earlier

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 24. Hopkins takes this even further in her novel, *Of One Blood; or, The Hidden Self* (1902-03. Rpt. Carby, ed., 1988), which documents African archaeological explorations in a quest to establish the hero, Reuel Briggs’s, “origin” (444).

¹¹⁹ *CAM* Jan. 1901, 232.

¹²⁰ See the discussion of Douglass’s speeches on the *Creole* revolt as a means to counter white assumption of “black inferiority” in chapter I of this dissertation.

¹²¹ *CAM*, Dec. 1900, 121. Hopkins cites Brown’s third volume of black history, *The Rising Son; or, the Antecedents and the Advancement of the Colored Race* (1874. Rpt. 1970) as one of her sources for compiling this biography (132).

representations of Madison Washington along racially ambiguous lines in her emphasis upon his similarly mixed racial heritage which is “heroic” in origins: “in the veins of this man ran the best blood of old Maryland families mingled with the noble blood of African princes.”¹²² Her representation of Douglass as an accomplished orator who shaped audience opinions echoes this writer’s representation of Washington’s effect upon Listwell in *The Heroic Slave*: “Many kept away from his [Douglass’s] lectures lest they be converted against their will. He knew the gamut of the human heart and swept the strings with a master hand.”¹²³ Hopkins’s understanding of the continuing relevance of abolitionist discourse can be explained in terms of her sense that the contemporary “black condition” is characterised by similar injustices: “These old days seem far away to us of the present generation... But is there not cause for anxiety? Are things, in the main, very much different at this hour?”¹²⁴ Finally, in “Frederick Douglass,” Hopkins explicates his significance as a role model: “He presents to us in his life an example of possibilities which may be within the reach of many young men of the rising generation.”¹²⁵ However, in contrast to Child, in these texts, Hopkins’s style is much less didactic in her political engagement with a black readership.

Hopkins’s “Heroes and Heroines in Black” (1903) defines the suitable subject-matter for historical discourse: “The heroic spirit in man... is the foundation of universal history.”¹²⁶ She articulates racial solidarity by arguing for the significant role played by black subjects for a black audience: “As a race, we need the stimulus

¹²² Ibid., 123.

¹²³ Ibid., 124. She incorporates personal testimony to create a greater sense of authenticity: “Child as I was, I felt that I could listen to the mellow richness of those sonorous accents forever” (125).

¹²⁴ Ibid., 128.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 132.

¹²⁶ CAM, Jan. 1903, 206.

of books and tales of this ‘cathartic value’ more than any other literature we can mention.”¹²⁷ Thus, her emphasis upon “cathartic value,” suggests that black heroic biographies provide an emotional outlet for black readers as well as inspiration to emulation. In imitation of Brown in his second volume of black history, Hopkins presents William Tillman in this article as “the Negro patriot” who successfully thwarted Confederate schemes to regain a “Union” ship during the American Civil War: “Armed with a club, he proceeded to the captain’s room and struck a fatal blow. Yet once again the deadly bludgeon rose and fell... and the black man was master... Tillman’s fatal club did fearful execution; the mate fell dead. The Negro seized the weapon... and proclaimed himself master of the vessel.”¹²⁸ This description shares parallels with Hopkins’s description of the *Creole* revolt (see discussion below), while phrases such as “the Negro patriot” and “the black man was master” endorse radical polemics of black violence and exemplary heroism according to separatist definitions of race which far exceed earlier representations by Douglass, Brown or Child. Thus, “Heroes and Heroines in Black” endorses black physical resistance as the only means to counter Hopkins’s invective that the “dawn of the Twentieth century finds the Black race fighting for existence in every quarter of the globe.”¹²⁹

Although she has been the subject of some recent critical attention, Hopkins suffers from undeserved neglect and a paucity of biographical information.¹³⁰ While her longer fiction has attracted scholarly debate, her shorter, and much more radical material, representing a diversity of genres which include history, biography,

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 208.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 211.

¹³⁰ Hannah Wallinger at Salzburg university, Austria, is currently completing a biography of Hopkins and very recently, she provided me with primary materials which I had previously not been able to obtain.

literature and drama, has only been discussed briefly.¹³¹ The major critics to consider Hopkins in terms relevant to this dissertation are Nellie McKay, C. K. Doreski and John Cullen Greusser.¹³² McKay and Doreski research Hopkins's experimentation with historical discourse more generally while Greusser provides the only sustained discussion to date of "A Dash for Liberty" (1901).¹³³ McKay argues that "Black history was always a priority for Hopkins, and her writings addressed its significance" while, according to Doreski, she provides biographies of black historical figures "not simply to cultivate but to create an audience for her revisionist race history."¹³⁴ According to this view, Hopkins selected historical events not only to serve an immediate political context but also to emphasise to her readers a black tradition of political activism. Doreski argues that, like Child's *The Freedmen's Book...* Hopkins transformed race icons into players in a history requiring authentication through participation."¹³⁵ This position confirms that Hopkins's use of history reflected innovations upon form by "conflating discourses of history, biography, fictional narrative, race, and gender in order to shape a rhetorical self to counter the absence of a reliable race history."¹³⁶ She also suggests Hopkins emphasised communal resistance as she "privileges the hero while suspending his deeds in a collective matrix."¹³⁷

Hopkins's "Preface" to *Contending Forces* endorses such a narrative strategy: "Fiction is of great value to any people as a preserver of manners and customs –

¹³¹ This material was covered in my MLitt. Dissertation, "'A Race Chameleon:' Explorations of a Diverse Black Narrative Form in Pauline E. Hopkins's Shorter Fiction" (1998).

¹³² Greusser (1996) 98-118; McKay, introduction, in Greusser and McKay eds., (1996) 1-20; Doreski, "Inherited Rhetoric and Authentic History: Pauline Hopkins at the *Colored American Magazine* in Greusser and McKay, eds., (1996) 71-97.

¹³³ Greusser (1996) 98-118.

¹³⁴ McKay (1996) 5; Doreski (1996) 72.

¹³⁵ Doreski (1996) 74.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 73.

religious, political and social... *we must ourselves develop the men and women who will faithfully portray the inmost thoughts and feelings of the Negro with all the fire and romance which lie dormant in our history*” (emphasis not mine).¹³⁸ Thus, Hopkins demonstrates her generically encompassing definition of “fiction” as social document, historical testimony and literary adaptation. In imitation of texts produced by Douglass, Brown and Child, Hopkins’s “A Dash for Liberty” also combines “fire and romance” to represent black male and female slave heroism in the *Creole* revolt. Furthermore, Hopkins’s statement in a *Contending Forces* that - “In these days of mob violence... the retrospective mind will dwell upon the history of the past, seeking there a solution of these monstrous outbreaks” – mirrors Brown’s use of history to shed light on the contemporary context and endorses her investigation into antebellum history in “A Dash for Liberty.”¹³⁹ Indeed, Greusser’s examination of “A Dash for Liberty” takes the view that Hopkins “significantly rewrites this historical episode and the earlier literary versions of it to produce her own brand of sophisticated and politically engaged fiction.”¹⁴⁰ He suggests that this work was far more radical in its literary-historical representation of characters and events than had been previously allowed by critics such as Yarborough.

Hopkins’s “A Dash for Liberty” is the only version of the *Creole* revolt to cite its source material by including the following sub-title: “Founded on an article written by Col. T. W. Higginson, for the Atlantic Monthly, June, 1861” (*DL* 243). However, this reference complicates rather than clarifies textual origins because this “article” on

¹³⁷ Ibid., 77.

¹³⁸ *Contending Forces* (1900. Rpt. Yarborough, ed., 1988) 13-14.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 14.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

the *Creole* revolt does not exist. Instead, this citation refers to a different piece by Higginson entitled, “Denmark Vesey,” cited in the introduction to this dissertation. This text omits any discussion of the *Creole* in an exclusive narration of Vesey’s slave rebellion but does share parallels with Hopkins’s piece in a narration of black male heroism.¹⁴¹ Thus, this article eulogises Vesey’s rebellion heroism according to universalised definitions of masculinity: “he would never cringe to the whites, nor ought any one who had the feelings of a man.”¹⁴² In “A Dash for Liberty,” Hopkins also testifies to Madison’s rejection of white injustice: “‘A white man may take up arms to defend a bit of property; but a black man has no right to his ... liberty or his life’” (*DL* 243). Furthermore, in imitation of Hopkins’s piece, Higginson uses this rebellion to dramatise “the extraordinary ability in the leaders,” while celebrating black solidarity by uncovering “a talent for concerted action on the part of slaves generally with which they have hardly been credited.”¹⁴³ Similarly, Hopkins later states that “the daring Madison had not only gained his own liberty, but that of one hundred and thirty-four others” (*DL* 247). Furthermore, “Denmark Vesey” borrows from a black male abolitionist tradition, established by Douglass and Brown, which testifies to the elision of black male heroism from the white historical record: “the official reports which told what slaves had once planned and dared have now come to be among the rarest of American historical documents.”¹⁴⁴ Higginson also borrows from Douglass’s and Hopkins’s emphasis upon black individual historical obscurity, discussed above, to critique their having been known “to the readers of American

¹⁴¹ Higginson, “Denmark Vesey,” *Atlantic Monthly* (June 1861): 730.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 731.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 741.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 744.

history” only as “the shadows of names.”¹⁴⁵

Greusser argues that Hopkins’s “A Dash for Liberty” parallels Higginson’s “Denmark Vesey” because she “found something there that inspired her to write her own version of the *Creole* affair.” He suggests that “an important likeness exists between Washington and Vesey” and that “she was inspired... by Higginson’s depiction of Vesey’s effort to organize blacks to fight for their freedom.”¹⁴⁶ However, these similarities outlined above may simply result from their shared manipulation of the available generic conventions within which to represent black heroism. Hopkins’s deliberate citation of Higginson emphasises her sophisticated authorial dexterity as she self-consciously manipulates the origins and generic type of her material. Greusser’s conclusion that “Hopkins’s headnote... reforc[ed]... the ‘fictive’ nature of ‘A Dash for Liberty’” can, therefore, be extended to an appreciation of her interrogation of abolitionist discourse and acknowledgement of historical ambiguity.¹⁴⁷

According to Greusser, Hopkins’s citing of Higginson’s article in “A Dash For Liberty” does not represent “deliberate obfuscation,” because she “was generally quite scrupulous in acknowledging her sources... when these were African Americans and white abolitionists.”¹⁴⁸ This reading, however, is impossible to maintain in light of Hopkins’s deliberate borrowings from other black writers, particularly Brown, which she frequently failed to acknowledge in her texts. The extent to which she “plagiarised” and repeated earlier material has been entirely neglected by critics and,

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. In his article, “Nat Turner’s Insurrection” (Aug. 1861), Higginson critiques the reliability of white testimony: “These were the master’s stories... it would be interesting to hear what the slaves had to report” (187). In imitation of Brown’s historical volumes and Hopkins’s various biographical series, Higginson outlines the non-specificity of slave biographies which “can hardly be individualised... We know bare facts... The outlines are certain, the details are inferential” (Rpt. McPherson, ed., 1998) 166.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

in terms of current research, remains only partially realised.¹⁴⁹ Therefore, Greusser explains Hopkins's discrepancy between source material and citation in terms of Brown's biography - also titled, "Denmark Vesey" - which was published in his first volume of black history and cited Higginson's article as its major source.¹⁵⁰ Brown's "Denmark Vesey," describes Higginson's piece as the "best account of the whole matter... to which I am indebted for the extracts contained in this memoir of Denmark Vesey."¹⁵¹ However, Greusser fails to mention Brown's revised version of this text, re-titled, "The South-Carolina Fright," and published alongside "Slave Revolt at Sea" in his second volume, *The Negro in the American Rebellion* (1867).¹⁵² The similarities of internal evidence between "Slave Revolt at Sea" and "A Dash for Liberty" make it much more likely that Hopkins was more well-read in Brown's second, rather than his first, volume of black history and, therefore, that this second version was her source. Overall, despite Hopkins's textual claims to the contrary, "A Dash for Liberty" (1901) exhibits parallel phrasing and a similar use of language to Brown's final version, "Slave Revolt at Sea" (1867).

Hopkins's "A Dash for Liberty" combines Brown's and Child's descriptions, in their versions, of Washington as possessing an "unmixed" (*MWFB* 147) and "African" (*SRS* 26) racial ancestry, in order to interpret black revolutionary heroism in separatist terms:

Madison was an unmixed African, of grand physique and one of the

¹⁴⁸ Greusser (1996) 106.

¹⁴⁹ See footnote 10.

¹⁵⁰ Brown, "Denmark Vesey," in William Wells Brown *The Black Man* (1863. Rpt. 1969) 142-48. This piece may substantiate an intertextual relationship with Hopkins's "A Dash for Liberty" on the grounds of a similar discussion of the legitimacy of black insurrection. Brown discusses the inevitable connection between slavery and revolt in order to universalise black human rights: "Human bondage is ever fruitful of insurrection, wherever it exists, and under whatever circumstances it may be found" (142). This work was published alongside "Madison Washington."

¹⁵¹ Brown, *The Black Man* (1863) 148.

¹⁵² Brown, *The Negro in the American Rebellion* (1867) 13-19, 26-36.

handsomest of his race. His dignified, calm and unaffected bearing marked him as a leader among his fellows. His features bore the stamp of genius. His firm step and piercing eye attracted the attention of all who met him (*DL* 243).

This excerpt can be compared to Brown's description in "Slave Revolt at Sea:"

Born of African parentage, with no mixture in his blood, he was one of the handsomest of his race. His dignified, calm, and unaffected features announced at a glance that he was endowed with genius, and created to guide his fellow-men. He called himself Madison Washington (*SRS* 26).

These extracts clarify Hopkins's intertextual debt to Brown as she repeats whole phrases – "handsomest of his race" - and echoes his choice of language, "dignified, calm, and unaffected." Both authors also emphasise Madison's "African" nationality which, for Hopkins, reflected her wider interests in contextualising black identities within an international, rather than an exclusively North American, historical and political context.¹⁵³ In these overt references to racial origins, Brown and Hopkins disassociate themselves from Douglass's romanticised and oblique discussion of Washington's black identity, which is only implied in "a brow as dark and as glossy as the raven's wing" (*HS* 179). Hopkins's "A Dash for Liberty" does, however, revise Brown's text as she omits, and later changes, Madison's surname to downplay Brown's emphasis upon the relationship between individual slave heroism and naming – "he called himself." This preoccupation with Washington's name and its heroic associations with white presidential figures also characterised the available newspaper accounts of the *Creole* revolt.

There are significant parallels between works by Douglass and Hopkins in addition to her adoption of a four part structure in "A Dash for Liberty" which

¹⁵³ See Hopkins's novel, *Of One Blood* (1902-03. Rpt. Carby, ed., 1988) and her anthropological exploration of diverse cultures within an international context in her series titled, "The Dark Races of the Twentieth Century," *Voice of the Negro* (February-July 1905).

imitates Douglass's composition of *The Heroic Slave*.¹⁵⁴ Thus, Madison's opening speech in "A Dash for Liberty" echoes his soliloquy at the start of *The Heroic Slave*: "A white man may take up arms to defend a bit of property; but a black man has no right to his wife, his liberty or his life against his master!... Liberty! I think of it by day and dream of it by night: and I shall only taste it in all its sweetness when Susan shares it with me" (*DL* 243). Thus, in Douglass's text Madison is resolved - "*Liberty* I will have, or die in the attempt to gain it" (*HS* 178, emphasis not mine) - in order to protest black domesticity: "if I were free, -my arms my own, - I might devise the means to rescue her" (*HS* 181). To a greater extent than Douglass's, Hopkins's text interprets black male acts of heroism as indivisible from black female emancipation.

In "A Dash for Liberty," Madison's speech articulating black heroism is given to his white Canadian employer, Mr. Dickson, who represents Brown's literary substitution, maintained by Child, of Douglass's white abolitionist, Listwell, in *The Heroic Slave*. However, while both Brown and Child employ this figure as a sentimental reader to black experience - "the story had... brought tears to [his]... eyes" (*SRS* 28) - Hopkins uses Mr. Dickson to condemn white racism: "It is hard for you to understand; you white men are all alike where you are called upon to judge a Negro's heart... Imagine yourself in my place: how would you feel?" (*DL* 243) This excerpt reveals Hopkins's polemics which, in comparison with versions by Douglass, Brown and Child, are much more radical as she dismisses "white men" as "all alike" and, therefore, incapable of "understanding" black experience. She rejects the hierarchical implications of abolitionist sentimental politics as she argues in favour of

¹⁵⁴ Greusser (1996) 106. He argues that "Like Douglass, Hopkins divides her *Creole* story into four parts."

black and white male equality, “imagine yourself in my place.” Hopkins’s “A Dash for Liberty” benefits from the comparative freedom of being published in the early twentieth century and in the *Colored American Magazine* which was financed, edited and read by a free elite black audience. Therefore, in comparison to Child’s didactic appeals to a newly emancipated black community in *The Freedmen’s Book*, Hopkins text endorses black militancy unapologetically.

Furthermore, Hopkins’s “A Dash for Liberty,” revises all previous versions of the *Creole* revolt by defending independent black rights and the legitimacy of physical self-defence. For example, in response to Mr. Dickson’s fears that ““you’ll do desperate deeds”” (DL 243), Madison states: ““put yourself in my place: I shall be there single-handed. I have a wife whom I love, and whom I will protect. I hate slavery, I hate the laws that make my country a nursery for it. Must I be denied the right of aggressive defense against those who would overpower and crush me by superior force?”” (DL 243-44) This excerpt demonstrates Hopkins’s interpretation of the white listener, and therefore her white reader, as complicit in racist discourse by pre-judging black experience: the phrase, “put yourself in my place” echoes his earlier appeal, ““Imagine yourself in my place”” (DL 243). Hopkins uses Mr. Dickson’s attempts to contain black rebellion - ““Promise me that you will... not begin an attack”” (DL 244) – to articulate radical race politics: “Such a promise seemed to him [Washington] like surrendering a part of those individual rights for which he panted. Mr. Dickson waited. Presently the Negro said significantly: ‘I promise not to be indiscreet’” (DL 244). Thus, Hopkins’s text endorses the legitimacy of black violence as the phrases “Mr. Dickson waited” and “Presently the Negro said” are juxtaposed to emphasise a reversal of racial power dynamics. She portrays Madison’s relationship

to white authority as much more ambivalent than even Douglass's satirical representation of Listwell in *The Heroic Slave* and represents black male heroism as beyond white control. Hopkins's reference to Madison as "the Negro" is repeated throughout the text and echoes Brown's preoccupation with "the negro leader" (*SRS* 35) in his version; the repetition of "negro" appeals to a black readership by confirming racial difference and a separatist politics which resist white abolitionist philanthropy and strategies of accommodation.

Hopkins's "A Dash for Liberty" rewrites Brown's narration of black violence in "Slave Revolt at Sea" by dramatising Washington's thwarted attempt to rescue Susan in less equivocal terms. Thus, Hopkins's descriptions are much more graphic than Brown's which states that "the heroic slave did not yield until he with a club had laid three of his assailants upon the ground with his manly blows; and not then until weakened by loss of blood" (*SRS* 31). By comparison, Hopkins's text reads:

With a crash, Madison's club descended on the head of the nearest man: again, and yet again, he whirled it around, doing frightful execution each time it fell. Three of the men who had responded to the overseer's cry for help were on the ground, and he himself was sore from many wounds before, weakened by loss of blood, Madison finally succumbed (*DL* 245).

Thus, while Hopkins repeats some of Brown's phrasing, such as "loss of blood" and "on the ground," she represents black heroism as deliberate, "again, and yet again" and as justified by white barbarity which fulfils Madison's earlier rhetoric: "'Must I be denied the right of aggressive defense against those who would overpower and crush me by superior force?'" (*DL* 243-44) The connotations of "frightful execution" underscore a sense of unconfined, unpredictable black masculinity which exists outside a white sentimental framework for expressing black identity. Hopkins's earlier choice of language - "His grasp tightened on the club... his nerves were like steel, his eyes flashed fire" (*DL* 245) - celebrates black heroism in poetic terms.

As well as her dramatic experimentation with the black male historical figure, in respect of Douglass, Brown and Child, Hopkins's "A Dash for Liberty" revises their narration of the black female slave. She portrays the black female body in overtly sexualised terms in comparison with their texts:

[she was]... a woman whose great beauty immediately attracted attention; she was an octoroon. It was a tradition that her grandfather had served in the Revolutionary War, as well as in both Houses of Congress. That was nothing, however, at a time when the blood of the proudest F. F. V.'s was freely mingled with that of the African slaves on their plantations. Who wonders that Virginia has produced great men of color from among the ex-bondmen, or, that illustrious black men proudly point to Virginia as a birthplace? ... the most refined, the wealthiest and the most intellectual whites... have not hesitated to amalgamate with the Negro (*DL* 245).

Hopkins situates the black female within a context of black male heroism as she revises Douglass's portrait of Madison in *The Heroic Slave* - as "a man who loved liberty as well as did Patrick Henry" and "who deserved it as much as Thomas Jefferson" (*HS* 175), by ascribing a context of white male heroism to the black female figure instead. This reading supports Yarborough's view that, in comparison with Douglass's *The Heroic Slave*, Hopkins's text establishes "Susan almost as much the protagonist of the story as Madison."¹⁵⁵ Hopkins adapts Douglass's references to the "great ones of the Old Dominion" (*HS* 174-75), as she documents "the blood of the proudest F. F. V.'s" to interrogate a history of black female sexual violation, as expressed by "freely mingled blood." Thus, Greusser argues that the "name of the slave ship... may have been the key factor attracting Hopkins to the slave rebellion" as the *Creole* emphasises a mixed racial heritage, thereby connoting the "direct blood connection between Susan and one of the founding fathers" which operates in direct contrast to Douglass's narrative focus.¹⁵⁶ Greusser concludes that "Susan, a creole,

¹⁵⁵ Yarborough (1990) 112.

¹⁵⁶ Greusser (1996) 112.

and the boat, the *Creole*, are mirror images.”¹⁵⁷

Hopkins’s “A Dash for Liberty” maintains Brown’s and Child’s emphasis upon Susan’s status as an “octoroon” as she critiques white male consumption of the black female body:

... the captain... cast... bold glances at the reclining figure... She lay stretched at full length with her head resting upon her arm...[which] displayed to the best advantage the perfect symmetry of her superb figure; the dim light of a lantern played upon the long black ringlets, finely-chiselled mouth and well-rounded chin, upon the marbled skin veined by her master’s blood, - representative of two races, to which did she belong?
(*DL* 246)

Thus, Hopkins introduces white male violation of black female physicality as the “captain,” positioned as a voyeur, objectifies Susan by his gaze or “bold glances.” This excerpt exposes the destructive potential of the tendency, in abolitionist discourse, to include an illegitimate white witness to translate black experience to a wide audience, as demonstrated by Listwell’s “eavesdropping” of Madison’s speech in Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave*. For Hopkins, the unseen white observer operates as a threat - “the man gazed at her in silence: then... kissed the sleeping woman upon the mouth” (*DL* 246) – as he is introduced to educate her contemporary black audience concerning black female suffering in slavery. In this extract, Hopkins substitutes Brown’s statement - “she stood as the representative of two races” (*SRS* 32) – with a question - “representative of two races, to which did she belong?” (*DL* 246) – in order to challenge fixed racial constructions by foregrounding the racial ambiguity produced by miscegenation.

In contrast to versions by Douglass, Brown and Child, Hopkins presents black female heroics as a result of the threat of rape as fundamental to “A Dash for Liberty.” Thus, Susan substantiates her revolutionary heritage by heroically resisting

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

the white captain's sexual advances: "The woman's heart stood still with horror: she recognized the intruder as she dashed his face aside with both hands" (*DL* 246). Given Hopkins's title to this piece, the connotations of "dash" contextualise black female resistance as her quest for emancipation imitates Madison Washington's performance of Patrick Henry's principle of "liberty or death" (*DL* 247), in both this and earlier versions. Hopkins associates "dash" with black male rebellion: "Madison Monroe lay chained to the floor and heavily ironed. But from the first moment... he had been busily engaged in selecting men who could be trusted in the dash for liberty that he was determined to make" (*DL* 246). Greusser argues that "Without question, the most distinctive feature of Hopkins's version... is her decision to rechristen the main character Madison Monroe."¹⁵⁸ Hopkins's decision to substitute Madison Washington for Madison Monroe, not only evokes different presidents in her variation of namesakes but more importantly, emphasises her experimentation with genre by establishing "A Dash for Liberty" as a fictionalised adaptation of historical discourse.

Greusser's view that this "dash by a black woman for the freedom to control her body" motivates black male rebellion confirms Hopkins's subversion of the "tragic mulatta" plot in "A Dash for Liberty."¹⁵⁹ Hopkins, like Brown and Child, revises Douglass's adherence to this plot in his representation of Susan's death as the text upon which to inscribe black male rebellion in *The Heroic Slave*.¹⁶⁰ By comparison, Hopkins establishes this convention - Susan "[made] for the deck with the evident intention of going overboard" (*DL* 246) – only to subvert it as Madison

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 104. See 104-6 for Greusser's exploration of the diverse implications of Hopkins's substitution of Madison Washington by Madison Monroe.

¹⁵⁹ Greusser (1996) 110. Yarborough argues in the same vein: "Hopkins implicitly rejects Douglass's obsessions with masculine heroism as she gives Susan not only a voice in the text but also force – the first act of black violent resistance... is Susan's" (1990, 112).

¹⁶⁰ Madison confides: "my poor wife fell by my side dead, while I received but a slight flesh wound. I... stood my ground, and awaited their attack over her dead body" (*HS* 220).

intercedes: ““Hold on, girl; we’ll protect you!’... he stooped, seized the heavy padlock which fastened the iron ring that encircled his ankle to the iron bar, and... hurled it with all his force straight at the captain’s head” (*DL* 246). Thus, Hopkins’s use of simplified language – “hurled with all his force” – provides a sensational and melodramatic depiction of black violence. Furthermore, these extracts support Greusser’s view that in contrast to her “literary antecedents, Hopkins places a great deal of emphasis on the vulnerability of black women to sexual assault by white men.”¹⁶¹ His summary that she “intertwines the sexual exploitation theme with the patriotic plot” is made clear by an investigation into her comparable representations of the black male and female slave figures.¹⁶²

In imitation of Douglass’s, Brown’s and Child’s versions, Hopkins’s treatment of the mutiny is similarly brief. For example, she describes how “In a moment Madison was upon him [the captain]... another moment served to handcuff the unconscious man” (*DL* 246-47). Thus, Hopkins’s repetition of “moment” establishes her disinclination to provide graphic representations of black male violence in “A Dash for Liberty.” Similarly, Hopkins describes the *Creole* revolt in phrases borrowed from Brown such as - “So swift were Madison’s movements” (*DL* 247, *SRS* 34) - and - “he lay dead upon the deck from a blow with a piece of a capstan bar in Madison’s hand” (*DL* 247, *SRS* 34) in order to displace a narration of black violence. In parallel to Brown and Child, Hopkins narrates Madison’s magnanimity - “the intrepid leader forbade the shedding of more blood” (*DL* 247) – while the connotations of “intrepid leader” confirm his representative status and participation in a literary-historical template within which to explore black heroism. Although

¹⁶¹ Greusser (1996) 108.

¹⁶² Ibid.

Hopkins provides similarly abbreviated accounts of black mutiny, in contrast to Child's and Brown's versions in which Madison "with his own hands dressed their wounds" (*DL* 35), Hopkins disassociates the black heroic figure from such activity by stating instead that "their wounds were dressed" (*DL* 247). Instead, Hopkins dramatises the implications of Madison's "one splendid and heroic stroke" (*DL* 247) as a result of which he "had not only gained his own liberty, but those of one hundred and thirty-four others" (*DL* 247). Greusser argues that Hopkins "stresses communal action... to de-emphasise the individual person in favor of what he and his companions succeed in accomplishing through concerted effort."¹⁶³

Hopkins's ending to "A Dash for Liberty" raises many important questions concerning her experimentation with genre and intertextual relationships with previous authors. Having maintained suspense throughout the piece, as Madison remains unaware of Susan's presence aboard the *Creole*, she narrates their reunion as follows:

... the beautiful octoroon with one wild, half-frantic cry of joy sprang towards the gallant leader.

"Madison!"

"My God! Susan! My wife!"

She was locked to his breast: she clung to him convulsively. Unnerved at last by the revulsion to more than relief and ecstasy, she broke into wild sobs, while the astonished company closed around them with loud hurrahs (*DL* 247).

Thus, Hopkins employs melodramatic conventions as she adheres to romanticised stereotypes of the "beautiful octoroon" and "the gallant leader." Her use of melodramatic dialogue – "My God! Susan! My wife!" – produces exaggerated, staged and sensationalised effects, while phrases such as – "She was locked to his breast" – conveys a stylised use of scene-setting. Yarborough argues that "by having Madison

¹⁶³ Ibid., 109. He viewed Hopkins's emphasis upon communal resistance as most suited to her political

fortuitously appear and interrupt the assault on Susan like some white knight rushing to the aid of his damsel, Hopkins ultimately falls back on the conventions of the sentimental romance.”¹⁶⁴ However, Greusser rejects this interpretation on the grounds that “Yarborough misses what I believe to be a major innovation in Hopkins’s retelling... her stress on the fact that Monroe does not act independently... rather than bursting in like a solitary white knight rescuing a fair maiden, Monroe successfully leads a black cavalry into battle against the figures of white oppression.”¹⁶⁵ Both critics, however, neglect to consider Hopkins’s complication of the romance plot which interprets Susan’s reliance on Madison on the grounds that she was “Unnerved at last by the revulsion to more than relief and ecstasy.” This phrase resonates with the limited roles for black women at the turn-of-the-century as Susan’s adherence to values of black domesticity and marriage is symptomatic of her lack of historical, social and political agency.

Hopkins closely parallels Brown’s conclusion to “Slave Revolt at Sea” in her final paragraph to “A Dash for Liberty.” His statement that “Every iniquity that society allows to subsist for the benefit of the oppressor is a sword with which she herself arms the oppressed. Right is the most dangerous of weapons: woe to him who leaves it to his enemies” (*SRS* 36), can be contrasted with her text which reads: “Every act of oppression is a weapon for the oppressed. Right is a dangerous instrument: woe to us if our enemy wields it” (*DL* 247). The similarities between this material confirm Hopkins’s close intertextual relationship, not only with Brown’s “Slave Revolt at Sea” but also his other works, which is emphasised throughout “A

context in a focus on “united action” which “made her story relevant to the conditions facing African Americans at the turn of the century” (111).

¹⁶⁴ Yarborough (1990) 112.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 109.

Dash for Liberty” including, for example, her reproduction of a “corn-shucking” (*DL* 244) song.¹⁶⁶ Hopkins’s revision of Brown’s statement – from “woe to him who leaves it to his enemies” to “woe to us if our enemy” – personalises his moral statement and emphasises the need for black resistance, not only to white “oppression,” but also to black internalisation of racist values in a contemporary context.

Child’s “Madison Washington” (1866) and Hopkins’s “A Dash for Liberty” interrogate and endorse established, white and black male and female, traditions of abolitionist discourse. Child’s version can be situated within a context of white female antislavery literature which includes additional writers such as Louisa May Alcott whose short story, “An Hour” (1864), published two years prior to “Madison Washington,” employs sentimental discourse as a textual lens within which to express black revolutionary idealism.¹⁶⁷ For example, Alcott’s representations of “Prince, the fierce leader of the insurrection” borrows from Douglass’s classical imagery which describes Madison Washington’s “Herculean strength” (*HS* 179) in *The Heroic Slave*: “Standing erect...[he was] a gigantic man, with a fine, dark face, a noble head, and

¹⁶⁶ The song which Hopkins includes in “A Dash for Liberty” (*DL* 244) – which had not been included previously by either Douglass or Child and not even by Brown – is identical to Brown’s material included in his final narrative, *My Southern Home* (1880. Rpt. Andrews, ed., 1993) 180-81. Hopkins’s inclusion of this material raises questions concerning whether she copied it from Brown, which seems most likely considering her frequent borrowings from his material, or whether she had read it in any other source as part of abolitionist collections of “Negro music” (*DL* 244). Her reference to this song as possessing “the noble strains habitual to Negro music, [which] sounded the depths of sadness, glancing off in majestic harmony, that touched the very gates of paradise in suppliant prayer” (*DL* 244) echoes Douglass’s discussion of “slave singing” as “representing the sorrows of the heart” in his conclusion to chapter II of his *Narrative* (1845. Rpt. Baker, ed., 1986). Hopkins’s reproduction of black dialect in this song – “All dem purty gals will be dar” (*DL* 244) – introduces black vernacular and authenticity debates. For a discussion of “black vernacular misrepresentation” see Lott (1999).

¹⁶⁷ Rpt. Elbert, ed.(1997) 47-68. This text shares similarities with Douglass’s narration of the *Creole* revolt in “Slavery, the Slumbering Volcano” (1849. Rpt. Blassingame, ed., 1979) 2: 148-58. Hopkins similarly employs natural imagery to document the inevitability of black insurrection: “the island was governed by fear alone, and he [the white slave-owner] never trod the dykes... without feeling as if he

the limbs of an ebony Hercules.”¹⁶⁸

Furthermore, Hopkins’s “A Dash for Liberty” can be contextualised by a discussion of her later novel, *Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and Southwest* (1902) which critiques abolitionist representations of the black male and female body as commodified spectacle, as well as interrogating the authenticity of white Northern testimony which documents black experience.¹⁶⁹ Thus, in her representation of the black male slave, Judah - described as “a living statue of a mighty Vulcan” - Hopkins not only maintains previous classical allusions in descriptions of black heroism, but also engages with black abolitionist processes of oral storytelling: “To emphasise his story, Judah [the black slave] stripped up his shirt and seizing the young white man’s hand pressed it gently over the scars and seams stamped upon his back.”¹⁷⁰ Hence, the black slave’s body operates metonymically as a text which authenticates and individualises the slave’s narrative, in a similar manner to Douglass’s and Brown’s exhibition of “slave irons” to punctuate their discussion of the “slave condition,” in lecturing tours throughout Britain and North America. In the final analysis, an investigation into versions of the *Creole* revolt by Douglass, Brown, Child and Hopkins, establishes their experimentation with and interrogation of abolitionist representations of the black male and female slave figure, as they revised existing formal conventions across a socially and politically changing, literary-historical landscape.

walked upon a crater-crust which might crack and spew fire any day” (52).

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 163.

¹⁶⁹ Rpt. Carby, ed., (1988).

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 323.

CONCLUSION

“Males in Shackles:” Black Performance in Theodore Ward’s *Madison* (1956) and Conclusions

Oh, Men, look at the matter plain:
We’re doomed to serve like beasts of the field,
We’re beaten and maimed and even slain –
Our women stripped and forced to yield –
While our children hope in vain –
Is it any wonder others
Deny our rights as brothers
When they see us millions strong
Cowardly suffering such wrongs?
Theodore Ward (1956)¹

This dissertation investigates versions of the *Creole* slave ship mutiny in nineteenth century American literature by Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, Lydia Maria Child and Pauline Hopkins. Therefore, in order to identify traditions of black heroic representation which continued into the mid-twentieth century, this conclusion analyses Theodore Ward’s musical, *Madison* (1956), in relation to its dramatisations of black male slave heroism and cultivation of black theatrical conventions. John Cullen Greusser is the only critic to analyse this text, as he maintains that the “literary legacy” of the *Creole* revolt “does not end with ‘A Dash for Liberty.’” The rebellion is also the subject of Theodore Ward’s four-act musical ‘Madison’ (1956), based on Douglass’s ‘The Heroic Slave.’”² An examination of Ward’s text contextualises Hopkins’s “A Dash for Liberty” (1901) and establishes its significance as a turn-of-the-century piece, while broadening the intertextual debates between all four authors

¹ Ward (*M* 45-46). James Hatch at the Hatch-Billops Archive in New York supplied me with a xerox of the typescript of this never performed, never published, musical.

discussed in this dissertation across political, historical and cultural contexts. This research also engages with Ward's literary borrowings from Douglass's *The Heroic Slave* (1853) which provide further confirmation of intentional intertextual relationships in representations of the *Creole* revolt, and emphasise Douglass's significance as literary-historical point of origin. Furthermore, this thesis's engagement with changing representations of the black male and female body as aestheticised and (de)politicised spectacle for white consumption, can be mapped onto twentieth century black theatrical texts which depict black physicality so as to appeal to both white and black audiences simultaneously.

The fact that Ward's *Madison* (1956) is the only known twentieth century dramatisation of the *Creole* revolt, distinguishes it from the literary legacy of the *Amistad* mutiny for which, according to Iyunolu Folayan Osagie, numerous retellings in theatrical form, by American and African playwrights exist.³ Indeed, Osagie's description of twentieth century theatrical adaptations of the *Amistad* by black playwrights, including Owen Dodson and John Thorpe, advances the argument that their material interrogates the politics of historical representation: "the theatrical text, space, or performance, offers the artist an opportunity to repeat the past through revision."⁴ Osagie comments upon the didactic interrogation of intended audience in these works which she describes as "double-voiced: while entertaining and educating blacks,...[their] messages have been clearly directed at whites, the absent audience."⁵ Thus, twentieth century black theatre's emphasis upon relaying its "messages" to racially diverse audiences maintains Douglass's and Brown's cultivation of white conversion to antislavery politics through moral suasion in their versions, while their

² Greusser (1996) 113.

³ Osagie (2000). See chapter 4 (71-97).

⁴ Ibid., 76.

⁵ Ibid., 74.

theatrical techniques designed to educate and entertain a black audience suggest Child's and Hopkins's political and literary agendas. Therefore, the debates surrounding white and black simultaneous consumption of black drama, in particular, raise important questions concerning theatrical construction, audience reception, and processes of commercialisation which can be applied, not only to Ward's *Madison*, but also to earlier texts by Douglass, Brown, Child and Hopkins.

Osagie also demonstrates that the "roots of black revolutionary theater" lie in dramatic works which document the lives of black historical figures, including Frederick Douglass, Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey and Toussaint L'Ouverture, among others.⁶ One such play, *In Splendid Error*, written by the black playwright, William Branch and published in 1953, predates Ward's *Madison*.⁷ This work problematises Douglass's involvement in John Brown's Harper's Ferry Raid (1859) in order to critique his literary-historical definitions of heroism, while illustrating his shifting status from slave object to independent black hero, and concomitant ambivalent relationship to violence.⁸ Branch's stage directions provide a physical description of Douglass which closely imitates his representations of Madison Washington in oratorical and written works on the *Creole* revolt:

(FREDERICK DOUGLASS enters... He is a tall, broad, compelling figure of a man... His face, or magnificent bone structure, would be a sculptor's delight with the high cheekbones, the strong broad nose, the proud flare of the nostrils. His eyes... peer intently from beneath the ridge of his prominent brow... A long mane of crinkly black hair sweeps back from his stern forehead, and,... lends a strikingly distinguished, leonine air. His large frame, bolt erect, is dressed conservatively... His is an impression of challenge, achievement, dignity, together with strength,

⁶ Ibid., 75-76. While Osagie provides an extensive list of heroic figures covered by twentieth century playwrights, there is no mention of either the *Creole* revolt or Madison Washington.

⁷ William Branch, *In Splendid Error* (1953. Rpt. Hill, ed., 1989) 123-204. Hill's reprinting of these works makes clear his political agenda: "It is clearly important that black citizens have around them reminders of those outstanding Afro-Americans who at great personal cost have striven to improve the lot of Americans... they instill a sense of pride in one's race" (viii). Hill's emphasis upon the significant influence of heroic exemplars upon contemporary race consciousness reiterates Ward's narrative design in *Madison*.

⁸ Ibid., 134.

quiet but omnipresent) (emphasis not mine).⁹

This extract shares similarities with Douglass's description of Washington in *The Heroic Slave* as "of manly form. Tall, symmetrical, round, and strong" (HS 179) and a figure who possesses "the strength of the lion, a lion's elasticity" (HS 179). This material can also be compared to Douglass's speech, "Slavery, the Slumbering Volcano" (1849) which describes Washington in stereotyped racial terms as "a black man, with woolly head, high cheek bones, protruding lip, distended nostril, and retreating forehead" (SSV 155). Thus, Branch's description combines Douglass's representations of Washington which both simplify and complicate his racial identity and therefore, testifies to the continuing similarities of black heroic paradigms in black literary-historical dramatisations throughout both nineteenth and twentieth century contexts.

Furthermore, Branch's choice of subject-matter for this play reinforces thematic continuity within the twentieth century because *In Splendid Error* parallels Ward's dramatisation of John Brown in a play titled, *Of Human Grandeur*.¹⁰ This unpublished work legitimates black rebellion by appropriating a discourse of white heroism in terms comparable to those argued by Madison Washington in *The Heroic Slave*. Thus, a black character argues: "Why should I be condemned if, like David Walker, I say: George Washington fought for liberty and he is revered as a hero for doing it? What right has any man to say it's wrong for a Negro to do the same?"¹¹ Furthermore, one of the unnamed white slave owners inadvertently testifies to black slave heroism by using language which echoes the title of this dissertation: "I reckon

⁹ Ibid., 137-38.

¹⁰ Schomburg Center: n.d. [unpublished typescript].

¹¹ Ibid., I.1, n.p. Like Douglass's comparison of Madison Washington to Hercules in *The Heroic Slave* (179), Ward describes one of John Brown's men in classical terms as "A Greek gladiator type" (II.1, n.p.) which indicates the continuing relevance of antiquated white precedent.

we are setting on a powder keg.”¹² Thus, close parallels can be drawn between this text and Douglass’s representations of Madison’s speech during the *Creole* revolt in *The Heroic Slave*: ““before this brig shall touch a slave-cursed shore... I will myself put a match to the magazine, and blow her, and be blown with her, into a thousand fragments” (HS 236). Both works equate black heroic resistance with Patrick Henry’s resolve – ““Liberty I will have, or die in the attempt to gain it”” (HS 178) – which patterns all versions of the *Creole* revolt by these authors.

A prominent critic of black drama, Errol Hill, identifies, within the historical, political and artistic origins of black revolutionary theatre which date back to the first half of the nineteenth century, a tradition among playwrights of evoking earlier historical contexts in order to critique contemporary political situations.¹³ He argues that they adopt “the familiar theatrical strategy of staging historical events that parallel contemporary concerns” and that, in terms of their subject-matter, they “repeatedly [turned] to the fighters for slave liberation to serve as the heroes of black revolutionary drama.”¹⁴ This technique became apparent in the literature of the *Creole* revolt as, in particular, Brown, Child and Hopkins manipulated this event in order to inculcate black pride in a post-Civil war context by the cultivation of race role models. Therefore, Ward’s *Madison* can be understood as both an inheritor of earlier traditions and a precursor to later theatrical developments which include works by writers such as Amiri Baraka, and much more recently, Edgar White.¹⁵ One of the most popular historical events for musicals and plays was the Haitian revolution and its major political figure, Toussaint L’Ouverture. In actual fact, Toussaint figures so

¹² Ibid., IV.6, n.p.

¹³ Hill, “The Revolutionary Tradition in Black Drama” (1986) 408-26. For further information on black revolutionary theatre which was produced as a result of, and in conjunction with, the Black Arts Movement, see Kaufman in Hill, ed., (1980) 192-209.

¹⁴ Hill (1986) 409.

¹⁵ Baraka, *Slave Ship: A Historical Pageant* (1978) in Branch, ed., (1993) 250-59 and White, *I, Marcus*

prominently in texts by Douglass, Brown, Child and Hopkins that they provide a wealth of comparative material for future investigations into literary-historical representations of black male heroism.¹⁶ According to Hill, Toussaint “inspired two operas by black composers and librettists,” and he writes that, just before her death, Lorraine Hansberry was “writing an opera on Toussaint L’Ouverture.”¹⁷ Bernth Lindfors’s study of ethnological show business as “the displaying of foreign peoples for commercial and/or educational purposes” can be applied to readings of black theatricality in North America, whose aesthetic autonomy was regularly impeded, either by the dictates of white sponsorship or the expectations of a white audience.¹⁸

Theodore Ward remains an inscrutable figure, both for the biographer and literary critic, as very little information can be gleaned concerning his private history or textual material.¹⁹ Doris Abramson provides rare information on Ward and his involvement in political movements, such as the Federal Theatre Project and the Negro Playwrights Company, to gain greater independence for black drama.²⁰ While like every other critic, except Greusser, she omits any discussion of *Madison*, Abramson establishes the contemporary popularity of Ward’s much earlier play, *Big*

Garvey (AND THE CAPTIVITY OF BABYLON) (1988) in Hill, ed., (1989) 205-76.

¹⁶ See the bibliography to this dissertation for a full list.

¹⁷ Hill (1986) 414. Furthermore, C. L. R. James’s play, *The Black Jacobins* (1936), debates issues of black portraiture in heroic representations of Toussaint and synthesises complex political debates in an engagement with questions of Haiti and colonial independence (Rpt. Anna Grimshaw, ed., 1993) 67-111. This play enjoyed a very popular run at the Westminster Theatre in London, starring Paul Robeson as Toussaint and was described by reviewers as holding the audience “grip[ped]... from beginning to end” (see the press reviews held by the C. L. R. James Institute, New York).

¹⁸ Lindfors, introduction, (1999) vii. This essay collection provides material which debates the relationships between spectator and the spectacle, the expectations of white and black audience in transatlantic contexts, and the significance of imperialist and colonial discourse, in representations of “African” bodies.

¹⁹ For example, the following texts provide interesting contextual material: Elam, Jr. and Krasner, eds., *African American Performance and Theater History: A Critical Reader* (2001); Hay, *African American Theatre: An Historical and Critical Analysis* (1994); Hill, ed., *The Theater of Black Americans: A Collection of Critical Essays*, 2 vols. (1980).

²⁰ For biographical information on Ward see Abramson (1969) 109-10.

White Fog (1938) which was performed to contemporary critical acclaim.²¹ She discusses Ward's appeal to a black audience as his thematic content documents their preoccupations and concerns while making a bid for aesthetic autonomy by challenging Broadway commercialism: "the New York group chose it as a representative play by a young Negro playwright... the emphasis was on a theatre for the Negro people that would foster 'Negro literature of the drama comparable with reality or truth.'"²² Thus, she establishes the political context for *Big White Fog* as evidence that Ward was committed to authenticity and realism, not only in his choice of subject-matter but also his method of black characterisation as he preferred to write "with sincerity about the lives and history of the Negro people."²³ Indeed, as its literary manifesto, the Negro Playwrights Company which Ward helped to found, presaged dramatic realism to the extent that he was lauded by Richard Wright as an exemplary practitioner. Wright's comment that - "There lives in America no playwright I know who is better fitted for the launching of a people's theatre for the mirroring of Negro life in America than Theodore Ward" – emphasises a direct relationship in Ward's material between contemporary black politics and his development of aesthetic motifs.²⁴ Thus, following its initial performance to financial profit in Chicago, *Big White Fog* was opposed by the Federal Theatre Unit due to "the revolutionary tenor of its denouement and the bad publicity which it might cause."²⁵ Ronald Ross's assessment of Ward as "one of the most successful black writers developed by the [Federal Theatre] project" indicates this playwright's status as both

²¹ This is the only work by Ward which continues to be regularly anthologised.

²² Ibid., 92.

²³ Ibid. See pages 110-17 for a discussion of Ward's *Big White Fog* in terms of its propagandistic value, use of black history, and dramatisation of tensions within the black family and the wider black community.

²⁴ Ibid., 93.

²⁵ Ibid., 110.

political activist and distinguished writer.²⁶

Performed both on and off Broadway and therefore both within and without white mainstream culture, Ward's later play, *Our Lan'* (1946), is relevant to versions of the *Creole* revolt examined in this dissertation because he dramatises nineteenth century historical events in order to shed light upon his contemporary social and political context.²⁷ Thus, Abramson comments that *Our Lan'*, which documented "the Reconstruction era," was "praised for its dramaturgy, its dialogue, the beauty of its story, its sense of history."²⁸ Abramson explains Ward's subject-matter as considering "courage in the face of betrayal, [as] a worthy subject for heroic drama, especially if at the centre of the story is a man of heroic stature."²⁹ Ward's preferences for politicising historical material and adapting black heroic figures to fit a contemporary context, echo Hopkins's narrative strategy in "A Dash for Liberty" (1901) which uses the *Creole* revolt to dramatise black violence unequivocally.

Abramson's discussion of Ward's failures to get *Our Lan'* produced, perhaps explains Ward's decision to dramatise Douglass's *The Heroic Slave* in his musical, *Madison*. Thus, she writes that in 1942 he "offered his services to the Writers' War Board in Washington, D.C. He had an idea for a play about Frederick Douglass which might have helped the morale of Negro troops. The Board found it too serious."³⁰ Therefore, the fact that Ward's idea for a play was considered "too serious" may reveal Ward's eventual decision to narrate a "Nigra insurrection" (*M.I.I.*, 6) as a musical instead: he was forced into presenting serious material in a potentially

²⁶ Ross, "The Role of Blacks in the Federal Theatre, 1935-1939" in Hill, ed., (1980) 46. In the same collection, Ethel Pitts Walker's essay "The American Negro Theatre" discusses Ward and *Big White Fog* which was the first work produced by the Negro Playwrights Company. As an organisation, the "founding members" were criticised because they "seemed too willing to sacrifice artistic quality for propaganda" (51).

²⁷ This text has recently become more widely available in Turner, ed., (1994) 73-145.

²⁸ Ibid., 95. For Abramson's discussion of *Our Lan'* see 117-35.

²⁹ Ibid., 117.

³⁰ Ibid.

more light-hearted form in better hopes of securing financial support. Both works explicate the political significance of black history which confirms the interdependence of generic form - such as the pamphlet, the musical, the drama – with literary and historical context.

According to Abramson, Ward's *Our Lan'* is "dramaturgically sound, historically accurate, and theatrically moving" and provides complex characterisation being "sufficiently individualised... to invite the audience to understand Negroes as persons worthy of attention, sympathy, and admiration."³¹ Thus, Ward's emphasis upon refuting stereotypes in this text mirrors Douglass's and Brown's motivations for dramatising the *Creole* revolt in their speeches and written versions, in order to counter white charges of black inferiority. Abramson summarises that in writing this play Ward "learned... how to use history well in writing about his people," and that the thematic content encouraged critical development: "he gained objectivity by choosing a period through which he had not lived."³² One of the very few dramatic works to be given any kind of extended treatment, Ward's *Our Lan'* is the subject of a recent article by Owen Brady in which he analyses the changes made by Ward in his draft versions of the work.³³ He describes it as a "landmark of black artistic achievement" and testifies to Ward's use of historical events to comment upon contemporary racial injustices and political disenfranchisement: "Ward seems to have intended from the very first draft to use history to shed light on the problem of racial justice in 1940 America."³⁴

Ward's *Madison* is held at the Hatch-Billops archive in New York and exists as a typescript upon which the author has included editorial changes by hand. Current

³¹ Abramson (1969) 118.

³² Ibid., 135.

³³ Brady (1984) 40-56.

³⁴ Ibid., 40, 41.

research has established that this piece was never performed, that a written text has never been published, and that it is not held by any other library, either in Britain or the United States. However, an examination of Ward's unpublished typescripts held in the Schomburg Center, makes it readily apparent that this was by no means the only musical he ever wrote. For example, in 1961, he compiled *Big Money: A Negro Musical* with Frank Fields which dramatised the life of the black male protagonist, Thunderbird, and his deliberation between careers in boxing or singing.³⁵ The subtitle, printed on the cover of *Madison*, which reads "a Negro Folk Opera" has been deleted by hand and changed to "a Negro Folk Play" (M 1).³⁶ Beneath the title, Ward includes the following in parenthesis: "(Based on the short story by Frederick Douglass called 'The Heroic Slave')'" (M 1). The fact that Douglass's *The Heroic Slave* (1853) was Ward's major source for this text is borne out by a comparison of internal evidence across both works which makes it unlikely that Ward had read any versions produced by Brown, Child or Hopkins. However, throughout *Madison*, Ward duplicates and adds to concerns which occupied Hopkins in "A Dash for Liberty." She similarly employed this mutiny to celebrate a tradition of black heroism in a contemporary context of political injustice and racism at the turn of the twentieth century. However, it can be said that Ward revised Douglass's representation of the *Creole* revolt to a much greater extent than any other author, in order to meet the needs and address the concerns of his contemporary political context. Throughout *Madison*, Ward provides an unequivocal endorsement of the legitimacy of black violence; he represents the black female slave character unflinchingly and in powerful terms; he engages with and comments upon the current political context in his

³⁵ Ward and Frank Fields, *Big Money: A Negro Musical* (unpublished typescript, 1961). Ward also wrote, *Black Wizard of the Keyboard*, which depicted an archetypal slave musician titled "Blind Tom;" he subtitled this piece "A Musical Play for Television" and it included music written by Irving Schlein, his collaborator on *Madison* (unpublished typescript, 1960).

innovations upon subject-matter; and finally, he narrates the damaging extent to which dissensions within the black community contributed adversely to their situation.

In imitation of Douglass's and Hopkins's four part structure in both *The Heroic Slave* (1853) and "A Dash for Liberty" (1901), Ward divides *Madison* into four acts which adopt the setting of Douglass's Part IV as they all take place aboard the "Quarter-deck of 'The Creole'" (M I.I 3). The ease with which Ward creates a theatrical adaptation of Douglass's *The Heroic Slave* testifies to the inherent dramatic qualities of this earlier text. The character list to *Madison* confirms that it was intended as a musical by providing the vocal range within which each character should perform: Ward describes the two leads, Madison and Zora, respectively as a "baritone" and "contralto" (M 2).³⁷ In confirmation of his theatrical form, throughout this piece, Ward employs stage directions evocatively: "Several white seamen are discovered in an attitude of brooding constraint, while from below is heard the sound of weeping" (M I.I, 3). Thus, he paraphrases Douglass's representation of the slave coffle in Part III of *The Heroic Slave* as characterised by "loud singing, - loud cursing, - and yet there seemed to be weeping and mourning in the midst of all" (HS 213-14).

Furthermore, Ward's stage directions in Scene II of the first act, dramatise conditions within the "Hold" of the *Creole*: "In the light of a pair of ship's lanterns, a mass of black men and women and children huddle, their faces glistening from sweat" (M I.II 11). Ward juxtaposes a description of collective slave suffering – "a mass of black men and women and children" – with the main protagonists described as "seemingly indifferent to the fierce heat... MADISON is surrounded by ZORA, TILITA, MILT... apparently listening to the story he is telling of himself" (M I.II 11).

³⁶ Due to the fact that this text is unpaginated, all page numbers given refer to my own pagination.

³⁷ It has proved impossible to locate the "music by Irving Schlein" (M 1).

Ward's *Madison* distinguishes between black experiences within slavery – variously portrayed as complicit in both dehumanising suffering and shared traditions of oral storytelling - in order to situate black male and female exemplary heroic figures outside the wider black community.

Ward's stage directions to Act II, Scene II undercut this view, however, by including references to the "People" which succeed in dramatising black concerted efforts, designed to subvert white authority: "PEOPLE: (Joyously, as unbeknown to the whites, they anticipate the impending revolt) And, Lawd, I just can't keep still!" (*M* II.II, 34) In echoes of Hopkins's focus upon community activism in "A Dash for Liberty," (1901), in *Madison* Ward adopts a didactic tone to advocate black self-help to his black intended audience as Madison confides: "Until we take our own part/Nothing will be done/... We live degraded and despised,/And've failed ourselves so long" (*M* I.II, 14). Therefore, Ward's thematic preoccupation repeats those of previous authors of the *Creole* revolt, as he establishes black capability according to existing conventions: "But we must prove we're worthy" (*M* I.II, 4) can be compared to Hopkins's "A Dash for Liberty," in which there are speculations concerning the black female figure and the hope, "'may she prove worthy'" (*DL* 244).

In imitation of Douglass's Part IV of *The Heroic Slave*, Ward uses white male characters, the first mate Grant (copied from Douglass's novella), crew member "Dicksee" and slave trader Jameson (both inventions), to introduce debates concerning the "darkies [sic] character" (*M* I.I, 6) – previously described as "negro character" (*HS* 227) - and the adversarial effects of slavery.³⁸ Jameson justifies his desire not to keep the slaves in irons solely on economic grounds: "I can't afford to lose em --/I want them Nigras to run the deck/And get plenty sunshine and fresh air"

³⁸ Ward's reference to "darkies [sic] character" explicitly echoes Jack Williams's comments in *The Heroic Slave*: "the whole disaster was the result of ignorance of the real character of *darkies* in

(*M* I.I, 5). However, Grant opposes this measure by evoking historical precedent: “Haven’t you heard what happened/Aboard the *Amistad*, just two years ago?” (*M* I.I, 6) to which Jameson responds by setting up stereotyped racial distinctions: “These ain’t them kind of Nigras --/Them blacks was African savages!” (*M* I.I, 6) Such an emphasis upon historical traditions of black insurrection and a distinction between North American slaves and “African savages” is unique to the literary-historical legacy of the *Creole* revolt. None of the previous versions by Douglass, Brown, Child or Hopkins document this slave ship mutiny in terms of the *Amistad* or portray “African” slaves. However, Jameson’s critique of the failures by the Spanish crew to suppress the *Amistad* mutineers echoes Williams’s disgust with white behaviour on the *Creole*, portrayed by Douglass in *The Heroic Slave* (*M* I.I, 6 and *HS* 226-27). Equally, Grant’s responses are similar in both versions as “out on the Atlantic/It’s an altogether different story!” (*M* I.I, 7) can be compared with Douglass’s text which reads: “I deny that the negro is... a coward, or that your theory of managing slaves will stand the test of *salt* water” (*HS* 228).

Ward dramatises a “cockney” character in Act I of *Madison* in the white crew member, Dicksee, whose national identity is communicated by Grant’s direction: “Button your Cockney lip!” (*M* I.I, 4) This inclusion of a “working class” British character operates in direct contrast to Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave* in which both Jack Williams and Tom Grant are white North American citizens. Ward’s substitution may signal his attempt to lighten his subject-matter in accordance with his conventions of form as, in the tradition of music hall, he plays on the associations of the “cockney” figure and “stock” comic entertainment. However, it may also be argued that Ward includes this change in order to maintain Douglass’s celebration of

British abolitionist philanthropy as Williams states that the slaves had the *Creole* “steered into a British port, where, by the by, every woolly head of them went ashore and was free” (*HS* 231). In much more graphic terms in *Madison*, Dicksee exclaims as follows: “by my blasted British soul,/Mates, it makes an ‘onest chap quite irate/To know ‘e’s slung ‘is ‘ooks aboard/Such a lying, stinking, bloody pirate!” (*M* I.I, 10) This reading corroborates Ward’s ending to *Madison* which applauds British philanthropy for emancipating all the slaves. An “officer” comments - “We are British subjects,/And our Queen would be outraged!/We don’t have such laws!” (*M* IV.III, 90) - to which Milt, one of the black male slaves, replies: “Hurrah, for the British!” (*M* IV.III., 90)

Ward’s processes of black heroic representation are illustrated in his depiction of Madison as slave rebel leader, his introduction of Zora as black female slave revolutionary, and his narration of the insurrection aboard the *Creole*, which provide many intertextual points of comparison with Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave*. Although in general, Ward’s narrative practice borrows heavily from the rhetorical form and content of Douglass’s language, nonetheless, his characterisation and plot development vary greatly in their acknowledgement of a differing historical and political context. For example, Ward’s preference for dramatising in full the moment of rebellion aboard the slave ship operates in direct contrast to Douglass’s major focus in *The Heroic Slave* upon Washington’s life prior to the mutiny and his consequent displacement of black violence. By comparison, in *Madison*, Washington summarises his life before the insurrection very briefly: “I spent five years up there in New Bedford” (*M* I.II, 12). Furthermore he replies to questions posed by the “People” concerning his escape to the North by stating that “It was easy with the help I had - /My friend, Mr. Listwell,/That white man you saw on the docks/Bidding me

farewell,/Posed as my master” (*M* I.II, 12). Thus, in contrast to Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave*, Ward’s *Madison* frames the white abolitionist, Listwell, by black narrative storytelling practices. Madison also summarises his return for his wife by adopting detached language and, in contrast to Douglass, he leaves her unnamed: “I’d promised my wife I’d not forsake her -/... Unfortunately, my coming back,/Only caused her to lose her life,/And put me back in chains” (*M* I.II, 13). Thus, Ward’s dismissal of Washington’s “wife” demonstrates that his gender politics in this text are even more problematic than those put forward by Douglass in *The Heroic Slave*. Ward describes this figure solely in terms of self-sacrifice in the interest of saving the black man – Madison narrates that “she got shot tying [sic] to help me get away” (*M* I.II, 13) - while other characters, in direct imitation of Douglass’s original, describe her as a “poor thing” (*M* I.II, 13, *HS* 180).

Ward’s physical descriptions of Madison are much less detailed than Douglass’s narration of his “Herculean strength” (*HS* 179) as stage directions state that he is “a young man in his early thirties” (*M* I.II, 12). Ward confirms his similarities with Douglass’s text, however, by focusing upon Washington’s exceptionalism - other slaves’ comments “you don’t sound like us” (*M* I.II, 12) prompt Madison to admit that the “abolitionists taught me some,/And tried to make me a preacher” (*M* I.II, 12). Thus, *The Heroic Slave* also illustrates Madison’s separation according to differences of language, education, environment and ideology as he comments upon the attitudes of other slaves: “I despised the cowardly acquiescence in their own degradation... and felt a kind of pride and glory in my own desperate lot” (*HS* 190). These comments highlight the difficulties of interpreting *Madison* as “a negro folk play” (*M* 1) in the same tradition as earlier dramatic works such as *Mule Bone: A Comedy of Negro Life* (1931) by Langston Hughes and Zora

Neale Hurston.³⁹ Therefore, in contrast to *Mule Bone* which employs comic stereotyping, humorous exchanges and allegorical events to dramatise tensions within the black community, Ward's *Madison* adopts a far more heroic and exceptional framework of characterisation which promotes exemplary models of black male and female heroism to the exclusion of "folk" life.

Throughout *Madison*, Ward critiques black passivity in the face of white physical oppression as he dramatises black united action by repeating the following citation from Byron's *Childe Harold* - "Who would be free themselves must strike the blow!" (*M* I.II, 19) - which was regularly reproduced by Douglass in his oral and written material on the revolt.⁴⁰ Ward's final speech to Act I conflates individual and communal identities, because it is given by "Madison and People" (*M* I.II, 23), while drawing parallels between the struggle for black rights in both 1840s and 1950s North America: "If we could rise up from our beds/To vote and have some voice,.../And keep our children by our side/... To grow and learn in open schools/Regardless of race or creed:/We'd know freedom is a grand and a beautiful thing!" (*M* I.II, 23) Ward employs the historical context of slavery in order to comment upon his immediate political context, as represented in the Civil Rights Movement and contested legislation, such as *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), and to posit an idealised understanding of "freedom."⁴¹ Moreover, the connotations of "Madison and People" at this point in *Madison* suggest a unity between the black heroic figure and the community, otherwise a site of contestation in this piece which becomes gradually more pronounced. Thus, the slaves employ derogatory language to denigrate

³⁹ Hughes and Hurston, *Mule Bone: A Comedy of Negro Life* (1931. Rpt. Bass and Gates, Jr., eds., 1991).

⁴⁰ See the discussion in chapter II of this dissertation.

⁴¹ As Stephen Lawson has noted in *Black Ballots: Voting Rights in the South, 1944-1969* (1976), acquiring the vote was, on many levels, the primary end of all civil rights agitation. For an overview of the debates surrounding the start of the Civil Rights Movement, see Cook (1998).

Madison as a “white skunk” (*M* II.III, 42) for pandering to whites’ “dirty lies” (*M* II.III, 42). This criticism of the exemplary black hero is unprecedented in any previous version of the *Creole* revolt, with the exception of the proslavery press, and tends to suggest twentieth-century dissensions within black political organisations. Washington’s justification not only emphasises expediency but also tropes of disguise: “I don’t deny – I’ve played the dunce!--/... though our self-respect we cherish/We must wear the mask or perish!” (*M* II.III, 43) Thus, Madison’s response echoes the emphasis between racial identity and performance in relation to abolitionist discourse which characterises versions by Douglass, Brown, Child and Hopkins.

Perhaps the single most innovative aspect of Ward’s *Madison*, in respect of this revolt’s nineteenth century literary-historical legacy, consists in his displacement of Madison’s wife, Susan, and introduction of a leading black female slave character, named Zora. In direct contrast to Douglass’s ambiguities of racial representation for Susan in *The Heroic Slave*, as well as Brown’s, Child’s and Hopkins’s preoccupation with the plight of the “tragic mulatta” in their versions, Ward describes Zora as “(A pretty black girl)” (*M* I.II, 12). Rather than fulfilling the role of Washington’s wife, he portrays Zora as an independent figure outside the black familial unit but who nevertheless suffers from an unrequited love which, in conjunction with her rejection by the black community, provides the dramatic tension in the piece. In *Madison*, Ward portrays Zora as contributing much greater acts of violence than committed by Susan in previous versions, even including Hopkins’s representation of her “dash for liberty.” Thus, in Act I, Zora juxtaposes admiration for Madison’s wife’s heroism - “She must-a been a brave woman” (*M* I.II, 13) - with justification of her poisoning of her master by feeding him “lemon toadstools” (*M* I.II, 15) in order to maintain

ownership of her body: “Am I a mare, or cow, or sheep,/I got to let em breed me? – I’s e a woman.../And I had to kill, or face the day/When mine, like yours’d meet the same sad fate” (*M* I.II, 17). Therefore, in an attempt to justify her actions to the black community, Zora foregrounds her female identity, “I’s e a woman,” and appeals to their sympathy by universalising her experience, as connoted by “When mine, like yours.” The competing attitudes among the black community towards Zora’s act of violence against her white master introduces debates concerning the legitimacy, or otherwise, of black resistance.

Throughout *Madison*, Zora rejects any politics of accommodation in favour of a militant defence of black individual rights: “I never could accept my lot like some,/And I never could understand/Why anybody else could” (*M* II.I, 27). Thus, Ward’s black female character endorses black male heroism and the need for physical resistance in terms as direct as those expressed by Madison’s rallying cry to the slaves: “I say, if we’re ready/And willing to lay down our lives,/Then we can seize the ship/And sail her on to Freedom!” (*M* I.II, 20) Furthermore, in *Madison*, Ward establishes a model of black heroism based on male and female mutual collaboration as Madison applauds Zora’s commitment to reform: “by striking back she’s shown/She’s right – at least, in spirit!/. . . Take a lesson from her book;/Instead of these poor women/Moaning and groaning in despair” (*M* I.II, 18). This discussion demonstrates that debates concerning black violence are fundamental to the dramatic tension of *Madison*. For example, Madison’s resolution – “I believe I’ll take this ship/Without firing a single shot!” (*M* II.III, 45) – is contradicted by another slave’s emphasis upon the inevitability of bloodshed: “You’ll turn this ship into a [sic] abattoir/And drown our cause in blood!.../You might not mean to kill, Son./But I know what I’m talking about./I know how Denmark and Gabriel/And their men was

put to rout!” (*M* II.III, 45-46) Thus, Ward evokes a context of thwarted black insurrection in order to emphasise the limitations of black violent protest in comparison with the effectiveness of white retribution. However, the text endorses Madison’s heroic status as he borrows from earlier black male abolitionist rhetoric in his speeches: “Is it any wonder others/Deny our rights as brothers/When they see us millions strong/Cowardly suffering such wrongs?” (*M* II.III, 45-46) Thus, Ward incorporates language which expresses the interdependence of black manhood with physical resistance and thereby, echo the terms employed not only by Douglass but also his antecedents, Henry Highland Garnet and David Walker.

In contrast to Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave*, Ward’s *Madison* represents black violence explicitly, however briefly, in stage directions:

(Grant is felled, as the mutineers dash across with their shackles raised as deadly clubs. Clarke, meanwhile, attempts to draw, but Madison is upon him. In the tussle for the weapon it is fired and Clarke slumps to the runway – The gun slithers to the deck below and Big Turp emerges from hatchway to retrieve it. Another shot sounds... Jameson... staggers and falls...Milt appears with his gun... Bruce emerges... with batch of rifles, and Madison takes over the wheel, as the helmsman is ordered out. Cheering is heard off left, and other mutineers appear with armfuls of rifles)” (*M* III.II 76).

This excerpt emphasises black physical resistance, as connoted by “deadly clubs,” while also illustrating Ward’s interest in situating Washington’s heroism within collective acts of resistance as additional slaves, such as “Big Turp,” “Milt” and “James” lend their support. The moment of slave insurrection in itself resolves the earlier between Jameson who argued in favour of black passivity – as they are “harmless as a cargo of sweet potatoes” (*M* I.I, 9) - and Captain Clarke’s fear that “There’s no such thing as a harmless Nigra!” (*M* I.I, 9) Despite his much less equivocal narration of black mutiny in this text, Ward parallels Madison’s speech in Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave* justifying his rebellion according to ideological

justification: “You call me a black murderer./But God is my witness,/It is liberty,/Not malice,/Which moves me and my men in this days [sic] work.../We have done no more/Than follow the example/Of the Founding Fathers whom all men applaud” (*M* IV.I, 79).⁴² In contrast to Douglass, however, Ward’s adaptation of Madison’s rhetoric, draws a more direct parallel between black male heroism and the white “Founding Fathers” in order to challenge more overtly white frameworks within which to express black identity.

In *Madison*, Ward complicates any straightforward representation of the legitimacy of black violence because he includes in Act IV a key plot change to previous narratives of the *Creole* revolt. Thus, in contrast to Brown and Child’s works which describe that “[the whites]... attempted to retake the vessel” (*SRS* 35, *MWFB* 154), Ward’s representation of resistance to Washington’s authority takes the form of a group of black slaves. Their leader, “Big Turp,” argues in favour of the sacrifice of the individual to save the community from white retribution: “But if us surrendor [sic] Madison/All the rest can walk off free!/. . . It’s Madison or us” (*M* IV.III, 86). However, Zora challenges his view by deploring their lack of gratitude: “Madison risked his life to save em,/And Gawd himself could do no more./Yet, now they turn and deal him/Sech a bitter thankless blow!” (*M* IV.III, 87) Thus, Ward’s text is much more unflinching than Douglass’s in terms of black self-hatred and ideological divisions within the black community while it extends Hopkins’s interest expressed in “A Dash for Liberty” in the necessity of communal black self-help. Madison saves the situation by his superlative oratorical prowess and renunciatory

⁴² It is worth contrasting this extract with the following from Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave*: “You call me a *black murderer*. I am not a murderer. God is my witness that LIBERTY, not *malice*, is the motive for this night’s work... We have done that which you applaud your fathers for doing, and if we are murderers, *so were they*” (*HS* 234-35, emphasis not mine). Pages 79-80 of *Madison* repeat, with more or less variation, Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave*, 234-36.

martyrdom despite Big Turp's placing of a gun to his head: "Betrayed as I,/...as our poor blind brothers think,/A bargain can be struck at my expense;.../I say so be it!.../You at least, then, shall be free,/And though they hang me,/High as Hayman,/The world shall know/They will have hanged a man (The women sob)" (*M* IV.III, 88). Thus, Ward's representations of heroism document the importance of individual rights to constructions of black "manhood" and engage with sentimentality in the effects wrought upon his "staged" audience – "the women sob" – by Washington's speech.

The examination in this thesis of literary-historical representations of the *Creole* revolt, as represented by the works of Douglass, Brown, Child, Hopkins and Ward in nineteenth century American literature and after, makes it possible to conclude with the following major points. Throughout the nineteenth century, and in particular during the antebellum period, Douglass was a major historical figure and literary innovator who succeeded, not only in interweaving the rhetoric and preoccupations of his contemporaries (both white and black) into his material, but also in setting important literary and historical precedents for subsequent authors. Thus, this thesis has explored the complex motifs and literary effects which he developed in his speeches on the *Creole* revolt, given in both North America and Britain, as well as his narrative experimentation across his different editions (illustrated and otherwise) of *The Heroic Slave*. The second chapter to this dissertation has also provided a detailed discussion of the dramatic qualities of *The Heroic Slave*, irrespective of publication forum, which not only point to complex relationships with dramas produced by Brown, Child and Hopkins, but also support Ward's rationale for adapting this text as a musical. Perhaps more importantly, this

research has also extended Douglass's existing canon by recovering and examining, however speculatively, a second version of *The Heroic Slave*, previously unfamiliar to critics, and subtitled, *A Thrilling Narrative*.

There is no question that Douglass's work on the *Creole* revolt provided the point of narrative origin for later adaptations by Brown, Child, Hopkins and Ward and therefore established the literary-historical tradition according to which, black and white, male and female, authors would dramatise this rebellion for well over a century. Furthermore, his experimentation with genre, form and context inspired the ideological protests against white racism and thematic diversity which characterised their later material. These writers extended and developed the major issues presented by Douglass which included the legitimacy of representing black violence, literary-historical interpretations of black male and female slave heroism, the limitations of white historical frameworks for narrating black experience, the interweaving of various genres for dramatic effect and a politicised manipulation of audience.

This dissertation has established the close intertextual relationships across versions by Brown, Child and Hopkins and indicates their parallel use of language, characterisation and literary-historical focus. All three writers document their similarities in a deliberate rewriting of Douglass's representations of the black female slave figure, Susan Washington. While Brown and, to some extent, Child further endorses her significance as a "tragic mulatta," Hopkins adopted a different set of conventions in her text which privileged black female agency, independence and survival, rather than passivity and tragedy. Thus, Hopkins used the black female character's racial indeterminacy to interrogate a history of miscegenation, while she associated Susan directly with black male resistance and complicated Brown's and Child's straightforward adherence to sentimentalised abolitionist discourse.

Hopkins's version revised Brown's emphasis upon historical re-interpretation in texts produced as part of his volumes on black history and critiqued Child's didactic content and simplified phrasing which represented her determination to educate a newly emancipated black Southern readership. This thesis has recovered a great deal of material by Brown and established that he wrote many more texts on the *Creole* revolt in many more arenas than had been previously supposed, not only including his volumes of black history but also his contributions to black periodicals and commissioning of an antislavery panorama. This work has also contextualised Child's educational primer by comparing it to other texts produced during the period, in terms both of its content and political implications. In the final analysis, this research into the *Creole* revolt testifies to a complex literary-historical dialogue between Douglass, Brown, Child, Hopkins and Ward whose works document the aesthetic accomplishments and political commitment of black and white authors in the antebellum, post-emancipation, Reconstruction and Civil Rights contexts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

This thesis catalogues and investigates a voluminous amount of rare, previously neglected and unpublished material. Therefore, it is necessary to provide a brief rationale concerning the methodology and composition of this bibliography. Each title is entered according to the model set down in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers Fifth Edition* (Joseph Gibaldi. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2000). In the case of anonymous texts, each entry is simply listed by the title (ignoring any initial). In the case of works produced pseudonymously, the text is listed under the real author's name while the pseudonym under which it was originally published is provided in square brackets at the end of the citation. Source material is divided into primary and secondary categories and, in practice, this system has provided the most effective way of finding and corroborating references across a diverse range of material. In terms of primary sources, in the case of authors who have written more than one work, each citation has been listed in alphabetical order by title, ignoring any initial. This system has been adopted due to the difficulties of dating some material, as well as the fact that a chronological approach complicates attempts to find references, as authors have produced a range of texts across a variety of genres. Thus, there are some entries for which it has been impossible to verify the correct date, either of composition or publication, in which case the abbreviation "n.d." is included and/or the possible date/s are placed in brackets at the end of the citation. Similarly, where page numbers are known, they are listed at the end of the citation, otherwise they are omitted. As far as citing secondary sources is concerned, this thesis has adopted the MLA practice of listing individual works in chronological order. For obscure microfilm citations, I have given the publication information of the microfilm and its reel number. In most instances, the material which has not been published represents one of two kinds - either handwritten or typescript - and this is stated at the end of the citation within square brackets.

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