

CANADIAN MIGRATIONS:
READING CANADA IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

by

Alyssa Erin MacLean

B.A., McGill University, 2001
M.A., University of Western Ontario, 2002

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Abstract

This dissertation contributes to the fields of Canadian literature, American literature, and transnational and hemispheric studies by examining Canada's place in American Renaissance discussions about imperialism, citizenship, and racial and national identity. In the nineteenth-century US, Canada became symbolically important because of its perceived common origins with the US as well as its increasing resistance to forms of American imperialism. *Canadian Migrations* examines the significance of the Canada-US relationship by analysing literary representations of two population movements across the Canada-US border: the 1755 deportation of French Catholic Acadians from Canada to the American colonies and the antebellum flight of African Americans north to Canada. American authors gravitated towards these narratives of displacement to and from Canada in order to discuss the meaning of American citizenship and the treatment of racial minorities within US borders.

I argue that both of these Canada-US movements prompted critical inquiries in US culture about forms of American imperialism. In Part One, I examine authors such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, who portrayed the violent expulsion of Acadians by British troops justified the creation of the United States as a necessary defense against imperial rule. Yet the Acadian expulsion also prompted these authors to question the contemporary US government's own displacement of racial and linguistic minorities through slavery and westward expansion. In Part Two, I examine the northward movement of fugitive slaves across Lake Erie to Canada. By crossing

Lake Erie, Black migrants—and the iconic texts written about them—challenged the conceptual categories that sustained US slavery and imperialism. Authors such as Stowe, Josiah Henson, Lewis Clarke, and William Wells Brown described scenes of nautical transit and transformation across the Lake Erie Passage to contest US slavery and to develop notions of Black citizenship. By recovering this conversation about the significance of Canada-US cross-border movement, I position nineteenth-century Canada within the movement of people and ideas across the Black Atlantic world. Together, my chapters demonstrate how the imagined community of the United States emerged through a series of complex political, cultural, and literary negotiations with Canada.

Preface

Sections of this dissertation's introduction and conclusion have appeared previously, in somewhat different form, in the essay "Canadian Studies and American Studies," located in *A Concise Companion to American Studies*, ed. John Carlos Rowe (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. 387-406).

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Introduction: Reading for Canada in US Literature

In the opening pages of “The Custom-House,” Nathaniel Hawthorne’s introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*, the narrator interrupts his discussion of his own position within the new American republic to survey the weathered shipyards of his hometown of Salem, Massachusetts. He briefly fixates on a strange yet familiar ship paying Salem a visit. As he watches a “Nova Scotia schooner, pitching out her cargo of firewood” (SL 73-74) onto Salem’s decaying docks, the narrator of *The Scarlet Letter* unconsciously engages in a comparative analysis of the US and Canada that was common for his time. By the 1840s, many of the economic and geographical similarities between Nova Scotia and Salem were increasingly being obscured by the widening political rifts between British North America and the United States. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a time “when India was a new region, and only Salem knew the way thither” (SL 99), Nova Scotia and New England were both British colonies that shared economic, geographical, and cultural traits: histories of mostly white, Anglo-Saxon settlement, similar environments, largely English-speaking populations, and shared investments in moving goods (timber, cod, furs, sugar, rum, and slaves) across international trade networks. Yet by Hawthorne’s time in the Custom-House, these traits had changed: while Halifax (Nova Scotia’s main shipping port) had once been one of Salem’s rivals, it was now a fellow victim of transatlantic economic realities in the nineteenth century. Nova Scotia now provides the primary resources for the consumption of a much larger US nation-state. In the same way, Salem, which had once represented the power of the British Empire and the growing self-reliance and ingenuity of the American colonies, is now relegated to a supporting role in Hawthorne’s time, while Boston and New

York prosper. The narrator's initial assessment of Salem's position within the hemisphere enables him to begin an inquiry into the history of pre-Revolutionary America, contrasting where "America" was under British rule and where it now stands as a republic. The "rusty little schooners that bring firewood from the British provinces" (SL 75), which are revisiting a familiar outpost that has fallen on hard times, invite the narrator of *The Scarlet Letter* to reflect upon the significance of the American democratic project as well as the legacy of the American Revolution.

Yet as the narrator proceeds, his continued references to Nova Scotia, and to British North America more generally, reveal evidence of imperial activity in North America that interrupts and sometimes even contradicts his celebration of US nationhood. Halifax and Salem were once allies in the same imperial power struggles in North America, only to end up on opposite sides: after the American Revolution, Halifax remained part of the British Empire, while Salem became a vital port for the independent United States. Halifax's political fate began to diverge sharply from Salem's, in fact, when the British colonial agent who figures so prominently in "The Custom-House"—Surveyor Jonathan Pue—was in office in the 1750s and 60s. And while the Canadian ships in Salem's mid-nineteenth-century harbour seem innocuous enough, they indicate the continued economic and military presence of the British Empire in North America.

As "The Custom-House" progresses, many of the narrator's comments about British North America, which index the political differences between monarchy and republic, empire and nation, begin to destabilize his larger assessment of the accomplishments of the United States. The narrator refers to Canada frequently to contextualize the significance of

the US project. He often dismisses the relevance of British North America in the antebellum period, claiming, for example, that the British North American captains lack “the alertness of the Yankee aspect” (SL 75) that Americans have gained since the Revolution. At the same time, however, he complains about the energy-draining atmosphere of the Custom-House and worries about the future of American democracy as a result. His co-workers recall the history of imperial warfare in North America, including the wars in the “wild Western territory” (SL 89) against Native Americans, the battles over Ticonderoga¹ during the Seven Years’ War (sometimes called the French and Indian War)² and the American Revolution, and conflicts on the Niagara frontier during the War of 1812. Yet the recurring nature of these battles testifies to the fact that all of these conflicts over culture, territory, language, race, and empire remain unresolved, and in fact are still resonating in Hawthorne’s time through different projects of American expansion. The narrator complains that America’s pre-Revolutionary “documents and archives” (SL 98) have been seized and “carried off to Halifax” (SL 98) by British Loyalists at the end of the Revolution, leaving the newly-created US bereft of both official history and literature. Similarly, even the discarded records of the scarlet letter, which the narrator prizes so dearly for the stories they can tell about early American history, are still endorsed by “the hand and seal of Governor Shirley” (SL 99), the British imperial representative for the American colonies in the eighteenth century. And as

¹ Ticonderoga was a fort on Lake Champlain that was highly contested by the English and French in the colonial period. The British won it in 1759, but it was later seized by American troops in 1775 during the American Revolution.

² I will be using the term “Seven Years’ War” to refer to the conflict between the British and French empires from 1756 to 1763 throughout this dissertation, even though I recognize that the “French and Indian War” is often the preferred term in US contexts. Canadian historians use “the Seven Years’ War” (or *la guerre de sept ans*) for a few reasons. The Seven Years’ War was a worldwide conflict over French and English trading empires, while the French and Indian War was the North American venue of that conflict. Historians in Canada have often preferred to highlight the war’s global context. “The Seven Years’ War” is also a more neutral term; “French and Indian War” assumes an Anglo-American perspective of the war and ignores the fact that aboriginal populations fought on both sides.

American studies scholar Donald Pease points out, the narrator, deprived of any other role model in his bureaucratic office, turns to another British official, Surveyor Pue, to define his own goals as an author, thus placing himself “within a line of succession authorized by the King of England rather than the President of the United States” (60). In short, the narrator’s revelations and discoveries in the Custom-House testify to the blurred line between British and American power in North America just as often as they sustain the notion of US dominance within North America in the antebellum period.

These intertwined imperial and national histories of the Custom-House prompt the narrator to question the legacy of the American Revolution and the relationship between the US citizen and the US nation-state. Literary critic Lauren Berlant observes that Hawthorne’s narrator can’t help but read the architecture of the aging Custom-House in multiple timelines: the Custom-House’s eagle icon, façade, and crumbling pillars simultaneously remind him of a defunct Roman empire, a decaying British system, and a newly-created, but dysfunctional and problematic US democracy (167-70). The narrator even worries that the American eagle above the Custom-House door, whose ferocious aspect is supposed to protect her citizens, may “fling off her nestlings with a scratch of her claw, a dab of her beak, or a rankling wound from her barbed arrows” (*SL* 74). The violence he imagines on the steps of the Custom-House at the hands of the US government calls the felicity of the American national project into question. In fact, the narrator’s comparison of the growing similarities between the US and the British Empire makes him question whether the US nation-state is any different from its imperial predecessor. His dissatisfaction with the failures of his own nation-state to protect and represent him ultimately compels him to search for a new kind of imagined community. By the end of “The Custom-House,” the narrator redefines himself as

a “citizen of somewhere else” (*SL* 113). His status as an imagined non-citizen of the US—someone who has chosen to exclude himself from the national project—offers him the possibility of aligning himself with an imaginary social order that provides an alternative to US policies. While the narrator begins his text by watching the movement of goods entering the US, then, he concludes by imagining his own escape out of it.

My dissertation analyses images of Canada-US cross-border movement to show how the United States’s relationship with Canada structured American Renaissance discussions about imperialism, citizenship, and racial and national identity. The image of Canada-US exchange in *The Scarlet Letter* has garnered no attention in American literary criticism; yet it reveals a mode of thinking about hemispheric relations that critically structured the literary output of what American studies scholars call the American Renaissance. In *American Renaissance*, literary critic F. O. Matthiessen famously described the period between 1850 and 1855 as a time when the United States experienced “a renaissance, by coming to its first maturity and affirming its rightful heritage in the whole expanse of art and culture” (vii). Matthiessen singles out five authors in particular (Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman), praising their “devotion to the possibilities of democracy” (ix), their artistic merit, and their efforts “to provide a culture commensurate with America’s political opportunity” (xv). In the last twenty years, however, literary scholars have expanded the temporal limits of Matthiessen’s American Renaissance and have challenged its national structural frame by exploring the different transnational engagements between writers in the US and their counterparts across the world. These scholars argue that the idea of the United States itself was frequently articulated and defined in reference to other imperial and national formations, like the British and French empires, as well as the revolutionary projects of many

Latin American and Caribbean countries. In his book *In This Remote Country*, Edward Watts, for instance, shows how the colonial French population of North America became an important point of discussion for Anglo-American authors in the decades leading up to the Civil War. US authors used images of the colonial French to think about the legacy of the American Revolution and to present new alternatives about the future of the United States. Similarly, in *Transatlantic Insurrections*, Paul Giles explores the intertextual connections between American and British literary cultures in the period after the US Revolutionary War. While many literary studies have insisted on the insularity of these two national literary traditions, Giles argues, each national culture referred to the other to consider “the kind of culture it might have been, but wasn’t” (*Transatlantic* 195). In *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere*, Anna Brickhouse reconceptualizes the American Renaissance as a transamerican renaissance, arguing that “the very conception of the American Renaissance, tied as it always has been to a cultural moment of intense national self-consciousness, is inherently dependent upon and sustained not only by nationalist discourses but by the underlying transnational desires and anxieties that such discourses seek to mask” (33). While many American authors appealed to notions of national literary purity, she argues, they drew from a heterogeneous print cultural community, finding inspiration in ideas expressed by Cuban, Mexican, and Caribbean authors, and responding to events happening outside the borders of the US, such as the Haitian Revolution. Similarly, Kirsten Silva Gruesz’s *Ambassadors of Culture* challenges the conceptual geography of the American Renaissance, by showing how nineteenth-century Anglo-American writers engaged with Latino writers and thinkers and by recovering nineteenth-century American texts written in Spanish. Other scholars, such as Shelley Streeby (in *American Sensations*)

and Amy Kaplan (in *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*), examine how American literature was shaped by debates about westward and southward expansion as well as developments in the Americas such as the Haitian Revolution. All of these scholars converge in their belief that the imagined community of the United States emerged through a series of complex political, cultural, and literary negotiations with its neighbours and cultural interlocutors within the hemisphere, notably Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Haiti. Yet as I will discuss, even though authors like Hawthorne were also invoking Canada in their literary works, Canada's position within the "transamerican renaissance" has largely been overlooked.

My dissertation contributes to the emerging conversation about transnational American studies by investigating Canada's position in the US literary imagination between roughly 1826 and 1863. Just as Americans were reading about Native Americans in Lydia Maria Child's *Hobomok* (1824) and white American pioneers on the Rio Grande in *Godey's Lady's Book* (1847), as Kaplan has explained, they were also encountering Canadian goods being unloaded on American shores in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), francophone Huron informants in James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), Acadian refugees travelling to Louisiana in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem *Evangeline* (1847), and enslaved African Americans running to Canada in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). These nineteenth-century conversations continued to resonate into the twentieth century, when American authors often turned to images of Canada to consider the legacy of race relations in the hemisphere and the impact of US imperialism within North America. Canada proved to be a remarkably flexible space in the minds of American authors, one that could serve simultaneously as a symbol of the decline of European empires in North

America, a site of linguistic otherness and racial miscegenation, a symbol of Anglo-Saxon supremacy and destiny in North America, and an alternative to established political structures in the US. Writing about Canada also enabled authors to destabilize notions of US exceptionalism by exposing the concept of the nation as contingent—as, in some ways, a fiction in itself.

The two central sections of my dissertation recover and examine nineteenth-century representations of two major population movements across the Canada-US border: the 1755 expulsion of 7,000 to 12,000 francophone Acadians south from eastern Canada to the American colonies, and the antebellum flight of free and enslaved African Americans north to Canada. These two instances of cross-border migration and state-sanctioned violence became flashpoints of literary conversation in the US in the mid-nineteenth century, just as debates about other forms of forced movement such as the Mexican-American War, Indian Removal, and the Fugitive Slave Law reached their peak. Authors such as Hawthorne, Longfellow, Stowe, and William Wells Brown wrote narratives describing these events to discuss the US's attempts to secure its external borders with other nation-states like Mexico, to define ideas of US citizenship and national identity, and to examine the relationship between race, nation, and empire as conceptual categories. The texts inspired by these examples of migration and forced movement to and from Canada allowed authors and readers to reflect on America's position in the world and its treatment of racial minorities within its own borders.

Canada and Nineteenth-Century US Empire

When Hawthorne wrote about Canada in the antebellum period (roughly 1830 to 1865), the territory we now refer to as the nation-state of Canada was politically recognized as British North America, a collection of colonial provinces and territories governed by the British Empire. In the context of American literature, however, the meaning of the word “Canada” shifted depending on the timeframe and the (often implied) linguistic and political position of the speaker within North America. At the risk of historical backformation, I will be using “Canada” as shorthand in this dissertation for the territories under British North American control or influence following the American Revolution; “America” and “American” will refer to the United States.³ To some extent, Canada became an important topic of conversation in antebellum America simply because of its geographical proximity. The mid-nineteenth-century railroad building boom greatly facilitated movement across North America, and by the 1840s, railway tours from Boston to Montreal, around Lake Ontario, and back to New York were popular excursions for upper-class Americans. When

³ The exact political designation of the word “Canada” shifted frequently until Canada’s Confederation in 1867. Since the seventeenth century, the word “Canada” or “the Canadas” often referred vaguely to French-held territories on the northern side of the Great Lakes and throughout the St. Lawrence watershed, and, occasionally, to the areas now known as the maritime provinces of Canada. In many texts (like the Leatherstocking novels of James Fenimore Cooper, for example, which are set during the Seven Years’ War) the name implied an imagined geography of linguistic and cultural difference from the white, Anglo-Saxon settlements of New England. At the end of the Seven Years’ War (1754-1763), when Quebec became a possession of the British Empire, “Canada” took on a more nebulous meaning in practice, sometimes referring to Quebec, and at other times referring to all British territories north of New England, especially after the American Revolution. Since 1791, the term “Canada” (used in the singular) officially referred to the anglophone region of Upper Canada (now Ontario) and the francophone region of Lower Canada (now Quebec). At that time, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland were collectively known as the Atlantic Colonies but were sometimes referred to as “Canada” by association. “British North America” referred to all of these territories along with the unexplored and unsettled regions of north/western North America. In 1841, Upper and Lower Canada merged to become the United Province of Canada, divided into Canada West (now Ontario) and Canada East (now Quebec). The 1867 British North America Act united New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Canada West and Canada East to create the Dominion of Canada. Other British North American colonies subsequently joined Canada, ending with Newfoundland (now Newfoundland and Labrador) in 1949.

Henry David Thoreau made the trip in 1850, for example, he reported with some bemusement that he had fifteen hundred American travelling companions with him (Doyle, *North* 7). The list of nineteenth-century American authors who visited and wrote about Canada is more lengthy than one might expect: *The Nation* editor E. L. Godkin, Boston Brahmin Richard Henry Dana, humorist William Tappan Thompson, realist writer William Dean Howells, nature writer John Burroughs, poet Walt Whitman, and writers such as Hamlin Garland, Mark Twain and Henry James, are only a few of the authors who wrote about their Canadian experiences. This list of tourists does not include the African American authors who (im)migrated to Canada to escape slavery, racism, and segregation in the US, such as Martin Delany, William and Ellen Craft, and Josiah Henson. Still others, such as Frederick Douglass and William Wells Brown, chose to live on the American side of the Great Lakes, but regularly invoked Canada's antislavery stance in the mid-nineteenth century in their essays and texts about the US.⁴ And while some of these authors mention Canada only briefly, their texts were sometimes so immensely popular that they had a profound effect on the perspectives of American readers towards their northern neighbour (as in the case of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, for example).

Canada's significance in antebellum US culture lay in the kinds of comparisons and contrasts it offered American authors in the highly-contested political debates about the future of US imperialism and the definition of the US national subject. As my brief examination of "The Custom-House" shows, Canada was significant in the US mind not only because of its perceived common origins with revolutionary Anglo-America, but also

⁴ Brown lived in Cleveland, OH, and Buffalo, NY, while Douglass spent his time in Rochester, NY. In his two books on the subject of Canada-US relations, James Doyle provides an extensive list of American writers who discuss Canada.

because of its increasing ideological distance from, and even resistance to, nineteenth-century America's configuration of empire. Recent scholarship in American studies has begun to investigate the ways that US power evolved in the nineteenth century, and how the history of US imperialism has (or has not) been understood by scholars. Early postcolonial scholars, such as Edward Saïd, defined imperialism as "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory" (9) and colonialism as "the implanting of settlements on distant territory" (9). Yet the suitability of these terms to a nineteenth-century US context was debated until recently. US founding documents such as the Declaration of Independence represented the US as an exceptional nation-state, one that had purged itself of imperial ambitions by rejecting British tyranny. Moreover, the early theoretical formulations of imperialism emphasized binary divisions between foreign and domestic spaces, imperial centres and colonial peripheries, and colonizing forces and colonized peoples and territories—divisions which did not align readily with the process of nineteenth-century American continental expansion, even though that process nonetheless depended on the definition of racial and linguistic categories, the oppression and dispossession of indigenous and non-white peoples, and the participation of the US in world systems of commercial domination and enslavement.⁵ In many cases, nineteenth-century American imperialism was described as "a contradiction in terms" (Kaplan, "Left Alone" 12), "a momentary psychological lapse" (Kaplan, "Left Alone" 14), or "a minor detour in the march of American history" (Kaplan, "Left Alone" 14).⁶

⁵ I use the term "continental expansion" carefully here; I agree with arguments made in previous scholarship (such as Streeby, *American* 9) that the distinction between "continental" and "imperial" expansion obscures the way that similar patterns of thinking motivated both of these forms of territorial expansion.

⁶ See also Streeby, *American* 6-10 and 292 n. 7 for a longer description of this discussion about the applicability of the term "postcolonial" to the US context.

However, contemporary scholarship has stopped questioning the reality of nineteenth-century US imperialism. Scholars of nineteenth-century US culture such as Amy Kaplan now investigate imperialism as a power structure or a network of power relations that depends on and constructs arguments about “home” and “abroad,” “domestic” and “foreign.” At the same time that it justifies negotiation, exploration, conflict, and the acquisition of territory, the rhetoric of imperialism also determines the confines of the domestic space of the nation, defining categories of identity such as race, religion, and citizenship, and shaping practices like segregation and slavery. Summarizing a long history of postcolonial scholarship, Kaplan explains that imperial engagements “occur within political and social structures of power and domination that both form and are transformed by these colonial encounters. In the arena of representation, critics have shown how stereotypes themselves become unstable sites of ambivalence that distort and challenge the bedrock divisions on which they are founded” (*Anarchy* 14). Kaplan proposes an understanding of US imperialism that recognizes how US expansion sustained, and was sustained by, “internal” practices of slavery, racial classification and segregation, and how literary representations of the “foreign” relied on “domestic” understandings of racial classification, language, and citizenship in nineteenth century US culture.⁷

Throughout this dissertation I explore how American authors situated Canada in relation to the US imperial and national projects, and how Canada helped American authors define these understandings of race, language, and citizenship. In the nineteenth-century US,

⁷ Many scholars have proposed different understandings of US imperialism in different time periods, including Richard Van Alstyne’s *Rising American Empire*, Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease’s edited collection *Cultures of US Imperialism*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire*, Mary Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes*, Anne McClintock’s *Imperial Leather*, Singh and Schmidt’s *Postcolonial Theory and the United States*, Shelley Streeby’s *American Sensations*, and Ann Laura Stoler’s edited collection *Haunted By Empire*.

references to Canada recalled competing “east-west” histories of transatlantic exchange and British and French imperialism; they could also invite “north-south” thought about the connections between nation-states in the Americas and the future of the hemisphere. These two transnational and hemispheric triangulations of Canada’s position meant that Canada was understood and represented by mid-nineteenth-century US authors as both a foreign and a domestic space. In the period between the American Revolutionary War and the Civil War, pressures on US nation-building grew exponentially, and commentators across the world by necessity defined America’s place in the world in relation to European empires and the newly-formed states in the Americas. Canada became a test case for theories about the stability (or instability) of these categories in the New World, and, by extension, about the future racial, linguistic, cultural, and political landscape of the Americas. As literary scholar James Doyle explains, Canada’s presence as a vast potential nation, one that could potentially follow in the US’s republican footsteps by overcoming British rule, invited comparison by US authors who wanted to stabilize narratives about the principles of the US democratic project and the future of North America. Yet the political, social, and geographical realities of Canadian life—its ongoing commitment to British rule, its 1833 decision to abolish slavery,⁸ its tolerance of its French-speaking minority, and its resistance to annexation—challenged mid-nineteenth-century US discussions about the future of the New World. Doyle contends that many of these US discussions about progress and destiny in North America were articulated through nationalist narratives that were in development:

Nineteenth-century Americans often assumed that Canadians would be a pioneering people like themselves, engaged in a struggle to subjugate the continent in accordance with prevalent notions about progress and the relationship between man

⁸ The 1833 Slavery Abolition Act abolished the practice of slavery in the British Empire, including British North America. It took effect on August 1, 1834.

and nature. But besides having rejected American ideas of political independence, some Canadians were quite different from Americans in their insistence on retaining decadent European habits of conduct, language, and belief, and in their apparent indifference to the gospel of progress.... The nineteenth-century United States was creating an indigenous body of legend involving Pilgrim fathers, revolutionary heroes, and frontier adventurers, who were all being moulded into the representation of an aggressive and individualistic notion of liberty. The Canadian chronicle, however, presented a confusing panorama of French colonial despots, aristocratic societies, French and English conflict, and finally a rather placid and unheroic chronicle of migration and settlement, emphasizing communal rather than individual activity. The setting for these events, furthermore, was not always consistent with American imaginative conceptions of the New World. Instead of being located on the edge of an infinitely expanding and readily accessible frontier, Canadian settlements usually gave onto a cold and hostile wilderness where survival, let alone subjugation of nature, seemed scarcely possible. (*North* 5)

The US's closest neighbour thus interrupted many of the ideas circulating in US culture about what it meant to be "American." Throughout this dissertation, I argue that whether American literary representations of Canada confirm or deny American beliefs about the US's status as a new democratic nation and as an imperial force, these representations consistently reveal the competing processes that generated and upheld these beliefs. For many American authors, describing and locating Canada was not simply a cartographical enterprise: it was laden with unconscious associations, ideological implications, and unspoken cultural knowledge. Authors used the idea of Canada to contextualize, promote, renounce, and develop ideas of US hegemony within the Americas; they also looked to Canada to define and consolidate the idea of US national identity. In some ways, Canada resembled other sites of potential US expansion, such as Haiti, Mexico and Cuba. However, on many occasions, Canada took on a different meaning than these places. This was, in part, because of Canada's ambiguous place within the logic of US imperialism.

In the early American republic, politicians and authors struggled to resolve the interpretive instability raised by the Canada-US relationship. The contemporary political

relationship between Canada and the US, which was widely invoked in print media conversations about the Monroe Doctrine, the expansion of slavery, and the US annexation of Texas, shaped the way readers interpreted fictive representations of Canada in nineteenth-century US literature. US president James Monroe's 1823 doctrine, which was used to construct arguments about the US's political hegemony in the Americas, carefully overlooks Canada. In a series of presidential messages, Monroe argued that "the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers" (qtd. in Murphy 4). Monroe's second message went even further, "declaring solidarity between the United States and recently independent South American republics" (5) and arguing that the US would "consider any attempt on [the allied powers'] part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety" (Monroe, qtd. in Murphy 5). Historian Gretchen Murphy argues that the conflicted discourse of the Monroe Doctrine declared the Western hemisphere closed to any future European colonization while representing the extension of US influence in the Western hemisphere as a natural process. Even as some commentators used the notion of hemispheric solidarity to promote democracy and to prohibit European control over the Americas, others cited the same principles to justify US expansion (6). Similar expressions about the US's exceptional status within the hemisphere soon followed, such as journalist John O'Sullivan's conceptualization of manifest destiny, which contended that America's expansion was destined by Providence.⁹ However, as the above declarations by Monroe demonstrate, Canada's place within the US's

⁹ See "The Great Nation of Futurity" by John O'Sullivan in the Nov. 1839 edition of the *Democratic Review*. Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 frontier thesis builds upon many of O'Sullivan's ideas as well. Many literary critics have discussed the impact of frontier rhetoric on American literature, notably Kaplan, *Anarchy*; Streeby, *American Sensations*; and Donald Pease and Amy Kaplan (eds.), *Cultures of US Imperialism*.

imperialist vision of the Americas was decidedly unclear.¹⁰ As a colony of a European power—and as the subject of territorial claims on the northwest coast of North America—Canada would seem a potential threat to the “peace and safety” of the United States. After all, British troops had responded to the attempted US invasion of Canada by sacking Washington, DC only a few short years before, during the War of 1812. At the same time, as a potential new state in the Americas, Canada could become part of the hemispheric “family” being imagined by Monroe and his contemporaries, and thus subject to the US’s protective embrace.

As nineteenth-century US authors and commentators engaged in discussions about the geographical and rhetorical limits of the US, politicians attempted to establish them through treaties and warfare. Canada was involved in both processes of US nation-formation. It is well known that the southern and western borders of the US shifted frequently throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, because of the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the acquisition of Florida in 1819, the annexation of Texas in 1845, and the Mexican Cession of 1848 following the Mexican-American War. The US’s northern borders were in flux at the same time. The precise location of the Canada-US border was established in stages, through the Treaty of Paris (1783), the Treaty of 1818, the Webster-Ashburton Treaty (1842), the Oregon Treaty (1846), and the Hay-Herbert Treaty (1903).¹¹ However, the

¹⁰ Of course, in 1823, Canada was not governed by any of the members of the monarchical “Holy Alliance” (Spain, France, and Austria) being addressed by Monroe, so it was not perceived as such a threat, but its position in North America and its continuing status as a British colony created confusion nonetheless. See C. G. Fenwick for a more detailed discussion of Canada’s position within the Monroe Doctrine.

¹¹ The 1783 Treaty of Paris formally ended the American Revolutionary War and established the first border between the Thirteen Colonies and British North America (Jaenen n. pag). However, the location of the border established by the treaty was inaccurate because of a lack of geographical knowledge about the northernmost point of the Mississippi River; it also failed to determine the location of the border for territories west of the Mississippi. The Treaty of 1818 determined that the border between the Lake of the Woods and the Oregon Country would follow the 49th parallel, and provided for joint control of the Oregon Country until 1828

shifting nature of the US's southern border popularized conversations about the possibility of Canada's annexation: after the US annexation of Texas, California, and Alaska, Walt Whitman claimed that the US was now "reach[ing] north for Canada and south for Cuba" (qtd. in Brickhouse 26). Canada was also involved in many of the same population movements that affected the US, notably the influx of the Irish in the 1840s and 1850s, the free and forced movement of people of colour due to the slave trade, the displacement of indigenous peoples across the continent, and the economic migrations prompted by the fur trade, the cotton and textile industry, the railroad industry, and the gold rushes of the nineteenth century. These movements of borders and people spawned different arguments, in both literature and politics, about the relationship between the US and Canada, the future of the US nation, the meaning of US citizenship, and the identity categories that enabled US imperialism to function.¹²

These historical developments fostered popular American interest in the definition and consolidation of the idea of a US nation. Political developments in Canada were

(Nicholson n. pag). The Webster-Ashburton Treaty reaffirmed the location of the border along the 49th parallel, and resolved a few disputes about the precise location of the border between Maine and New Brunswick, and between Lake Superior and the Lake of the Woods (see Stuart 88). The Oregon Treaty settled discussions about the westernmost edge of the Canada-US border by extending the borderline through Oregon Country along the 49th parallel (Henretta et al. 372-73); Vancouver Island was retained in its entirety by the British. The US portion of the Oregon Country became known as the Oregon Territory and would eventually become the state of Washington; the British portion remained unorganized for a few years but eventually became the Colony (and later still, the Province) of British Columbia (see Wexler 100-01). The border between what is now the Canada-Alaska border was first determined (imperfectly) by the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1825, when Alaska was a Russian possession (see Wexler 61, 222). The US subsequently purchased Alaska in 1867 and inherited the convention. The imprecision of the border established by that convention led to the Alaska Boundary Dispute. This dispute was finally settled in arbitration in 1903. For more information, see Allan Smith and Norman Penlington.

¹² These themes are discussed in a number of texts. James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* discuss the displacement of indigenous peoples during the French and Indian War, albeit from a white, Anglo-American perspective. Edward Watts shows how French colonial culture was represented by writers such as George Bancroft, Francis Parkman, Washington Irving, Lyman Beecher, and Henry Rowe Schoolcraft. Jack London's Klondike fiction also deserves mention here for its lasting impact on the popular imagination of Canada across the world. Pierre Berton's *Hollywood's Canada* discusses how London's fantasies continue to dominate film representations of Canada. See also Sherrill Grace's *Canada and the Idea of North*.

frequently read in relation to events in US history that authors wanted to commemorate in order to establish the US's independence from its British roots and its exceptional status as an imperial force in the hemisphere. In this sense, Canada was important to the formation of an American national consciousness. Alys Eve Weinbaum explains that the word "nation" first designated populations with a shared racial ancestry. In the modern period, however, "the meaning of 'nation' came to refer to large aggregates of people closely associated through a combination of additional factors, including common language, politics, culture, history, and occupation of the same territory" (164). As Weinbaum explains, many nineteenth-century political theorists concentrated on defining these individual factors to determine principles of national inclusion and exclusion. "Such nineteenth-century debates," she argues, "exposed nation-formation as deeply ideological—as involving processes of self-definition and self-consolidation as often dependent on the embrace as on the persecution of differences, especially those construed as racial in character" (165). In probably the most helpful theoretical intervention, Benedict Anderson defines the nation not on the grounds of a common language, culture, history, race, or ancestry, but rather on the social links that consolidate a community. He famously defines the nation as "an imagined political community" (6) created through the collective imagination of people who perceive and represent themselves as members of a shared nation. In Anderson's view, print culture is a particularly important factor in the creation of the modern nation because it allows people to represent themselves as members of historical and cultural communities, and to invent traditions and narratives of historical origins that join otherwise disparate individuals together in a common national project. Critics in American studies have widely examined the American Renaissance as a period in which American authors and politicians were

interrogating and stabilizing notions of American national identity through their writing. John Carlos Rowe, for example, argues that the newly-created nation-state of post-revolutionary America depended upon the imaginative construction of a unified US culture, with its own national institutions and practices (“Nineteenth-Century” 80).¹³ My dissertation explores how Canada influenced this project of creating an imagined community for the US nation.

An overview of Canada-US political and literary interactions from the 1830s to the 1860s shows that the presence of Canada alongside the US in the hemisphere shaped US print-cultural conceptualizations of the purpose and destiny of the US nation. Canada’s historical links to the British Empire and its population of primarily white, Anglo-Saxon settlers were especially cited as “family resemblances” shared by the US and Canada. This familial rhetoric often placed Canada awkwardly within the well-known representation of US revolutionary history as a family feud. If colonial America reached national adulthood by rebelling against its tyrannical English parent, then Canada was the slightly less impulsive younger sibling who avoided the violent histrionics of the US-British relationship but, by choosing to retain its British ties, failed to achieve democratic maturity.¹⁴ Of course, this conceptualization of the hemisphere as a family placed the independent US in the role of a benevolent, protective, and morally-superior guardian over the still-dependent Canada—a conceptualization that facilitated the idea of “natural” annexation. However, many Canadians

¹³ Many literary scholars have discussed the role of nationalism in mid-nineteenth-century US culture. See, for example, Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*; Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy*; Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of US Culture*; Kaplan and Pease, *Cultures of US Imperialism*; Streeby, *American Sensations*; Rowe, *Literary Culture and US Imperialism*; and Levine, *Dislocating Race and Nation*.

¹⁴ Jay Fliegelman discusses the symbolic representation of American revolutionary history at length in *Prodigals and Pilgrims*. One US writer who was especially frustrated with Canada’s adolescent behaviour was William Dean Howells, who urged Canada to “[s]ever the apron strings of allegiance, and try to be yourself, whatever you are” (qtd. in Doyle, *North* 108).

fiercely resisted the idea of US annexation, arguing that Canada's interests would be better protected through its Commonwealth ties to Great Britain.

Invocations of Canada's similarities with the United States were often tied to much larger teleological arguments about the political, linguistic, and racial destiny of the New World and about the "purpose" of the United States as a model for other nation-states. For example, in the late 1830s, when settlers in Canada were openly defying British colonial rule during the Upper and Lower Canada Rebellions, *The United States Democratic Review* interpreted the events as evidence that Canada was engaging in its own revolution and that North America was destined to become a democratic space.¹⁵ A series of editorials on "The Canada Question" in 1838-39 compared Canada to other spaces of potential US annexation, such as Texas and Mexico, and suggested that Canadians would surely follow in the footsteps of the rebellious American colonists:

[N]o one can, it appears to us, entertain the preposterous idea of the possibility of the continuance of the colonial relation between the Canadas and Great Britain. It is utterly contrary to the spirit of the age.... A majority of the people of the Canadas desire to be free,—to govern themselves on the pure representative principle of which they have so glorious a model perpetually before their eyes. ("The Canada Question" 216)

The editorial's tone is outwardly confident about the US's ability to define the "spirit of the age," but it masks a critical instability in US culture about the future of the hemisphere. The editorial continues by predicting the outcome of Canadian democratic freedom in terms not

¹⁵ The Upper and Lower Canada Rebellions in 1837-38 were short armed conflicts against the British colonial government in Upper Canada (now Ontario) and Lower Canada (now Quebec). The leaders of both rebellions (William Lyon Mackenzie and Louis-Joseph Papineau, respectively) sought reforms from the colonial government that would improve accountability, government representation, and land distribution. The rebellions received strong popular support in the United States and they prompted much discussion in US magazines (for example, see Woodbridge's poem "Papineau"). Ironically, while the *Democratic Review* discussed the rebellions as evidence of Canada's inevitable annexation to the US, present-day Canadian historians argue that the 1837-38 rebellions actually helped to solidify a sense of Canada's distinct national identity, especially in Quebec (see Lemire 187).

of the creation of a new nation-state, but rather of the successful expansion of the values of the American Revolution across North America: “we can see no reason why, at some future day, our ‘experiment’ should not be in successful operation over the whole North American continent, from the isthmus to the pole” (“The Canada Question” 218). However, as the process of American expansion continued unabated throughout the 1840s and 1850s, Canada continued to resist annexation; in fact, many of its major late-nineteenth-century projects, such as Confederation in 1867 and the construction of the Trans-Canada railway (completed in 1885), were undertaken (in part) as a defence against US annexation. Throughout this time, American authors began to question the US’s republican experiment as well as its self-proclaimed superiority in the New World. As I will show, writers such as Longfellow and Stowe recognized Canada not as a poor copy of the US, but rather as an example of a political alternative within the hemisphere.

These conversations about the possible annexation of Canada also enabled authors to consider the interconnections between categories of race, language, and nation in the US imagination. In the nineteenth century, Canada’s historical engagements with the French and British empires at times solidified notions of Anglo-Saxon dominance but at other times worked to challenge it. Many authors justified the annexation of Canada by stating that the (imagined) whiteness of both countries would naturally bring them together under the same national project (Horsman 264). Historian Reginald Horsman explains,

By 1850 American expansion was viewed in the United States less as a victory for the principles of free democratic republicanism than as evidence of the innate superiority of the American Anglo-Saxon branch of the Caucasian race. In the middle of the nineteenth century a sense of racial destiny permeated discussions of American progress and of future American world destiny. (1)

The imaginative construction of a shared Anglo-Saxon background between Canada and the US helped to solidify an aggressive form of US nationalism by naturalizing the dominance of the white, English-speaking (male) citizen in both countries. In fact the successful expansion of the US into Canada was predicated on this fantasy of Anglo-Saxon racial, cultural, and linguistic contiguity. US authors like James Russell Lowell imagined the future union of Canada and the US not as “the manifest destiny of aggressive rapine, as in the case of Texas, but obedience to the attraction of natural laws” (146).

Two anti-annexationist satirical cartoons, published in Canada in the 1870s, demonstrate the trajectory of this logic. They acknowledge arguments about the “family ties” between Canada and the US, even as the cartoonists ridicule these ties and reject the idea of US annexation. Both cartoons invoke a fantasy of US expansionist desire by portraying Canada as the potential ward or object of desire of the United States. For example, in “Child Canada Takes Her First Step” (Figure 1), Canada is a toddler who is lovingly overseen by a grandmotherly Britannia encouraging Canada to become independent, and by a young Uncle Sam who is all too eager to step in and help Canada gain a solid footing. Similarly, “A Pertinent Question” (Figure 2) depicts Canada as a young, eligible woman pursued by an overeager and debauched Uncle Sam.



Figure 1: “Child Canada Takes Her First Step.” [Illustrator unknown.]

Source: *Canadian Illustrated News* Jun. 1870. Rpt. in Hou, Charles and Cynthia Hou. *Great Canadian Political Cartoons, 1820 to 1914*. Vancouver: Moody's Lookout, 1997. 21. Print.

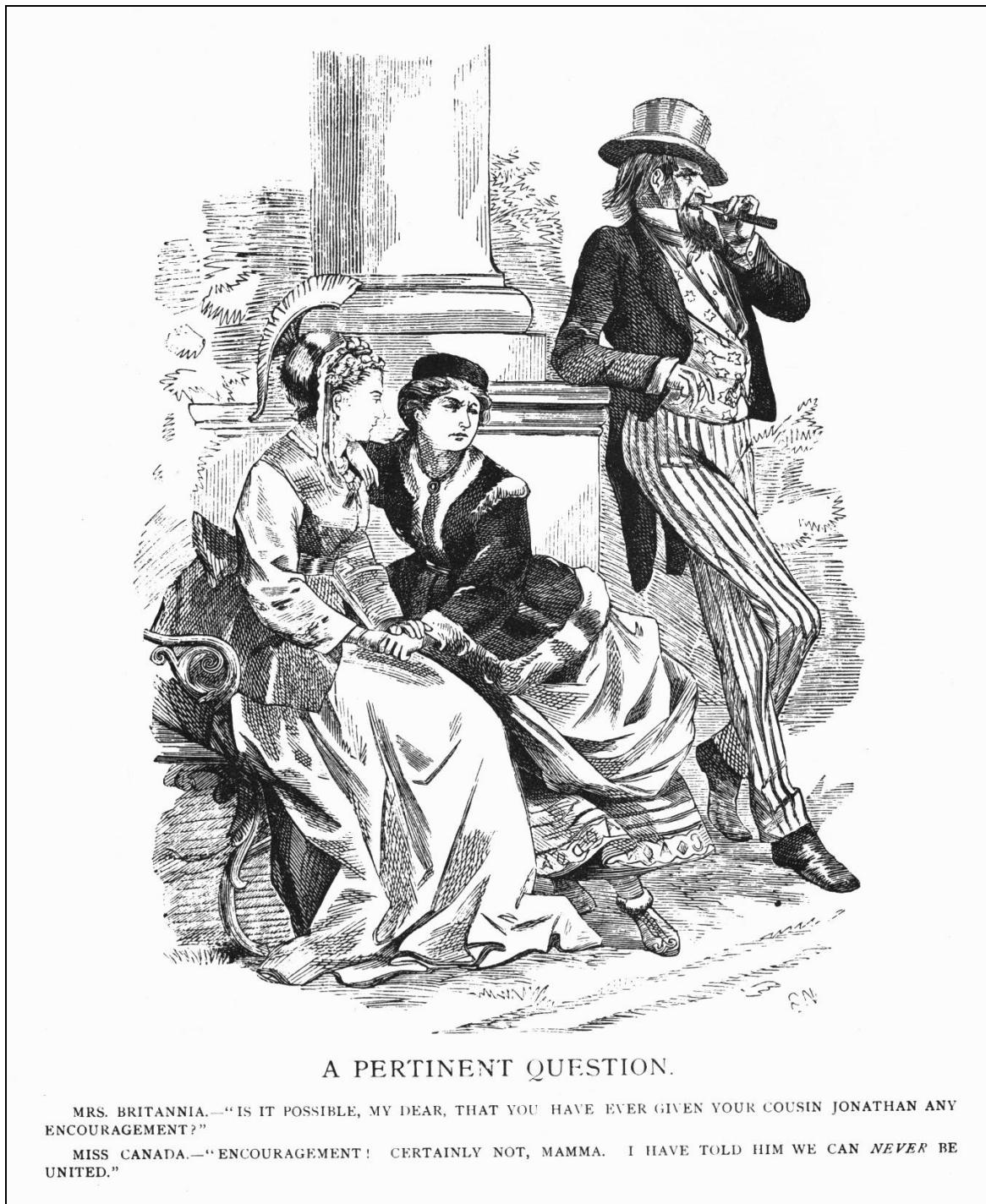


Figure 2: “A Pertinent Question,” by John Wilson Bengough.

Source: *Diogenes* 18 Jun. 1869. Rpt. in Hou, Charles and Cynthia Hou. *Great Canadian Political Cartoons, 1820 to 1914*. Vancouver: Moody's Lookout, 1997. 17. Print.

These cartoons speak against an overwhelming perception in the US that Canada's annexation was an inevitable and desirable event in North America's future. However, as these cartoons show, the annexationist fantasy of the US depended upon implied linguistic and racial similarities between Canada and the United States. In both images, the Canadians being lured by the US are of similar Anglo-Saxon background: both figures are white; the child wears a tartan, while the bachelorette and her mother speak English. Many US authors used the perceived proximity of Canada to link white racial identity with the capacity for citizenship and national belonging, while excluding other racial formations from these social and political categories.¹⁶ Antebellum authors such as Godkin, Thoreau, and the famous French observer Alexis de Tocqueville participated in this construction of Canada by suggesting that the disruptive problem of French Canada would solve itself over time: French Canada would eventually vanish through assimilation into an English North American continent.¹⁷

Fantasies of Canada as the Great White North often described a landscape that was historically blank and racially pure, ready for the expansion of white America. Yet Canada's

¹⁶ Scholars from Pierre Berton to Sherrill Grace show how later representations of Canada as North—a space ready for conquest, the geographical equivalent of an available woman—helped to construct and sustain the obsessions of mainstream US culture and its Cold War ideologies.

¹⁷ Alexis de Tocqueville, who visited Montréal and Québec in 1831, imagined that French Canada would eventually be completely overwhelmed by its English environment. In the long term, he predicts, the language of the conquered would eventually disappear:

Il y a donc fort à parier que le Bas-Canada finira par devenir un peuple entièrement français. Mais ce ne sera jamais un peuple nombreux. Tout deviendra anglais autour de lui. Ce sera une goutte dans l'océan. J'ai bien peur que... la fortune n'ait en effet prononcé et que l'Amérique du Nord ne soit anglaise. [The odds strongly indicate that Lower Canada will become an entirely French people. But it will never be a large people. Everything around it will become English. It will be a drop in the ocean. I am very afraid that fortune has spoken and that North America will be English.] ("Bas-Canada" 73)

Yet while the conversation in the United States predicted the inevitable linguistic expansion of English, French Canadians imagined the reverse. As Maurice Lemire points out, nineteenth-century Québécois intellectuals predicted that non-English immigrant populations would cluster into linguistic and cultural nodes that would share a national affiliation with the United States despite their linguistic differences—and that French, not English, would grow to become the dominant language of eastern North America (203).

linguistic and racial realities also challenged the stability of US formulations of racial categories and definitions of citizenship. If the sight of a Nova Scotia schooner could recall memories of eighteenth-century British/American conflict in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (and suggest that such conflicts over land and politics remained unresolved), the presence of a protected French Canadian linguistic and religious minority within a largely anglophone, Protestant British North America could also raise questions about the hegemony of the Anglo-Saxon race. After the Seven Years' War, when New France was ceded to the British Empire, the colonial government of British North America restored the use of French civil law and guaranteed the free practice of the Catholic faith.¹⁸ The fact that Canada was protecting its minority French population flew in the face of assumptions about the inherent superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race. In his study of American representations of French colonial culture, literary scholar Edward Watts suggests that the presence of French Canada recalled the conflicting worldviews of the French and British empires in North America. He explains that antebellum authors sometimes perceived French North Americans as French-speaking members of a white race who would (implicitly) stand united with English-speaking whites in the domination of the continent. Other authors, however, equated the linguistic difference of French Canadians with racial difference, "depict[ing] the frontier French as somehow less than white" (Watts 9) and "setting the stage, at best, for the coming purity, virtue, and power of the Anglo-Saxon empire" (Watts 9; see also Doyle, *North* 6, 13). Watts describes how images of the French Canadian *voyageur* vanishing from the US frontier were often used by US authors such as Francis Parkman to suggest that the permissive attitudes of the French towards racial mixing with Native populations led to

¹⁸ The 1774 Quebec Act did not protect language rights but it did protect freedom of religion and it restored the French-based legal system in Quebec. These protections so angered Anglo-American colonists that the Quebec Act was declared one of the "Intolerable Acts" leading to the American Revolution.

moral degeneracy and political decay. The linguistic and religious differences of French Canadians were often associated with despotism and betrayal. Through characters such as Magua, the French-speaking Huron informant from Canada in Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, American authors linked Frenchness and indigeneity with the threat of race rebellion. Other configurations of French identity as either overly Catholic (passive, uncritical, tied to papal dogma) or as excessively European (overinvested in monarchical and imperial histories, politically unambitious, sexually uninhibited, and morally bankrupt) implicitly "precluded [French North Americans] from the free critical thought essential to the burden of the franchise" (Watts 10) and disqualified them from participation in the democratic project of the New World.

At other times, as Watts explains, US authors saw French Canada's presence within the continent as a symbol of options that had been overlooked in the history of English control of North America, such as greater tolerance of racial and linguistic difference in the US. Many of the texts that I will discuss in Part One present more sympathetic readings of French Canadians that draw parallels between the history of French colonists in Canada and that of pre-Revolutionary Anglo-American colonists. The distance, in the antebellum period, between the fates of these two groups often underlines the violence of US imperialism and calls the US's commitment to its principles of freedom and the pursuit of happiness into question. In Watts's terms, "the memory of the French was used to imagine a nation... [that was] less greedy, less racist, less aggressive.... [C]ompeting ways of imagining the nation were contested and entangled in epitome through contrasting narratives of the French frontier and the question of its relevance for antebellum America" (4). All of these speculations were especially important in an era when the US was expanding into non-anglophone Catholic

areas of the continent such as Louisiana and Mexico and was determining the potential citizenship status of non-anglophone immigrants.

US representations of Canada in the antebellum period also reflect debates about the relationship between citizenship, race, and national identity. Though the right to vote was prized in post-Revolutionary US culture, it was hardly the only dimension of citizenship. As Marco Martiniello explains, the concept of citizenship could refer, in its most restrictive sense, to “the juridicial link between the individual and the state” (115) and the “set of rights enjoyed by the individual by virtue of her or his belonging to a national community” (115). Both of these were important elements of the formal relationship between the individual and the state. However, citizenship could also denote the experience of belonging to a community and/or nation, participating in local institutions, expressing loyalty towards fellow citizens, performing duties and fulfilling responsibilities, engaging in free and open discussion with other citizens, and “participat[ing]... in the management of... public affairs” (Martiniello 116; see also Menzies, Adamoski and Chunn). In technical terms, populations living in pre-Confederation British North America were not considered legal citizens of Canada: Canada did not yet exist as an independent nation-state, and Canadian citizenship would not exist in a legal sense until 1947. In the mid-nineteenth century, Canadians were considered colonial subjects of the British monarchy, and suffrage rights in mid-nineteenth-century British North America varied according to region.¹⁹ Despite the absence of full representative government or a legal concept of Canadian citizenship, however, Canadians

¹⁹ I will discuss this issue at more length in Part Two. Briefly, though, suffrage qualifications were determined regionally; voters in British North America could only elect members of their local government and their general assembly, while the executive assembly was determined by the British monarchy. Garner provides a more lengthy description of franchise debates in pre-Confederation Canada. Veronica Strong-Boag also summarizes the debates leading up to the 1885 Franchise Act in Canada, which shifted the determination of voting eligibility from provincial governments to the federal government.

bore forms of attachment and belonging to their Canadian civil institutions that could be considered a kind of citizenship. While Americans certainly participated in their institutions in a similar way, the perceived division, in the Canadian context, between the concept of direct representation and the forms of civic belonging that Canadians felt that they possessed interrupted many narratives about the development of the United States as an independent nation-state. As historian John Garner explains, while American political doctrine often emphasized the achievement of representative government, most nineteenth-century British North Americans were more concerned about the achievement of responsible government (3). As a result, American authors often used the example of Canada to consider the constitutive elements of citizenship in a new light. To many Americans, Canada's colonial status seemed an anachronism within a North American continent destined for independence from European powers. Yet Canadians consistently resisted (albeit with British help) any invitations to "extend" US democracy to Canada through annexation. Canada's continuing presence alongside the US thus challenged some of the most fundamental concepts sustaining American political discourse at the time.

These conversations about political differences between Canada and the US also focused on the relationship between citizenship and race. Many observers argued, in fact, that colonial Canada was fulfilling many of the ambitious principles enshrined in the US Declaration of Independence by protecting the legal rights of its linguistic and religious minority French Catholic population, by engaging in a process of abolition in the late eighteenth century, and later (after the passage of the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833) by refusing to extradite fugitive US slaves to the US. As race theorist David Theo Goldberg explains, "race is integral to the emergence, development, and transformations (conceptually,

philosophically, materially) of the modern nation-state” (233). Canada and the US developed different conceptualizations of race in the nineteenth century: Canada’s racial formations were mainly influenced by its colonial relationship with the British Empire, its cultural proximity to the US, and its imperial engagements with Native populations, while the US was developing racial formations in relation to its practices of slavery and expansion. Throughout this dissertation, I will show how US authors found the differences between Canadian and American approaches to linguistic diversity, race relations, and slavery especially fascinating in the period from 1833 (when Canada ended the practice of slavery), through the period of Indian Removal and the US-Mexican War, until 1863 (when the Emancipation Proclamation freed US slaves). The “racial reassignment of the frontier French” (11) in US literature discussed by Watts reflects changing beliefs about citizenship in US culture which began to consider whiteness as a primary requirement for citizenship. Sometimes francophones were racialized as non-white in order to rationalize their exclusion from the US national project. At other times they were de-racialized in order to consider them as potential participants in that project, thus solidifying the idea of white hegemony in North America and bringing other non-white racial formations into sharper relief.²⁰ In a similar way, forms of British, Canadian and US imperialism also often converged in the nineteenth century, working together to define racial categories that would enable the control of indigenous and Asian populations across the continent and deny or revoke their claims for enfranchisement.²¹

²⁰ The arguments of Theodore Allen (about the invention of the white race in the US) and of Noel Ignatiev (about the definition of Irish immigrants to the US as members of the white race) are worth keeping in mind in this conversation about the racial classification of French North Americans in US literature.

²¹ See Veronica Strong-Boag’s “The Citizenship Debates,” as well as the work of David G. McCrady.

The divergence between US and Canadian approaches to Black citizenship in the period between 1833 and 1863 was particularly important. In this period especially, Canada gained a legendary status as the terminus of the Underground Railroad and as a safe haven for oppressed Blacks, including fugitive US slaves. At the time, the US was developing precise (and legally-binding) rules of racial classification which forbade Black citizenship and enfranchisement (such as the 1857 Dred Scott decision). Legal rulings about the potential citizenship of racial minorities within the US led to fierce debates within the mid-nineteenth-century US public sphere about the epistemological status of the US national citizen as well as the human subject more generally. Decisions by the British North American government to abolish slavery, to classify Black immigrants as British subjects, and to defend fugitive American slaves in Canada challenged US principles of racial classification by denaturalizing many of the assumptions upon which US ideas of white superiority and white citizenship rested. After all, British North America was offering Black men limited voting rights at the same time that the US was declaring them non-human. In this way, examinations of Canada in antebellum US literature illuminate what theorists Michael Omi and Howard Winant call the process of racial formation:

The meaning of race is defined and contested throughout society, in both collective action and personal practice. In the process, racial categories themselves are formed, transformed, destroyed and re-formed. We use the term *racial formation* to refer to the process by which social, economic and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meanings. (61)

Throughout the nineteenth century, as authors and intellectuals discussed the similarities and differences between the US and Canadian formations of race and citizenship, they (consciously or unconsciously) exposed these formulations as ideological constructs—

constructs that certainly had real material, social, and political effects on people's lives, but constructs nonetheless. Authors and intellectuals examined the interaction of Black and white racial formations in the US and Canada, and used comparative logic to challenge or perpetuate the logic of Black enslavement. Antebellum writers frequently drew contrasts between US restrictions on Black citizenship and the legal freedom conferred on US slaves as soon as they reached Canada. Enslaved African Americans such as Frederick Douglass spoke openly in their narratives about their desire to escape to Canada. Voicing this desire became a way of expressing their own symbolic self-emancipation from slavery and their ongoing psychological resistance to the social and legal logic determining their slave status. By considering their potential position in Canada they rhetorically asserted their own candidacy for US citizenship. Other writers challenged the US system by arguing that the presence of a country within the hemisphere that shared similar roots as the US but engaged in different political practices enabled Americans to think beyond the limits of their own system. African Canadian historian James W. Walker explains,

The Canadian experience of fugitive slaves proved... pro-slavery arguments to be false, for here it was evident that blacks could and did care for themselves, live moral Christian lives, benefit from education and fulfill all the duties of citizenship from military service to voting intelligently in elections. The Canadian fugitives... inspired the zeal of abolitionists and dispelled their fears, and could be considered to have provided a "trial run" for the eventual elimination of slavery in the United States. (60)

Abolitionist print culture responded to popular discussions about US democracy by pointing out that Canada (rather than the US) had fulfilled many of the American Revolution's ambitious promises. As African Canadian literature scholar George Elliott Clarke explains, this strategy, effective as it was, came with its own set of oversights about different kinds of unfreedom in Canada: texts like Benjamin Drew's *The Refugee*, a collection of narratives by

former US slaves living in Canada, function as a “reply to Comte Alexis de Tocqueville’s *De la démocratie en Amérique* . . . , one that proves the absence of true democracy in America, but also its *purportedly* functioning reality in Canada West” (“Hearsay” 29; *emph. in original*).

Canada’s different approach to Black citizenship also caused many US authors to consider Canada’s continuing presence a danger to the US system. Even as Canada often represented an idea of Anglo-Saxon racial continuity with the US, it also occasionally recalled uncomfortable images of racial rebellion. The second article on “The Canada Question” in *The United States Democratic Review* (1839) summarized popular arguments about the reasons why formerly enslaved African Americans who had immigrated to Canada could become a threat to the stability of the United States:

[T]he Canadas now afford an asylum for vast numbers of fugitive slaves; the transmission of which to the frontier is carried on, as a regular system, to an extent greater than is known or imagined by us—under the encouragement of the British Government, which is very glad to incorporate them into its black regiments, as the only soldiers on whom, from the necessity of their position, it can implicitly rely, whether as against us or against its own discontented subjects. (“The Canada Question: Second Article” 28)

In the same way, US writers also began to triangulate the US’s position through a hemispheric matrix involving Canada and other racially and linguistically “resistant” spaces in the hemisphere, such as Haiti and Cuba. In some cases, Canada was seen as a white space that could align with the US against these more racially diverse spaces (Horsman 283; Brickhouse 237). But in others, Canada was aligned *with* these spaces, working in symbolic opposition to the US and recalling the possibility of a society with both Black and white citizens—a possibility that many authors (such as Stowe, for example) often worked to

oppose. Texts such as Martin Delany's *Blake* and Frederick Douglass's "The Heroic Slave" depict Canada as one possible starting-point for a hemispheric antislavery revolution.

The two migrations that I discuss in this dissertation—the passage of white, French-speaking Acadians south towards the US and the passage of Black, English-speaking American slaves north away from it—work together to focalize these anxieties about imperialism, citizenship, language, and race. Throughout the nineteenth century, authors returned again and again to these symbolic figures to present arguments about the future of the United States.

Critical Context

Despite the archive of texts and recurring themes that I have presented above, the Canada-US literary relationship has been virtually excluded from larger discussions about the literary context of the hemisphere in the nineteenth century. In recent years, scholars have begun to embrace transnational approaches to the study of American and Canadian culture. In practice, though, the Canada-US border has yet to be mapped out in so-called hemispheric American studies, a field whose very name carries the unwanted baggage of US expansion around in its explorations of the continent. As American studies scholar Ricardo L. Ortíz explains, even the most well-meant hemispheric American studies projects have engaged in a "conventional absencing of Canada from certain powerfully imagined, and powerfully strategic, configurations of continental and hemispheric space" (337).

To date, most of the published monographs examining the literary, cultural, and political relationship between Canada and the US have been produced under the rubric of Canadian studies. Popular Canadian historian Pierre Berton examines the representation of Canada in the Hollywood imagination. Similarly, Canadian literary scholar Sherrill Grace examines the construction of what she calls “the idea of North” in different forms of Canadian art. David Staines, W. H. New, and James Laxer have written books reflecting on the symbolic formation of the Canada-US border, largely concentrating on the cultural context of the twentieth century. Similarly, Sourayan Mookerjee, Imre Szeman, and Gail Farschou’s recent edited collection *Canadian Cultural Studies* provides an excellent range of foundational texts, many of which discuss the Canada-US relationship. Research by Robin W. Winks, James W. Walker, Harvey Amani Whitfield, George Elliott Clarke, Karina Vernon and Afua Cooper explores the history and culture of Blacks in Canada. Still, though, examinations of the Canada-US literary relationship in the nineteenth century are relatively uncommon. Literary scholar James Doyle has published two volumes examining the representation of Canada by nineteenth-century authors; *Yankees in Canada* is an anthology of US travel writing about Canada, while *North of America* provides a cursory overview of the American fiction that mentions Canada most prominently. Similarly, Greg Gatenby’s *The Wild is Always There*, an anthology of writing about Canada produced by foreign writers, includes some nineteenth-century writing by US authors. French Canadian scholar Pierre Nepveu’s *Interieurs du nouveau monde* examines parallels between foundational texts in Québécois literature and US literature, while Nick Mount’s *When Canadian Literature Moved to New York* examines the interdependent relationship between Canada’s Confederation Poets and the nineteenth-century US print culture industry.

In recent years, scholars in both Canada and the US have developed approaches that acknowledge the importance of national formations but also seek to complicate them. Postcolonialism, as an interrogative framework, a literary mode, and a political praxis has probably been the most helpful in identifying Canada's critical investments in, and differences from, Commonwealth countries in the Americas. The applicability of the term "postcolonial" to both Canadian and American contexts has itself been a contentious issue (Moss vi). Canada's continued membership in the British Commonwealth and its asymmetrical relationship with US power informed some of the first theories of Canadian culture (see Mookerjee et. al). More recently, postcolonial scholars have complicated the view of Canada as a colonized space by considering Canada's own colonial engagements with religious, racial, and linguistic minorities in Canada. Scholars have sometimes invoked postcolonialism to examine indigenous engagements with Western cultural systems, and to contest forms of Canadian nationalism that denied or erased Canada's violent history of north/westward expansion and the displacement of aboriginal peoples.²² Others, including scholars such as Hugh Hazelton and creative writers such as Guillermo Verdecchia, David Chariandy, Dionne Brand, M. NourbeSe Philip, and Dany Laferrière reflect on the diasporic histories of Canadian immigrants across the Americas. In French Canada, scholars such as Jean Morency and Gérard Bouchard have also explored the idea of a hemispheric identity with the concept of *américanité*.²³ Such strategies enabled French Canadian cultures to

²² Though postcolonial approaches have enabled some indigenous writers and intellectuals to destabilize Western frames of reference and respond to Canada's colonial legacy, some Native scholars and writers such as Thomas King reject any association with postcolonial studies, arguing that the approach reifies colonial relationships and denies Canada's continued actions as a colonial agent. See King's essay "Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial."

²³ Many formulations of *américanité* draw inspiration from the writing of authors such as Cuban writer José Martí, and explore the cultural, racial, and linguistic effects of the shared settler-invader and postcolonial histories of the Americas, and by the similar political concerns and conflicts that have been produced in the Americas because of these factors. Some, like Nepveu, concentrate explicitly on the relationship between

recognize their diverse origins and develop a sense of solidarity with other minority French and Creole cultures in the Americas.

Yet postcolonial studies of the Canada-US relationship have so far been less successful. Investigations in American studies have largely concentrated on more direct sites of US imperialism such as Puerto Rico and the Philippines rather than Canada (see, for example, Singh and Schmidt; Kaplan, *Anarchy*). And in Canada, the research has largely examined the unequal power relationship between Canada and the US—a necessary area of study, but one not without limitations. For example, there is no shortage of analysis of the Canadian publishing industry’s slow death through overexposure to US mass media. However the relative paucity of nineteenth-century Canada-US literary studies is striking, especially given the provocative research of Nick Mount on the ways that Canada’s Confederation Poets—some of Canada’s most celebrated writers—profited artistically and financially from their exposure to a large US print-cultural audience. Many researchers consider the formation of Canadian myths and national icons in Canada (Grace; New) but very few examine the rhetorical formation of Canada in the US (J. Doyle, *North*; Gatenby). Finally, academics in indigenous studies such as Roger L. Nichols and David G. McCrady suggest that the glamorization of Canada’s more “peaceful” approach to settlement in the West, in relation to the violence of the US policies of westward expansion, has made it more difficult to study the way that the US and Canadian governments collaborated in controlling and repressing the passage of Native populations across North America.

Québec and the US. Scholars often use the positive idea of *américanité* against the more negative concept of *américanisation*, the gradual erosion of distinct cultures of the Americas by US cultural imperialism (see Thériault). Though the hemispheric analyses produced by many of these scholars converge with American and English Canadian studies in compelling ways, the linguistic divide between French and English academic cultures seems to impede any significant cross-cultural conversation.

Such perceived limitations in postcolonial studies prompted a shift in the last twenty years towards what many scholars have called transnational studies. In the late 1990s, American studies scholar Janice Radway proposed a radical rethinking of the discipline of American studies, arguing that the geographical and discursive frame of American studies—the very notion of “America” itself—might need to be questioned and perhaps even discarded as a key organizing principle of cultural study (1). Though transnational approaches vary widely, they share a commitment to “decentering the tenacious model of the nation as the basic unit of knowledge production” (Kaplan, “Violent Belongings” 11; see also Rowe, *New American*). Many projects have engaged in active study of the construction of the relationships between nation-states in the Western hemisphere. Similar attempts in Canada have been launched in academic publications like *Trans.Can.Lit*, edited by Smaro Kamboureli and Roy Miki. In that volume, Diana Brydon explains that transnational perspectives offer scholars the opportunity to begin what she calls the unravelling of the nation, that is,

to recognize that the creation of any imagined community is a continuous work in progress, involving making and unmaking, learning and unlearning, aiming not to fix boundaries but to encourage movements across them. If the role of the state is to consolidate, then the role of literature is to unravel those consolidations through the kinds of critique, questioning, and reimagining that enable new groupings to form that may be more responsive to the needs of the day. (13)

All of these scholars find common ground in the idea that transnational perspectives could enable new discussions about national interactions within and across nation-states, and could offer a way to redress long-standing power imbalances in the hemisphere.

Since the emergence of the term in the 1990s, transnationalism has come to encompass a variety of research formations, goals, and techniques, which have divided into

two broad but overlapping projects. Some scholars have taken transnationalism as an invitation to explore the possibilities raised by investigating “alternatives to state-sponsored forms of identity” (Sadowski-Smith 2), and the new perspectives that emerge when subjects identify themselves through post- or extra-national paradigms. Gloria Anzaldúa’s study of *mestiza* culture, McCrady’s analysis of the Native North American cultures bisected by the borders of nation-states, and Paul Gilroy’s formulation of the Black Atlantic, for example, recognize the importance of the nation as a conceptual category and as a historical reality, but suggest that notions of national identity and citizenship have often alienated and divided diasporic or migratory populations, and have marginalized those communities in political, geographic, social, economic, and literary contexts. Other scholars use transnational approaches to recognize the contingency of the nation itself, to reveal the different demands and interests that shape the formation of nation-states, and to investigate the way in which perceptions of one nation-state could be used in the service of another’s self-definition. Anna Brickhouse’s study of the international knowledge networks that shaped the production and reception of the so-called American Renaissance, for example, shows the ways that “foreign” voices, perspectives, and experiences both construct and contest the conceptual apparatus that sustains the idea of the “domestic” in US culture. For Paul Giles, “using national cultures against each other in this way functions as a kind of materialist version of deconstruction, whereby each cultural formation reveals the blindspots or limitations of the other” (“Transnationalism” n. pag.). Transnational approaches are often informed by methods and concepts in postcolonial studies. However, by sidestepping the temporal and political registers of postcolonial studies, transnational approaches have been somewhat

more flexible in imagining and studying the relationships of nation-states with no history of direct colonial interaction.

Given that so many US exceptionalist narratives reinforce US power in the hemisphere, transnational approaches have been widely promoted as a way to contest the deployment of US power across the Americas in particular. Adherents argue that transnational approaches to American studies will “contextualize and clarify, rather than reproduce, the exceptionalism that has long been central to the [US] nation’s conception of its privileged place in the American hemisphere” (Levander and Levine 3). While most of the first transnational projects examined the US’s relationship with Mexico, Cuba, and Latin America, researchers have expressed growing interest in “locating Canada within the history and culture of the Americas” (Adams and Casteel 5), thereby establishing Canada’s presence in a field that had, at the very least, taken Canada’s similarities with the US for granted.

In practice, though, these attempts to include Canada in transnational American studies projects have had mixed results. In recent years, a few volumes have concentrated specifically on Canada’s relationship with the wider Americas, notably Winfried Siemerling and Sarah Phillips Casteel’s *Canada and Its Americas*, and Siemerling’s *New North American Studies*. But problems with terminology, approaches, and foundational concepts still persist. The concept of the US border, which was heavily (and usefully) theorized in reference to the Mexico-US border by scholars such as Anzaldúa, is still discussed and defined largely without any consideration of the Canada-US border (see, for example, Brady; Singh and Schmidt 6-7).²⁴ Similarly, some scholars explicitly studying relationships between

²⁴ The border studies school has informed my thinking about the Canada-US border and the positioning of Canadians in imaginative contexts. However, the relative absence of Canada within a very large discussion

nation-states in the Americas fail to discuss Canada at all. Other scholars superficially cite either Canada's excessive similarity to the US, its excessive difference, or its continued "marginality within US American studies and Americas studies" (Shukla and Tinsman 23) as a reason to eliminate a lengthy discussion of the topic. In recent years, the genre of hemispheric American collections seems to have stabilized in what seems like a parody of Canadian content regulations,²⁵ gesturing northwards with one article (in book collections of ten to fifteen articles) on Canada's presence in the Americas (Duncan and Juncker; Pease and Wiegman). While this research recognizes the need to include Canada, too often it neglects to acknowledge and confront the problems that come with representing a nation that is at once extremely diverse and severely underrepresented in hemispheric discussions. Even the naming of the field has proven difficult, as terms such as "New American studies" and "hemispheric American studies" were initially welcomed but eventually discarded because of the way they threatened to re-inscribe forms of US exceptionalism.²⁶

reflects a reality that there is still much work to be done. Even those scholars who argue (rightly) that border studies does not simply examine the US-Mexico border have neglected any discussion of Canada (see, for example, Singh and Schmidt 6-8).

²⁵ Canadian content regulations are a set of practices established by the Canadian government, and enforced by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), that regulate the minimum amount of "Canadian content"—i.e., content produced by Canadian artists and/or personnel—in Canadian mass media and that encourage the production of cultural material that reflects "Canadian values" in television and radio. In most cases, stations must ensure that a minimum percentage of their daily and hourly broadcasts feature Canadian content as determined by the CRTC. See "CRTC Mandate."

²⁶ Some of these terms are still in use. Literary scholar Kirsten Silva Gruesz explains that many scholars engaged in the study of the hemisphere have struggled to describe their project's place within American studies. Yet the project of finding the right terms to distinguish America (the nation-state) from America (the hemisphere) has proven problematic, especially in the light of the long history of US cultural imperialism. Some scholars have sought to deconstruct the meaning of "America" by "divorcing the name of the nation from the name of the continent" (Gruesz, "America" 21): using "America" and "American" to denote the Western hemisphere, and the adjective and noun form of "US" to refer specifically to the United States. While these usages of the word "American" have struck many scholars in American studies as odd, Gruesz explains, "the very awkwardness of such terms has a certain heuristic value" ("America" 21; see also Radway). Some scholars like Gretchen Murphy have called attention to the symbolic superimposition of "United States" onto "America" by using the term "USAmerican" instead of the adjectival "American." Others have resisted this move on the grounds that using "American" can help show the process by which the term was appropriated (Streeby *American* 7). Yet I would point out that many of these suggestions overlook the effects of US cultural

As a result, the relationship between Canadian and so-called transnational and/or hemispheric American studies has been uneasy, at best, and has occasionally turned sour. Some hemispheric American studies scholars have expressed frustration that their efforts have not been embraced with the appropriate level of enthusiasm from Canadian studies. Rachel Adams and Sarah Phillips Casteel, for example, criticize “Canadianists’ withdrawal from hemispheric conversations” (5); but a cursory look at the introductions to many hemispheric projects, including that of Adams and Casteel, reveals Americanist scholars’ acceptance of the knowledge deficit of their intended US audience in a way that awkwardly rationalizes Canada’s marginalisation in hemispheric discussions. Others situate US-Mexico concerns at the implicit centre of the discussion, if only to show how Canada diverges from well-trodden research avenues. Such approaches often reinforce stereotypes about Canada, and the hegemonic interests of American studies, at the expense of specific considerations of Canadian history and Canadian cultures. This has led researchers in Canadian studies on both sides of the border to complain that the recent excitement about transnational studies has done little to change the methods that inform US research on the hemisphere, and that academic conversations are now evolving in “splendid isolation” (Siemerling 140) on either side of the Canada-US border.²⁷

These realities indicate that the premises and methods of transnational and hemispheric American studies have solidified prematurely in a way that has rendered the

imperialism (and reactionary anti-American sentiment) in Canada: many Canadians, I would suggest, would be averse to labelling themselves “American” precisely because doing so recalls a two-hundred year history of debates about annexation and the apparent irrelevance and/or non-existence of Canadian culture. This is why, in this dissertation, I follow the lead of Winfried Siemerling and other scholars in Canada, in using the terms “America” and “American” interchangeably with “United States” and “US”; in cases where I deliberately want to invoke a larger reference to the Americas (i.e. the entire Western hemisphere), or to North, South, or Central America, I do so using those terms.

²⁷ See also Roger L. Nichols for a discussion of how this reality has affected Native North American studies.

study of Canada more difficult. After all, the problem lies not with Canada's difference from other nations in the Americas, but with theoretical approaches and critical practices in academia. There is something fundamentally wrong with a field of border studies that fails to recognize an 8,891 km-long border as meaningful. In the same way, there is something fundamentally wrong with a field of transnational studies that routinely neglects some national formations in favour of others that seem more familiar. The present inability of American studies and Canadian studies alike to make sense of the relationship between Canada and the US should make us aware of the ways in which ideas of national identity, language, political difference, ethnicity, religion, and race shape ideas of what it means to be "American," in the most diverse and loaded meanings of that term. Far from being a disruption, the Canadian example should be seen as an invitation to reconsider some of the most familiar assumptions of hemispheric approaches.

Reading for Canada in American literature

My dissertation engages with this critical and historical context by providing a method of reading the Canada-US border as a site of interaction and of knowledge production. While scholarly disciplines may recently have had difficulty understanding the ways in which US audiences reacted to descriptions of Canada, the works in this dissertation show that Canada played an important role in the US's self-conception, shaping the way Americans think about immigration, displacement, national identity, race, and language. US readers were reading for Canada in their works; we must try, now, to find a way to do the same.

I argue that discussions of the Canada-US border in nineteenth-century literature reveal the continuing intimacy of empires in North America and the “unacknowledged interdependence of the United States and European colonialism” (Kaplan, “Left Alone” 8). The two border-crossing populations of my study, French Catholic Acadians and African Americans, inspired discussion in the nineteenth century not simply because of their physical mobility but because of the way they helped to construct, mobilize, and deconstruct categories that enabled US imperialism to function. Throughout this thesis I draw from cultural theorist Mark Simpson’s understanding of mobility. In *Trafficking Subjects*, Simpson argues that human movement was read symbolically by nineteenth-century American readers in relation to notions of citizenship and power. Different forms of movement determined, and were determined by, structures of class, race, and gender in the nineteenth century US.

Simpson defines mobility

not as a naturally occurring phenomenon but much more rigorously as a mode of social contest decisive in the manufacture of subjectivity and the determination of belonging. At stake is what, in this project, I term *the politics of mobility*, the contestatory processes that produce different forms of movement, and that invest these forms with social value, cultural purchase, and discriminatory power. (xiii-xiv)

Simpson argues that the stories authors told about mobility often served as coded conversations about individual subjectivity and US citizenship. In some cases, US popular discourse used the rhetoric of progress and native erasure to legitimate power structures that sustained the nation-state and to naturalize the forced movement of minority populations within the United States. In this way, descriptions of exile, traffic, imprisonment, forced displacement, fugitive escape, territorial invasion, and vanishing were used and read as markers that could signify or even determine whether someone was, or could be, a potential

citizen. At the same time, forms of willed movement and stasis, like travel, freedom, leisure, expansion, and domesticity, were described as natural elements of progress, and identified potential candidates for US citizenship. These scenes of mobility thus structured larger conversations about the meaning of “America” and of forms of “American” belonging.

This research is important because it helps explain why the two populations in motion that I study in this dissertation became such important figures in antebellum America. These migratory populations, by moving across the border in their free and forced movement, made the imperceptible categories sustaining imperial and state systems more visible. In some cases, the British and US imperial systems collaborated with each other (consciously or unconsciously) to define the race, identity, and citizenship of the border-crossing migrants. In other cases, though, differences between French, British, and US systems emerged. As these populations moved across state borders, they showed that political and social categories that seemed immutable and fixed could be rethought and contested. In many cases, Canada-US border-crossers made some of the most familiar patterns of their homeland suddenly become unfamiliar.

In such cases, authors were able to use images of cross-border movement as a way of opening up options that had been foreclosed. Authors such as Hawthorne and Longfellow, for example, reached across temporal borders as well as geographical ones, using a sense of historical distance and national difference in their works to compare the contemporary conditions of the US with that imaginative political project of the American Revolution. Granted, this means that their representations of Canada were often decidedly fictional; but they served a rhetorical function in defining, contesting, contextualizing, and re-imagining

the US project. While my dissertation focuses on two particular populations, my approach offers a new way of being sensitive to Canada's symbolic importance in the US—that is, of “reading for Canada” in the context of the American Renaissance.

I have chosen to focus specifically on the 1755 expulsion of the French Catholic Acadians and the antebellum movement of free and enslaved African Americans because of the way the conversations about these populations converged in the 1840s and 1850s. Both of these instances of cross-border movement overlapped in interesting ways in the minds of US readers.²⁸ The two conversations that I have chosen to investigate in this dissertation resonate with each other and show different sides of the same patterns of representation of whiteness and blackness in North America.

Taking my cue from other studies that seek to recover interconnected literary conversations in antebellum America, such as Mary Louise Kete's *Sentimental Collaborations*, I have divided my discussion into two major parts, with a short “entr'acte” between them. Each part recovers the archive of texts and authors involved in a discussion about a border-crossing population, establishes a theoretical framework, and then examines the evolution of this discussion through the work of different authors. Part One, entitled “‘If I were an American poet, I would choose Acadia for the subject of my song’: the *Grand Dérangement* and the American Renaissance,” examines a series of literary representations of the forced displacement of the Acadians, French Catholic settlers living in eastern Canada

²⁸ There are other kinds of Canada-US cross-border migration that are equally deserving of critical attention but that I will be unable to discuss in this dissertation. Asian American and indigenous engagements with the border, for example, were also connected to slavery and various processes of US and Canadian north/westward expansion. I am thinking, in particular, of the writings of Charles Eastman, Mourning Dove, and George Copway (a friend of Longfellow's who helped Longfellow with his later poem *Hiawatha*). However, these engagements focused on different conversations about racial identity and belonging which happened at a later period and were not tied together in the public mind as neatly as the American Renaissance conversations about Acadian and African American identity that I recover here.

who were forced off their farms by British troops, and deported by boat to the American colonies in 1755, shortly before the outbreak of the French and Indian War. Eighty years after the deportation, members of the Boston literary elite, including Hawthorne, Longfellow, Whittier, and Stowe, wrote sentimental representations of the event in novels, poetry, letters and essays. Their imaginative texts represent Acadia as a symbolic double of the pre-Revolutionary US. In their eyes, Acadia was an independent, proto-national, egalitarian community that was cruelly destroyed by British troops; the Acadians who were violently transported to the US became the first white citizens to lack a nation-state. Yet the Acadian narratives also strategically underline similarities between British imperial behaviour and US actions in the nineteenth-century hemisphere. In *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair*, a US history book for children, Hawthorne interprets the destruction of Acadia as proof of the necessity of the American Revolution. However, his depiction of the violent past of 1755 Acadia threatens to overwhelm his early-1840s present: after comparing Acadia with the original New England colonies, Hawthorne raises questions about the human cost of warfare in the Americas and the necessity of US projects of aggressive expansion. Whereas his initial representations of Acadia support the creation of the US as a North American nation-state, his final portrayal of the Acadian people ultimately forced into homelessness by merciless American politicians expresses anxiety that the US is losing sight of its idealistic first principles.

A few years later, Longfellow took inspiration from the same event to challenge the ethics of US slavery and US expansion. Longfellow's epic poem *Evangeline*, written in 1847, attempts to bridge the divide between his white, upper-class US readership and the different geographical, cultural, and linguistic "transgressors" who have been cast out of the

US national project in the late 1840s. While Hawthorne's account of the Acadian expulsion largely describes the arrival of the Acadians on US shores and the disappearance of the Acadians into an imagined US community, Longfellow follows the fate of his title character from her early life in Acadia to her exile in the US. *Evangeline's* Acadia is an egalitarian, peaceful, newly-created nation in North America that seemingly enacts what the American Revolution promised for the US. Its destruction by a British empire intent on expansion calls the nineteenth-century US project of expansion into question. As *Evangeline* progresses, Longfellow's Acadians function as allegorical doubles for other displaced populations moving to and across the US in the nineteenth century. For example, the images of ships leaving Acadia overloaded with human cargo recall the middle passage of slaves. Similarly, the images of Acadians forced to move across the US recall the ways that both Native American and Mexican populations were being displaced across the American West. At the end of Part One, I explore how nineteenth-century American readers' discussions of Longfellow's poem in antebellum newspapers reflected on the US's postcolonial history, criticized the US's involvement in the expulsion, and recognized Evangeline as a double of marginalized racial minorities within the US. This chapter shows how Acadian deportation thus became a mechanism for Longfellow and Hawthorne (as well as their readers) to challenge and deconstruct the principles sustaining US imperialism.

My discussion then moves, in a short entr'acte, to consider Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a novel that gestures to both of the migratory movements that I discuss in my dissertation. Stowe's main character Little Eva, who is based on Longfellow's Evangeline, maps the forced nationlessness of the Acadians directly onto the experience of US slaves. Moreover, Stowe situates her Acadian-descended heroine in the mid-nineteenth

century US amidst the most heated debates about slavery. Little Eva imagines the kind of paradise that a post-slavery US could become and inspires Uncle Tom to reach it; yet her status as an angelic outsider who can only indicate the ways that the US can reach its perfect goals underlines the work to be done to end slavery in the US. As Little Eva and Uncle Tom move further south, presenting their idealistic goals for the US from within the slaveholding regions of the US south, a group of Kentucky slaves begin their migration north to Canada, to reach a paradise that they cannot find at home. In this way, Stowe maps Longfellow's patterns of understanding racial difference and cross-border movement onto new patterns of sympathy that would contribute to her abolitionist project. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* thus functions as a pivot point between the two narratives of migration to and from Canada that I study in this dissertation.

In Part Two, "Reading the Lake Erie Passage," I move from a discussion of the literary representations of the eighteenth-century southward movement of white, French-speaking Acadians towards the US to an analysis of texts describing the antebellum migration of free and enslaved African Americans north to Canada. The colonial Canadian government began to restrict the practice of slavery starting in 1793. By 1834, Canada had abolished slavery altogether, making it a destination for African Americans desiring to escaping slavery and segregation in the US, especially after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act. In literary contexts, the Underground Railroad has become the dominant trope by which most Black migration between the US and Canada has been understood.²⁹ Yet this popular myth, which emphasizes terrestrial journeys, one-way migrations, and the success of white abolitionist conductors, frequently ignores the lived experiences of Black North Americans

²⁹ For a list of slave narratives that mention Canada or describe passages to it, see George Elliott Clarke's "Primer of African-Canadian Literature" (*Odysseys Home* 325-30).

who crossed and re-crossed the Canada-US border, primarily on water. It also fails to explain the most popular representations of the Canada-US border in nineteenth-century abolitionist literature.

Part Two recovers and examines the print-cultural representation of a significant site on the Canada-US border, in particular: the Lake Erie Passage. The fugitive slave crossing the Canada-US border to become a legal subject in Upper Canada was an iconic image in many abolitionist texts; in the 1840s and 1850s, authors gravitated in particular towards the image of the fugitive slave crossing Lake Erie to find freedom on Canadian shores. Antislavery authors like Stowe, Josiah Henson, William Wells Brown, and Lewis Clarke capitalized on the Lake Erie Passage, turning it into a powerful abolitionist image and a print cultural phenomenon. Poems, novels, and slave narratives returned to this iconic scene of nautical transit and transformation across the Great Lakes to contest U.S. slavery and discuss the meaning and potential of Black citizenship.

After providing a historical and theoretical overview of Black Canadian-American cross-border movement and an inventory of the texts that depict it, my chapter moves through autobiographical and fictional representations of the Lake Erie Passage to show the different ways that authors imagined Canada's importance to Black North Americans: as a haven from slavery, a home, or even a staging-ground for a continental revolution. Most autobiographical accounts of the Lake Erie Passage express a great deal of ambivalence about life in Canada. Yet fictional portrayals of the Lake Erie Passage in abolitionist works, such as Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ignore these ambiguities in the Black Canadian experience to represent Canada as a nation where Black-white relations have been resolved,

or (more often) to represent Canada as a temporary stopover for Blacks on a longer journey to Africa. Stowe's contemporary William Wells Brown responds critically to Stowe's simplistic representation of Canada with his own reimagining of the Lake Erie Passage in his novel *Clotel*.

The representation of Canada in these Lake Erie Passages as a racial haven under a monarchical government, however problematic, challenged beliefs in antebellum US culture about the US's racial identity and its political supremacy in the continent. As a result, the Lake Erie Passage critiqued some of the most foundational race, gender, and class hierarchies sustaining US culture. By recovering this international, interracial conversation about the significance and meaning of Canadian-American border-crossing, I assert the important role of nineteenth-century Canada within the movement of people and ideas across the Black Atlantic world. I conclude the chapter by reflecting on the legacy of the print-cultural image of the Lake Erie Passage and by examining the ways that Black North American writing has been received, categorized, and examined in Canadian and American studies.

While the cross-border migrations of my study took place at different times and for very different reasons, the expulsion of the Acadians from Acadia to the colonial US and the passage of African Americans north to Canada across Lake Erie work in inverse and in parallel to each other. Both forms of cross-border movement inspired some of the same American Renaissance authors, many of whom were friends and contemporaries. Moreover, the Acadian expulsion and the Lake Erie Passage inspired a literary iconography that was interpreted, by US readers, as a commentary on the processes of US expansion and the

effects of US imperialism at home and abroad. In both cases, authors employed similar images of nautical travel, forced displacement, incarceration, violence, and familial separation. Furthermore, both paradigms explore the notion of nationlessness in order to comment on the process of acquiring national identity and of practicing national citizenship. Yet while the Acadian immigrants of Part One become idealized immigrants and function as sympathetic narrative stand-ins for African Americans and others who were barred from citizenship, the Lake Erie “passengers” of Part Two visibly, and sometimes very self-consciously, confront white antebellum fears about racial miscegenation and Black enfranchisement. Some authors used the Lake Erie Passage to set fears to rest, while others used the Lake Erie Passage to criticize not only the injustice of US slavery but also the ways that racism had constructed such fears of Black participation in civil society. My conclusion examines the legacy of these two images of cross-border movement in North American culture and comments on the ways that Canada-US relations continue to revisit and re-invent these examples of cross-border migration.

Part One: “If I were an American poet, I would choose Acadia for the subject of my song”: the *Grand Dérangement* and the American Renaissance

1.1 US print culture and the *Grand Dérangement*

This chapter contributes to contemporary critical discussions about mid-nineteenth-century North American literary relations by examining how literary representations of Acadia shaped popular American discussions about the meaning of American national identity. From roughly the 1830s to the 1850s, the interests of American authors began to converge on the traumatic displacement of the Acadians, a group of French Catholic settlers in the British colony of Nova Scotia who were forced from their homes by Anglo-American militias in 1755. In an effort to minimize a perceived French threat to British North America at the outbreak of the Seven Years’ War, Anglo-American militias deported an estimated 7,000-12,000 Acadians to different Anglo-American colonies. Eighty years after this event—called the *Grand Dérangement* by most Canadian historians and scholars³⁰—New England literary elites, including Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Nathaniel Hawthorne, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Harriet Beecher Stowe began representing the event in their verse, children’s books, sentimental fiction and histories of North America. These accounts of the

³⁰ Historically, English Canadians referred to the Acadian expulsion as “The Great Upheaval,” a metaphor which compares the deracination of the Acadians to a geographical catastrophe like an earthquake. Most contemporary scholars, however, prefer the term used by Acadians, *le Grand Dérangement*, which recalls not only the physical movement of the population (the French word *déranger* literally means “to disorganize or disturb”), but also the “sense of madness, or derailment, in the use of the French *dérangement*” (Grady 3)—the permanent mental and social trauma—that such an event has on a community.

Grand Dérangement spawned a nineteenth-century print-cultural industry that reflected on the eighteenth-century origins of the United States, speculated on the homology between Canada and the US as “nations” within North America, and offered different visions of the US’s role in the nineteenth-century Americas.

The mid-nineteenth-century print cultural interest in the *Grand Dérangement* was first sparked by the publication of the Nova Scotian politician, historian, and satirist Thomas Chandler Haliburton’s *An Historical and Statistical Account of Nova-Scotia* (1829), which was reviewed by the popular *North American Review* in the same year. Haliburton based his description of the violent denationalization of the Acadians on that of Abbé Guillaume Thomas François Raynal’s *Histoire des Deux Indes*, published in 1770. In his revision of Raynal’s text, Haliburton stated that the tragic story of the *Grand Dérangement* was “worthy rather of the poet than the historian” (*Historical* 173). His words would prove prophetic, for by the 1840s, many US writers used his text as a basis not only for their own historical retellings of the event, but also for their own fictive accounts of the *Grand Dérangement* in their novels, short stories, and poems. Hawthorne drew from Haliburton’s history to create a fictional account of Acadian exiles arriving in Boston’s harbor in his story “The Acadian Exiles,” which became a central narrative episode in Hawthorne’s trilogy of US history books for children known as *The Whole History of Grandfather’s Chair* (1840-41). George Bancroft—the historian and statesman who would later write treaties formalizing U.S. laws on naturalization and expatriation—described the deportation in a historical essay entitled “The Exiles of Acadia” (1841) that was designed to refamiliarize US readers with the expulsion. It was reprinted in the popular annual *The Token and Atlantic Souvenir* in 1842-43, alongside publications by prominent New England writers such as Stowe and

Longfellow. Shortly after Bancroft's essay appeared, the American novelist Catherine Read Williams, a distant relation of Haliburton, published *The Neutral French: or, the Exiles of Nova Scotia*, a sentimental novel describing the life of the Acadian exiles in the American colonies. Quaker poet and abolitionist John Greenleaf Whittier also began research in 1841 for "Marguerite," a sentimental poem about the death of an Acadian indentured servant, which he published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1871.

Meanwhile, Hawthorne's interest in the Acadians inspired his friend Longfellow to begin work on *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie*. Published in 1847, *Evangeline* outsold every other literary account of the Acadian deportation ever published. It was instantly popular, selling out five editions in as many weeks (Longfellow, *MS Am 1340 [221]* 137).³¹ *Evangeline*'s sympathetic treatment of the expelled Acadians also inspired wide public interest in the fate of the Acadian exiles, creating a literary chain reaction that shaped all future representations of the Acadian deportation and of the history and culture of francophone North America more generally. After *Evangeline*'s publication, Hawthorne revised his 1841 account of the *Grand Dérangement* in *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair* to direct readers to Longfellow's poem. Furthermore, Stowe, one of Longfellow's acquaintances, used intertextual references to *Evangeline* to structure her criticism of US slavery in her 1852 *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The conversation that began with these New England writers came to dominate future literary representations of the Acadians and of

³¹ See Staines 44 for a longer description of *Evangeline*'s commercial success and worldwide popularity into the twentieth century.

French Canadians.³² Moreover, the surge of US interest in the *Grand Dérangement* permanently changed the memorial and geographical landscape of Nova Scotia.³³

Surprisingly, while this 1755 event provoked intense literary interest amongst 1840s audiences, it was hardly noticed by Anglo-American colonists in the eighteenth century, who were much more preoccupied by the Seven Years' War and by the revolutionary rhetoric emerging from New England at the time. In fact, the number of Acadians involved in the *Grand Dérangement* was dwarfed by the tallies of other Canadian-American population exchanges, such as the movement of Loyalists to Canada after the Revolution, the flight of African Americans from the US to Canada during the antebellum period, the late nineteenth-century emigration of roughly one million eastern Canadian textile workers to New England, and the US push to the Canadian North during the 1898 Klondike gold rush, for example.³⁴ Nonetheless, some ninety years after the *Grand Dérangement* occurred, the story of the displaced Acadians inspired a nation-wide literary and historical discussion in the US. In

³² Later US authors such as Frederick Cozzens and Henry James acknowledged their intellectual debt to *Evangeline* in their non-fictional representations of Canada (see Doyle, *Yankees* 124). The earliest fictional account of the *Grand Dérangement* published by a French Canadian author is a novel by Napoléon Bourassa called *Jacques et Marie*, which was published in the *Revue canadienne* in 1865-66 (see Lemire 189). However, of all these accounts, Longfellow's *Evangeline* had the most profound impact on Canadian literature and Acadian culture. Translated into French by Québécois bureaucrat Léon Pamphile Lemay in 1865, Longfellow's poem was widely credited with creating a sense of community and continuity for the Acadian diaspora. The sentimental depiction of the Acadians in nineteenth-century poetry and fiction also prompted later representations in other genres such as folk tales, silent films, musicals, and operas. Perhaps most famously, Acadian writer Antonine Maillet responded to Longfellow's text with her acclaimed 1979 novel, *Pélagie-la-Charette*. Her text, which is written in *chiac*, the Acadian French dialect, describes the return of a group of Acadian deportees to Acadia from the US in the decades after the *Grand Dérangement*. For more information about the legacy of *Evangeline* in French Canada, see Eigenbrod as well as Fendler and Vatter.

³³ *Evangeline*'s immense popularity also gave rise to an entire travel industry. US travel guides included the fictional *Evangeline*'s hometown on rail tours, inviting US tourists to retrace the steps of her forced exile in reverse. The Dominion Atlantic Railway finally made the nostalgic travel fantasy complete by creating a statue of *Evangeline* in Grand-Pré, Nova Scotia, for the benefit of US tourists. Similar memorials to the fictional character exist in Louisiana. See J. A. Evans.

³⁴ There are many critical accounts of such population movements but very few have explored their literary impact. For analyses of other Canada-US migrations, see G. E. Clarke's *Odysseys Home* and Harvey Amani Whitfield's *Blacks on the Border* on the passage of Black Loyalists to the Maritimes, as well as Nick Mount's *When Canadian Literature Moved to New York*, on the 1880-1890 migration of prominent Canadian writers to the northeastern US.

fact, the *Grand Dérangement* became more important to US authors in retrospect, when American Renaissance authors began to use it to trace the first outlines of a native American mythology (Lewis 1).

This chapter reads the broad cultural appeal of the *Grand Dérangement* in relation to the political context of the US antebellum period. The Acadian exiles were represented in the colonial American period as religiously, linguistically and even racially foreign to white, Protestant, anglophone American readers. Yet the Acadian narratives were widely hailed by both authors and readers as quintessentially American stories. Hawthorne, for example, claimed in an 1847 review of Longfellow's *Evangeline* that the "removal and dispersion" of the Acadians "is one of the most remarkable [events] in American history" (qtd. in Hoeltje 234), and one of his characters in *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair*, speaking of Longfellow's account of the deportation, muses, "If I were an American poet, I would choose Acadia for the subject of my song" (WH 129). Despite Hawthorne's assertion, few literary critics have asked what kind of stories about "America" the Acadian narratives were telling, and how the story of the 1755 *Grand Dérangement* was interpreted, by both readers and writers, as a narrative not only about the destroyed Acadian nation but also about an emergent US one.

US writers had used francophone characters to define an idealized Anglo-American identity before. To date, Americanist scholars who have focussed on the contemporaneous reception of *Evangeline* point to notions of religious and linguistic difference in order to explain the appeal of the Acadians to a nineteenth-century American audience. Jenny Franchot suggests that political developments in the US, including increased Irish immigration and the Mexican-

American War, brought Catholicism to the forefront of American culture; Stowe, she argues, was particularly inspired by Catholicism's emphasis on the communal experience (xvii), while Longfellow was interested in the Catholic emphasis on the experience of heroic suffering, which he incorporates into his title character (204). Edward Watts problematically merges his discussion of the Acadians into a larger thesis about the representation of French colonial culture in the United States, ignoring the ways that the Acadians, the historians who wrote about them, and the authors who were inspired by these historical accounts all identified the Acadians as a population that was distinct from the French empire. While I agree that the religious and linguistic differences of the Acadians were part of their appeal, the focus on these elements in isolation has made the scholarly understanding of their significance incomplete. Moreover, neither of these scholars examines how the religious and linguistic differences of the Acadians positioned them within the racial formations under construction in antebellum US culture, especially in an era when debates about slavery were reaching their peak.

Antebellum authors sometimes discussed the Acadians as a subset of Catholics or as members of a larger French colonial culture. However, antebellum US authors found the Acadians fascinating because of the way that their *multiple* signifiers of difference—their tightly-knit ethnic community, their language, their Catholicism, and their working-class background—interacted with each other and resonated with political developments in the US. Since all of these elements were perceived as factors that defined racial and national identity in the nineteenth century, the Acadians became the perfect case study for US authors who were interested in examining the relationships between nation, race, language, religion, ethnicity, and empire.

Meanwhile, the narrative of the *Grand Dérangement* became attractive to US authors in the mid-nineteenth-century because it shed light on the tensions between the US's postcolonial past and its increasingly aggressive imperialist present. When Longfellow, Hawthorne, Whittier, and Bancroft turned their attention to Acadia, they also contributed to conversations about the history and the future of the Americas in venues such as the *Democratic Review* (a principal site of discourse about American national identity at the time). Discussions of the *Grand Dérangement* helped these authors put claims about US democracy and US imperialism in perspective. Many read Acadia as a double of colonial America: like the eighteenth-century Anglo-American colonists, the Acadians had attempted to forge their own nation but had become colonial victims of British power. The timing of the *Grand Dérangement* in 1755, right before the outbreak of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), enabled authors to both revisit and contextualize the American Revolution that followed soon afterward and the founding of the United States as the first independent nation-state in the New World. Yet just as the condition of the Acadians in the 1750s inspired reflection about the US's status as a nation, it also prompted authors to reconsider the US's relationship to imperialism in the 1850s: for many, the US resembled both the persecuted nation of Acadia and the empire that persecuted them. After all, the Acadian texts written by these American authors told stories of a border dispute at a time when America was obsessed with securing its own borders. Authors interpreted this story of eighteenth-century conquest in relation to debates about the potential US annexation of Caribbean and Pacific territories, the annexation of Native territories and Texas (1845), the invasion of Mexico (1846-48), and the expansion of slavery in newly-created US states. The volatility of US geographical borders also raised questions about the meaning of US national identity and

the relationship between race and citizenship. In all of these works, authors imaginatively represent the Acadian exiles using the iconography of slavery and forced movement. The images of boats in motion, shackled bodies, burning houses, broken conversations, and lost and exiled family members that permeated all the nineteenth-century renderings of the story of the Acadians would all have resonated with antebellum US audiences familiar with the tropes used to discuss contemporary issues such as slavery, Indian Removal, and the Mexican American War. Moreover, while the Acadians were entirely defined by their denationalization, their Canadian origins reminded American readers of a contemporary North American alternative to the US's stance on slavery and expansion.

In order to understand the appeal of the *Grand Dérangement* as a literary trope, then, we must read the Acadians in double time—not only in relation to the eighteenth-century founding of the US, but also in relation to the nineteenth-century politics of expansion and the different arguments that were being made in US culture about the role of US power in the Americas. For authors like Longfellow and Hawthorne, the Acadians simultaneously recalled past and present, calling US's increasingly violent actions to secure its hegemony in North America into question, and contrasting the politics of US expansion to the idealistic rhetoric of the American Revolution. In some cases, American authors and readers were using the white, working-class Acadians as stand-ins for ideal American immigrants; in others, they were reading the French Catholic difference of the Acadians as a potential threat to white Anglo-American supremacy in North America. Sometimes the Acadians came to represent a nostalgic Puritan past; at other times, the Acadians recalled the exoticism of the US's contemporary Canadian neighbours. Some US readers and authors identified with Acadians' experience of imperial violence; in other cases, they recognized themselves as perpetrators of

imperial violence. Sometimes, the analogies made between the eighteenth-century *Grand Dérangement* and the British persecution of colonial Americans sustained the notion of US political supremacy; at other times, the similarities in the forms of forced movement and imperial conflicts made any perceived differences between eighteenth-century British militarism and nineteenth-century US militarism symbolically collapse. And finally, while many authors insisted on the perceived whiteness of these Acadian figures, I suggest that their symbolic associations with slave ships and forced movement, as well as their linguistic and religious difference from Anglo-Saxon Protestant America, were often taken as a sign of potential racial difference. The arguments made to include or exclude the Acadians from the American national project thus gesture towards the different ways that ideas of race were determining notions of citizenship in the antebellum US.

The texts by Hawthorne and Longfellow that I study in Part One, and by Stowe in my later entr'acte, show some of the different ways that US authors used the Acadians in literary conversations about the meaning of US national identity and the ethics of US expansion. All of these authors drew from the same source texts by Abbé Raynal and Haliburton, but also built on each other's interpretations to construct their own arguments about the significance of the *Grand Dérangement* in North American history. Hawthorne, for example, represents the Acadians as nostalgic figures who represent all of the ideals of the United States; however, their expulsion at the hands of British imperialists lead Hawthorne to challenge the imperial projects taking place in the antebellum US. Similarly, for Longfellow and Stowe, the Acadians become figures of displacement, narrative stand-ins for ethnic and racial minorities in the nineteenth-century US who were being displaced by forms of US imperialism. As a result, after gaining the right of entry into the American literary

consciousness, these Acadian figures of displacement proved excessively mobile, difficult to control, and potentially dangerous in their ability to undermine triumphant celebrations of American ascendancy in the continent. As cultural theorist Mark Simpson points out, displacement can often reveal the fault lines in master narratives about American citizenship:

For if, in the U.S. nineteenth century, struggles over mobility typically distribute it as a differential resource, privileging some citizens (white, male, bourgeois) at the expense of their social others, nevertheless unpredictabilities do haunt this dynamic. Strains of excess texture the politics of mobility, intimating the contingency of modern transit and traffic—not to mention the illogic of the capitalist system they so often serve. Thus, even when normative or regulatory, mobility's histories will figure forth, in those traces of contest they must contain, the conditions of possibility for their undoing. (xxxi)

The chain of associations recalled by these Acadian narratives often defied the control of their authors. While the historical Acadians described by these authors—innocent in their beliefs, steadfast in their loyalty to their doomed community, perpetually victimized by their British oppressors—may seem very conservative figures, the books written about them become extremely transgressive, demanding white Americans to imagine the life of the Other, protesting against the increasing commercialization of American culture, and stating that American citizens should be more aware of the deeds committed in the name of American empire-building. As an imagined location, Acadia opens up a discursive space for different authors to imagine new options for the United States. Paradoxically, even as many authors used this narrative of transnational migration to study the formation of the US, their works also came to destabilize notions of American identity and national progress.

1.2 The *Grand Dérangement* and the history of the Acadians

From the beginning, Acadia was the uneasy product of empire. Acadia, a region of what is now the Canadian province of Nova Scotia, was claimed for France in 1604, and was settled by French Catholics (see Figure 3). Named after the idyllic Greek region of Arcadia, Acadia became one of the most coveted colonies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The French were the most active explorers and traders in the St. Lawrence and the eastern coast of Canada, but their interest in the Acadian farming colony was something of an anomaly, given that France's other investments in North America were largely based around the fur industry. As France laid claim to the region in the seventeenth century, the English

Figure 3, "Expansion of Acadian settlements, 1605-1710," has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The map shows the directions of the expansion and development of the French Acadian settlements in Nova Scotia from 1605 to 1710.

Figure 3: Expansion of Acadian settlements, 1605-1710.

Source: Griffiths, N. E. S. *From Migrant to Acadian: A North American Border People, 1604-1755*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2005. 168. Print.

were simultaneously claiming significant southern parts of the eastern seaboard. Acadia's position at the northern boundary of English claims and the southern boundary of French claims made it contested territory. Moreover, its valuable farmland and easy access to major fisheries and trade routes made it an attractive negotiating chip in larger seventeenth- and eighteenth-century imperial conflicts between France and England. Acadia was transferred back and forth between French and British rule ten times between 1604 and 1713, at which time the British gained permanent control of the region and formally named it Nova Scotia. As a result of this change in government, the French Catholic Acadian population was cut off from New France (see Figure 4).

Figure 4, "Population density map of the maritime regions, c. 1750," has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The map shows the location of the French Acadian settlements in 1750, in relation to the English territory of Nova Scotia as well as the French territory of New France (in what is now New Brunswick).

Figure 4: Population density map of the maritime regions, c. 1750.

Source: Griffiths, N. E. S. *From Migrant to Acadian: A North American Border People, 1604-1755*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2005. 282. Print.

Some six thousand Acadians who feared persecution under permanent British rule fled immediately to other French territories.³⁵ Those remaining, fearing attacks by the English if they declared allegiance to France, and French reprisals if they declared allegiance to the English, negotiated what in retrospect seems a remarkable policy of neutrality. The Acadians pledged allegiance to the British crown, on the condition that they could “remain neutral in time of war between the French and the British or the British and the [Native Canadian] Mi’kmaq” (Basque 19). This pledge made them subjects of the British crown but allowed them to avoid participating in military attacks against the French.

This agreement, known as the Convention of 1730, was a political coup for the Acadians, for it effectively enabled them to preserve their French Catholic culture while still protecting themselves from the effects of any further invasions or imperial conflicts in the area. More importantly, it enabled them to develop a culture and a community that imagined itself as distinct from the European imperial powers that were asserting their control over the New World. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Acadians had created a self-sustaining economy supported by an innovative system of dikes that transformed the marshes near the Bay of Fundy into productive farmland. Moreover, the Acadians recognized themselves (and were recognized by eighteenth-century observers like the British) as a community that was geographically specific and linguistically and culturally unique within North America, given its relative isolation from France, Britain, and other Euro-American colonies. The Acadians established a positive relationship with the neighboring Mi’kmaq and were supportive of

³⁵ At the time, New France included what is now Quebec, along with most of Canada’s maritime provinces: New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and parts of Nova Scotia. Arsenault estimates that roughly 6000 Acadians—more than a third of the Acadian population—left Nova Scotia for parts of New France in this first, voluntary, dispersal. New Brunswick, Île Saint-Jean (later Prince Edward Island), and Île Royale (later Cape Breton) were the most popular destinations for the Acadians (Arsenault 174).

mixed-race or intercultural marriages with both nearby English troops and aboriginal populations; in peacetime they traded with New Englanders. Finally, according to the historical accounts of Raynal and Haliburton, the Acadians largely kept their distance from the colonial British government, preferring to settle disputes on a local level with community elders (Haliburton, *Historical* 172). In their discursive, cultural, and political choices, then, the Acadians were increasingly defining themselves not as a dependent colony, but rather as an independent, national North American space. Some might call the Acadian strategy a form of dual citizenship: the Acadians realized that their interests, as a linguistically and culturally-distinct colony in North America, were diverging from those of both France and Britain. Their efforts to negotiate a truce between their British and French loyalties and to preserve their linguistic environment against assimilation with a much larger Anglo-American population showed that they aligned themselves with a markedly different kind of identity than that offered to them by the binary options of allegiance held out by Britain and France. In the strictest sense, one might also argue that the Acadians had voluntarily *expatriated* themselves from the French and English empires—though this was not even a possibility according to either power—and defined themselves as an Acadian nation in North America that had yet to be recognized by European governments.

Yet the Acadians' policy of neutrality, which enabled the development of their national culture, also made them a subversive threat to both the French and English governments in North America. Both the British and the French wanted the Acadians to abandon their neutrality, even if it meant the Acadians would become definite opponents of either colonial power. Moreover, as the New England colonies became more powerful, the Anglo-American government began to perceive French Acadia as an obstacle "that retarded

the progress of the new [British] settlements” in the region (qtd. in Haliburton, *Historical* 338) and that prevented eastern North America from becoming an anglophone, Protestant space. In the early 1750s, Charles Lawrence, governor of Halifax, and William Shirley, governor of the Massachusetts Bay colonies and commander-in-chief of British forces in North America, designed a plan to force the Acadians either to leave Nova Scotia or to assimilate into the English-speaking population.³⁶ Meanwhile, the French colonial government, which had forbidden the Acadians from entering into any negotiations with the British, interpreted the Convention of 1730 as a betrayal. French officials began veiled attempts to encourage the Acadians to rebel forcefully against the English or to declare definitive allegiance to France for protection. While French officials had no direct role in the Acadians’ expulsion, they did little to protect the Acadians from becoming the objects of British aggression and helped to foster British francophobia.³⁷

These pressures from the British and French empires combined to create an impossible situation for the Acadians in Nova Scotia by 1755. Shortly before the outbreak of the Seven Years’ War, Shirley and Lawrence demanded of the Acadians a declaration of unconditional allegiance to the King of England. The Acadians refused. In retaliation, Lawrence issued a deportation order for the 10,000-14,000 Acadians,³⁸ and sent three of

³⁶ See Kozuskanich 2 for a more lengthy description of Lawrence and Shirley’s “Great Plan.”

³⁷ For more information about the attempts made by *agents provocateurs* in New France to force the Acadians to choose sides, see Massé 11, Fonteneau 109, Griffiths *Migrant* 434, and Grady 7-8.

³⁸ Accurate figures of the population size of French Acadians in 1755, and of the number of Acadians deported during the *Grand Dérangement*, are very hard to determine because the last comprehensive census of the area had been taken in 1714. Most population estimates of Acadia in 1755 have multiplied this 1714 census information by a growth factor to reach a rough count of 12,000-18,000 individuals. However, Brasseaux debates these claims. In a study of the manifests of the transport ships used during the deportation, he notes that 5,400 Acadians were listed as deported in the summer and fall of 1755; this number grew to 6,050 by 1760. Additional Acadians were deported from Île Saint-Jean (now Prince Edward Island) in 1758. Any remaining Acadians either fled or were detained by the British until the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1763. See Brasseaux’s *Scattered* 1, 2, 4, and 7; Arsenault 209; and Faragher 364.

Shirley's New England militias to carry it out.³⁹ These militias arrived at the Acadian settlement of Minas Bay in the late summer of 1755, forcibly removed the Acadians from their farms, and loaded them onto boats. Haliburton describes how many Acadians watched as their homes were burnt to the ground. On hearing word of the first arrests and deportations at Minas Bay, many Acadians from the Annapolis Royal area escaped to the woods and evaded the militias for several weeks; others made largely unsuccessful attempts to rebel against the Anglo-American forces.⁴⁰ The few who successfully evaded capture escaped to areas still held by New France, mainly to the regions now known as New Brunswick and Québec, but thousands of Acadians died as a result of the conflict.

The deportation was part of a divide-and-conquer strategy to disperse the Acadians across North America and Europe. Most ships went to different coastal American colonies that were geographically distant from Acadia, while a few others "returned" the Acadians to France. Some of the Acadians deported to the American colonies were given the option to relocate in French Saint-Domingue or Spanish Louisiana. Given the enormous distances involved in returning to Acadia, and the logistical impossibility of reuniting quickly, the Anglo-American government hoped that the dispersed Acadians would become a powerless and ineffectual minority in colonial American cities, and would assimilate with the English Protestant population. By the final round of deportations in 1760, roughly 9,550 Acadians

³⁹ According to Kozuskanich, Shirley hired at least 10 ships from Apthorp and Hancock of Boston to carry out the expulsion (15-16). One of the officers of the New England militia, John Winslow, became a recognized figure in the antebellum accounts of the *Grand Dérangement*. Winslow's journal account of the expulsion from Grand-Pré (later to become the hometown of the fictional Evangeline) called the deportation "this Troublesome affair which is more Greivous to me than any Service I was ever Employed in" and described the Grand Pré deportation as a "scene of sorrow" (qtd in Gipson 275). Grady argues that Lawrence sent Shirley's New England militias because the British regulars stationed in the area (many of whom had married Acadian women and converted to Catholicism) refused to participate in the plan, and could have been among the deported themselves (8-9).

⁴⁰ For historical descriptions of Acadian resistance efforts and the results of the *Grand Dérangement* in Nova Scotia, see Arsenault 204-208 and Basque 19.

from British maritime colonies had been deported to France, England, or American colonies along the eastern seaboard of the United States: Virginia, Georgia, North and South Carolina, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. Some groups of Acadians attempted to return to their farmlands, but the Acadian population in Nova Scotia was permanently diminished. By 1764, there were only 1,000 Acadians reported by the Nova Scotia census (Griffiths, “Deportation” 21).

The effects of the *Grand Dérangement* were devastating. As a result of overcrowding and starvation on the transport ships, the Acadian exiles arrived at English colonial seaports in North America with typhus, smallpox, and other epidemics. The Acadians’ religious, cultural and linguistic differences were consistently associated, in colonial newspapers, with the threat of disease, racial insurrection, arson, and disorder:

Though nominally British subjects, these papists were fully expected to join their co-religionists, the French, and their fierce Indian allies in the impending intercolonial struggle for North American domination.... [T]he Acadians, in the view of the British colonial administrators, would constitute, even in exile, a formidable fifth column, capable perhaps of inciting servile insurrections in the slave colonies to aid the French cause. (Brasseaux 10-11)⁴¹

Most American colonial governments did not provide the Acadians with the legal means to earn money or buy property. Many exiles became homeless and were forced to sell their children into indentured servitude.⁴²

⁴¹ Throughout the 1750s, newspapers in Boston, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, New York, and New Hampshire reprinted each other’s reports on the movements of the Acadian refugees. Many reports criticized the Acadians’ incessant demands to be returned to Nova Scotia, even as former Acadian farm lots were being advertised for sale to American colonists in the same newspapers.

⁴² See Hoban 4511 for the Acadians’ complaint against a law that forced the Acadians to sell their children into indentured servitude. I quote from this same petition in the next paragraph.

Perhaps most importantly, though, the expelled Acadians represented an ontological problem for the British empire. In a petition submitted to the Pennsylvania government in February 1757, the Acadians explained that their indefinite status within the American colonies was proving more destructive than any form of captivity they could imagine:

Permit us, Gentlemen, to ask in what Quality we are here? Be pleased to tell us, whether we are Subjects, Prisoners, Slaves or Freemen? In our Opinion we are not Subjects, inasmuch as it appears to us unparalleled, that his *Brittanic* Majesty should ever oppress his Subjects in the Manner we have been oppressed.... If we are Criminals, we are ready to submit to the Punishment due to our Crimes.... [Mr. Charles Lawrence] moreover told us, that since we would be *Frenchmen*, he made us Prisoners of War, and that he would transport us to our own Country. Neither can we be called Slaves, because Christians have never made a Trade of such as believe in Jesus Christ. We are not Freemen neither, seeing we cannot withdraw into the Country promised us.... We then conclude ourselves Prisoners, for we must be something, or be reduced to a State of Non-existence. (qtd. in Hoban 4509-11)⁴³

Ironically, after being sent into exile for having allegiances with too many nations—being nominal subjects of both France and Britain—they could not become recognized as subjects of either. After the Seven Years' War ended in 1764, Britain rescinded the deportation decree and allowed the Acadians to return to their lands; however, by that time, many deported Acadians had no means to pay for the return trip to Nova Scotia, and many of those who did found that their farms had been given to New England settlers who had been encouraged to expand into the newly-vacated Acadian farmland. Some refugees made the long journey

⁴³ I have only been able to locate this petition in its English translation, amongst the records of the Pennsylvania Archives. The petition above may have inspired Haliburton's later account:

The peculiar situation of the Acadians embarrassed the local Government of the Province, who were for a long time wholly at a loss to know what course to adopt towards them. They were not British subjects, inasmuch as they had refused to take the oath of allegiance, and therefore could scarcely be considered rebels. They were not prisoners of war, because they had been suffered for nearly half a century to retain their possessions; and their neutrality had been accepted in lieu of allegiance, [sic] they could not, therefore, with propriety, be sent to France. (168)

back to Acadia on foot. Others located lost family members in other colonies and created Acadian settlements in Louisiana, then under Spanish rule.⁴⁴

Still other Acadians chose to remain in the Anglo-American communities where they landed, eventually assimilating into Anglo-American culture. Yet their testimony from the time reveals some of the reasons why the Acadians would become such compelling figures to antebellum authors. An undated Acadian petition to the English King, submitted sometime after the Acadians arrived in Pennsylvania in the 1750s, demonstrates the Acadians' continued perception of their status as a diasporic nation. The petition (which represents the interests of the Acadian deportees) urges the King to provide material support for the Acadians in their refugee camps, given that the Acadians had agreed to be subjects of Britain. However, as it defends the reasons why the Acadians had originally supported the Convention of 1730, it also represents the Acadian community as a nation that had chosen to be governed by the English:

[I]t was always our fixed resolution to maintain, to the utmost of our power, the oath of fidelity which we had taken, not only from a sense of indispensable duty, but also because we were well satisfied with our situation under your Majesty's Government and protection, and did not think it could be bettered by any chance which could be proposed to us. (qtd. in Haliburton, *Historical* 193)

⁴⁴ The area of present-day Louisiana was claimed as a French territory by Robert Cavalier de la Salle in 1682. When France lost the French and Indian War, it ceded part of Louisiana to the British, but retained possession of some areas including New Orleans. France gave these remaining territories to Spain in 1763 to keep them out of English hands. Spain gave Louisiana (except New Orleans) back to France after the Treaty of San Ildefonso of 1800. Yet a few years later in 1803, when Napoleon failed to retake Haiti and realized that Louisiana was going to become a drain on French resources, he sold Louisiana to the US. The Cajun settlements in Louisiana developed around these frequent shifts. A small group of Acadian refugees in the American colonies went to Louisiana at the end of the Seven Years' War, during the period of Spanish rule. Some located their scattered family members across the globe and told them of the growing Acadian communities in Louisiana. This led to a second major Acadian migration to rural Louisiana in the late 1760s, from France, Saint-Domingue, and the eastern United States. A third Acadian migration to Louisiana occurred in the early 1800s after the Haitian Revolution, but this group of Acadian planters (who had by then become part of Haiti's mixed-race aristocracy) largely integrated itself within the Creole culture in New Orleans rather than the Cajun settlements in rural areas. See Brasseaux for the history of the Acadian population after the *Grand Dérangement*.

Here, even as the Acadians invoke the notion of duty to define their relationship with the British empire, they also argue that their status as a distinct population in North America entitled them to a *choice* in their political representation. Historian N.E.S. Griffiths argues that this democratic attitude towards imperial rule was incompatible with the dominant European understandings of monarchical rule:

Acadians presented the British with the challenge of subjects who would be citizens. That is to say, instead of accepting the generally held view that their relationship with the British monarchy was simply one of subjects and rulers, the Acadians acted as if they had rights of citizenship. Subjects [unlike citizens] have, as Anne Dummett and Andrew Nichol point out, ‘a personal link....[it is]... a vertical relationship between monarch and individual, not a horizontal one between members of a nation or citizens of a body politic.’ Consciously or unconsciously, the Acadian stance represented two beliefs. The first was that they were indeed a people, distinct from both the French of France and French Canadians. The second was that, despite the actions of empires and decisions of princes, the Acadians had every right to debate and present ideas about how and where they should live. The Acadian experience of life on a border that was the meeting place between two empires, each interested in expanding into territory claimed by the other, had sharpened the Acadian sense of their political needs. (*Migrant* 369-70)

At the very least, this action presented a serious rethinking of the idea of citizenship in North America that would anticipate the conflicts of the American Revolution. The presence of francophone Acadia in Nova Scotia exposed fundamental conceptual conflicts in the relationship between imperial centre and colonial periphery. Moreover, the destruction of the Acadian community would also force the American colonies to think carefully about whether New England, too, would eventually become a pawn in the British-French conflict.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ See James Allan Evans, who explains that the frequent English-French feuds that led to the deportation of the Acadians also led New Englanders to worry about their position. New Englanders were not consulted, for example, when Britain traded Louisbourg, a port (in present-day Nova Scotia) that New Englanders had taken great pains to win, for French Madras in India, in the 1748 Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. He writes, “Some historians claim that the American Revolution started here [in Acadia], and whether or not they are right, this is

This is precisely why the story was attractive to 1840s American Renaissance authors who wanted to discuss the formation of the American nation. The Acadians were symbolically meaningful because of both their efforts to negotiate a space between the seemingly fixed opposition between the British and French empires in North America and their ultimate failure to do so. The Acadians, in effect, became symbols of colonial Americans' aspirations for independence: the efforts of the Acadians to secure independent citizenship began a discussion about the importance of democratic subjectivity, but their fate under British tyranny also seemingly testified to what may have happened to the American colonies, had they not gone to war to defend those same democratic principles. In the minds of many mid-nineteenth-century US authors, Acadia became a North American "city upon a hill" that fell to imperial forces.⁴⁶

The political conditions of the *Grand Dérangement* are not often discussed in relation to the literary representation of the event, perhaps because the literary representations have eclipsed these political considerations by typecasting the Acadians as victims of imperial violence. While the Acadian expulsion was described by a few American colonial newspapers at the time, the story of the Acadians was brought to a world audience by two historians—each of whom had their own criticisms of imperial governance in North America. The first, Abbé Raynal, published his *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les Deux Indes* (often referred to simply

the point when the colonists realized that Britain would weigh her interests in America against her interests elsewhere, and they might be sacrificed"(110). At the time, the New England colonies sided with Britain, against the Acadians.

⁴⁶ Haliburton's account, for example, says that the decision "to remove and disperse this whole people among the British Colonies" was part of a divide-and-conquer strategy, for once they were geographically divided "they could not unite in any offensive measures, and... they might be naturalized to the Government and Country" (174).

as *Histoire des Deux Indes*) in 1770.⁴⁷ Raynal's history uses the Acadians to show the dangers of tyranny and despotism in colonial North American governments. He praises the Acadians' pastoralism and describes their policy of neutrality in relation to the other imperial developments in North America. Portraying the Acadians as "a good and simple people, who disliked the shedding of blood" (240), Raynal blames the French priests and the British government for the destruction of French Acadia. Drawing from Diderot, Raynal concludes by classifying the *Grand Dérangement* as "the result of national jealousies, of that rapaciousness of governments which devours land and men" (241).⁴⁸

Raynal's account provided the foundation for the 1829 history of Acadia written by Haliburton, which was the most influential and widely-accessible text consulted by mid-nineteenth-century American authors. Unlike Raynal, Haliburton was a committed supporter of the monarchical system and (as a committed Tory) he distrusted the new American republican project. At the same time, however, he often attacked what he perceived as "a badly informed and unintelligent colonial policy" (McDougall 219) practiced by the British government in Nova Scotia in the early nineteenth century.⁴⁹ Haliburton's account of the *Grand Dérangement* criticizes the actions of the British troops but nonetheless justifies British control of North America. Haliburton describes the Acadian colony as a unified,

⁴⁷ Raynal published many subsequent editions. I am quoting from Jimack's translation based on the expanded 1780 version, an edition which was written with the assistance of Diderot.

⁴⁸ All of these quotations are Jimack's translations of the original French. Longfellow likely consulted the book in French; however, the English translation was available as early as 1776 and continued to be published until 1821.

⁴⁹ Haliburton would later develop his politics more clearly through *The Clockmaker* (1835), a set of satirical sketches describing the adventures of an industrious, yet conniving, Yankee clock-peddler named Sam Slick and an English Squire as they tour together around Nova Scotia. The two characters represent the political values that Haliburton saw at stake in the fate of Nova Scotia at the time: that is, they represent a choice between US-style republicanism and Tory colonial ideals. The Nova Scotians that the two characters encounter are lazy and apathetic, especially compared to the calculating Slick. Haliburton's criticism of his Nova Scotia countrymen is thus designed to encourage social and political reform in Nova Scotia that would revive Nova Scotia's failing economy. However, Slick's manipulative, self-promoting character highlights the dangers of the unfettered capitalism of the US system as well. See criticism by McDougall and Godeanu-Kenworthy.

prelapsarian space which had reached a “state of social happiness, totally inconsistent with the frailties and passions of human nature” (*Historical* 173). He goes further to provide a sympathetic portrayal of the chaotic scenes in different Acadian villages as the expulsion was taking place. His description of the deportation, which connects the destruction of the Acadian communities with the long-term destruction of Acadian culture, represents the event as an act of what we might now call genocide:

[The Acadians] bore their confinement, and received their sentence with a fortitude and resignation altogether unexpected; but when the hour of embarkation arrived, in which they were to leave the land of their nativity for ever—to part with their friends and relatives, without the hope of ever seeing them again, and to be dispersed among strangers, whose language, customs and religion, were opposed to their own, the weakness of human nature prevailed, and they were overpowered with the sense of their miseries. (*Historical* 179)

At the same time, though, Haliburton describes the *Grand Dérangement* as a side-effect of the natural expansion of European empires in North America. He suggests that the Acadians would inevitably have helped the French regain their strength in North America (*Historical* 197), and he also sympathizes with the Anglo-American soldiers who carried out the expulsion (*Historical* 180). Nonetheless, his use of historical documents from both Acadian deportees and American military commanders provides some insight into the traumatic effects of the expulsion from the perspective of individuals involved in the *Grand Dérangement* and its aftermath.

Both Raynal and Haliburton present the *Grand Dérangement* as an unfortunate consequence of an imperial conflict in North America that had resulted in the victimization of a small population. These accounts explain the political situation that gave rise to the deportation, the involvement of American settlers in the Anglo-American militia that

deported the Acadians, and the horrific treatment of the Acadians by the American colonial government after the deportation. Yet the mid-1840s representations of the Acadians and of the *Grand Dérangement* significantly revised these source texts, making the Acadians sentimental figures and shifting the focus to more personal forms of displacement and trauma. Scholars in Canadian studies such as Renate Eigenbrod criticize these fictionalized accounts of the *Grand Dérangement* for transforming the Acadians into hapless victims and for failing to acknowledge the political complexities that lay behind the event. However, I would argue that the sentimentalized iconography of the Acadian phenomenon was deeply related to the political context of 1840s America. Though the Acadians were separated from the lives of their mid-century US readers by two generations, a shift from monarchic to democratic government, and a very different set of religious and linguistic cultural practices, they became a fundamental part of the way US audiences thought about immigration, revolution, and empire in American culture in the 1840s.

1.3 “Citizen[s] of somewhere else”: Hawthorne’s poetics of exile in *The Whole History of Grandfather’s Chair*

This section develops a method of reading Hawthorne’s discussions of US citizenship in relation to his representation of the *Grand Dérangement* in *Grandfather’s Chair*, *Famous Old People*, and *Liberty Tree*, a trilogy of children’s books that he wrote in 1840 and published in 1840-1.⁵⁰ The trilogy, known collectively as *The Whole History of*

⁵⁰ I am discussing *The Whole History of Grandfather’s Chair* as a unit because the three volumes of the trilogy were written together and are thematically linked, although they were first published separately as *Grandfather’s Chair* (December 1840), *Famous Old People* (January 1841), and *Liberty Tree* (March 1841). In later printings, Hawthorne published the books together in one volume, and revised his text to refer to Whittier

Grandfather's Chair, describes the history of the American colonies until the end of the American Revolutionary period. Hawthorne's account of the *Grand Dérangement* lies at the centre of his second book of the trilogy, *Famous Old People*, and becomes a recurring reference point in the third book, *Liberty Tree*, which discusses the American Revolution and the creation of the United States as a nation-state.

Recent scholars have begun to investigate the relationship between Hawthorne's career as a customs-house and consular official, and his literary representations of the US in the antebellum period.⁵¹ While he may not have literally followed in his merchant-sea captain father's wake, Hawthorne studied American borders on a professional level, policing the traffic of products in and out of the United States and examining the US's interactions with different national and imperial systems across the world. Many of these themes carry through his fiction. Anna Brickhouse, for example, suggests that Hawthorne's literary career was shaped by these (sometimes repressed) histories of transnational interactions and influences:

[A] dense matrix of transamerican cultural exchange and literary influence... yielded both the earlier and later transamerican affiliations of Hawthorne's familial genealogy as well as of his editorial and Customs House careers: his father's and other ancestors' trading voyages to the West Indies and South America; his editorial work on accounts of travel in the Caribbean and other parts of the Americas; and the special view he was afforded as a customs agent of the illegal slave trade among West Indian and US ports. More specifically, the political and cultural confrontations between the United States and Mexico during the early 1840s—numerous accounts of

and Longfellow's writings about the *Grand Dérangement*. His emendations suggest that he wanted to position *The Whole History* within the larger antebellum conversation about the *Grand Dérangement*. See Laffrado 6 and Wineapple 142-3.

⁵¹ Hawthorne held positions at the Boston Custom-House from January 1839 to January 1841, as well as the Salem Custom-House, from April 1846 to June 1849. He was holding the Boston Custom-House position as he wrote *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair*. Later in his career, from 1853 to 1857, he served as US consul in Liverpool, a central port of exchange for the triangular Atlantic trading network.

which accompanied Hawthorne's literary production in the journals in which he was publishing—distinctly shaped his emergence from literary obscurity into literary notoriety, defining and sustaining his sense of himself as an aspiring national author. (182-3)

Gretchen Murphy similarly recognizes how Hawthorne maps his obsessions about the geographical and racial borders of the United States onto the domestic spaces described in his fiction. She reads the emphasis on the primacy of the home in *The House of the Seven Gables*, for example, as a response to competing interpretations of the Monroe Doctrine and the processes of US expansion.⁵² Yet as my dissertation's introduction explains, Canada has largely been overlooked in these discussions of Hawthorne's fiction, despite the fact that Hawthorne pays particular attention, in a number of his texts, to the significance of the frontier between British North America and New England in different time periods. Nova Scotia becomes a particularly important point of reference in *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair*, as well as his 1850 introductory chapter of *The Scarlet Letter*. In "The Custom-House," Hawthorne uses the northward movement of British bodies and information from Salem to Nova Scotia after the American Revolution to structure his thoughts on the US. Yet Hawthorne returns to a similar Nova Scotia-New England trajectory in *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair*. While "The Custom-House" describes the movement of British Loyalists north in the late eighteenth century, *The Whole History* depicts the movement of Acadian exiles south to Boston in 1755, at the hands of the British. The

⁵² Murphy's argument continues by suggesting that Hawthorne's sacralization of the domestic space in *The House of the Seven Gables* and his sympathy for displaced figures (such as the Maules and the Indian sagamores) reject the expansionist logic of the 1840s in favor of a more protectionist view of the United States. Other critics note that works that Hawthorne set in fantastic or obviously foreign locations were often inspired by North American conversations about geographical and racial borders. Brickhouse points to the similarities between "Rappaccini's Daughter" and popular writings about Mexico by archaeologist John L. Stephens and American expatriate Frances Calderón de la Barca to suggest that Hawthorne's short story "returns unfailingly to the very American scenes that it seems designed to escape" (182), namely the "hemispheric controversies over colonialism, race, slavery, and US imperial designs on Mexico" (183).

Canadian migrations in both texts underline the uncertain position of the Anglo-American colonies amidst the complex power configurations of mid-eighteenth-century North America. Moreover, in both texts, Hawthorne invokes the shared background of Nova Scotia and New England in the pre-Revolutionary period to comment on the events within North America that have happened since then and to define the US's contemporary political position as a democracy and as an empire.

Hawthorne famously ends "The Custom-House" by declaring himself a political exile, a "citizen of somewhere else" (SL 113). His 1841 text *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair* set the groundwork for many of his reflections on citizenship and exile in "The Custom-House." Hawthorne published *The Whole History* while he was employed at the Boston Custom-House, and wrote "The Custom-House" based on his custom-house position in Salem. In both cases, the "neutral space" of the custom-house invites him to consider the different kinds of personal and national formations that the current configuration of US empire may be obscuring or even policing out of existence. Moreover, in both cases, Hawthorne concentrates on the idea of a "neutral" person—the political refugee, the exile, the national outcast—to investigate the meaning of national identification and construct a sense of a national "home." In *The Whole History*, Acadia functions as a "homeland" that resisted the control of foreign empire until it was destroyed. The exiled "Neutral French," who are forced onto foreign shores, help Hawthorne define the American "home" and the process by which individual connections to the US nation are constructed.

This section examines the narrative function of the Acadian exiles and the *Grand Dérangement* in defining the existence of a US national character and marking the

emergence of the US as a North American nation-state. While Hawthorne positions eighteenth-century New France in opposition to the American colonies, he draws parallels between Acadia and colonial America. As I will show, his alignment of the idyllic Acadian settlement with the American colonies defines North America not as a simple series of European imperial outposts, but rather as a collection of new national cultures. In this way, the presence of Acadia alongside the American colonies helps Hawthorne construct what Murphy calls “the imagined confines of the Western Hemisphere” (26). In an era when many nineteenth-century authors were anxious about what seemed to be the excessively heterogeneous makeup of the United States, Hawthorne’s representation of the pastoral paradise of Acadia helped to stabilize and naturalize the presence of North American settlements: rather than being a state without a nation, the eighteenth-century US (like Acadia) could be reconceptualized as a proto-nation without a federal state. However, the destruction of Acadia calls attention to the discrepancy between the interests of the continent’s European rulers and its colonists. In this way, Acadia’s destruction allows Hawthorne, in particular, to justify the American Revolution as a necessary response to an intrusive and cruel imperial government in North America. The American community that he imagines in *The Whole History of Grandfather’s Chair*, which rallies around the idea of Acadian exile, helps to stabilize the heterogeneous foundations of the United States.

The Whole History of Grandfather’s Chair

The Whole History describes the history of the New England colonies from Puritan times to the end of the Revolutionary period by describing episodes in the lives of white,

Anglo-American settlers, some of whom were involved in public life and others whom Hawthorne describes as private citizens. The plot is structured around scenes of storytelling in which Grandfather relates the history of an ornate fireside chair to his inquisitive grandchildren—Alice (age five), Charley (age nine), Clara (age ten) and Lawrence (age twelve)—in a series of historical vignettes about the chair’s previous owners. Grandfather’s chair functions as a memento of past times that helps Grandfather explore the lasting impact of a seemingly distant American colonial history. Like the scarlet letter, the chair allows Grandfather to introduce the personal experiences of the inhabitants of colonial America with the political systems in development in North America (Berlant 207).⁵³ An omniscient, third-person narrator presents the stories; the narration transitions almost imperceptibly from the narrator’s free indirect discourse to Grandfather’s direct narration. Grandfather’s stories are occasionally interrupted by quoted interjections and protests from Grandfather and the children which bring the reader back to the non-narrative time and space of antebellum America.

The structure of *The Whole History* locates the creation of this US identity in the childhood home. Every story is told in a parlour that symbolically represents the space of US national dialogue and exchange; the chair, which is mysteriously “connected with the country’s fate” (WH 137), becomes the narrative device through which Grandfather focalizes the history of the New England colonists in North America, from the time of the Puritan settlements until the end of the Revolutionary period. The stability of the chair is an important factor here, because it creates a more tangible sense of home that will later

⁵³ See Berlant 207 for her analysis of the parallels between the scarlet letter and Grandfather’s chair.

resonate against the initial domesticity of the Acadians as well as their eventual exile.⁵⁴

Hawthorne's preface suggests that New England has been rendered unstable in the present age by a lack of knowledge about the US's national origins. Though he complained in a letter to Longfellow of the "drudgery" of writing children's literature (qtd. in Laffrado 2), and even called his product "the dullest of all books" (qtd. in Wineapple 143), Hawthorne saw the project of writing a historical book for children as a way to combat "the tottering infancy of our literature" (qtd. in Brickhouse 182)—to bequeath US children a sense of historical and cultural tradition, and thereby to secure the United States's position as a mature nation-state in the New World. The act of storytelling and the process of listening become equally important in constructing a sense of national belonging amongst the children. In his preface, Hawthorne explains his objective as an attempt "to describe the eminent characters and remarkable events of our annals in such a form as the YOUNG may make acquaintance with them of their own accord" (WH xxv). To date, the preface argues, children have no "distinct and unbroken thread" of national history (WH xxv); this deficit in national feeling can only be addressed by weaving tales about North American history that would stabilize the historical and cultural foundations of the United States and create an imagined community.

Like the scarlet letter, the chair is a found object that connects the political history of the nation-state with the personal history of its national subjects. Situated beside a hearth, which, as Laffrado points out, functions as an indicator of popular U.S. sentiment during the storytelling episodes (29), the chair represents the interdependent relationship between the

⁵⁴ Wineapple argues that Hawthorne got the idea of using a family chair as a plot device from his second cousin, Susanna Ingersoll. Her uncle, John Hathorne, had attempted to seize her house and her grandfather's chair, which had been bequeathed to her after the death of her parents. The chair became a central motif in this trilogy. The story of the uncle who was stealing his niece's house motivated the plot of Hawthorne's later novel *The House of the Seven Gables*. See Wineapple 142.

private sphere of the home and the public sphere of the government.⁵⁵ Its presence gives the nation an aura of domestic stability and teleological development at a time when the transnational relationships and political affiliations in North America were anything but stable. As an eighteenth-century colony of Great Britain, New England was a space crisscrossed by competing international interests and cultural interactions, and the chair's provenance testifies to conflicts that determined the U.S.'s geographical borders (such as invasions, wars, and land claims) or that threatened to erode the stability of New England society, such as religious feuds and class divisions. At times, the chair seems to construct a dynastic order for the US: the chair's original owner (the Earl of Lincoln), and its physical properties (its gilded surface, velvet cushion, coat of arms, and ornate lion's-head carving), recall all the external signs of the legitimacy of the British throne. However, the chair transforms with its New England setting, passing from Cotton Mather to British Loyalists to George Washington; it is damaged by fat British rulers, scoured back to its original oak surface by a Black slave, broken by an angry Revolutionary mob, and repaired by forward-thinking US nation-builders. Its physical transformation represents the transition from decadent monarchy to vitalized democracy. After going through these evolutions as a "chair of state" (WH 25), it then passes into the hands of American citizens, and finally becomes "'a family chair'" (WH 64) in Grandfather's living room. Though the chair's pre-revolutionary owners were not citizens of what we now know as the US, the chair turns them into honorary Americans. Like "Rappaccini's Daughter," then, *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair* effaces "its inherently mixed American origins" (Brickhouse 181) by constructing a national genealogy through a process of inheritance.

⁵⁵ See Gruesz's "Feeling for the Fireside" for a longer discussion of the symbolism of the fireside in antebellum fiction.

The preface's anxiety about finding a stable "place" for the U.S. nation-state in North America, I argue, is related to a desire for a stable imagined community in the Jacksonian period. The stories that Grandfather tells while seated on the chair reflect conflicts in American colonial history that resonated with the conflicts in U.S. politics in the 1840s. "The Lady Arbella," "The Government of New England," and "The Hutchinson Mob," for instance, examine the relationship between the American colonies and Great Britain from the arrival of the Puritans to the American Revolution. "Troublous Times" and "The Quakers and the Indians," which talk about the persecution of Anne Hutchinson and Mary Dyer, discuss freedom of expression in the American colonies. "The Pine-Tree Shillings" and "The Sunken Treasure," both relatively light-hearted stories about gifts and treasure, nonetheless depict a New England society threatened by class divisions. "The Indian Bible," "Thomas Hutchinson," and "A Collection of Portraits" focus self-reflexively on the need for a North American literary canon that would sustain the development of a US national character. The two representatives of upper-class patriarchy in the trilogy, Grandfather and the narrator, praise colonial subjects who devoted themselves to the development of a proto-American (white, anglophone) national culture.

Each vignette features Grandfather's telling of an "American" story and records the interactions between the children as they try to interpret the significance of the history they are learning. Alice, the youngest and most naïve, is curious but the most emotionally affected by the stories, and is liable to burst into sympathetic tears. Clara, who plays house and tends her garden plot in the time between stories, reacts to Grandfather's tales by asking about the fate of women and by commenting on the impact of different events upon the sanctity of the home. Clara and Alice thus model two idealized nineteenth-century feminine responses to

nation-building. Charley is “a bold, brisk, restless little fellow” (*WH* 3), the first to tire of Grandfather’s stories and the first to suggest warfare as a solution to complex problems; he is a representative of aggressive empire-builders, and is constantly shushed by his peers for his brash comments and behaviour. Laurence, the eldest and (as an adolescent white male) implicitly the most eligible candidate for American citizenship, takes the most interest in the political and personal circumstances that frame his Grandfather’s anecdotes, and he expresses a desire for a peaceful resolution to historical conflicts. Grandfather promises that the history of the chair will “teach [Laurence] something about the history and distinguished people of his country which he has never read in any of his schoolbooks” (*WH* 3), and thus prepare him for adulthood.⁵⁶ Each of these characters represents a different national ideology. Their discussions about events reproduce the exchange of heterogeneous ideas in the US public sphere, while their efforts to reach a consensus represent the creation of a shared affective reaction and an ideal national character.

On a first reading, *The Whole History* appears very conservative, staging debates about complex transnational episodes in the history of the Americas which are superficially resolved by Grandfather’s paternalistic commentary: as a narrator, Grandfather tends to conclude stories whenever he sees the children becoming upset or bored, and the episodic structure of his stories often obscures the larger ideologies that have led to different conflicts in the first place. Yet the conclusions reached by Grandfather and the children—many of which condemn the brutality of imperial warfare in the Americas—also frequently raise awkward questions about the ethics of nineteenth-century US expansion and the judgement of government rulers. Despite the fact that Grandfather’s stories focus on the lives of

⁵⁶ For a critical source on the relationship between children’s literature and nation-building in antebellum America, see Lesley Ginsberg.

important political figures in colonial American history, he and the children often oppose the actions of these celebrated figures. In fact, *The Whole History* may be one of Hawthorne's most vocal anti-war, anti-imperial texts, because the children are able to voice different opinions about debates that were raging in the US mid-nineteenth-century public sphere by considering historical situations that seem temporally distant. Within *The Whole History*, discussions of Canada, and of the Acadian deportation in particular, help Hawthorne theorize the relationship between the individual citizen and the nation-state, as well as between the local national community and the imperial centre. While Grandfather expresses nostalgia for the "simplicity of the good old Puritan times" (WH 104), the pastoral perfection of a pre-lapsarian Acadia helps him identify the US as a space that was, and continues to be, threatened by class conflict and imperialist ideology.

In Grandfather's stories of the pre-Revolutionary Americas, French North America becomes an important testing-ground for a US national character in formation. Perhaps the most noteworthy example is the lengthy discussion of the siege of the French fortification of Louisbourg in Nova Scotia in 1744 by colonial American soldiers, during one of the many imperial wars preceding the Seven Years' War. Grandfather describes the colonial regiments' siege of Louisbourg as a military encounter that has the effect of calling an American nation into being. It is on the battleground, poised between the military threat of the French empire and the disdain of the English one, that Americans suddenly become visible:

Tall, lanky, awkward fellows came in squads, and companies, and regiments, swaggering along, dressed in their brown homespun clothes and blue yarn stockings.... They were an army of rough faces and sturdy frames. A trained officer of Europe would have laughed at them till his sides had ached. But there was a spirit

in their bosoms which is more essential to soldiership than to wear red coats and march in stately ranks to the sound of regular music. (WH 112)

Grandfather explains that the siege of Louisbourg became “one of the occasions on which the colonists tested their ability for war, and thus were prepared for the great contest of the Revolution” (WH 115). Thanks to the French Canadian and British “others,” Grandfather and the children begin to recognize the American colonial militia as an emergent North American national group. The siege of Louisbourg, like the American Revolution itself, was an investment into the character of the US nation that had to be paid in advance. Yet after New England successfully captures Louisbourg for the English, the British Empire later returns Louisbourg, “which the New-Englanders had been at so much pains to take” (WH 119), to France. The Louisbourg siege raises the possibility of further friction between the interests of colonial America and those of the larger British empire. It also sets the stage for many subsequent “tests” of American fortitude, including the colonial rebellion against impressment and the rise of George Washington as a revolutionary leader. Such events, Grandfather notes gravely, “might have warned the English not to venture upon any oppressive measures against their colonial brethren” (WH 120).

If Grandfather’s account of the siege of Louisbourg described a scene in which an American militia began to recognize itself as distinct from “foreign” British and French troops, Grandfather’s representation of Acadia helps the children (and, implicitly, the reader) see North America as a space that deserved to be independent from imperial rule. Grandfather chooses to tell the children the story of the *Grand Dérangement* in “the early twilight of Thanksgiving Eve” (WH 118), a setting that is at once geographically specific (as an American holiday) and temporally ambiguous. Much like the upper floor of *The Scarlet*

Letter's Custom House, the holiday fireside encourages the imagination of “[v]anished scenes... in the air” (*WH* 118), the intermingling of past and present, and the self-conscious examination of the national subject. The narration also emphasizes the deliberate construction of the home: the yellow cat, whose purring recalls the comfortably feminine sounds of “the singing of a tea-kettle or the hum of a spinning-wheel” (*WH* 119), joins the children in their semi-circle around the fireside chair.

As Grandfather begins his story about the Acadians, then, the narration carefully situates the reader and the children literally and metaphorically within the American home. This domestic position contrasts with the setting of Grandfather’s story of eighteenth-century America, in which he describes a very different kind of landscape. Grandfather introduces eighteenth-century America as a natural environment which has been dramatically altered by forms of imperial warfare and military architecture. As Grandfather surveys the mid-eighteenth-century French forts built in the Ohio Valley, for example, he portrays them as foreign intrusions on a pristine American landscape:

It was strange to behold these warlike castles on the banks of solitary lakes and far in the midst of woods. The Indian, paddling his birch canoe on Lake Champlain, looked up at the high ramparts of Ticonderoga, stone piled on stone, bristling with cannon, and the white flag of France floating above.... And all around these forts and castles lay the eternal forest, and the roll of the drum died away in those deep solitudes. (*WH* 120)

Fort Ticonderoga—a setting which becomes an important site of memory for the narrator of “The Custom-House”—is described as an imperial site that seems out of place in an otherwise borderless, peaceful North American forest. In fact, the forest, which naturally smothers the sound of imperial warfare, threatens to overwhelm this built environment. While the house and the forest are both described in the text as “natural” locations within the

continent, the presence of the French and British forts begins to defamiliarize and deconstruct the empires that built them. Moreover, the ephemeral nature of these forts calls the security of the political systems they represent into question.

This sense of anxiety about imperial intrusion only grows as Grandfather introduces the history of conflict between the Acadian people and their imperial rulers. Grandfather represents Acadia not as a colony established by the French empire, but as a utopian space, an Arcadia-like “ancient province” (WH 121) that predates the French and English governments that lay claims to it. The Acadians are thus conceptualized not as immigrants, but as indigenous North Americans under foreign rule. Grandfather’s unqualified praise for the Acadian settlement could well describe Hawthorne’s idea of a perfect American community. The Acadians are a “peaceful race” (WH 121), uninterested in warfare and innocent of the forms of imperial conflict taking place around them. The seeming permanence of this autonomous Acadian culture in North America contrasts with the frequent and unpredictable changes in the imperial rulers of the region; Acadia is suddenly “infested with iron-hearted soldiers, both French and English, who fought one another for the privilege of ill-treating these poor, harmless Acadians” (WH 121). In fact, while the religious, cultural, and linguistic differences of other minorities (like the French characters in Hawthorne’s other writings)⁵⁷ are often seen as liabilities, the Acadians’ differences from the

⁵⁷ Brickhouse argues that Hawthorne uses francophone characters to recall concerns about the history of racial mixing in the French Caribbean. She argues that Hawthorne based some of his French characters (notably the Schaeffers in *The Marble Faun* and M. de l’Aubépine in “Rappaccini’s Daughter”) on Franco-Americans he met in Maine. Hawthorne used Aubépine as a self-referential pseudonym in his early writings as well. While Brickhouse’s reading of the synecdochal link between Hawthorne’s French characters and anxieties raised by the image of the French Caribbean in Jacksonian America is compelling, I would suggest that the Franco-Americans Hawthorne met in Maine could also have been New Brunswick Acadians (i.e. part of the Acadian population that had *not* been deported during the *Grand Dérangement* and that had migrated to New England in search of work). New England became a destination for French Canadians (both Acadian and Québécois) in the

mainstream Anglo-American culture make them *more* legitimate North American settlers in Hawthorne's eyes, for they establish the Acadians' cultural and historical discontinuity from Europe.

By portraying the Acadians as a nationally homogenous, autonomous group, Hawthorne can invoke the concept of the social contract to position the Acadians alongside colonial Americans as the rightful owners of their North American settlements. Earlier in the trilogy, Hawthorne represents the New England colonies in similar terms. Overlooking the significant religious, ideological, and economic differences between the thirteen American colonies, Hawthorne imaginatively joins them in a proto-national project. The thirteen American colonies, like Acadia, were ““almost independent of the mother country”” (*WH* 27); moreover, Grandfather states, ““at so vast a distance from their native home, the inhabitants must all have felt like brethren. They were fitted to become one united people at a future period”” (*WH* 22). Hawthorne's geography of North America thus concentrates on the fate of two groups, the French Catholic Acadians and the Protestant Anglo-Americans of the thirteen colonies, who both bear legitimate claims of ownership over the space of North America. Moreover, they are both threatened by a British government more interested in fostering its own financial gain than in protecting its subjects. The presence and destruction of Acadia thus paradoxically reinforces the idea of American exceptionalism by establishing the possibility of *two* potentially successful, anti-imperial, national groups (Acadia and the American colonies) that co-existed in North America—but only one of which survived. In this sense, Hawthorne's retelling of the *Grand Dérangement* validates the necessity of the

1830s. By 1840 the French Canadian population in New England and Maine had grown to 8,200 (Barkan 391); the population peaked in the 1850s as land shortages in Quebec grew worse. For more information, see Rodrigue & Louder xxii, Richard 11-13, and Barkan 388-392.

American Revolutionary War and solidifies a sense of America's exceptional status within the Americas.

Yet even as the description of the destruction of Acadia seemingly upholds the idea of national autonomy, Hawthorne's description of the *Grand Dérangement* raises questions about the stability of citizenship in North America and the potentially terrifying effects of the denial of national citizenship. Hawthorne initially uses the image of the Acadians living in their isolated community in Nova Scotia to develop the idea of a natural right to citizenship based on historical inheritance and forms of familial and cultural belonging. The image of Acadians torn violently from their land and forcibly sent to the American colonies shows how easily individuals could become summarily cast out of the political community entirely. For Hawthorne, the plight of the Acadians reveals all the ways in which the idea of national citizenship was contingent and even arbitrary—as easily lost as it is gained. However, Hawthorne concentrates more carefully, throughout the rest of “The Acadian Exiles,” not on the scene of expulsion in Acadia, but rather on the arrival of the Acadians in Boston, and the effect that the Acadians have on Bostonian society and the initial refusal of Bostonians to interact with these French Catholic “others.” “The Acadian Exiles” becomes a point of reference for the children as they listen to the remaining stories in *The Whole History* precisely because of the questions it raises about the relationship between the federal government and its citizens.

Hawthorne's description of the spectacle of the Acadians arriving on Boston's Long Wharf defines the role of the government by examining its failure. The narrator concentrates on different images of dispossession and forced movement: he pictures the Acadians moving

“at the point of the bayonet” (WH 122) to transport ships, witnessing the destruction of their homes and the separation of their families, and “tossing upon the ocean in the crowded transport vessels” (WH 122-23). Finally, they arrive on Boston’s Long Wharf—a place where typically cargo is offloaded, inspected, and sold—and they are “left to themselves on a foreign strand” (WH 124). All of the architectural, military, domestic, and familial structures—boats, weapons, houses, and “bonds of affection” (WH 124)—that would normally contain or protect the Acadians have now been lost or destroyed. Furthermore, once landed on the shore, the Acadians are characterized by subject-positions that are missing their implied counterpart or political representatives: wives call out for missing husbands, widows search for lost sons, betrothed youth search for their lovers, and lost girls cry for their mothers. The survivors of the deportation are rhetorically feminized and geographically rearranged in ways that denote their complete political disenfranchisement.

In and of itself, the excessive mobility of the Acadians is not the problem, in Hawthorne’s eyes; other minority populations in *The Whole History* are moved and exchanged in similar ways. In an earlier episode, for example, Grandfather reassures Alice that at the time, “[n]othing was more common than to see a lot of likely Irish girls advertised for sale in the newspapers. As for the little negro babies, they were offered to be given away like young kittens” (WH 105). Yet Grandfather presents indentured servants and slaves as wards or goods of the (imagined) state that fall within the protection of the US domestic space. By contrast, the Acadians’ unregulated movement, and their position in Boston’s public space (radically *outside* the home), signify two larger breakdowns: first, a radical shift from the British government’s expected protection of colonial populations to their coercive and violent treatment of those populations; and second, a potential failure in the structure of

Boston's social community, should the New England communities overlook the bonds they share with others who make North America their home and refuse to welcome them. All of the images of homelessness and abandonment mobilized by Hawthorne in this passage stand in for larger forms of exclusion from the American political process. The Acadians' position on the literal and metaphorical borders of the US thus helps Hawthorne to begin a critical inquiry about the responsibilities of government and the process by which the US national subject is constructed.

In the same way, Hawthorne's sympathetic lamentations about the Acadians' position within-yet-outside the US provide a negative definition of national identity. Grandfather's *ubi sunt* statement about the Acadians characterizes their forced exile as a fate worse than death:

“Oh, how many broken bonds of affection were here! Country lost!—friends lost!—their rural wealth of cottage, field and herds, all lost together! Every tie between these poor exiles and the world seemed to be cut off at once. They must have regretted that they had not died before their exile; for even the English would not have been so pitiless as to deny them graves in their native soil. The dead were happy; for they were not exiles!” (WH 126)

The passage names and immediately revokes what Hawthorne sees as the constitutive elements of citizenship: national identity is produced through a series of interconnected relationships and experiences between homeland, friends, family, possessions, culture, and language. However, in Berlant's words, the “forced, involuntary expatriation violates the citizen through a virtually ontological torture” (13). The Acadians who are separated from this web of relationships are plunged into existential crisis: there is no larger *telos* to define their identity. Furthermore, Grandfather's desire for some form of geographical containment for the Acadians wandering the streets signals the absence of a larger structure of knowledge

that would give their lives meaning. For the Acadians in *The Whole History*, as for the Puritans in *The Scarlet Letter*, the nation's construction depends upon the prison-house and the graveyard—two symbols of involuntary disconnection from the nation that nonetheless function as the unacknowledged structure of a society. In this way, the Acadians become symbols of a broken contract between the North American colonies and the imperial forces that governed them.

Hawthorne contrasts this negative definition of citizenship with a series of representative tableaux that describe the reactions of the eighteenth-century Bostonians—as well as the nineteenth-century children who hear the story—to this image of forced denationalization. The tragedy of the *Grand Dérangement*, for Hawthorne, happens at the moment of the Acadians' arrival, when the Acadians realize the effects of their own forced denationalization.⁵⁸ Grandfather's reconstruction of the *Grand Dérangement* expresses concern that American society is being destroyed by the same conflicts that led the English to expel the Acadians. Hawthorne's narrative approach in this section is to create clusters of stock "Americans" who are visually and behaviourally defined as members of different gender, age, and class identities. The Bostonians are initially divided by these differences, but eventually they align sympathetically with the displaced Acadians in what David Marshall calls a "correspondence of feelings" (3) that defines the existence of a US national

⁵⁸ Contemporary newspaper accounts of the arrival of Acadian deportees show that Anglo-American colonists were not nearly as welcoming as Hawthorne suggests. A report published in the October 11, 1756 edition of the *Boston Evening Post* suggests that the arrival of the Acadians on American shores turned into a public spectacle rather than an impromptu demonstration of Anglo-American hospitality:

Bristol, June 26. On Saturday arriv'd here from Virginia, the Virginia Packet with three hundred French Neutrals, a great Part of whom were Women and Children. They lay at our Kay waiting for Orders from Above, for the Disposal of them, vast Numbers of the Citizens flocking daily to see them, and Thursday were removed to Guinea-[unreadable], and are allow'd Six-pence per Head per Day without any Deduction, which will afford them a comfortable Support in their present deplorable Circumstances.—Several hundred more are shortly expected. ("Bristol" 3)

community. “Prying busybodies” (*WH* 125) leave their houses to listen to “the outlandish sound of the French tongue” (*WH* 125). New England women emerge from “their warm, safe homes, where everything was regular and comfortable, and where their husbands and children would be with them at nightfall” (*WH* 125), to sympathize with the Acadians wandering in the streets. Boston school-boys who begin by ridiculing “this crowd of oddly dressed foreigners” (*WH* 125) soon “[melt] into tearful sympathy” (*WH* 125) at the sight of the Acadians’ despair. At every point, the narrator worries whether the outward signs of the Acadians’ difference—their “outlandish, unintelligible words” (*WH* 126), their odd dress, their poverty, and their Catholic “sign[s] of the cross which the Acadians continually [make] upon their breasts” (*WH* 125)—will pre-empt the formation of any sympathetic bonds between the Acadians and the New England colonists. The narrator’s voiced desire to see a resolution between all of these groups expresses a larger anxiety about a failure of sentiment among Americans: he hopes, for example, that the “wealthy and pompous merchants” whose “feelings [are] seldom moved” (*WH* 125) will nonetheless “distribut[e] some of their superfluous coin among these hapless exiles” (*WH* 126).

The kinds of social conflicts that Grandfather projects onto his reconstructed eighteenth-century history reflect larger concerns about the production (and erosion) of a shared national bond between Americans in the nineteenth century. His description of the New Englanders meeting the Acadians on Boston’s shores reveals a pre-Revolutionary society that is initially intolerant of difference, divided by class, and increasingly invested in “a pompous and artificial mode of life” (*WH* 104). His editorializing comments perform a didactic, socializing function: though he acknowledges the language, class, and cultural differences that could interrupt the production of sympathy, Grandfather’s comments imply

that such differences should be overcome. Hawthorne creates a fantasy of national belonging: as the Acadians “begin to stray into the town” (WH 126), they are gradually invited into the “stately mansions” (WH 126) and “humble wooden tenements” (WH 126) alike. The New England that was divided by class is now united in its willingness to take in these dramatically foreign Others; the Americans become a recognizable people because of the way they can recognize the cruelty of the invasion and destruction of Acadia and accept the Acadians into their homes. Meanwhile, the Acadians are equally willing (at least in Hawthorne’s account) to be welcomed into the American national fold. Even though they could have remained a radically heterogeneous immigrant population within the revolutionary US (and were, in reality, frequently ostracized by American colonists precisely because of that possibility), the Acadians in *The Whole History* conveniently vanish into the American landscape, “forgett[ing] the language of their ancestors” (WH 126) and speechlessly integrating into American culture. As Mark Simpson explains, “vanishing” characters (like Hawthorne’s Acadians) frequently serve to obscure the power structures at work in nineteenth-century American culture: “[i]deologically, vanishing expresses in terms of spatio-temporal inevitability the historically contingent violence of territorial invasion, ingress, displacement” (xiv). Hawthorne’s portrayal of vanishing Acadians thus replaces the violence of Anglo-American troops with a form of discursive violence that elides the history of the Acadians’ rejection in the Anglo-American colonies, and gives the Acadians access to a privileged category of US citizenship only under the condition of assimilation. The anonymous Acadians voluntarily assimilate into the American population and make the cultural sacrifices deemed necessary for US citizenship. His image of the *Grand Dérangement* thus presents the possibility of a homogenous American culture by dispelling

anxieties about past and present immigration. Paradoxically, then, Hawthorne creates an imagined US community, in both the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, that rejects aggressive geographical expansion but also tacitly encourages the cultural dominance of the US's white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant values and its political hegemony within North America.

Yet while a fantasy of a unified, homogenous US society emerges in relation to the dispossessed Acadians, "The Acadian Exiles" finishes by raising questions about the degree to which the US government represents that character. After wandering the streets of Boston, the Acadians finally penetrate into the political heart of Boston to face their aggressor, "Governor Shirley, meditating upon matters of war and state, in Grandfather's chair!" (*WH* 127). The *Grand Dérangement* was part of Shirley's larger "Great Plan," proposed in 1754, to secure anglophone control over Nova Scotia by moving 6,000 Anglo-American settlers from the overpopulated New England area to Nova Scotia by 1759. He also suggested creating English Protestant schools in Nova Scotia to erode the cultural authority of the Catholic Church and to destroy the French Acadian culture. *The Whole History* imagines the Acadians confronting Shirley with the human results of his policies:

If such an incident did happen, Shirley, reflecting what a ruin of peaceful and humble hopes had been wrought by the cold policy of the statesman and the iron hand of the warrior, might have drawn a deep moral from it. It should have taught him that the poor man's hearth is sacred, and that armies and nations have no right to violate it. It should have made him feel that England's triumph and increased dominion could not compensate to mankind nor atone to Heaven for the ashes of a single Acadian cottage. But it is not thus that statesmen and warriors moralize. (*WH* 127)

Hawthorne's representation of Shirley minimizes the degree to which the *Grand Dérangement* was sanctioned and carried out by New England colonists.⁵⁹ Instead, Hawthorne reconfigures the *Grand Dérangement* as a problem caused by an individual's failure of feeling: Governor Shirley neglected to sympathize with the needs and interests of simple settlers, and instead privileged the expansive needs of faraway governments over the sanctity of the home. Each of the children reacts by ventriloquizing different arguments that privilege the rights of 'native' North American settler communities against the ambitions of interventionist state governments: Laurence laments the cruelty of "'iron-hearted War'" (WH 127), and Alice and Clara burst into tears at the tale of "'a whole people homeless in the world!'" (WH 128). Charley proposes that the Acadians should have defended their farms, even if it meant certain death. While the anti-expansionist moral of the Acadians' experience is lost on Shirley, Grandfather's portrayal of the *Grand Dérangement* forcefully prepares the children for a more sanguine understanding of national citizenship not only by inculcating a respect for US history and its federal institutions, but also by raising the possibility that the interests of governments and the interests of citizens may diverge. The episode's emphasis on the primacy of the home and of the illegitimacy of imperial governments creates an interpretative pattern that buttresses what Murphy calls "imagined traditions of national isolation and anticolonialism" (14). While previous episodes criticized the history of warfare in North America, "The Acadian Exiles" forcefully proposes that the US's future citizens must adopt the important "customs" of distrusting the government and criticizing US expansionist projects.

⁵⁹ Kozuskanich suggests that economic rivalry between Acadia and New England, along with a culture of rampant francophobia, led many New Englanders to support the *Grand Dérangement*.

The notions of place and displacement constructed by Grandfather's tale of the Acadian exiles continue to shape the children's responses in the final book of the trilogy, *Liberty Tree*. The exile of the Acadians foreshadows that of two British Loyalists "blasted out of their world and time" (Laffrado 24), Thomas Hutchinson and Peter Oliver, who become central figures in *Liberty Tree*. Hutchinson, the British royal governor of Massachusetts from 1771 to 1774, upheld and enforced the controversial Stamp Tax, and was driven out of New England as a result. Oliver, only slightly more sympathetic in Grandfather's eyes, represented British interests as the Chief Justice, but was forced to leave Boston during the British retreat. The rhetoric of national belonging and homelessness that Grandfather constructed through his example of the *Grand Dérangement* now comes to shape Hawthorne's representation of political exile. In different imaginative encounters, Hutchinson and Oliver are both confronted by angry New Englanders in scenes that recall the encounter between Shirley and the Acadians. Hutchinson, like Shirley, is confronted in his "large brick house, decorated with Ionic pilasters" (WH 160), by a revolutionary mob that overturns Grandfather's chair and sets the house on fire. Hutchinson is forced out of New England by the revolutionary Americans. Later, in the tumultuous days after the defeat of the British army in Boston, Oliver finds himself (like the Acadians) on the sidewalk in front of the Province House, where he is both snubbed by "haughty Britons" (WH 205) and ridiculed by derisive Bostonians. In strange ways, then, these Loyalists are presented as victims and villains at the same time. As he tells their stories, Grandfather encourages the children to try to "imagine the feelings of those who were quitting [Boston] forever" (WH 201); the story of Hutchinson's family made "homeless in the street" (WH 165) by an unruly mob brings Alice to tears once again.

Yet the children are comforted by the idea that the suffering of these British figures was caused by a critical failure of character. Both characters are described by Grandfather as New Englanders who failed to defend “the rights of [their] country” (WH 158) (i.e. America) against the British “rod of oppression” (WH 208). They also neglected to learn from the history of imperial warfare that was taking place in North America—the same history, in fact, that the children are learning. As a result, Hutchinson and Oliver are doomed to experience the same kind of national and domestic destruction that had been visited upon the Acadians. In Laurence’s words, “[t]he misfortunes of those exiled tories... must have made them think of the poor exiles of Acadia” (WH 207). The rapid transformations of Oliver and Hutchinson from imperial aggressors to victims further invites the children to imagine the position of different kinds of people who have been excluded from the US national project. Sympathetic comparisons between the British Loyalists and the Acadians thus reify the sanctity of the North American household. However, Grandfather also insists that the children must learn to adopt a healthy critical attitude toward their government, and must be willing to guard North America from different forms of tyranny. Through Grandfather’s narration, Hawthorne argues that the British Loyalists brought their own exile upon themselves, because they failed to act as informed citizens—that is, to reject a government that was overstepping its bounds.

Throughout the final chapters of *Liberty Tree*, comparisons between these British figures and the Acadians help Hawthorne construct a larger interpretive pattern that supports a radical restriction of the US’s sphere of influence. As time progresses there is more and more evidence (and criticism) of expansionist pressures at work in the US. Grandfather’s first stories about the chair construct the fantasy of an exceptional US national community

rapidly distancing itself from its colonial history. However, the later stories raise questions about the direction of the newly-created US nation. As the British forces vacate the government buildings of New England, the US government takes their place, a shift that suggests a degree of interchangeability between the two regimes and which raises questions about the goals of the post-Revolutionary US government. Similarly, Grandfather's chair is used as a replacement throne for colonial rulers and is housed in British sites such as the Province House and the Coffee House during the Revolutionary period. However, after falling into the possession of George Washington during the Revolutionary War, this national touchstone gets lost, sold to the highest bidder, and housed in commercial spaces that draw uncomfortable parallels between the old British empire and the new American government. Grandfather's chair finds a place in a barber-shop, surrounded by other material evidence of the US's geographical expansion in the post-Revolutionary period, including "a stuffed alligator, a rattlesnake's skin, a bundle of Indian arrows, an old-fashioned matchlock gun, a walking-stick of Governor Winthrop's, a wig of old Cotton Mather's, and a colored print of the Boston massacre" (WH 209). As evidence of the US's expansion accumulates in the narrative environment of Grandfather's stories, the children's world changes as well: Charley abandons his first toys of choice (a wheelbarrow and a stick) and begins to prefer vehicles like trains and sleds—more complex forms of technology that enable the movement of goods and people over longer distances. These developments indicate a heightened anxiety about US expansion that Hawthorne attempts to control: Charley is verbally reined in by Grandfather's commands, and Hawthorne literally brings the chair home, fixing it within the American domestic space. Its final resting place in Grandfather's parlour implicitly

resists the idea of US expansion and instead promotes a vision of the home as the eternal, and rightful, centre of the US nation.

Murphy argues that in *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne “envisions a compromise between reform and stasis firmly grounded in the domestic.... Hawthorne’s vision of compromise reaffirmed American exceptionalism and stasis in North America, updating American ideals of virtuous domestic isolation to contend with expansive and troubling fantasies” (29). The same could be said of *The Whole History*. Throughout the trilogy, references to the *Grand Dérangement* help to produce this notion of virtuous domestic isolation, by portraying the interests of the New England settlers and the Acadians as contiguous and by symbolically remapping the geography of colonial America as an independent territory that deserved to be free of European influence. The forced denationalization of the Acadians helps Grandfather identify a perceived gap between the actions of governments and the interests of individuals. The anxious questions raised at the book’s conclusion about the implications of the US’s revolutionary position and the American government’s failure to reach its stated ideals make the children and the reader the possessors of the knowledge that Grandfather’s history has taught. In the final pages, Grandfather has a dream in which the carved lion’s head on the chair begins to speak, offering advice intended to “teach a private person how to lead a good and happy life, or a statesman how to make his country prosperous” (WH 216). Grandfather listens as the chair states, “As long as I have stood in the midst of human affairs,... I have constantly observed that JUSTICE, TRUTH, and LOVE are the chief ingredients of every happy life” (WH 221). However, the chair also observes ruefully that this advice has been lost on most people: “From what I have observed of the dealings of man with man, and nation with nation, I

never should have suspected that they knew this all-important secret''' (*WH* 222). It is unclear how the grandchildren will come to learn this advice; only Grandfather and the reader are the witnesses to the chair's secret.

At the conclusion of the novel, therefore, the security of the future of the American nation remains somewhat uncertain. While the children have learned, through the chair's history, about the dangers of imperialism and the potential divergence between the interests of American citizens and the interests of the American government, the conclusion of the book challenges the idea that this lesson has been (or even can be) learned. It is this "failure of the federal system to secure the complex emancipatory image America has claimed as its birthright, its natural law" (Berlant 8) that leads Grandfather to begin his didactic historical narratives. Berlant argues that Hawthorne puts his faith in everyday life, local institutions, personal identities, and strong sympathetic bonds between people as the mechanisms that will eventually combat this institutional failure and revitalize the state. In the meantime, though, Grandfather's story of the Acadian exiles encourages the children to engage in a radical re-reading of America. The Acadians become the example through which Hawthorne can divide a politically, economically, and linguistically heterogeneous colonial population into two groups: proto-Americans who commit themselves to life in North America and defend the values of the Revolution, and failed Americans like William Shirley, Thomas Hutchinson, and Peter Oliver, who have either neglected these values or have betrayed them outright. The Acadians who vanish into Hawthorne's imagined America enable him to overlook the social inequities between classes of American society and assert a fiction of national genealogy. The children who inherit the knowledge of the chair are introduced as future guardians of the national character that they are learning at Grandfather's knee. They

are forced to consider how, and when, they may come to dispute the direction of their imagined nation and how they may be called upon to become “citizen[s] of somewhere else” (SL 113), just like the narrator of *The Scarlet Letter*: political exiles who choose to deliberately exclude themselves from a national system in decay, in favor of another, new imagined community whose outlines have yet to be sketched out.

1.4 The politics of displacement in Longfellow’s *Evangeline*

Hawthorne’s account of the *Grand Dérangement* concentrates almost exclusively on the moment at which the Acadians arrived in Boston. By avoiding an extensive discussion of the lives of Acadians before their expulsion or after their arrival in the thirteen colonies, Hawthorne’s account evaluates the significance of the event largely in terms of its effect on Americans past and present. Similarly, while Hawthorne certainly criticizes the expulsion, the “vanishing” of Acadia allows him to reinforce US exceptionalism by positioning the US as an emergent nation-state that survived the violence of eighteenth-century British imperialism. At the same time, though, the apparent convergence between the aggression of the British empire and the expansionist efforts of the US in the nineteenth century makes him worry that the US has lost sight of its first principles.

Longfellow’s long narrative poem *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie* explores many of the same anxieties as Hawthorne’s text. It, too, is worried about the process of US expansion. However, while *The Whole History* evaluates the effects of imperialism based on its effects on an imagined white, Anglo-Saxon American community, *Evangeline* condemns

imperialism for its punitive effects on different racial minorities in the mid-nineteenth-century US. Published in 1847, *Evangeline* focusses on the story of betrothed Acadian lovers tragically separated during the *Grand Dérangement* and deported to the US by the British. The poem describes Evangeline's pastoral life in Acadia, portrays the violent expulsion of the Acadians, and follows Evangeline's movements across America as she dedicates the rest of her life to an epic, cross-continental search for her lost fiancé Gabriel. Longfellow spends much more time representing Acadian culture before the *Grand Dérangement* and offers a much more sympathetic understanding of the problems facing the expelled Acadians after they arrive in the American colonies. Like Hawthorne, Longfellow uses the British violence against the Acadians to raise the spectre of imperial tyranny and to justify the American Revolution.

Throughout this chapter I argue that the antebellum interest in the *Grand Dérangement* was motivated by contemporary discussions about US power in the mid-nineteenth century. Drawing from Longfellow's abolitionist poetry and his private papers, I consider *Evangeline* as a veiled critique of the expansionist, pro-slavery ideology of Jacksonian America in the 1840s. Longfellow's sympathetic description of the fate of the dispossessed, denationalized Acadians forced to wander endlessly across the US in search of their lost community puts a (white) face on images of dispossession and forced movement in the 1840s that were typically racialized as non-white. In particular, his main character, Evangeline, follows symbolically in the paths of US slaves, Native Americans, and Mexicans passages across the continent. As I will show, in *Evangeline*, Longfellow uses intertextual references from his previously-published anti-slavery poetry to express some of his abolitionist sentiments after his abolitionist poetry came under censure. *Evangeline*, I argue,

is a poem about not only the forced movement of Acadians but also the forced movement of slaves and Native Americans across the US South and West.

Scholars have recently begun to consider the relationship between Longfellow's political views and his sentimental poetry.⁶⁰ Longfellow wrote *Evangeline* in a mid-1840s environment that was profoundly fractured over ideas about forced exile, imperial conflict, and racial difference. Kirsten Silva Gruesz, for example, reads *Evangeline* as a critique of the development of the Mexican War, arguing that *Evangeline* "reflects the ethical questions surrounding invasion, territorial colonization, and displaced populations that confronted every newspaper reader in the country during the year in which it was composed" (*Ambassadors* 90). Similarly, John Seelye argues that *Evangeline* reflects US political tensions about slavery and the Mexican War in the mid-1840s. Noticing parallels between *Evangeline* and some of Longfellow's abolitionist poetry, Seelye interprets the Acadians as proxy figures designed to create sympathy for enslaved Blacks: "Evangeline, whitely and quietly, serves as a vicarious vehicle for emotions aroused by the plight of enslaved black people, involving the breakup of families and homeless wandering as perpetual aliens" (43). However, Seelye backs away from the suggestion that *Evangeline* is a poem about Longfellow's political beliefs, concluding (inscrutably) that "*Evangeline* is not *about* slavery in America, but it is *of* that peculiar institution" (43) and insisting that Longfellow prized his "personal detachment" (43) above his goals of political self-expression.

⁶⁰ For a postcolonial reading of *Evangeline* that compares Longfellow's representation of Jews, Acadians, and Native Americans in his poetry, see Eigenbrod. See also Irmscher's reading of *The Song of Hiawatha*: he sees *Hiawatha* as a "a native messianic hero" who is both a pacifist and a "cultural ambassador" (*Public* 124). Irmscher reads Hiawatha as a role model for white Americans who were so deeply divided over slavery that they were threatening to abandon any attempt at national reconciliation.

I am indebted to these arguments even as I feel they need to be extended further and situated within Longfellow's print-cultural context. I argue that the poetic narrative about displaced Acadians, who are loaded onto boats and sent to foreign shores, invokes the problem of American slavery by constructing an imagined community that rejects practices of racial exclusion and violent forms of expansion. *Evangeline* thus creates an alternative vision of American nationalism, one which depends on cultural exchange and shared sentiment rather than conflict and exclusion. In the next pages, I will show how Longfellow's particular position as a national poet, his choice of the sentimental mode, and his interest in abolitionism came into conflict in the mid-1840s. I argue that *Evangeline* purposefully revisits many of the themes of nautical travel, confinement, and death that he introduced in his earlier volume of abolitionist poetry entitled *Poems on Slavery*. As I will show, in his early career, Longfellow was interested in supporting the abolitionist cause, but because of his early fame and his status as a "national" poet, his attempts at political expression drew a great deal of criticism. *Evangeline* is an attempt to represent his anti-slavery views in a more coded way. Just as Hawthorne used his discussion of a small French Canadian settlement in the 1750s to reflect on the condition of New England in the 1840s, Longfellow employs the Acadians to represent the trauma of American slavery to his 1840s white American readership.

Longfellow's racial politics

At the moment of *Evangeline*'s composition in the mid-1840s, Longfellow was already an established poet, famous for calling the notion of "America" into being. As a

professor of modern languages at Bowdoin College (1829-1835) and Harvard (1836-1854), he launched the discipline of comparative literature and encouraged the study of European cultures and languages in the US. His first major literary works were a series of travelogues, novels, and plays based on his European travels (*Outre-Mer, A Pilgrimage Beyond the Sea* in 1833, *Hyperion* in 1839, and *The Spanish Student* in 1843). Through these works, as well as his major translation of European poetry, *The Poets and Poetry of Europe* (1845), Longfellow introduced his American readers to different European languages and cultures. However, it was his first collections of sentimental poetry—*Voices of the Night* (1839), *Poems on Slavery* (1842), and *Ballads and Other Poems* (1842)—that “persuaded much of the literary establishment that the country had finally produced a major poet” (Calhoun 138). By his middle period of 1844 to 1865, during which he published *The Belfry of Bruges and Other Poems* (1845), as well as epics such as *Evangeline* (1847) and *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855), “Longfellow became known both at home and abroad as the poet laureate of America” (Hilen 3:1).

Longfellow became celebrated domestically and internationally as a quintessentially “American” poet for a few reasons. Most simply, as a poet from the United States, he was seen to represent a new, successful American literary establishment in a synecdochal way. Later, with the publication of epic poems set in the US, such as *Evangeline* (1847) and *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855), he actively fostered this reputation as a national poet by creating, disseminating, and commemorating different mythological histories of North American cultures. Poems such as “The Building of the Ship” (1849) and “Paul Revere’s Ride” (1860) celebrated the creation of the US and solidified a sense of a shared US history.

Perhaps most importantly, Longfellow's choice of genre, sentimental poetry, also associated him with the formation of American identity, even when his poetry didn't explicitly invoke the idea of nationalism. Literary scholar Mary Louise Kete argues that in the period between the War of 1812 and the Civil War, "the events and actions shaping what it meant to be an American were being sung in a key set by the poetics of sentimentality" (2). Kete characterizes the antebellum period as a time of great anxiety about the definition of the US nation. The political leaders during the Revolutionary period had conceptualized the idea of the United States in a theoretical way, but unifying such a diverse nation (on grounds other than its rejection of British imperial power) was proving difficult in practice. Debates about immigration, women's rights, slavery, and US expansion threatened to throw the United States, as a political entity and an imagined community, into disunion. Longfellow's rhetorical mode of choice—sentimental poetry—addressed this antebellum cultural anxiety by creating a structure of national belonging based on the sharing of sentiment. As Kete explains,

Those who, like Sigourney and Longfellow, were inventing what it would mean to be an American turned to sentiment, which enabled them to structure a project of imagining their country which would be ongoing, sustainable, and broad based because it depended on collaboration. And this collaboration begins to close down the proliferation of possible Americans by binding it, America, to a concept of identity dependent on voluntary relationships and demonstrated by shared, mutually felt emotional truths. (8)

Kete argues that sentimental poetry's implicit invitation to participate in the sharing of emotions helped to create an imagined community for the antebellum US. The language of sentimentality was a construct through which nineteenth-century Americans imagined their position in the world. Poets like Longfellow used "the culture-building power of sentimental discourse" (Kete 3) to solidify a sense of a shared national history, a shared national

subjectivity, and a shared national future. In turn, American readers looked to sentimental poetry to see themselves represented as part of a stable, idealized US national project. Of course, fiction writers like Hawthorne were also interested in this project of national consolidation; but Longfellow's association with sentimental poetry and his early fame made him a figurehead for middle-class America in the mid-1840s.

As much as Longfellow benefited by this unofficial designation as America's poet laureate, the role also came with its own particular set of challenges. The first was that his status as a poet who spoke for an emergent American nation made it difficult for him to criticize the US's actions in the 1840s. While Longfellow became famous for writing epic descriptions of US landscapes—often constructing a sense of US national identity and fostering a sense of US exceptionalism in so doing—he also worried about the effects that an aggressive and militant form of American nationalism could bring upon the world. In an anonymous essay published in the *North American Review* in 1832, for example, Longfellow outlines his beliefs in the importance of national literature.⁶¹ Yet even as he provides a panoramic vision of the potential sources of American national pride that American poets could describe and strengthen further, he feels compelled to redirect that pride away from projects that would lead to the further geographical expansion of the US:

We glory in the extent of our territory, in our rapidly increasing population, in our agricultural privileges, and our commercial advantages. We boast of the magnificence and beauty of our natural scenery.... We boast of the increase and extent of our physical strength, the sound of populous cities, breaking the silence and solitude of our Western territories,—plantations conquered from the forest, and gardens springing up in the wilderness. Yet the true glory of a nation consists not in the extent of its territory, the pomp of its forests, the majesty of its rivers, the height of its mountains, and the beauty of its sky; but in the extent of its mental power,—the majesty of its intellect,—the height and depth and purity of its moral nature.... True

⁶¹ This article reviewed Sidney's *Defense of Poesy*. Calhoun attributes it to Longfellow. See Calhoun 81-83.

greatness is the greatness of the mind;—the true glory of a nation is moral and intellectual preeminence. (“Review” 59)

Longfellow’s career had only just begun as he wrote this essay, but even at this early time, he was aware of a contradiction between his own views of the US’s future and those being promoted by the government during the Jacksonian period (as well as by many of Longfellow’s fellow contributors to the *North American Review* in the mid-1830s). In this essay and others like it, Longfellow shies away from definitions of US “greatness” that could potentially reinforce the political and military hegemony of the US and tries to redefine this greatness as a form of intellectual transcendence—the expansion of the “moral and intellectual preeminence” of the American mind, rather than the expansion of American borders.

Longfellow also attempted to contest “what he perceived as an American tendency toward provincialism” (Gruesz, *Ambassadors* 83) by redefining the ideal American subject and the ideal American poet as part of a world community. Scholars have begun to study Longfellow as an intellectual who was professionally and personally committed to exploring the relationship between the “domestic” cultures of the US and those of other “foreign” cultures across the world, in an era when the importance of such transnational connections was often dismissed. His travel experience, his varied interests in multicultural literary traditions, his openness to cultural diversity, and his fluency in many languages gave him a unique perspective on the ways that literature could produce and support a sense of national identity. Critics such as Christoph Irmscher and Mary Louise Kete have explored how Longfellow’s sentimental calls for unity in his poetry and translations ask his primarily white, middle-class readers to put themselves in the position of literary characters from

different national, class, gender, ethnic, and racial backgrounds—from Venetian gondoliers to Native North American hunters to Christian kings to American working-class labourers. For Irmscher, Longfellow’s poetry encouraged Americans to think of themselves as citizens of as an inclusive, multicultural, and multiracial nation: “by systematically exposing them to experiences of different cultures, Longfellow gave his readers—whether American or not—a chance to imagine themselves, vicariously, as more than just citizens of one country, namely as inhabitants of the world and participants in traditions other than their own” (*Redux* 70).⁶² Kete suggests that Longfellow’s sentimental approach, which emphasized the transcendence of class and gender boundaries, enabled him to “inoculate [his] nationalist projects against... the threat of disunion” (8) by proposing a “shared vision of America” (8). Both Kete and Irmscher suggest that Longfellow’s national project was built through the shared affective relationship between poet and reader.

Though he may have been successful in creating an idea of national consensus, Longfellow’s private journals and letters occasionally comment on his personal discomfort with his very public position as a poet and unofficial spokesperson for a nation that was embroiled in conflict.⁶³ Throughout his career, but especially during the 1840s and 1850s, Longfellow reported feeling trapped by his own iconicity and the demands that were being made on him by his readers. Even as Longfellow cultivated a persona as “a public poet” (Irmscher, *Redux* 23), open to his reader’s responses and sentimental reactions, he often struggled emotionally when his collaborative exchange with his readers failed—for example,

⁶² See work by postcolonial scholar Renate Eigenbrod, who argues that Longfellow drew links between the fates of displaced Jews, Native Americans, and Acadians in his poetry.

⁶³ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s personal papers, scrapbooks, and account books, to which I refer frequently in this section, are all housed in the Longfellow collection at the Houghton Library, Harvard University. Frances Appleton Longfellow’s diaries and papers are housed in the collection at the National Park Service, Longfellow National Historic Site. I will be referring to these texts by their call number (which will be italicized) and the relevant page number.

when his readers refused to share his vision of America, when they disagreed with his political views or negatively reviewed his poetry. Longfellow was essentially in a double bind, as his iconicity as a public figure and his sentimental approach came into conflict with his political self-expression. The public expectation that he spoke for the nation—or, more specifically, for whatever his readers thought “the nation” meant—came to compromise his political self-expression.

The tension between Longfellow’s national profile as a poet and his own critical views of the nation came to a head in the 1840s when his critical view of slavery collided with the national policy. As literary critic Robert A. Ferguson explains, Longfellow was close friends with some of the most progressive political leaders of Boston, including the author and lawyer Richard Henry Dana, Jr. and the prominent Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner, who “kept the poet politically well informed” (189); he also associated with abolitionists such as James Russell Lowell, John Greenleaf Whittier, Julia Ward Howe, Samuel Gridley Howe, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, and he attended abolitionist lectures.⁶⁴ Even though Longfellow’s own family’s wealth depended on slavery,⁶⁵ throughout the 1840s and 1850s, Longfellow’s personal correspondence overtly condemned the legal and social practices that sustained slavery and US expansion. His journal entries for the mid-1840s, when he was writing *Evangeline*, express great distrust of the expansionist rhetoric of the government. He saw the Mexican War as a war of aggression against “a sister Republic” (*MS Am 1340 [200]* 114) and predicted that the Louisiana Purchase and the annexation of Texas

⁶⁴ For example, Longfellow attended an 1846 abolitionist speech by the Ohio politician Joshua Reed Giddings, a fellow contributor in the 1846 *Liberty Bell* (*MS Am 1340 [200]* 192). As I will discuss in Part Two, Giddings wrote about Canada as a destination for fugitive slaves; he was also a major political opponent of the Mexican-American War.

⁶⁵ Longfellow’s second wife, Frances Appleton Longfellow, was the daughter of a prosperous textile manufacturer; moreover, Longfellow’s sister was married to a Boston cotton broker and lived in New Orleans. See Calhoun 196.

would destabilize the US by enabling the expansion of slavery; he condemned the “great and glaring violations of the compact between the States, and consequent increase of the Slave Power, [that] the North has submitted to, fascinated by increase of territory” (*MS Am 1340 [204]* 12). Longfellow was irate about the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, and reported angrily in a journal entry for Oct. 26, 1850 about the presence of slave-hunters in Boston: “I hope they will be imprisoned, as they deserve, the wretches! What a disgrace this is to a Republic of the Nineteenth Century!” (*MS Am 1340 [203]* 238).⁶⁶ He deplored the 1836-44 “gag rule” in the US Congress, which had prohibited debate about slavery (“Letter 662” 384). He also followed the Boston trials of several slaves captured under the Fugitive Slave Act.⁶⁷ While Boston was a centre of abolitionist and anti-expansionist thought, the debates about slavery and the Mexican War grew throughout the 1840s and 50s, in both volume and violence: in 1856, Charles Sumner, Longfellow’s closest friend, was beaten on the floor of the US Senate by South Carolina Congressman Preston Brooks after giving an antislavery speech.

Moreover, Longfellow’s comprehensive philanthropic and social engagements with fugitive slaves, African Americans in exile, Native North American educators, and social revolutionaries from countries across the world show that he understood US slavery as an issue that had global ramifications. Early in his career, Longfellow considered writing a play about Haitian revolutionary Toussaint L’Ouverture, “thereby doing what my feeble talent enables me in the cause of slave-emancipation” (qtd. in Calhoun 93). He supported the work

⁶⁶ See Kirsten Silva Gruesz’s *Ambassadors* 90-94 for a longer discussion of Longfellow’s reaction to the Mexican War.

⁶⁷ Longfellow spoke of the trials of Thomas Sims, William Craft (who had escaped to Britain by way of Canada), Anthony Burns (who was being legally represented by Richard Henry Dana Jr., and who later moved to Upper Canada), and Shadrach Minkins. See *MS Am 1340 (204)* 36, 52; *MS Am 1340 (203)* 209.

of international antislavery activists such as the German revolutionary poet Ferdinand Freiligrath and a pair of “Cuban Anti-Slavery Men!” (Longfellow House, “Impact” 9) who came to visit him. He also met a number of formerly enslaved Black authors, including Ellen Craft and Josiah Henson, both of whom had escaped to Canada. Henson (whom I will discuss at length in Part Two) made perhaps the greatest impression on Longfellow.⁶⁸ Henson was one of the founders of a manual labour school for Black Canadian immigrants at Dawn, in what is now southwestern Ontario. Longfellow agreed to support Henson’s cause, and from 1846 onward became a regular contributor to Black Canadian activists’ initiatives, including Henson’s Dawn Institute, and the Refugee Home Society organized by Henry Bibb.⁶⁹ Longfellow’s generosity also extended to a number of educational and religious causes for racial minorities in the US and abroad.⁷⁰ Finally, his account books and letters document regular donations to free Blacks, slaves, and fugitives—some of whom visited him

⁶⁸ Longfellow’s journal entry of June 26, 1846 describes the meeting in detail:

In the evening Mr. Henson, a negro, once a Slave, now a preacher, called to get subscription for the School at Dawn in Upper Canada for the education of black [sic]. I had a long talk with him; and he gave me an account of his escape from Slavery with his family. There was never anything more childlike, than his manner. Not one word of abuse. The good-natured ebony face, the swarthy bearded lip, the white teeth, the pink tongue. The whole aspect of the man so striking and withal so wild. It seemed as if some Egyptian statue had come to life; [sic] and sat speaking in the twilight sonorous English not yet well learned. What most pleases me in the Negro is his bonhomie. . . . His right arm was crooked and stiff. It had been broken by a savage blow with a stake from a fence. (Longfellow, *MS Am 1340* [200] 159-60).

Longfellow’s portrait of Henson shows many of Longfellow’s best and worst qualities. Longfellow is a sympathetic and attentive listener, reporting on details “so accurate that one must assume he had heard Henson himself” (Irmscher, *Public* 117); in fact, Henson frequently told the story about his broken shoulder-blades to potential philanthropists. However, as an author, Longfellow speaks in place of Henson, foregoing any description of their discussion together, revelling in Africanist stereotypes, and concentrating on his own fanciful impressions of Henson’s “Egyptian” voice (Henson was born in the US) and “pink tongue,” rather than reporting on Henson’s political objectives.

⁶⁹ For example, Longfellow’s personal account book (*MS Am 1340* [152]) shows that he gave \$10.00 to the “Refugee Home Soc Canadas” in 1852 (188), \$5.00 to “Slaves in Canada” in 1854 (181), and \$5.00 in April 1857 to “Mr. Wilson, Canada”—likely Hiram Wilson, Henson’s co-organizer for Dawn (145). See also *Longfellow House*, “Henson” 9. I will be discussing the Refugee Home Society and the Dawn settlement in Part Two of this dissertation.

⁷⁰ For example, Longfellow’s personal account book (*MS Am 1340* [152]) shows donations to different African colonization efforts (48, 191), African newspapers (191), Black schools in Africa and Michigan (9, 189), a regiment of Black soldiers during the Civil War (160), and a great number of Black churches in the US, Haiti, and Canada (Irmscher, *Public* 115). Irmscher outlines Longfellow’s philanthropy in more detail (*Public* 115).

to ask him directly for help and others who were being smuggled out of town by white abolitionists.⁷¹ His willingness to collaborate with these international figures shows his belief that US debates about abolition and expansion could be shaped by political developments in other countries across the world.

Longfellow made his own antislavery views clear when he published his *Poems on Slavery*, a slim volume of eight poems, in 1842 with the publisher John Owen. In a letter to Ferdinand Freiligrath, Longfellow explains that he was inspired to write his *Poems on Slavery* during a particularly stormy transatlantic passage on the way home from Europe:

We had a very boisterous passage. I was not out of my berth more than twelve hours for the first twelve days. I was in the forward part of the vessel, where all the great waves struck and broke with voices of thunder. In the next room to mine, a man died. I was afraid that they might throw me overboard instead of him in the night; but they did not. Well, thus “cribbed, cabined and confined,” I passed fifteen days. During this time I wrote seven poems on Slavery. I meditated upon them in the stormy, sleepless nights, and wrote them down with a pencil in the morning. A small window in the side of the vessel admitted light into my berth; and there I lay on my back, and soothed my soul with songs. I send you some copies. (“Letter 743” 496)

Though Longfellow was fortunate enough to be an upper-class American traveller on his way home, his poetry enabled him (and his readers) to cross geographical and racial borders. In this letter, Longfellow imagines himself in the position of a slave experiencing the terror of the Middle Passage—trapped below deck, losing track of time, wondering about his ultimate destination, witnessing the death of fellow passengers, imagining being thrown overboard alive, and attempting to comfort himself with songs. Longfellow’s poems in *Poems on Slavery* show that he understands slavery first and foremost in terms of the tropes

⁷¹ The *Longfellow House Bulletin* suggests that Longfellow gave money to known Underground Railroad “conductors” such as Susan Hillard (Longfellow House, “Outrage” 5). His account book (*MS Am 1340 [152]*) also notes donations to Mary Elizabeth Wormeley, to purchase the freedom of slaves (145), and to “C.E.N., for ‘Contrabands’” (167) in 1860—possibly a donation to fugitive slaves being smuggled with the assistance of his friend Charles Eliot Norton.

of suffocation, death, fear, displacement, and incarceration that he imaginatively experienced in his “middle passage.” For instance, the main character of “The Slave’s Dream” lies dreaming of his lost African homeland as he dies of exhaustion in a rice paddy. The singer in “The Slave Singing at Midnight” voices hymns that foretell his ultimate victory over his captors. Finally, in “The Witnesses,” the skeletons of slaves drowned during the Middle Passage testify to the violence of the slave trade. Of course, the fact that Longfellow was afterwards in a position to write about his experience testifies to the fact that he was definitely not in the same position as enslaved Africans trapped in the hold of a ship. Yet Longfellow’s letter and his *Poems on Slavery* both reveal his commitment to creating psychological and sympathetic associations between the experience of white Americans and enslaved African Americans. He would later insist to one of his friends that he felt he had a duty to write the volume: “I believe that everyone has a perfect right to express his opinion on the subject of Slavery as on every other; nay, that every one ought so to do; until the Public Opinion of all Christendom shall penetrate into and change the hearts of the Southerners on this subject” (“Letter 742” 494).

Thus, Longfellow expected that *Poems on Slavery*, like his other sentimental poems, would engage with the international conversation about slavery and would change the hearts of his fellow Americans. He initially said that he thought the volume was conciliatory and tempered: “[s]ome people here have been pleased to call them *incendiary*, which certainly they are not; but on the contrary so mild that even a Slaveholder might read them without losing his appetite for breakfast” (“Letter 783” 538). Yet Longfellow was dismayed to find himself thrust into the spotlight in the heated abolitionist debates of the mid-1840s.

Antislavery papers such as the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, for example, embraced the abolitionist efforts of their national poet:

[I]t is a happy omen for our land that one of her favorite bards has tuned his harp in the service of his country. Never was there a nobler sphere for patriotism and philanthropy than lies before the true-hearted American, who seeks to wash from our national escutcheon the taint of oppression, and rescue a large people from the yoke of slavery.... It is well that American genius in its fairest form should aid in adorning and advancing a cause so glorious as the anti-slavery movement[.] (J. J. 1)

Pro-slavery reviewers, however, were angry that Longfellow had stated his views on the political issue of the day. Edgar Allan Poe, a consistently venomous reviewer of Longfellow's poetry, dismissed *Poems on Slavery* as "incendiary doggerel" (764) that was "intended for the especial use of those negrophilic ladies of the north, who form so large a part of Mr. LONGFELLOW's friends" (761-62).⁷² Longfellow mentions similar attacks from pro-slavery readers after the original publication of *Poems on Slavery*.

While this debate cooled down somewhat in 1844, public criticism flared up once again in 1845, when Longfellow decided to republish some of his poetry in two different versions of his collected poems. The first was an expensive, illustrated gift book called *Poems* published by Carey & Hart of Philadelphia. Carey & Hart had convinced Longfellow to omit his *Poems on Slavery* from their collection because they feared that the anti-slavery content would make the volume unpopular in the South (Hilen 3: 63 n. 2; Calhoun 175). The other, a cheap, non-illustrated paperback published by Harper & Brothers in 1846, included *Poems on Slavery* (Hilen 3: 102 n. 1).

⁷² This is one of Poe's regular attacks on Longfellow in US newspapers. See Calhoun 158-62 and Poe 670-777. Longfellow discusses the negative reaction of Bostonians in a letter to Henry Russell Cleveland (Hilen 2: 491). Longfellow's friends also worried that they would face public censure for supporting the volume: see Longfellow's letter to Rufus Wilmot Griswold in Hilen 2: 409.

Predictably, pro-slavery readers were enraged to see *Poems on Slavery* republished in a cheap and accessible paperback. In his journal, Longfellow tells of his negative reception in the Southern press, lamenting a “long and violent tirade against me..., taken from a South Carolina paper. How impatient they are, those hot Southerners. But this piece of violence is quite ridiculous” (*MS Am 1340 [200]* 203). Longfellow carefully collected reviews of his poetry—both positive and negative—in a scrapbook.⁷³ The negative review from *The South Carolinian Columbiad* castigates Longfellow for encouraging abolitionists, arguing that the cheap edition “will find its way into the hands of every pot-house blusterer, and shirtless fanatic, who are usually so eloquent in preaching the enormities and sinfulness of Slavery to our domestic enemies” (qtd. in Longfellow, *MS Am 1340 [221]* 98).⁷⁴ The *Columbiad* argues that Longfellow’s antislavery poetry would encourage abolitionists to project their own voices (and ideas) across the country and overseas, tarnishing the US’s good reputation at home and abroad.

Longfellow’s abolitionist audience, however, was also disappointed in him for omitting *Poems on Slavery* from his expensive gift book. Longfellow perhaps found these attacks by his abolitionist supporters even more disheartening: in his journal, he complained,

⁷³ Longfellow was fairly meticulous about collecting these reviews: each of them was cut out of the newspaper and pasted into a scrapbook. This unpublished scrapbook is located in his personal papers at the Houghton Library at Harvard University. The articles are categorized according to the volumes of Longfellow’s poetry that the reviews discuss. As a result, the articles are presented in more or less chronological order within each category (with the categories sorted according to the publication date of the corresponding books). It seems as though he pasted the articles in as he received them. If the review’s source was not immediately obvious (i.e. if the newspaper’s header was not attached to the article), Longfellow occasionally wrote the name of the newspaper in by hand alongside the newspaper column. Unfortunately, many of his notations of the newspaper titles are abbreviated, and few of them include specific dates or author information. I have attempted to find these articles independently whenever possible, but when I have been unable to find the columns, I have referred to the page number in his scrapbook at the Houghton Library.

⁷⁴ Longfellow came across this review from *The South Carolinian Columbiad* by way of another review in the *Anti-Slavery Paper*. The *Anti-Slavery Paper* had reprinted *The South Carolinian Columbiad*’s negative review in order to show its readers the outraged reaction of the Southern establishment. I am quoting from the *Anti-Slavery Paper* article, which Longfellow glued into his scrapbook.

“[t]he anti-slavery papers attack me for leaving out the ‘Slavery poems’ in the Illustrated Edition. They are rather savage” (*MS Am 1340 [200]* 53). One of these reviews levelled a scathing attack on Longfellow’s politics:

Into such a base position Longfellow has fallen. Some passages of his poems gave offence to slaveholders—these passages were among the most striking and beautiful contained in his book.... These he has at the suggestion of his publisher consented to have expunged.— He has thus eviscerated the offspring of his own soul to secure a pecuniary interest with those who traffic in slaves. (Western Paper, qtd. in Longfellow, *MS Am 1340 [221]* 95)

Longfellow was deeply aggrieved by the suggestion that he had sacrificed his abolitionist politics in order to sell more books, especially because he had had to argue forcefully with Carey & Hart to ensure the wider publication of *Poems on Slavery* in the collection published by Harper & Brothers.⁷⁵ In one of the only examples of marginalia in his entire scrapbook, Longfellow responded angrily by inscribing the word “Lie” alongside the accusation (*MS Am 1340 [221]* 95).

In an 1842 letter to his friend John Forster (editor of the *Examiner* of London) Longfellow suggested that his “very small book” of *Poems on Slavery* “may possibly be made larger hereafter. I must first see the effect of these. They are written in a kindly—not a vindictive spirit” (“Letter 734” 481). Yet the never-ending public furor caused by *Poems on Slavery* throughout the early 1840s brought Longfellow’s career as a public abolitionist to a near-complete halt. After *Poems on Slavery* was published, major abolitionist figures like John Greenleaf Whittier invited Longfellow to become an abolitionist spokesperson and even

⁷⁵ Carey & Hart were angry with Longfellow because they felt he had undermined their illustrated edition by allowing Harper & Brothers to publish a cheaper version of his collected poetry. Throughout 1845, Longfellow argued frequently with Carey & Hart about whether the mass-market paperback version of the collected *Poems* proposed by Harper & Brothers would compete with Carey & Hart’s expensive illustrated edition. Longfellow eventually won the argument. See letters 845, 855, 857, and 899 in Vol. 3 of Hilen’s *Letters*.

suggested he run for Congress. Yet Longfellow “shunned all occasions on which he would have had to declare his opinions publicly and declined all invitations to give speeches” (Irmischer, *Redux* 8), and to this day, scholars debate his commitment to abolitionism as a result. The few abolitionist poems he did write after *Poems on Slavery* became less direct and more symbolic in their approach. “The Norman Baron,” published in the 1845 *Liberty Bell*, is an allegory of US slavery that describes a regretful Norman king who decides, on his deathbed, to free his serfs. But Longfellow’s vexed contribution to the *Liberty Bell* a year later, “The Poet of Miletus,” betrays his growing sense of frustration. In it, Longfellow compares himself to a famous Greek poet who is bullied into silence by his critics:

In ancient days, when in the Ionian land,
The poet of Miletus, unto whom
The Ephesians gave three thousand golden pieces
For singing them one song, desired to add
Four chords unto the seven-chorded lyre,
That he might give a more complete expression
To all the feelings struggling at his heart,

He was forbidden by the popular vote.
This happened some three centuries before Christ!

Here, too, the popular voice forbids the poet
To add a single chord unto his lyre,
Although he takes no gold from the Ephesians,
And would but give an utterance more complete
To all the voices of humanity,
Even the swart Ethiop’s inarticulate woe.
And this is eighteen centuries after Christ! (“Miletus” 25-26)

Longfellow is referring to the Greek lyre player and poet Timotheus of Miletus, who “used a lyre with more than the standard seven strings, and as a result incurred the censure of the authorities” (Hordern 7). This musical innovator’s new melodies were accused of corrupting the young and dishonouring musical tradition. Longfellow’s reference to Timotheus’s stifled voice recalls the feelings of suffocation that he experienced during his confined transatlantic

passage. Moreover, the emphasis on Timotheus' public censure comments on the ways the expectations of Longfellow's readers may also have constrained his self-expression: even as some wanted him to share his abolitionist sentiments, others were attacking him for doing so. Irmscher argues that Longfellow kept his political views largely to himself (*Redux* 46). Yet "The Poet of Miletus"—a whisper of a poem published in the most supportive abolitionist community Longfellow would have been able to find—seems to indicate that at this particular time in his life, Longfellow felt frustrated by how the political views he *did* express were being openly criticized. As much as his sentimental poetry may have been trying to build a feeling of national consensus (as Kete claims), Longfellow complains of being silenced by the "popular voice," trapped in his position as an iconic poet, figuratively enslaved by an audience that demands a different kind of song than the one he is singing. It's worth keeping in mind, of course, that Longfellow's complaint about being persecuted is calculated to resonate with an abolitionist audience that gained political support by calling attention to its own besieged status. After all, Longfellow's silencing was nothing compared to that of African Americans who were literally being gagged and legally prohibited from writing at the time.⁷⁶ Longfellow also seems breezily unaware of the way that his appropriation of the voice of the "swart Ethiop" might shut out the voices of actual people of colour. Nonetheless, "The Poet of Miletus" provides an unusually candid picture of a politically-aware but frustrated author struggling to express his views about racial persecution in the US and to write back to his critics and his readers.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Longfellow wrote a horrified letter to a friend about seeing an iron slave collar with a built-in gag: "[e]very drop of blood in me quivered" (Hilen 4: 284).

⁷⁷ Longfellow continued to face criticism about his views on slavery for the rest of his career. After Longfellow published his nationalist poem "The Building of the Ship," for example, he was denounced by the radical abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison at a Boston anti-slavery convention for being too moderate and

Evangeline, which Longfellow was writing at the same time he published “The Poet of Miletus,” is a response to the rhetorical and political context that Longfellow found himself in in the mid-1840s. Rather than becoming a spokesperson for the abolitionist cause, Longfellow revisited the topic of slavery using allegory in *Evangeline*. *Evangeline* is Longfellow’s attempt to reconcile his political support for abolition with his poetic project of building a sense of US national identity.

Longfellow composed *Evangeline* from January 1846 until February 1847, and the poem was published on October 30, 1847. His portrayal of colonial Acadia and revolutionary America is a product of his political and personal context. Like Hawthorne’s *The Whole History of Grandfather’s Chair*, *Evangeline* is a poem meant to be read in the double time of the nation’s past and present. Longfellow’s national allegory reflects nostalgically on the democratic potential of colonial America. The characters Evangeline and Gabriel, like many of Longfellow’s later male protagonists such as Hiawatha and Miles Standish, “begin as fully integrated social beings who suffer from the loss or the threat of the loss of the societies that have given them meaning” (Kete 116). Moreover, through the character of Evangeline, Longfellow can observe the passage of denationalized Acadians into the United States, which was, in 1755 (and was still thought to be, in 1845) an emerging state without a sense of its own national identity. In this way, Longfellow could examine the process by which national identity and allegiance were formed; he could use Acadia to create a myth of a coherent America that could sustain the kinds of challenges (from immigration, slavery and

conciliatory in his anti-slavery views and for minimizing the profound changes needed to end slavery in the US. Longfellow collected a newspaper article which reported on Garrison’s statement. See Longfellow, *MS Am 1340* (221) 229, as well as Calhoun 195.

the Mexican War, for example) that he felt were threatening US national identity in the 1840s.

At the same time, the fate of the displaced Acadians also commented on the distance between the Acadian paradise and the state of the US in the mid-1840s. While *Evangeline* implicitly celebrates the creation of the United States, it also begins to investigate how the US's westward expansion in the 1840s was leading to further episodes of national dispossession of native peoples and enslavement as new territories were opened up as slave states. Longfellow's journal entries from 1846 show that he was reading about (and lamenting) the annexation of Texas and the commencement of hostilities in the US-Mexico borderland at the same time that he was writing *Evangeline* (*MS Am 1340 [200]* 103-04). Longfellow opposed the war in part because it enabled the expansion of US slavery. As Gruesz comments, "[t]he unlawful British invasion that spurs into motion the plot of *Evangeline*... resonates—dimly but suggestively—with what Longfellow and his circle found most distasteful about the Mexican war: that in violating the territorial integrity of a sovereign neighbor, the US would tear the fabric of its own civic virtue" ("El Gran" 395). The cruelty of the invasion of the Acadian village of Grand-Pré in 1755, which Longfellow describes at length, raised troubling questions about the US project of westward expansion. Any sympathies for an Acadian nation destroyed by "foreign" imperial forces thus transferred onto other racial minorities and transnational groups that were being displaced within the US and beyond. Through *Evangeline*, Longfellow expresses his opposition to US policies on slavery, Indian Removal, and the Mexican War without facing the same criticism he invoked by his abolitionist writing. At a time when immigration and transnational

exchange were regarded with suspicion in the US, Longfellow's main character embodies an idealized American self as well as its immigrant Other.

As the symbolic division between Longfellow's idealized Acadia and the reality of the 1840s US grew more apparent, the symbolic similarity between eighteenth-century Acadia and contemporary British North America became more clear as well. Longfellow's 1846 encounter with the former slave Josiah Henson, along with the regular arguments in popular discourse about the escape and extradition of fugitive slaves, would have kept the stark contrasts between the policies of Canada and the US in mind. By the 1840s, British North America had seemingly adopted many of the democratic principles of the American Revolution: it had emancipated its slaves, resisted US annexation, and refused to send US fugitive slaves in Canada back into slavery.⁷⁸ Even as Acadia could be read as a double of a pre-Revolutionary America, then, it could also represent a contemporary space within the hemisphere that had taken a different approach towards developing the equal society that colonial American intellectuals had proposed so eloquently. In this way, the images of Acadia in 1755 and Canada in 1845 were doubling back on each other in the US imagination, insofar as they both symbolized the possibility of an active political alternative to US policy within North America. Ironically, the poem's invitation to compare the US with other nations—a quality that generated its immense appeal—also threatened the coherence of American political thought. *Evangeline* itself seems to waver between two interpretations of American history, sometimes obsessively justifying America's rebellion against British

⁷⁸ Canada had already emancipated its slaves by 1834 and had developed a policy regarding the extradition of fugitive US slaves, which was enshrined in Article X of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty. For more details see Part Two.

tyranny, and at other times, remembering the ways that America has failed to live up to its promise.

Evangeline

Historians and Longfellow biographers believe that Longfellow likely became familiar with the *Grand Dérangement* prior to the 1840s through the histories of some of his ancestors, who had fought in Nova Scotia against the French. Many also suggest that he availed himself of government records in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, as well as the written accounts by Haliburton and Abbé Raynal, in his research for his epic poem.⁷⁹ Longfellow's most important source for *Evangeline*, however, was the Reverend Horace L. Conolly, to whom Hawthorne introduced Longfellow at a dinner party in 1844. Rector of an episcopal church in South Boston, Conolly told both Hawthorne and Longfellow an Acadian oral narrative about a pair of lovers who had been separated during the *Grand Dérangement* and spent the rest of their lives searching for each other in the US. Though Longfellow and Hawthorne may have discussed the *Grand Dérangement* earlier, in the late 1830s, when Hawthorne was writing *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair*, Conolly provided Longfellow with the inspiration to frame the events of the *Grand Dérangement* through the

⁷⁹ Critics have outlined different ways that Longfellow may have come to know about the *Grand Dérangement* but few have connected all his sources. Longfellow grew up in Maine, across the border from the Acadian population in New Brunswick that had not been deported. Andrew C. Higgins points out that two of Longfellow's ancestors had fought in Anglo-American colonial militias against the French; one of them had even helped the British take control of Grand-Pré in one of the British-French wars before 1755 (42). Furthermore, Longfellow's grandfather, a Massachusetts Bay politician, helped the Acadians after their arrival in the US in 1755 (Viau 38). In addition to these family sources, critics suggest Longfellow consulted the records of the Anglo-American militia in the Historical Collections of Pennsylvania (Hebert-Leiter 34) and the Massachusetts Historical Society library (M. Hawthorne, *Origin* 7).

sentimental lens of a tragic love story.⁸⁰ Longfellow's portrayal of two lovers caught in imperial warfare, his expansive descriptions of landscape, and his use of dactylic hexameter (a metrical form that recalls classical Greek and Latin epics such as *The Iliad* and *The Aeneid*) all position the narrative of the *Grand Dérangement* within the epic tradition. *Evangeline* focusses on the fate of its main character as she moves from her idyllic homeland of Grand-Pré to the American colonies. Part The First describes the Acadian community in detail, concentrating especially on Evangeline's betrothal to Gabriel and the promise of her upcoming marriage. The celebratory atmosphere is interrupted by the sudden invasion of Acadia by British troops. Longfellow describes the destruction of the Acadian community as families are deported to different American colonial cities; Gabriel and Evangeline are tragically separated. Part The Second begins in the US after the expulsion, as Evangeline begins to search for Gabriel in the US. The poem follows her as she moves silently across an imagined US landscape. Longfellow's description of the *Grand Dérangement* is thus much more individuated than Hawthorne's: he invests his narrative energy in describing the fate of

⁸⁰ In fact, Conolly had told Hawthorne this story before, with little reaction from Hawthorne. However, when Hawthorne brought Conolly to Longfellow's house for dinner, Conolly told the story again. Longfellow later wrote a letter describing the events of the night:

Hawthorne dined one day with I [sic] and brought with him a friend from Salem. After dinner the friend said; "I have been trying to persuade Hawthorne to write a story based upon a legend of Acadie, and still current there; the legend of a girl, who in the dispersion of the Acadians, was separated from her lover and passed her life in waiting and seeking for him and only finding (found) him dying in a hospital when both were old." I wondered that this legend did not strike the fancy of Hawthorne, and said to him; "If you have really made up your mind not to use it for a story, will you give it to me for a poem?" To this Hawthorne assented and moreover promised not to treat the subject in prose till I had seen what I could do with it in verse. ("Letter to Nova Scotia" 1)

This unaddressed letter, which was donated to the Nova Scotia Legislative Library in 1884 by Samuel Longfellow, closely parallels Horace Conolly's own account of the night. Conolly stated that Hawthorne had rejected the love story for the plot of a novel, saying, "It is not in my vein; there are no strong lights and heavy shadows. It is a good story but it is not in my vein.... I might use it perhaps interwoven with something else" (Conolly, qtd. in M. Hawthorne, "Man of God" 277). However, once Longfellow reacted enthusiastically to the "best illustration of faithfulness and constancy of woman that [he had] ever heard" (Conolly, qtd. in M. Hawthorne, "Man of God" 277), Hawthorne was reportedly quite peeved with Conolly's excellent delivery, and rebuked Conolly for not telling him the story better the first time. See Manning Hawthorne's *Origins* 11-15 about the date of the Conolly dinner party; he suggests it took place in 1840 or 1841. Longfellow borrowed Haliburton's book from the Harvard library for the first time in 1841.

one individual Acadian and the options available to her as a French Catholic immigrant in colonial America.

Longfellow's first picture of Acadia tries to set up an ideal affective relationship between Acadia and the pre-Revolutionary American colonies. Critics have widely pointed out that Longfellow's description of the "forest primeval" ("Evangeline" 57) bears more of a resemblance to the landscape of New England than of Acadia (see, for example, Irmscher, *Public* 121). While this may have been prompted by Longfellow's ignorance of the geography of Nova Scotia, it serves the function of creating an initial basis of comparison between Acadia and pre-Revolutionary America.⁸¹ Longfellow introduces the "foreign" Acadian community by providing an expansive view of the Acadian village and its people, both of which seem in perfect harmony with their environment. Longfellow's introductory lines embed elements of Acadian culture unfamiliar to nineteenth-century Protestant American audiences—the references to their seemingly archaic religious practices and their "snow-white caps and kirtles" ("Evangeline" 59), for example—in a setting that is comfortably domestic and non-threatening. In Part The First, Longfellow portrays Acadia as a site of equality and cooperation:

⁸¹ Longfellow had not yet travelled to Canada at the time he was writing *Evangeline*; his descriptions of Canada are based primarily on his research on Acadian history in Haliburton and Abbé Raynal. For his descriptions of Acadian culture, he drew from books on medieval English folklore, leading to more than a few inaccuracies. Longfellow's only physical visit to Canada was a visit to Niagara Falls in 1862. He may have drawn some inspiration from his wife Frances's descriptions and sketches of her trip to Québec in the summer of 1833. Her travel diary describes her visit to the Cathédral Notre-Dame, which she found "in very bad taste" (*MS LONG 21578* 110). Still, she praised the "mysterious awe" of the cathedral and admired the confessionals filled with "plenty of devout Canadiens kneeling about and muttering Ave's" (*MS LONG 21578* 110). Later, she praises the beauty of Québécois farming women in terms that resemble Longfellow's portrayal of Acadian peasants: "We were delighted with the beauty of the Canadiens. The women have all round smiling faces, + the most brilliant eyes, set-off to advantage by the full ruffle of lace inside of their immense straw hats. Their costume is extremely pretty and quite Swiss-like—they wear jackets and are in the fields at work, flourishing their pitchforks with a most-graceful air" (*MS LONG 21578* 121-22).

Thus dwelt together in love these simple Acadian farmers,—
Dwelt in the love of God and man. Alike were they free from
Fear, that reigns with the tyrant, and envy, the vice of republics.
Neither locks had they to their doors, nor bars to their windows;
But their dwellings were open as day and the hearts of their owners;
There the richest was poor, and the poorest lived in abundance. (“Evangeline” 59)

In Longfellow’s eyes, the Acadians’ self-governing community fulfills many of the idealistic principles set out by colonial American leaders such as John Winthrop, who described his archetypal “Citty upon a Hill” in similar terms (233). The comparison enables Longfellow to emphasize the promise of the American colonial project. Yet Longfellow’s description of this perfect space is not without its own sense of gloom: while he compliments this imagined community for successfully avoiding the worst faults of foreign tyranny and free-market capitalism, he necessarily implies that his own contemporary society may not have been so lucky. In the same way, his praise of Acadian architecture—its “[s]trongly built” houses and dikes, compared to its “unfenced” meadows and unlocked doors (“Evangeline” 58)—reflects his implicit rejection of the need for this community either to engage in warfare or to expand its borders. The Acadians invest their energy in protecting their families from the elements, rather than feuding with their indigenous neighbours or anticipating conflicts with faraway governments. Longfellow’s idealistic representation of the Acadian nation thus sets out all the potential of America, as well as its implied failure to reach this utopian ideal. *Evangeline* remembers Acadia as it never was, and America as it ought to have been.

Such strategies enable Longfellow to introduce the Acadians not simply as proto-Americans but as perfect ones. Longfellow’s first lines represent the peaceful Acadians as “uncomplicated racially white figure[s] more than capable of attaining full American citizenship, regardless of Acadian difference” (Hebert-Leiter 27). Thus, even before they are removed to US shores, the Acadians set to rest all the worst fears about American

immigrants in the eyes of white anglophone readers in the 1840s, because Acadia has already seemingly fulfilled the American promise. This opening strategy allows Longfellow more latitude to begin expressing more critical views of US politics. In the first sections of the poem, which establish the rhythm of Acadian life and introduce the political relationship between the British and the Acadians before the *Grand Dérangement*, Longfellow uses the speech of the Acadians to articulate a variety of possible reactions towards aggressive state behaviour. Like Hawthorne, who used the voices of Grandfather and the children to communicate objections to US expansion, Longfellow uses Evangeline, her peaceful father Benedict, and the rebellious Basil to revisit different arguments made about the American Revolution in the eighteenth century; but these arguments also move forward in time to comment on the US's position in the 1840s as well. Longfellow begins by dramatically simplifying the French-English conflict that motivates the *Grand Dérangement*, eliminating any discussion of colonial America's participation in the expulsion. Given the discussions of Americans' involvement in the *Grand Dérangement* written by Haliburton and Hawthorne, it seems clear that Longfellow knew that the expulsion was motivated at least in part by the commercial interests of the American colonies and by a culture of anti-French hostility. Instead, Longfellow assigns Britain sole responsibility for the conflict, and Acadia becomes the victim of a government that has become so obsessed with linguistic and racial feuding that it is willing to destroy a perfect society in its quest for continental hegemony.

Few of the Acadians anticipate conflict with the British, and Longfellow uses their conversations about a possible British invasion to comment theoretically on the potential actions a people could take in response to a corrupt government. However level-headed Benedict may be, the Acadian patriarch is oblivious to signs of betrayal: he fails to notice

how the flames in his hearth, “[s]truggl[ing] together like foes in a burning city” (“Evangeline” 65) and flashing like “shields of armies in the sunshine” (“Evangeline” 66), at once recall the fall of Troy and foretell Acadia’s destruction. The poem implies that Benedict’s lack of critical awareness virtually guarantees the destruction of the Acadian settlement. Basil, Evangeline’s future father-in-law, warns that “[d]aily injustice is done, and might is the right of the strongest!” (“Evangeline” 70), and supports rebellion against the British. Benedict, however, dismisses his anxieties. Meanwhile, the notary René Leblanc, a character based on an actual Acadian deportee who landed in Philadelphia, tells a bizarre story about an indentured servant girl who is accused of stealing a necklace, executed by a cruel government, and then exonerated after her death. Leblanc’s story seemingly anticipates the imminent victimization of the Acadians; but his story also warns against blind faith in institutions and laments the consequences of a public failure to react promptly when “the laws of the land were corrupted; / Might took the place of right, and the weak were oppressed, and the mighty / Ruled with an iron rod” (“Evangeline” 70). Each of these positions remains supportive of US nationalism and implies that a rebellion against British tyranny would have been justified.

In the initial stages of the poem, therefore, Longfellow constructs his characters in a way that symbolically aligns them with white, pre-Revolutionary American settlers. However, over the course of the poem, the terms of Longfellow’s national allegory begin to change. The Acadians slowly become more racially ambiguous, changing colour from white to brown as they consider less predictable (and more transgressive) options for resistance. Initially, the narrator insists on the whiteness of the Acadians’ clothing as a symbol of their moral purity. However, as the poem progresses, the narrator begins to qualify and even

question their whiteness: Benedict's cheeks are described as "as brown as the oak-leaves" ("Evangeline" 60) and Michael the fiddler glows "like a living coal" ("Evangeline" 74). The narrator praises Evangeline's "snow-white feet" ("Evangeline" 73) but also notices her black eyes and dark hair ("Evangeline" 60). He also suggests that her future children will have "ruddy" faces ("Evangeline" 63), and predicts the loneliness of her future banishment with a Biblical reference to the bondswoman Hagar and her son Ishmael ("Evangeline" 73), who were cast out of the house of Abraham and symbolize the division between the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions.⁸² While the poem initially emphasizes Evangeline's whiteness to position her as a proto-American heroine, it begins to imply that her ethnic and religious difference will set her apart from the Anglo-Protestant community in which she must live, and that this difference will ensure her isolation.

Furthermore, as British troops begin to invade Evangeline's Acadian village of Grand-Pré, the lived experience of the Acadians begins to resemble that of other minorities being displaced across North America. The Acadians gather in their Catholic church for a meeting with British soldiers, who announce that they are taking the Acadians captive. At first, the reactions of the Acadians recall the words of American revolutionaries in the first stages of the American Revolution. Basil's impulsive call to arms, for example, echoes Thomas Paine's call for a revolution in *Common Sense*:

Flushed was his face and distorted with passion; and wildly he shouted,—
'Down with the tyrants of England! we have never sworn them allegiance!
Death to these foreign soldiers, who seize on our homes and our harvests!'
More he fain would have said, but the merciless hand of a soldier
Smote him upon the mouth, and dragged him down to the pavement. ("Evangeline" 76)

⁸² The Acadian petitions submitted to the Pennsylvania government also compare the fate of the displaced Acadians in the US to that of Hagar and Ishmael in the desert. See Hoban 4511-12.

However, even as this scene of imprisonment would seem familiar to US readers, it also becomes unfamiliar as the racial subtext is made more clear. The Acadians are imprisoned because of their linguistic, ethnic, and religious difference from their British captors. This structural parallel thus transforms Basil's call into a criticism of US interactions with similarly "foreign" minorities in the mid-1840s. Gruesz reads this passage as a commentary on the Mexican-American War, which was breaking out as Longfellow began the second half of *Evangeline*. She suggests that the Acadians' response to British aggression implicitly criticized the logic of Polk's invasion of Mexico (*Ambassadors* 93). Basil's words implicitly justify the American Revolution, she argues, but they also articulate the grievances of indigenous and Mexican populations whose traditional lands were being invaded by US troops:

For some, the parallel scheme of *Evangeline* might have prompted satisfaction at having avenged the moral outrage of the British invasion a century earlier. But others might have gloomily asked... whether the nation's behavior toward Mexico was any more defensible than the expulsion of the Acadians from their Eden, or whether its results would be any less tragic. (*Ambassadors* 94)

While Basil is initially presented as a proto-American hero, his speech also comes to question Polk's rationale for the US invasion of Mexican territories.

In the same way, the context and content of Basil's rebellious speech also defamiliarize dominant configurations of US empire by recalling mid-nineteenth-century debates about popular resistance to slavery in the US. Seelye argues that the character of Basil was based on Elihu Burritt, a blacksmith of Longfellow's acquaintance who was also an abolitionist writer (26). Longfellow's portrayal of the Acadian men collectively imprisoned in their church recalls the scenes of US slave markets featured in US abolitionist

literature. Longfellow compares the panicked reaction of the trapped Acadians to that of chattel livestock: “Bellowing fly the herds, and seek to break their enclosures; / So on the hearts of the people descended the words of the speaker” (“Evangeline” 76). Basil’s rebellious words and his “flushed” (“Evangeline” 76) face draw further parallels to the speeches of abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison and militant Black leaders such as Nat Turner.⁸³ However, Basil’s outburst, which encourages the Acadians to break forth from the walls of the church, also recalls Longfellow’s prediction of racial violence in “The Warning,” a poem included in *Poems on Slavery*:

There is a poor, blind Samson in this land,
Shorn of his strength, and bound in bonds of steel,
Who may, in some grim revel, raise his hand,
And shake the pillars of this Commonweal,
Till the vast Temple of our liberties,
A shapeless mass of wreck and rubbish lies. (“The Warning” 28)

Longfellow thus uses his idealized white characters as spokespersons for the abolitionist beliefs that he had earlier attempted to introduce in *Poems on Slavery*.

Longfellow constructs the rest of his account of the expulsion to link the fate of the Acadians with that of enslaved African Americans. One account of the *Grand Dérangement*, a legal document written by Acadians who landed in Massachusetts, for example, laments the destruction of Acadian traditions, communities, and families due to the expulsion:

Parents were separated from children, and husbands from wives, some of whom have not to this day met again; and we were so crowded in the transport vessels, that we had not room even for all our bodies to lay down at once, and consequently were prevented from carrying with us proper necessities, especially for the support and comfort of the aged and weak, many of whom quickly ended their misery with their lives....

⁸³ See, for example, Garrison’s 1845 essay “The American Union,” which accuses the US of tyranny and invites a war that would restore freedom in the US.

The miseries we have since endured are scarce sufficiently to be expressed, being reduced for a livelihood to toil and hard labour in a southern clime, so disagreeable to our constitutions, that most of us have been prevented, by sickness, from procuring the necessary subsistence for our families; and therefore are threatened with that which we esteem the greatest aggravation of all our sufferings, even of having our children forced from us, and bound out to strangers, and exposed to contagious distempers unknown in our native country. (qtd. in Haliburton, *Historical* 194-95)

This account, quoted in full by Longfellow's primary source text, describes the Acadian exiles suffering in the hold of unbearably cramped transport ships, selling their own children into servitude, and dying from exhaustion, overexertion, and disease in the heat of the south—tropes that Longfellow and his contemporaries were using to describe the horrors of slavery. The parallels between the transport ships that took Acadians away from their homelands in 1755 and those that moved slaves across the Atlantic and within the US in the nineteenth century were not lost on Longfellow. The Acadian refugees in *Evangeline* begin to resemble Longfellow's enslaved subjects in *Poems on Slavery*. Like "The Slave Singing at Midnight," *Evangeline*'s exiled Acadians comfort themselves with song, "and in singing forget they are weary and wayworn" ("Evangeline" 80). Similarly, the Acadian wives are "torn from their husbands, and mothers, too late, saw their children / Left on the land, extending their arms, with wildest entreaties" ("Evangeline" 81). They, like the slave lying on the beach in "The Slave's Dream," will be left to imagine the impossible reunification of their families.⁸⁴ *Evangeline*'s father, who dies "stretched abroad on the sea-shore" ("Evangeline" 84), is "buried in the sand" ("Slave's Dream" 24) like the slaves in "The Slave's Dream" and "The Witnesses." The Acadians are "'cribbed, cabined and confined'"

⁸⁴ Gruesz writes that "Longfellow deploys the abolitionist's strategy of portraying a political problem as a domestic one, so that the removals come as an outrage against the sanctity of the family" (91) and that the scene "exact[s] a pathos similar to the slave-auction scenes in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*" (91). However, I would point out that Stowe may have been inspired by Longfellow in this case, especially given that she used the name of Longfellow's heroine for her character Little Eva.

("Letter 743" 496), as Longfellow was, in the hold of a ship. "Scattered... like flakes of snow" ("Evangeline" 86) across the United States, they are destined either to forget the traditions of their homeland (as Basil does) or to remain in a state of perpetual mourning for the rest of their lives (like Evangeline).

As the Acadians move within the borders of a future American nation, Evangeline and Basil come to represent different options for immigrant integration into the US. The Acadian settlement before the expulsion stood for an unattainable US ideal, located temporally and geographically outside the boundaries of the US but still tantalizingly within reach. Within the US, however, the Acadians continue to speak to the ideals and the failures of the American project. The second half of the poem investigates the fate of the Acadians as they attempt to locate their lost loved ones and to construct new identities for themselves. Basil, who creates a new Acadian settlement in Louisiana, takes on a new, racialized identity. He integrates himself into American culture by abandoning some aspects of his cultural memory, like his Acadian folk history. He trades his Acadian peasant clothing for a "Spanish saddle and stirrups, / ... gaiters and doublet of deerskin" ("Evangeline" 95), and he rides a Mexican horse. In fact, Basil's "[b]road and brown... face... under the Spanish sombrero" ("Evangeline" 96) now seems racially indistinct, yet perfectly situated within the heart of Cajun Louisiana; in effect, he moves from one minority role (white but Acadian within the Protestant US) to another (a figure of indefinite but non-white racial background within a dominant white American culture). His new position on the racial and geographical edges of the US imaginary in the 1750s speaks to the US-Mexican conflict in the 1840s, as the US was attempting to evict Mexican and mestizo populations in the borderland between the US and Mexico. But Longfellow carefully turns this newly-racialized immigrant into an

advocate for American progress. Basil underlines the concrete gains that the American system has brought for him: in America, he says, ““No King George of England shall drive you away from your homesteads, / Burning your dwellings and barns, and stealing your farms and your cattle”” (“Evangeline” 99).⁸⁵ Moreover, he becomes the spokesman for the individualist ideal that America offers to the hardworking immigrant. His fellow Acadians are inspired by his stories about “the prairies, whose numberless herds were his who would take them” (“Evangeline” 99). Basil, the Acadian blacksmith-turned-Mexican cowboy, could potentially represent the threat of miscegenation and racial pollution on the US borderland. However, he remains a sympathetic figure because he embraces the revolutionary rhetoric of the American Revolution and vouches for the democratic strengths of the United States, “a home, / that is better perchance than the old one!” (“Evangeline” 99).

However, Evangeline’s excessive personal memory and her restless passage across the United States complicate the celebratory rhetoric voiced by Basil. Her search across the continent for her lost Gabriel literally represents an attempt to re-member a disconnected people. Whereas Basil argues to his fellow Acadians that Acadian oral history and folklore cannot prepare them for their new lives in Louisiana, Evangeline treasures the oral histories of displaced peoples and makes every effort *not* to forget her perfect community. This compulsion to remember is part of her sentimental appeal; but her commitment to her lost utopia and her perfect fiancé becomes a form of resistance against the practices of expansion and enslavement that she witnesses in her voyages across the continental US, from Louisiana to Nebraska and Michigan. While Longfellow describes Basil as an ideal immigrant, he

⁸⁵ Longfellow’s use of the word “America” in this section of the poem is symbolic, rather than temporally accurate: after landing on US shores, Evangeline visits Basil in “American” Louisiana, and searches across the continent for Gabriel. She then passes through the battlefields of the American Revolution. The American Revolutionary War occurred from 1775-1783. Louisiana did not become an American territory until 1803.

positions Evangeline as a critical American—not unlike Longfellow himself—whose endless searching and wide-ranging travels imply that a better community has been lost.

Throughout the poem, Evangeline helps to recover the resistant forms of memory of other peoples whose members have also been “scattered like dust and leaves” (“Evangeline” 142) by forms of colonial violence. During her passage across the American West, for example, she sympathetically shares memories with a Shawnee woman, a member of “the scattered tribes of Ishmael’s children” (“Evangeline” 104) who has lost her French Canadian soul mate. This woman shares her personal narrative of the loss of her husband to intertribal conflict brought on by the expansion of the United States; she also tells Evangeline legends about phantom lovers and bridegrooms of snow who vanish into the landscape. While the Shawnee woman has been displaced by a very different conflict than that which displaced the Acadians, the structural parallels between the two women invite readers to extend their sympathy for the Acadians to “vanishing” indigenous peoples who were also being displaced in their time. Thus, while Hawthorne hailed “Evangeline” as a quintessentially American narrative because of its epic descriptions of the US landscape, Longfellow positions Evangeline within a very different imagined community that rejects the legitimacy of the westward expansion of the US. Evangeline’s travels across the imagined US nation recall the most urgent fears of non-citizens about America’s imperial practices.

Evangeline’s travels south to Louisiana also create a sentimental link between the fate of the Acadians and that of American slaves. In her search for Gabriel, Evangeline goes from the eastern US to the Mississippi River, and descends the river to Louisiana, where Basil has settled. Many Acadians chose to travel by sea to the marshes of Louisiana in the Gulf of

Mexico, where Spanish governor Ulloa granted them land in the late eighteenth century. The Mississippi River was not a popular travel route for the Acadians in the eighteenth century. However, it *was* the trajectory of choice for the US's internal slave trade in the 1840s, and Longfellow evokes the symbolism of that landscape to draw attention to the parallels between the Acadians and African American slaves. Evangeline's trip down the Mississippi begins with a survey of the exotic landscape, and her gaze initially falls on images of whiteness: "cotton-trees," "dove-cots," "silvery sand-bars," and pelicans with "snow-white plumes" ("Evangeline" 89). Yet as her raft penetrates deeper into the South, it reaches a much darker region: a swampy maze of "sluggish and devious waters," ("Evangeline" 90) "deathlike... silence," ("Evangeline" 90) "dusky arch[es]" ("Evangeline" 90) and "dark colonnades" ("Evangeline" 91). As Seelye notices, the images of corruption recall not only the "ruined cathedral" (Seelye 35) of Acadia, but also the gothic landscape of alligators, bayous, and "odours of orange-flowers and spice" ("Quadroon" 71) that frames the slave trade in Longfellow's *Poems on Slavery* (notably "The Quadroon Girl," "The Slave in the Dismal Swamp," and "The Slave's Dream"). Evangeline's day in the bayous turns into an artificial night, and her dreams in this perverted lotusland recall the American political unconscious, "[s]trange forebodings of ill, unseen and that cannot be compassed" ("Evangeline" 90). The new Americans in the bayous have not simply become physically lost; the narrator implies that the South is a maze in which these potential citizens have no sense of orientation, no moral compass. Longfellow thus structures Evangeline's passage downriver to recall the racial landscape of the US in the 1840s, notably the conflicting meanings of the US South as an exotic paradise for some and a site of corruption for others.

Evangeline's passage north to Philadelphia, where she finally locates Gabriel, symbolically links the fate of the couple to that of escaping slaves. In Philadelphia, Evangeline joins the Catholic Sisters of Mercy and becomes a nun, dedicating herself to tending the sick and injured.⁸⁶ Evangeline has committed her life to the values of "[p]atience and abnegation of self, and devotion to others" ("Evangeline" 111) which are otherwise missing in her American community. Evangeline's final destination is symbolically resonant: Evangeline proceeds to the Quaker city because of the way "it recalled the past, the old Acadian country, / Where all men were equal, and all were brothers and sisters" ("Evangeline" 110). As the nation's first capital, Philadelphia represents the national ideals that were formed and tested by events like the Revolutionary War and the Haitian Revolution. By the 1840s, Philadelphia had also become a centre of abolitionist thought and an important destination for fugitive slaves. Evangeline finally re-encounters Gabriel when she finds him among the urban poor struck by the 1797 yellow fever epidemic. Her final encounter with Gabriel, in which she tends him on his deathbed, positions the two Acadians in an imaginative escape back to Canada. Mid-nineteenth-century abolitionist writing frequently associated Canada with Quaker settlements, not only because of the perception that both societies were committed to racial equality, but also (as I will discuss in Part Two) because Quakers frequently helped slaves escape from the US to Canada. It is in Philadelphia that Gabriel and Evangeline express their desire to return home to a heavenly Acadia. Evangeline, glimpsing Gabriel, witnesses his transformation back to his Acadian self: "[l]ong, and thin, and gray were the locks that shaded his temples. / But, as he lay in the morning light, his face for a moment / Seemed to assume once more the forms of its earlier

⁸⁶ See Franchot 210. While Longfellow describes Philadelphia as a centre of Catholicism, Maryland was in reality a more popular site for the Catholic Church. The first Jesuit church in Philadelphia was established in 1733. However, the religious order of the Sisters of Mercy would not exist until 1831.

manhood” (“Evangeline” 113). Hearing Evangeline’s exclamation, the dying Gabriel imagines escaping from his “realms of shade” (“Evangeline” 114) to “green Acadian meadows” (“Evangeline” 114) and a youthful Evangeline. The implied migration upward to heaven and northward to Canada reverses the forced southern displacement of Acadians and slaves and anticipates Harriet Beecher Stowe’s use of “home” as the destination for many of the travellers in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

Yet passage to a lost homeland is impossible, for Longfellow’s narrator admits that it exists now only in memory. The *ubi sunt* passage at the end of the poem reveals that Acadia has been replaced: “Still stands the forest primeval; but under the shade of its branches / Dwells another race, with other customs and language” (“Evangeline” 114). Evangeline and Gabriel have been buried side by side in the Catholic graveyard of Philadelphia, “far way from [the] shadow” (“Evangeline” 114) of the Acadian forest. The new settlers in Acadia—Loyalists who fled to Nova Scotia after the American Revolution—have symbolically carried out the Great Plan of Acadian invasion and assimilation envisioned by Lawrence. In the nostalgic closing words of the poem, the narrator admits that while Acadia may now exist only in memory, the United States has *not* become a substitute for that pastoral ideal. Indeed, the escalating violence on the Mexican-American border in 1847 and the US’s continued dependency on slave labour would make Longfellow look to a fictionalized Canada for another perspective of what a North American nation might become.

As a sentimental favorite, Evangeline passes between centuries just as easily as she passes between nations, and this boundary-crossing brings Longfellow’s competing interpretations of the US into focus. Evangeline puts a human face on the kinds of movement

and cultural destruction that were being forced upon minorities within the US, transferring the attention of his 1840s readers from the ideal of “America” to its reality in the mid-nineteenth century, and recalling some of the negative consequences of US expansion for those who were often caught in its path. Longfellow uses Evangeline to represent “all the voices of humanity” (“Miletus” 25-26) that he wished he could channel and to invite his audience to share feelings across the boundaries of race, class, gender, and nation that would normally interrupt that sharing.

Reading *Evangeline* in the United States

While Longfellow’s poem was incredibly popular at the time of its publication, it has not fared well with critics, many of whom see *Evangeline* as a poem that depoliticizes the *Grand Dérangement* and oversimplifies the British-Acadian conflict in its project to create a US national narrative. Some argue that Longfellow embraces and perpetuates problematic stereotypes of pastoral simplicity, feminine passivity, and limitless American potential; others complain that he describes the Acadians as passive victims (see, for example, Eigenbrod and Viau). Similarly, Gruesz points out that *Evangeline*’s criticism of the Mexican War avoids the prickly topic of immigrant integration. While it draws sympathetic links between Acadians and Mexicans,

[i]t deracinates the potential conflict posed by the entry of mestizo Catholics into a dominant Anglo-Protestant society, making its model Catholics inoffensively white and French-speaking.... [R]eligious and racial differences are minimized so as to intensify readerly identification with an idealized feminine figure who fits within the confines of U.S. domestic ideology. (*Ambassadors* 99)

Seelye, one of the few critics who does examine the connection between Longfellow's abolitionist views and *Evangeline*, accuses Longfellow of escapism for "[i]nsulating the heat of a contemporary controversy" about slavery "by means of historical distance" (42). Finally, historian James Allan Evans suggests that Longfellow's discomfort with the role of the Anglo-American militia in the *Grand Dérangement* led him to overemphasize the involvement of British troops and obscure the role of American ones. All of these critics charge that Longfellow's poem either perpetuated dominant ethnic and racial stereotypes in antebellum US culture, or at the very least, didn't do enough to challenge them.

However, a survey of the mid-nineteenth-century reviews of *Evangeline* shows that Longfellow's sentimental epic did prompt popular discussion in the US about the miserable treatment of the Acadian minority by New Englanders. Moreover, Longfellow's readers, recognizing parallels between the actions of imperial Britain and those of the US government in the 1840s, used the poem to speak out against the contemporary violence committed in America's name. As Evans has claimed, Longfellow obscured many of the details about the involvement of New Englanders like William Shirley and John Winslow in the deportation. Yet Longfellow's reviewers (many of whom did their own, independent research after reading *Evangeline*) quickly set the record straight, educating their readers about New England's participation in this imperial conflict and condemning the kind of historical erasure that US nationalism had promoted. The *Daily Whig* questioned how "this piece of moral and social butchery" (qtd. in Longfellow, *MS Am 1340 [221]* 130) could have been considered "the patriotic duty" (qtd. in Longfellow, *MS Am 1340 [221]* 130) of New England troops. George Wyndham, in the *New York Recorder*, went a step further, condemning the

American colonists for participating in the expulsion and then persecuting the Acadians once they landed in the US:

If, on this sad and shameful occasion, the British lion displayed remorseless cruelty, his Anglo-American whelps growled filial applause. And let it not be urged, in stay of posterity's judgment, that the colonists received the poor outcasts with humanity. By getting rid of their Acadian neighbors, the colonists had got rid of a perpetual source of alarms, and surely they could well afford to comfort the wretched exiles with broken victuals and a barn to sleep in! (qtd. in Longfellow, *MS Am 1340 [221]* 158)

While Hawthorne stabilized his own view of American identity by inventing such a scene of American hospitality in *The Whole History*, Longfellow's readers were quick to realize that the Acadians had not found such a welcome in the US, and that in fact, American politicians like Shirley were likely representing the francophobia of their New England populations at the time.

Other reviewers used the poem to challenge dominant narratives of US history. In an exchange between the *Boston Daily Journal* and the *Boston Courier*, a reviewer drew parallels between the francophobia that had led to the *Grand Dérangement* and the US culture of isolationism in the antebellum period. A negative review of the poem in the *Boston Daily Journal* had incorrectly suggested (among other things) that Acadia was located in Normandy. The *Boston Courier* quickly objected with a history and geography lesson:

The band of ruthless soldiers" who burned to ashes "the little hamlet in Normandy," *to wit*: the village of Grand Prè [sic], or Great Meadow, in Nova Scotia, were *citizens* of Boston....

Now, that a person attempting to write a critique on *Evangeline*, should know nothing of an event in which the government and people of Massachusetts took so large and reasonable a part:—of a transaction which forms one of the darkest passages in our history, but is in a manner atoned for by this work of *poetical justice*:—which happened only ninety years ago, and has left its traces among the

living generation of Massachusetts men and women;—which is recorded in all histories of our country, and recurs hundreds of times in the pages of our legislative journals during six or seven years;—that a Boston writer should assume to pass judgment upon a poem, wholly founded on these notorious facts of *American* history, without the feeblest gleam of knowledge that any such things ever happened, is not very creditable to the primary schools in the “Athens of America.” (qtd. in Longfellow, *MS Am 1340 [221]* 145)

In castigating this *Journal* reviewer’s ignorance, the writer in the *Courier* appeals to his readers to develop a new kind of critical American intellectual culture, one that respects the importance of cross-cultural knowledge and that fosters debate about the acts being committed in order to secure the US’s hegemony in North America. Similarly, the *Boston Chronotype* argues that Longfellow “ought to have expressed a much deeper indignation” (qtd. in Whittier, “Evangeline” 366) at the events in the poem. After giving a lengthy historical exposé of the *Grand Dérangement* and denouncing the horrific violence of colonial America’s past, the *Chronotype* states:

It seems that no period of our history has been exempt from materials for patriotic humiliation and national self-reproach, and surely the present epoch is laying in a large store of that sort. Had our poets always told us the truth of ourselves, perhaps it would now be otherwise. National self-flattery and concealment of faults, must of course have its natural results. (qtd. in Whittier, “Evangeline” 367)⁸⁷

The *Chronotype* review continues by defining the responsibilities of a national poet: “[s]ince the public are so strongly disposed to concede to Mr. Longfellow’s production a position of honor as the first of our great national poems, we cannot but hope he will revise it, and give the parties, motive and instrumental, in removing the Acadians strict poetical justice” (qtd. in Longfellow, *MS Am 1340 [221]* 152). The review thus positions Longfellow as a cultural agent who has a responsibility to provide an accurate, critical view of American history.

⁸⁷ Longfellow identifies this source as the *North American Review*. However, Whittier quotes this article in his own review of *Evangeline* and states that it is from the *Chronotype* (Whittier, “Evangeline” 366-67).

Finally, readers also saw the parallels between the fate of the Acadians and that of Mexican, Native, and African American populations in the antebellum period. Antislavery periodicals introduced reviews of *Evangeline* in relation to Longfellow's previous publication of *Poems on Slavery*; illustrators of later volumes of *Evangeline* in fact drew from the iconography of slavery to describe the Acadians. Figure 5, an illustration for an 1850 volume, depicts the Acadian men in chains—an event not described in *Evangeline* nor in any of its historical sources, but which would have clearly resonated with antebellum readers familiar with abolitionist visual culture. Meanwhile, other reviewers established a direct parallel between Acadia and Mexico. A reviewer for the *New Bedford Herald* stated, “Some of the follies and atrocities, which he describes, are said to find a parallel in recent incidents of our disgraceful war with Mexico. But the lecturer leaves it to his hearers to make the comparison, and to determine by their easy judgment of the past, the proper condemnation of the present” (qtd. in Longfellow, *MS Am 1340 [221]* 164). Another reviewer, who unconsciously linked *Evangeline*'s wandering with that of indigenous peoples, wished that *Evangeline* could have finished her wanderings “in some Indian village of the West” (qtd. in Longfellow, *MS Am 1340 [221]* 147). Meanwhile, *Punch* satirized the poem with an 1849 spoof in hexameters: Dollarine, a young barmaid in California, is abandoned by her father and the rest of her community when they participate in the Gold Rush. In despair, she becomes a “minist’rin’ angel” ([Lemon and Taylor] 26) for a corrupt politician, but she finally chooses to leave her national representative for the gold fields as well. However irreverent it may be, the *Punch* spoof situates *Evangeline* directly within the context of 1840s expansion, slavery, and class pressures 140 years before literary critics would do so again.

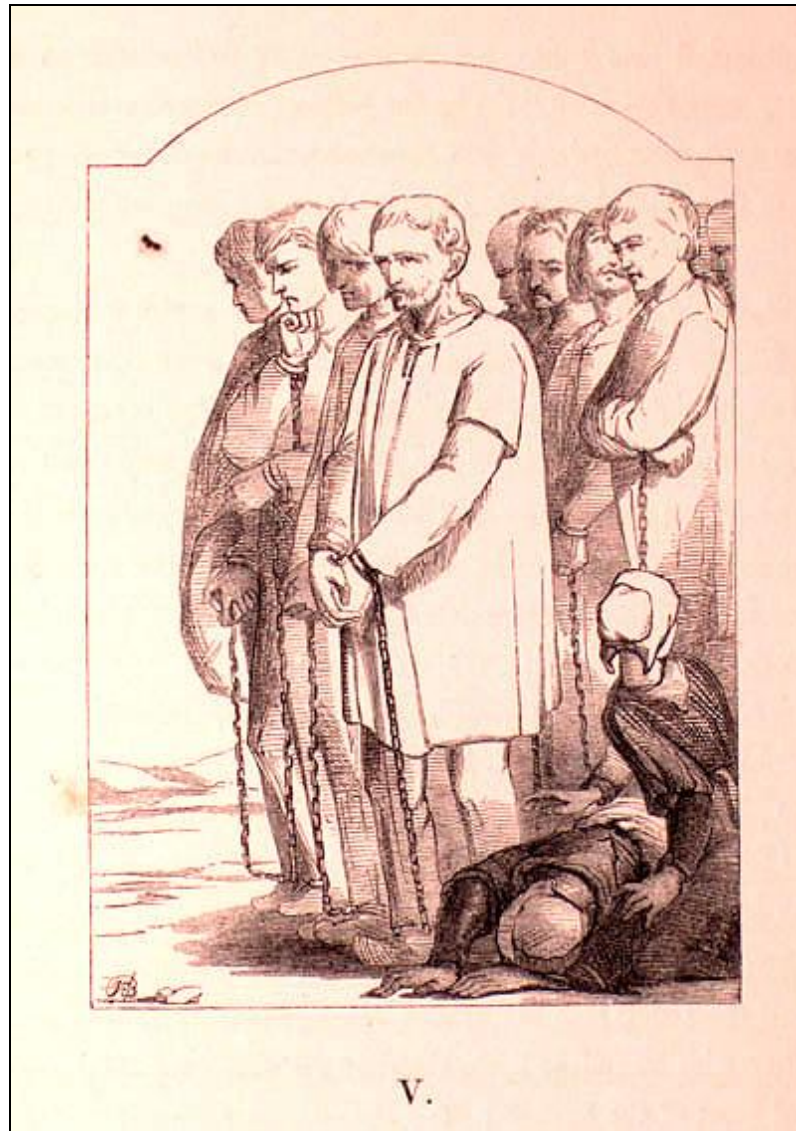


Figure 5: [Acadians in Chains], by Jane E. Benham.

Source: Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie*. Boston: Ticknor, 1850. Print. Clifton Waller Barrett Library of American Literature, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.

Thus, while Longfellow could be criticized for his failure to represent the Acadian experience accurately or his unwillingness to do so, his readers clearly responded to

Evangeline by drawing their own parallels between past abuses by British tyrants and their complicit colonists and present abuses by US imperial aspirations. Longfellow and Hawthorne's texts about the *Grand Dérangement* invoke Acadia as a way of imagining an ideal American community that seemed out of reach to antebellum authors. From the liminal space of Acadia, Longfellow and Hawthorne justify the creation of the United States; yet the conflicts of memory within their works also betray a longing for an alternative America, a shadow space that can live up to the American promise in a way that the antebellum US does not. Their transnational vision becomes a mode of dissent that allows them to define the proper kinds of personal connections to the community and the state that will enable the American nation to prosper.

Entr'acte: The Canadian Migrations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

In Harriet Beecher Stowe's abolitionist novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a Black slave from a Kentucky plantation and a young white slaveowner's daughter named Evangeline meet on a Mississippi River steamboat. Their descent down this "river of dreams" (UTC 226) prompts a longer conversation about the "fearful freight" (UTC 226) weighing on the American consciousness because of the practice of slavery. At the same time, a group of enslaved African Americans from the Kentucky plantation resolve to "'make tracks for Canada'" (UTC 43) and leave the United States behind. I pause here, between Parts One and Two of my dissertation, to discuss *Uncle Tom's Cabin* because this rich text functions as a hinge between my discussion about the legacy of the narratives of the *Grand Dérangement* discussed in Part One and the narratives of Black cross-border migration to which I will turn in Part Two. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe draws from the politics of displacement constructed by Longfellow in his Acadian narrative poem *Evangeline*—the references to imperial warfare and forced movement, the racial comparisons between the Acadians and other minorities, and the human consequences of the destruction of the family unit—to define the US's position within the political landscape of the Americas.⁸⁸ However, she makes the allegorical subtext of Longfellow's poem more explicit, imaginatively combining the Acadian trajectory with the movement of Black flights to Canada in the era of the

⁸⁸ Stowe echoes the title of Longfellow's poem "The Slave in the Dismal Swamp" in her later novel *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*.

Fugitive Slave Act. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* thus demonstrates the symbolic connection between the two narratives of migration to and from Canada that I study in this dissertation.

Many critics have explored the series of doublings in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, not only between characters, but also in domestic spaces and narrative motifs. However, Stowe also employs doubled references to Canada in her construction of the implied trajectories of her characters. Throughout the 1840s and 1850s, at the same time that Canada was becoming recognized as the idealized homeland of the Acadians, thanks to Longfellow's poem, Canada was also gaining a reputation in the mid-nineteenth-century American public mind as the terminus of the famed Underground Railroad. Canada's antislavery stance and its tradition of providing legal protection for fugitive slaves stood in opposition to the US's increasing dependency on slave labour and its pro-slavery ideology. This reputation only increased after the US Congress passed the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, which allowed slavecatchers to pursue and apprehend fugitive slaves anywhere within the US, even free states in the North. From 1850 on, enslaved African Americans could only protect themselves from the long reach of the American law by leaving the United States altogether. As a result, neighbouring Canada became a well-known destination for fugitive slaves. In short, the ideals and the symbolic geographies of *Evangeline* and the Underground Railroad converged in the American public mind and, for many, transformed Canada into a space that represented America's lost ideals.

Stowe weaves these two narratives of migration together to map out the position of the United States within conversations about slavery that were taking place across the world. She depends on the ambiguous Canadian background of the St. Clare family to construct her two imagined trajectories of Canadian migration and to help her represent the United States

as a country poised between different approaches towards slavery and integration. Stowe's assessment of the "longitude and position" (*UTC* 261) of the different St. Clare family members frames the cultural and political choices facing Americans in the antebellum period. The narrator states that the St. Clare family "had its origin in Canada" (*UTC* 239). This brief mention of Canada, and the resemblance between Little Eva and Longfellow's Evangeline, imply that the St. Clares are of French Catholic, and possibly, but not necessarily Acadian, origin.⁸⁹ Ophelia and Augustine St. Clare are the descendants of two Canadian brothers who immigrated to the United States; after arriving, the two brothers made very different choices about how and where to live. Ophelia's New England history, her obsessive work ethic, her "Scott's Family Bible" (*UTC* 244),⁹⁰ and her fear of the "heathen[s]" (*UTC* 245) living in the "awful wicked place" (*UTC* 245) of New Orleans, suggest that her side of the St. Clare family has joined the Episcopalian Church, and has assimilated with an anglophone New England culture. Meanwhile, the Louisiana St. Clares have made different choices. Augustine's father, a man "of poor and not in any way of noble family" (*UTC* 335), moved to Louisiana and married "a Huguenot French lady" (*UTC* 239) to join the aristocratic upper class of creole Louisiana.⁹¹ Slavery allows the Louisiana St. Clares to improve their standing in US culture, but Stowe implies that it also causes them to regress to some of their Old World vices: their lack of religious and political commitment threatens to turn their home into a space of decay. Moreover, Brickhouse notices that the St. Clares' association with slavery has also called their racial identity into question. Evangeline and Augustine St.

⁸⁹ Given that the French crown did not permit Huguenot immigration to New France, it is more likely that the St. Clares would have either been French Catholic, or English (and probably Protestant).

⁹⁰ The Rev. Thomas Scott was an evangelical Anglican minister, and one of the founders of the Church Missionary Society; he wrote the notes for this edition of the Bible.

⁹¹ Stowe's stance on Catholicism in the description of the St. Clares is decidedly ambiguous. For example, Augustine's mother is described as a French Huguenot, but regularly plays Latin and Catholic hymns (*UTC* 334, 449). The Frenchness of the characters seems inevitably to imply Catholicism.

Clare are associated with white clothes and skin. However, as Brickhouse points out, Augustine's brother Alfred and his nephew Henrique have much darker hair, eyes, clothing, and horses—in fact they come to resemble George and Harry Harris more than the other St. Clares (243). Brickhouse suggests that these characters, both of whom are associated with a punitive form of plantation slavery, embody the “Franco-Africanist shadow cast by New Orleans and its proximity to Haiti and the larger West Indies” (244).⁹²

The St. Clares thus represent three cultural groups within America: a Northern abolitionist culture as represented by Ophelia, a decadent and miscegenated Southern plantation slaveholding culture as represented by Alfred, and a more racially pure and potentially reformable slaveholding culture, as represented by Augustine. The opposition between North and South gestures towards two locations within North America that symbolize Stowe's best hopes and worst fears for the racial future of the US: an ultra-white Canada free of slavery and a space of Franco-African miscegenation, enslavement and rebellion, symbolized by “that abominable, contemptible Hayti” (*UTC* 392). Louisiana is

⁹² Given that the linguistic background of French Canadians was often interpreted as a sign of racial indeterminacy, literary descriptions of French Canada often involved Haiti, especially in the 1850s. The shared language of French Canada and francophone areas of the West Indies such as Haiti prompted anxiety in US culture about the continuity of white racial dominance. Brickhouse explains that in the mid-nineteenth century, writers themselves found the interrelations among Haiti, francophonie, and alternative racial categorization so inescapable that a shadowy series of racially indeterminate francophone or French-identified figures proliferated across the national literary landscape, populating works ranging from Walt Whitman's early novel *Franklin Evans* (1842) to Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) to Melville's *Pierre* (1852). At the same time, the history of the Haitian Revolution figured prominently in much abolitionist literature. (24)

Any argument, in US popular culture, about Canada as a site of whiteness or a site of francophonie also implicitly indexed Haiti; as Brickhouse explains, Haiti was becoming more and more threatening in the American public eye, “a symbol of racial difference and the hemispheric potential of political chaos” (227). The interest in the *Grand Dérangement* was linked, in part, to a desire to put an end to the perceived racial instability of French Canadians by classifying them conclusively as members of a white race (thus aligning them as potential Anglo-Saxon American allies in hemispheric racial conflicts).

geographically positioned between these poles, and Little Eva's family (as ambivalent slaveowners) must choose between them. The description of the St. Clares' geographic, racial, and cultural origins helps to triangulate the position of the US in the novel, should it pursue a future of slavery or a future of emancipation.

Stowe uses the trajectories of the Acadian expulsion and antebellum Black flights to Canada to navigate between these two predicted outcomes of US slavery: a white North America free of slavery or a Haiti-like space of enslavement and inevitable racial rebellion. Little Eva, Tom, Augustine St. Clare, and George Shelby all depend on their textual ancestors in *Evangeline* as they model responses to US slavery. Critics such as Kirsten Silva Gruesz and John Seelye have suggested that Stowe named her character Little Eva after Longfellow's heroine (*Ambassadors* 91; Seelye 43). Yet while Gruesz argues that Longfellow "deploys the abolitionist's strategy of portraying a political problem as a domestic one, so that the [Acadian] removals come as an outrage against the sanctity of the family" (*Ambassadors* 91), I would argue the strategy works in the reverse in this case: Stowe's abolitionist text actually draws from Longfellow's portrayal of the deportation to articulate *its* abolitionist message. In effect, Stowe's invocation of *Evangeline* enables her to suggest that slavery will destroy American families in the same way that the expulsion destroyed Acadian ones.

Like *Evangeline*, Little Eva commits herself to pursuing principles of equality, mercy, and sympathetic interracial understanding as a way to save her family from corruption. In fact, Little Eva is able to imagine an entire nation founded upon this kind of understanding and sympathetic exchange. Like *Evangeline*, Little Eva is an otherworldly

figure, defined by a form of racial and spiritual perfection that allows her to transcend boundaries. She is so perfect, and so white, that she is able to “move like a shadow through all sorts of places, without contracting spot or stain” (*UTC* 231). Her ease of physical movement parallels her ability to reach across the seemingly fixed categories of race and class that impede the sharing of knowledge and sentiment within the US. Like Evangeline, she functions like a celibate Sister of Mercy, dedicating herself to caring for those less fortunate and committing herself to cross-cultural knowledge. She dedicates herself to fostering interracial understanding in her home, and finds value in Tom’s spirituals (with their coded references to Canada), exclaiming, ““Oh yes! he sings such beautiful things about the New Jerusalem, and bright angels, and the land of Canaan..... and he’s going to teach them to me” (*UTC* 282). Moreover, unlike the voiceless Evangeline, who implicitly recalls the forced movement of slaves and the destruction of the family unit through her physical movement, Little Eva becomes a spokesperson for interracial understanding. Her ““St. Clare’s blood”” (*UTC* 361) enables her to make passionate speeches in support of enslaved African Americans. Little Eva explains her own death as a human sacrifice that will inspire others to lead a good life and dedicate themselves to the kind of interracial harmony that will end slavery. The Acadian and Canadian references built into Little Eva’s character thus position her within a tradition of silent feminine dissent; however, Stowe transforms this character into a spokesperson for a new US community that rejects slavery. While the death of Longfellow’s Evangeline identifies the vast distance between Evangeline’s America and her imagined homeland of Acadia, Little Eva insists until her death that the world that she imagines can become a reality.

Little Eva's implied alignment with Longfellow's white Acadians helps to identify the kinds of interracial sympathy that Stowe feels white Americans must adopt in order to end slavery. Meanwhile, Stowe makes the stakes of slavery more explicit by using Evangeline's trajectory downriver as the basis for Tom's journey. As Seelye argues, "Stowe combine[s] the themes of Longfellow's slavery poems and the landscape of *Evangeline*, setting her black Christ afloat on the Mississippi in the wake of the Acadian maiden, not to a Louisiana paradise but to a green hell" (43). Stowe echoes Longfellow's language in Part The Second of *Evangeline* to describe Tom's passage down the Mississippi. In Longfellow's poem, Evangeline and her Acadian friends journey down a "[d]reamlike, and indistinct, and strange" ("Evangeline" 90) river, passing under "towering and tenebrous boughs of the cypress" ("Evangeline" 90) that resemble the "broken vaults" ("Evangeline" 90) and "banners... of ancient cathedrals" ("Evangeline" 90). Similarly, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Eva and Tom go down the "river of dreams" (UTC 226) into the South, past "tall, dark cypress, hung with wreaths of dark, funereal moss" (UTC 227) and "gliding plantations" (UTC 228). Stowe's gothic landscape, like Longfellow's, eventually reveals the repressed work of Southern slaves—the "creaking and groaning... machinery" (UTC 228) and "the everywhere predominant cotton-bales" (UTC 227)—that keeps the US functioning. Tom, like Longfellow's Evangeline, faces the destruction of his family unit; and like Evangeline, he is foiled in his attempts to return home and to reunite with his lost family members. Yet throughout his experience being sold downriver, Tom's faith in God and family never wavers and, like Eva and Evangeline, he remains committed to his ideals until death.

Together, these two Acadian-inflected characters help Stowe redefine the ideals of the United States, even as they point out all of the ways in which the contemporary US has

failed to reach them. Uncle Tom and Little Eva never lose sight of their imagined national “home,” even if it exists only as a state of mind. Augustine St. Clare, a character who once refused to commit to any political principles, eventually dedicates himself to the trajectory set out before him by Tom and Eva. Eva’s tragic death and Uncle Tom’s inspirational friendship make Augustine promise to do ““something to save [his] country from the disgrace of that false position in which she now stands before all civilized nations”” (*UTC* 451). Similarly, after his encounter with the dying Tom, George Shelby promises to ““do *what one man can* to drive out this curse of slavery from my land!”” (*UTC* 593). The white slaveowners inspired by Tom and Eva’s sacrifices thus model the different ways that white Americans could work to abolish slavery and to develop a new kind of American society.

As Little Eva and Uncle Tom move south, presenting their idealistic goals for the US from within the slaveholding regions of the US south, the enslaved members of the Harris family begin their escape from Kentucky to Canada, to reach a paradise that they cannot find at home. Stowe pairs the imaginative heavenly “ascent” of Eva and Uncle Tom with a much more concrete one carried out by fugitive slaves moving north. During his escape to Canada, George forcefully argues that, as a slave, he has already been cast out of the US and that his flight to Canada is not so much a flight *from* his homeland as an intentional movement *towards* a national community that he can embrace:

“My country again! Mr. Wilson, *you* have a country; but what country have *I*, or any one like me, born of slave mothers? What laws are there for us? We don’t make them, —we don’t consent to them, —we have nothing to do with them; all they do for us is to crush us, and keep us down.... Sir, I haven’t any country, anymore than I have any father. But I’m going to have one. I don’t want anything of *your* country, except to be let alone, —to go peaceably out of it; and when I get to Canada, where the laws will own me and protect me, *that* shall be my country, and its laws I will obey.” (*UTC* 187)

Like Little Eva, George sketches the outlines of the nation that he wants to build; unlike Eva, however, he is able to reach that nation in his lifetime. This is precisely why Stowe depends upon *both* trajectories of Canadian migration in her text: once combined, these two trajectories not only help her describe the theoretical possibility of a new kind of nation without slavery, but also enable her to stress the real presence of that alternative within the hemisphere. By the end of the text, Canada is configured as a location that can reverse the effects of US slavery. When Cassy is reunited in Montreal with her daughter Eliza and her son-in law George, Stowe's narrator invokes Longfellow's image of a scattered nation to imagine the eventual return of a slave family to foreign shores:

The note-book of a missionary, among the Canadian fugitives, contains truth stranger than fiction. How can it be otherwise, when a system prevails which whirls families and scatters the leaves of autumn? These shores of refuge, like the eternal shore, often unite again, in glad communion, hearts that for long years have mourned each other as lost. And affecting beyond expression is the earnestness with which every new arrival among them is met, if, perchance, it may bring tidings of mother, sister, child or wife, still lost to view in the shadows of slavery. (*UTC* 606)

Stowe concludes her novel by directly superimposing the fate of enslaved African Americans upon that of white Acadians cruelly "scattered like dust and leaves" ("Evangeline" 142) across the US. Canada, however, becomes a location that can reassemble the families destroyed by US slavery.

In this way, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* uses the imagined racial geography of North America in the antebellum period, and the imagined trajectories of Acadian exiles and of African American flights to Canada, to map out the possible political directions of the US. Stowe's text needs both of these imagined trajectories to and from Canada to describe the theoretical and practical dimensions of her antislavery project. Yet even as Stowe brings

Longfellow's implied connection between African Americans and Acadians into sharper focus, she struggles to contain the implications of her own suggestions. In fact, the scene of reunion that I mention above effectively shows all the potential of Stowe's text as well as its intellectual limits. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* generates its affective intensity by invoking the theme of interracial understanding built up by Longfellow, using the plight of white Acadians to draw attention to the suffering of enslaved African Americans. In that sense, it depends on revealing and criticizing the way that the US power depends on forms of non-white racial exclusion. At the same time, though, Stowe works to contain the radical possibilities of her own text: her Black Acadians either die or choose to journey to a Liberian "homeland," leaving the exclusivity of white US citizenship intact. Even as *Evangeline* helps Stowe imaginatively reassemble the family unit scattered by slavery, the textual connection ultimately enables her to displace her Black characters out of a newly-imagined US nation. As I will show in Part Two, other authors would use the conversation started by Stowe to imagine more radical possibilities for Black North Americans in Canada and the US.

Part Two: Reading the Lake Erie Passage

2.1 Black cross-border writing in the nineteenth century

In 1899, African American writer Charles Chesnutt published “The Passing of Grandison,” a short story which culminates with a memorable tableau scene. The story describes the escape of a fugitive slave towards Canada with his master in hot pursuit. The fleeing slave named Grandison outwits his owner and boards a steamer heading from Cleveland, Ohio to Upper Canada. The story closes as Grandison, standing on the upper deck of the steamer, derisively waves goodbye to his master standing on the American side of the lake. The master, in turn, is forced to watch his “vanishing property” cross Lake Erie to Canada and turn into a legal subject. The story closes as the narrator states smugly, “The [Colonel] shook his fist impotently—and the incident was closed” (205).

This chapter opens on the border that the Colonel could not traverse, by considering the representation of Canada, and of Canadian-American cross-border migration, in nineteenth-century abolitionist literature. In the mid-nineteenth century, Canada’s antislavery stance and its tradition of providing legal protection for fugitive slaves stood in opposition to the US’s increasing dependency on slave labour and its pro-slavery ideology. As a result, Canada became an appealing destination for both slaves and free Blacks who wanted to escape US slavery and racial oppression. From the mid-1830s until the mid-1860s, roughly

20,000 US Blacks moved to Canada and Canada gained a legendary reputation as the terminus of the Underground Railroad.⁹³ As William Wells Brown put it,

No section of the American Continent has been watched with so much interest, both by the oppressor, the oppressed, and the friends of freedom and civilization, as the Canadas. The only spot in America, where every child of God could stand and enjoy freedom, and the only place of refuge for the poor whip-scarred slave of the Southern plantation, it has excited the malignant hate of all slaveholding Americans, while it shared the sympathy and approving interest of the friends of the African race everywhere. (“Colored” 461)

Given this charged political context, the representation of Canada-US border-crossing became highly contested in nineteenth-century American print culture. Anti-slavery advocates in North America recognized that the Canadian border could act as a fulcrum in debates about white supremacy and the expansion of US slavery. Blacks who crossed the border to Canada could own property, participate in Canadian civil society, and (eventually) vote, thereby contradicting the white supremacist ideology that forbade Black enfranchisement and Black citizenship in the US.⁹⁴ In fact, crossing the border was one way that disenfranchised African Americans could express their political views about the US’s policies and demonstrate their capacity for legal citizenship. Slaves who risked their lives to

⁹³ This figure is still contested. See Winks, *Blacks* 233-240, and Faires 130 n. 2, for a discussion of the estimates of the scope of Black migration to Canada in the antebellum period, and the ways that these estimates have fluctuated over the years.

⁹⁴ The idea of former American slaves crossing the border and instantly gaining the right to vote in Canada was a prized one in abolitionist literature. However, the reality was much more complex. Technically, pre-Confederation Canadians were considered British subjects rather than Canadian citizens. Pre-Confederation voters elected members of their Provincial Assembly; each province was ruled by a governor who was appointed by the British monarchy. In *A Plea for Emigration: Notes of Canada West*, a treatise promoting African American migration to Canada, Mary Ann Shadd explains, “there is no legal discrimination whatever effecting colored emigrants in Canada, nor from any cause whatever are their privileges sought to be abridged” (74). Blacks could testify in court, serve on juries, join the military forces and participate fully in all aspects of public life in Canada (Hepburn 22). However, suffrage was not universal, nor was it automatic, and Shadd goes on to explain carefully that would-be voters had to fulfill many conditions to qualify for suffrage, including owning property for a certain length of time, being a male of at least 21 years of age, and being a British subject. New immigrants could become British subjects only by swearing an oath to “bear faithful and true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Victoria” and “defend her to the uttermost of my power against all traitors, conspiracies, and attempts whatever which shall be made against Her Person” (76). This would, of course, include defending the Queen against any possible threats coming from the United States. For a more extended discussion of voting in British North America, see Garner.

escape to Canada implicitly contradicted the idea that Blacks were not capable of political thought or action. By “opting out” of the US, formerly enslaved Americans became important symbols of resistance to the US system in the mid-nineteenth-century American public sphere.

This chapter develops a methodology for analysing the specific historical, political, cultural, and racial conditions that affected the literary representation of the Canada-US border in the mid-nineteenth century, by focussing specifically on a scene of borderland transit and transformation that I call the Lake Erie Passage. The mythology of the Underground Railroad (a term coined in the 1830s to describe Black fugitive movement) recalls the most advanced travel technology of the mid-nineteenth-century—the steam railroad—to describe the trajectory of Black *overland* flights to Canada. Adrienne Shadd, a descendant of the *Provincial Freeman* editor Mary Ann Shadd, defines the Underground Railroad as “a metaphor for the series of secret routes used by slaves escaping their masters in the American South to the northern free states and Canada. Its more popular usage... referred to the loosely organized network of abolitionists who hid, transported, or otherwise aided escaped slaves on their trip northward to freedom” (628). Mark Simpson elaborates further, pointing out that the Underground Railroad conceptually emphasizes the success of Black movement in the face of the technological superiority of white power, through an elaborate, secret-but-open system of escape, and the hijacking of Enlightenment technologies (62-3).

However, most Blacks entered Canada not by rail but by boat. It was the maritime passage from Canada to the US across the Great Lakes—and especially the voyage across Lake Erie—that was most frequently described in abolitionist literature. Upper Canada (now

Ontario), the most common destination for African Americans, was separated from the US by a water boundary (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). Even with the construction of the two suspension bridges across the Niagara Gorge—Charles Ellet’s foot-passenger bridge in 1848 and John Augustus Roebling’s Railway Suspension Bridge in 1855, most Blacks chose to travel to Canada by



Figure 6: A Map of the United States and Part of Louisiana, by Mary Van Schaack [c. 1830].

Source: Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.

Notes: While this 1830 map is not to scale, it shows how the border between Lower Canada and the US traversed each body of water in the Great Lakes watershed: starting from Lake Superior, it followed the St. Mary’s River, Lake Huron, the St. Clair River, Lake St. Clair, the Detroit River, Lake Erie, the Niagara River, Niagara Falls, Lake Ontario, and the St. Lawrence River. Four US states (Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York) border Lake Erie.

water.⁹⁵ The visual motif of Blacks boarding a boat, crossing from Ohio to Upper Canada on Lake Erie, and celebrating their newfound freedom and legal protection on Canadian shores, became the most popular image of border-crossing in mid-nineteenth-century abolitionist print culture. Consequently, the nautical frontier between Canada and the US became a site overwritten with interpretations about the future of slavery in North America. The Lake Erie Passage, as a border zone, a narrative of political emancipation, a process of personal transformation, and a site of literary convergence, became a key part of the imagined geography of the Canada-US border.

From the 1840s until the 1860s, the Lake Erie Passage became an iconic episode in scores of slave songs, abolitionist poems, pamphlets, novels, newspaper articles and slave narratives. Antebellum writers on both sides of the border gravitated towards this narrative predominantly of displacement *to* (but also travel *from*) Canada, writing and responding to each other's accounts, in order to discuss the significance of a slave's transformation to a free political agent, the meaning of racial identity and citizenship, and the future of North America as a multiracial space. In 1845, in *The Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis Clarke*, the fugitive slave Lewis Garrard Clarke described his arrival in Canada West, his sense of sheer alienation upon arrival, and his attempts to find a Black Canadian community. Another former slave, Josiah Henson, who escaped to Upper Canada in 1830, published a more celebratory account of his Lake Erie crossing in 1849. In this narrative (the first of many autobiographical writings) Henson presents a triumphant account of his arrival on Canadian

⁹⁵ The Railway Suspension Bridge linked Niagara Falls, NY and Niagara Falls, ON. Sarah Bradford, biographer of Harriet Tubman, recounts Tubman's usage of the Railway Suspension Bridge. I have not been able to find any evidence that slaves crossed the earlier, foot-passenger suspension bridge. The Railway Suspension Bridge was not used to transport fugitives as often as ferries because it involved a passage through a tollbooth and an inspection of passengers and baggage. See Strand, *Inventing Niagara* 105-135. While the Detroit River was by far the most popular route, Strand also recounts a tale of a fugitive slave who, in desperation, tried to row a gate across the rapids of the Niagara River, "ending up 12 miles out to sea on Lake Ontario. Luckily, a Canadian steamship picked him up" ("Lost" n. pag).

shores and capitalizes on his new status as a successful Canadian immigrant to mobilize financial support for a Black manual labour school he had founded at Dawn in Canada West. Former slaves William Wells Brown and Henry Bibb also wrote narratives detailing their escapes to the Canada-US border. Both made multiple attempts to escape from slavery and, after reaching the border, began careers as Lake Erie ferry operators and “conductors” of what has become known as the “Underground Railroad.” Their texts implicitly connect their physical skill in navigating Lake Erie with their political ability to address audiences on both sides of the border. Meanwhile, Black abolitionist poet Joshua McCarter Simpson’s famous song, “Away to Canada,” written in 1852, describes Canada as a racial haven. The song, which was meant to be sung to the tune of “O Susannah!”, describes the Queen as a welcoming figure, thus inverting the American Revolutionary tradition of representing Britain as an abusive parent:⁹⁶

I heard Victoria plainly say,
If we would all forsake
Our native land of slavery,
And come across the Lake.

That she was standing on the shore,
With arms extended wide,
To give us all a peaceful home,
Beyond the rolling tide.

Farewell, old master!
That’s enough for me—
I’m going straight to Canada,
Where colored men are free. (J. M. Simpson n. pag)

In the same period, the political significance of the Lake Erie Passage and the living conditions of new Black Canadians became a frequent point of discussion in Black

⁹⁶ Martin Delany includes this song in a significant passage describing the escape of fugitive slaves to Canada in *Blake* 143.

periodicals such as *The Liberator* (edited by William Lloyd Garrison), *The Provincial Freeman* (1853-60, edited by Mary Ann Shadd Cary and Samuel Ringgold Ward), and *The Voice of the Fugitive* (1851-53, edited by Henry Bibb).

The image of Canada as a “promised land” inspired a great deal of white abolitionist authors as well, many of whom drew from slave narratives, eyewitness accounts and newspaper reports of successful escapes to Canada. The 1846 *Liberty Bell* featured non-fiction descriptions of slave escapes across the Great Lakes. Alongside Longfellow’s abolitionist poem “The Poet of Miletus” (which I discuss in Part One), the prominent Ohio statesman Joshua Reed Giddings published a short account, “Fugitive Slaves in Northern Ohio,” describing the arrival of a family of fugitive slaves in Ohio with southern slave-catchers in hot pursuit.⁹⁷ In the short story, Ohio abolitionists of all racial and class backgrounds unite to send the fugitive family to Canada West and drive the slave-catchers out of town. In the same issue, western American writer and editor Caroline M. Kirkland published “Recollections of Anti-Slavery at the West,” another story describing a successful escape of fugitive slaves from Detroit to Sandwich, Canada West. Kirkland’s report praises the efforts of dedicated (white) US Underground Railroad conductors. The writer Sarah H. Bradford also immortalized the border-crossing success of the famous Underground Railroad conductor Araminta “Harriet” Ross Tubman Davis, better known as Harriet Tubman, in the 1869 biography, *Harriet Tubman: The Moses of Her People*.

⁹⁷ Joshua Reed Giddings, a prominent supporter of abolition, was the Ohio member of the House of Representatives from 1838 to 1859, and served as US consul to Canada from 1861 until his death in 1864. His political activism reflected the abolitionist stance of his border state and often capitalized on Canada’s antislavery stance (and its presence as a potential site of Black escape) to challenge US slavery. Giddings advocated violent resistance to the Fugitive Slave Law, fought to repeal the gag rule barring antislavery petitions, and proposed resolutions in Congress that supported the right of the Black mutineers aboard the *Creole* to defend their liberty. Giddings’ political support of the rights of the captives aboard the *Creole* converged with the stance of Frederick Douglass, whose novella “The Heroic Slave” represents a fictionalized description of the Black mutiny aboard the USS *Creole*.

Flights to Canada became a recurring motif in fictional texts as well, especially after the passage of the controversial 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. Emily Catharine Pierson's 1851 novella *Jamie Parker, the Fugitive* concludes with an impressionistic description of a flight across Lake Erie. Similarly, John Collins's 1855 poem "The Slave-Mother" describes a scene in which a fugitive slave mother, at the point of recapture in Ohio, throws her baby down on the banks of Lake Erie and publicly disowns it, in order to prevent slave-catchers from taking her child back into slavery.⁹⁸ Abolitionists finally reunite the mother and her baby and help them to escape, while bystanders on the Ohio shores of Lake Erie refuse to help the slave-catchers pursue the escaping skiff across the lake.

Certainly the most influential fictional text in this abolitionist literary exchange was Harriet Beecher Stowe's serialized novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The novel's description of the enslaved Harris family's escape, and the accompanying illustrations (see Figure 7), were perhaps the most widely-circulated representations of Canada in the mid-nineteenth century. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the Harris family moves north on the Underground Railroad from Ohio to Amherstburg, Canada West. The illustration of the family celebrating on the shores of Lake Erie while a departing steamer ship sails away in the background popularized some of the most important visual and narrative motifs of the Lake Erie Passage.

⁹⁸ Under the conditions of the Fugitive Slave Act, slave-catchers would not have been able to seize the baby if they could not prove that it belonged to the enslaved mother. "The Slave-Mother" is inspired by an article in Elihu Burritt's *Bond of Brotherhood*, a Quaker monthly publication which was in print from 1846 until 1867, but I have yet to locate the original piece that gave rise to Collins' poem.

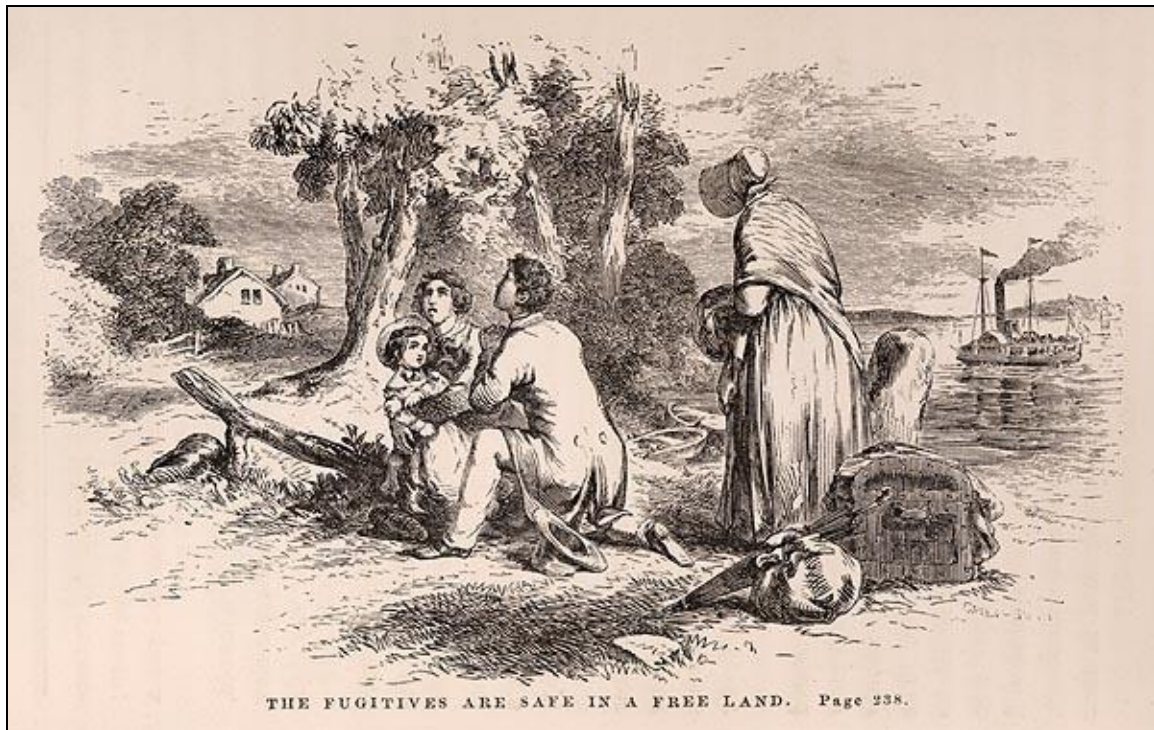


Figure 7: "The Fugitives Are Safe in a Free Land," by Hammatt Billings.

Source: Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Boston: Jewett, 1852. 238. Print. Rpt. in Stephen Railton and the University of Virginia. "First Edition Illustrations." *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture*. 2009. Web. 20 Nov. 2009.

Stowe's portrayal of cross-border travel, which I discuss briefly in my entr'acte, prompted the creation of a new series of iconic scenes in artistic and literary accounts of the border. The Lake Erie Passage had become so pervasive by 1855, that fugitive slave writer Samuel Ringgold Ward reported that it had inspired the English social theorist Harriet Martineau:

Miss Martineau was told by a gentleman, that the sublimest sight in North America is the leap of a slave from a boat to the Canadian shore. That "leap" transforms him from a marketable chattel to a free man. Hence that "leap" is far more sublime than the plunge of the Niagara River from its natural bed to the deep, deep, receptacle of its voluminous waters, far below. But when it is remembered how much of difficulty the poor American slave has to encounter, in preparing for his escape, and in making it—how every step of the way is beset with peril and threatening disaster—then one

could see in that "leap" so much of the consummation of long and fondly cherished hope, hope nurtured on the very brink of despair, so much of real true manhood, as to give a better insight into its real "sublimity" than a mere casual glance could afford. (158-59)

While Ward cites Martineau and explains the transcendent imagery of the Lake Erie Passage to give his Canadian experiences more literary credibility, other non-fiction writers were deliberately re-writing their slave narratives with the famous image of the Lake Erie Passage in mind. Josiah Henson, for example, revised his own narrative after its original publication to make it resemble Stowe's fictional account of the Harris family crossing.⁹⁹

At the same time, other notable Black intellectuals increasingly saw differences between the triumphant portrayals of Black emancipation in white abolitionist fiction and the lived experience of Black Canadians, many of whom continued to struggle with poverty, racism, and unofficial segregation in Canada West. These Black authors responded with their own fictional re-imaginings of the Lake Erie Passage. William Wells Brown, for example, revised Stowe's trajectories in his 1853 fictionalized slave narrative *Clotel, or the President's Daughter*, to position Black border-crossers as true American radicals and intellectual insurgents. In the same year, Frederick Douglass's novella *The Heroic Slave* inserts Canada into the history of the mutiny aboard the USS Creole. A few years later, in his unfinished novel *Blake, or the Huts of America* (published serially from 1859 to 1862), Black transnational author and intellectual Martin Delany, who lived in Chatham, Canada West from 1856 to 1861, positions Canada as a potential staging ground for a continent-wide slave revolt. His eponymous character Blake eschews any transcendent boat journey, proposing

⁹⁹ After the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe attributed her portrayal of the Lake Erie Passage to the slave narrative of Josiah Henson (see Stowe's *Key* 26-27). However, critics such as Robin W. Winks have since challenged her assertions on this point. In fact, Winks suggests that Josiah Henson rewrote *his* later autobiographical descriptions of the Lake Erie Passage to address some of the expectations and demands prompted by the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the resulting increase in interest in the lives of Black Canadians. See Winks, "Making" 115, 122.

instead to “[mow] his way into Canada” with a scythe (*Blake* 147). In response to many of these ideas, Stowe finally revises her portrayal of Canada in her 1856 novel *Dred: a Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*. Instead of exporting her fugitive slave characters to Africa, Stowe imagines the possibility of a successful Black community in Canada West.

This inventory of texts shows the great depth of this archive, as well as the sheer diversity of authors, texts, and modes of representation in nineteenth-century North American discussions about the significance of the Canada-US border. All of these representations of a maritime journey across the Great Lakes from the US to Canada recall the traumatic experience of the Middle Passage from Africa to the Americas. However, they extend the “pattern of movement, transformation, and relocation” (Gilroy xi) of nineteenth-century Black populations in North America that Paul Gilroy has called the Black Atlantic. In *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy proposes an understanding of Black history based on the shared experiences and hybrid cultural forms produced through the movement of ideas, people, goods, and cultures of the transatlantic slave trade. Gilroy explains that the chronotype of the ship presents a way of reading the structure of the forces that controlled Black movement and shaped Black culture in the era of slavery and beyond:

The image of the ship—a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion—is especially important for historical and theoretical reasons.... Ships immediately focus attention on the middle passage, on the various projects for redemptive return to an African homeland, on the circulation of ideas and activists as well as the movement of key cultural and political artefacts: tracts, books, gramophone records, and choirs.
(4)

The visual and narrative motifs of these border-crossing texts—their emphasis on boats, their frequent contrasts between the freedom of the ship’s movement and the threat of confinement, their visual and textual comparisons between the ship’s passengers and cargo,

and their descriptions of the political transformation of passengers from chattel on one side of the water to citizens on the other—all symbolically re-enact the Middle Passage, but they also raise the possibility of its reversal.

This chapter investigates Canada as a specific geographical and rhetorical site in the broader history of movement of ideas and people across the Black Atlantic world. The notion of transformation that underpins Gilroy's conceptualization of the Black Atlantic operates throughout the archive of texts that represent what I call the Lake Erie Passage. The appeal of Lake Erie as a setting lay largely in the way it could play out the acquisition of citizenship for Black "passengers": the arrival on shore represented the precise moment at which a US slave could be manifestly transformed into a human being, a British subject, and a political agent at the same time. These new identities were often aided by more personal forms of transformation as well, including costumes and slave passes. If "the memory of slavery and the middle passage represents one form of geographical and cultural dislocation" (Gilroy 133), this new passage represents "a second, freely chosen variety" (Gilroy 133) of movement previously inaccessible to US Blacks. This freely chosen movement leads to new forms of belonging and citizenship, both on board the boat (where positive interactions between sympathetic captains and fugitives frequently take place) and on Canadian shores (where newly-arrived US Blacks begin to build new lives and create new affiliations with both white and Black Canadians). In short, these nautical texts represent a "sea change," not only in a personal context (where individual slaves and free Blacks suddenly transform themselves into members of Canadian society and legal subjects on the British side of the water) but also in a hemispheric context, with a dramatic shift in the political and racial landscape of North America after the emancipation of US slaves.

Yet the fate of the traveller is different in every image and text, and the sheer diversity of these texts, and the depth of the literary archive, shows how central the discussions of Canada-US border-crossing were to larger conversations about the future of race relations in North America. Authors came from all class, racial, political, and educational backgrounds and they wrote texts in a variety of genres: there were border-crossing songs, novels, slave narratives, poems, newspaper articles, letters to the editor, and political pamphlets. While almost all these writers made strong claims about the veracity of their texts, their approaches to representing the Black Canadian experience varied widely. Most of these texts describe one-way trajectories from south to north, upholding the mythological construction of the Underground Railroad narrative. Nautical crossings to Canada featuring hair-breadth escapes, lengthy passages across the expanse of Lake Erie, and celebratory arrivals in Canada were popular because they could reinforce what literary scholar Nancy Kang calls the “allegory of Canadian freedom reigning triumphant over American bondage” (435). The propaganda value of such images was considerable. Authors such as Stowe and John Collins, for example, made their careers by mythologizing the seemingly absolute political contrasts between Canada and the US. However, Canada is frequently described in such glowing terms in such abolitionist texts that the discussion of any possibly negative consequences of border-crossing for Blacks is given short shrift.

In other texts, though, authors describe more uncertain or tentative trajectories: return trips to the US, or circular movements within the borderland, for example. Some of these cross-border authors revelled in their status as new Canadians; others portrayed themselves as profoundly, and resistantly, American. Some texts use the existence of Black Canadian settlements to imagine a permanent Black presence in the Americas, while others eliminate

that possibility, positioning Canada as merely the first stop within a larger pattern of movement across the Black Atlantic world. Many authors who supported Black migration to Canada also were forced to acknowledge the personal cost of such escapes. As Kang shows in her examination of Benjamin Drew's *The Refugee*, many Black fugitives in Canada express complex national alignments after their traumatic displacement, some even contradicting the idea of Canada as a "promised land." While former US slaves frequently express relief on reaching some measure of safety in Canada, Kang notes that their narratives also have ambivalent feelings about their Canadian experience, expressing anything from "raw psychological terror" (448) to "morbid unsettledness and suspended desire" (445). Thus, Kang argues, while the experience of fugitive slaves has often been invoked as proof of Canada's political superiority as a racial haven, many texts written by fugitive authors often testify to the trauma of displacement for Black North Americans: the "ambivalence of adopting a new land as home," the paralysing isolation that comes as a result of the refugee experience, and the reality of "multi-directional migration" (443) for Blacks on the border.

Taking the texts about the Lake Erie Passage as a case study, this chapter will thus examine the development of a transnational, multiracial print cultural conversation about nineteenth-century Black border-crossing between Canada and the US. By studying Lake Erie as both a "fluid frontier" (A. Cooper, "Fluid" 131) and as a site where the border was represented in literature in very fixed ways, I hope to show how conceptualizations of Black allegiances, Black migration, and Black identity evolved in North America.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore,

¹⁰⁰ There are a number of important slave narratives about Canada that I do not discuss in this chapter. The 1860 slave narrative *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom* by William Craft, for example, describes a famous escape in which Ellen Craft passes for a white invalid, while William masquerades as her Black attendant. They make their way to Halifax and later to Britain. Another text which I have left out of my discussion is William H. H. Johnson's slave narrative, which (as contemporary Black Canadian author Wayne Compton helpfully indicated to me) describes a passage across Lake Superior.

by comparing Black representations of the Lake Erie Passage, I want to show how Blacks on the border represented the political and practical significance of Black freedom in Canada and how their discussions of their own experience intervened in, objected to, and inspired discussions about the future of race relations in North America.

The Lake Erie Passage, as a conceptual framework, therefore offers a more nuanced and accurate understanding of Black movement and Black subjectivity in nineteenth-century North America. The Black Atlantic and the Underground Railroad have been the rubrics most frequently used to study patterns of Black migration in North America. These conceptual mappings of Black movement vary in their temporal and geographical registers: the Black Atlantic traces out the movement of goods, people, and ideas across the world from the beginnings of slavery until the contemporary period, while the Underground Railroad describes patterns of Black North American migration that specifically took place during the antebellum period of the United States (especially during the Fugitive Slave Act). Yet as I will discuss, both of these understandings of Black migration have frequently treated Canada as a closed incident, a static rhetorical episode, rather than an active discursive and political space.

The Lake Erie Passages that I examine in this chapter show that the Underground Railroad's emphasis on fugitive flights and on linear trajectories fails to describe the lived experience of many Blacks in Canada. Moreover, the Underground Railroad's emphasis on the success of slave escapes marginalizes the history of free Blacks in Canada, or of fugitive slaves who returned to the US after the Emancipation Act. Mark Simpson has argued that the Underground Railroad paradigm has led to the "strategic romanticization" (61) of Canada's status as a safe terminus of the Underground Railroad, silencing Black Canadian voices and

overlooking racial conflict in Canada. George Elliott Clarke has taken a similar position, arguing that the Underground Railroad has become a foundational part of Canadian national identity because it allows Canadians to assert Canada's political superiority over the US while strategically "forget[ting] that slave ships ever docked in Halifax, Montreal, Saint John, and York (Toronto)" ("Introduction" 11) before 1834. Such erasures, Clarke adds, make it even more difficult to confront the history of slavery and imperialism in Canada. I examine the Lake Erie Passage as a contact zone that has often been *represented* (in our contemporary period as well as in the antebellum era) as the primary trajectory and end point of the Underground Railroad. However, as I show, some Lake Erie Passages often describe trajectories that are more open-ended—and experiences that are more ambivalent—than the Underground Railroad model implies. My examination of the Lake Erie Passage thus offers a more accurate understanding of Black North American experience; it also allows scholars to see how the mythology of the Underground Railroad was constructed in popular culture.¹⁰¹

In developing this framework I also hope to position Canada within Gilroy's larger conceptualization of the Black Atlantic. Given Canada's participation in slavery until 1834, its importance as a trading point on the transatlantic shipping network, its status as a home for Black Canadians and as a destination for African Americans, and its importance in the North American abolitionist community, it would seem imperative to situate Canada within the intellectual history of the Black Atlantic world. Yet African-Canadian scholars such as Clarke (see "Hearsay") and Rinaldo Walcott have widely lamented the fact that Gilroy neglects to mention Canada explicitly as a specific site on the Black Atlantic; Gilroy even

¹⁰¹ The Promised Land Project, a multi-disciplinary research project based in Canada, shares some of these goals. The project investigates the history of early Black settlements in the Chatham-Kent area of what is now Ontario. It, too, challenges the concept of the Underground Railroad by examining southern Ontario not as an endpoint but as a site of Black Canadian life and as a generative node from which Blacks spread across Canada.

fails to comment on the Canadian experiences of his featured authors Martin Delany (who lived in Canada) and William Wells Brown (who frequently landed there as a ferry operator, corresponded with Black Canadians like Mary Ann Shadd Cary, and spoke there as an abolitionist lecturer). The Black Atlantic model links the Americas with Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean, but ignores the north-south trajectories between Canada and the US.

Moreover, it also overlooks the way that Canada-US interactions in the nineteenth century affected the worldwide network of slavery in intellectual, legal, economic, social, and literary contexts. Kang suggests that “[w]ith Canada involved... there must be a revised optic to define another ‘counterculture of modernity’ (quoting Gilroy), since the dynamics of movement between the two neighbor nations functioned on a smaller scale and with different underlying concerns than those of individual traversing the Black Atlantic community” (444). The works I study in this chapter link the fresh-water nautical experiences of Black cross-border migrants in North America with the maritime experiences of the Black Atlantic. They reveal that Canada was a dynamic abolitionist site, a space overwritten with ideas about the human rights of people of African descent and their potential for citizenship. A study of these texts will provide a new perspective of Canada’s place in the intellectual legacy of the Black Atlantic by showing how texts by and about Black Canadians shaped ideas about African colonization, Black citizenship, and Black nationalism in the Atlantic world.

By recovering the multiple, contesting, contrasting Lake Erie Passages, I will show how the Lake Erie Passage became a method by which abolitionists in the US and Canada could speculate on the meaning of racial and national identity, on the methods of Black resistance, and on the future of Black North Americans. In December 1857, at the height of US debates about the future of slavery in the US, J. Miller McKim wrote a letter to fellow

abolitionist Maria W. Chapman, stating, “[t]here are only a few, unfortunately, who can understand an abstract idea or comprehend a general principle. To make our antislavery idea fully understood we must put legs on it” (qtd. in Gara 115). The Lake Erie Passage was one way that abolitionists and formerly enslaved writers in the US and Canada could “put legs on” the story of Black escape to Canada, and thereby bring the Black Canadian experience to life: to give the abstract idea of Black North American migration a presence or “body” that would make it more meaningful to audiences, to make the Black Canadian experience come alive to a primarily white, upper-class American readership, to develop an idea of Black political agency, and, sometimes, to consider the possibility of a continent-wide Black rebellion that would end slavery in the Americas. This antislavery idea with “legs” was also meant to break down divisions between racial and national audiences—making the story of the Black Canadian experience cross back into the US, bringing informed discussions of Black Canadian settlements to US abolitionist debates, and spreading news of developments in US abolitionism to Black Canadian settlements. The Lake Erie Passage was a trope designed to become mobile, embodied, unruly. It was meant to find new markets, to represent Black oral culture in a mobile, written form, and to mutate between genres. In all this there is a sense of movement and transformation.

2.2 Historicizing the Canada-US border

Canada’s reputation as the terminus of the Underground Railroad is so strong that it has often overwritten the historical existence of slavery in Canada. However, an overview of the history of slavery in North America shows that the importance of the Canada-US border

(and the importance of Lake Erie as a symbolic site on the border) has changed over time in response to different political developments between the two countries. Chattel slavery was legal in Canada for over two hundred years before it was abolished by the British Empire's Slavery Abolition Act in 1834. European colonists brought chattel slavery to Canada in the seventeenth century, but the practice grew slowly in Canada, mostly because Canada's fur and timber trades did not require large-scale plantation labour.¹⁰² During and after the US Revolutionary War (1775-1783), many Loyalists to the British monarch fled to Canada and brought slaves with them to new settlements in British North America. As historian Afua Cooper relates, this led to a significant Black presence in southwestern Upper Canada, making the Great Lakes area (especially the northern shore of Lake Erie) one of the most concentrated slaveholding regions of British North America (see Figure 8).

¹⁰² Cooper states that the first recorded Black slave in Canada, Olivier LeJeune, arrived in New France in 1623 (*Hanging* 74-6). Forms of slavery were practised by First Nations groups prior to European settlement as well. See C. Peter Ripley et al, Afua Cooper, and James W. Walker for a more extended treatment of the conditions of slavery in eighteenth-century Canada and the legal rulings that began to control the practice in the late eighteenth century.

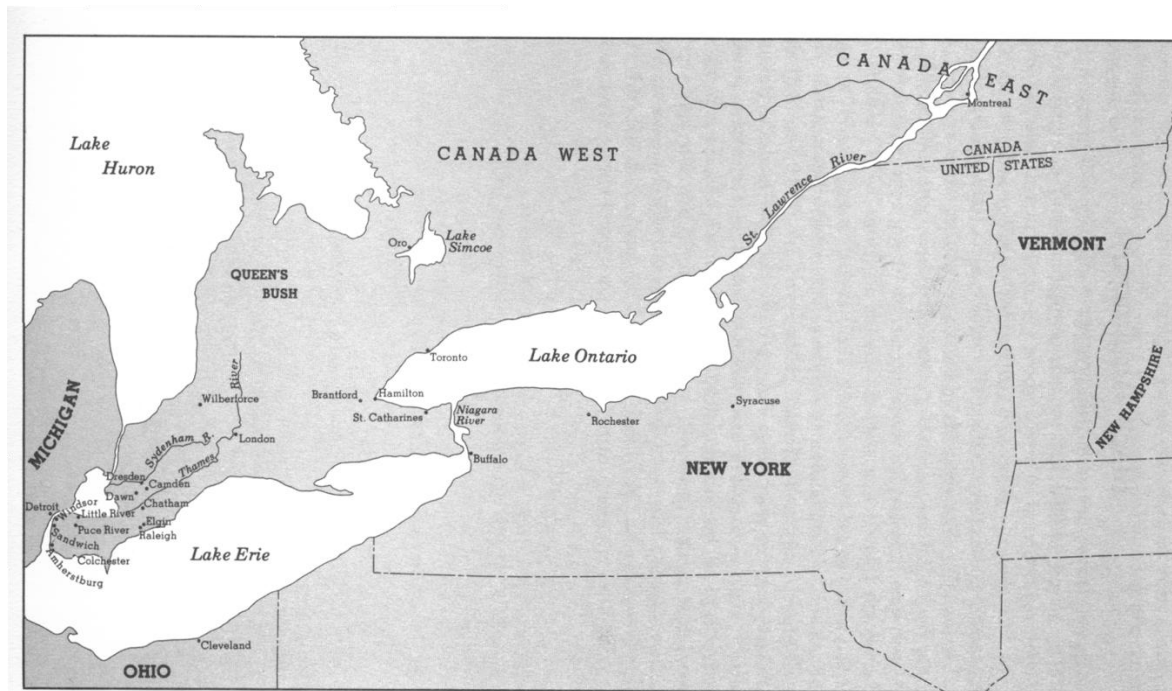


Figure 8: Black communities in Canada West.

Source: THE BLACK ABOLITIONIST PAPERS: VOLUME II: CANADA, 1830-1865 edited by C. Peter Ripley. Copyright ©1987 by the University of North Carolina Press. Used by permission of the publisher. www.uncpress.unc.edu

As British North American and US positions on slavery began to diverge, however, the border's political significance in the lives of Black North Americans fluctuated in ways that are not well understood in our contemporary period. As Cooper explains, slavery was gradually restricted in Canada through a series of legal rulings in Great Britain and in different British North American provinces. In 1793, the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, Lord John Graves Simcoe, passed the Slave Act restricting slavery in Upper Canada. Though it did not emancipate slaves, this ruling outlawed the import of slaves into Upper Canada and ordered the children of slaves freed at age 25. This had a peculiar effect in the Great Lakes region in particular. Until 1834, the north shore of Lake Erie, in Upper Canada, was a popular slaveholding region, while the 1789 Northwest Ordinance had prohibited

slavery entirely in the areas that would become Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio. Cooper points out that Simcoe's 1793 Slave Act didn't liberate enslaved Blacks in Upper Canada outright. But its prohibition on the import of slaves did have the effect of emancipating any US slaves who managed to escape across the border to Upper Canada. Moreover, Canadian slaves who crossed to the US *also* lost their slave status under British law. Ironically, this prompted some enslaved Black Canadians to make a run for the US border to free themselves. From 1793 to 1803, as Cooper relates, "[k]nowing that the Northwest Ordinance prohibited slavery in Michigan, these enslaved Ontarians soon began to cross or swim the Detroit River to freedom.... [I]n this instance, the Underground Railroad was reversed—it led *from* Canada to the United States" ("Fluid" 133).¹⁰³

Yet this startling narrative of Black Canadians escaping to the US to secure their freedom in the early 1800s has been veritably eclipsed by the later one of African Americans crossing to freedom in Canada in the mid-1800s. As the nineteenth century wore on, US and Canadian policies on slavery began to diverge significantly. The US was gradually increasing its dependency on slave labour, while the British colonial government in Canada was gradually restricting the slave trade and the practice of slavery in Canada. In 1803, a court ruling in Lower Canada by William Osgoode deemed slavery incompatible with British Law, thereby emancipating 300 slaves. Further British Imperial Acts—the 1807 Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade and the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act (which took effect on August 1, 1834)—decisively ended the slave trade and the practice of slavery in Canada.

¹⁰³ For a description of the abolition of slavery in regions of British North America outside of Upper Canada, see Winks, *Blacks* 99-113.

At the same time, nineteenth-century Canadian anti-slavery legislation and extradition statutes successfully protected fugitive US slaves in Canada from being deported back to the US and returned to slavery under their former owners. I would argue, in fact, that Canada's reputation in the US as a haven for fugitive slaves arose largely from the outcomes of Canadian legal rulings on extradition cases, rather than from the effects of the British Imperial Acts that actually ended slavery in Canada. Blacks may have not been allowed to vote the instant they crossed the border into Canada (despite the often erroneous suggestions made in abolitionist texts), but they *did* gain instant legal protection under British North American law, which regarded the crime of "self-theft" as "a patent impossibility where slavery did not exist" (Winks *Blacks* 169). In a series of legal cases in the 1830s and 40s, the US government demanded the extradition of fugitive African American slaves who had escaped to Canada. Yet in almost all cases, the Canadian government protected the former slaves and refused to return them to the US.¹⁰⁴ The 1837-38 Jesse Happy case, in particular, set out legal grounds for extradition that effectively protected former US slaves in Canada from the US Fugitive Slave Law (an 1850 law that allowed slavecatchers to apprehend fugitive slaves in the non-slaveholding states of the Northern US).¹⁰⁵ These cases changed the way abolitionists talked about Canada. Since these US slaves were defended by the Canadian government as soon as they arrived in Canada, the northern shores of the Great Lakes became widely recognized in US print culture as a space of instant freedom. Given the growing division between Canada and the US on the slavery issue, nineteenth-century Canada gained a reputation for its legal protection of fugitive slaves, its assertion of equal

¹⁰⁴ See, in particular, the Blackburn case (1833) and the Happy case (1837-38). Occasionally, though, former US slaves *were* deported to the US for committing crimes of theft, as in the case of Nelson Hacket. For a description of all these cases, see Winks 168-177 and Ripley et al. 5-6.

¹⁰⁵ The principles of the Happy case were later enshrined in Article X of the 1842 Webster-Ashburton Treaty. See Ripley et al. 5-6.

political and legal rights regardless of racial background, and its commitment to the abolition of slavery.

Antebellum US Black migration to Upper Canada took place in two major waves. From the 1820s until the 1840s, “the first substantial wave of immigrants, made up largely of blacks from the free states, moved north as.... the social, economic, and political status of blacks in northern [US] cities began to decline” (Ripley et al. 9). Many of these Black immigrants settled in Upper Canada. The second, and larger, wave of Black immigration to Canada took place as it became clear that Canada’s judicial system would protect fugitive slaves from the Fugitive Slave Law. From 1850 on, the Mason-Dixon line separating North and South became less relevant in the lives of Black fugitives, while the Canada-US border became more important and more visible. As a result, the number of Black fugitives fleeing to Canada West increased substantially, leading to significant Black populations in and near towns in Upper Canada such as Welland, St. Catharines, Colchester, Windsor, Amherstburg, London, Chatham, Dresden, and finally, Oro and Queen’s Bush (Winks, *Blacks* 144). Historians such as Sharon Roger Hepburn estimate that roughly 20,000 US Blacks settled in Canada before the Civil War (10); earlier estimates of 30,000-40,000 appear to have been inflated somewhat by abolitionist propaganda in the antebellum period.¹⁰⁶ The success of

¹⁰⁶ In his 1855 autobiography, for example, Samuel Ringgold Ward reported that “[t]here are supposed to be in Canada some 35,000 to 40,000 coloured people” (154) but admits that this number was an approximation made by experts “from the best sources at command” (154). Yet as Winks points out, many population estimates made during the nineteenth century were wildly inaccurate. Enumeration methods and census terminology were imprecise in the mid-nineteenth century; former slaves were understandably nervous about identifying themselves and sometimes passed for white or avoided enumeration altogether; newspaper reports misreported census information; and abolitionists and slave-owners alike often did not discriminate between Canada and Upper Canada, and inflated the numbers of escaping slaves to emphasize US losses. Robin Winks provides a 12-page appendix on the subject, with an informative discussion that outlines the difficulties of estimating the size of the Black population across Canada in different time periods. He concludes that “the total Negro population across the British North American Provinces (including the West Coast) in 1860 was approximately 62,000, with nearly two-thirds of these in Canada West and perhaps two-thirds having come—whether as fugitives or as free men—from the United States between 1840 and 1860” (*Blacks* 494). However debates about

free and formerly enslaved US Blacks in Canada challenged the ideas of Black inferiority that sustained US slavery and defied the US's perceived political hegemony over the continent. This challenge to US hegemony only became more pronounced after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850, when abolitionists increasingly reported on flights to Canada in their texts. Symbolically, Canada stood in opposition to the US as a space that had lived up to the emancipatory promise of the New World.

These historical realities have led scholars to propose new ways of understanding patterns of Black mobility in the Great Lakes region during the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, ways that reenvision the fixed, land-bound tropes of the Underground Railroad in terms of more evocative, fluid notions of travel and transit that evoke tropes of passage, "passing," and passes. In particular, historian Afua Cooper argues that the image of "fugitive slaves fleeing the slaveholding United States... has indeed become part of Canadian mythology" ("Fluid" 130) insofar as it reinforces notions of Canadian-American difference. However, even though this *grand récit* has established a sense of a very fixed, and very important, border between Canada and the US, Cooper's research into the lives of Blacks on the border characterizes the Canada-US border as an inherently permeable and ambiguous space for Black North Americans. While the US and Canada were establishing their terrestrial borders and emphasizing their political differences, Black North Americans were taking very opportunistic attitudes to cross-border movement, often moving back and forth across national borders at different points in their lives. Given this historical reality, Cooper conceptualizes the Detroit River border as a "fluid frontier" that enabled Black North Americans to develop flexible and complex national allegiances and identities. For Cooper,

the size of the Black population in Canada are ongoing, and more recent historians have downscaled their population estimates significantly; see Hepburn 10-11.

the term “fluid frontier” recalls the river between Detroit, Michigan, and Windsor, Canada West, but also refers to the free flow of goods, information, and people in the Great Lakes Region, and “the shifting and multiple nature of identities” (“Fluid” 131) created in such border zones. Black populations crossed the Detroit River border to create new social, political, national, gender and class identities on the opposite side; Blacks used these new identities, in turn, to defend themselves from slavery, to reunite their families, and to develop new Black communities along the border. For example, Henry Lewis, a slave living in Upper Canada, escaped from his Canadian master by crossing the river to the US; once settled in Schenectady, NY, he wrote a letter to his master establishing the conditions of his own purchase (“Fluid” 134). Later, former slaves like Henry Bibb wrote about their experiences crossing the border to Canada to attack US pro-slavery rhetoric and make a case for Black citizenship. Thus, “[b]y regarding the border as a significant unit of analysis,” Cooper writes, “one discovers that Blacks who lived at its edges consciously manipulated it in their ‘search for a place’ and sought to live in a place, any place, where they could live fully as humans” (“Fluid” 130).¹⁰⁷

While Cooper’s conceptualization of the “fluid frontier” refers specifically to the Detroit River, I would like to use the term to develop a more precise understanding of the literary construction of the Canada-US border, and the border across the Lake Erie area in particular. Black cross-border migrants used the border in very flexible ways to pursue their safety and happiness. Yet authors (many of whom were migrants themselves) also treated the border in very strategic and pragmatic ways. Both groups recognized that Black migration

¹⁰⁷ See also the research of literary critic Rinaldo Walcott, who characterizes Black diasporic movement in Canada as “jogging,” and historian Nora Faires, who draws from Cooper’s idea of the “fluid frontier” to describe late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Black migration in the Great Lakes region. Nancy Kang also develops a reading of the Canada-US border as an “unsettled” space. Twentieth-century works such as Ishmael Reed’s *Flight to Canada* also revisit this iconography of the Great Lakes region.

was symbolically important to the project of abolition. In that sense, Lake Erie was both a geographical space and an imagined space. Representations of the Lake Erie Passage offered an opportunity for authors of different political, racial, class and gender backgrounds to draw connections between the north-south migrations of Blacks in North America and the transatlantic routes of enslaved Africans, to imagine the effect of freedom on the human consciousness, to describe the ways in which the Black Canadian community could affect the abolition movement in the US, and to predict the racial and political future of North America. Each representation of the Lake Erie Passage became, in its own way, a philosophical inquiry into the kinds of transgression that could end US slavery.

In her study of the cross-border narratives of Benjamin Drew's *The Refugee*, Kang elaborates on the importance of transgression in cross-border abolitionist texts. She positions "the contradictory *episteme* of passing—passing on, passing by, passing through, passing over, passing away" (431) as a central feature of Canadian-American cross-border literature. As slaves chose to pass over the Canada-US border line, they implicitly testified to their own human status, their self-ownership, and their desire and capability for citizenship; in addition, their lines written *about* the border transgress the racial hierarchies of the nineteenth century and write back to the "peculiar institution" of US slavery. Kang thus compares Canadian/American cross-border writing with another transgressive genre: the slave pass. Both texts, she argues, function as "a potentially subversive artifact of American antebellum plantation culture.... [and] a site of rebellion for slaves who desired to appropriate some form of textual authority" over the dominant power structure (433). The cross-border narrative, like the slave pass, was a "species of hybrid transnational discourse seeking to reform more narrowly defined schemas of theoretical containment, aggressively nationalist sentiment, and

exclusionary literary praxis” (Kang 444). Like Cooper, Kang theorizes the Black cross-border experience as an inherently fluid one which challenges nineteenth-century ideas about the borders of the nation, the self, and the text.

In my use of the term “Lake Erie Passage” I build on the multiple meanings of the word “passage” to explore the way this visual and textual episode described the spatial, ideological, class, racial, and gendered transgressions required to cross the Canada-US border. The Lake Erie Passage recalled the water symbolism of the slave narrative tradition and the political debates that framed it. However, it made this symbolism even more urgent and meaningful by describing an actual space in North America where Black fugitives from US slavery became legally recognized and protected by the British Crown. Finally, while many of these Lake Erie Passages are episodic, featuring truncated, vague, or even inaccurate descriptions of Lake Erie and/or Canada itself, I invoke them as a starting point: how do Blacks on the border describe the methods required to cross the border, the experience of transgression (geographical and otherwise), and the effects of border-crossing? In this way, my study of each text extends the geographical limits of Lake Erie to consider the representation of Canada and the US more generally.

Lake Erie was not the most popular nor the easiest site of border-crossing for African Americans—Cooper suggests that the Detroit-Windsor river crossing was (“Fluid” 135-36). Yet Lake Erie became the definitive space where Black migration was cited and “sited” by antislavery literature, largely due to the symbolic resonance of a few important accidents of geography. First, Lake Erie formed part of a northward escape route that led from the Deep South to the most populous Black settlements in Canada, via US transportation systems. The mid-century American industrial boom produced elaborate railroad and canal networks,

completed between 1825 and 1845, that linked the Hudson and Mississippi River watersheds with the Great Lakes.¹⁰⁸ The processes of westward expansion of canal and railroad systems ultimately led to the expansion of US slavery and the development of US legal restrictions on Black movement (such as the Fugitive Slave Laws). However, abolitionists and fugitives realized that the railroads and canals—forms of technology which came to symbolize the success of Enlightenment thought and, by extension, the superiority of the white race—could be reverse-engineered to counter US expansion and US slavery, by moving slaves illegally on rail cars, boats, and barges. The links between the canal systems and Lake Erie was especially important. By 1845, anyone who had access to the Mississippi River, the Ohio River, or major cities like Pittsburgh, PA, Portsmouth or Cincinnati, OH, or Albany, NY, could reach the southern shores of Lake Erie by boat (see Figure 9). In the words of historians Adrienne Shadd, Afua Cooper, and Carolyn Smardz Frost,

Escape by boat was one of the earliest and most widely used methods of entry [into Canada], particularly for those living near the coast or along inland rivers. On the Great Lakes the boat service was extensive. Friendly captains leaving the port cities of Racine (Wisconsin); Chicago (Illinois); Detroit (Michigan); Sandusky, Cleveland and Toledo (Ohio) and Buffalo (New York) dropped off fugitives at ports in Canada West such as Windsor, Amherstburg, Owen Sound, Collingwood, Niagara Falls, St. Catharines, Hamilton, Toronto, and Kingston. (21-2)

A boat passage to Lake Erie from the US South often presented at the very least a faster travel option to slaves than a physically exhausting and dangerous escape by foot. Fugitive slave Lewis Clarke, for example, who escaped to Canada from Lexington, Kentucky in 1841, travelled by canal from Portsmouth to Cleveland, and from there bought a passage across Lake Erie to Port Stanley, Upper Canada. Abolitionists and Quakers in cities such as Detroit,

¹⁰⁸ The same industrial revolution, and the same political concerns about annexation and empire, prompted the construction of the Welland, Rideau, and Lachine Canals in Canada. McIlwraith argues that the Erie Canal was stimulated by the rhetoric of manifest destiny and political “call[s] to nationalism and self-sufficiency” (61) in early 1800s in the US.

Sandusky, and Cleveland often helped fugitives book passages on ships manned by known abolitionist sympathisers and even fugitive slaves (such as William Wells Brown and Henry Bibb, for example). Meanwhile, the Canada-US borderline, which bisected the east-west lengths of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, ran roughly parallel with the Mason-Dixon line. This symbolically cast the northern US as a liminal zone that was complicit in Southern slavery and further aided authors in constructing a symbolic binary division between a slave-ridden US and a morally superior Canada.



Figure 9: Canals of Ohio, 1825-1913, by the Ohio Historical Society [1969].

Source: Courtesy of the Ohio Historical Society.

But above all, it was the symbolism of the lengthy maritime passage that made Lake Erie attractive to authors and readers. Bluntly put, bushwhacking didn't offer very good

narrative options. At the time, the territory along the Canada-US border line was not well defined; as Kang notes, many first-hand accounts of fugitive escapes by land recall a great deal of confusion about the location of the border itself, hours of travel through dense forest, and somewhat anticlimactic arrivals in Upper Canada. For example, Henson, who travelled to Upper Canada in 1830, spent six weeks following an “old military trail [to Lake Erie] that had not been used since the war of 1812” (Walker 49).¹⁰⁹ By contrast, a voyage by boat across the relative safety of Lake Erie offered a longer consideration of what it meant for Blacks to pass from Canada to the US. As a bounded border zone, Lake Erie helped authors construct a sense of national difference, while imagining what it would mean to suspend or ignore national categorizations. US slaves, who were considered US property but not US citizens, were symbolically denationalized once they sailed away from US shores. The instant protection offered to them by the British North American government upon their arrival on the northern shore of Lake Erie offered insight into what it would mean for Blacks to become citizens. In Richard Hardack’s words, “[t]he slave narrative is a genre of crossed borders, particularly borders marked by water—a fluid threshold, indistinct and indefinable, which also transforms what it conducts” (56). The Lake Erie Passage offered an opportunity to consider these personal transformations as inherently political commentaries on the US system of slavery. In other words, each representation of Lake Erie describes differences between two national systems, even as it offers “passengers” the opportunity to change them.

While many of these texts consider Lake Erie as a specific site on the border, “passage” can also recall a metaphorical experience of movement and transformation rather than merely the literal location in which such an experience takes place or the direction of

¹⁰⁹ See McIntosh 185-186 and 357-361 for descriptions of the customs-houses and military forts built in the Great Lakes region during the nineteenth century.

travel. The texts in my study take very different approaches to understanding what Black movement meant to migrants and when Black movement could be considered complete. Some authors portray the Lake Erie Passage as a journey, a movement across borders with an indefinite duration and possibly no return. Others portray it as an expedition, a form of self-directed movement that leads to moral or scientific discovery, with an eventual return to a known, bordered space. Still others recall a more ambiguous, circular or back-and-forth movement, or even a sense of stasis. The open-endedness of the term “passage,” compared to the Underground Railroad “line,” opens up the study of this Black Atlantic site to a greater diversity of diasporic experiences of Blacks who crossed to Canada, including the feelings of ambivalence described by Kang and the kinds of inertia and circular migrations described by Cooper. Are Black migrants (like birds of passage) “passing through a place without staying in it” (“Passage” n. pag)? Should a Black transnational be considered “an itinerant” or “a tramp” (“Passage” n. pag)? Do the prohibitions against Black movement in the US transform a Canadian/American border crosser into a “thief, criminal, or fugitive” (Kang 432)? Or, does such a transnational adopt a more neutral or ambiguous designation: a “double agent,” “trickster,” “clever opportunist” (Kang 432), or resident? Can such transitory passengers and authors be rightfully considered under one national literary history or the other (or both)?

Central to these experiences of movement is “the power, permission, or right to pass... [or] travel as a passenger” (“Passage” n. pag). Many authors used the voyage across Lake Erie to examine the conditions that enable or prohibit Black movement, to contextualize the history of forced movement for Black peoples across the world, and to link themselves to a wider African diaspora. As literary scholar Brad Born points out, slave narratives frequently drew from the popular romantic “imagery of the wild, unruly sea to

suggest slaves' natural yearning for freedom and elemental right to resistance" (419-20).

White abolitionist writers used this trope as well. In his poem "The Slave-Mother," for example, John Collins links the powerful flow of water north over Niagara Falls with the northward flight of fugitive slaves and the inevitable triumph of abolitionist thought:

Long as thunders o'er the wave
Niagára's deaf'ning roar,
Shall the story of the slave
Echo wide on Erie's shore. (lines 243-6)

Slave songs and poetry also cited Biblical imagery. The religious iconography of Moses parting the Red Sea and of Joshua leading his people across the River Jordan to the Promised Land were particularly important narratives that authors used to describe the passage north as a natural trajectory and to depict Canada as a promised land for enslaved Blacks.

Other abolitionist texts used the water imagery of Lake Erie to connect the Canadian-American cross-border experience to other forms of slave escapes described in slave narratives across the world. In *Slavery and Social Death*, theorist Orlando Patterson discusses how slavery represents a form of social death, a kind of political drowning or suffocation. Slave narratives recall this through their water imagery: the passage of slaves through rivers often symbolizes a form of baptism, or the death of a slave subject and the rebirth of a person. As Hardack explains, these water settings "represent not just the slave's potential freedom, but his potential recapture and death in water.... During the forced expatriation from Africa, slaves are in a sense consumed in the hold of the ship, surrounded by water, interred and transformed by white society" (58). The recurring image of the ship in motion on Lake Erie between Canada and the US performs the movement of the middle passage in reverse, turning property into persons and reuniting the family unit: "[t]he slave

ship is turned upside down to provide a freedom ride” (Hardack 59). Moreover, as literary scholar Stephen Lucasi points out, the association of Lake Erie with nineteenth-century leisure travel stood in opposition to the horrific forced mobility of most nautical voyages for African Americans. This would, of course, include not only the Middle Passage but also the internal movement of slaves within America, notably the trips of Mississippi slave steamboats to the Deep South (Lucasi 528). Fugitive slaves frequently contrasted their experience on such slave ships with their Lake Erie “freedom ride.” As I will discuss, Brown and Henson both contrast their experiences of forced labour on Mississippi steamers to their free passage across Lake Erie. In another case, fugitive slave Henry Morehead outlines the stakes of his own voyage by referring to a slave passage to the Deep South (a trip which would lead to his own eventual death in slavery) as the only other alternative: “I would rather have followed [my family] to the grave,” he said, “than to the Ohio River to see them go down. I knew it was death or victory—so I took them and started for Canada” (qtd. in Drew 181). Over the course of the passage, fugitives and authors often reflected philosophically on the meaning of the transformation from a “circulating object” to a “travelling subject” (Lucasi 531), and the kinds of conceptual borders that were being renegotiated through their physical, racial and textual transgressions.

In this way, each act of passing reflects on conditions of nineteenth-century citizenship and the power structures that stabilize them. Political transitions from one state to another invariably involve more personal transgressions: forging slave passes, tricking masters, passing for white, disguising in drag, performing new class identities, and claiming enfranchisement. In Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, the escaping members of the Harris family adopt new gender, race, and class identities to board a steamer and cross

the lake: the fugitive revolutionary, George, pretends to be the slave of the abolitionist Mrs. Smyth, the light-skinned Eliza masquerades as an adolescent Black boy, and the young mulatto Harry temporarily becomes a white “Harriet.” Such forms of “fugitive dissimulation,” whether fictional or non-fictional, comment on what Mark Simpson calls “the incoherencies of racial categorization” (62) in North America, and represent “a passive-aggressive refusal to accept one’s predetermined collocation on this color line” (Kang 432). They question the stability of the racial and gender formations that determined citizenship in the United States by transforming them into a matter of personal choice.

Central to all of these acts of transgression are the notions of willed movement and choice—forms of agency that defined white citizenship but that were denied to trafficked cargo or slaves. Simpson, commenting on the meaning of mobility in nineteenth-century North America, argues that descriptions of movement of Blacks across the border on forms of transportation associated with leisure travel (notably the steamer and the railroad) implicitly cast Blacks as candidates for citizenship, because self-determined movement was associated with political agency. Boat passages, especially, recall “the traveling ideal that, emphasizing individuation, freedom, leisure, solitude, refinement, taste, reflection, discernment, sensibility, and disinterested detachment, treats as universal, as the common condition and capacity of all persons, what are in fact the dispositions, privileges, and values... of a particular social class under capitalism” (M. Simpson xxiii). Each description of the Lake Erie Passage implicitly commented on the power structures governing Black movement and the conditions of citizenship in North America. With every successful passing came a subversion of white American power and a redefinition of citizenship in North America.

By invoking the term “passage” I finally want to explore the textual senses of the word, namely how each of these texts drew from the genre of the slave pass and how the collection of texts about Lake Erie collectively represented Black migration. Many of these episodic descriptions of the Lake Erie Passage might seem too brief or vague to be meaningful. However, as Kang explains, each textual passage comments on the ways in which writing became a politically meaningful act for Black North Americans. Noting that many African Americans began their journey to Canada with acts of forgery, illicit writing, literary subversion, and coded signals, Kang theorizes the cross-border slave narrative as a document which, like a stolen slave pass, hijacks dominant power structures. Black Canadian writing became a particularly important threat to US racial logic: as Kang puts it, any former slave who reflects on his border-crossing to Canada “speaks himself into a national identity. It is the act of language, no longer spoken but written, that cements the newly adopted, lately defended ontological position” (440). Each cross-border text, like a pass, functioned as a “mobile and volatile signifier that traverses borders and problematizes national affiliations” (443). Furthermore, these passages crossed borders themselves, inspiring new physical escapes, new ways of describing Black movement, and new forms of literary production. Lake Erie became a meeting site for emigrationists, Black nationalists, and transnationals, all from different ideological, racial, and national backgrounds, who “passed on” different ideas about the possibilities of Black citizenship in North America. Taken together, these Lake Erie Passages represent a heteroglossic landscape upon which authors inscribed their ideas about racial and national identity. I want to consider these texts as individual commentaries on the experience of Black migration and as part of a wider discussion about the kinds of social changes that could stabilize a post-emancipation society.

2.3 The Lake Erie Passage in autobiographical texts

I then made up my mind that salt and potatoes in Canada, were better than pound-cake and chickens in a state of suspense and anxiety in the United States. Now I am a regular Britisher. My American blood has been scourged out of me; I have lost my American tastes; I am an enemy to tyranny. I would as lief meet serpents as some people I know of in the States. (Alexander Helmsley, qtd. in Drew 38)

I would rather have remained in my native country, among my friends, could I have had such treatment as I felt that I deserved. But that was not to be, and I came into the wilderness. (Thomas L. Wood Knox, qtd. in Drew 184)

I intend to be a terror to the system while I live. (Rev. William Troy, qtd. in Drew 319)

This section examines a range of autobiographical texts written by Black transnational authors in the Lake Erie area to investigate how allegiances were constructed and articulated by Black border-crossers and how Black writers acknowledged the US print cultural environment and used it to their advantage. Mary Louise Pratt defines the contact zone as “the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (*Imperial* 6). Blacks who lived on the edges of this contact zone were highly aware of the ways in which their writing contributed to different kinds of social and political conversations in both countries. Whether or not Blacks were accepted as citizens, they were rarely (if ever) recognized as legitimate writers in either Canada or the US. In addition, many of these Black writers were responding more specifically to the legitimacy of US slavery as a political and social institution, and their descriptions of the fluidity or the fixedness of the border play into that debate. Some authors downplayed the relevance of a physical border or

failed to mention it at all. By emphasizing the natural setting of Lake Erie, for example, they could highlight the artificiality of the political border between Canada and the US. If the only functional difference between Canada and the US was their stance on slavery, and if that all-important belief about slavery was revealed to be just as arbitrary as an imaginary line drawn through the middle of a lake, then the racial hierarchies that sustained the system of US slavery could also be called into question.

However, at other times, Black authors actively portrayed the border in very fixed ways. They wrote their texts in a way that *sustained* the myth of the Underground Railroad, and presented Canada as a kind of racial paradise, in order to present a model for the kind of nation the US could become. For Black North Americans, choosing sides between Canada and the US was a profound political statement; but this choice came with significant material and social consequences. Their comments about their own national alignments thus must be understood within the context of the different historical forces and pressures that shaped the print-cultural environment of North America.

By focussing on the Lake Erie Passage as a trope in Black Canadian/American writing, I am necessarily privileging the handful of slave narratives that describe some sort of trajectory across the Canada-US border. However, my examination reveals that the narratives that do mention the border also tend to be the narratives that are most self-conscious about the highly politicized print-cultural context of the US antebellum period and of the ways that Black statements of national identity would be interpreted in North America. Many Black writers on the border—even those who considered themselves “settled” in Canada—understood that their presence in Canada and their self-representation could affect debates about Black citizenship in the American and Canadian public spheres. While Black

immigrants to Canada wanted to represent their experience, they were also sensitive to the ways that their writing (along with their mobility) testified to their candidacy for citizenship. Pratt considers the genre of the American slave autobiography as an “autoethnographic text,”

a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them.... [T]hey involve a selective collaboration with and appropriation of idioms of the metropolis or the conqueror. These are merged or infiltrated to varying degrees with indigenous idioms to create self-representations intended to intervene in metropolitan modes of understanding. Autoethnographic works are often addressed to both metropolitan audiences and the speaker's own community. Their reception is thus highly indeterminate. Such texts often constitute a marginalized group's point of entry into the dominant circuits of print culture. (“Arts” 64)

In their representations of the Lake Erie Passage, Black cross-border writers were describing their efforts to secure citizenship and literacy, two forms of political and cultural power that were prohibited to them in the US. At the same time, they frequently wanted to testify to their own experiences in Canada, even if those experiences contradicted the reputation of Canada as a utopian space for fugitive slaves.

The resulting texts are often highly strategic ones which at times acknowledge the expectations of their white reading audiences and sharply criticize US slavery, but also acknowledge the difficulties of their Canadian experiences. These autobiographical texts were published in a print cultural environment that already had expectations about Black behaviour and agency. All of these Black migrants knew that their geographical movements, their descriptions of their experience, and their decisions to adopt different national identities were meaningful to the political discussions about the abolition of slavery in the US; they also understood that they were writing to largely white audiences who might or might not have been receptive to their claims for citizenship. All of these authors had something to prove. As a result I feel their slave narratives deserve careful attention, for the ways in which

they describe their own national alignments, the way they try to accommodate many of these readerly expectations, and the strategies these authors use to change them.

In his autobiography, fugitive slave Josiah Henson, for example, defiantly renounces his affiliation with the US upon arrival in Canada. Henson has been frequently reprehended by literary critics and historians for emphasizing an overly simplistic binary between Canada and the US in his slave narrative. However, when his larger comments about the Canada-US border are taken into account, his writing reveals a very canny understanding of the rhetorical significance of the border throughout his career and of the ways that his Canadian identity could help the abolitionist cause. One of Henson's contemporaries, Lewis Clarke, describes his border-crossing experience very differently by portraying Canada as an utterly unfamiliar and alienating space. In so doing, Clarke rhetorically establishes himself as a dislocated American hero to an audience of (largely) white American abolitionists. Still others, like Bibb and Brown, represent themselves as "sailors, moving to and fro between nations, crossing borders in modern machines that were themselves micro-systems of linguistic and political hybridity" (Gilroy 12). They revelled in the ease with which they could pass between the US and Canada, and spoke often of their success as Underground Railroad conductors.

Henson's *Life of Josiah Henson, formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada. Narrated by Himself* was published in Boston in 1849.¹¹⁰ Henson's narrative presents one of the most celebratory accounts of the Lake Erie Passage, and became a frequent point of reference in abolitionist fiction. Henson and his family escaped from slavery in 1830; shortly

¹¹⁰ Henson was functionally illiterate. His 1849 autobiography was ghost-written by Samuel A. Eliot. The last edition of Henson's slave narrative, *An Autobiography of the Rev. Josiah Henson ("Uncle Tom"), from 1789 to 1881*, was ghost-written by John Lobb. See M. E. Doyle for more information about the multiple editions of Henson's autobiographies.

afterwards, he became one of the most famous leaders of the Black community in Upper Canada, playing an instrumental role in founding a manual labour school at Dawn, Canada West, which opened in 1841. Over the course of his career he published many accounts of his life and work. Henson became a central iconic figure in the Black Canadian community because of his association with Harriet Beecher Stowe. In her *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a text Stowe wrote to outline the various sources she consulted about slavery and slave life in her novel, Stowe argues that she based her novel's characters and plot elements on "parallel facts from the lives of slaves of our personal acquaintance" (*Key* 13). She cites Henson as one of the inspirations for the long-suffering Uncle Tom (*Key* 26) and says that Henson and Lewis Clarke provided the foundation for her revolutionary mulatto character George Harris (*Key* 15).¹¹¹ Henson's narrative describes his conversion to Christianity and the subsequent tension that arises between his desire to free himself and his worry that "self-manumission" would require him to deceive his master. At one point in his slave narrative, Henson is sent downriver to be sold; when his boat nears New Orleans, he considers killing his sleeping master and travelling companions with an axe but refrains from doing so (*Life* 42). This resembles a key moment in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* when Cassy urges Tom to murder their master, Simon Legree, but Tom refuses. In Henson's *Life of Josiah Henson* and Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the Black hero's refusal to commit murder marks the beginning of his escape from slavery; yet while Henson's experience strengthens his resolve to disobey his master and escape to Canada with his family, Tom's refusal to kill Legree leads to his martyrdom.

¹¹¹ See also Ripley et al. 408 n. 1.

Much has been made of this Uncle Tom-Josiah Henson connection, largely because of the publicity that Henson's association with Uncle Tom brought to Henson as a public figure and to the Black settlements in Canada West in the 1850s. Some critics, such as Robin Winks, have dismissed the possibilities that Stowe met Henson before writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or had read Henson's *Life* before publishing her text. Henson's *Life* was published in 1849 in Boston, while Stowe was writing in Cincinnati; moreover, Henson's possible visits to Boston and Andover, Winks argues, never quite aligned with Stowe's presence in those cities, at least in the period during which she was writing her novel ("Making" 124). Nonetheless, I would argue that Henson's account of his nautical passages down the Mississippi (including his decision not to kill his sleeping travel companions) and his passage across Lake Erie bear such a striking resemblance to the events described in Stowe's novel that the connection seems impossible to dismiss. With Hiram Wilson, a white abolitionist, Henson founded the British American Institute of Science and Industry at Dawn, Canada West. While Stowe may have been unfamiliar with Henson until the 1850s, she was likely familiar with Wilson: he had been a student of Stowe's father and was one of the "Lane Rebels" who had left the Lane Theological Seminary in 1834 after taking issue with its colonizationist, antiabolitionist stance (Hedrick 102-3). By 1843, Wilson was publicizing the success of the Dawn Institute, and mentioning Henson's role in educating Black Canadians, in abolitionist newspapers such as the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* (1). Thus, Stowe may have heard of Henson's life story and his involvement with the Dawn Institute from second-hand abolitionist sources like Wilson, even if she had never met Henson personally or read his autobiography before she published *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Whether or not Stowe's text was directly influenced by Henson's 1849 slave narrative, Henson's writing (especially in later years) was undoubtedly influenced by Stowe's. The idea of Uncle Tom, and the massive international success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, changed the way that Henson was represented by abolitionists, the options Henson had for representing himself as a free Black in Canada, and the way his slave narratives were interpreted by (white) literary critics. As Robin Winks explains,

[T]he cause of the abolitionists was served well by Henson's narrative. In many ways his saga is illustrative of the problem of the intelligent fugitive slave of the time: Henson was seldom left free to be himself, to assimilate if he wished into the mainstream of Canadian life—even of black Canadian life—for he became the focus of abolitionist attention, a tool to be used in a propaganda campaign which was not above much juggling with the facts, however proper its ultimate goals may have been.... [His] life, and narrative, must be seen against the background of the efforts made by and on behalf of the fugitive slaves to found all-black colonies in Canada West. ("Making" 115)

Henson's fame, according to Winks, turned him into a problematic leader who became a sycophantic "Uncle Tom" (in the pejorative sense) even if he hadn't been so before his escape. His financial problems, brought on partially by the cost of supporting the Black settlement at Dawn, prompted many subsequent reprintings and rewritings of his slave narrative, each of which grew more elaborate than the last. The success and fame of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* led Henson to refer to himself, in his titles, as the source for Uncle Tom, even if Stowe later came to distance herself from Henson (see Winks, "Making"). The last edition of Henson's slave narrative, *An Autobiography of the Rev. Josiah Henson ("Uncle Tom"), from 1789 to 1881* (ghost-written by John Lobb), bore text and illustrations that closely mimicked the iconography of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

I relate these facts to introduce both how politicized abolitionist print culture was in the period when Henson's first autobiography was written and how the Canada-US border

was already being read at the time. Henson's first slave narrative, published in 1849, constructs a stark political division between the US and Canada. Henson structures his account of slavery to contrast the different kinds of forced and free movement available to US slaves. He tells of his first introduction to the idea of running away, when his master asks Henson to lead a group of his fellow slaves from Maryland to a plantation in Kentucky. Along the way, as Henson's party passes Ohio, Henson is invited by other Blacks in Cincinnati to remain in Ohio and liberate himself and his group from slavery. Henson refuses, explaining that it was a point of honour for him to purchase his freedom (*Life* 23). Yet Henson's master then betrays him, first by selling all of the members of Henson's party and later by deceiving Henson about the price required to purchase his freedom. Henson's master tricks him again by sending him on a boat to New Orleans to be sold. While going downriver on the Mississippi, Henson considers killing his guard (his owner's nephew) and escaping, but makes a moral decision not to do so (*Life* 42). Instead, he decides to escape with his family to Canada (*Life* 48).

Henson's account of crossing the Canada-US border is set into contrast by these previous migrations across the United States and by Henson's realization of the way that his labour is being repeatedly stolen by his master. Henson's trip across Lake Erie becomes a means of confronting the politics of slavery that he has previously been unable to repudiate publicly. In his escape, Henson flees with his wife and four children on foot. After a gruelling walk through the Ohio wilderness, Henson manages to secure a boat passage across Lake Erie with a friendly captain, and works for a day to pay for the crossing while his family waits in the woods. His surprise at the friendliness of the crew and his success in boarding the boat contrast with the difficulty of his previous passage down the Mississippi,

in which the white boat crew was leading him towards an even more punitive form of plantation slavery in the Deep South. Henson's Lake Erie Passage emphasizes his own transformation into a freeman by noting the significant differences between his boat captains on the Mississippi River and Lake Erie:

The next morning we dropped down to Black Rock, and the friendly captain, whose name I have gratefully remembered as Captain Burnham, put us on board the ferry-boat to Waterloo, paid the passage money, and gave me a dollar at parting. He was a Scotchman, and had done enough to win my enduring gratitude, to prove himself a kind and generous man, and to give me a pleasant association with his dialect and his country. (*Life* 58)

Henson carefully sets up a series of inversions in this scene to emphasize the social and racial conventions that are broken by his illicit movement across the border. The boat captain's Scottish accent marks him both as a newcomer to and outsider of the US. Moreover, the captain (as a figure of authority) supports the idea of racial equality, foreshadowing Henson's future interactions with the white Canadian community. Finally, unlike Henson's companions on the Mississippi who steal Henson's money and his labour, Captain Burnham pays him for his crossing and wishes him well.

Henson's description of his own personal transformation on Canadian shores also helps him establish the potential long-term effect that a Black Canadian community could have on the abolitionist cause. Henson's account of his arrival in Canada is certainly one of the most celebratory in cross-border literature. In his narrative, he describes not only his personal response to his newly-gained freedom, but the response of his fellow Canadians:

When I got on the Canada side, on the morning of the 28th of October, 1830, my first impulse was to throw myself on the ground, and giving way to the riotous exultation of my feelings, to execute sundry antics which excited the astonishment of those who were looking on. A gentleman of the neighborhood, Colonel Warren, who happened to be present, thought I was in a fit, and as he inquired what was the matter with the poor fellow, I jumped up and told him *I was free*. "O," said he, with a hearty laugh,

“is that it? I never knew freedom make a man roll in the sand before.” It is not much to be wondered at, that my certainty of being free was not quite a sober one at the first moment; and I hugged and kissed my wife and children all round, with a vivacity which made them laugh as well as myself. (*Life* 58-9)

By describing himself kneeling on the shore, Henson represents the crossing as a transcendent spiritual, personal, and political experience. Henson celebrates his own racial uplift and describes the passage as a transformation that enables the permanent preservation and reunion of his nuclear family. Furthermore, Henson’s proclamation to Colonel Warren on shore, “*I am free*,” asserts his equality with white citizens in Canada. Moreover, his awareness of the meaning of his freedom, and of his ability to choose his national alignment, directly contradicts the idea that he and his family are incapable of citizenship. The “sundry antics” of Henson on the shore of Lake Erie thus construct a sense of an absolute difference between Canada and the US—even though Henson is forced to acknowledge, immediately after this passage, that his “free” life in Canada is hard; Henson and his family literally make their new home in Canada in an abandoned pig sty. Yet Henson ignores the material conditions of his Canadian experience to emphasize instead the ideological differences between Canada and the US.

Abolitionist propaganda revelled in such joyful reactions on Canadian shores, and progressive editions of Henson’s autobiography emphasize this absolute border even more forcefully. In these later accounts, as Henson’s hero status increases, his performance on shore becomes more elaborate, and Henson becomes even more dependent on godlike white figures in his text. In Henson’s 1881 autobiography, for example, the Scottish captain becomes a father figure, to whom Henson feels compelled to promise to be good: “I’ll use my freedom well; I’ll give my soul to God” (*Autobiography* 94). Similar requests for white endorsement (both on the ship and on Canadian shores) recall uncomfortable images of

minstrelsy for the benefit of a white audience (see Figure 10 and its precedents, Figure 7 and Figure 11). As Winks says,

Ultimately Henson was to suffer the greatest irony of all: precisely through his successful self-identification with Uncle Tom, and because of his own moderate views on matters of race, he would become synonymous for many with the paths of moderation and even accommodation to the white community which the mid-twentieth century's Black Power advocates rejected. ("Making" 131)

What has been lost, in the years that have followed, is the ways in which the idea of Black political agency is set up and described in Henson's *Lake Erie Passage*. His 1849 narrative represents his arrival on the shores of Lake Erie as a subversive act. By describing his border-crossing as an instantaneous political transformation and by classifying himself forcefully as a new Canadian, Henson ignores his own former status as a slave and his (perceived) political helplessness. Instead, he rejoices in his newfound citizenship—an intellectual act that would be beyond the capabilities of mere chattel. The idea that Henson could reject his US status and recategorize himself as a Canadian thus deliberately contradicts US proclamations about Black incapacity for citizenship: not only is Henson able to become a citizen; he is also able to be discerning in his choice of citizenship.

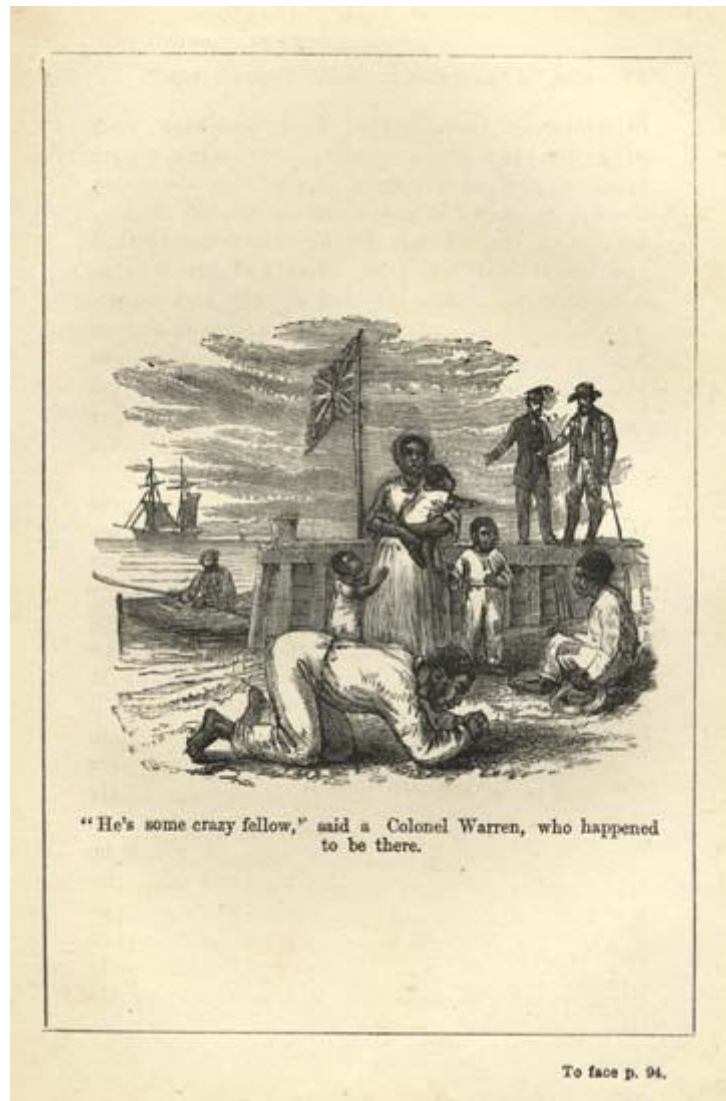


Figure 10: “He's some crazy fellow.” [Illustrator unknown.]

Source: Henson, Josiah. *An Autobiography of the Rev. Josiah Henson (“Uncle Tom”). From 1789 to 1881*. Ed. John Lobb. London: Schuyler, 1881. [p. 94a]. Print. Rpt. in *Documenting the American South*, n. d. Web. 15 May 2009.

Notes: This image, printed in Henson’s 1881 autobiography, clearly builds on the iconography of Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Like the image accompanying Stowe’s text (see Figure 7 on page 167), this drawing emphasizes the transition from slave to subject by showing the departing boat in the background; it, too, emphasizes the importance of the Black family, clustered in a semicircle on Canadian shores. Yet this image builds on Stowe’s to emphasize the transgression of power structures that takes place as a result of the Henson’s arrival. The kneeling figure of Henson, at the centre of the image, is certainly meant to recall Josiah Wedgwood’s famous “Am I Not a Man and a Brother?” slave medallion (see Figure 11). Yet the position of the white onlookers around the Henson family differs significantly from both Wedgwood’s image and Stowe’s: the white figures’ position on top of a pier recalls a slave auction block, reversing the expected power structure, and their pointing gestures suggest a power reversal taking place.



Figure 11: “Am I Not a Man and a Brother?” Slave medallion by Josiah Wedgwood [1787].

Source: Image by kind permission of the Wedgwood Museum, Staffordshire (England); www.wedgwoodmuseum.org.uk.

At the same time, the 1849 text also values Henson's ability, as a new Black Canadian, to challenge the social and political conditions of Canadian society as well. In the episode, Henson describes himself as a "madman," while the white Canadians around him stare in astonishment. Clearly, the episode is designed to attack US slavery, but Henson's account of the surprised Canadians is intriguing. Henson's "excessive" revelry in his newfound political power somehow upsets the *Canadian* social order as well. While many Lake Erie Passages describe forms of racial passing, in Henson's account, the new Canadians are not travellers of ambiguous gender, class, or race. Their dress and their skin tone situate them directly in a new Black Canadian working class, reflecting Henson's ideological commitment to his manual labour school and the notion that a strong Black working class in Canadian settlements would prepare former slaves for citizenship. The new Black Canadian family is the object of much scrutiny and discussion by white onlookers in Canada—there is an oppressive sense that the Hensons are being watched and evaluated on their "freedom performance"—but the presence of a new Black community in Canada is depicted as profoundly transformative to white logic and white discourse in *both* countries. Unlike many later fictional descriptions of Black arrivals in Canada (like Stowe's), which describe fugitive arrivals in Canada as private, secretive events, Henson describes his immigrant family's arrival on a public pier, thus situating their transformation from slaves to subjects as a matter of public, rather than private, interest to Canadian citizens. In addition to challenging US ideas of Black citizenship, then, Henson also acknowledges the potentially difficult reception of new Black immigrants to Canada—an issue that he complains about on other occasions, but that he may have felt he could not address explicitly in this slave narrative.¹¹² Henson's

¹¹² Henson once addressed the latent racism in Canada by reporting that "in Canada, black children are despised" (qtd. in Winks, "Introduction" xxvii).

representation of the Canadian reaction to his Lake Erie Passage thus quietly acknowledges the difficult social conditions faced by Blacks across the continent, regardless of their citizenship status. He presents the Black Canadian as an object of both discussion and entertainment, as well as an empowering ideal and a model for the African diaspora across the world.

In short, Henson's 1849 text displays a very canny sense of the symbolic value of his own citizenship in *both* nations and of the ways that his choice of national alignment could interact with larger abolitionist discussions about what Canada could offer fugitive slaves from the US. The question of the "rightful" political identity of Black Canadians raised in this episode is significant enough that Henson would symbolically re-enact the Canada-US border-crossing again in later texts. In his 1881 *Autobiography of Josiah Henson*, for example, Henson describes another border-crossing episode that took place at the Crystal Palace Exhibition in London, England, in 1851. Henson went to the World's Fair to represent his manual labour school and to encourage sales of its products. For his exhibit, he chose to display four black walnut boards that he felt would reflect the craftsmanship of the Black Canadian community: "excellent specimens, about seven feet in length and four feet in width, of beautiful grain and texture. On their arrival in England, I had them planed and perfectly polished, in French style, so they actually shone like a mirror" (*Autobiography* 100). Henson's jet-black boards are, however, transported to England by an American boat. This transportation issue causes an international incident in which Henson has to navigate between his Canadian and American identities. Given that the lumber has been transported by the US, the superintendant of the US exhibition "insist[s] that [the] lumber should be exhibited in the American department" (*Autobiography* 100). Upon hearing that the work of

fugitive slaves in Canada is going to be symbolically stolen and unilaterally reclassified as an American product, Henson protests:

To this I objected. I was a citizen of Canada, my boards were from Canada, and there was an apartment of the building appropriated to Canadian products. I therefore insisted that my boards should be removed from the American department to the Canadian. But, said the American, "You cannot do it. All these things are under my control. You can exhibit what belongs to you if you please, but not a single thing here must be moved an inch without my consent." (*Autobiography* 100)

The superintendent's reclassification scheme (a form of northward expansion) threatens to reenact a version of the Middle Passage, stealing the black board "bodies" and the labour of Black workers. At the same time, he denies the political agency of fugitive slaves in Canada who now consider themselves Canadian citizens. Angry that his work is going to be repossessed by an American government who had already once stolen his labour and his body and had refused to acknowledge him as a citizen while he lived and worked in the US, Henson refuses to cooperate. He retaliates by creating a textual palimpsest on the boards, overlapping his past status as a US slave with his present success in Canada and his newfound political voice:

Thought I, if this Yankee wants to retain my furniture, the world shall know who owns it. I accordingly hired a painter to paint in large white letters on the tops of my boards: "This is a product of the industry of a Fugitive Slave from the United States, whose residence is Dawn, Canada."

In due time, the American superintendent came around.... The gaze of astonishment with which he read my inscription, was laughable to witness. His face was as black as a thunder-cloud. "Look here, sir," said he. "What, under heaven, have you got up there?.... Do you suppose I am going to have that insult up there?.... [Y]ou may take it away, and carry it where you please." (*Autobiography* 101)

Both parties understand how the black boards, when understood as American products, reinforce the labor practices and ideological assumptions sustaining US slavery. They also see how Henson's illiteracy could put decisions about his representation entirely in the hands

of the US superintendant. However, Henson's graffiti makes the silent boards testify about the unspoken history of Blacks in Canada; in fact, the boards now come to represent not only the possibility of Black citizenship but also the existence of defiant, politically aware Black citizens in Canada. As a slave, Henson was once a product and a producer of the US. As a fugitive, Henson chose to take his Black body and his labour outside of the US, putting it on virtual display in Canada to prove his capacity for political thought. Now, as a new Canadian as well as a former American, Henson refuses to allow himself and his work to be symbolically repossessed by the United States. The white writing on the black background inverts the expectations of his white audience—instead of being owned once again, Henson asserts his ownership of his product and puts on display his complex national alignments as both a new Canadian and an American in exile.

Not only does this rhetorical move enable Henson to seize a form of American identity for himself; it also gives the US agent more than he bargained for. The US superintendant must now "own" the fact that a productive, intelligent American, once denied human status because of his racial background, now chooses to contribute to Canadian society instead. The American superintendant tries to make Henson retract his walnut-board statement about his American origins and his presence in Canada. However, Henson stands his ground:

"Oh," said I, "I think, as you wanted it very much, I will not disturb it. You can have it now.... [W]hen I wanted to remove it, you would not allow it, and now, for all me, it shall remain." In the meantime the crowd enjoyed it and so did I. The result was, that by the next day, the boards were removed to their proper place at no expense to me, and no bill was ever presented to me for carrying the lumber across the Atlantic. (*Autobiography* 101)

Playing with the ironies of text and product, Henson revels in his ability to pass between the US and Canada at will. While he once had to conceal his illegal movement, he can now refuse to move, or have his new flight to Canada endorsed by the US government. The episode demonstrates how keenly aware Henson is that the mere act of asserting a national status could transform North American society. His status as a resistant, outspoken American is still a valuable rhetorical position for him, but his “proper place” is on the “Canadian” side of the Crystal Palace.

The episode also shows the importance of Henson’s writing about his own nationality. By writing on his boards, Henson usurps American power and turns the exceptionalist narrative that defines American progress against itself. His new narrative tells a story that reflects the conflicted feelings of Blacks in Canada. Furthermore, Henson recognizes that his insurgent text has the power to change the way people think about race relations in North America. The face of the American superintendant (as he reads Henson’s progress narrative) visibly turns “black as a thunder-cloud” (*Autobiography* 101). Henson notes a similar change in the onlookers at the Crystal Palace who read his declaration of national sentiment: “Perhaps my complexion attracted attention, but nearly all who passed, paused to look at me, and at themselves, as reflected in my large black walnut mirrors” (*Autobiography* 101). Henson’s reading of the situation suggests that his metaphorical Lake Erie Passage, like his actual one years before, has allowed his white onlookers to experience and understand the complexity of the Black diasporic position for themselves. In this way, Henson writes himself into a Canadian identity—sometimes simplistically so. Yet the border-crossing episodes in his texts show an awareness about the ways that his experience

in Canada could affect larger discussions about abolition and Black subjectivity in North America.

One of Henson's contemporaries, the fugitive slave and author Lewis Garrard Clarke, describes a similar trajectory across Lake Erie. Yet while Henson's description of his arrival in Canada concentrates on the political power he has gained, Clarke addresses the feelings of alienation and despair experienced by former US slaves in Canada. Born in 1815, Clarke escaped to Canada in the summer of 1841, from a tobacco plantation near Lexington, Kentucky, to Port Stanley, Canada West. Unlike Henson, who moved to Canada and stayed there for the rest of his life, Clarke moved back and forth from the US to Canada frequently in his lifetime. After his successful escape to Canada, Clarke went back to the US to rescue his brother Milton and became an antislavery lecturer (Ripley et al. 277, n. 7). His *Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis Clarke* was published in 1845. His slave narrative, which describes his escape to Canada as well as his return to the US to free his brother, became well-known in abolitionist circles, especially because Stowe cited Clarke as the inspiration for her revolutionary fugitive slave character George Harris in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Clarke returned to Canada West in the early 1850s, and lived there until 1874, when he moved to Oberlin, Ohio. Perhaps more than most, then, Clarke epitomized the circular patterns of motion and migration of Black cross-border populations in the nineteenth century. Throughout his career, Clarke "praised Canada as a land of opportunity and freedom for blacks" (Ripley et al. 277, n. 7) but worked actively to fight for the abolition of slavery in the US.

Published four years before Henson's account, Clarke's narrative is fascinating because of the way it represents the fear and overwhelming social alienation experienced by fugitive slaves in Canada. Like Henson, Clarke recognizes that his Lake Erie Passage can

explore the different kinds of national belonging that fugitive slaves experience as Canadian citizens and American exiles. As a slave in the US, Clarke (like Henson) never had access to US citizenship—his black skin in fact disqualifies him from the very possibility of being a US citizen. Yet Clarke draws from his familiarity with the US geographical and cultural environment to draw himself closer to his intended American audience. In the US, he is at home, yet physically and politically threatened; in Canada, he is politically safe, yet culturally and physically disoriented. His expressions of intellectual uncertainty position himself alongside an intended American readership that would understand and relate to his experience as a foreigner in Canada. His slave narrative thus explores the paradoxical forms of national belonging available to formerly enslaved Americans in Canada: he is always radically within and radically outside both countries.

Clarke's descriptions of the Canadian landscape and his trajectory to Canada are highly symbolic and evocative; he literally reads his national and political transformation in the landscape before him. He begins his slave narrative by relating his previous knowledge of Canada, which consists of pro-slavery gossip and lies that characterize Canada as a demonic space. In these rumours, Canada is associated with images of blindness, mutilation, and imprisonment. Slave owners warn Clarke that "if he goes to Canada, the British will put him in a *mine under ground, with both eyes put out, for life*" (31). Similarly, Clarke hears that when Canadians "get hold of slaves in Canada, they make various uses of them. Sometimes they *skin the head*, and wear the wool on their coat collars—put them into the lead-mines, with both eyes out—the young slaves they eat; and as for the Red Coats, they are sure death to the slave"(39) . These stories oppose the grand narrative of Black freedom in Canada by presenting horrific images of forced labour and confinement—stories which are

surely meant to obscure the reality of slavery in the US, making the forced labour and confinement experienced by US slaves seem positively benign in comparison. At the beginning of his narrative, Clarke expresses a great fear of the “Canadian tricks” (41) that would literally and figuratively mislead him to escape to slavery. However, in his escape to Canada, Clarke begins to adopt the very “Canadian tricks” that he so fears in the early parts of his narrative. For example, he uses the ambiguity of his mulatto complexion to subvert the US racial hierarchy. As he journeys from Kentucky to Ohio, first on foot and then by canal boat, he passes for a white traveller. He then goes on to blind himself with a disguise of “double-eyed green spectacles. When I got them on,” he complains, “they blind-folded *me*, if they did not others. Every thing seemed right up in my eyes. Some people buy spectacles to see out of; I bought mine to keep from being seen” (35). Though his new perspective causes no end of psychological distress, it also helps him to discover the power and symbolic value of his own deviance in the US system. Clarke’s narrative plays on the ironic dichotomy between Canada and the US. US slaveholders warn slaves about fictitious Canadians who will blind, mutilate, and decapitate them. Meanwhile, US readers are blind to ways that slaves are already legally “undead,” that they are already being mutilated and murdered, and that they already have become figures of negation within US society. Clarke’s narrative, by documenting his brutal treatment in slavery, reveals the repressed violence and the mechanisms of denial that function to sustain US slavery.

The “confusion, dreams, anxiety and trembling” (35) brought on by Clarke’s flight increase as he crosses the Mason-Dixon line and moves through the northern US, from Portsmouth, Ohio to Cleveland by canal boat, and attempts to book a passage to Canada. However, when he reaches Lake Erie, his anxiety about his future in Canada manifests itself

again in a fear of blindness. At first he can't see the other side of the lake, and then he is forced to book a night passage—a delay he perceives as “a bad omen” (38). The crossing itself, from Cleveland to Port Stanley, Canada West, takes place in obscurity. Clarke's description (like many other slave narratives) exhibits a “pervasive lack of specificity of events... [and] narrative elisions... that make it difficult to register in time and place the shift from American to Canadian territory” (Kang 445). Yet while the border itself is not actually described, Clarke's arrival on shore is nothing less than a revelation: “When I stepped ashore here, I said sure enough, I AM FREE. Good heaven! what a sensation, when it first visits the bosom of a full-grown man; one born to bondage—one who had been taught, from early infancy, that this was his inevitable lot for life” (38). Despite his happiness in his arrival, Clarke's national transformation and his literal self-possession come at a great social cost:

Not till *then* did I dare to cherish, for a moment, the feeling that one of the limbs of my body was my own. The slaves often say, when cut in the hand or foot, “Plague on the old foot” or “the old hand; it is master's—let him take care of it. Nigger don't care, if he never get well.” My hands, my feet, were now my own. But what to do with them, was the next question. A strange sky was over me, a new earth under me, strange voices all around; even the animals were such as I had never seen. A flock of... black geese were altogether new to me. I was entirely alone; no human being, that I had ever seen before, where I could speak to him or he to me. (38-39)

Once in Canada, Clarke can describe his previous slave condition as a form of dismemberment and dispossession of the self. His “repossessed” hands and feet symbolize the labour and agency that he now owns. While the slaveowners once warned him about cannibalizing Canadians, he can reconfigure America as a home of body-snatchers who force slaves to donate their bodies to another person's care. His own use of his feet to escape to Canada testifies to his own (unrecognized) human status in America.

Clarke's narrative thus compares two experiences of nationlessness: the uncanny experience of being an American slave, politically "undead" within the US, with the sensation of being an American refugee in Canada. Even though in Canada he is recognized as a human being, Clarke describes himself as socially, geographically, and nationally dispossessed. His description of the Canadian landscape above describes his un-homeliness; Clarke can't help expressing his new condition as a failure of knowledge. In perhaps the most eloquent expression of the sense of alienation experienced by fugitive slaves in Canada, Clarke asks,

And could I make that country ever seem like home?.... If I could have been assured of my freedom in Kentucky, then, I would have anything in the world for the prospect of spending my life among old acquaintances where I first saw the sky, and the sun rise and go down. It was a long time before I could make the sun work right at all. It would rise in the wrong place, and go down wrong; and, finally, it behaved so bad, I thought it could not be the same sun. (39)

Clarke's newfound citizenship in Canada creates a form of existential crisis: though he can possess his own work, body, and mind, he has lost his family and knowledge system.

According to Clarke, exile in Canada is a form of social death just as much as slavery had been. The vast expanse of Lake Erie symbolizes the near-permanent destruction of family ties and what little subjectivity a slave could possess in the US. The ambivalence of narratives like Clarke's provides a stark contrast to later representations by authors like Stowe and Brown, who often simplify or eliminate that sense of confusion in order to construct happier portrayals of the future of Blacks in Canada.

Clarke combats this feeling of alienation in Canada by looking for "the greatest number of colored soldiers"(40) in Canada West,¹¹³ a search which requires him to examine

¹¹³ I have not yet been able to determine how Clarke knew to look for regiments of Black soldiers in Upper Canada. There is some indication that a regiment of Black Upper Canadian soldiers, Captain Runchey's

the political contradictions between Canada and the US. The search turns into a series of uncanny incidents, including getting lost and repeating experiences uncontrollably. As he proceeds farther into Canada, Clarke describes repeatedly encountering the same white soldier on the street:

When I arrived in St. Thomas, I kept a bright look-out for the red coats. As I was turning the corner of one of the streets, sure enough, there stood before me a *red coat*, in full uniform, with his tall bear-skin cap, ...and he standing as erect as a guide-post. Sure enough, that is the fellow that they tell about catching the slave. I turned on my heel, and sought another street. On turning the other corner, the *same* soldier, as I thought, faced me.... I was as near scared to death, then, as a man can be and breathe. (40)

While Clarke is initially terrified of the soldier, the soldier does function, in a symbolic way, as a “guide-post” that enables Clarke to overcome his national disorientation and find a community. Clarke’s efforts to find a Black Canadian soldier represent his first efforts to follow through on his newfound political choice and overturn the controlling institutions of the United States. Clarke finally encounters the ideal citizens he seeks: “two colored soldiers, with a white man, bound, and driving him along before them. This was something quite new. I thought, then, sure enough this is the land for me. I had seen a great many colored people bound, and in the hands of whites, but this was changing things right about.... [E]ver after, I felt quite easy in Canada” (40). Clarke’s satisfaction at this scene of inversion—Black soldiers guarding a white man—casts the US as a prison where Blacks are bound in the hands of whites. Moreover, his success in finally finding the Black soldiers symbolically reinforces his political transformation from US slave to British subject and political agent.

Company of Colored Men, fought against a US regiment from Kentucky during the War of 1812; perhaps the rumours of Black soldiers spread to slave cultures in Kentucky as a result of that military encounter (see Parks Canada 18-19). Other regiments of Black soldiers were assembled in Upper Canada during the Rebellion of 1837.

From his new vantage-point in Canada, Clarke begins to suggest new ways of looking at the US and its most cherished ideals. His narrative concludes by explaining how his Canadian experience has helped him see the Bunker Hill Monument, one of the most treasured monuments of the US Revolutionary War, as a potential site of incarceration:

Mr. Everett, with whom I worked, treated me kindly, and urged me to stay in Canada, offering me business on the farm. He declared “there was no ‘free state’ in America; all were *slave* states, bound to slavery, and the slave could have no asylum in any of them.” There is certainly a great deal of truth in this remark. I have *felt*, wherever I may be in the United States, the kidnappers may be upon me at any moment. If I should creep up to the top of the monument at Bunker’s Hill, beneath which my father fought, I should not be safe, even there. The slave-mongers have a right, by the laws of the United States, to seek me, even upon the top of the monument, whose base rests upon the bones of those who fought for freedom. (42)

Clarke’s new perspective from across Lake Erie gives him the rhetorical distance to criticize the most privileged concepts of American politics, transforming them into their polar opposite. As Clarke said when he adopted his green spectacles, “Every thing seemed right up in my eyes” (35). While Clarke’s way of seeing Canada initially establishes him as a US citizen displaced in a foreign land, his new Canadian perspective becomes a critical tool for criticizing US slavery.

In his Lake Erie Passage, Clarke defines himself culturally as an American in a foreign land, and politically as a Canadian citizen. In so doing, he performs a fundamental criticism of US culture and political discourse while still expressing ambivalence about his experience in Canada. Theorists from Edward Said to Lisa Lowe have commented on the ways in which “the project of imagining the nation as homogenous requires the orientalist construction of cultures and geographies... as fundamentally ‘foreign’ origins antipathetic to the modern American society that ‘discovers,’ ‘welcomes,’ and ‘domesticates’ them” (Lowe

5). In her theorization of immigrant writing, Lowe argues that citizenship is determined not only through legislation and location, but also through cultural production:

Citizens inhabit the political space of the nation, a space that is, at once, juridically legislated, territorially situated, and culturally embodied. Although the law is perhaps the discourse that most literally governs citizenship, US national culture—the collectively forged images, histories, and narratives that place, displace, and replace individuals in relation to the national polity—powerfully shapes who the citizenry is, where they dwell, what they remember, and what they forget. (2)

As a US slave, Clarke was denied American citizenship. However, through his autobiographical portrayal of his journey to Canada, Clarke can redefine himself, if only retroactively, as a member of, and participant in, an American civil society. Lowe explains that subjects can often define themselves as citizens by engaging with national symbols:

It is through the terrain of national culture that the individual subject is politically formed as the American citizen: a terrain introduced by the Statue of Liberty, discovered by the immigrant, dreamed in a common language, and defended in battle by the independent, self-made man. The heroic quest, the triumph over weakness, the promises of salvation, prosperity, and progress: this is the American feeling, the style of life, the ethos and spirit of being.... It is through culture that the subject becomes, acts, and speaks itself as “American.” (Lowe 3)

Clarke’s narrative tries to engage with these American mythologies by presenting himself as an adventurer in the foreign space of Canada; in so doing, he can speak himself into a category of American citizenship that he feels he has always deserved. Yet his new perspective on the US from his exile in Canada—and his new political agency in Canada—also enables him to respond critically to the US system. Clarke’s bi-national vision, while dizzying at times, enables him to engage with US debates about abolition and the meaning of freedom, while also denying the idea that political freedom in Canada can miraculously solve the problems of loneliness and dispossession experienced by Blacks in Canada.

Other fugitive slaves, such as William Wells Brown, developed a sense of selective national identity to express their rejection of US slavery. The Black transnational author and abolitionist made multiple escape attempts in his early adulthood. With the help of a Quaker family, Brown successfully escaped from slavery in 1834, travelling by night from Cincinnati to Cleveland. However, he was stopped in his tracks by ice that was covering Lake Erie in the winter of 1834. He settled in Cleveland and then moved to Buffalo: both cities were close enough to Canada that he felt confident he could escape, should slave-catchers come looking for him. He spent the next nine years working as a steamboatsman on Lake Erie, ferrying passengers from Detroit, Cleveland, and Buffalo to the Canadian cities of Windsor and Fort Erie, Canada West. While Brown's ships largely catered to tourists and local trade, he was also known to carry more extraordinary goods from time to time. In 1842 alone, Brown reported that he helped over sixty-nine fugitive slaves cross Lake Erie and watched his "merchandise" transform into legal subjects on the Canadian shore.

Perhaps more than most, Brown was acutely aware of what Canada meant to these fugitives, for earlier in his life, he had worked as a guard on slave boats going in the opposite direction, transporting slaves down the Missouri River to Southern plantations. The contrast between this forced movement of American slavery and his later free movement across Lake Erie is central to his 1847 *Narrative of William Wells Brown: A Fugitive Slave*. Unlike Lewis Clarke, Brown never chose to live in Canada and thus does not discuss Black life in Canada in his narratives. Yet he lived and worked on the border for almost nine years and returned to it frequently in his travels and his lectures.¹¹⁴ As a result, the Lake Erie Passage is still a

¹¹⁴ Brown became an abolitionist speaker in 1843 and moved to Britain for a time after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, but had significant contact with the Black Canadian community throughout his career. In 1849, he participated in an influential lecture series with the fugitive slaves William and Ellen Craft, who

central concept in his writing about US slavery. Like Clarke, Brown constructs an important contrast in his narrative between Canada, “a land of liberty” (*Narrative* 31), and US “slavery, with its democratic whips—its republican chains—its evangelical blood-hounds, and its religious slave-holders” (*Narrative* 31). In his slave narrative, Brown (echoing Clarke) frequently refers to his choice to flee the US for freedom in Canada. Brown speaks about Canada to emphasize the incongruity of his decision to “opt out” of America:

This I know will sound strangely to the ears of people in foreign lands, but it is nevertheless true. An American citizen was fleeing from a democratic, republican, Christian government, to receive protection under the monarchy of Great Britain. While the people of the United States boast of their freedom, they at the same time keep three millions of their own citizens in chains; and while I am seated here in sight of Bunker Hill Monument, writing this narrative, I am a slave, and no law, not even in Massachusetts, can protect me from the hands of the slave-holder! (*Narrative* 46)

Brown’s reference to Bunker Hill echoes Clarke’s in the way that it compares the abolitionist project to that of the US Revolutionary War: despite both being on opposite sides of the Canada-US border, Clarke and Brown both cast themselves as freedom fighters rebelling against the tyranny of US slavery. However, even though Brown pauses to consider the contradictions in his choice to leave the US, he never follows through on his threat to leave the US. Rather, for Brown, “Canada” is more like a rebellious condition or a state of mind. Brown uses Canada’s geographical and political proximity when he wants to assert his political agency in the US. However, throughout his writing he carefully represents himself

famously made their escape to Britain via Nova Scotia using an elaborate disguise. As an antislavery speaker, Brown supported the creation of manual labour schools for fugitive slaves in Canada similar to Henson’s Dawn settlement. Later in his career, Brown visited and corresponded with important Black Canadian intellectuals and community leaders, such as Martin Delany, Mary Ann Shadd Cary, Isaac D. Shadd, James Madison Bell, H. Ford Douglas, and William Howard Day (Ripley et al. 18). In 1861, he was invited by the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada to give a lecture series in Canada West in support of Haitian emigration.

not as an American exile but rather as a heroic American dissident who has the power to move others, in both an intellectual and physical sense.

Thus, Brown's accounts of the Lake Erie Passage refer frequently to his ease of movement to represent his intellectual resistance to slavery. Even though Brown lived on the border and must certainly have thought about following through on his threat to move to Canada (especially during the tenure of the Fugitive Slave Law), his narrative avoids any discussion of jumping ship, metaphorically speaking. Instead, he revels only in his success in helping other fugitives make their way to Canada:

It is well known that a great number of fugitives make their escape to Canada, by way of Cleaveland [*sic*]; and while on the lakes, I always made arrangement to carry them on the boat to Buffalo or Detroit, and thus effect their escape to the "promised land." The friends of the slave, knowing that I would transport them without charge, never failed to have a delegation when the boat arrived at Cleaveland. I have sometimes had four or five on board at one time.

In the year 1842, I conveyed, from the first of May to the first of December, sixty-nine fugitives over Lake Erie to Canada. In 1843, I visited Malden, in Upper Canada, and counted seventeen in that small village, whom I had assisted in reaching Canada. Soon after coming north I subscribed for the *Liberator*, edited by that champion of freedom, William Lloyd Garrison. I had heard nothing of the anti-slavery movement while in slavery, and as soon as I found that my enslaved countrymen had friends who were laboring for their liberation, I felt anxious to join them, and give what aid I could to the cause. (*Narrative* 48-9)

Literary critic Richard Hardack discusses how many slave narratives (like that of Frederick Douglass, for example) represent the boat captain as a father figure, or sometimes, more ominously, as a potential pirate (59). However, in both of these cases, Brown seizes that power himself, representing himself as a man-stealer or smuggler who seizes American "merchandise" and takes it under his own control, allowing his "free charges" to go on to live, work, and vote in Canada. His passengers are liberated, nationally speaking, but are then put into rhetorical service, casting Brown as a heroic liberator. Brown himself chooses

to remain in the United States, in defiance of slave-catchers and US beliefs about Black inferiority. Contrasting his own ease of movement with the forced movement required by slavery, Brown uses his autonomous travel to describe his new-found intellectual independence and the power his lectures will have on changing US opinions about slavery. Brown's *Narrative* (and his later writings like *The Black Man, His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements*)¹¹⁵ thus express a kind of strategic nationalism, in which he uses the successful, and multiple, passings of his Black Canadian passengers in order to define himself as an American dissident and show off his ability to "turn the boat around"—to control the abolitionist discussion about slavery and set a new course for formerly enslaved Blacks in North America.

2.4 The Lake Erie Passage in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Clotel*

Non-fictional representations of the Lake Erie Passage had a significant impact on the nineteenth-century imagination, prompting a series of revisionist and often utopian fictional

¹¹⁵ In another fanciful tale that was widely repeated in abolitionist propaganda, Brown recounts helping a fugitive escape slave-catchers in Cleveland by painting him white and disguising him in drag:

The slave was a young and valuable man, of twenty-two years of age, and very black. The friends of the slave had almost despaired of getting him away from his hiding-place, when I was called in, and consulted as to the best course to be taken. I at once inquired if a painter could be found who would paint the fugitive white. In an hour, by my directions, the black man was as white, and with as rosy cheeks, as any of the Anglo-Saxon race, and disguised in the dress of a woman, with a thick veil over her face. As the steamer's bell was tolling for the passengers to come on board, a tall lady, dressed in deep mourning, and leaning on the arm of a gentleman of more than ordinary height, was seen entering the ladies' cabin of the steamer North America, who took her place with the other *ladies*. Soon the steamer left the wharf, and the slave-catcher and his officers, who had been watching the boat since her arrival, went away, satisfied that their slave had not escaped by the North America, and returned to guard the house of the abolitionist. After the boat had got out of port, and fairly on her way to Buffalo, I showed the tall lady to her state-room. The next morning, the fugitive, dressed in his plantation suit, bade farewell to his native land, crossed the Niagara River, and took up his abode in Canada. (*Black Man* 25-6)

depictions of Black migration in North America. Yet the fictional representations of the Lake Erie Passage, however fanciful, began to take on lives of their own. Important intellectuals in the abolitionist movement, including Stowe, Brown, Delany, and Douglass used their fictional representations of the Lake Erie Passage to comment on wider theoretical debates taking place in the abolitionist community between 1846 and 1863, and to represent their own opinions about the future of Canada as a site of black emigration.

I use the term “emigration” generously, here, because for many abolitionists, Black migration to Canada was not considered as final a departure from the US as a migration to Africa or the Caribbean. Canada was certainly perceived as a more benign location than Haiti, for example, which (in the early nineteenth century) recalled the threat of a violent slave revolt. Yet the idea of African colonization and Haitian emigration appealed to many who either feared or disliked the idea of racial integration in North America. African colonizationists hoped that if slaves could be shipped “back” to Africa, slavery could be gradually abolished. Supporters of Haitian emigration similarly believed that free and formerly enslaved US Blacks could work to create a new Black nation in Haiti. While organizations such as the American Colonization Society supported the idea of colonization, many African Americans in the north “rejected emigration and colonization as an answer to their problems, adamantly contending that the United States was their home” (Hepburn 15). Furthermore, many Blacks in Canada felt strongly that they still had an important role to play in the antislavery struggle. They settled in Canada West in part because its proximity to the US allowed for an easy return to the US, if conditions improved. As C. Peter Ripley et al. explain, “[p]ermanent exile smacked of abandoning the homeland and the slave. That would

not do” (33). As a result, most Black Canadians drew a line between the idea of African colonization and Canadian migration, at least until the mid-1850s:

The emigrationist debate became as much a philosophical and intellectual discussion and a critique of American society as it was a call for specific action. Canadian immigration was fundamentally a matter of necessity—a forced migration of refugees seeking safety and security from real threats in America. But sanctuary for the refugees was often viewed as a separate issue from the emigration debate, which engaged the attention and energy of many black leaders but never moved to action large numbers within the black communities. Throughout the time of the Canadian experiment, a majority of blacks were concerned with the demands of daily life, often under the difficult circumstances that came with being refugees. The debate over emigration from Canada touched few of them. (Ripley et al. 38)

There was a fairly significant discrepancy between the ways Blacks in Canada discussed their position in relation to emigration, colonization, and the abolition of US slavery and the ways that US-based abolitionists described Black Canadians in relation to these issues. Black Canadian communities (understandably) focused the bulk of their attention on the best ways to welcome, to educate, and to employ Black refugees from the US and their families.¹¹⁶ This included discussions about how best to fight racism in Canada, how to establish school systems, and how to change perceptions of Canada as a site of whiteness. Yet as many of the descriptions of the Lake Erie Passage show, the passage to Canada was sometimes troped as a first step towards permanent emigration to Africa. Some anti-colonization authors (like Brown) had to work against the association between Canada and African colonization, changing their representation of Canada to emphasize the important role that African

¹¹⁶ For example, some community leaders debated the values of segregated Black communities versus integrated ones. Some supported the establishment of block settlements for Black refugees, such as Dawn (established by Hiram Wilson and Henson) or Elgin (led by Presbyterian minister William King), while others, like Mary Ann Shadd, favored a more dispersed and integrated approach to Black settlement. Certainly, one of the most famous arguments within the Black community developed around the fundraising methods for Black Canadian settlements; this debate played out endlessly in the pages of *The Provincial Freeman*, edited by Shadd, and *The Voice of the Fugitive*, edited by Bibb. Shadd favored the integration of Blacks in Canada, the desegregation of schools, and the development of Black financial independence. Bibb, who emphasized the need for emergency relief for Black refugees, routinely demanded charitable donations from antislavery groups in the US—a practice that Shadd described as “begging.”

Americans in Canada could play in the US antislavery effort. Yet it was difficult to quiet the widespread fears within the Black North American community that “emigration of any sort—whether voluntarily to Canada or involuntarily to Liberia—played into the hands of the colonizationists’ agenda” (Rhodes 13) and supported the kind of racial hierarchy that had sustained American slavery in the first place.¹¹⁷

There was also a worry that Black migrants to Canada would abandon efforts to end US slavery. James Theodore Holly, a former slave who had escaped to Canada from Virginia, fought this by publicly encouraging Black Americans to “‘swarm in a ceaseless tide to Canada West, and hang like an ominous *black cloud* over this guilty nation’ until the abolition of slavery was achieved” (qtd. in Rhodes 53). Yet the myth of the Underground Railroad which was so important in naming Canada as a site of Black freedom and raising sympathy for the plight of US slaves also sometimes privileged the role of heroic white conductors rather than the efforts of the Black refugees themselves. Many writers, in both Canada and the US, debated the best way to provide aid to Black refugees, with some promoting Black independence and others arguing that Blacks in Canada needed the financial and political support of white abolitionists. Similarly, many writers (like Brown and Stowe) had very different opinions on the potential and effectiveness of Black abolitionist activity in Canada. Comparisons to Haiti brought on by the colonization debate also raised fears (and, for some, hopes) that Canada could become the starting-point for a continent-wide slave revolt.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Levine provides a summary of the conflict between Martin Delany and Frederick Douglass about the significance of Black communities in Canada (see *Martin Delany* 180-81).

¹¹⁸ See, for example, Martin Delany’s novel *Blake*, which responds to Stowe’s portrayal of Black passivity by depicting the formation of a continent-wide slave insurrection involving Blacks in Canada, Cuba, and the United States. Canada played an important role in the planning of John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry. On

The debate about Canada's place in the emigration and colonization movements became more heated after the 1850 passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in the US. The law, which threatened the freedom of any fugitive slave in the northern states, prompted a flood of new Black immigration to Canada. While Blacks were moving to Canada to gain some measure of personal safety, the social conditions in Canada for Blacks were getting worse. There was a widespread belief in both Canada and the US that racism was a US product that was spreading northwards from southern slave states. Yet historian Jane Rhodes argues that the idea that American-style racism was penetrating across the border and "poisoning" Canadian society was a convenient myth that sustained Canadian nationalism. Rhodes argues that the pro-Canadian nationalist rhetoric that had often praised Canada's refusal to adopt "American-style" slavery also ignored the legacy of slavery in the British empire as well as the history of racism in the British intellectual tradition. This willful ignorance of the pervasive racism of Canadian society (a belief that upheld a nascent idea of Canada's moral superiority over the US) made it even more difficult for Blacks in Canada to protect their civil rights (Rhodes 145). Thus, as the Black population of Canada West increased, so too did racial discrimination and segregation:

In the years leading up to the Civil War, blacks found themselves increasingly segregated and isolated from the main institutions of Canadian life—churches, schools, business and politics. While they may have enjoyed owning a plot of land, black employment opportunities were confined to work on railroad gangs or menial service as waiters, cooks, barbers, and whitewashers. Their progress was profoundly impeded—and their resentment brewed. From Windsor [on Lake Erie] to St. Catharines [on Lake Ontario], the towns and villages of Canada West which had been deemed a sanctuary years before, had become for many an intolerable hotbed of anti-black sentiment. (Rhodes 145)

May 8, 1858, Delany, Brown, and a number of other abolitionists met secretly in a schoolhouse in Chatham, Ontario, and sketched out a formal plan of the goals that violent rebellion against the US government was meant to accomplish. See Levine, *Martin Delany* 182, and Winks, *Blacks* 267-71.

While Canada was once a place to escape *to*, in reality, for many Black Canadians, it also became a place to escape *from*. The idea of Black emigration from Canada to Africa and Haiti became most popular in the late 1850s as the pressures on the Black Canadian communities grew most quickly. Delany, who lived in Chatham, Canada West from 1856 to 1861, became a vocal proponent for Black Canadian emigration and developed ambitious plans for a Black colony in West Africa (see, for example, his *Official Report on the Niger Valley Exploring Party*). After Delany's plan fell through in 1862, attention turned to Haiti; Buffalo-based activist William Wells Brown, who had long resisted the idea of emigration, finally began to support Haitian emigration in the 1860s. Mary Ann Shadd continued to resist the idea. Her 1852 pamphlet *A Plea for Emigration, Or, Notes of Canada West* favors Canada over Haiti as a destination for African Americans leaving the US. Later, according to Rhodes, she "took particular delight in castigating Brown in the pages of the *Anglo-African* for luring emigrants with tales of enormous sweet potatoes and bananas grown in Haiti. Her stinging, relentless attacks on the Haitian agents continued until they retreated back to the United States" (142).

These debates represent a great struggle, within the North American abolitionist community, over who could (or should) rightfully speak for Black Canadians and what Canada could offer to the US anti-slavery project. The representation of the Lake Erie Passage became a central battleground in these debates. A survey of these texts shows the different ways that US authors used the Canada-US border crossing to imagine the future of former slaves in Canada. Moreover, the contrasting representations reveal a great difference of opinion about how Black diasporic communities in Canada could engage with and affect the abolitionist project in the United States. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe revises the

autobiographical accounts of Henson and Clarke to minimize the impact of her Black characters in Canada. However, Brown revises Stowe's trajectories to express his understanding of the civic and political responsibilities of exiled Black Americans.

Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* presents one of the most significant and widely-read representations of Canada in the nineteenth century. As Greg Gatenby reports, Stowe "did not permit her ignorance of Canada to stop her from using the country as a setting for the dramatic conclusions to two of her best-known-works" (363), *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred*. Before she wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe's only visit to Canada had been a short trip to Niagara Falls in 1834. But Stowe compensated for this lack of direct knowledge by drawing from key moments from Henson's border-crossing experience and Clarke's *Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis Clarke* to create her iconic portrayal of the Lake Erie Passage. Despite depending heavily on these sources for inspiration, Stowe eliminates much of the ambiguity and ambivalence expressed by Henson and Clarke in order to stabilize her interpretation of Canada and minimize the changes that emancipation can bring for US slaves.

Stowe's account of the Lake Erie Passage is structured to emphasize the importance of the Black family unit. In my entr'acte, I explained how little Eva's association with Longfellow's Evangeline enables Stowe to suggest that slavery threatens to destabilize the family unit, separating Black families and poisoning white families. Stowe's novel begins by presenting competing visions of the potential life that the Harris family might hope for in freedom. The most positive domestic location in the novel is the Quaker home of Rachel Halliday, which represents the possibility of an ideal bi-racial household governed by "loving words, and gentle moralities, and motherly loving kindness" (*UTC* 215). To some extent, the Shelby plantation comes close to achieving this state of domestic bliss, save the

effect of the “portentous shadow” (*UTC* 51) of slavery; however, even the Halliday home is not a safe space for the Black fugitives in the novel. In contrast to these two domestic sites stand the corrupt homes of the St. Clare family and Simon Legree, which together represent the decay of the American family under slavery. These examples of US homes help shape the reader’s expectations about the ultimate goal of the Harris family on their escape across Lake Erie: the possibility of a safe, happy, and liberated home in Canada. The significance of the Lake Erie Passage is also emphasized by the two major north-south trajectories of the novel: first, the movement of Eliza north across the ice into Ohio, and second, the passage of Tom on the Mississippi River to the Deep South, which leads to his eventual martyrdom. These two passages establish the consequences of capture, should the Harrises fail in their attempt to reach Canada.

Eliza’s “desperate leap” (*UTC* 118) across the ice to Ohio situates Canada within a series of steps towards liberation:

The huge green fragment of ice on which she alighted pitched and creaked as her weight came on it, but she staid there not a moment. With wild cries and desperate energy she leaped to another and still another cake; stumbling—leaping—slipping—springing upwards again! Her shoes are gone—her stockings cut from her feet—while blood marked every step; but she saw nothing, felt nothing, till dimly, as in a dream, she saw the Ohio side, and a man helping her up the bank. (*UTC* 118)

While the episode is a key moment in Eliza’s escape, it also comments on a wider pattern of escape and transformation in the novel. This preliminary passage over the frozen waters of the Ohio River to the free North anticipates her later passage over water to a freer, icier, Canada. Ohio provides some measure of protection to the family; Eliza transforms from a non-human “wildcat” (*UTC* 119) in Kentucky into a “right brave gal” (*UTC* 118) on the Ohio side of the water. Moreover, the episode allows Stowe to comment ironically on forms

of Black subterfuge: just as many slaves denied their intentions to escape to Canada (a popular discussion in slave narratives), Sam and Andy, the two slaves who practice various kinds of deceit to aid Eliza's escape, joke about the impossibility of "Lizy's bridge" (*UTC* 120) and speak of their reluctance to cross it: "'I hope Mas'r'll 'scuse us trying dat ar road. Don't think I feel spry enough for dat ar, no way!'" and Sam gave a hoarse chuckle" (*UTC* 119). Yet Eliza's hopscotch from one ice floe to another predicts the trajectory of her family's escape from slavery, from the South to the North, and then from the US to Canada, France, and finally Liberia.

Stowe's representation of the Lake Erie Passage builds on that of Henson and other images in the popular press to create a sense of absolute difference between Canada and the US. After being pursued by slavecatchers through Ohio, the members of the Harris family reach Cleveland, and they adopt new gender, class, and racial identities to board a steamer that ferries them across Lake Erie. In every case, even as the family members don disguises, the narrator refers to their slave status as a way of expressing the danger that they face, even in the North, under the Fugitive Slave Law. Eliza, for example, cuts her "silky abundance of black curly hair" (*UTC* 545), an act that reduces her market value as a female slave and enables her to transgress the national border between Canada and the US. However, George Harris comments on Eliza's failure to conceal her beauty, despite her new gender identity: "'Well, indeed,' said he, holding her off at arm's length, and looking admiringly at her, 'you *are* a pretty little fellow'" (*UTC* 546). Similarly, little Harry becomes a "dark beauty" (*UTC* 548) as he transforms into a girl. These pervasive exclamations about the beauty of the disguised slaves accompany other comments about the ways that the scarred hands of George and Eliza will reveal their chattel status and their commercial value on the American side of

the water. For example, before they board the boat, George advises Eliza to wear gloves, for fear that Eliza's "slender paw" (*UTC* 547) will reveal Eliza's status as a female labourer; he also attempts to conceal the "'brand in one of his hands'" (*UTC* 548) for the same reason. All of these signifiers, which simultaneously "mark" the labour of these slaves, their exchange-value, their ability to pass, and their human agency, must be hidden from the appropriately-named slavecatcher "Marks."

Throughout the escape, then, Stowe emphasizes the hands and the speech of George and Eliza Harris to demonstrate their capacity for citizenship: the "possessed" slaves have remarkable self-possession under pressure. However, once George and Eliza Harris begin to approach Canada, Stowe shifts her attention away from their hands and words to the words and accomplishments of God. In effect, Stowe's Lake Erie setting becomes more and more abstract and her heroic main characters become less and less radical. In the middle of Chapter 37, the setting quickly moves from the stifling paranoia of the boat wharf—where the slavecatcher and the fugitives are in visual range of each other—to an expansive scene of freedom and a "returnless distance" (*UTC* 548) between Canada and the US. Stowe constructs her Lake Erie Passage to recall the tradition of British abolitionist rhetoric, and her diction celebrates the crossing as a miraculous event:

It was a superb day. The blue waves of Lake Erie danced, rippling and sparkling, in the sun-light. A fresh breeze blew from the shore, and the lordly boat ploughed her way right gallantly onward....

But the boat swept on. Hours fled, and, at last, clear and full rose the blessed English shores; shores charmed by a mighty spell,—with one touch to dissolve every incantation of slavery, no matter in what language pronounced, or by what national power confirmed. (*UTC* 548-9)

In her description of the Lake Erie Passage, Stowe invokes "the emancipating qualities of English soil and air" (Nadelhaft 197), popularized by British antislavery legal discourse and

literature, to describe the Canadian side of the border.¹¹⁹ Yet this quixotic description of Canada's blessed shores goes to great lengths to consider this emancipation in its most abstract terms and to reconceptualize it as a racially pure, English imperial project. The Harrises are virtually paralysed by their epic passage, while the boat becomes a white knight, "right gallantly" moving onwards with a sense of crusading purpose. The shores of Canada—now "English"—are blessed by a magical "spell," while the US is cursed with an evil "incantation." As the evidence of human agency is virtually erased from the text, Stowe's text reconceptualizes the Harris flight as an act of God: while once Eliza and George were the heroes of their Underground Railroad escape, they recede now from the narrative as the narrator attributes their success to the will of God and the help of the missionary Mrs. Smyth.

As they approach the shore, the text calls attention once again to Eliza's hands in order to communicate her transformation from slavery to freedom:

George and his wife stood arm in arm, as the boat neared the small town of Amherstberg [sic], in Canada. His breath grew thick and short; a mist gathered before his eyes; he silently pressed the little hand that lay trembling on his arm. The bell rang; the boat stopped. Scarcely seeing what he did, he looked out on his baggage, and gathered his little party. The little company were landed on the shore. They stood still till the boat had cleared; and then, with tears and embracings, the husband and wife, with their wondering child in their arms, knelt down and lifted up their hearts to God! (*UTC* 549)

¹¹⁹ See, for example, the legal arguments made in the 1772 *Somerset* case. The lawyers for the case contended that slavery was against natural law: "this air is too pure for a slave to breathe in.... [A]ny slave being once in England, the very air he breathed made him a free man" (qtd. in Nadelhaft 197). Nadelhaft argues that the *Somerset* case was widely discussed in the US press in the antebellum period. In *The Task* (1784), the abolitionist poet William Cowper drew from such arguments to equate English shores with the immediate acquisition of freedom:

We have no slaves at home - then why abroad?
And they themselves, once ferried o'er the wave
That parts us, are emancipate and loosed.
Slaves cannot breathe in England; if their lungs
Receive our air, that moment they are free,
They touch our country and their shackles fall. (14)

I would like to thank Matthew Giancarlo for pointing out Stowe's allusions to these texts.

As the family looks out over the waters of Lake Erie, the narrator stabilizes the kind of ambivalence expressed by Clarke on his arrival in Canada. Instead, Stowe's text portrays Lake Erie as a site enabling the reunification of destroyed families. The visual cues about hands and luggage signal the new distance between the Harris family and their previous chattel status, compared to the previous scenes narrating Tom's passage south on steamboats laden with baggage and female slaves. Now, the husband and wife can go arm in arm; Eliza's hand communicates her emotion and her familial bonds, rather than revealing her slave status; George's baggage can now be recognized under a different conceptual category than his family. Yet despite the openly celebratory tone, Stowe's narration describes this Lake Erie Passage in remarkably passive terms. George and Eliza are "touched" by the shores that free them from the political conditions of slavery, and are "landed" on the banks of Lake Erie like cargo. The poem that follows the episode picks up on the hand imagery that has persisted throughout the chapter, but credits the successful escape to the work of Mercy, rather than the labour, ambition, and ingenuity of the Harris family: "*Mercy's hand hath turned the golden key, / And Mercy's voice hath said, Rejoice, thy soul is free*" (UTC 549). Furthermore, while Mercy's voice sounds forth, George is silenced, incapacitated by his voyage. Unlike Henson, who proclaimed his freedom to an entire wharf of stunned bystanders, the Harris family collapses inwards in private prayer, seemingly in a secluded grove. The family relies on Mrs. Smyth, "shepherd to the out-cast and wandering," to guide them to their "asylum on shore" (UTC 549), and the Harris family subsequently vanishes from the landscape of Canada West.

Uncle Tom's Cabin thus builds on many of the themes previously expressed by Henson and Clarke, but puts their different kinds of Black transgression at the service of a

white abolitionist project. The text conceptualizes Canada as a racial haven, which was certainly helpful for US abolitionists; however, in so doing, it writes Black agency (and, for that matter, white Canadian activism also) out of the script. Canada is not described as space where legal rights are obtained; rather, it becomes a place where religious or spiritual destiny is made manifest and families are reunited. Even though the Harrises land at Amherstburg, a site with a large Black population, there is no sense of a Canadian political community, Black or white, that can come and welcome the family, or of any Black Underground Railroad conductors (like Bibb or Brown) who could facilitate their escape on the ferry. Canada's blackness is erased from Stowe's revolutionary text, and so too is the possibility of a North America with Black and white citizens. Instead, the text describes abolition as a project for white North Americans, and (ultimately) Canada as a brief stop before more travel. Just as George and Eliza wait breathlessly for the Canadian shores of Lake Erie to come into focus, so too must they wait, apparently, for the "mighty spell" of abolition to touch the United States.

This refusal to imagine a bi-racial nation within North America continues when the Harris family moves to Montreal.¹²⁰ Stowe's choice to export the Harrises to Montreal is decidedly odd, given the strength and the proximity of the Black community in Canada West, and the presence of educational opportunities in Canada West, such as Henson's Dawn. Moreover, Stowe did not actually visit Montreal until May of 1869, well after both *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred* were published (Gatenby 369). Yet Montreal's French language and culture and its associations with Catholicism prove useful, as the English-speaking Harris

¹²⁰I cannot delve into the history of slavery and Black life in Lower Canada/Canada East in detail here. The most authoritative historical account of slavery in French Canada continues to be Marcel Trudel's *L'esclavage au Canada français*. See also Mackey, *Black Then: Blacks and Montreal, 1780s-1880s*, and Cooper, *The Hanging of Angélique*.

family becomes more strictly delineated from its environs. In Montreal, the family once threatened by US slavery is finally protected. In contrast to the previous scenes of expansive freedom on Lake Erie, the Harris home in Montreal is described as a small domestic space that recalls the Quaker household earlier in the text:

The scene now changes to a small, neat tenement, in the outskirts of Montreal; the time, evening. A cheerful fire blazes on the hearth; a tea-table, covered with a snowy cloth, stands prepared for the evening meal. In one corner of the room was a table covered with a green cloth, where there was an open writing-desk, pens, paper, and over it a shelf of well-selected books. (UTC 604)

In *Sensational Designs*, Jane Tompkins argues that Stowe transforms the interior space of the home into the site of physical, spiritual, and moral activity from which a possible revolution in American society could emerge: “Stowe relocates the center of power in American life, placing it not in the government, nor in the courts of law, nor in the factories, nor in the marketplace, but in the kitchen” (145). Yet while the Halliday home represents this vision of an egalitarian, cooperative matriarchy that could extend its influence outwards to its surrounding community (and thereby transform American society), the Montreal home of the Harris family proves somewhat more limiting. The space is defined by walls, corners, boxes, and table-coverings. The tight walls, while ensuring the family’s protection, also indicate the various kinds of racial and social constraints that Stowe represents in order to contain this Black family within Canada. The Harrises have improved themselves in ways that raise their family above the condition of slavery and prove their capacity for full citizenship. Harry, for example, announces his ability to learn his mathematics: ““I did it, every bit of it, *myself*, father; and *nobody* helped me!”” (UTC 605), while his father says encouragingly, ““That’s right... depend on yourself, my son”” (UTC 605). The family thus comes to represent the rhetoric of self-improvement and individualism that sustains the narrative of the American

Dream. Yet this new family unit is indeed just that—a unit, rather than an active part of a Black diasporic community (one that did exist in Montreal by the mid-nineteenth century) or as part of Canadian society. The arrival of the Harris family is represented as causing no social change in Canada, perhaps because the Harrises never leave the safety of their house. Instead, the narrator's attention turns radically, claustrophobically inward. The family members talk to each other about their own successes. Moreover, the narrator proudly discusses George's new career as a machinist and his newly acquired literacy, but celebrates this work because it assures the stability of George's family, not because it allows him to contribute to the international abolitionist project or to participate in Canadian society. Unfortunately, the letters strewn on George's desk are not intended for the *Provincial Freeman* or *The Voice of the Fugitive*. Stowe's revolutionary character literally becomes domesticated within the narrative limits of this Montreal cage.

The claustrophobic scene also serves to contain Cassy's rebellious nature and her troubled Creole origins within a tidy family narrative. Montreal's French Catholic exoticism, and its association with other locations within the failed French empire in North America, notably New Orleans and Haiti, serves to triangulate the Harrises' escape from the US within a much wider history of slavery in North America. After Tom's death, Cassy, dressed "after the manner of the Creole Spanish ladies" (*UTC* 597), and her companion Emmeline make their way to the Mississippi River, meeting Madame de Thoux along the way. They play out Tom's trajectory in reverse, moving northwards up the Mississippi River on "the good steamer Cincinnati" (*UTC* 598). The Mississippi River becomes a site of national and personal convergences, and the passing travellers successfully "re-member" the families that have been destroyed by slavery. Madame de Thoux successfully locates her brother, George,

through her interview with George Shelby, while Cassy discovers that her daughter, Eliza, has become George Harris's wife. While speaking to George Shelby, however, both women recall the history of sexual decadence, racial mixing, and creolization associated with the slave trade in the West Indies and in New Orleans. For example, Cassy and George Shelby remember the "extravagant" (UTC 601) market value of Eliza as a girl and the fact that Eliza would probably have been sold into prostitution, had George Shelby's father not purchased her. Meanwhile, Emily de Thoux speaks of her miscegenated marriage. The revelation of Cassy and Emily's sexual and racial histories causes a domestic tumult in the *Cincinnati*, with Cassy fainting and "George upsetting a wash-pitcher, and breaking two tumblers, in the warmth of his humanity" (UTC 601-2). Order is restored, however, as Cassy, Emmeline, and Madame de Thoux "[proceed] immediately to Canada" (UTC 603) across Lake Erie to Amherstburg.

Despite the fact that Cassy and Emmeline are both liberated as they cross Lake Erie, Stowe contains their transformation within the domestic space of the Montreal home. As I explain in my entr'acte, Canada is celebrated, at the end of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as a heavenly "[shore] of refuge" (UTC 606) that can reunite families that have been "scattered" (UTC 606) by slavery. However, even though the text acknowledges the fate of family members still enslaved, the novel does not ask how Black Canadians can permanently banish the "shadows of slavery" (UTC 606). Stowe's static representation of the Harris home indicates genuine anxiety about the agency of Black citizens in North America. Cassy is one of the most revolutionary characters in the book, protecting Emmeline from sexual servitude, urging Tom to kill Legree, forcing Legree to confront his slaveholder's guilt, and engaging in various subterfuges and disguises to enable her escape with Emmeline. Yet, like George

Harris, Cassy—as well as the fears of miscegenation and Black revolution she represents—is put to rest in Canada, even if it is clear that many Black transnationals (like Clarke and Brown) saw the border as a place where the opportunities for Black education enabled more active, and effective, political agency.

Thus, even as Stowe explicitly praises Canada for providing a haven for former US slaves, her representation of the Harrises' arrival in Canada implicitly reveals part of the reason why Canada was so ideologically important to the US abolitionist movement: Canada was imagined and described as a site where both slavery and the Black political activity it provoked would come to an abrupt stop in North America. The “out-cast and wandering” find “an asylum on this shore” (*UTC* 549) after their terrible ordeal, leaving white abolitionists in the US to continue their work to free US slaves; Canada functions as a temporary containment site for Black refugees. In passing across Lake Erie, the members of the Harris family sacrifice more than their plantation suits and Eliza's glossy hair. The text asks them to give up their revolutionary imagination, their grief over their lost home, their anger, and their ambition for a new kind of North American society. The text refuses to imagine these individuals as active Black citizens or as fellow members of a worldwide abolitionist project. Such descriptions of Canada as a terminus on the Underground Railroad, a site where slavery, racism, and even labour have ceased to be a concern, serve to contain and minimize the possibility of an integrated community in Canada, the potentially radical demands that a Black Canadian community could make in North America, and the revolutionary political, racial, and economic changes that would result from the abolition of slavery in the United States.

Instead, the real centre of activity becomes Africa. Stowe goes on to export her surviving Black characters to France, and later Liberia, where George Harris proposes to found a racial paradise for exiled Black North Americans. The Lake Erie Passage thus becomes part of a larger colonization quest, Canada as a mere stopover on the way to Africa. In his letter rationalizing his choice to emigrate, George rejects his US identity outright: “‘I have no wish to pass for an American, or to identify myself with them’” (*UTC* 608). He also rejects the Black francophone nation of Haiti as too “‘effeminate’” (*UTC* 608). His speech defending Liberia as a destination for US Blacks literally overlooks his experience in Montreal and his own success there in educating himself and providing for his family:

Where, then, shall I look? On the shores of Africa I see a republic, —a republic of picked men, who, by energy and self-educating force, have, in many cases, individually, raised themselves above a condition of slavery. Having gone through a preparatory stage of feebleness, this republic has, at last, become an acknowledged nation on the face of the earth.. . . There it is my wish to go, and find myself a people. (*UTC* 609)

The “shores” of a foreign destination remain a visual theme, but Lake Erie is now replaced by the Atlantic, and George directs his attention to Africa. George ignores his history in Montreal and the presence of Canada as an alternative to colonization and now argues that a strong African nation will provide the model for Black progress in the US. It is only when talking about Liberia that George aligns himself politically with the abolitionist cause. So ironically, while Stowe depends on Eliza and George’s successful political transformation in order to establish a binary opposition between Canada and the US, she structures her text in a way that immediately refuses to imagine them as political subjects who could work within North America to change the terms of slavery. Even though both Henson and Clarke understood themselves as exiled Americans whose presence in Canada could inspire debate and change in the US, Stowe portrays Black political agency as a product that must be

exported. The passage across Lake Erie is celebrated in her text because it offers the possibility of ending slavery, but the real lives of Black Canadians are ignored to make the emigrationist solution to Liberia the only concrete resolution to the story.

The Black community in Canada lamented Stowe's failure to imagine Black activism in Canada or indeed, the possibility of a nation-state in North America with Black citizens. An author writing as "C. V. S.," in the Black Canadian newspaper *The Provincial Freeman*, responded in 1854 to Stowe's ending by exclaiming,

What a pity it is, that British America, either North temperate, or Tropical, could not have contained the manly runaway mulatto, and his family! Uncle Tom must be killed,—George Harris exiled! Heaven for dead negroes!—Liberia for living mulattoes! Neither can live on the American Continent! Death or banishment is our doom, say the Slaveocrats, the Colonizationists, and,—save the mark,—Mrs. Stowe! (C. V. S. par. 4)

This author concludes by insisting that slavery will not simply be ended, as it is in Stowe's text, by a magic spell, but rather, by the work of Black transnationals themselves: "[l]et black men learn from this, and ten thousand live cases, the great lesson that the vindication of their rights and liberties, *must be done mainly by themselves*. That however gratefully accepting the assistance of friends, *so far as it goes*, the work, under God, is their own" (C. V. S. par. 5).

This view would prove so compelling that a year after the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, William Wells Brown would repossess Stowe's Lake Erie Passage, and revise it to reflect his own views of the future for Blacks in North America. After publishing his slave narrative in 1847, Brown travelled extensively in England and played an instrumental role in garnering support for the abolitionist cause. Like Stowe, he felt compelled to write a sentimental novel to support his views on the future of fugitive slaves in North America. His

invocation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in his 1853 fictional slave narrative/melodrama *Clotel; or, the President's Daughter* reflects his belief in the need for Black North Americans to become active political voices in North America. Brown's fictional slave narrative *Clotel* follows the fate of three generations of female slaves living in the antebellum South who are the illegitimate descendants of Thomas Jefferson. Through her fraught genealogical origins, the title character literally brings the hypocrisy of the US slavery system to life: Clotel is the daughter of one of the Founding Fathers and yet a slave. Literary scholar Robert S. Levine has described *Clotel* as a bricolaged text that steals ideas and written texts circulating in US culture and forcefully joins them together to deconstruct national narratives about slavery ("Clotel" 6). One such "kidnapped" document is the Lake Erie Passage that Stowe included in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* a year before. Stowe once modelled her main character George Harris after the fugitive slaves Josiah Henson and Lewis Clarke. However, Brown models *his* main characters George and Clotel after Stowe's characters George and Eliza Harris, and gives them an escape route towards Canada that deliberately invokes Stowe's text and her support for colonization. But the trajectories towards Canada that Brown invokes stop before the Canada-US border. In effect, Brown hijacks Stowe's Lake Erie Passage and contains it within the US in order to imagine a Black transnational community that could work to change race relations in the US.

Clotel struggles between the desire to represent the experience of fugitive slaves and the narrative pressure to use the idea of a utopian Canada—an example of a potential state free of slavery in North America—to create a new national imaginary for the US. Brown was familiar enough with Canadian geography and with his source texts to describe Canada in detail in his text. But the trajectories towards Canada that Brown borrows from other authors

are strangely truncated. Even though George, Clotel, her slave companion William, and three other unnamed slave characters all state their intentions to escape to Canada, only George actually makes it to “the land of freedom.” Moreover, just as the narrator begins to tell of George’s emancipation, his description of Canada itself seems to waver and vanish. Borrowed narratives which originally described passages to Canada, notably Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and the story of William and Ellen Craft’s escape,¹²¹ stop abruptly at the border. In fact, until the reunion of George Green and Mary Devenant in France at the ending of the novel, almost all the characters of *Clotel* circulate endlessly in US space, despite their multiple escape attempts towards the border. The Canadian content of Brown’s source texts has nearly been excised entirely from *Clotel*.

What we witness in *Clotel* is the making of a powerful myth of Canada that ironically requires Canada’s erasure. Canada is an immensely productive space for Brown (even if it is often geographically and socially misrepresented) because it allows him to discuss the possible ethical commitment of fugitive slaves to the abolitionist project. Analyses of *Clotel* by critics such as Christopher Mulvey explore how the rhetorical force of the novel depends on the exposure of national paradoxes (Mulvey 104). Similarly, Levine states that Brown’s subversive juxtapositions of “kidnapped” national documents and fictional antislavery texts force his readers to reconsider their beliefs about the American social order and the texts that sustain the nation, such as the Declaration of Independence (“Clotel” 6). Levine considers “Brown’s taking of texts as a kind of kidnapping and trickery characteristic of a liberator: he steals the texts of a culture that steals black bodies” (“Clotel” 6). Yet Brown also kidnaps

¹²¹ William Craft only published his slave narrative, *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom*, in 1860—many years after the publication of *Clotel*. However, Brown performed on a speaking tour with William and Ellen Craft in 1849, and the story of their escape was well known in abolitionist circles.

interpretations and assessments of Canada, suppressing some discussions and expanding others, to imagine a new national text for the United States. Brown's revisions to the Lake Erie Passage are woven together in *Clotel* to emphasize the importance of altering US print culture and changing the terms of the debate about emancipation rather than seeking an emigrationist solution to American slavery.

At times, Brown presents Canada as a possible destination for fugitive slaves in *Clotel*. Yet at the time Brown was writing his text, even fervent abolitionists in the US acknowledged that African American emigration to Canada could paradoxically erode support for abolition and Black civil rights in the US. If shipping freed African Americans off to Canada (as to Liberia) seemed to be an easier solution than reforming race relations in the US, the presence of Canada could actually shut African Americans out of the US citizenship project. Brown attempts to address this paradox in a number of rhetorical situations. In every case, Canada is carefully positioned in a way that supports the idea that slaves deserve to be considered US citizens. In one episode, for example, Georgiana, a white abolitionist who has recently been bequeathed her family's slaves, considers the possibility of emancipating them, but is worried about having to force them off their plantation and send them out of the state. Carlton, her new husband, suggests a solution:

"Let's send them to Liberia," said Carlton. "Why should they go to Africa, any more than to the Free States or to Canada?" asked the wife. "They would be in their native land," he answered. "Is not this their native land? What right have we, more than the negro, to the soil here, or to style ourselves native Americans? Indeed it is as much their home as ours, and I have sometimes thought it was more theirs. The negro has cleared up the lands, built town, and enriched the soil with his blood and tears; and in return, he is to be sent to a country of which he knows nothing.... [T]hroughout the whole of the struggles of liberty in this country, the negroes have contributed their share." (*Clotel* 160)

In this case, Canada, the US, and Liberia are all considered as potential destinations for fugitive slaves. However, Brown invokes the idea of Canada's hemispheric solidarity with the US to position North America, rather than Africa, as the "native land" of African Americans. Georgiana's response supports a conceptualization of African American national identity that is based on the contribution of African Americans to the American national project, rather than on their racial background. By merging Canada and the US in her response to the idea of African colonization, and advocating for a form of continental belonging, Georgiana insists that the future of America includes people of colour.

Brown revisits the notion of transatlantic emigration again when he revises Stowe's Lake Erie Passage and her description of the Harris family. His revisions insist that fugitive slaves in Canada have a responsibility to use their newfound freedom in Canada to change the conditions of US slavery. The rebellious George Green in *Clotel*, based on George Harris in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, is smart and ambitious; like his predecessor, he has mixed ancestry and a quick temper. In *Clotel*, George makes his way to Canada with the help of Quakers. However, instead of following the route set out by Stowe, which would involve a triumphant Lake Erie Passage, a safe arrival in Canada, and a miraculous family reunion, Brown's main character quietly moves towards the border on foot and suddenly arrives in the town of St. Catharines, on the shores of Lake Ontario in Canada West. Unlike Stowe's character, Brown's George is not "charmed by the mighty spell" (*UTC* 549) of freedom in Canada. Brown's character dedicates himself to turning St. Catharines into a centre of abolitionist activity, creating a school for former American slaves, "doing his best to obtain education for himself, [and] impart[ing] what he could to those of his fellow-fugitives about him, of whom there were many" (*Clotel* 216). Brown thus transforms Stowe's image of the comfortable

Montreal Harris home into a school for Black Canadian immigrants who consider themselves exiled Americans, even if the US government refuses to recognize them as such. This “family” of border-crossers dedicate themselves, in Canada, to testing the rhetorical limits of the US nation. As a character previously distinguished by his fluency with national texts—saving municipal documents from a fire, reinterpreting the meaning of the constitution—George now seeks to impart his criticisms of the US to other African Americans in exile. Brown’s revision of the Lake Erie Passage, then, raises the spectacular promise of the Lake Erie Passage, only to resist portraying Canada as either a haven or as a stop on the way to other destinations. Instead, it casts Canada as a site from which a new, politically empowered population of Black Americans could emerge.

Clotel’s conclusion, like that of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, describes a happy family reunion; yet Brown situates this reunion abroad. Unlike George and Eliza Harris, who wait patiently for their family to be reassembled, George Green takes advantage of his location in St. Catharines to “[employ] an English missionary to go and see if the girl [Mary] could be purchased, and at what price” (*Clotel* 217). When he believes that Mary has been sold at the New Orleans slave market, George Green leaves for Europe. His emigration to England and France would seem to follow the colonizationist path set out by Stowe’s Harris family, but William Wells Brown’s rationalization of George’s migration to Europe is pointedly different. George goes abroad to pursue job opportunities, passing as a white man and developing a successful business career in England. And while Mary and George eventually reunite and find a measure of safety and stability in Europe, it is not without regret. At the end of Stowe’s novel, George Harris renounces his American citizenship: “I have no wish to pass for an American, or to identify myself with them. It is with the oppressed, enslaved

African race that I cast in my lot.... The desire and yearning of my soul is for an African nationality” (UTC 608). However, Brown’s text treats George Green as a diasporic American. The narrator reminds his readers of the political conditions in the US that still demand the Green family’s attention: “We can but blush for our country’s shame when we recall to mind the fact, that while George and Mary Green, and numbers of other fugitives from American slavery, can receive protection from any of the governments of Europe, they cannot return to their native land without becoming slaves” (*Clotel* 225). Brown’s fugitives can never quite leave America behind, even if they can build a new future for themselves abroad.

Finally, Brown’s revision of Stowe’s character Eliza goes one step further in insisting on the importance of confronting the system of US slavery rather than leaving it behind. In *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Clotel’s predecessor Eliza successfully traverses the boundaries between Canada and the US, skipping over the ice that separates North from South and later crossing the waters to Canada. In *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Eliza is symbolically reborn after crossing over the ice of the Ohio River and proceeding to Canada. Critics such as Giulia Fabi have noted the similarities between Eliza’s escape in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and Clotel’s flight across the Long Bridge in Washington. Eliza’s physical transgression of the boundaries between North and South, and of Canada and the US, turns her into an implicit critic of American slavery. Yet once Eliza reassembles her family and leaves the United States, she is virtually silenced as a figure in the text. In *Clotel*, however, Eliza’s equivalent circulates endlessly within the US, trying fruitlessly to free her daughters and find an exit from her national prison, only to commit suicide by plunging into the Potomac River. Her suicide scene reworks the water

scenes in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, transforming Eliza's passage across the ice and her successful escape across Lake Erie into a political statement:

But God by his Providence had otherwise determined. He had determined that an appalling tragedy should be enacted that night, within plain sight of the President's house and the capital of the Union, which should be an evidence wherever it should be known, of the unconquerable love of liberty the heart may inherit; as well as a fresh admonition to the slave dealer, of the cruelty and enormity of his crimes.... On came the profane and ribald crew, faster than ever, already exulting in her capture, and threatening punishment for her flight. For a moment she looked wildly and anxiously around to see if there was no hope of escape. On either hand, far down below, rolled the deep foamy river of the Potomac, and before and behind the rapidly approaching step and noisy voices of pursuers, showing how vain would be any further effort for freedom. Her resolution was taken. She clasped her *hands* convulsively, and raised *them*, as she at the same time raised her *eyes* towards heaven, and begged for that mercy and compassion *there*, which had been denied her on earth; and then, with a single bound, she vaulted over the railings of the bridge, and sunk for ever beneath the waves of the river! (*Clotel* 207; italics in original)

Clotel's flight and her state of suspension over the river dividing North and South recall Eliza's "desperate leap" (*UTC* 118) and her choice to risk her life in her bid to escape to Canada. But the hand imagery of the *Clotel* scene, and the references to divine salvation, also rewrite the Lake Erie Passage of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. While George and Eliza Harris's trembling hands once threatened to reveal their slave status (and their fear of US authorities) aboard their Lake Erie steamer, Clotel's raised hands demonstrate her religious and political conviction. In Fabi's words,

The story of Clotel's flight draws on, but also radically modifies, Harriet Beecher Stowe's best-selling description of Eliza's escape to Canada in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). In both cases, passing secures freedom, but whereas Eliza passes defensively and only in order to emigrate abroad (a decision ultimately harmonious with Stowe's procolonization policy), Clotel, once free, continues to disguise [sic] and returns south in search of her daughter. However, Clotel's short-lived, courageous, independent attempt to save Mary eventually fails, and her ensuing public suicide elevates her individual defeat into an exemplum of the evils of slavery. In other words, the final powerlessness that makes Clotel choose to plunge into the Potomac rather than return to slavery becomes a more effective abolitionist statement than her living trickery. (n. pag)

In *Clotel*, as in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, “dying is the supreme form of heroism.... [D]eath is the equivalent not of defeat but of victory; it brings an access of power, not a loss of it” (Tompkins 127). Yet Eva is the one who sacrifices herself for the nation, not Eliza. William Wells Brown revises this sentimental paradigm in *Clotel*. Clotel drowns herself in the waters between North and South that divide the nation's capital and in the ideological conflict that divides the nation—waters that are also in plain view of the White House, where her father Thomas Jefferson once lived. While the Canadian escape of Stowe's Eliza allows her to create a new home in Africa, thereby containing the threat of Black radicalism, Clotel remains relentlessly American, dedicating her life to performing a radical criticism of the United States from within, even though it means her own political and physical suffocation. Clotel transforms herself from a figure of apparent powerlessness into an image of action and profound political change.

Brown's repossession of the Lake Erie Passage in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, like his slave narrative, ultimately insists on the need for Black North Americans to engage with and rewrite the US national script. He situates Canada fully within that project. Brown's autobiographical accounts of his own border-crossing revel in his ability to help his fellow African Americans cross the Canada-US border and his own political empowerment as a literate African American. His main character in *Clotel* makes the same choices: to learn to write and to write in order to change US racial hierarchies. As a result, Brown continues to emphasize the responsibilities of Black border-crossers as American exiles as well as the need for this exiled population to work to change the ideological conditions that enable the practice of American slavery. Brown recasts Canada as a space that would temporarily improve the social and material opportunities for African Americans and that would enable

the creation of a new generation of politically empowered American citizens of colour. For Brown, Canada's symbolic status as a free North American space gives Black North Americans the opportunity to confront the ideological limits of the United States. The myth of Canada, however fictional it may be, works like one of Brown's stolen source texts, performing what Levine has called the "phantasmagorical, fragmented, *unwriting* of American history" ("Clotel" 17).

2.5 Studying Black cross-border writing

The study of Black American-Canadian cross-border literature presents some formidable logistical challenges. The illiteracy of many slaves, the ephemerality of slavery documentation (such as forged slave passes), and the exclusion of Black authors from literary canons have made it difficult to classify, compile, and even recognize the kinds of literature that were produced by authors who were former slaves. Moreover, many of these authors expressed complex understandings of their own national identities and/or of the political futures of their characters. The diversity of these nationalist alignments, and of the sources of this archive, seems to have prevented either Canadian or American literary studies from engaging in a comprehensive study of Black cross-border writing and the intertextual, international conversations they encouraged in North America. The Lake Erie Passage, as a geographical, literary, political, and textual site of exchange and transformation, shows the ways in which authors of all backgrounds and ideological beliefs rallied to create new conversations about the racial future of the Americas. However, this interdisciplinary,

international collection of texts reveals some of the fault lines in the historical and literary approaches used most frequently in the study of Black North American literature and culture.

To date, most cross-border literature has been examined in relation to the Underground Railroad. The myth of the Underground Railroad has gained wide popular appeal in both Canada and the US, but critics in both countries are beginning to recognize how the Underground Railroad has often been constructed and celebrated as a way to reinforce national identity narratives. In the US, the Underground Railroad story of rebellion and escape appealed to a literary and political tradition that valued rebellion and dissent. As a result, stories of slave escapes in North America have often been troped or classified as “American” narratives of migration and survival. In addition, the Underground Railroad is often treated as a narrative of national movement within US borders, rather than a migration across national borders. This has led to many odd (but sadly predictable) exclusions in historical and literary research: many Underground Railroad studies stop abruptly at the Canada-US border, contain their scope within US national boundaries, or (in a best-case scenario) dedicate only a few pages to the international destinations of fugitive and free African Americans.¹²² Others completely overlook the fact that some African American writers, like Josiah Henson, crossed the border and stayed in Canada, thereby ignoring one form of political agency that *was* available to fugitive US slaves. These conditions explain why the collection and publication of literature by Black writers in Canada has been haphazard, at best: reprints are found scattered in books on the Underground Railroad,

¹²² See, for example, Charles L. Blockson’s *The Underground Railroad*, a 297-page book whose final, 2 ½-page chapter on Canada largely summarizes the historical research of Robin Winks. Alan Govenar’s *African American Frontiers* includes the narratives of Lewis Clarke and William Wells Brown, but does not discuss their Canadian experience; also, all of the maps illustrating Black settlements and populations stop at the Canada-US border. Even the *Black Abolitionist Papers* series—a tremendously useful, exhaustive, and well-researched multivolume collection of historical documents, letters, and texts—is divided according to national volumes, thereby making the international connections in the abolition movement less visible.

historical records of the abolitionist movement, collections of letters written or dictated by slaves, and collections of slave narratives. The importance of the Black Canadian/American cross-border writing to the production of ideas in the Black Atlantic world, and in the North American abolitionist movement, has not been well understood.

In Canadian scholarship, the myth of the Underground Railroad has also been used to sustain Canadian nationalism, but this has led to different forms of erasure and willed misunderstanding. Interest in the Underground Railroad prompted many of the first discussions of Black Canadian history. Yet the portrayal of Canada as a safe destination for escaping US slaves cast Canada as a morally superior nation in the Americas. As many of the texts in this chapter show, many anti-slavery authors (even Black authors who lived in Canada) were only too happy to create a dichotomy between a peaceful, multiracial Canadian paradise and a corrupt United States if it meant attacking US slavery more forcefully—even if it also sustained white Canadian nationalism. As a result, in the long term, the Underground Railroad myth helped to obscure the history of slavery in Canada, as well as the forms of intolerance, racism and prejudice that were harming not only Black Canadians but all racial minorities within Canada. Scholars have recently begun to challenge the way that the Underground Railroad myth has served to “contain” popular historical interest to the Black populations of southern Ontario. Nancy Kang, for example, worries that the Underground Railroad has become “the sole epistemic center of black Canadian consciousness” (434), overriding the concerns of other Black Canadian populations who migrated at other times (such as the Africadians, who moved to Nova Scotia after the US

Revolutionary War, or the Black immigrant populations who moved to western Canada after the US Civil War).¹²³

The same impulses that led many to use the Underground Railroad in the service of nationalistic propaganda seem also to have dominated the research agendas in the academy, creating a series of strange disownings and interdisciplinary conflicts between American, Canadian, postcolonial, and transnational studies. Whereas the autobiographical writings of European immigrants to Canada, such as Susanna Moodie,¹²⁴ Catharine Parr Traill, and Anna Brownell Jameson, have become recognized as central texts of nineteenth-century Canadian literature, scholars of African Canadian literature and history such as George Elliott Clarke have been dismayed to find that autobiographical writing produced by Black cross-border migrants has largely been excluded from anthologies of Canadian literature because of a perception that slave narratives are an “American” genre. In a form of northward expansion, Clarke argues, Americanists such as Henry Louis Gates, Jr., have laid claim to these texts, while Canadianists have ignored the important Canadian context and Canadian affiliations of many of these formerly enslaved Americans: “North American slavery is so profoundly identified with the Great Republic that the slave narrative is eyed, in Canada, as an exotic species of Americana, one having only incidental and abstract engagement with British North America” (“Hearsay” 7). Black authors such as Thomas Smallwood, John William Robertson and Josiah Henson, who all lived and wrote in Canada, were historically been excluded from nineteenth-century Canadian anthologies; in fact, Clarke argues, Black

¹²³ Two texts are worth mentioning here because of the way they help challenge the hegemony of the Underground Railroad narrative in Canada. Karina Vernon’s PhD dissertation, entitled *The Black Prairies*, explores the writing produced by Black writers in the Canadian Prairies. Wayde Compton’s *bluesprint* is an anthology of writing by Black authors in British Columbia.

¹²⁴ Ironically, Susanna Moodie was also an anti-slavery editor, a fact that makes it all the more urgent to include literature written in Canada by former slaves alongside her work. See Clarke, “Hearsay” 13.

Canadian writing has generally been either underemphasized or entirely overlooked in conceptualizations of nineteenth-century Canadian literature (“Hearsay” 11; see also Kang 437). While this is changing with the publication of recent anthologies by Smaro Kamboureli, Wayne Compton, and Cynthia Sugars and Laura Moss, all of which include writing by nineteenth-century Black Canadians, it is still worth identifying the ways in which Black writing in Canada has been marginalized in the past. The implicit assumption behind the historical exclusion of Black Canadian writers seems to be that many of these writers expressed ambivalence and even regret about their Canadian experiences; some only stayed in Canada for a few years before returning to the US. Moreover, the conditions of forced movement that prompted many Blacks to move to Canada has led many Canadianists to consider fugitive Blacks in Canada as displaced Americans, rather than settler Canadians. Yet national ambivalence has never prevented the same scholars from including white immigrant writers in conceptualizations of Canadian literature (Susanna Moodie is perhaps the best example of a profoundly ambivalent “Canadian” settler who is now widely accepted as a major figure in nineteenth-century Canadian literature). Whatever the reasons, such practices of literary and historical erasure enabled a perception of Canada as a white (rather than multiracial) nation: as Clarke argues, “so successfully have we whitewashed our history that we have brainwashed ourselves: we do not notice, even now, the bloodstains and *race* shadows besmirching our ‘virgin’ snow” (“Introduction” 11; see also Cooper, *Hanging*).

Critics like Clarke have responded to these issues by arguing forcefully that Black immigrant writing in Canada must be understood as part of Canadian literature. For example, Clarke argues that many of the slaves interviewed by Benjamin Drew in *The Refugee*—even

those who had only been in the country for a few months—aligned themselves forcefully as Black Canadians, and literary critics should understand them as such:

as much as fugitive slaves (and free blacks) were counted as African-Americans as they fled across the Niagara frontier or the Great Lakes and into British North America, they were *Canadians* when they agreed to speak to Drew. Canadians should approach *The Refugee...*, not as a species of exotica or “off-colour” Americana, but as a foundation of Canadian political philosophy (anti-republicanism) and as a distinct set of *settler* narratives. If we accept this reasoning, we repulse imperial America’s writ as an annexationist intellectual power. (“Introduction” 11)

Similarly, Richard Almonte argues that Mary Ann Shadd, a writer who grew up in the US, moved to Canada in early adulthood, and dedicated herself to writing about the Black Canadian community for almost fifteen years before returning to the US, deserves to be recognized as a key member of “a tradition of Black *Canadian* writing” (Almonte 33). Both of these critics agree that by developing a new conceptualization of Black settler literature as Canadian literature, students and literary scholars can fight the historic racism that has denied the contributions of non-white settlers to Canadian society and confront any appropriative attitudes still working in American literary criticism.

Meanwhile, other approaches to literary analysis have had varied results in examining the cross-border writing of former slaves. The argument for including slave literature within the rubric of postcolonial studies would seem fairly strong: not only were former slaves living in a postrevolutionary state while in the US, but as they passed into Canada, they were also escaping forms of internal colonization in the US. Many Americanists such as Amy Kaplan, Donald E. Pease, John Carlos Rowe and Renée Bergland have included forms of internal colonization in their understanding of American postcolonial studies. However, there has been little agreement about whether the term could be deployed to study the relationship between the US and Canada, two sites that were never directly engaged in a colonial

relationship with each other. As a result, even the broadest applications of the postcolonial rubric have rarely generated a discussion of nineteenth-century Canada-US Black cross-border writing.

While transnational approaches would seem to be a logical next step, studies of nineteenth-century Black Canadian-American literature are rare. Only a handful of projects include such discussions, although this seems to be improving (see, for example, the collection edited by Casteel and Siemerling as well as the special journal issues published by Almonte, Chariandy, and Harris). Moreover, many of the US expansionist attitudes that Clarke attacks so forcefully are now reappearing in transnational American studies scholarship. Timothy B. Powell, for example, proposes that we should use the notion of American diaspora to examine the effect of populations “who lived beyond the borders of the United States but who nevertheless were still part of the imagined community of the nation” (99). However, Powell’s argument proposes that we should consider Canada and other countries as shadow-colonies of the United States: “[b]y incorporating the ‘colonies’ of fugitive slaves living in Europe, Canada, and Haiti, a much more complex and historically accurate portrait of the multicultural expanse of ‘American’ identity begins to come into focus” (134). Powell’s point that fugitive slave writers interacted with the American Renaissance literary community is well taken. However, his call to consider fugitive slaves in Canada as functional Americans ignores the wide range of statements made by Black Canadians about their own understanding of their national identity(ies). After all, the fact that many disenfranchised African Americans chose to identify themselves as members of Canadian communities and as British subjects had a marked rhetorical effect in US debates about abolition. As well-meaning as Powell’s attempt to diversify our understanding of the

American Renaissance may be, his book cloaks American expansionist attitudes in a seemingly benign call for transnational analysis. Moreover, his assumption that scholars should consider Canada as a colony of the US ignores not only the rhetorical conditions of anti-American sentiment in nineteenth-century Canada but also overlooks any possible connections between nineteenth-century Black Canadian writing and a long tradition of immigrant writing to Canada.

Nancy Kang is much more successful at acknowledging the fraught national politics of the cross-border slave narrative. In her study of Canadian-American cross-border narratives, Kang argues that literary scholars on both sides of the border must confront and “[break] down some of the conceptual barriers that have prevented nationally discrete literary histories from converging and merging on the intra-continental reality of a slave past” (435). Instead of classifying the genre of the cross-border slave narrative as Canadian or American, Kang proposes reconsidering it as a “borderless text” that engages with different North American discourses about slavery and national identity. This approach would shift the focus away from nationalistic approaches to more diasporic ones, offering a clearer view of the shared experiences and the shared literary techniques of Black North Americans. In her view,

to speak of borderless texts does not merely imply the lack of clearly enunciated borders and the extension of political or moral affiliations *outside* of the act of language (that is, the borders of the written page); “borderless” also imparts a sense of nationalistic panic in the contested realm of literary history. American theorists, it seems, are guilty of hoarding the fugitive slave narratives as their particular and uniquely indigenous form of literary currency, while Canadianists are equally blameworthy for over-fertilizing the particular Canadian content in these narratives, making for two rather unwieldy master narratives of migration and escape: the Underground Railroad and nothing else, or Paradise Found and nothing else. (448)

Extricating herself from the debate about the Canadian or American identity of these texts, Kang recalls that many of the transcribed narratives in Benjamin Drew’s *The Refugee*

describe national borders in very indistinct ways, if they mention them at all. She compares Black cross-border texts to the slave pass and the passport, two genres which define Black identity in relation to different power structures that control nineteenth-century Black movement. While the narratives of *The Refugee* are ostensibly transcribed because of their acts of national border-crossing, many of these slave narratives spend more time discussing or crossing non-national borders (such as the Mason-Dixon line or the colour line), suggesting that other power structures were determining Black agency just as much, if not more, than the Canadian-American boundary. Slaves were required to assert their identity, show passes, and disguise themselves on many occasions, even within the boundaries of the US. By proposing an understanding of the cross-border narrative as “borderless,” Kang argues, she is not proposing to “*negate* borders, but rather, in questioning their very existence and constitution, to *dilate* them beyond their supposed station as geographically or phenomenologically fixed points” (446). By considering the cross-border narrative as a borderless text, she argues, scholars can compare the forms of slave escape and subterfuge that took place within US boundaries (for example, when slaves escaped their plantations to hide in the woods) with the international movement of slaves from the US to Canada.

Kang thus reads the Canada-US border as one site (of many) where Blacks could produce their identities. She draws attention to the similarities between the “woods,” escape sites outside of plantations to which Blacks could flee temporarily, and the Canadian “wilds,” the frontier settlements to which Blacks would escape and settle in order to escape from slavery. Both sites, Kang argues, provided an “interstitial space of knowing” (446) that was a refuge from plantation life and a form of protest. Moreover, in both sites, slaves could begin to transform their own identities. While the “woods” largely helped slaves prepare for

longer escapes, the Canadian “wilds” became a place that Black fugitives could transform into a permanent home. As they cleared Canadian land, built their new homes, and wrote about their experience as citizens in Canada, former US slaves could engage with foundational US myths of self-transformation and expansion and fulfill the archetype of the American Dream. As a result, she argues, cross-border Blacks could literally write themselves a new identity just as they forged their own slave passes; in the Canadian wilds they could call themselves into being.

As much as I commend Clarke and Kang for identifying such important problems in the ways that Canadian and American literature have examined Black cross-border writing (or have failed to do so), I am also cautious about either insisting on the national origins of these texts (as Clarke urges) or considering these texts “borderless” (as Kang suggests). While the nationalist argument has served to expose research deficits in Canadian studies and appropriative attitudes in American studies, the debate about whether to consider Black cross-border writing as Canadian or American seems profoundly limiting. And it seems clear that many of these Lake Erie Passages were very self-conscious about the importance of the Canada-US border (even if many of the episodes in Drew’s book aren’t). In the words of Winfried Siemerling and Sarah Phillips Casteel, “[s]uch texts have to be read both across the border and as wider transnational writing practices since the questions of slavery and of emigrationism in many of them clearly exceed North American frameworks. Yet they are also mediated by two particular national contexts that have different consequences” (18-9).

The emphasis, in abolitionist literature, on the Lake Erie Passage as a site of transformation, liberation, and exchange shows how many of these texts investigate and remember the broader history of the Black Atlantic. The memories of the middle passage

recalled by these texts are transnational; the kinds of movement they describe are transnational; and the ideas they share and pass on—about Black North American political agency, identity, and emancipation—move within the transatlantic and continental pathways that fostered the international slave trade. These Lake Erie Passages show how the kinds of movement and transformation imagined on this cross-border journey deliberately recalled the wider transatlantic history of slavery in order to imagine Canada as a space of liberation, as a nation with Black and white citizens, and as a refuge. Some texts, such as Lewis Clarke's *Narrative* and Brown's *Clotel*, imagine Black cross-border movement as a continental solution to a national problem. Others, like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (as well as Martin Delany's *Blake* and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred*) exceed the boundaries of the continent, comparing the fate of Blacks in Canada to those in other locations around the world, notably Liberia and Haiti. Literary analyses which consider texts solely within national frameworks would ignore the kinds of intellectual exchange taking place in and around Lake Erie; they would also greatly restrict the ideas about the different kinds of transnational movement and escape taking place between Canada, the US, and the Black Atlantic world.

In other cases, authors were quite conscious of the ways that their texts were being read within national frameworks and political debates. Black fugitives were especially aware of the ways that their success in Canada, and their status as Canadian voters, were politically and rhetorically meaningful to US audiences. Josiah Henson, for example, insisted on his Canadian identity to disrupt American narratives of progress and exceptionalism and establish Blacks as potential US citizens. His texts were not “borderless” and the Canada he describes is not a blank wilderness space: in fact he needs the border and the presence of a Black Canadian community to establish the grounds for his success. Lewis Clarke and

William Wells Brown insist on their national status in a very different way: they both establish themselves as Americans through their ability to leave the US or to help others leave it. Thus, I argue that studying the Lake Erie Passage as a textual motif that underwent an evolution in nineteenth-century North American print culture offers us a better understanding not only of how Black immigrants to Canada felt about their own national identities, but also of the kinds of civic responsibilities they felt they had as diasporic Americans. Sometimes it also shows how national boundaries could also become a tool to *contain* Black mobility and Black achievement within prescribed norms. Often, this requires a very active understanding of the state of US print culture in the pre-Civil War period and the ways that Black authors, especially, were being interpreted and read by US audiences who were also familiar with slave narratives by famous African American authors like Frederick Douglass and Henry “Box” Brown. This may mean considering slave narratives written in Canada as a form of diasporic American writing; however, I would argue that the best way to repulse what George Elliott Clarke identifies as “imperial America’s annexationist intellectual power” (“Introduction” 11) is by developing analytical methods that are responsible to the historical context of the time, the ways that border-crossing was experienced and represented by writers in Canada, and the ways that national and transnational alignments were interpreted by nineteenth-century readers.

A clearer understanding of the significance of the Lake Erie Passage will help establish Canada’s place in the production of ideas across the Black Atlantic world as well as the ways that Black North Americans understood Canada’s importance to the abolitionist cause. This research will also help us recognize how, and why, Canada became a site of erasure of Black history. As we can see from the short story by Charles Chesnutt, which I

cited at the beginning of this chapter, discussions of Canada's place in Black North American history were present in the American mind in the late nineteenth century. In "The Passing of Grandison," Chesnutt reimagines a Lake Erie Passage that takes place between the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law and the Civil War, but he does so from the perspective of the US Reconstruction period, positioning Grandison as a heroic usurper of American power. His description of the confrontation between Grandison and the Colonel puts Grandison in the role of a mythical Odysseus, sailing away from a blinded and disempowered Cyclops. From Chesnutt's 1899 point of view, Black cross-border movement to Canada represented a massive power reversal for American politics, one that was still relevant to Americans in the Reconstruction period. Since then, however, such narratives of Black Canadian history have been virtually erased from both the Canadian and American popular imagination. To be blunt, in the Civil War and Reconstruction period, when Blacks from Canada like Mary Ann Shadd Cary and Martin Delany moved back to the US to fight in the Civil War and to participate in the American political system, there was a sense that Black Canadians could play (and were playing) an important role in changing racial conditions across North America; there was a sense of a Black Canadian history and a Black transnational history. Unfortunately, many of these discussions about the possibility of Black citizenship and cross-border exchange have been at best selectively remembered, if not shut down entirely. A better understanding of the representation of Canada in the early to mid-nineteenth-century, and of the importance of the Lake Erie Passage as a symbolic site, will set the foundation for a new understanding of the reasons behind this willed forgetting.

Conclusion

In 1918, William Faulkner, an aspiring WWI pilot, left his home in Mississippi and travelled north to Toronto to train for the Royal Air Force in Canada. While his stay in Toronto was brief—lasting only six months—biographers Joseph Blotner, Michael Millgate and Frederick Karl agree that it was a formative experience for the Southern US author. In a letter to his parents written shortly after he arrived in Canada, Faulkner reveled in Canada's colonial history, describing Toronto as “an English place” with “short crooked streets and old houses” (*Thinking* 72). In a glowing description of Toronto's waterfront, he said that Lake Ontario “looks like the sea, excepting you can see the United States across it” (*Thinking* 73). This strange perspective—of an exoticized Canada and a distant but familiar US—became a frequent topic in his letters home. In a letter sent a few days later, he gave an even more fanciful description of Canadian geography as he looked again over the lake towards the US:

I sit... and imagine I see Indian canoes going up and down, and deer and moose coming down and swimming out into the sunset, or suites of bateaux filled with the soldiers of the Marquis de Montcalm going down to Champlain, with the French and Huron scouts flashing back and forth.... It's queer to be here and think of what this old lake has carried upon it. The Hurons and Iroquois fought all about here. I am acquiring the prettiest mahogany color you ever saw. (*Thinking* 88)

It is doubtful that Lake Ontario had a more elaborate imperial history than the American South, or that the effect of Toronto's sun was any stronger than Mississippi's.¹²⁵ Faulkner's recollections on the shores of Lake Ontario unconsciously recall the two key historical

¹²⁵ It is unclear, here, whether Faulkner imagines himself darkening to assume an indigenous identity or a Black one (or both). While here the context seems to imply that he is imagining himself “going native,” he brags in later letters that “I'll be so sunburned that I'll look like a nigger by Xmas” (*Thinking* 88), and “I look just like a kodak negative now. All brown my self, and my hair is burned rope color” (*Thinking* 94-5). The image of a white man turning black, as if depicted in a kodak negative, is repeated in *The Wild Palms* and *Light in August*.

narratives about Canadian-American history that were widely discussed in the American Renaissance: the Anglo-French conflicts of the Seven Years' War (which motivated the Acadian expulsion); and the Underground Railroad, through which Canada gained a reputation for harbouring escaping slaves (many of whom had passed for white as they crossed the border). For Faulkner, Canada seemed to be an infinitely flexible space, one that could accommodate multiple racial, linguistic, national and imperial histories.

The idea of Canada would become a crucial component of Faulkner's conversations about the American South. In texts such as *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), the unpublished short story "Evangeline" (c. 1931), *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), and *The Wild Palms [If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem]* (1939), Faulkner drew from the popular narratives about Canada that defined the antebellum period—the *Grand Dérangement* and the passage of African Americans to Canada—to reflect on the legacy of the Civil War and the shifting patterns of race relations in the South after the Emancipation Act.

Faulkner was not the only author to reference Canada in his fiction about the US. Many modern American authors would revisit antebellum conversations about Canada, and themes similar to those that Faulkner raises in his letter above: familiarity and difference, historical revisionism, racial passing, and indigeneity. In the popular US mind, references to Canada and Canadian characters offered insight on ideas of displacement, trauma, linguistic difference, and racial and national identity. Some authors would specifically refer to the two conversations about Canadian migrations that I have reconstructed here. The historian George Bancroft, who wrote one of the first descriptions of the Acadian exiles in the US, went on to define categories of identity in the immigration and naturalization treaties of the

US government. Authors such as Kate Chopin also portrayed the francophone descendants of Acadian deportees as a way to examine the interaction of gender, race, language and class in late-nineteenth-century Louisiana society. Willa Cather, who grew up near a Franco-American immigrant community in Nebraska and spent her summers in New Brunswick, regularly featured French Canadian immigrant characters in her texts. Cather's Franco-American characters in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927) and *O Pioneers!* (1913) enabled her to explore the intersection of immigrant cultures in the US Midwest and the processes by which these immigrant cultures were included and excluded from understandings of American belonging. She later reflected on eighteenth-century North American history by focusing on French settlers in New France in *Shadows in the Rock* (1931). And the legacy of the Underground Railroad (and the Lake Erie Passage within that imagined trajectory) has become a fundamental part of the national imaginary in both Canadian and American culture. Authors like Charles Chesnutt and Ishmael Reed would revisit Canada through their imaginative reconstructions of the Underground Railroad. Still other authors would return to similar themes and imaginative projections of Canada as a space of whiteness or as the final frontier for US expansion: Jack London's Klondike fiction and the Westerns describing Canada, for example, both revisited the fantasy of US expansion, describing Canada as a blank space upon which white American masculinity could be symbolically inscribed.

While these later literary conversations about Canada often take place in different contexts, the thematic patterns they trace out are often remarkably similar to the ones I have studied in this dissertation. All of these texts, like the ones I mention here, use the idea of Canada to form and contest ideas about the US and the meaning of American identity. The

literary conversations that I have recovered and analysed in this dissertation show that literary evaluations of Canada were fundamentally connected to the processes of defining the United States: its citizens, its non-citizens, its geography, its racial configurations, its temporal and geographic boundaries, its history, and its future.

Many of these conversations created associative patterns that continue to affect Canadian-American literary and political relations to this day. As Canadian (im)migrants crossed back and forth across the Canada-US border, they lay bare the structures that enabled the US nation-state to function and often revealed the imbrication of different imperial and state systems of knowledge and power that were shaping the lives of North Americans. Moreover, as readers and authors constructed interpretations of Canada's similarities and differences with the US, they necessarily created new kinds of arguments about the US's self-conceptualization and contested older ones.

The literary representations of Canada in US literature that I have studied here show that many authors and readers developed a way of reading Canada-US relations that was at once hemispheric (evaluating the similarities and differences between Canada and the US as representative societies of the New World) and transnational (examining the similarities and differences between the empires of Britain and the US). Such examinations also transcended boundaries of time, comparing past empires with present ones, historical promises and contemporary results. Part One, which recovers and analyses American literary representations of the 1755 *Grand Dérangement*, shows the ways that American authors formulated understandings of US citizenship through the racial and political categorization of Acadian exiles. Antebellum authors represented Acadia and Acadians in different ways,

depending on the arguments they wanted to make about the future of the United States within the hemisphere. Hawthorne, for example, begins by representing the independent Acadian colony as politically similar to the eighteenth-century New England colonies, but he portrays the Acadians themselves as essentially different from American colonists. Over the course of his story, however, he draws the Acadian exiles closer and closer to his American project, urging US children to redefine the Acadians as potential Americans and to consider Acadia a better measure of the success of “American” values than their contemporary US empire. Meanwhile, the American politicians who failed to recognize Acadia’s potential become unfamiliar and even treacherous. In this way, Hawthorne uses his Canadian migrants to delegitimize expansionist forms of US government.

Longfellow and Stowe, however, use the whiteness of the Acadians to redefine the idea of American belonging and to question the principles of American slavery. While each carefully constructs the Acadians as ultra-white, benign, proto-Americans, each slowly transforms Acadian characters into sympathetic stand-ins for racial minorities who were being excluded from the American project. In *Evangeline*, for example, Longfellow draws comparisons between the fate of the displaced Acadians and that of enslaved African Americans. By applying the narrative tropes of slavery and invasion to the situation of an eighteenth-century Euro-American population, Longfellow defamiliarizes the racial categories that enable different forms of US imperialism to function. Similarly, Stowe makes an intertextual reference to Longfellow’s poem to challenge US slavery even more directly. She uses the ambiguous Canadian history of the St. Clare family to map out the potential directions of the United States in the 1850s: towards an imagined national paradise that could come to pass only with abolition or towards a form of racial anarchy that a continuing

dependency on slavery would create. Stowe and Longfellow both use the ambiguous racial and ethnic background of the Acadians, as well as their association with slavery-free Canada in the 1840s, to promote forms of interracial sympathy that would bring slavery to an end in antebellum America as well.

Part Two reconstructs another conversation about figures of exile in the Americas by examining the popularity of the Lake Erie Passage. While Part One examines the forced southward movement of Acadian exiles to the US, Part Two concentrates on the willed northward movement of Blacks across the Canada-US border. Antebellum writers on both sides of the border imagined Black trajectories back and forth across Lake Erie, writing and responding to each other's accounts, in order to discuss the significance of a slave's transformation to a free political agent, the meaning of racial identity and citizenship, and the future of North America as a multiracial space. My chapter gathers poetry, slave narratives, letters, fiction, and journalism to explore how the Lake Erie Passage functioned as a real and imagined space in antebellum culture.

The highly symbolic space of the Lake Erie Passage became a contact zone for competing arguments about the relationship between racial identity and citizenship. I consider the Lake Erie Passage as a space that combines the north-south trajectories of the Underground Railroad with the nautical forms of Black transportation most often associated with the Black Atlantic. In so doing, I show how the Lake Erie Passage shaped conversations about Black identity within the context of Canada-US relations. The passage of enslaved Blacks to freedom on Canadian shores was described as a utopian reversal of the effects of the Middle Passage and as the symbolic baptism of a new kind of Black political subject that

had yet to be imagined in the United States. However, while this transformation was celebrated by abolitionist authors as a definitive victory for the cause, in many cases it was far from complete and its political results were far from certain. As I have shown, while many formerly enslaved authors represented their border-crossing experience in positive ways, others also acknowledged the difficult social conditions faced by Blacks in Canada despite their newfound political agency. Paradoxically, the African American slaves who crossed Lake Erie exposed the formation of ideas of race in *both* countries. By crossing the border and by instantly becoming recognized as British subjects, Lake Erie “passengers” revealed that Black racial inferiority (a concept upon which US slavery depended) was not an essential characteristic, and that essentialist understandings of race could be contested. However, they also drew attention to the ways that racial formations of the US and Canada resembled each other: racism was still very much a reality in both locations, even if the two countries had different official stances on issues such as Black voting and enslavement. Josiah Henson, for example, understood that as a representative of the Black Canadian community he would have to work hard to change race relations in both Canada and the US.

The Lake Erie Passage also raised the possibility of an American nation with both Black and white citizens. Blacks who lived on the edges of this contact zone were highly conscious of the ways in which their writing contributed to arguments about the possibility of African American citizenship. Some authors, like William Wells Brown, used their descriptions of Black cross-border movement to support this idea, while others, like Stowe, described Black life in Canada in a way that foreclosed on that possibility. The competing predictions about the eventual final destinations for Lake Erie “passengers” reflected larger debates in American culture about the racial destiny of North America. They also raised

questions about the future relationship between the US and sites within the hemisphere with a perceived history of racial deviance (like New Orleans) or of extreme interracial conflict (like Haiti).

These case studies are fairly specific, written within the space of roughly thirty years and limited thematically to studies of Black-white relations in the antebellum American consciousness. Yet they are crucial because they represent the foundation of a discursive pattern that played out across centuries of Canada-US interactions. These two movements work in inverse and in parallel to each other: while they describe seemingly opposite populations of Black, English-speaking Americans and white, French-speaking Canadians moving in opposite directions, they were both used to comment on what it meant to be American, and what it meant *not* to be American. The fact that these two narratives overlapped and intertwined in American memory in works such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Evangeline*, for example, highlights the fact that US readers and authors recognized these two forms of cross-border migration as provocatively similar. The sheer popularity of these cross-border migration narratives also indicates that these readers felt that these Canadian migrations provided important insights into the structure of life within the US.

As scholars of these migrations, we have to find a way to recognize those insights. Academic analyses of Canada's significance in antebellum US culture have been hampered by disciplinary boundaries and conceptual blind spots. Even though conversations about Acadian and Black North American mobility dominated antebellum culture, involving some of the best-known authors and the widest reading audiences of the nineteenth-century US, contemporary institutional frameworks and expectations have prevented scholars in various

academic disciplines from examining the relationship between Canada and the US and understanding its significance. Somehow, we have lost the ability to “read for Canada” in the way that antebellum readers did. This could, in part, be a question of not interrogating our own contemporary beliefs about racial identity and difference. For example, the antebellum writers of my study had to explain the racial status of the Acadian exiles: some carefully positioned them alongside Anglo-Saxons as fellow white citizens of a North American continent, while others used the indeterminacy of these figures to draw sympathy for members of other marginalized racial categories. Yet it would seem that scholarly approaches in the last twenty years have been chronically unable to understand how the Canada-US relationship informed ideas about race and have often taken the whiteness of Canadians for granted. This could be part of the reason why Canada has been routinely excluded from other conversations about border studies taking place at the moment.

In other cases, scholarly approaches have been divided by conceptual divisions between area studies, postcolonial studies, and hemispheric studies. Too often, conversations have tended to fall along national lines, creating an artificial division in literary studies that hampered the study of what could be understood as a Black North American literature. My reading of the Lake Erie Passage underscores the need for a transnational reading practice that not only acknowledges but *values* how border-crossing African Americans positioned themselves as active citizens of both Canadian and American societies, even when they were not legally recognized as such. Border studies has often investigated ideas of racial and ethnic difference, historical land claims, class distinctions, and violent conflict; however, many ideas that seem to define the Canada-US border from the perspective of former slaves, such as the notion of political choice, still remain to be discussed.

American literary scholar Carolyn Porter summarized transnational approaches to American literary analysis as an invitation to “rethink what we thought we already knew” (470) about the most celebrated texts of the American canon and to consider “what we know that we don’t know” about works that had yet to be studied in American literature. I hope that my dissertation has made its readers do precisely that. To borrow a phrase from Slavoj Žižek, I would suggest that we must now consider the “unknown knowns” in our approaches to knowledge production across the Americas—the repressed beliefs about nation, ethnicity, language, canonicity, foreignness, and domesticity that structure our knowledge of academic fields and that come to light through the process of situating Canada in the Americas. Understanding Canada in relation to its hemispheric neighbours requires confronting the most persistent and most powerful assumptions that have grounded the formative concepts of national area studies and of transnational studies. My hope is that we may someday find a model for a productive and engaging conversation, one that respects the specific contexts of language, history, culture and location, yet defies the apparently untranslatable dimensions of nation and empire. How, now, can we develop a transnational register in American, hemispheric, and Canadian studies that alternates between speaking and listening, and moves towards more accurate self-knowledge and historical awareness? Which academic practices and scholarly inquiries could foster an equal partnership between Canadian and American studies? Are scholars across the world brave enough to imagine a positive, collaborative relationship between disciplines in the hemisphere, one that builds forms of knowledge that are so very needed?

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