“This is no hearsay”: Reading the Canadian Slave Narratives

For Linda Hutcheon¹

George Elliott Clarke²

I Admitting the ‘Fugitive’ U.S. Genre to Canadian Literature

The Canadian slave narrative is ignored as a genre of Victorian-era Canadian literature (1837-1901) because it seems not to exist. Indeed, 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 and, post-1867, that infant state – the Dominion of Canada. Furthermore, African-American scholars have long asserted the organic *Americanité* of this prose genre, one principally defined by first-person-narrated memoir and autobiography. Introducing *The Classic Slave Narratives* (1987), editor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., declares, with strange triumphalism, that, “In the long history of human bondage, it was only the black slaves in the United States who – once secure and free in the North, and with the generous encouragement and assistance of northern abolitionists – created a *genre* of literature that at once testified against their captors and bore witness to the urge of every black slave to be free and literate.”³ Insouciantly here, Gates omits Exodus and other Hebraic texts about captivity, enslavement, and eventually liberation, and reconciliation to God, and he identifies “the African

1 I dedicate this essay to Dr. Linda Hutcheon, University Professor at the University of Toronto, an internationally acclaimed scholar of irony, post-modernism, and opera, who is also a Canadianist – and my Mentor at the Department of English, University of Toronto. This paper was presented before the Victorian Studies Association of Ontario, at Victoria University, Toronto, Ontario, on 7 March 2002. I am grateful to that audience for its helpful critique and comments.

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3 Henry Louis Gates, Jr., ed., *The Classic Slave Narratives* (New York: Penguin-Mentor, 1987), ix.

Advertisements.

JUST imported, and to be sold by Joshua
 Mauger, at Major Lockman's Store in Halifax several Negro
 Slaves, viz. A very likely Negro Wench, of about thirty five Years of
 Age, a Creole born, has been brought up in a Gentleman's Family, and
 capable of doing all sorts of Work belonging thereto, as Needle-Work of all
 sorts, and in the best Manner; also Washing, Ironing, Cookery, and e-
 very other Thing that can be expected from such a Slave: Also 2 Negro
 Boys of about 12 or 13 Years old, likely, healthy and well shap'd, and
 understand some English: Likewise 2 healthy Negro Slaves of about 18
 Years of Age, of agreeable Tempers, and fit for any kind of Business:
 And also a healthy Negro Man of about 30 Years of Age.

Figure 1. Halifax took part in the coastal slave trade in the 1750s, as this advertisement from the *Halifax Gazette* 30 May 1752, p.2, shows. Reproduced from the copy of the newspaper held at Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

RAN away from her Master JOHN ROCK, on Monday the 18th Day of August last; a Negroe Girl named *Thursday*, about four and an half feet high, broad sett, with a Lump above her Right Eye: Had on when she run away a red Cloth Petticoat, a red Baize Bed Gown, and a red Ribbon about her Head. Whosoever may harbour said Negroe Girl, or encourage her to stay away from her said Master, may depend on being prosecuted according as the Law shall direct. And whosoever may be so kind to take her up and send her home to her said Master, shall be paid all Coits and Charges, together with **TWO DOLLARS** Reward for their Trouble.

JOHN ROCK.

HALIFAX, Sept. 11, 1772.

Figure 2. John Rock of Halifax offers a two-dollar reward for his runaway slave, named "Thursday," in an advertisement in the *Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle*, or September 1772, p.3. Reproduced from the copy of the newspaper held at the Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax.

person's enslavement in the New World" with, specifically, "black slaves in the United States" (ix), so that *African* itself is conflated with *American*. Gates acknowledges that the four narratives included in his edited compendium were "written or related by one African, one West Indian, and two Afro-Americans" (xviii), but he views all of them as providing a skeleton for "the Afro-American literary tradition" (xii). Sagely, Gates states, "no group of slaves anywhere, at any other period in history, has left such a large repository of testimony about the horror of becoming the legal property of another human being" (ix). But, he Americanizes this necessarily international writing, scotching the truths that some United States-born, ex-slave authors spent crucial parts of their lives in other countries, while still other black anti-slavery writers were not African-American at all. As stereotypically annexationist (or 'globalist,' a synonym) as Gates may be, he is not the only African-American scholar to insist on the innate Americanness of the slave narrative. Witness the great African-American literary historian, Blyden Jackson. He is compelled to adopt odd cartographical and historiographical contortions to patriate the West African-born, West Indies-settled, and British-identified Olaudah Equiano, the author of *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789):

His America was much, much more the Caribbean than it ever was the colonies which have become the United States. Yet in the eighteenth century the English possessions in the Western Hemisphere constituted a unit.... In his *Narrative* it is clear that Equiano feels himself, in terms of his sense of where he belongs, as much at home ... in continental, as in Antillean, America.... [He] tends to view that world – the mother country and the colonies, whether islands in the Caribbean or land along the American coast – as substantially an undivided whole.⁴

Although Jackson admits "the degree and kind of Equiano's Americanism must ... always be subject to qualification," he asserts that Equiano "probably still does remain continentally American enough to be permitted in a pantheon of continental America's black authors" (61). Such lawyerly expansion of the boundaries of the United States permits Gates to include Equiano's text as one of his four *classic* – that is, *American* – narratives. When Gates writes, blithely, that "the narratives of ex-slaves are, for the literary critic,

4 Blyden Jackson, *A History of Afro-American Literature*, Vol. 1 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 60.

Figure 3. "A slave's arrival in Canada." From Josiah Henson's *An Autobiography of the Rev. Josiah Henson ("Uncle Tom") from 1789 to 1881*, rev. and enl. (London, Ont.: Schuyler, Smith, 1881), [94]. Reproduced from the copy held at the Toronto Public Library.

the very foundation upon which most subsequent Afro-American fictional and nonfictional narrative forms are based" (xii), the truly astute "literary critic" must answer that slave narratives belong to more than one national literary tradition. Equiano's narrative, for instance, is a fount of Anglo-African writing (because he came from Africa) as well as of black British writing (because he lived in England). Similarly, *History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave* (1831), another of Gates's quartet of *classic* narratives, belongs to both a black British and an African-Caribbean literary tradition.

Yes, slave narratives support "the very foundation" of "the Afro-American literary tradition, especially its canonical texts" (xii). But they also inform the origins of other New World African literatures, even that of Canada. While John William Robertson's *The Book of the Bible Against Slavery* (1854), belongs, for example, to African-American literature (for Robertson was native Virginian), it also adheres to African-Canadian and Canadian literature by virtue of its publication in Halifax, Nova Scotia, the city of Robertson's refuge.

Despite such enumerations of colonial Canadian publications of narratives of African-American fugitives, many Canadian literary critics prefer to classify the slave narrative as American and alien. Thus, Canadian scholar Richard Almonte, in his 2000 edition of Thomas Smallwood's *A Narrative of Thomas Smallwood (Coloured Man)* (1851), urges, "Simply," that "the slave narrative is a literary genre of the United States" (16).⁵ In his *History of Canadian Literature* (1989), W.H. New devotes a single paragraph to black history in Canada. He surveys slavery in New France, the arrival of black Loyalists in 1783, and the flight of African Americans to the Canadas via the 'Underground Railroad' between 1833 and "the 1860s."⁶ Then, New

5 Almonte also attests that Smallwood was "the only ex-slave to publish his narrative in Canada" (9) and that his *Narrative* is "the sole example of a slave narrative written and published in Canada" (16). These statements are wrong. Israel Lewis issued a screech, in Montreal, Quebec, in 1846; Paola Brown released a squib in Hamilton, Ontario, in 1851; James W. Robertson published his narrative in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1854; Josiah Henson's internationally celebrated narrative, published in Boston in 1849, was re-issued in London, Ontario, in 1881; in 1861, the *Montreal Gazette* published the transcribed narrative of Lavina Wormeny; Jim Henson's narrative appeared in Owen Sound, Ontario, in 1889; and William Johnson's text was published in Vancouver, B.C., in 1901. Smallwood's own text was printed in Toronto, Ontario, in 1851. There are likely other slave narratives, yet unknown, languishing in Canadian archives.

6 William H. New, *A History of Canadian Literature* (Houndmills, UK: Macmillan, 1989), 32-33.

classes American author Benjamin Drew's compilation of African-American fugitive slave and ex-slave transcribed, oral memoirs, *The Refugee; or The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada* (1856), as an "anthology" of their "stories"⁷(33). New does not inscribe these testimonies, however, as types of Victorian Canadian literature, even though Drew identifies his interviewees as "colored *Canadians*" (16, my italics). New's later work, however, *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada*, includes a brief entry for "Slave Narratives,"⁸ one that contradicts Almonte's *canard* that only one slave narrative – that by Thomas Smallwood – was written and published in Canada (a mistake repeated in the entry on "Black History in Canada" [122]). Here, in fact, the *Encyclopedia* cites "James" [Jim] Henson's *Broken Shackles* (1889), while also referencing Drew's *The Refugee* as a fully Canadian text. In spite of such progress, slave narratives remain absent from most anthologies of and guides to Canadian literature. George Woodcock's entry on "Biography and memoirs in English" in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* contains not a hint of the insurgent, *black* Victorian memoirs.⁹ Nor do Douglas Daymond and Leslie Monkman, in their generous selection, *Literature in Canada: Volume I* (1978), reprint any slave narrative or excerpt – although they trace "the evolution of Canadian literature from the narratives of exploration of the sixteenth century to the poetry, fiction, and drama of the nineteen-seventies."¹⁰ Their bibliography for Susanna Moodie, the avatar of the High Victorian Anglo-Canadian writer, allows that Mary Prince's *History of Mary Prince* and Ashton Warner's *Ashton Warner, A Native of St. Vincents* (1831) and his *Negro Slavery Described by a Negro* (1831), all published in England, are "attributed" to Moodie (really, the transcription and editing of the narratives).¹¹ But, one may

7 Benjamin Drew, ed., *The Refugee; or The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada. Related by Themselves* (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1856); Rpt. as *The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada* (Toronto: Coles Publishing Company, 1981).

8 W.H. New, *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 1054-55.

9 George Woodcock, "Biography and Memoirs in English," *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*. 2nd ed., eds. Eugene Benson and William Toye (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997), 102-06.

10 Douglas Daymond and Leslie Monkman, eds., *Literature in Canada: Volume I* (Toronto: Gage, 1978), ix.

11 Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave* [Ed. Susanna Moodie] (London: Maunder, 1831); Ashton Warner, *Ashton Warner, A Native of St. Vincents*, [Ed. Susanna Moodie] (London: Maunder, 1831); and *Negro Slavery Described by the Negro: Being the Narrative of Ashton Warner, a Native of St. Vincents* (London: Maunder, 1831).

note, with John Thurston in New's *Encyclopedia* (753), that Moodie was, not only the author of "a founding text in the literature of English Canada," her own *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852), but also an anti-slavery editor. (Given Moodie's status as midwife to Prince's *History*, it may be possible to read *Roughing It*, intertextually with Prince, as a displaced 'slave narrative' of a genteel, pioneer English woman, toiling in the bush country of Upper Canada. But such a 'stealth' reading must underline, again, the invisibility of the slave narrative in Canadian literature.) Robert Lecker's masterful catalogue, *English-Canadian Literary Anthologies: An Enumerative Bibliography*, a copious list, misses Drew's assembly of 'fugitive texts,' perhaps because a clutch of transcribed oral memoirs of unlettered ex-slaves does not compose a 'literary anthology.'¹² In their article on "Life writing," prepared for *The Cambridge Companion to Canadian Literature* (2004), Susanna Egan and Gabriele Helms canvass materials on "Immigration" (219), "Family memoir-generations" (223), and even "Trauma – national, communal, and personal" (227), but cite not a single slave narrative. Despite the appearance, then, of some estimated "6000 published narratives" by ex-slaves, most of them African-American and many of them brief transcriptions from interviews, and despite their publication in the "hundreds" in "American and British journals",¹³ they are marginalized in mainstream Canadian literary scholarship. American historian Robin W. Winks notices the smug Canadian attitude toward African-American fugitive slaves and their texts in this disparaging paragraph:

In 1901, when a black sensationalist, William H.H. Johnson, published in Vancouver an essay filled with bloodhounds,

¹² Robert Lecker, *English-Canadian Literary Anthologies: An Enumerative Bibliography* (Teeswater, Ont: Reference Press, 1997).

¹³ See Lisa Robinson's "Slave Narratives," in *African: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, ed. K.A. Appiah and H.L. Gates, Jr., (New York: Basic-Civitas, 1999), 1718. Joan Sherman notes in *Africana: American Poetry of the Nineteenth-Century: An Anthology* (Urbana, Ill.: U of Illinois P, 1992) that "the most popular and influential [African-American] writing from the 1830s through the 1850s were thousands of slave narratives.... Most appeared in widely read abolitionist newspapers and magazines, but several dozen were full-length books" (5). They were beautiful examples of counter-discourse: "Such vivid chronicles of human bondage and dramatic escapes became best-sellers; they fueled abolitionist fervor in the North and fearful antagonisms in the South as the fugitives' firsthand descriptions of slavery's horrors contradicted Southerners' propaganda for the benignity of their peculiar institution. Many former slaves became celebrities of the lecture circuit in the North and in Europe when their memoirs appeared, exacerbating sectional tensions" (5).

mutations, attempted rape, incest, floggings, and sudden discoveries of long-lost sons – the whole a potpourri of the fieriest of abolitionist tracts – Canadians reminded themselves, quite properly, of the irrelevance of this tale to their experience. Canada had played an honorable rôle in the continental attack on slavery, had harbored fugitives from that condition, and had sent them home or seen them to their grave.¹⁴

Winks's upholding of white Canadian dismissal of black Canadian complaint reveals a suspicion that lurid, black protest literature was illegitimate in post-Underground Railroad Canada.¹⁵

In Canadian literature – and history – then, the slave narrative, whether or not indigenous or imported, seems literally out of place, always exilic, always exotic. It is a silently painful wound, an anthology of the unspeakable that cannot enter into our anthologies. It bespeaks prolific violence that suffocates speech, depleting it of any national consequence, so that the fomenters and cementers of canons cannot hear or see its relevance. Its chronicles of suffering must not be suffered. For what (ex-)master needs to hear his (ex-)slave's sad, mad voice?¹⁶ No matter the snowy camouflages and inky smokescreens that our critics and historians throw over Canada's own heritage of slavery, *History* abhors *lacunae*, and so *Literature* rises to answer back, to shout out what had formerly only been whispered and sighed.

For this reason, every honest bibliographer must recognize the host of slave narratives, written or spoken and transcribed – and sometimes published – in Canada, dating to pre-and-post U.S. Civil War periods, that are (or, rather, should be), therefore, integral to conceptions of the canon of Victorian Canadian literature. To list only those published during Queen Victoria's reign is to confront a daunting array (including the one-hundred-plus mini-memoirs Drew presents in *The Refugee*):

14 Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1997), 291.

15 The postbellum return to the United States of many of the tens of thousands of African Americans who had come to Canada between 1815 and 1861 (and especially during the last decade of that period) cannot be discounted as one more reason for the discounting of their narratives as constitutive of Canadian and African-Canadian literature.

16 Thus, as Houston Baker testifies, a slave narrator seeks "to seize the word. [To make his being] erupt from nothingness. Only by grasping the word could he engage in the speech acts that would ultimately define his selfhood." See his *The Journey Back: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 31.

A NORTH-SIDE VIEW OF SLAVERY.

THE REFUGEE:

OR THE

NARRATIVES OF FUGITIVE SLAVES IN CANADA.

RELATED BY THEMSELVES,

WITH.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE HISTORY AND CONDITION OF THE
COLORED POPULATION OF UPPER CANADA.

BY

BENJAMIN DREW.

BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY JOHN P. JEWETT AND COMPANY.

CLEVELAND, OHIO:

JEWETT, PROCTOR AND WORTHINGTON.

NEW YORK: SHELDON, LAMPORT AND BLAKEMAN.

LONDON: TRÜBNER AND CO.

1856.

Figure 4. The front cover of Benjamin Drew's *The Refugee*. Reproduced from the copy included in Canadian Institute for Historical Reproductions collection, CIHM number 49469, <www.Canadiana.org>, in partnership with Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

- Bibb, Henry. *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave, Written by Himself*. New York: n.p., 1849.
- Brown, Paola. *Address Intended to Be Delivered in the City Hall, Hamilton, February 7, 1851, on the Subject of Slavery*. Hamilton, Canada West: [Paola Brown], 1851. [A plagiarized version of David Walker's *Appeal* (1829).]¹⁷
- Clarke, Lewis, and Milton Clarke. *Narratives of the Sufferings of Lewis and Milton Clarke, Sons of a Soldier of the Revolution, during a Captivity of More than Twenty Years among the Slave-Holders of Kentucky, One of the So Called Christian States of America*. Boston: B. Marsh, 1846.
- Drew, Benjamin, ed. *The Refugee; or The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada. Related by Themselves*. Boston: John P. Jewett, 1856. Rpt. as *The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada*. Toronto: Coles Publishing Company, 1981.
- Henson, Jim. *Broken Shackles*. Ed. Glenelg. [pseud. of John Frost, Jr.] Owen Sound, Ont.: n.p., 1889. Rpt. as *Broken Shackles: Old Man Henson from Slavery to Freedom*. Ed. Peter Meyler. Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2001.
- Henson, Josiah. *Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada, Narrated by Himself*. Boston: A.D. Phelps, 1849.
- Howe, Samuel Gridley, comp. *The Refugees from Slavery in Canada West: Report to the Freedmen's Inquiry Commission*. Boston: Wright and Potter, 1864.
- Johnson, William H.H. *The Horrors of Slavery*. Vancouver: n.p., 1901.
- Lewis, Israel. *Crisis in North America: Slavery, War, Balance of Power and Oregon*. Montreal: Harrison Printer, 1846.
- Loguen, Jermain Wesley. *The Rev. J.W. Loguen, As a Slave and As a Freeman: A Narrative of Real Life*. Syracuse, N.Y.: J.G.K. Truair & Company, 1859.
- Robertson, John William. *The Book of the Bible Against Slavery*. Halifax, N.S.: John William Robertson, 1854.

¹⁷ See Smallwood (2000), 30. Note, too, that Brown's earlier publication, "Circular Address to the Free People of Color throughout the United States" (*The Liberator* [Boston] 27 Oct. 1832:1), written in Ville de Québec, may also be indebted to David Walker. Historian Frank Mackey's chapter on Brown, titled "Agent of the Liberator," in *Black Then: Blacks and Montreal, 1780s-1880s* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), leaves no doubt that he was a scamp, a fraud, and a plagiarist (76-84).

- Roper, Moses. *A Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper, from American Slavery with an Appendix Containing a List of Places Visited by the Author in Great Britain and Ireland and the British Isles, and Other Matter*. London: Darton, Harvey, and Darton, 1838.
- Smallwood, Thomas. *A Narrative of Thomas Smallwood (Coloured Man)*. Toronto: [n.p.], 1851.; Ed. Richard Almonte. Toronto: Mercury Press, 2000.
- Steward, [Theophilus] Austin. *Twenty-Two Years a Slave, and Forty Years a Freeman; Embracing a Correspondence of Several Years, while President of Wilberforce Colony*. Rochester, N.Y.: Alling & Cory, 1856.
- Still, William, comp. *The Underground Rail Road*. Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1872.
- Troy, William. *Hair-Breadth Escapes from Slavery to Freedom*. Manchester, Eng.: W. Bremner, 1861.
- Ward, Samuel Ringgold. *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro: His Anti-Slavery Labours in the United States, Canada, & England*. London: J. Snow, 1855.
- Wormeny, Lavina. "Narrative of the Escape of a Poor Negro Woman from Slavery." [Transcribed and edited by Anonymous.] *The Gazette* [Montreal], 31 January 1861. Rpt. in *Black Then: Blacks and Montreal, 1780s-1880s*. Ed. Frank Mackey. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004. 162-66.

These texts are Canadian in terms of the once-and-past (or future) residency of their authors or speakers, and almost half – those by Brown, the Hensons, Lewis, Johnson, Robertson, Smallwood, and Wormeny – were actually published in Canada.¹⁸

II Liberating the Canadian Slave Narratives

In addition to these U.S.-reflective slave narratives that belong, regardless, to Canadian literature, scholars must also address the mass of memoirs treating African slavery in pre-Victorian Canada. However, these records do not fill books or spark pamphlets; instead, they exist in newspaper articles and trial documents: these are the sources of the narratives of African 'Negro'-heritage persons enslaved in colonial Canada, in either Nouvelle-France or in British North

¹⁸ See note 5.

America, prior to the British Empire's abolition of the institution in 1834.¹⁹ For instance, the chronicle of the life and execution of the Montreal slave, Marie-Josèphe Angélique, in 1734, for arson, does not appear in some literate 'Confessions' cobbled together by her in prison, but rather in the transcribed, oral 'confession' tortured out of her during her imprisonment.²⁰ If not for such prejudicial and tainted trial statements and gallows-humoured recollections, the witness of African-Canadian slaves, their wit and even their very language, would languish.

Naturally, in reading our Canadian slave narratives, we approach a literature of propaganda that attacks the pro-slavery arguments of white slaveholders and their allies, particularly their allegations of black inferiority and depravity. In *Slavery & Race in Popular American Culture* (1984), William L. Van Deburg points out that, under slavery, blacks were depicted as "feeble-willed noble savages, comically musical minstrel figures, and dehumanized brutes."²¹ So pervasive – and popular – were such caricatures that "Even ... white sympathizers, the antislavery spokespersons, were not free from entrapment in a culture which seemed determined to forward slave images derogating black humanity while soothing majoritarian fears of a black rebellion" (xi). This Negrophobic discourse is *the* American accompaniment to slavery. But colonial Canada was just as titilated by the tomfoolery and antics of burnt-cork-defaced blacks, terrified by the rages and outrages of cut-throat blacks, and entertained by the placid pastoralism of uncomplaining, choral blacks. New affirms "certain black stereotypes continued during the nineteenth century to be the subjects of humour in Canadian writing" (*History* 33).

19 Canadian slave narratives should be periodized thus: 1) narratives treating slavery in colonial Canada (found in trial records, letters, newspapers), from the early seventeenth-century to 1833; 2) 'exodus' narratives focusing on the experiences of black Loyalists and War of 1812 Refugees (1783-1815); and 3) 'Canaan' narratives about fugitives who used the Underground Railroad to reach Canada, meaning, mainly southern Ontario (1830s-1861). One irony of this division is that the latter narratives are so rich with almost bombastic praise for Canadian/British 'liberty,' that the more negative, earlier accounts of white settler racism are obscured to the point of erasure.

20 See my article, "Raising Raced and Erased Executions in African-Canadian Literature, or Unearthing Angélique," *Essays on Canadian Writing* 75 (Winter 2002): 30-61.

21 William L. Van Deburg, *Slavery & Race in Popular American Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), xi.

For proof, one need look no further than the checkered *oeuvre* of that imperial-colonial, Planter-Loyalist-descended, Tory Plato-Punchinello, Thomas Chandler Haliburton, who trafficked relentlessly in images of comic or homicidal or shiftless blacks throughout the course of his Empire-wide, literary career, between 1836 and 1865. At first a progressive *philosophe* to his fellow Nova Scotians, as the popularity of his 'frontier' idioms increased, Haliburton became increasingly conservative, to the point of writing slavery *apologia*. For him, slavery was one of the buttresses of Western civilization and its inherent ideal of white superiority. Thus, he penned vitriolic humour to extol its extollers and to denigrate its 'ingrates.'²² In one passage, Haliburton's persona, Sam Slick, offers the opinion that "niggers ... those thick skulled, crooked shanked, flat footed, long heeled, wooly headed gentlemen, don't seem fit for much else but slavery."²³ Such writing served to perpetuate slavery. William Van Deburg recognizes that "it was historians' acceptance of this decision to equate blacks with slaves and slaves with blacks which foreclosed historical possibilities that might have served as a liberating force toward ending black bondage before it became embedded in the American past" (9). Proto-Canadian authors like Haliburton, by mouthing the pseudo-scientific racialism of European imperialism and Caucasian-operated slavery, united with American slaveholders in using "the grotesque nature of the comical black character [to provide] whites with living, breathing reasons for maintaining racial separation" (Van Deburg 24). Even after slavery was defeated in the United States, "Armed with images of blacks as natural slaves, feeble exotics, and comical imitators, writers sought to turn the tentative plantation visions of previous years into convincing – and entertaining – human and institutional portraits" (Van Deburg 25). Given the wide debasement of *blackness* itself in North American cultures, the slave narrative authors or orators, even in British Imperial Canada, had to focus upon "two areas which were underdeveloped by whites – slave achievement and the interconnection between prejudice and bondage" (Van Deburg 53).

22 See my two essays on Haliburton's work: "White Niggers, Black Slaves: Slavery, Race, and Class in T.C. Haliburton's *The Clockmaker*," *Nova Scotia Historical Review* 14.1 (1994): 13-40; and "Must We Burn Haliburton?" in *The Haliburton Bi-centenary Chaplet: Papers Presented at the 1996 Thomas Raddall Symposium*, ed. Richard A. Davies (Wolfville, N.S.: Gaspereau Press, 1997), 1-40.

23 Thomas Chandler Haliburton, *The Clockmaker; or the Sayings and Doings of Sam Slick of Slickville* (Halifax, N.S.: Joseph Howe, 1836), 176.

In the black Atlantic²⁴ world, then, the slave narratives sought to reveal how “whites had become slaves to their own brainwashing.”²⁵ Thus, a formulaic rhetoric scores these texts: the delineation of institutional, Sadean vileness and violations (tortures and terrors), the underlining of moral and economic contradictions (bankrupt behaviour and profiteering potentates), the appeals to reason and compassion, the rationales for fighting and flight, and the documentation of the ex-slaves’s excellent humanity, signaled by a heartfelt Christianity, a labourer’s ‘prosperity’ (thrift and industry), and a lust for literacy.

The germ of these rhetorical strategies is exhibited in Olivier Le Jeune’s 1632 riposte to his French-Canadian master, Jesuit missionary Paul Le Jeune, and the claim that “all men were one when united in Christianity” (Winks 1). Le Jeune answered: “You say that by baptism I shall be like you: I am black and you are white, I must have my skin taken off then in order to be like you” (qtd. in Winks 1). Hilaire L’Amour, a Montreal black and recent ex-slave, states his de facto opposition to slavery, by formally freeing Catharine, his wife, on 26 December 1787, after having purchased her just a few weeks before: “I do hereby renounce all right of property which I had, or might have had or might have claimed to have by virtue of the said purchase.... Declaring her from this moment Free and released from all servitude as a slave by these presents.”²⁶ By voyaging from Nova Scotia to Sierra Leone with other so-called black Loyalists in 1792, Lydia Jackson escaped a violent indentureship – really, enslavement – to the Nova Scotia household of a Dr. Bulman, who got her with child, then beat her so viciously that she miscarried.²⁷ To explore fully these ‘indigenous’ accounts of Negro slavery in pre-Abolition Canada, intensive archival research is mandatory.

Even so, the memoirs of African-American ‘fugitives’ in the Victorian era present clear examples of the persuasive arts catalogued in the previous paragraph. Robertson’s *Book of the Bible Against Slavery* is typical. He lists the agonies and atrocities of slavery:

24 This coinage belongs to Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

25 Van Deburg, 128.

26 Hilaire L’Amour, in *Black Then: Blacks and Montreal, 1780s-1880s*, ed. Frank Mackey (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), 14.

27 See James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870* (Halifax: Dalhousie University Press, 1976).

This is the way slaves are treated in the United States, by persons in power without mercy or moral feeling:... they are overworked, not over fed, most wretchedly clad and lodged, besides have insufficient sleep. That they are often made to wear round their knees, iron collars, armed with prongs to drag heavy chains and weights at their feet, while all work in the field, and to wear yokes and bells, and iron horns; that they are often kept confined in the stocks, day and night, for weeks together. Also, to wear gags in their mouths for hours or days, the effects of which in some cases, has been the means of breaking teeth and otherwise torn out, so that they may be easily detected when running away. That they are perpetually flogged with terrible severity, have Cayenne pepper rubbed into their bruised flesh, and also spirits of turpentine poured over the lashes to increase the torture of these unfortunate people. That in some cases they are striped [sic] of their clothes naked, and their backs and limbs cut and scared [sic] with knives, and otherwise bruised in various ways. That their bodies can be tortured. That they are also often hunted by blood hounds and shot down like the wild animal of the forest, and torn to pieces by the dogs; in some cases suspended by the arms, whipped and beaten until they faint, and when revived by restorative, beaten again until they faint again, and in some cases may come to or die. That their bones are broken, their eyes put out, their ears often cut off, their flesh branded with hot irons, maimed, mutilated, and burnt to death over slow fires.²⁸

28 John William Robertson, "Book of the Bible Against Slavery," in *Fire on the Water: An Anthology of Black Nova Scotian Writing. Volume I*, ed. George Elliott Clarke (Lawrencetown Beach, NS.: Pottersfield Press, 1991), 61. As vivid as this list of hurts may be, Robertson is merely cataloguing what others have experienced. In the 1861 Montreal *Gazette*-published narrative of Lavina Wormeny, one reads that, in her enslavement in Texas, "No clothes whatever were allowed," that she was, like other slaves, "compelled to go down on their knees, and harnessed to a plough, to plough up the land, with boys for riders, to whip them when they flagged in their work." On one escape attempt, she "travelled on foot without a vestige of clothing, subsisting on herbs and nuts," and "gave birth to twin children, one of them dead." Upon recapture, her master slit Wormeny's ears, branded her on the back of her left hand and on her belly, and axed off her little right finger. To pressure her to reveal information about other fugitive slaves, Wormeny was "fixed in what is there called a 'buck.'" This machine doubled her in two, "until her legs were passed over her head, where they were kept by a stick passed across the back of the neck" (qtd. in Mackey 162-64). Wormeny went on to experience even more violence before she made her way to Montreal.

Robertson's hypnotic and disgusting anatomy of the ills of slavery seeks, like most slave narratives, to prod the audience to rebel against the cold-blooded hypocrisy of the nominally Christian society that allows such cruelties.²⁹ Its realism and forceful iteration exemplify the *reportage* of oral witness come to print. (Robertson had been illiterate when he landed in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1852.) His style encourages his readers and auditors to imagine slavery for themselves, thereby undercutting its apologists. Robertson also reveals the innately anti-slavery, economic wisdom of the bondsmen: "I remained ... with ["my master and owner as a slave"] until my spirits became brightened by the influence of God, which was in the year of our Lord 1852. It dwell on my mind that it should come to pass, by me as with many others, that I should start and cut grass for myself" (58). Rather than continue to sweat to fatten another man, at no profit for himself, Robertson elects to run off. In the first, apocalyptic paragraph of his poetic pamphlet, he justifies his decision by scathingly denouncing the false religious arguments of slavery's backers:

The spirit of Slavery never seeks refuge in the Bible of its own accord; the horns of the Altar are its last resort, seized [sic] only in desperation as it reaches and rushes from the avenger's arm, like other unclean spirits.... "Goaded to phrensy [sic] in its conflicts with conscience and common sense and reason, denied all quarters, and hunted from every convert, it vaults over the sacred enclosures, and courses up and down the Bible," seeking rest and finding none; the law of love glowing on every page, flashes around in omnipotent anguish and despair, and shrinks from the hatred [sic] light, and howls under the consuming torch, as demons quailed before the Son of God, and screeched aloud, "torment us not." At last it shrinks away under the types of the Mosaic system, and seeks to borrow [sic] out to sight as among the shadows vain hopes. Its asylum is its sepulchre, its city of refuge the city of destruction; it flies from the light into the sun, from heat into devouring fire; and from the voice of God into the thickest of his thunders. (58)

Robertson's fierce, highly coloured oratory, his flamboyant and hard-earned self-righteousness, is almost the special province of slave narratives, which resemble newfangled scripture, add-on apocrypha

29 This strategy is common in slave narratives. In Drew's compendium, Mrs. Nancy Howard alleges, "I think the slaveholders don't read the Scriptures the right way, – they don't know their danger" (51).

intended to bridge Exodus and Revelation, or Lamentations and the Gospels. Having 'voted with his feet' against the Perverse Institution, Robertson ended up in Halifax, where he proceeds from ignorance of "a letter in the alphabet" to attaining a "small share of education" to writing and publishing, perhaps at his own expense, his short but significant narrative (64). All that remains for him is to endeavour "to improve with the help of God" (64). Robertson's narrative concludes, not only in a manner befitting a nineteenth-century Anglo-Protestant, but also in deference to the Victorian ideals of social uplift, especially deliverance by the exertion of independent manliness, moral fibre, perseverance, and work and study. (Another salutary effect of Robertson's narrative is to introduce Halifax as an 'Underground Railroad' port, thus expanding to the Eastern Seaboard a narrative of escape more usually situated in the Great Lakes centre of the continent.)

While Robertson's narrative typifies those of the era, and while it maintains the necessarily parasitic relationship of African-Canadian literature to its African-American precursor, it also begins to articulate some of the differences of a Canadian positioning. For instance, Robertson utters an explicit condemnation of his homeland, which, while not unusual in slave narratives, assumes a Canadian nationalist colouration in the *supra*-border environment: "All these [tortures] are perpetrated in the United States, where slavery is allowed, and carried on, which can be proved beyond doubt by many hundreds of persons of good repute" (61). Absent here is any citation of the slavery practised legally in British North America until 1 August 1834, nor is there any mention of the appalling poverty and social disgust to which African-American fugitives and ex-slaves were treated in this dissident 'America.' Robertson's text is a model, in every way, of how exiled African Americans/proto-African Canadians denounced American slavery, but, simultaneously, supported the creation of a Canadian nationalist, anti-Americanism that, while essential for abolitionist purposes, also legitimized the repression of the reality and history of Euro-Canadian racialism. (The import of this black-and-white mythography still shapes racial discourse in Canada. Indeed, by training their righteous anger so squarely on the squalid inadequacies of the American Republic, the proto-African-Canadian slave narrative authors helped to obscure European-Canadian racism and, worse, *justify* Anglo-Canadian [British] imperialism. Their writings supported and inspired white Canadian paternalism, sentimentality,

and romanticism regarding African Americans, attitudes still *au courant* today.³⁰)

In harmony with this strategy, Drew's compilation, *The Refugee*, is as much anti-American as it is anti-slavery. The publisher, John P. Jewett and Company, in its prefatory "Advertisement," advises that "the statements of the Fugitives from Slavery" compose "a valuable and permanent contribution to American Literature." For Drew himself, though, as compiler and editor, the fugitives' words "reveal to the ears of pitying indignation, the secrets of the prisonhouse" (1), or, rather, of the Republic-as-jail. Crucially, these narratives are meant to be *heard* in the United States, and merely *overheard* in British North America.³¹ Thus, in his "Author's Preface," Drew tells us that "the citizens of this Republic should feel an interest in [the] fate and fortunes" of the "fugitive slaves of the United States." Furthermore, his opening paragraph replicates the militant oratory of the "Declaration of Independence," the document of 4 July 1776, in which thirteen British American colonies declared their revolt from their imperial parent. Where that paper begins, "When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another,"³²

30 See, for instance, Dorothy Livesay's poem, "New Jersey: 1935," in *The New Romans: Candid Canadian Opinions of the U.S.*, ed. Al Purdy (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1968), 110-11.

In the landlady's garden
we walked entwined in moonlight
Luella and I
tree and shadow of tree
linked white and black.

After the white American landlady, with "her frog eyes," tells Livesay's persona, "Don't ever / let a nigger enter my door again" (110), she snaps back, "Why no! – I never will – / nor a white girl, either," then packs and leaves (111). This narrative repeats a favourite staple of white Canadian liberal nationalism: to defend set-upon African Americans against white American racists. Problematically though, these same liberal nationalists – Livesay honourably excepted – are seldom present to defend coloured minorities against white Canadian racism, especially in its smiling, 'slick' manifestations.

31 Phillip Brian Harper originated this argument in terms of white audiences 'overhearing' black American poetry. See his article, "Nationalism and Social Division in Black Arts Poetry of the 1960s," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (Winter 1993): 234-55.

32 "Declaration of Independence. [American.] [By Thomas Jefferson.] 1776," in *The New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary of the English Language: Encyclopedic Edition*, ed. Bernard S. Cayne (New York: Lexicon, 1988), 249-50.

and explains this 'necessity' as being the result of illiberal actions of a once-sovereign power, Drew echoes its sentiments with his first sentence – or broadside:

When in any State, the oppression of the laboring portion of the community amounts to an entire deprivation of their civil and personal rights; when it assumes to control their wills, to assign them tasks, to reap the rewards of their labor, and to punish with bodily tortures the least infractions of its mandates, it is obvious that the class so overwhelmed with injustice, are necessarily, unless prevented by ignorance from knowing their rights and their wrongs, the enemies of the government. (1)

Just as Thomas Jefferson's "Declaration" justifies the insurrection of the American people against an extra-territorial, monarchical 'tyranny,' so does Drew insist that African-American slaves have the right to contest a territorial, caste-based despotism: "To them, insurrection and rebellion are primary, original duties" (1), as well as, as Drew adds, flight from "evil" (1). Clearly, Drew aims to inspire anti-slavery fervour among democratic, European-American 'patriots,' but his fund of vehemence also spills over Anglo-Canadian discourse, freshening springs of anti-Americanism and pro-British imperialism.

With avid discipline, then, Drew, as the regulator and animator of his escapee speakers, prompts a regular discourse from his subjects that blasts, *blackens*, the Republic while exalting the accidental Canaan of the Canadas and the relative Eden of British, Crown-derived law and liberty. Drew accents this irony, asking his presumed American readers, "What circumstances have led [ex-slaves] to prefer a monarchy to a *republic*?"³³ In dozens of the narratives, the interviewees view monarchical Canada as a true, free land opposing the 'United Slave States of America.' In such imagery lie, in part, the roots of *our* imagined moral superiority *vis-à-vis* the United States.

For instance, the Rev. Alexander Hemsley, once a slave in Maryland before becoming a resident in St. Catharines, Canada West (Ontario), recalls his arrival, indigent, in "a small inferior place," and his subsequent bare ability to make "both ends meet."³⁴ Still, he resolved

33 Drew even wonders whether "a race partly African, partly Saxon" might not favour "the cross of St. George" in any eventual conflict between England and "our stars – and stripes" (14).

34 Rev. Alexander Hemsley, qtd. in Benjamin Drew, ed., *The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada* (Toronto: Coles Publishing Company, 1981), 39.

“that salt and potatoes in Canada, were better than pound-cake and chickens in a state of suspense and anxiety in the United States” (39). So enamoured is he with British North America and its guarantee of ‘the freedom to work for oneself’ to all, that Hemsley exclaims, “Now I am a regular Britisher. My American blood has been scourged out of me; I have lost my American tastes” (39). This statement marks the effect that Canadian space has on exiled Americans: to replace their hypocritical republicanism with the virtues of true, British liberty. (One spies in such claims the enthusiastic patriotism of Red Tory Canuck nationalists like George Grant.³⁵) The Rev. Hemsley’s healthy pro-British sentiments are amplified by another St. Catharines resident, William Grose, once a slave at Harpers Ferry, Virginia: “Here’s something I want to say to the colored people in the United States: You think you are free there, but you are very much mistaken: if you wish to be free men, I hope you will all come to Canada as soon as possible” (qtd. in Drew, 86-87). Grose’s Canada is Paradise: “I have been through both Upper and Lower Canada, and I have found the colored people keeping stores, farming, etc., and doing well.” Grose buttresses his celebration at being “a true British subject,” one who has “a vote every year as much as any other man,” by insisting, “I am not prejudiced against all the white race in the United States, – it is only the portion that sustain the cursed laws of slavery” (87, 86). Even so, he sketches out a rudimentary sociology of African-Canadian life that doubles as Canadian nationalist propaganda: “As a general thing, the colored people are more sober and industrious than in the United States: there they feel when they have money, that they cannot make what use they would like of it, they are so kept down, so looked down upon. Here they have something to do with their money, and put it to a good purpose.”³⁶

In Galt, Canada West, Henry Gowens, another ex-Virginian, says he plans “to publish the whole history of my life to the people

35 See my “Treason of the Black Intellectuals?” in *Odysseys Home: Mapping African-Canadian Literature* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2002), 82-210, especially pp. 193-5.

36 Introducing the narrative of John W. Lindsey, Drew offers the editorial aside that “Mr. Lindsey reached St. Catharines in an entirely destitute condition. He is now reputed to be worth from eight to ten thousand dollars, acquired by industry and economy” (77). The bare fact is an aphorism – for those with ears to hear and eyes to see: Canada is now the *true* land of opportunity.

of the United States and Canada."³⁷ Still, he uses his interview with Drew (or *vice versa*) to proclaim, again, the superior virtues of the Canadas:³⁸ "But in Canada, all are really free and equal. Color is not recognized in the laws of the land. During all the time I have lived in Canada, no white person has suffered any inconvenience, or had cause to complain, because I am placed on an equality with him."³⁹

Sounding like the Moses of the spirituals, Gowens wonders, "How much longer, in the name of God, shall my people remain in their state of degradation under the American republic?" (143). According to ex-Virginian J.C. Brown, a fellow citizen of Cincinnati, Ohio (where he resided before settling in Chatham, Canada West), told him "every [black] that I took off to Canada was a sword drawn against the United States."⁴⁰ The heroic John Little, hailing from Murfreesboro, North Carolina, and latterly, Queen's Bush, Canada West, appeals to his African-American brethren to quit their racist presidents for the bounty bestowed by British royalty: "To them I say, go into the backwoods of Queen Victoria's dominions, and you can secure an independent support."⁴¹ Canada's very air is a moral cleanser:

The man who was "a bad nigger" in the South, is here a respected, independent farmer.... The "*nigger*" who was so "BAD" among Southerners, as to be scarred with whips, put in the stocks, chained at his work, with ankles sore from the irons, ... put in jail after jail, hunted by hounds, – stands up here at the North, a man respectable and respected. I don't ask any one to take my word for it, merely. Ask the people of Peel, Wellesley, Woolwich, and Waterloo – those are the places where I am known. (219-20)

37 Henry Gowens, in Drew, 142. Another value of these testaments is their casual historiography. Thus, William Jackson of Queen's Bush reports that he and his father arrived there in 1846 and that "for years scarcely any white people came in, but fugitive slaves came in, in great numbers, and cleared the land" (189). Thanks to such chronicles, the slave narratives come to resemble mainstream settler, pioneer, and travel narratives. In other words, the recounting of such histories repositions 'fugitives' as 'pioneers' and 'settlers' – and, thus, as builders of Canada West, that is Ontario. At Chatham, too, John Little recalls, "the fugitives are thick as blackbirds in a cornfield" (in Drew, 234).

38 See Mary Ann Shadd's *A Plea for Emigration; or, Notes of Canada West* (Detroit: Pattison, 1852), for yet further African-American, anti-slavery propaganda that positions Canada as a land of milk, honey, and zero racism.

39 Henry Gowens, in Drew, 142.

40 J.C. Brown, in Drew, 245.

41 John Little, in Drew, 219.

Little's eloquence supports both the Canadian vision of *our* moral supremacy over the United States, but also the aspirations of emigrationist African Americans to locate a new and comfortable homeland.⁴² The success of such positive depictions of Canada has entailed the marginalization of slave narratives as essentially American literature by and for Americans, bespeaking an experience – slavery and slave resistance – supposedly alien to our 'Peaceable Kingdom.'

Pro-British and anti-American statements thus fill Drew's compilation. But there are a few admissions of the practice of anti-black or other racism in Canada West. A striking commentary is that of Sophia Pooley, another Queen's Bush resident, "now more than ninety years old" (in the 1850s). She testifies that "I was stolen from my parents when I was seven years old, and brought to Canada; that was long before the American Revolution."⁴³ She believes "I was the first colored girl brought into Canada," where she was sold to aboriginal leader, Joseph Brant, to be his slave in the Niagara region of present-day New York and Ontario (192). Eventually, her Aboriginal master sells Pooley to an Englishman "for one hundred dollars" (194), and remains with him, in southwest Ontario, for seven years, until she simply claims her freedom and leaves (194). Her story is an intriguing snapshot of Native, African, and European socio-economic relationships on the Niagara frontier.

For that matter, *The Refugee* reconfigures the map of Victorian North America along African-American lines, giving prominence to just three areas: the South, the North, and Canada. The first two locales represent iniquity, while the third is the home of truth. (But Canada – really, in this case, southern and southwestern Ontario, is also the home of veritable African-American colonies. Introducing his interviews with fugitives in St. Catharines, Drew observes, "we will ... look at St. Catharines as the peaceful home of hundred of the colored race" [17]). To cite the words of St. Catharines's James Adams, "We [slaves] all the time talked to each other about how we would get away, and what we should do if the white folks tackled us; that was

42 Vital here is humour. So David West, another St. Catharines's ex-Virginian, undermines republican slavery with this reported exchange: "A Baptist preacher told me once, when I was working for him, that there was no country in the world equal to Virginia. My answer was, "Yes, I believe it is the greatest country in the world: for one third of the people are doing nothing, and the other two thirds are working to support them" (qtd. in Drew, 88).

43 Sophia Pooley, in Drew, 192.

all our discourse."⁴⁴ Drew's interlocutors resemble African Lears who have fled from false Pericles, now revealed as the most dissolute and heartless Macbeths.⁴⁵ Thus, *The Refugee* is a kind of reply to Comte Alexis de Tocqueville's *De la démocratie en Amérique* (Paris, 1835-40), one that proves the absence of true democracy in America, but also its *purportedly* functioning reality in Canada West.⁴⁶

Fundamentally, *our* slave narratives are anchored in a Victorian temperament, one that holds, as Roy Daniells posits, "a widespread belief in the value of continuing tradition to a nation beginning its independent course," such as, for instance, using "the English poetic tradition in order to interpret the Canadian scene."⁴⁷ In his narrative then, Smallwood waxes as painterly as Walter Pater to accent the elect nature of his times: "Not in the full blaze of Assyrian glory and strength, from Nimrod to Sardinapolis, extending over a period of nearly fifteen hundred years, have so many extraordinary events taken place as are concentrated in the last half century" (23). Indeed, "We live in an age of epochs – every year, every day, yea every moment, is an era within itself" (23). To preface his narrative, Smallwood quotes or alludes to the then-extant, 'liberal' British Pantheon of John Milton, Edward Young, Samuel Johnson, abolitionist orator Henry Lord Brougham, William Wordsworth, John Philpot Curran, William Cowper, Thomas Campbell, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, Robert

44 James Adams, in Drew, 24.

45 One sign of this ironic reversal is that Mrs. Colman Freeman, once of North Carolina, is now of Canada West, although her father "fought the British in the [American] Revolution" (qtd. in Drew, 330).

46 Here one must remember that, as Richard Almonte pleads, "the nineteenth-century Black Canadian community should not be seen – as it often is in popular Canadian history – as a uniform group of ex-slaves happy simply to be in Canada" (12). Indeed, several of the narratives compiled by Drew speak of enmity and the failure of some fugitives to do their fair share of work to develop communities and to prosper. Therefore, George Williams, an ex-Kentuckian resident in Sandwich, Canada West, states, "In some places, the colored people can manage without aid, – but here not" (in Drew, 344). In Colchester, on the northern shore of Lake Erie, Robert Nelson, out of Virginia, complains, "the prejudice is higher here in this place than in any part of Canada. It arises from a wish to keep the colored people so that they can get their labor" (in Drew, 371). Class – and culture – clashes helped to frustrate the unity and progress of the *immigrant* nineteenth-century black Canadian communities in the Canadas and British Columbia.

47 Roy Daniells, "High Colonialism in Canada" in *Colony and Confederation: Early Canadian Poets and Their Background*, ed. George Woodcock (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1974), 42, 46.

Burns, and William Shakespeare, plus, two token Americans, Daniel Webster and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (23-28). Smallwood thus follows African-American literary critic Joan Sherman's insight that, in the nineteenth-century, African-American poetry (and, I would add, other literature), was "influenced not by other black poets [or writers] but by such white American contemporaries as Longfellow, [John Greenleaf] Whittier, and [James Whitmore] Riley, or by the British writers Shelley, [Oliver] Goldsmith, [Sir Walter] Scott, Byron, and [Alfred, Lord] Tennyson" (3-4). Too, like these European and Euro-American poets, and like black writers, Smallwood accepts "the century's dictum that poetry's province is to convey truth, to teach, uplift, reform, and, secondarily, to give pleasure" (Sherman 4). Even so, Smallwood's style is closer to the more racy Algernon Swinburne than it is to the moralistic Matthew Arnold. Treating the probable martyrdom of the heroic, African-American, abolitionist publisher David Walker, Smallwood writes, in pretty royally purple ink, "When the fame of [Walker's] book reached the South, the poor, cowardly, pusillanimous tyrants grew pale behind their cotton bags, and armed themselves to the teeth" (32). Just as richly worded is Smallwood's denunciation of "Northern Colonisationists" (38), that is, those who wish African Americans to relocate to Liberia: "[They are] the great merchants, manufacturers, and aristocrats of the North, who suck their riches from the South, off from the sweat and blood of the African race, with as little reason and humanity as the stall-fed hog sucks the swill that is poured into his manger" (38). Ultimately, these capitalist hypocrites will be destroyed: "I believe the long suspended blow against that republic and the final emancipation of their victims are close at hand, and will be attended with a terrible and bloody breaking up of their present system" (69).

Smallwood's style may obey the influences of Byron and Sir Walter Scott, as Benjamin Brawley argues was the tendency among nineteenth-century African American writers,⁴⁸ who delineated a heroic universe where liberty was sought. The slave narrative exhibits, then, the stuff of historical romance, as well as the murky, labyrinthine, Gothic terror demanding the stoic, yet active, heroic response. Thus, Drew produces the mini-sagas of J.C. Brown (239-48) and John Little (198-24). However, if Sir Walter Scott was the

⁴⁸ Benjamin Brawley, ed., *Early Negro American Writers: Selections with Biographical and Critical Introductions* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935), II.

South's favourite novelist,⁴⁹ and thus a model for African-American writers, he was also a long-lasting influence for Anglo-Canadian authors. In 1954, Lister Sinclair observes, "there is always Sir Walter Scott, who remains the great model for so many of us, both in verse and in prose."⁵⁰ For both African-Americans and English-Canadians of the Victorian Age, Scott communicated ideals *via* romance and melodrama, two aspects of literature essential, asserts Northrop Frye, "in consolidating a social mythology."⁵¹

Given the similar influences upon African-American slave narratives and colonial Anglo-Canadian writing, and given that some of the slave narratives were shaped here, we must find some continental continuity between these 'national' expressions. Indeed, we should note, in their mutual responses to estrangement and stranding, the articulation of the identical impulse: to imbue imperial forms with local associations. And, in some cases, we must hear the voice of the colonial *African-Canadian* slave speaking in terms and tropes, not unknown in African-American literature. In the end, the supposedly *American* slave narratives are far more *Canadian* in their polemical thrust than we have tended to recognize. To cite Drew's interlocutor, Thomas Hedgebeth, "This is no hearsay" (278), though it may be heresy....

SOMMAIRE

Cet essai soutient que les récits d'esclaves de l'ère victorienne, bien que certains chercheurs afro-américains prétendent qu'ils font partie d'un genre particulièrement afro-américain (ou américain), constituent également un genre canadien, dont la « canadienité » toutefois est rarement reconnue. Quoiqu'il en soit, plusieurs esclaves fugitifs afro-américains s'installèrent au Canada – en tant que pionniers – avant d'écrire et de faire paraître leurs mémoires. En outre, il y a aussi des récits qui traitent de l'esclavage *au* Canada alors qu'il constituait une colonie. Cependant, afin de trouver ces œuvres, des recherches dans

49 Donald Petesch, *A Spy in the Enemy's Country: The Emergence of Modern Black Literature* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), 139.

50 Lister Sinclair, "The Canadian Idiom," in *Our Sense of Identity: A Book of Canadian Essays*, ed. Malcolm Ross (Toronto: Ryerson, 1954), 236.

51 Northrop Frye, "Conclusion," in *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English*. Vol. 2., 2nd edition, ed. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 333-61.

les archives des cours de justice seront nécessaires. Lorsque nous lisons les récits des esclaves « canadiens », « indigènes » ou « fugitifs », nous entendons des voix qui critiquent sévèrement l'esclavage en termes clairs, utilisant des modèles définissables de rhétorique. Ironiquement, cependant, l'insistance abolitionniste à condamner l'hypocrisie américaine et à porter aux nues la liberté (canado-) britannique, a eu pour effet de convaincre les Canadiens qu'ils étaient vraiment meilleurs que les Américains, que l'esclavage constituait un fait américain, et que, par conséquent, les récits d'esclaves n'avaient rien à voir avec *nous*.