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Self-Fashioning, Double Consciousness, and a History of Representation: The Narratives of Frederick Douglass and Solomon Northup as Compared to Runaway Slave Advertisements

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Self-Fashioning, Double Consciousness, and a History of Representation:
The Narratives of Frederick Douglass and Solomon Northup as Compared to Runaway Slave
Advertisements

Senior Project submitted to
The Division of Languages and Literature
with a Concentration in Experimental Humanities
of Bard College

by

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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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Dedications

My first dedication goes to my Senior Project Adviser Peter L'Official, for believing in my ability to complete a successful project, especially when I struggled to believe in myself. The literature department as well as the Bard community as a whole are very lucky to have you join them. You easily became one of the most popular professors amongst the students, which is telling considering this is only your second semester here! Thank you for your support and fun SPROJ meetings, I know that you will continue to inspire all the students you encounter here at Bard.

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Introduction

Envision what it would feel like to be shut into a small, wooden box, about three feet long and two feet wide, for 27 hours. The only provisions around you: a jug of water and a few biscuits. Now, imagine how it would feel when the box was eventually opened. Finally, consider for what reasons would one subject oneself to such circumstances?

Henri “Box” Brown, (the middle name given to him after his epic escape) a slave who lived in Virginia in 1815, would not have to imagine such an experience. The end for which he accepted the conditions described was simple: his freedom. He describes:

One day, while I was at work, and my thoughts were eagerly feasting upon the idea of freedom, I felt my soul called out to heaven to breathe a prayer to Almighty God. I prayed fervently that he who seeth in secret and knew the inmost desires of my heart, would lend me his aid in bursting my fetters asunder, and in restoring me to the possession of those rights, of which men had robbed me; when the idea suddenly flashed across my mind of shutting myself up in a box, and getting myself conveyed as dry goods to a free state.¹

This quote is taken from but one example of a slave narrative written at the turn of the 19th century. Brown experienced such brutal conditions in his time while enslaved, that he quite improbably, *mailed* himself into a free state. The sense of urgency to escape slavery is present on every page in Henri Brown’s narrative. After 27 hours of land and water travel, Brown arrived in Philadelphia. Two abolitionists William Still and James McKim received Brown, who is said to have climbed out of the box asking, “How do you do, Gentlemen?”. Later, in Brown’s own

¹ Brown, Henry Box. *The Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. 51.

narrative he describes how after, “I was told that I was safe, I was to break out in song of deliverance, and praise to the most high god...Great God, was I a freeman!”² Brown would unofficially be given the middle name “Box”, after his emancipation. Although he was advised against publishing his story by Frederick Douglass - the famous orator and an escaped slave himself - in order to protect potential future slaves escaping using the same method, Brown would use his experiences as a platform to recreate his own identity and to write himself into the new world.

Post-emancipation America witnessed a surge of interest by writers and journalists to document the stories of former slaves. Up to 2,300 narratives were written or recorded and subsequently collected by the Library of Congress. Over a third of these narratives collected were due to the Federal Writers Project of the Works Progress Administration. It is important to note that many published narratives required a stamp of approval from a white male figure. This ‘stamp’ was in the form of a ‘Preface’ or an introduction or letter stating that the information revealed was accurate and therefore valuable. Also, it served as simple attestations of proof that the author actually wrote the work, since most people would have doubted a slave’s capacity to read and write. The ability to write - and indeed, to write oneself into existence by attesting to that existence in prose - was something many slaves would have pursued, given the opportunity. Of those published, common themes such as the recognition of self as an ‘other’, the recognition of self as ‘object’ and then ‘property’, the testing of faith, the devastation of being separated from

² Brown, *The Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown*, 63.

family, the brutal conditions within slavery and finally the difficulty assimilating into a world that was not made for people of color post-emancipation appear.³

Identity plays an important role in the development of the former slaves' narratives as there are many different perspectives through which African Americans viewed themselves. The identities projected onto the slaves by their white oppressors included ideas of racial superiority. The stories some former slaves would eventually include in their narratives attempt to counter these notions as a way of recreating new identities. The narratives themselves act as a mode of resistance against the belief that the slave identity was internalized.

In many ways, slave narratives represent written archives of the authors' identities, and testaments to those identities. Through consideration of what constitutes self-making and how one represents a struggle almost entirely unknown to the intended reader (i.e. white Americans), we may better see the parts of an identity that are either invisible or absent from the narratives entirely. We are then called to ask: how might the authors of the narratives represent selves that can garner sympathy from white audiences while simultaneously laying the foundation for their own future identities in a free world?

In a sense, narratives such as the ones written by Frederick Douglass and Solomon Northup acted as advertisements for abolition, and for creating a sentimental feeling within a potentially unsympathetic audience. By thinking of slave narratives as advertisements, (with advertisements meaning drawing attention to a cause/person/place/thing in order to promote it, or

³ Yetman, Norman R. "An Introduction to the WPA Slave Narratives." *Library of Congress*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. N. pag. *Library of Congress*. Web. 1 Dec. 2015. <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snintro00.html>>.

as a dictionary definition might add “Public notices designed to inform and motivate”⁴) one might also understand that in the necessarily incomplete sketches of selves that comprise them, there is much missing information regarding the experiences and the complex layers of identities experienced by slaves. It is the information that is absent from the narratives that represents a kind of resistance to the restrictive nature of a narrative as medium for an all encompassing an identity.

This project aims to consider *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*⁵ and *Twelve Years A Slave a Slave Narrative of Solomon Northup*⁶ as advertisements for abolition as well as a medium for self-making for their authors. The project will also compare these two narratives against the Runaway Slave Advertisements⁷ written by slave owners. Runaway Slave Advertisements were a set of newspaper articles that described runaway slaves. These were written by slave owners with the hopes of having the slaves captured and returned. The advertisements consisted of detailed, physical and personality descriptions of slaves who had managed to escape. Out of the examination of these primary and archival sources, deeper issues concerning relationships between slave and master, as well as a narrative

⁴ "Advertisement." Business Dictionary. Accessed May 1, 2016.
<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/advertisement-ad.html>.

⁵ Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. New York: Dover, 1995.

⁶ Northup, Solomon. "Twelve Years a Slave Narrative of Solomon Northup, a Citizen of New-York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, and Rescued in 1853, from a Cotton Plantation near the Red River in Louisiana." Edited by David Wilson. Gutenberg-e. Last modified May 11, 2014. Accessed March 26, 2016.
http://www.gutenberg.org/files/45631/45631-h/45631-h.htm#CHAPTER_I.

⁷ Advertisements were taken from the the Geography of Slavery in Virginia Archives of the University of Virginia:
 The Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia. "Explore Advertisements." The Geography of Slavery in Virginia. Accessed March 7, 2016. <http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/index.html>.

told from the ‘other side,’ arise. Invoking W.E.B. Du Bois’ theories of “double consciousness”, having a “twoness of mind” and “the Veil”, the project will analyze the ways in which slaves both externally and internally developed their identities.

Finally, through the use of digital coding⁸ and frequency analyses, the project will explore questions of language regarding the words chosen by the former slaves as compared to the words chosen by their white oppressors to describe the ‘slave’ identity. It is important to note that slavery was a reduction of human beings to number values. The intention of this project is not to mimic the same reduction. The digital analyses are a means of extracting information from the two narratives and advertisements that would be missed from a ‘conventional’ close reading. It is for this reason that the close readings of the two texts appear first in the project, followed by an addition of the frequency analyses results.

Most broadly, this project considers the narratives of Frederick Douglass and Solomon Northup as conventional in the literary sense. Through the use of narratives as a lens to consider the runaway advertisements, two sides of the process of self-making are revealed. It begs the question: what does it mean to present oneself as oneself in comparison to having a ‘self’ imposed? Since the narratives act as resistance to these impositions, whether it be through the escape of the individuals or through the recognition of one’s own existence in the writing, hope arises. With hope, follows possibilities for the illumination of distinguishing characteristics that set Douglass and Northup apart as complex and resilient individuals.

⁸ The term ‘digital coding’ is referring to text analyses performed through a program called Python. The language of Python allows for texts to be cleaned of their punctuation and mined in order to generate quantitative results with regard to word usage.

Just as Henri “Box” Brown used the notion of slaves being ‘objects’ and property as a literal means of freeing himself, Frederick Douglass and Solomon Northup used their traumatic pasts as modes of self-making post-emancipation. The narratives of Brown, Douglass and Northup all force us to ask: what does it mean to create a future when one’s history is denied?

Chapter 1: Devices, Du Bois and Douglass

The Inclusion of A Preface: A Stamp of Approval

Although the narratives themselves were written by Frederick Douglass and Solomon Northup, they were not published until a white ‘stamp of approval’ verified their authenticity. This ‘stamp’ was given in the form of a letter or preface, written by a white abolitionist, that was appended to the narratives. Although the help of white abolitionists was a valuable asset in the escape of many slaves — in, for example Henry Brown’s escape — the fact that a human being’s story needed to have a stamp of approval is problematic, as it reveals that society at the turn of the century did not fully trust that slaves were the most accurate authors of their own experiences.

In *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, he includes a letter from famed white abolitionist Wendell Phillips as a way of introducing the reasons why a narrative such as this is important. Phillips was most known for his theory that racial injustices were the starting point for all of the problems in American society. He also supported the idea of the separation of states in the United States as, he argues, a country could not be united if some states were pro-slavery and others supported abolition.⁹

In the letter at the start of Douglass’ narrative, Phillips emphasizes how Douglass comes “from that part of the country where we are told slavery appears with its fairest features,” or was

⁹ McNamara, Robert. "Wendell Phillips." About Education. Accessed December 1, 2015. <http://history1800s.about.com/od/abolitionmovement/a/Wendell-Phillips-biography.htm>.

considered 'less brutal' when compared to the conditions of slavery in the deep South.¹⁰ He then encourages us to "hear, then what it is at its best estate - gaze on its bright side."¹¹ This acts as a reminder that even Douglass' experiences as a slave were still considered less brutal when compared to the conditions of slaves in the deep South. This comment contributes to the notion that the narrative itself was an advertisement for abolition because if Douglass' horrific experiences as a slave were not as bad as other slaves, then a white audience might ask themselves, "How much worse could conditions have been?" This might then lead them to feel sympathy for other slaves in addition to Douglass. Furthermore, Phillips discusses how the best person to tell the story of slavery is a slave or former slave himself, which is important, as many believe the contrary to be true. White audiences often believed that, in fact, the least reliable source to tell the story of slavery was a slave. Historian Walter Johnson asks the question of authentication from a white figure in order for a slave narrative to be respected. He describes how:

The antislavery history of these narratives has made some historians wary of using them as sources for writing the history of slavery. In proslavery responses to the narratives, which were taken up by early historians of slavery like Ulrich B. Phillips, the narratives were treated as politically interested fabrications and were dismissed, according to one of the most durable paradoxes of white supremacy — the idea that those who are closest to an experience of oppression (in this case, former slaves) are its least credible witnesses.¹²

¹⁰ Douglass was born and spent his time in slavery in Maryland.

¹¹ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, xvi.

¹² Walter, Johnson. *Soul by Soul: Life inside the Antebellum Slave Market*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999. 9.

At the same time, Johnson warns not to use one perspective or narrative as a reflection of an entire struggle. To see the history of slavery as solely a domination of white Americans over black Americans is limiting, too, as one needs to consider the process and relationships of slavery from selling to buying to owning to being owned.¹³

Finally, Phillips gives credence to the fact that Douglass' encounters with such acts of cruelty "are the essential ingredients, not the occasional results, of the system," highlighting that Douglass was not the exception but an example of a greater cruel and inhumane system.¹⁴

Similarly, Solomon Northup needed David Wilson, a white man, to authenticate that he was a free slave who had been kidnapped¹⁵. Wilson, an attorney from Whitehall, N.Y., described, "That he has adhered strictly to the truth the editor, at least, who has had an opportunity of detecting any contradiction or discrepancy in his statements, is well satisfied."¹⁶ Thus, Northup's story was 'put to the test' and he was proved authentic because, "He has invariably repeated the same story without deviating in the slightest particular...dictating an alteration where the most trivial inaccuracy has appealed."¹⁷ Northup had to submit to psychoanalysis conducted by a white doctor before his narrative could be published to establish its veracity. Furthermore, to portray Northup's own literacy and ability to write, the opening of the text consists of an image

¹³ Johnson, *Soul By Soul*, 9.

¹⁴ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, xvi.

¹⁵ Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. "12 Years a Slave: Trek From Slave to Screen." *The Root*. Last modified March 3, 2014. Accessed April 22, 2016. http://www.theroot.com/articles/history/2013/10/solomon_northup_trek_of_his_book_12_years_a_slave_to_the_big_screen.html.

¹⁶ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, xv.

¹⁷ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, xv.

of Northup with the caption “Northup in his plantation uniform” followed by his own written signature.¹⁸ By starting the narrative with his signature, Northup is highlighting: that he can read and write, that he was a slave and finally, and most importantly, that he is now a free man who exists and can be recognized as a human in the world. A signature is personal and unique. The fact that Northup has his own, personal symbol that represents his existence is a powerful act of resistance against a reader who would otherwise not acknowledge him as person. It also is a sign and signifier of writing and literacy: both the fact that Northup can read and quite literally write (with his own hand).

Recognition of Self as ‘Property’ or ‘Object’

A common device seen in all slave narratives is the recognition of self as property or an ‘object’. Henry Brown, Frederick Douglass and Solomon Northup all questioned the notion that they were considered not human. Where Douglass grappled with his ‘humanness’ through his marriage certificate, Brown used words associating people and ‘things’ in order to call to question that association itself. Brown describes how “the human as well as every other kind of property, came to be divided equally amongst” the sons of the owner upon his death.¹⁹ Viewing yourself through the eyes of the other becomes apparent here as African Americans born into slavery were dehumanized and presented not only as ‘the other’, but as ‘the object’. Enslaved African Americans experienced events where they were treated or spoken about as if they were inanimate objects. Brown emphasizes how he had to ask permission from the owner of the woman he had been courting, in order to marry her. He also had to ask him not to sell her after

¹⁸ See Figure 1 in Appendix

¹⁹ Brown, *The Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown*, 16.

they were married. He describes how, “He gave me a note to my master, and after they had discussed the matter over, I was allowed to marry the object of my choice.”²⁰ The use of the word ‘object’ here emphasizes the absurdity, even then, to discuss a human being as something inanimate.

Although at first Brown’s description of himself as an object seems solely a comment on the strange and irrational justification of the institutionalization of making humans property to other humans, his literal mailing himself to freedom was an example of true resiliency. Brown, knowing his eventual method of escape, “accepts” the reduction of his personhood to object-hood and then uses that very object-hood as the instrument of his escape. Brown dares his captors in suggesting that, ‘if you’re going to treat me as an object, then an object I will become - but, in doing so, I will liberate myself from both captivity and object-hood.’ In other words, if he was to be treated and spoken to as if he were an object, then he could literally ‘take himself’ to freedom.

Commodification of the Black Body

Slaves were sold for a price, which involves another identity being projected onto them — a numeric value. Walter Johnson describes the quantification of the black body as “the chattel principle”. He explains how, “[a]ny slave’s identity might be disrupted as easily as a price could be set and a piece of paper passed from one hand to another.” He also would describe how “slaves’ values always hung over their heads.”²¹ Thus, if Du Boisian “double consciousness”

²⁰ Brown, *The Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown*, 33.

²¹ Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life inside the Antebellum Slave Market*, 19.

describes a kind of inescapable “two-ness” of mind and self-perception, slaves experienced a three-ness of mind: their own self-identification, their sense of themselves as object and property, and finally their monetary value.

Johnson also describes the way in which double consciousness is limited in the sense that it takes some of the ‘agency’ away from African Americans. He says:

The history of the enslaved people who toiled in those fields has generally been approached through durable abstractions: “the master-slave relationship,” “white supremacy,” “resistance,” “accommodation,” “agency.” Each category has been indispensable to understanding slavery; together they have made it possible to see things that otherwise would have been missed. Increasingly, however, these categories have become unmoored from the historical experience they were intended to represent. The question of “agency” has often been framed quite abstractly— counterpoised against “power” as if both terms were arrayed at the ends of some sort of sliding scale, an increase in one meaning a corresponding decrease in the other. But “agency,” like “power,” is historically conditioned: it takes specific forms at specific times and places; it is thick with the material givenness of a moment in time. “Agency: is less a simple opposite of “power” than its unfinished relief — a dynamic three-dimensional reflection.²²

Johnson is focused on this idea that there are three perspectives that one can glean the most understanding of the slave trade. He argues that “agency” is not the direct and equal correlative to “power” — that agency is what remains when power is at its absolute limit. Agency is the remnants of resistance that can be managed when power is exhausted. Although double consciousness does allow us to understand what it means for slaves to see themselves through

²² Johnson, Walter. *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2013. Print. 9.

the eyes of their white oppressors, there is also an understanding in which whiteness and white identity were constructed as a way of separating and distinguishing itself from black identity. Johnson highlights how at risk yet, ultimately, courageous any exercise of “agency” was and is. He is saying that agency is, despite not being the corollary to “power”, witnessed in the reflections and places just beyond power’s reach. White Americans were significantly outnumbered on the plantations by their slaves. Racial superiority acted as a tool to uplift whites and to prevent the ascension of power by African Americans. Johnson also questions the form in which American history is told as it makes slavery and the economy seem like two parallel stories, each one changing without ever affecting one another, when in reality one fueled the other.²³ He then expresses how he:

[t]ried to understand a slave sale from the contingent perspective of each of its participants - to assess their asymmetric information, expectations, and power, to search out their mutual misunderstandings and calculated misrepresentations, to investigate what each had at stake and how each tried to shape the outcome.²⁴

By considering slavery from both the perspective of the master as well as the slaves in question, one can better understand the reactionary construction of identity. How does each side of “a slave sale” affect the development of the other’s identity?

²³ For more on the ‘untold story’ of slavery and the American economy see:

Baptist, Edward E. *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*. New York: Basic Books, a member of the Perseus Books Group, 2014.

Davis, David Brion. *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*. Oxford, England: Oxford UP, 2006.

²⁴ Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life inside the Antebellum Slave Market*, 9.

Invoking Johnson here, a consideration of the Runaway Slave Advertisements will aid in the understanding of the complex master and slave relationship. In what ways would reading one's own Runaway Slave Advertisement affect the way one fashions one's identity in the future? How does seeing oneself through the eyes of 'the other'— in this case one's owner, — shape the understanding of one's projected identity? In the case of an escaped slave, in what ways might the owner feel responsible to re-capture his slave and thus re-establish his 'power' over that slave? Lastly, how can these advertisements act as the medium in which power that was lost from not being able to subdue one's own "property" is regained? After all, the successful escape of slaves was made in direct defiance of the slaveholder's power over them.

Double-Consciousness and Runaway Advertisements

In true Du Boisian fashion, Douglass' narrative reflects how complex the struggle of African Americans both during and after the time of slavery was. Indeed Douglass' narrative also illustrates one of Du Bois' most famous theoretical concepts: 'Double Consciousness' and the 'Veil'. Both terms, coined by Du Bois, refer in part to a separation of understanding between African Americans and white Americans post-Emancipation. The first term, refers to a condition in which African Americans are forever doomed to look at themselves both through their own eyes as well as through the eyes of an outside 'other', most often their white oppressors. The second, refers to an invisible wall that Du Bois suggests separated African Americans from their white counterparts post-Emancipation, especially in terms of experience and cultural

understanding of the struggle black Americans faced trying to integrate into American society.²⁵

Du Bois describes how:

One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.²⁶

Although slavery was eventually legally abolished, former slaves struggled to fully integrate into American society as they were not considered whole citizens and they were significantly disadvantaged as they had no property, savings, or inheritance. When an identity such as slavery was projected onto Douglass and Northup, it was not internalized. They were viewing themselves through the eyes of another. This gaze reflects a historical and literary understanding and can be analyzed through the Runaway Slave Advertisements.

Runway Advertisements are notices displayed by masters to describe their runaway slaves so that they can be captured and returned. As described by David Waldstreicher:

Runaway advertisements, in effect, were the first slave narratives - the first published stories about slaves and their seizure of freedom. They differ from the later counter narratives of ex-slaves and abolitionists in that the advertisements attempted to use print to bolster confidence in slavery, rather than confidence in African Americans and their allies. Written by the master

²⁵ Du Bois, *The Souls of Black*, 8.

²⁶ Du Bois, *The Souls of Black*, 8.

class, they not only reveal but also exemplify the profitable contradictions of the mid-Atlantic labor system.²⁷

Thus, the need “to bolster confidence in slavery” implies that the act of running of away was a defiance of the foundation of slavery. If slaves were property and were ‘subdued’, the act of planning and successfully carrying out an escape defies these notions. Especially when slaves had the help of white abolitionists, this notion destabilized the idea that slavery was supported by all white Americans.

In many ways, the advertisements highlight positive traits observed by masters of their slaves and reveal the disconnect owners had from the human beings they bought and sold. Disgruntled owners added assumptions regarding personality traits of the slaves based on physical traits and descriptions as a way of dehumanizing and incriminating the slaves. This complex relationship is explored further within Chapter 2.

Heritage, Education and the History of Literacy of Slaves

Literacy, amongst African American slaves, represented much more than a step towards freedom and assimilation into a new world, post-emancipation. It also represented a mode of resistance. Laws prohibiting teaching slaves to read began from the 1700s, in reaction to acts of rebellion²⁸ led by prominent African American figures.²⁹ One of these figures, Jemmy, a

²⁷ Waldstreicher, David. "Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic." *JSTOR*. Last modified April 1999. Accessed April 22, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2674119>. 247.

²⁸ Warren, Kim. "Literacy and Liberation." *Project MUSE*. Last modified December 2005. Accessed April 22, 2016. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/190829>. 511.

²⁹ Warren, "Literacy and Liberation." 511-512.

Congolese man, would use his literacy to unite over 100 slaves to march, carrying banners with the word “Liberty!” written on them in what would be known as the Stono Rebellion.³⁰

Recognizing the power of literacy, South Carolina would implement the Negro Act a year following the rebellion. The Act prohibited slaves from growing their own food, earning money and finally, learning to read. Although previously these laws were existent, they had not been enforced.³¹

The reasons why slave-holders feared literate slaves is because it would be the first step towards African Americans being able to contribute to dialogue regarding the laws and politics of the systemized oppression. Literate slaves would be able to access, understand and then question the laws that enslaved them. As described by author Kim Warren:

After 1800, when the legislature determined that previous laws had not kept African Americans in “due subordination,” they enacted further restrictions on the gathering of slaves and outlawed any kind of “mental instruction,” including reading, writing, memorization, arithmetic, and more (p. 13). That same year, South Carolina extended its prohibitions to include free African Americans. Like South Carolina, Georgia approved a statute to punish anyone carrying printed material “for the purposes of exciting to insurrection, conspiracy or resistance among the slaves, Negroes, or free persons of color.”³²

An important addition to the laws was “free persons of color”. Why would the southern states impose a law that hindered free people? If freed slaves were able to read, they would be a part of the dialogue regarding the making of segregating laws. In other words, they would be advocates

³⁰ "The Stono Rebellion." Public Broadcasting Services. Accessed April 22, 2016.
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1p284.html>.

³¹ "The Stono Rebellion."

³² Warren, “Literacy and Liberation.” 512.

for the rights of those who were still enslaved. Those who were literate could then find hypocrisies in common justifications of slavery. For example, slavery itself was many times justified by re-appropriated Christian values and notions of racial superiority, the source for this information, the Bible, would then be available to those weakened by its supposed contents.

The use of the phrase “laws had not kept African Americans in “due subordination,” implies that the laws themselves are the reason for slaves escaping. Almost as if the laws were responsible for “exciting to insurrection, conspiracy or resistance amongst the slaves.” The language is reactionary in the sense that rebellion of the roles projected onto African-Americans was incited. However, the relationship between slave and master is itself reactionary. Each person performs systematically assigned roles, one of the subduer and the other of the subdued.³³ The best examples of reactionary language used by white slaveowners are Runaway Advertisements.

In addition, education, or lack there of, was another form of control used by white oppressors over African Americans. Douglass also describes his recognition that knowledge was another form of control by the slave owners of Douglass’ time when his new mistress, Mrs. Auld, teaches him the alphabet. His realization that knowledge was another form of control came when Mr. Auld expressed how:

If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master -- to do as he is told to do. Learning would spoil the best nigger in the world.”

³³ Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning." 247.

Furthermore, Mr. Auld used terms such as “unmanageable”, “no value”, “do him no good”, and it will make “him discontented and unhappy.”³⁴

By using direct quotations, Douglass removes himself and any doubt that a white reader may have regarding his credibility, and creates empathy. The reader ‘hears’ what a cruel white slaveowner says about a slave, who is clearly in the room listening to this, and will judge the speaker accordingly. Hearing this for Douglass, was the most powerful moment in the narrative, as it marked the transition from youth to adult, as he realized and “understood the pathway from slavery to freedom.” (Douglass 20) To a white reader, Douglass explains how preventing someone from learning to read, as done by Mr. Auld following his realization that Mrs. Auld was teaching Douglass, was an “evil” act. Douglass invokes the Christian rhetoric of ‘good and evil’, inspiring white Christian readers to view the sin in keeping knowledge and information from slaves.³⁵

However, this form of control was not just with knowledge taught at school. Douglass opens the narrative describing his frustration at not knowing his own background and history. In the middle of the text, he even describes how he realized how's growing literacy was basically giving him the means to become ‘uncontrollable. Finally, at the end of the narrative when Douglass was free, he makes a point of noting his marriage certificate. This document was a first for Douglass, in the sense that it was an official certification of his existence. He copies his exact

³⁴ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 20.

³⁵ For more on legal ‘subordination’ and the ‘permissible bounds of slaves’ words and deeds’ see: Wiethoff, William E. *The Insolent Slave*. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2002. 17
In particular page 16:

“By 1806, for example, Louisiana lawmakers explained that the degraded condition of slaves rested legally on their “absolute” subordination. “Not susceptible of any modification or restriction,” this subordination entailed “a respect without bounds, and an absolute obedience. The circle was complete. Slaves were debased because they had no rights because of their degraded nature. There was no remedy.”

certificate in the narrative as a way to emphasize how this recognition was powerful for someone who had previously no proof of legitimacy as a citizen or even as a human being in the United States.

An emphasis is placed by Douglass on the fact that he had no documentation to mark his birth, age, family or existence. He describes how he has:

...no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it. By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant.³⁶

Douglass highlights how slaveowners used knowledge of the histories of the slaves themselves as a form of control over the slaves. When Douglass describes his father, he refers to the knowledge as being hearsay or:

He was admitted to be...the opinion was also whispered that my master was my father, but of the correctness of this opinion, I know nothing; the means of knowing was withheld from me.³⁷

Douglass emphasizes how not only was information regarding his father controlled by his master, but also by his immediate family. The acquisition and furthermore, conveying of knowledge is protected by the owner. The phrase “withheld from me” implies the knowledge was available to Douglass’ owner however, there was purpose in keeping it from Douglass.

Garnering Sympathy From An Unsympathetic Audience

³⁶ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 1.

³⁷ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 1.

One of the intents for which slave narratives were written was to generate sympathy amongst a white audience. Douglass also lays out the custom of slavery in Maryland, where he lived, as being a place where:

It is common custom...to part children from their mothers at a very early age. Frequently, before the child has reached its twelfth month, its mother is taken from it, and hired out on some farm a considerable distance off, and the child is placed under the care of an old woman, too old for field labor.³⁸

With this, Douglass creates empathy with the unknowing white reader, who can see how barbaric and inhumane it is to separate a mother from an infant. Douglass is using common cultural understandings as a means of generating an understanding of the cruelty slavery or a reader who has had no first-hand exposure to such practices. Henri Brown uses the same tool when he describes the devastating moments in his life leading up to his escape, including being taken away from his mother at 15 years old to work on another plantation in Richmond. He describes:

not having, during that time, seen, and very seldom heard from, my mother, my feelings were very much tried by the separation which I had thus to endure. I missed severely her welcome smile when I returned from my daily task; no one seemed at that time to sympathize with me, and I began to feel, indeed, that I really was alone in the world; and worse than all, I could console myself with no hope, not even the most distant, that I should ever see my beloved parents again.³⁹

³⁸ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 2.

³⁹ Brown, *The Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown*, 20.

Something as powerful as a separation of family members is a common scene that plays out in the narratives as it evokes a universal devastation. Brown will further go on to explain the pain his mother went through when her youngest child was taken from her. He describes how:

It was not till after she had begged most piteously for its restoration, that she was allowed to give it one farewell embrace, before she had to let it go for ever.” Brown describes how, “this kind of torture is a thousand fold more cruel and barbarous than the use of the lash which lacerates the back; the gashes which the whip, or the cow skin makes may heal, and the place which was marked, in a little while, may cease to exhibit the signs of what it had endured, but the pangs which lacerate the soul in consequence of the forcible disruption of parent and the dearest family ties, only grow deeper and more piercing, as memory fetches from a greater distance the horrid acts by which they have been produced. And there is no doubt but they under the weighty infirmities of declining life, and the increasing force and vividness with which the mind retains the memoranda of the agonies of former years--which form so great a part of memory's possessions in the minds of most slaves— hurry thousands annually from off the stage of life.⁴⁰

Memories are forever, and many slave narratives emphasize how although they may be free, their horrific experiences stay with them. The act of being whipped is a universal image associated with slavery, even for a white audience, and to describe how the pain of losing one's child is worse than being a victim of a whipping, highlights the devastation felt by a parent who is separated from their child.

Christianity and Faith

⁴⁰ Brown, *The Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown*, 16-17.

Frederick Douglass uses Christianity as a means to connect with the white reader of his narrative. His narrative paralleled the structure of early Christian narratives, where the main character's soul progresses eventually reaching 'heaven', or in other words, freedom. This was a technique used by the narrator to connect the stories of African Americans who were enslaved with a white Christian audience. Douglass' structure follows his recognition of the injustices of slavery from an early age, leading to his brutal experiences as an adult in chains, ending with his emancipation. He credits 'divine Providence' as the reason for his salvation/emancipation from slavery. He describes his being selected to move to Baltimore as being "the first plain manifestation of that kind providence which has ever since attended me, and marked my life with so many favors."⁴¹ In this way, Douglass is reversing a former justification of slavery (Christianity) as being something that God would be against. In other words, if God is intervening to free a slave like Douglass, then does that mean that God is against slavery? Similarly, as mentioned in the introduction, Brown's plan for his escape would come after he "felt my soul called out to heaven to breathe a prayer to Almighty God."⁴² This would raise questions from the Christian readers, that if God was in support of Christianity, why would he answer the prayers of a slave asking to be freed? Brown himself would directly address this question as he asks:

The advocates of slavery will sometimes tell us, that the slave is in better circumstances than he would be in a state of freedom, because he has a master to provide for him when he is sick; but even if this doctrine were true it would afford no argument whatever in favor of

⁴¹ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 18.

⁴² Brown, *The Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown*, 51.

slavery; for no amount of kindness can be made the lawful price of any man's liberty, to infringe which is contrary to the laws of humanity and the decrees of God.⁴³

Brown and Douglass both describe their faith as a source of strength to persevere through the brutal conditions of slavery. Christianity is an effective device in the narratives as it was a common justification of slavery now being described as a source for a slave's endurance. A white reader at the turn of the century might perhaps consider if God agreed with slavery, then why would he also give the slaves strength? When Brown's wife is eventually sold, despite her master promising him not to when he asked to marry her, he describes the tragic scene with references to heaven and God. He says:

My agony was now complete, she with whom I had travelled the journey of life in chains, for the space of twelve years, and the dear little pledges God had given us I could see plainly must now be separated from me for ever, and I must continue, desolate and alone, to drag my chains through the world. O dear, I thought shall my wife and children no more greet my sight with their cheerful looks and happy smiles!....I seized hold of her hand while my mind felt unutterable things, and my tongue was only able to say, we shall meet in heaven! I went with her for about four miles hand in hand, but both our hearts were so overpowered with feeling that we could say nothing, and when at last we were obliged to part, the look of mutual love which we exchanged was all the token which we could give each other that we should yet meet in heaven.⁴⁴

⁴³ Brown, *The Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown*, 25.

⁴⁴ Brown, *The Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown*, 44 - 47.

Thus, according to Brown, not only was God witnessing this tragic event, he was intending on reuniting Brown and his wife in heaven. The use of apostrophe here highlights Brown's faith and call to a higher power for comfort through this experience. A scene like this would be relatable to a white audience as they could empathize with a marriage being divided.

Alongside ideas of good and evil, come ideas of inflicting pain and suffering. It also calls to question how much a human's soul, regardless of race, could take. Using Du Bois' idea of this two-ness of mind, or looking at one's own identity through the eyes of the white oppressor, Douglass describes how the songs sung by slaves served a double purpose in healing the broken souls of the slaves. He says, "The songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by tears."⁴⁵ Douglass emphasizes how the songs were sung as a means of expressing "the bitterest anguish," while at the same time acted as relief for "an aching heart."⁴⁶ Douglass tries to express the way in which he did not recognize or understand how these songs looked from the outside as he was himself, "within the circle, so that [he] neither saw nor heard as those with might see and hear."⁴⁷ Having a two-ness of mind and spirit is expressed here as Douglass references being within and then following his emancipation, being on the outside of the circle of slavery. To an audience who once gave no credibility to a former slave to tell this story, Douglass highlights his own power, as he is able to understand both what it is like to be enslaved and then to be free.

⁴⁵ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 9.

⁴⁶ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 8-9.

⁴⁷ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 8.

Finally, Douglass references the Du Boisian theory of double consciousness with the use of chiasmus as a rhetorical device. Chiasmus, or relating two clauses to each other in inverted parallelism, mirrors the two-ness of mind African Americans experienced when viewing their identities. For example, Douglass describes how his one master, Mr. Covey, tried to whip him but through Douglass' resistance, he garnered some what of a respect from his white owner. He describes, using chiasmus, how "My long-crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance took its place; and I know resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact."⁴⁸ The inverted use of his view of his own enslavement highlights how he asserted his own self respect and desire "to be used so no longer" that he managed, in a system which prevented such, to gain power over his master. In this way, the use of the rhetorical device creates a sense of heroism to the act of defiance and creates empathy and almost encouragement for Douglass in this moment against the evil Mr. Covey. Douglass is trying to create anger and hatred for a white slave owner by a white reader. He is also highlighting how despite Mr. Covey's view of him as his property, he viewed his own identity differently and asserted his self-worth as a way to achieve respect from a white man.

As Box's story became more widespread, it became clearer to a seemingly unknowing white audience that slaves would go to the furthest extent to be free. This fact rings true throughout many other slave narratives, too, although the emancipation stories in *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* and *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup* were not as extravagant as Box's. All three narratives use various rhetorical devices to encourage support and sympathy amongst a white audience. Box would later move to

⁴⁸ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 43.

England in order to avoid capture and re- enslavement following the Fugitive Slave Act, but would return to the United States in 1875 where he performed magic tricks, including using the famed box which he travelled in his acts.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Walls, Bryan, Dr. "Freedom Marker: Courage and Creativity." *PBS*. Corporation for Public Broadcasting, n.d. Web. 4 Nov. 2015. <<http://www.pbs.org/black-culture/shows/list/underground-railroad/stories-freedom/henry-box-brown/>>.

Chapter 2: “Twelve Years A Slave” and Reversing the Gaze

Solomon Northup was born a free man in 1808 in Minerva, New York. Although his father, Mintus Northup, was born a slave, Mintus was able to acquire land, qualifying him to the right to freedom. Solomon acquired an education from his father, which as he describes as, “surpassing that ordinarily bestowed upon children in our condition.” (Northup 21) Solomon’s mother was classified as a ‘quadroon’, meaning she had one bi-racial parent (mixed black and white) and one white parent. The term originates from France, and was often used alongside other classifications such as ‘octaroon’ and ‘mulatto’, which differ in terms of the fractional quantity of ‘African’ of which one was made- up.⁵⁰

Northup worked for a timber transportation company in Lake Champlain, New York. He lived with his wife and children. Between his work contract, money earned playing the violin and his wife cooking in the kitchens of a coffee house, Northup describes how they “always returned home from the performances with money in our pockets...we soon found ourselves in the possession of abundance, and, in fact, leading a happy and prosperous life.”⁵¹ Using Frederick Douglass’ experience as a lens, Northup can be described as being outside of the ‘circle’ of slavery and the mindset of a slave.⁵²

Northup comes in contact with slaves who are traveling with their masters to

⁵⁰ Clark, *The Strange History of the American Quadroon: Free Women of Color in the Revolutionary Atlantic World*, 2.

⁵¹ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 25.

⁵² Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 8.

Saratoga, where Northup eventually moves. He describes how “Almost uniformly I found they cherished a secret desire for liberty.”⁵³ Northup portrays his shock that this was a ‘secret’ as he recognizes:

Having all my life breathed the free air of the North, and conscious that I possessed the same feelings and affections that find a place in the white mans breast; conscious, moreover, of an intelligence equal to that of some men, at least, with a fairer skin.⁵⁴

This revelation of having “the same feelings and affections” as white Americans shows just how outside the circle of slavery Northup was. Because of his separateness from slavery, however, his narrative also had the potential to resonate with a white audience in a special way. Northup’s being born a free man with a relative ‘outsiderness’ from the world of slavery in the South shows just how brutal an experience it was when he was kidnapped and then enslaved for twelve years. Northup had the unique experience of knowing he was a free man, being accepted and treated like an equal by many white counterparts and then having to ‘learn’ a new identity when he was eventually enslaved. Northup describes how:

I was too ignorant, perhaps too independent, to conceive how any one could be content to live in the abject condition of a slave. I could not comprehend the justice of that law, or that religion, which upholds or recognizes the principle of Slavery; and never once, I am proud to say, did I fail to counsel any one who came to me, to watch his opportunity, and strike for freedom.⁵⁵

⁵³ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 26.

⁵⁴ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 27.

⁵⁵ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 27.

The notion that those who were still enslaved were ‘content’ with their ‘abject condition’ emphasizes the ignorance Northup had regarding the life of a slave, prior to his own enslavement. However, Northup hints here how he advised where he could on potential escape plans with slaves of whom came in contact. Not only did Northup have the luxury of time to ponder why the law of slavery was unjust, but he also had the educational means to be able to question the justifications of slavery.

Northup’s kidnapping was carried out by two white men claiming to be interested in hiring him for his violin playing abilities. According to the two men, they were affiliated with a circus in Washington and would pay Northup daily for his services to them. Northup, excited by the high paying wage offered, packed his bags and left with the men. Northup's wife and children were away working in Troy, New York still, and thus Northup did not inform her where he was being employed. In fact, Northup was sure he would be back in New York soon, and so did not write to his wife to say where he was headed. This was an unfortunate decision as Northup would not see his wife for twelve years.⁵⁶

The peculiarity of the justifications of slavery was not shared only amongst the uneducated. In 1815, Thomas Jefferson drew up a rubric to “clarify to an acquaintance the legal taxonomy of race.” He used an algebraic equation to describe the terms mulatto and quadroon:

Let the first crossing be of a , pure negro, with A , pure white. The unit of blood

⁵⁶ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 29-30.

of the issue being composed of the half of that of each parent, will be $a/2 + A/2$. Call it, for abbreviation, h (half blood).

Let the second crossing be of h and B , the blood of the issue will be $h/2 + B/2$ or substituting for $h/2$ its equivalent, it will be $a/4 + A/4 + B/2$, call it q (quarteroon) being $1/4$ negro blood.⁵⁷ This is important to note because Jefferson was an intellectual and if he could find a mathematical justification for slavery, then it is not surprising that southern white slave owners were doing the same. Northup himself remarks how,

It is not the fault of the slaveholder that he is cruel, so much as it is the fault of the system under which he lives. He cannot withstand the influence of habit and associations that surround him. Taught from earliest childhood, by all that he sees and hears, that the rod is for the slave's back, he will not be apt to change his opinions in maturer years.⁵⁸

Thus Northup highlights how the indoctrination of the system of slavery was not solely from master to slave, but also the system and society itself teaching white children the expectations of them with their treatment of African Americans.

Garnering Sympathy From an Unsympathetic Audience

Solomon Northup acknowledges from the start of his narrative that his experience of slavery is limited solely to the twelve years he spent in its cruel clutches. He also recognizes the importance of commenting on the topic of slavery, both in the fictional manor in which poets, artists and authors are pursuing as well as personal narratives. However, he makes a key

⁵⁷ Clark, *The Strange History of the American*, 1.

⁵⁸ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 206.

observation: Northup argues that although art does not have to be so faithfully founded in truth, readers of his narrative should consider “whether even the pages of fiction present a picture of more cruel wrong or severer bondage.”⁵⁹ Northup’s post-liberation recognition that slavery has become a phenomenon amongst artists and authors, highlights his awareness that people of all walks of life are engaging in a discussion about the conditions of slavery. This is important to note as then one can analyze Northup’s narrative for devices that can be classified as ‘advertisements for abolition’. In what ways does Northup shape his story so that a northern white reader can empathize with a slave’s suffering?

Northup’s first Chapter describes his life as a free man prior to his kidnapping. He emphasizes his close relationships with white men in New York, often commenting on how kind and accepting they were of his and his wife’s business and personal endeavors. Whether it was promoting his violin playing in local restaurants or hiring his wife to cater at banquets of wealthy, well known families, he describes how he “entertained feelings of strong regard” for many of his fellow, white citizens.⁶⁰ Northup uses his strong founded relationships with white northerners as a way of constructing an identity to which a white reader can relate. So we might ask: If a man of color is treated as an equal by white men in the north, why does this not exist in the South? Also, by expressing understanding for white men even after being enslaved, Northup is showing his ability to separate his anger at white slave owners and traders from white Northerners who do not have slaves. In doing this, the narrative reads as a criticism of the system and not a force of guilt for white northerners. Guilt is a powerful emotion that can quickly harden

⁵⁹ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 19.

⁶⁰ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 25.

the hearts of those experiencing it, Northup recognizes the value in harboring supporters of abolition on both sides of the color line.

Northup describes how he was aware of his “intelligence [as] equal to that of some men, at least, with a fairer skin.”⁶¹ This is an important comment to make as it counters notions of racial superiority as a man who was not born under the conditions of slavery was able to be just as educated and intellectually capable as a white man. Such a notion might register with a white audience and would advertise the notion that it is the system of slavery and oppression that limits a group of individuals from progressing in the world - not that they are biologically lacking.

Similarly to Frederick Douglass, Solomon Northup dwelled, understandably, on the grief experienced from the separation of families within the slave trade. He describes his own struggle from the moment he was falsely imprisoned as a runaway slave. His depression included dreaming he was back in New York and that he could “see their faces, and hear their voices calling me.” This dream soon ended when he awoke and realized the “bitter realities around me” and could not “but groan and weep.”⁶² As a father and a husband, his depression and anguish at the separation from his family strikes a chord for any reader - both freed and unfree people have families.

In the case that an audience may not be able to relate to this anguish, perhaps due to Northup being a man and a father as opposed to a woman and a mother, Northup includes a moving testimony of a female slave named Eliza. Not unlike Northup, Eliza had lived a

⁶¹ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 27.

⁶² Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 47.

comfortable life prior to her being sold. Although she was born a slave, she was a favorite of her masters and had been described by Northup as:

on condition of her living with him (her master), she and her children were to be emancipated. She resided with him there nine years, with servants to attend upon her, and provided with every comfort and luxury of life.⁶³

Eliza had been given an education and “her air and manners, the correctness and propriety of her language - all showed, evidently, that she had sometime stood above the common level of a slave.”⁶⁴ The vivid description of Eliza’s comfortable upbringing juxtaposed with her eventual separation from her children as her owner does not fulfill his promise to free her family, is a devastation that evokes a visceral response. Eliza’s love for her children shows as Northup hears her telling her children how “It would break her hear, God knew...if they were taken from her.”⁶⁵ Northup would eventually encounter Eliza later in his time enslaved and he described how:

She had sunk beneath the weight of an excessive grief. Her drooping form and hollow cheeks too plainly indicated that she had well nigh reached the end of her weary road.⁶⁶

Northup's description of Eliza’s emotional trauma due to her barbaric working conditions and her depression from being separated from her children, garners sympathy as one is able to recognize the emotional as well as physical toll slavery took on those oppressed by it. It is important to

⁶³ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 53.

⁶⁴ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 50.

⁶⁵ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 51.

⁶⁶ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 107.

note that these slave narratives were important because they provided a medium to express an individual's history. In a sense, the narratives acted as family trees, testaments of existence, personal, social and cultural histories. They acted as markers of the passage of time in an individual's life. In many narratives, including Douglass', the narrator expresses confusion regarding where and when they were born and who their parents were. Thus the narrative as a book symbolizes a personal archive of the individual who wrote it. The medium itself is an act of rebellion against notions of a denied history as the reader is forced to physically hold the contents of a slave's life. It also forces the reader to acknowledge a past of a slave that was denied by slave owners. Thus the narratives were personal archives for slaves as well as a tool of rebellion against the systematic denial of the histories of slaves.

Transition From Freedom to Slavery

The transition from being a free man to being enslaved is particularly unique as Northup had been raised with an acceptance of his humanity. Northup's father had earned his freedom through purchasing property, and thus his children were born free. They were educated and they were taught that through hard work, one can live comfortably alongside white Americans.

African Americans like Frederick Douglass were born into slavery and experienced at a young age the projected identity of being less than human by their white oppressors. Northup had to be convinced of a lesser personhood.

The word convinced is purposefully used here because Northup had sense of his own identity that he had built for himself. This identity included being a family man, a violinist, a timber trader and in many circumstances, an intellectual equal (and in many ways superior) to

the white northerners he encountered. When he was sold into slavery, he expressed how “I had reached a turning point in my existence - reached the threshold of unutterable wrong, and sorrow, and despair.”⁶⁷ Northup expresses a change in his ‘existence’ which reveals, at least within the context of slavery, that Northup felt his existence rejected as soon as he was enslaved. Furthermore, Northup uses weather imagery to illuminate feelings of a loss of identity when he describes approaching a:

shadow of the cloud, into the thick darkness whereof I was soon to disappear, thenceforward to be hidden from the eyes of all my kindred, and shut out from the sweet light of liberty, for many a weary year.⁶⁸

The words ‘shadow’, ‘darkness’, ‘disappear’, ‘hidden’ and ‘shut out’ juxtapose against the image of “the sweet light of liberty”. They also create notions of invisibility and a lack of recognition or human acknowledgement, notions that Northup struggled to absorb coming from the life of freedom and fulfillment he had in New York.

Language of Runaway Slave Advertisements

Runaway Slave Advertisements were narratives in and of themselves. They are especially interesting to compare to the narratives of Frederick Douglass and Solomon Northup as they ‘reverse the gaze’. The phrase ‘the gaze’ refers to W.E.B. Du Bois’ theory of double

⁶⁷ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 27.

⁶⁸ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 27.

consciousness or “looking at oneself through the eyes others.”⁶⁹ In considering the advertisements written by white slave owners, one is able to see the slaves through the eyes of their owners. Notions of projected identities become apparent as the clear disconnection of understanding between slave owner and slave is revealed. The advertisements were written to aid in the identification and recapturing of escaped slaves. Slave owners wrote detailed physical descriptions of the individuals and in these descriptions they projected personality traits that might be “recognizable” by a stranger. This is where such a disconnect between slave and owner becomes apparent. Many positive qualities of the people described are often twisted and used as criticisms due to the fact of their successful escape. The advertisements become narratives of undeservedly demonized individuals. A perhaps not surprising outcome arises when comparing these two sets of documents: the words chosen by the former slaves to describe their white oppressors is the same as the words chosen by their white oppressors to describe them. Thus an identity is projected onto the slaves by slave owners.

The archives of the regions Washington D.C., Virginia and Maryland are the most extensive in the country and thus have a significant number of original runaway advertisements that are digitized for public access. For this reason, the advertisements considered will be taken from *The Geography of Slavery in Virginia* project facilitated by the University of Virginia.⁷⁰ As it so happens, Henry “Box” Brown and Solomon Northup were enslaved in Virginia and Frederick Douglass was born and lived during his time in slavery in Maryland. An example of a Runaway Slave Advertisement where a projected identity can be seen is one published on May

⁶⁹ Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 8.

⁷⁰ "District of Columbia Daily Advertiser (J. and J. D. Westcott), District of Columbia, May 27, 1800." *Virginia Center for Digital History*. U of Virginia, 2005. Web. 10 Apr. 2016. <<http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/search/relatedAd.php?adFile=vgl800.xml&adId=v1800050009>>.

27th, 1800 by the District of Columbia Daily Advertiser. Below is the transcript of the full advertisement:

Stop the villain! RAN away from the subscriber the 12th of May, 1800, a likely negro man, named HARRY. 5 feet 8 or 9 inches high, aged 36 or 37 years; he has generally a down look; his complexion is of a brown, his hair longer than negroes usually wear it, and he is bowlegged, though active and well made. For some years past he lived at the Occoquan Mills. He has lived in Alexandria, and was there in January, February, and March, 1799, working with one Turner, a carpenter, or house joiner--His trade is that of a carpenter, though he has worked frequently at the House joyner's, ship carpenter's & mill right's business, and from his understanding and ingenuity, is capable of doing good work at either, when attended to. I expect he will forge pass and go off and hire himself, as he can write an indifferent hand. He calls himself Henry Brown. All persons, and particularly tradesmen with masters and owners of vessels, are cautioned against harboring, employing, taking on board, or carrying off said negro, and will prosecute all such with the utmost rigour. Any person who will apprehend the said Negro Harry, shall receive the following rewards, to wit, TEN DOLLARS if taken up within 20 miles of the town of Dumfries, in the county of Prince William, and state of Virginia, and either secured in the prison of the said county, so that I get him, or delivered to me at my place of residence in the said county and state; TWENTY DOLLARS, if taken up more than twenty, and within thirty miles of the aforesaid town, and secured in the prison of the county where taken, so that I get him, or delivered to me as aforesaid, FIFTY DOLLARS if taken out of the state or more than thirty miles from the aforesaid town, within the state, to be secured in prison, so that I get him, or delivered to me. Bertrand Ewell. May 27, 1800.⁷¹

⁷¹ "District of Columbia Daily Advertiser (J. and J. D. Westcott), District of Columbia, May 27, 1800." *Virginia Center for Digital History*. U of Virginia, 2005. Web. 10 Apr. 2016. <<http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/search/relatedAd.php?adFile=vgl800.xml&adId=v1800050009>>.

The advertisement begins with the line “Stop the villain!”, immediately drawing attention to the urgent tone. The use of the word ‘villain’ is purposefully chosen to create an unnerving feeling amongst the people reading the section of the daily advertiser. The imperative voice also unifies those reading to take a stand against said ‘villain’. Towards the end, there is even a word of caution to tradesmen from ‘harboring’ the runaway slave, invoking images of a fugitive who could turn on those who attempt to hide him at any moment. The advertisement continues by describing the physical and personality traits of the individual, describing how, “He has generally a down look; his complexion is of a brown, his hair longer than negroes usually wear it, and he is bowlegged, though active and well made.”⁷² The description is loaded with projections and insight into the relationship between slave and owner. The owner describes the individual as having ‘a down look’, as if it is particularly shocking for a slave to look depressed at the condition he is forced to live in. This highlights the disconnect between slaveowners and their slaves as the author of this advertisements believes that a slave who looks sad or depressed would be particularly remarkable. The comparison of the man’s hair as being “longer than negroes usually wear it”, shows some form of recognition that the owner could distinguish the man described from his other slaves. The phrase ‘well made’ conjures notions of property and the projected objectified identity slave owners placed on their slaves. Instead of describing a man, the owner is describing a ‘villain’, instead of describing a human being, the owner is describing a ‘well made’ object. This is furthered when the advertisement states, “he calls himself Henry Brown.” as opposed to his name *is* Henry Brown, (Not to be confused with Henry “Box” Brown). The recognition of the name and therefore identity of “Henry Brown” shows a

⁷² "Explore Advertisements." *The Geography of Slavery in Virginia*. The Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia, n.d. Web. 7 Mar. 2016. <<http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/index.html>>.

victory for the runaway, as his owner is forced to acknowledge his former slaves' own sense of self in order to best be able to recapture him. The advertisements considered here are evidence of just how peculiar an institution of slavery was in that these details reveal the at time intimate and human knowledge that slaveholders would have about their slaves. The details indicate a care for another being, at least for their appearance if not for their status as equal or as property.

The word 'active', as becomes apparent upon reading various advertisements, shows a direct correlation to the value of the slave in question. The more hard working and 'active' the person is described, the higher the reward value for the returning of the slave to the owner. Thus there was another identity projected onto slaves; their monetary value to their owners. If individuals such as, "Henry Brown" were to have read their own advertisements, they firstly would most likely avoid trying to match the descriptions, however vague, of their advertisements, and secondly, would be able to see inside the minds of their former owners with regard to how they were viewed.

Henry Brown's former owner provides increased reward amounts based on where Brown is captured; the further away he is captured, the more money rewarded. This shows how valuable Brown is to his owner. The advertisement forces slave owners to publicly express how much the runaway individuals' are worth to them. Although it is with the intention of recapturing and re-enslaving the people described, there has to be a certain amount of 'give' expressed by the owner in order for people to feel motivated to look for said individuals. Furthermore, the demonization of the individuals, for example calling Henry Brown a 'villain', is a way of incentivizing the capture of the individuals without having to directly recognize that the runaways were impressively able to escape their dire conditions. Three questions are raised in response to these

notions, at least by a reader in the time period who may consider searching for the individuals described; the first is, if the runaway slave is such a 'villain' and should be treated with 'caution', then why would an owner want him or her back? The advertisement uses the phrases "so that I get him" and "delivered to me" a total of six times, highlighting the desire for said runaway to be returned. Secondly, if the 'active' individual does do 'good work' and is so educated for his situation, then what would drive him/her to runaway? Finally, in what ways does the manipulation of physical detailed description and discrediting of impressive talents and skills of the slaves by their owners reveal the unstable grounding of the justification of racial superiority? These questions are important because they show how the advertisements, when considered as narratives themselves, reveal hypocrisies and projected identities that empower instead of discredit the escaped slaves described.

The authors of the advertisements do not consider the possibility that such detailed advertisements could lead to the further disguising and disappearing of the runaway in question. Brown's advertisement reads, "I expect he will forge pass and go off and hire himself, as he can write an indifferent hand" as well as includes other somewhat complimentary skills such as having "understanding and ingenuity". The mention of impressive qualities, such as being able to read and write, are often twisted to form an image of someone deceptive and conniving, rather than clever and capable of success as a free man. The tone is so dismissive and hateful, both of the slave's escape and of their having developed faculties that might indeed aid in their lives away from their owner. For example, Brown is already being accused of forging another man's handwriting, solely because he has the ability to write. To use a phrase from historian David Waldstreicher, the author's of the advertisements twisted the talents of the runaways to become

‘profitable contradictions’.⁷³ What was profitable was to demonize the particularly educated and talented runaways as if they would become a problem to society. Once again, this can be seen as a success as the mere acknowledgement by the owner of the skills of his former slave, uplifts the individual’s self-forged identity.

An advertisement such as this could have been used to describe Frederick Douglass or Solomon Northup. Both gentleman were ‘active’, hardworking, intelligent and talented in many ways other than in their ability to perform physical labor. Had either of these individuals seen the descriptions of themselves by their former owners, they would have experienced a rather literal form of Du Boisian double consciousness having seen themselves through the eyes of another.⁷⁴ Douglass, having managed to step out of the circle of slavery and experienced what it was like to be a free man, would be able to separate the projected identity imposed by the slaveholding ads from the one he is creating and gathering for himself. Northup would see the projections of descriptions he would have used to describe his particularly harsh masters, rather than himself. The story of slavery had, up until slave narratives, been expressed solely through the eyes of the slave-owners. If former slaves were able to write, a new perspective and therefore a new narrative of slavery could be told.⁷⁵ The voice of the oppressed would garner a visceral and sympathetic response from a reader who had not considered their perspective.

Perhaps Northup did see runaway slave advertisements, and thus inspired the language used in his narrative. In fact, Northup’s descriptions of his owners have similar structures and

⁷³ Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning." 247.

⁷⁴ Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 8.

⁷⁵ Williams, Heather Andrea. *Self-taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005. 7.

language to the runaway slave advertisements. However, Northup's descriptions are much more detailed and therefore more convincing than the poorly portrayed runaway advertisements. An example can be seen in his description of his second owner, Edwin Epps, whose erratic behaviors due to his constantly drunk state, lead him to take pleasure in the beating of his slaves. Northup reveals:

Edwin Epps, of whom much will be said during the remainder of this history, is a large, portly, heavy-bodied man with light hair, high cheek bones, and a Roman nose of extraordinary dimensions. He has blue eyes, a fair complexion, and is, as I should say, full six feet high. He has the sharp, inquisitive expression of a jockey. His manners are repulsive and coarse, and his language gives speedy and unequivocal evidence that he has never enjoyed the advantages of an education. He has the faculty of saying most provoking things, in that respect even excelling old Peter Tanner. At the time I came into his possession.⁷⁶

The detailed descriptions of Epps' physical features, such as he is 'heavy-bodied' and has 'a Roman nose' highlights the perceptive nature of Northup to read people. In many ways, although the runaway slave advertisements were attempting to be accurate, they were not half as specific and clear as Northup's of his owners. Unlike the advertisements, Northup's portrayal of the cruel and uneducated nature of Epps is eloquent and impressive. It raises the question of if a former slave can recount such an exact description of his owner years after being separated, why could not a slave owner, who has incentive to recapture his slave, recount notable features of a slave who has only escaped for a few days? Furthermore, Northup's narrative transforms into a fact-

⁷⁶ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 162-163.

ridden advertisement for abolition as he accounts for the unjustified acts of cruelty performed by his owners. Northup even quotes his former masters, describing how:

When "in his cups," Master Epps was a roustering, blustering, noisy fellow, whose chief delight was in dancing with his "niggers," or lashing them about the yard with his long whip, just for the pleasure of hearing them screech and scream, as the great welts were planted on their backs. When sober, he was silent, reserved and cunning, not beating us indiscriminately, as in his drunken moments, but sending the end of his rawhide to some tender spot of a lagging slave, with a sly dexterity peculiar to himself.⁷⁷

By directly quote Epps, Northup is not only highlighting the cruelty of a master who is a cruel, drunkard, but also that he remembers so vividly his time in slavery. The words ‘sly’, ‘silent, reserved, and cunning’ are all highly common words that appear in the runaway slave advertisements to describe slaves. Yet the advertisements reveal no evidence for these characteristics other than assumptions made from vaguely described physical features and the fact that the slaves successfully escaped. Runaway slave advertisements consisted of a few common elements: “a description of the runaway information to hasten the runaway’s capture, the reward offered, and the name of the person placing the ad (“subscriber”).”⁷⁸ A white reader of Northup’s narrative will most definitely have encountered runaway advertisements.

Northup describes his feelings of viewing himself through the eyes of his white oppressors on many occasions. During negotiations of the buying and selling of slaves, slaves

⁷⁷ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 163.

⁷⁸ "Run away from the Subscriber." National Humanities Resource Toolbox. Accessed May 1, 2016. <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/enslavement/text8/virginiarunawayads.pdf>.

were ‘showcased’ and put on display, with their positive qualities highlighted by their owners so as to attract a higher price for them. In some cases, companies would create mass showrooms to present the slaves. As described by the scholar Walter Johnson:

As it became clear that there was a great deal of money to be made buying, transporting, and reselling slaves, a set of highly organized firms emerged to compete with the footloose speculators. Their firms maintained offices, complete with high walled jails that could house as many as a hundred slaves at a time, large yards where the human property could be exercised, and showrooms where interested buyers could question and examine the people they hoped to purchase.⁷⁹

Northup describes a similar scene where his master Edwin Epps puts him on display for another man and speaks of him as if he was not standing right next to him. Epps takes hold of Northup’s arm and lists all of Northup’s talents, emphasizing how “he isn’t like others” and how he “doesn’t look like ‘em - don’t act like ‘em.”⁸⁰ Epps uses phrases such as “have him”, “put together” and “got the muscle in him” emphasizing the way in which Epps viewed Northup as property and not a human being. Northup in the eyes of Epps was ‘made’ well, as if he were created in a factory, rather born into the world with a family. In reducing a man to an accumulation of parts and skills, it becomes simpler to almost calculate the man’s worth. The viewing of slaves as solely a sum of their parts and not for the complexities as human beings becomes apparent in the runaway advertisements, too. The advertisements jump from physical trait to physical trait, from personality assumption to future action guess. The advertisements, in

⁷⁹ Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom*, 41.

⁸⁰ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 283.

this way, cannot be seen as narratives as they themselves are merely a sum of unconnected parts. Whereas Northup's description of Epps is a series of observations that match actions that Northup has witnessed. However, based on the definition of advertisement given at the start of the paper, Northup's narrative can be seen as an advertisement as he is drawing attention to a cause and experience with the hopes of informing and motivating his reader to support abolition.

The man, Bass, responds to Epps that he cannot *see* the talents that Epps describes, at least physically. Epps then encourages Bass to feel Northup, as if this this would indicate Northup's worth. Bass, perhaps unintentionally, highlights the limitation of a physical appearance as a representation of a human being.

The runaway advertisements act as narratives for the projected and limited view slave owners had of their slaves as complex individuals. Northup's description of Bass furthers this notion of the limitations of representing an individual completely through a written account of another person's observations. Even Northup's narrative, despite being written by Northup himself, cannot be considered a full account of Northup's layers of identities.

Northup's account of Epps compared to his account of Bass is completely different and thus reveals how Northup valued Bass as someone who's "true heart overflowed with noble and generous emotions." Northup expresses how he owes "an immeasurable debt of gratitude" to Bass and that "Only for him, in all probability, I should have ended my days in slavery." Northup's observations regarding Bass' physical appearance is minimal where Northup recognizes "It will be difficult to convey a correct impression of his appearance or character."⁸¹ This implies that those who were kind and valued by Northup are given the respect of not even

⁸¹ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 264.

attempted description of their physical attributes. In a way, Northup honors their identities by not writing a 'runaway advertisement' for them. Northup carries with him years later the "look of recognition and significance" given to him by Bass.⁸²

Northup's narrative where he describes both his white oppressors and white allies shows striking similarities and important differences to runaway slave advertisements. He recognizes the limiting nature of trying to encapsulate an entire being in one short description when he discusses his allies. When comparing his narrative to the advertisements, it becomes apparent that the information and personality traits described in the runaway advertisements are based on assumptions and unjustified leaps made by disgruntled slave owners.

⁸² Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 284.

Chapter 3: Coding and Reading Texts with Python

While performing a frequency analysis on a document as historically rich and emotionally moving as a slave narrative, there is much of information that cannot be gleaned from the narratives. Just as the runaway advertisements attempt to portray a ‘full’ account of the people they describe and fail, the authors of slave narratives purposefully resist fully revealing their experiences and parts of their identities. They keep stories to themselves that the reader will never know and this prevents the reduction of humans to an object — in this case a book. Whether it was keeping information out of the narratives for the protection of future slaves escaping in the same way or whether it was for the sake of guarding an identity that was so often minimized, Frederick Douglass and Solomon Northup’s narratives can be seen as literary arguments against quantification of the human body. The conversion of human being to value cannot draw meaning and similarly, the performance of a frequency analysis cannot represent the identities of Douglass and Northup. For this reason, I argue that the two narratives considered can be seen as ‘resistance narratives’ as they reflect the parts of the identities that cannot be quantified and therefore reduced. There are also parts of a written form narrative that are limiting in the sense that due to the low literacy rate amongst slaves, many slaves perfected the art of oral tradition. Slaves had, at least according to historian Robert B. Stepto, “a fairly well developed version of his or her tale either memorized or (more likely) sufficiently patterned for effective presentation, even before the question of written composition was entertained”.⁸³ This adds

⁸³ Stepto, Robert B. *From behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1979. 9

another layer of potentially lost information, experience and emotion when a former slave presents his/her story in written form.

It is important to address the procedure used for analyzing both texts, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* and *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup* through a computer program. In the same way that reading a narrative about a person's life or experiences being enslaved does not encapsulate the entire identity of said person, running a text through a machine that spits out numbers does not either. Frederick Douglass and Solomon Northup had lives outside of the narratives they wrote about their lives. The purpose of performing this 'experiment' of using code to calculate the frequency of and association with certain words, is to analyze the moments where Douglass and Northup recognize themselves as human beings. In teaching a computer how to 'close read' a text, important information is gleaned regarding a layer of the identity of Douglass and Northup. Through the close reading of the Runaway Slave Advertisements, disconnects between master and slave understanding becomes apparent.

Slavery was a reduction of human voices into numbers and values. It is important to note that this is not the intention of the project nor is it the intention to make claims regarding fully understanding Frederick Douglass and Solomon Northup as individuals. This experiment stemmed from curiosity of the potential of the digital humanities and computer generated analyses to reveal further information from the texts, that could be missed through manual close reading. Although close reading of a key passage 'manually' can be telling in terms of rhetorical devices such as metaphors, imagery, repetition etc, there are certain patterns that are missed from this method of analyzing. There are characteristics of the voices performing their narratives that

the program cannot read, and it is these characteristics that add to the complex identities of Frederick Douglass and Solomon Northup.⁸⁴

There is significant stigma surrounding the idea of using technology to analyze literature. As described by Alan Liu, Professor in the Department of English at UC Santa Barbara, the stigma arises not from mining texts for word frequencies and associations, but rather what to do with such information and how to extract meaning from this information. Liu considers Ryan Heuser and Long Le- Khac's *A Quantitative Literary History of 2,958 Nineteenth Century British Novels: the Semantic Cohort Method* (2012)⁸⁵, where Heuser and Le-Khac ask major questions within the field of the digital humanities:

The general methodological problem of the digital humanities can be bluntly stated: How do we get from numbers to meaning? The objects being tracked, the evidence collected, the ways they're analyzed—all of these are quantitative. How to move from this kind of evidence and object to qualitative arguments and insights about humanistic subjects—culture, literature, art, etc.—is not clear.⁸⁶

Thus, various challenges arise from using technology to 'read' a text for meaning. One of the first challenges encountered when using Python to mine the narratives by Douglass and Northup

⁸⁴ For more on slave narratives as performance see:
Stepto, Robert B. *From behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative*.
Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1979.

⁸⁵ Liu, Alan. "What is the Meaning of the Digital Humanities to the Humanities?"
Modern Language Association International Bibliography on InfoTrac. Last
modified 2013. Accessed April 22, 2016. <http://www.mlajournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1632/pmla.2013.128.2.409>.

⁸⁶ Liu, "What is the Meaning." 411.

was looking for figurative language. How does one ask a computer to locate each moment an author refers to the concept of 'self' or 'identity', for example, when the majority of such references are through imagery, symbols and metaphors. The next challenge was how to analyze information that was provided in such vast amounts. For example, the word 'self' appeared over 125 times in Frederick Douglass' narrative, and that was including words such as 'himself', 'herself' and 'myself'. Thus specific programming had to be put into place to search for the word 'self', but only when there was a space before the letter 's' and after the final letter 'f'. Finally, the selection process of the words that the program was asked to find had a sense of an 'observer affect'. Almost as if the text was read differently because I was finding exactly what I was looking for.

Alan Liu referred to the phrase 'distant reading' which, in the case of the narratives considered through the eyes of a computer program, seemed applicable. When one 'manually' close reads a text, various themes and rhetorical devices are extracted. Simultaneously, before one even begins the novel, there are no specific expectations of words that would most frequently appear together. Perhaps the reader has heard of the author and has a sense of the genre, a few general themes and the first name of the main character in mind from prior discussion. However, generally speaking the initial engagement with the text is 'pure'. When you perform frequency analyses to mine a text for specific words, there is a possibility for information to be missed. At the same time, there are possibilities with technology which could also be 'missed' when reading manually. For example, it is difficult to keep track of sentence structure, in particular, the usage of prepositions when you are reading a text manually. With a

program such as Python, you can command for the computer to consider the number of words that surround prepositions such as ‘for’ and ‘after’.

The experiment that I conducted with the help of a computer science student⁸⁷ involved programming Python to calculate the number of times a list of words was used in the narratives of Frederick Douglass and Solomon Northup and the Runaway Slave Advertisements. The ‘programming’ itself involved teaching the computer how to ‘read’ a text. The first step was to ask it to ‘clean’ the text of punctuation by commanding for it to replace apostrophes, exclamation marks, periods...etc in each ‘string’ (word) with a blank space. Next, I wrote out a list of words that the program would count appeared in each of the texts.⁸⁸ The first experiment split the Frederick Douglass’ and Solomon Northup’s narratives in half, and calculated the number of times the word (and variants of the word) ‘I’ appeared in the first half of the narrative as compared to the second half. The second experiment calculated the number of times a list of words appeared in the Runaway Advertisements as compared to the two narratives each as a whole.

The process of word selection to create a list to mine the narratives was based on W.E.B. Du Bois’ theory of double consciousness which, as mentioned in previous chapters, describes the viewing of oneself through the eyes of an other.⁸⁹ I was interested in comparing the words used to describe the runaway slaves in the advertisements by white oppressors to those used by Frederick Douglass and Solomon Northup to describe themselves. In this way, I would consider

⁸⁷ Alexander Goodlad was my coding expert. It was particularly telling explaining how I wanted the computer to ‘sort’ through the texts and then having Alex translate this into Python (a computer language).

⁸⁸ See Figure 2 in Appendix

⁸⁹ Du Bois, *The Souls of Black*, 8.

if the projection of the slave identity by ‘an other’ onto a slave was internalized by slaves such as Douglass and Northup. I also kept in mind David Waldstreicher phrase of ‘profitable contradictions’⁹⁰, where talents that slaves developed that would help them in their escape of their masters clutches were manipulated by slaveowners in the advertisements to seem like negative traits. For example, a slave who could read and write would be described as capable of forging a signature. The words that were selected were an accumulation of adjectives, ad-verbs and verbs which were projected onto runaway slaves from a series of advertisements.⁹¹ They were: smooth, cunning, clever, active, changed, disguise, alter, attempt, artful, imposter, good, bad, abscond, lying, lie, remarkable, lurking, sly, tolerable, existence, identity, expect, believe, suspect and likely. The words ‘believe’, ‘suspect’, and ‘likely’ were chosen because many of the descriptions of slaves in the advertisements were unjustified and mostly guesses at characteristics many of the individuals did not actually possess. Furthermore, due to the notion of ‘profitable contradiction’⁹² occurring, positive attributes were manipulated to sound villainous.

The results of the first experiment revealed important information regarding when in the plot of the narratives both Douglass and Northup began believing themselves to be people. This was tested by calculating the quantity of times the word ‘I’ was used in each section of the narratives. Douglass, who was born into slavery, was taught from young that he was considered less than human compared to his white counterparts. The first half of his narrative describes his time in slavery. The latter half describes his time post emancipation. Thus, the expected results would be that Douglass would refer to himself as ‘I’ less times in the first half of his narrative in

⁹⁰ Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning." 247.

⁹¹ See Figures 3 - 8 in Appendix

⁹² Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning." 247.

comparison to the second half. This in fact proved to be true. In the first half of Douglass' narrative, the word 'I' appeared 358 times and in the second half it appeared 671 times. That means Douglass referred to himself as 'I' almost twice the number of times in the latter half of his narrative than in the first part.⁹³ This outcome reflects the plot and the theory of Double Consciousness⁹⁴ as Douglass was viewing himself through the eyes of his white oppressors during his time in slavery. The slave identity projected onto him consisted of notions of dehumanization and racial inferiority. If Douglass viewed himself as less than human then that would mean he would seldom use 'I' to express himself. In using 'I' almost double the number of times when he was free, Douglass is acknowledging himself as not only a human but also a voice worth hearing in the writing world.

However, it is neither fair nor accurate to portray Douglass as someone who internalized the slave identity projected onto him solely because he was born into slavery. What led to Douglass' desire to seek freedom was his restlessness at the fact that he was given less than what he was owed, in both in terms of treatment and payment for his labors for his owners. He portrays how:

I could see no reason why I should, at the end of each week, pour the reward of my toil into the purse of my master....The fact that he gave me any part of my wages was proof, to my mind, that he believed me entitled to the whole of them.⁹⁵

⁹³ See Figure 9 in Appendix

⁹⁴ Du Bois, *The Souls of Black*, 8.

⁹⁵ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 57.

Douglass felt entitled to more in his life even while he was still a slave. His feelings of uneasiness at receiving just a part of his own wage reveals that individuals who were born into slavery did not internalize their subjected roles. Douglass will go on to describe how he was told to set “aside my intellectual nature, in order to contentment in slavery” by a slave owner who suspected him of trying to escape.⁹⁶ In other words, even white slaveowners at the time admitted that in order to find peace with slavery as a system, one had to ignore one’s intellectual nature.

Expectations regarding Northup’s usage of the word ‘I’ can be considered differently because he was born a free man. Northup’s time in slavery was over twelve years in his adult life. The majority of the first half of his narrative Northup is discussing his life as a free man and the history of his family. For this reason I predicted that the use of the word ‘I’ would be significantly greater than the second half of the narrative where he is discussing his experiences in slavery. This hypothesis matched the results, however not with a significant difference between the values. Northup used ‘I’ 751 times in the first half of his narrative and 628 times in the second half. Northup resisted many of his masters’ attempts at projecting an inferior identity onto him and in many ways used skills he learned as a free man as a means to better his life in chains. Therefore, Northup’s use of the word ‘I’ *consistently* throughout his narrative reflects how he did not internalize the projected slave identity during his time in slavery. In other words, if the reference of oneself as ‘I’ is a reflection of a belief in one’s own ‘humanness’, then Northup maintained the belief that he was a person and not property.

With regard to the results of the words used in the runaway advertisements to describe the slaves as compared to the words chosen by Northup and Douglass to describe their masters as

⁹⁶ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 58.

well as their own identities, there were a few important findings. The words that most appeared in Douglass narrative which were shared amongst the runaway advertisements were ‘clever’, ‘believe’, ‘bad’ and ‘suspect’. The circumstances in which the word ‘suspect’ appears in Douglass narrative as compared to the runaway advertisements are particularly powerful as Douglass uses it to describe his owners’ potential behaviors. The first time it appears, Douglass references how the wives of owners who have children with their slaves are suspicious of their husbands showing favor to the children.⁹⁷ The next time, Douglass portrays how his one owner, Anthony, was never suspected of being a virtuous man.⁹⁸ The third appearance of the word ‘suspect’ revealed how Colonel Lloyd, Douglass’ other owner, only had to ‘suspect’ a slave of neglecting his horses and they would receive “the severest punishment; no excuse could shield them”⁹⁹ All three of these interactions describe the lack of humaneness white slave owners had at the time, but more than this, it reveals the lack of Christian values that the owners were displaying. The word ‘suspect’ is particularly triggering with regard to the runaway slave narratives as many of these traits that the writers of the ads would ‘suspect’ the slaves of having were assumptions based on admirable qualities. For example, one advertisement goes so far as to suggest that a slave who “generally smiles when he speaks” is ‘suspected’ of “lurking about a plantation” as he is so “dissembling” and “artful”.¹⁰⁰ Thus, a slave who has mustered up what little joy he has left in him to even smile when spoken to, is suspected of manipulating those he encounters. Thus the

⁹⁷ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 13.

⁹⁸ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 14.

⁹⁹ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 19.

¹⁰⁰ Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), Williamsburg, March 9, 1769. http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/saxon/servlet/SaxonServlet?source=/xml_docs/slavery/ads/rg69.xml&style=/xml_docs/slavery/ads/display_ad.xsl&ad=v1769030329

use of the word on both sides of the racial divide was very different. For Douglass, ‘suspect’ is used to describe the lack of Christian values and general morality in his cruel masters’ treatment of himself and other slaves. In contrast, the word ‘suspect’ used in runaway slave advertisements is used to project inaccurate assumptions based on positive attributes held by the slaves in question. In many ways, this occurs for the other words found in both texts.

In Northup’s narrative, the word that most dominates in common with the slave narratives is the word ‘lie’, and its variations (lying, liar, lied). The kidnapping and then enslavement of Northup was an enormous tragedy and highlighted the grave potential of whites to ruin a free black man’s life. Northup’s narrative acts as evidence that he was lied to on many accounts for the sake of his captures earning money through his price. Even when he was faced with near death injuries, Northup himself “could not force from [his] lips the foul lie that [he] was a slave.”¹⁰¹ In contrast, the authors of the runaway slave advertisements do not shy away from making bold assumptions regarding their former slaves. The frequent use of the words ‘likely’, ‘expect’, ‘believe’, ‘may attempt’ and ‘suspect’ are reflections of the hedged guesses as to the future deceitful actions of the individuals in question. The word ‘lie’ and its variations are found in the runaway slave advertisements in abundance and are often associated with younger individuals. The young people who were able to escape their dire circumstances are often accused of theft and committing other deceitful crimes, but in many of these cases, the monetary reward amount for returning the individuals is extremely high. One narrative is so abruptly contradictory, its first line is “Stop Thief and Runaway!! TEN DOLLARS REWARD”.¹⁰² If an

¹⁰¹ Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, 45.

¹⁰² Norfolk Herald (Willett and O'Connor), Norfolk, September 22, 1796. http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/saxon/servlet/SaxonServlet?source=/xml_docs/slavery/ads/vg1796.xml&style=/xml_docs/slavery/ads/display_ad.xml&ad=v1796090132

individual is so deceitful and a compulsive liar, why would a slave owner desire for them to be returned?

As an escaped slave, it must have been eye-opening to read a runaway advertisement about oneself. The literal seeing of yourself through the eyes of your oppressor could spark many reactions. The first could be a change in one's appearance and actions. If you were to be recognized for your clothing, accent or overall mannerisms, it would be understandable if a slave would change their behavior/appearance. The second reaction, could be of shock at the realization of how much a person who oppressed you valued you and your skills. The forced recognition of talents and abilities from a person who had treated you as inferior is particularly powerful. Finally, to be able to see a document that recognized your existence in a world which classified you as less than human, would be a striking way to start your life as now a free individual.

This experiment brought to light the differences in circumstance in language was used by Solomon Northup and Frederick Douglass in comparison to runaway slave advertisements. Where Douglass and Northup used their words purposefully to identify the injustices in their lives, the authors of the runaway advertisements projected character-assumptions based on physical traits of individuals they did not fully understand. It becomes immediately apparent the disconnect of understanding slave owners had for the individuals that they enslaved. Furthermore, although there were some parallels in language used in the runaway advertisements considered and the narratives of Frederick Douglass and Solomon Northup, these connections was not reflected in the descriptions of identity in the narratives. Although the increase in the use of the word 'I' occurred post-emancipation, the language chosen by Douglass and Northup to

describe their views of themselves was not reflected in the language of the advertisements.

Douglass describes his desire to keep his first name given to him by his mother as a way “to preserve a sense of my identity.”¹⁰³ Names and oral histories were important parts of the identities many slaves carried with them post-emancipation. Thus the language of ‘self’ as seen in the use of words in the two narratives developed separately to the language projected onto slaves by slave owners in runaway advertisements.

¹⁰³ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 62.

Conclusion

Ran away, Glenn Ligon. He's a shortish broad-shouldered black man, pretty dark-skinned, with glasses. Kind of stocky, tends to look down and turn in when he walks. Real short hair, almost none. Clothes nondescript, something button-down and plaid, maybe, and shorts and sandals. Wide lower face and narrow upper face. Nice teeth.¹⁰⁴

Glenn Ligon is a modern day visual artist who presented an exhibition entitled *Runaways* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1993. Ligon asked ten of his close friends to describe him as if they were filing a missing person's report, however they were instructed to use what he called 'police language'. Ligon was concerned with the experience many slaves had of having one's identity projected onto them through a runaway advertisement. Through imagery, language and the experience of being 'watched' by 'an other', Ligon asks the viewers of his own 'advertisements' to consider more than just the racial divide but also the complex relationship between master and slave. Ligon concerns himself with "bringing the notion of slavery into the present."¹⁰⁵

Ligon was also moved by the narrative of Henry "Box" Brown, the example of a slave narrative with which I opened the project. Brown's creative use of a box to mail himself to freedom inspired Ligon to explore the symbol of a confined, cubed space as a mode of resilience and freedom. He describes how he "became fascinated with the idea of this box as the container

¹⁰⁴ Metropolitan Museum of Art. "Glenn Ligon Runaways." Metropolitan Museum of Art. Accessed April 22, 2016. <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/490240>.

¹⁰⁵ Hansen, Liane. "Glenn Ligon Reframes History In The Art Of 'America.'" NPR. Last modified May 8, 2011. Accessed April 23, 2016. <http://www.npr.org/2011/05/08/136022514/glenn-ligon-reframes-history-in-the-art-of-america>.

for the body, but also the idea that if he had spoken, it would have been the thing that would have given him away.”¹⁰⁶ The box, although it creates notions of being cramped and confined, it was used as a mechanism of liberation for Brown. Ligon presented an exhibition entitled *To Disembark* which consisted of crates in a room with projections emanating from within. He uses sounds like Billie Holiday's “Strange Fruit” and KRS-One singing “Sound of Da Police”, which barely resonate out of the crates, to symbolize the restriction of voices in the time of slavery. It also renders contemporary the struggle of slavery by referencing surveillance, control and race-induced police brutality.¹⁰⁷

The image of the ‘box’ as confinement mirrors the physical limitations of the slave narratives. Just as the box that Henry Brown was shut into forced him to remain silent in order to maintain his freedom, there are parts of the lives of the people behind slave narratives like Frederick Douglass’ and Solomon Northup’s that will remain forever silenced. For example, Douglass refused to relay his means of escape for the sake of other slaves at the time potentially escaping the same way. This is but one of many examples of stories and experiences we as readers and scholars will never fully know. Although it was telling and informative to analyze the texts discussed through a computer program and through manual close reading, there will be information that cannot be tapped into just by the nature of the atmosphere of when the narratives were written.

Furthermore, it is misleading to draw the conclusion that because Solomon Northup was born a free man, when he was being indoctrinated with the belief that slaves were not human

¹⁰⁶ Hansen, "Glenn Ligon Reframes History."

¹⁰⁷ Hansen, "Glenn Ligon Reframes History."

beings by his white oppressors, or that he did not feel a burden on his soul. This was not the case. The narratives themselves are a presentation of a self that is not complete. Both Douglass and Northup had lives outside of their narratives, which solely represented their experiences in slavery and the identities they choose to portray in their books. In many ways the ‘characters’ of Douglass and Northup have freedom inside the framework of a slave narrative that they did not have in their worlds post-emancipation. Thus, although the slave narratives are a means of writing oneself into existence, that self has its own persona and identity beyond the pages of the books.

Many of the arguments made in this project explain how slave narratives can be seen as advertisements for abolition and that runaway slave advertisements can be seen as forms of narratives. Often times the history of slavery is taught and described as if it is no longer relevant. The climate of inequality and systematic oppression are present today in different forms. A form of runaway advertisements was recreated easily by Glenn Ligon, all through the lens of using ‘police-language’. It is particularly telling that the language used by enforcers of the law to locate missing criminals matches the language used by slave-owners to describe escaped slaves. The history of police departments themselves is closely linked to what was once known as ‘Slave Patrols’ which were a “law enforcement system existed in America before the Civil War for the express purpose of controlling the slave population and protecting the interests of slave owners.”¹⁰⁸ As historian Victor E. Kappeler, Ph.D writes in his article entitled, “A Brief History of Slavery and the Origins of American Policing”:

¹⁰⁸ David, M. "Police Originated From ‘Slave Catching Patrols’." Counter Current News. Last modified April 15, 2015. Accessed May 1, 2016. <http://countercurrentnews.com/2015/04/police-originated-from-slave-catching-patrols/>.

Slave patrols and Night Watches, which later became modern police departments, were both designed to control the behaviors of minorities. For example, New England settlers appointed Indian Constables to police Native Americans (National Constable Association, 1995), the St. Louis police were founded to protect residents from Native Americans in that frontier city, and many southern police departments began as slave patrols. In 1704, the colony of Carolina developed the nation's first slave patrol. Slave patrols helped to maintain the economic order and to assist the wealthy landowners in recovering and punishing slaves who essentially were considered property.¹⁰⁹

In a time when law enforcement targets not criminals, but stereotypical notions of what are deemed 'criminal characteristics', many parallels can be drawn to the many who hunted for runaway slaves. What does it mean for our society that the language of documents describing escaped slaves from two centuries ago, matches the language used to describe wanted criminals? The ever-present news stories of police-brutality against minorities, in particular, young African American males, are proof that the demonization of minorities through projected identities is still relevant today. Moreover, the history of communities self-policing through the hunt for runaway slaves is the foundation on which the American legal enforcement system was built. In this way, we are still steeped in a history that has been deemed irrelevant.

¹⁰⁹ David, "Police Originated From 'Slave,'" Counter Current News.

Appendix

Figure 1: Opening image of Solomon Northup's narrative with his signature beneath it. Northup, Solomon. "Twelve Years a Slave Narrative of Solomon Northup, a Citizen of New-York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, and Rescued in 1853, from a Cotton Plantation near the Red River in Louisiana." Edited by David Wilson. Gutenberg-e. Last modified May 11, 2014. Accessed March 26, 2016. http://www.gutenberg.org/files/45631/45631-h/45631-h.htm#CHAPTER_I.



Figure 2: Python Coding with breakdown of steps

```

1 def puncfliminate(wordList):
2     newWordList=[]
3     for word in wordList:
4         word=word.replace('!', '')
5         word=word.replace('.', '')
6         print word
7         newWordList=newWordList+[word]
8     return newWordList
9
10 class Count_List:
11     def __init__(self, textFile):
12         self.textFile=textFile
13         with open(self.textFile) as wordText:
14             words=wordText.read()
15             self.wordList=words.split()
16             print self.wordList
17
18 class Narrative:
19     def __init__(self, textFile):
20         self.textFile=textFile
21         with open(self.textFile) as wordText:
22             words=wordText.read()
23             self.wordList=words.split()
24             print self.wordList
25             self.wordList=puncfliminate(self.wordList)
26             print self.wordList
27
28     def count_words(self, countList):
29         wordCountList={}
30         for countWord in countList.wordList:
31             wordCount=0
32             for word in self.wordList:
33                 if word == countWord:
34                     wordCount=wordCount+1
35             print countWord
36             print wordCount
37             newCountList=wordCountList.update({countWord: wordCount})
38             print wordCountList
39             return wordCountList
40
41 test_list=Count_List('count_list_test.txt')
42 test_narrative=Narrative('narrative_test.txt')

```

1) Go through each 'string' (word), command it to replace punctuation like ! with nothing, leaving the words (characters)

2) (count list) Separate words by spaces, creates list, take another list of words that you want to count (identity, existence etc) and looks through main word list, for each word that you want to count, checks to see if the word matches, and if it matches, it counts it (adds up)

3) Then taking the words that are counted, and generating the 10 words before and the 10 words after and finding the passages (Key Words in Context)

4) Then calculating how many times certain word pairs show up together

Sample original Runaway Slave Advertisements used in Chapter 3 experiment, taken from:

"Explore Advertisements." *The Geography of Slavery in Virginia*. The Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia, n.d. Web. 7 Mar. 2016. <<http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/index.html>>.

Figure 3: *Virginia Gazette (Parks)*, Williamsburg, May 2 to May 9, 1745.

RAN away, about the 10th of *April* last, from the Hon. *Jaba Coffin, Esq;* of *Williamsburg*, a Negro Man named *Peter*, of a middle Stature, about 30 Years of Age; has a Scar in his Forehead, or somewhere about the upper Part of his Face, occasion'd by falling into the Fire when a Child, is *Virginia-born*; he went away with Irons on his Legs, a *Kersey* Waistcoat, and a Cotton Pair of Breeches, laced on the Sides for Conveniency of putting them on over his Irons; he has robb'd me, in Cash, Household Linen, and other Goods to a considerable Value; and notwithstanding he is Out-law'd will not be taken or return home; he can read, and I believe write. Whoever apprehends and conveys him safe to me, shall have Two Pistoles Reward, besides what the Law allows.

Jaba Coffin.

Figure 4: *Virginia Gazette (Rind)*, Williamsburg, April 26th, 1770.

April 8, 1770. GEORGE MURRIEL.

RUN away from *Greenwich*, in *Gloucester* county, on the 3d of *January* last, a likely Negro man, named *Adam*, about 23 years of age, 6 feet high, of a yellowish complexion, and has a down look; he is by trade a cooper and sawyer, and can read and write. Before he went off, he was heard to say that he intended for *South-Carolina*. He carried with him sundry cloaths, among them one suit of grey cloth, and a pair of white yarn stockings, and generally wore steel buckles in his shoes. Whoever apprehends the said slave, and conveys him to me, shall, if taken in *Virginia*, have FIVE POUNDS reward, if in *North-Carolina* TEN POUNDS, and if in *South-Carolina* TWENTY POUNDS, besides what the law allows; or if confined in any gaol, and notice is given, half the above rewards will be allowed.

JOHN FOX.

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Figure 5: Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), Williamsburg, November 5, 1772.

JONES
 ...able, and true. Whoever brings the said Horse to me shall have
 TWENTY SHILLINGS Reward. SARAH MITCHELL.

FREDERICKSBURG, *Merid* 11, 1772.

FIFTEEN POUNDS Reward for taking
 up, and delivering to me, my Man CHRISTMAS. He is a lilly,
 well made, genteel Fellow, has waited on me from my Infancy, can dance
 and dress extremely well, and is about thirty Years of Age; his Com-
 plexion is rather light (his Father being a light Mulatto) very pleasant,
 and well featured. He has been inoculated for the Smallpox, but has no
 Marks except the Scar of the Incision on one Arm, and at present a large
 Cut on his Shin, the Effect of a late Night Revel; he can read, is very fluent
 of Speech, speaks with great Propriety, and is so artful that he can invent a
 plausible Tale at a Master's Warning, which makes me suspect that he will
 now pass unobserved, under some Pretence or other, as a Freeman, which
 I presume will be most desirable to him; though he has lived little short
 of it with me, having been too much indulged, and being very idle during
 my present Indisposition, he has grown wanton in Licentiousness, and
 several gross Acts of ill Behaviour this Week past, are now punished by
 an Exilement last Monday Night. It will be in vain to describe his Dress,
 as he has already changed his Livery, and it seems has taken a brown Ker-
 sey Waistcoat belonging to my Cook, which I presume he will retain as
 Part of his Dress. The above Reward will be proportioned, and paid
 according to the Distance he may be taken up and brought home, namely,
 FIVE POUNDS if above twenty and under fifty Miles, TEN POUNDS if
 any Distance above a Hundred Miles, and FIFTEEN POUNDS if
 any Distance above a Hundred Miles in this Colony; but if he is taken
 out of the Colony, I will give TWENTY POUNDS.

Tf JAMES MERCER.

Figure 6: Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), Williamsburg, July 28, 1768.

...any person desirous to purchase may
 may know the terms by applying to the subscriber in *King's*
 parish, *Gloucester* county.

Tf ROBERT BILLUPS.

RUN away from the subscriber,
 the 10th of *June* last, a Negro fellow called
 CAJAH, about 5 feet 9 inches high, of a yellow
 complexion, a downcast look, well made, a very
 slovenly fellow, his voice sounds as if coming out
 of a hollow tree, and reads and writes very well.
 I am apprehensive he will endeavour to make his
 escape from the colony. Whoever conveys him
 to me, in *King William* county, shall be well re-
 warded.

Tf CARTER BRAXTON.

RUN AWAY from a quarter
 belonging to the estate of *Mr. John Thompson*,
 deceased, in *Albemarle* county, about three years
 ago, a tall mulatto wench, slim made, has long
 hair, and is about 30 years old. She has some
 pretensions to freedom, and obtained a pass from
 ...

Figure 7: Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), Williamsburg, March 9, 1769.

...the purchase with the a job at ... RICHARD ADAMS.

TEN POUNDS REWARD.

RUN away from the subscriber's plantation, in Loudoun county, from James Waley, overseer, on last Easter Monday, TOM, a Negro man these, by name called Tom Sawyer, of a middle size, well made for strength, about 31 years old, has bad teeth, and many small pimples about his beard; he can read, and play on the fiddle, and had a variety of clothes, but his common working duds was dyed brown casaca. He managed several years as an overseer for me, under Capt. Robert Downman, at a plantation of mine on Marattick creek, in Richmond county, where he always lived until lately. He is a dissembling artful fellow, and generally smiles when he speaks. I suspect he is lurking about a plantation belonging to Charles Carter, Esq; in Hanover county, at or near South Water, where he has a wife named Lebra, and perhaps at times about his old haunts at Marattick. Whoever will deliver him to me, in Prince William county, shall have the above reward; or if they will secure him in any of his Majesty's goals, so that I may get him again, 5l. and if he is taken out of the colony, and brought home to me, 20l. paid by

HENRY LEE.

TAKEN up in Red Bank ...

SHILL
away
years

AT

Figure 8: Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), Williamsburg, March 19, 1772.

JONES ... TWENTY SHILLINGS Reward. SARAH MITCHELL.

FREDERICKSBURG, March 17, 1772.

TEN POUNDS REWARD.

RUN away from the subscriber, in Northumberland, on Wednesday the 14th of October, a very early young Florida born Negro Man named DAVID, of a yellowish Complexion, and about five feet six inches high; had on when he went off an Osnaburg Shirt, a Pair of Purple Frying Cloth Breeches lined with white Linnen, a Pair of Reddish Breeches over them, and a Fawn-colour'd Jacket with Horn Buttons. He carried with him a brown coloured Kersey Jacket, a Hat and white Flannel Cloth Gown with coarse Osnaburg Pocket, brown and white Linnen Shirts, and fancy other Clothes which I cannot well describe; but, as he is a very cunning artful fellow, I imagine he will sell and swap his Clothes as may suit him. Though his Hair is of the Negro Kind, he keeps it very high and well combed; but, as he wants to be free, I imagine he will cut it off, and get a Wig to stir and disguise himself. He had with him thirty or forty Shillings in Silver Money, and a Brass Medal with the Image of our present King and Queen on it, which he will endeavour to pass for Gold. He can read pretty well, and I make no Doubt will endeavour to pass for a Freeman and get himself a large Pair, and endeavour for some foreign Part, either by getting on Board of some Vessel or finding some Gentleman's Horse and make for Carolina. He has always been my Waiting Man when I went from home, and is a good Water, Driver, and Hauler, understands something of Gardening, of combing and dressing Wigs and Hair, can plough, work at the Hoe and Axe very well, and is, on the Whole, a very clever active brisk Fellow. Whoever will apprehend the said Runaway, and bring him home to me, or secure him in any Jail in the Colony, so that I get him, shall have FIVE POUNDS Reward, and reasonable Charges allowed; if out of the Colony TEN POUNDS, and reasonable Charges for bringing him home.

THOMAS GASKINS.

N. B. He is suspected to have carried with him a Drab coloured Saddle's Jacket with Black Sleeves, Leather Buttons on the Breast, if not on the Breast, and lined through with red and white Swanskin; also a Pair of old white Flannel Breeches, which are missing.

U S.

... my former Address. I ...

Figure 9: Output results for 'I' and variants summation. The first two rows starting from '358' shows the 'I' counts of the first half and second half of Frederick Douglass' narrative consecutively. The row where it says '31' reflects the 'I' counts in the Runaway Slave Advertisements considered. The final two rows starting with '751' reflects the first half of Solomon Northup's narrative 'I' count followed by the second half results.¹¹⁰

```
Python 2.7.7 <default, Jun 1 2014, 14:21:57> [MSC v.1500 64 bit (AMD64)] on win
32
Type "help", "copyright", "credits" or "license" for more information.
>>> import word_counter
<'I': 358, "I'll": 0, "I'n": 0, "I'd": 0, "I've": 0>
<'I': 671, "I'll": 0, "I'n": 0, "I'd": 0, "I've": 0>
<'I': 31, "I'll": 0, "I'n": 0, "I'd": 0, "I've": 0>
<'I': 751, "I'll": 3, "I'n": 0, "I'd": 2, "I've": 0>
<'I': 628, "I'll": 9, "I'n": 5, "I'd": 0, "I've": 6>
>>>
```

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