Introduction

"To Tell the Truth": African American Activism in the British Isles 1835–1895

Before departing for America in the spring of 1847, formerly enslaved African American activist Frederick Douglass addressed an "overflowing" audience in Leicester, England. In a well-rehearsed opening, he claimed he "had nothing in the way of learning" to entice the crowd's interest apart from, as emphasized by the newspaper correspondent, "A LONG EXPERIENCE OF SLAVERY." Douglass went on to say:

> A slave was looked upon in that free country [the United States] as a piece of property, to be bought and sold, and to be hunted down by blood-hounds if he made his escape. – I have myself (said the speaker, after a momentary pause,) experienced the anxiety and trepidation consequent on this state of things; for I am, as I believe most of you are aware, A RUNAWAY SLAVE.[1]

While some of his speeches in Britain were extemporaneous, Douglass relied on distinct performative techniques to convince the transatlantic public of southern brutality. In doing so, his blistering oratorical artistry amazed audiences, who awaited his every word with bated breath: his rhetoric, sonorous voice and command of the lecturing platform painted a picture of slavery like no other. His testimony as a fugitive added weight to his words, and he combined such techniques with a flair for the dramatic, adding – as we see here – a "momentary pause" to infuse his words with impact and anticipation. Despite his protestations (which were included purely for dramatic effect), Douglass was far from being an amateur public speaker. Even if his oratorical career had begun in Britain when he arrived in 1845, he had lectured roughly 300 times by

[1] *Leicestershire Mercury*, March 6, 1847, 2. Emphasis in original.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108767057.001 Published online by Cambridge University Press

1847. Douglass's sojourn increased his confidence, independence and celebrity within transatlantic abolitionist circles, and it became a stepping-stone for future success in the United States. He was the most successful Black transatlantic activist of the nineteenth century and contemporaries lavishly described him as an eloquent orator, a modern Demosthenes.[2]

The story of the transatlantic abolitionist movement is an extraordinary one. Scores of Black activists such as Frederick Douglass traveled to England, Ireland, Scotland and even parts of rural Wales during the nineteenth century to educate the British public on slavery. Many individuals sought temporary reprieve from American soil, others permanent; some raised money to free themselves or enslaved family members; and others sought work with varying degrees of success. Black women and men lectured in large cities and tiny fishing villages, wrote and published narratives, stayed with influential reformers, and appealed to different classes, races, and genders, with no discrimination against profession, religion, or age. Whatever their reasons for visiting, Black abolitionists exhibited whips and chains, sometimes together with their scars; read runaway slave advertisements from southern newspapers; created visual panoramas; and used fiery rhetoric to tell their stories.[3]

During this period, millions of British and Irish people witnessed formerly enslaved people lecture. They vociferously read about their lives through slave narratives or pamphlets, watched antislavery panoramas unfold, purchased daguerreotypes, and raised money to free enslaved individuals and their families. Activists inspired poetry, songs, woodcuts, pamphlets, children's literature, wax models, religious remonstrances, along with hundreds of editorials and letters to the press. In response, Victorian press correspondents endlessly commented on Black abolitionist lecturers, their appearance, their diction, and most importantly, their authenticity. While the public displayed a distinct racial curiosity and flocked to churches, taverns, and town halls in order to glimpse or even touch a formerly enslaved individual, many were inspired by activist voices and genuinely gave what they could to the antislavery cause. As the pioneering historian Richard Blackett has noted, Black activists brought

[2] *Dundee, Perth and Cupar Advertiser*, February 3, 1860, 2.

[3] Audrey Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England: Abolitionist Politics in Popular Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1–10. See also Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016) and Richard J. M. Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983).

"a legitimacy to the international movement that their white co-workers could never claim." They did not encourage armed conflict or political interference, as some of their opponents alleged, but instead "aimed to inform the British public about the nature of American slavery." It is therefore unsurprising that British newspaper editors littered their reportage with accounts of formerly enslaved individuals as well as their speeches, adverts for their narratives, and their letters to editors. From the *John O'Groat Journal* to the *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, Victorian Britons followed the movements of Black Americans from the 1830s until decades after the American Civil War, often cramming into tiny churches or town halls to curb an insatiable appetite for details about American slavery.[4]

By sharing their oratorical, visual, and literary testimonies to transatlantic audiences, African American activists were soldiers in the fight for liberty, as a result, their journeys were inevitably and inescapably radical. Their politicized messages and appeals for freedom had severe consequences for enslavers, proslavery defenders, white racists, and ignorant publics: the act of traversing the Atlantic itself highlighted not only their death-defying escapes from bondage but also their desire to speak out against slavery and white supremacy on foreign soil. In August 1846, Frederick Douglass declared that

> so long as the slave clinks his chains in bondage, while he lifts up his imploring hands to heaven, and the advocates of freedom everywhere are doing their utmost in his behalf, in exposing his wrongs, and making known the outrages under which he suffers, while I see this, I cannot do other than pursue the course which I am now doing.[5]

Douglass' position as a formerly enslaved individual made it impossible for him to follow any other course of action: it was his *duty* to travel to the other side of the Atlantic and share his blistering rhetoric in the hope it would be amplified and reverberated back to the United States. As he declared a month later, "no man would dare to rise up . . . and say he had not had cause to speak warmly" on the subject.[6] Douglass and other

[4] Blackett (1983), 195–197. See also Peter Ripley (ed.), *The Black Abolitionist Papers, Vol. 1: The British Isles 1830–1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Clare Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists: An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974); Fisch (2000); Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid Nineteenth Century* (Leicester: Holmes and Meier Publishers Inc., 1978); Sinha (2016).

[5] *The Newcastle Guardian*, August 8, 1846, 2–3.

[6] *The Bristol Mercury, and Western Counties Advertiser*, September 5, 1846, 6.

advocates of freedom traveled extensively around the British Isles to convince the transatlantic public of slavery's horrors, and in doing so, they dared their audiences to challenge their experiences, facts, perspectives, or arguments; they were the expert witnesses since they had worn the shackles of bondage themselves. While representing and advocating for the voiceless and silent millions who toiled in slavery, women and men spoke tirelessly to numerous audiences, despite the trauma on their scarred hearts, bodies, minds, and souls. What was the cost of such a burden? How did they navigate their own liberties when, to white Victorian audiences, they represented a suffering and tortured slave? Day after day, night after night, formerly enslaved individuals relived their trauma for hours on end, in urgent and emotional appeals to encourage antislavery momentum. They believed that speaking abroad would have a very real and positive impact on the abolitionist movement, and for some, such as Douglass, this was the only option they had: as Moses Roper summarized in 1839, "I would lay down my life to save them [the enslaved], but I dare not put my foot on American ground: – I should be dragged in chains to an ignominious and cruel death."[7] Those who knew the true value of freedom were its best advocates, and radical figures like Roper were unafraid to resist, speak out, and die for the cause.

The constant movement and exchange of Black peoples across the Atlantic famously led Paul Gilroy to conclude that scholars must study the "Black Atlantic" as a separate hybrid entity, and they should acknowledge its role in the influence of Black self-fashioning strategies. Black activists visited Europe "and had their perceptions of America and racial domination shifted as a result of their experiences there," which "has important consequences for their understanding of racial identities." While this book concentrates only on the movement of African Americans to the British Isles, many individuals used the nation as a base to visit France, Italy, Greece, Egypt, and other parts of Africa to campaign against slavery or reconnect with their ancestral land.[8]

During their transatlantic journeys to Britain throughout the nineteenth century, African Americans engaged in what I term "adaptive resistance," a multifaceted interventionist strategy by which they challenged white supremacy and won support for abolition. They

[7] *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, February 15, 1839, 2–6, 15–19.
[8] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

self-consciously performed in contested public spaces, intruded into a white supremacist narrative, and unsettled Victorian concepts of Blackness, race, and slavery. Alongside this mode of self-presentation in sources I have excavated from Victorian newspapers, I use an interdisciplinary methodology that draws on literary studies, cultural history, memory studies, African American studies, and the visual culture of antislavery iconography to (re)discover Black performative strategies on the Victorian stage from the late 1830s to the mid-1890s. With their blazing rhetoric, violent descriptions of slavery, panoramas, plays. or props, individuals such as Moses Roper, Frederick Douglass, William and Ellen Craft, Henry "Box" Brown, John Sella Martin, Josiah Henson, and Ida B. Wells countered racial stereotypes that people of African descent were inferior to whites. The term "adaptive" is key to this resistance strategy, since Black Americans actively created new relationships or means to "adapt" to the Victorian stage. It encompassed the sheer extent of individual actions, their (sometimes improvised) reactions to racism and white supremacy, and their myriad performative techniques that depended on specificity in regard to location, audience, and contemporary events.

However, in the analysis of such strategies, it is abundantly clear that performance was only one strand in the Black activist arsenal. The successful employment of adaptive resistance relied on a triad of

1. adaptive performance techniques,
2. utilization of abolitionist networks, and
3. exploitation of Victorian print culture.

Building upon the groundbreaking work by Audrey Fisch, Richard Blackett, and Peter Ripley, this book identifies and unifies these themes as central to Black abolitionist transatlantic visits and concludes that if an individual ensured an even balance between all three strategies, it was likely their sojourn would be successful. To share their testimony of slavery, Black women and men "adapted" to the location and the sociopolitical climate in which they spoke in. Intervening within these white public spaces, they used their *performances* to subvert white dominance and refused to exploit themselves as spectacles or objects for white consumption. To maximize their message, they befriended newspaper editors, organized the printing of narratives or pamphlets that recorded their speeches, and manipulated connections with Victorian *print culture* to enable favorable coverage of their lectures. They wrote letters to influential newspapers and in their speeches thanked publications for

their support of the antislavery cause. Synonymous with this, they utilized as many white and Black abolitionist *networks* as they could: American abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison's British supporters were often friendly with local newspaper editors, and activists relied on these men and women to publish their stories, print advertisements for their meetings, and accommodate them whenever they visited certain locations. White abolitionists introduced formerly enslaved individuals to their families and friends, and arranged transportation, dinners, and social events. Most prominently, they ensured that audiences packed out lecture halls. While these abolitionist networks or links to print culture could not be exploited by every activist (indeed, some white networks deliberately sabotaged missions), Black women and men used or created every opportunity to maintain antislavery momentum and encourage support for abolition.[9] More often than not, Black abolitionists exploited one or two strands of adaptive resistance to achieve moderate success on the stage and in the press. By studying Moses Roper and his radical dissonance, for example, we can understand why Frederick Douglass was so successful. Douglass was a skillful performer who could answer criticisms or compromise his graphic language with relative ease. When he was maligned in the press, he used his own rhetoric and friendships with white activists that he had cultivated through Garrisonian networks to ensure any form of sabotage was met with indignation. Roper could not exploit print culture or abolitionist networks to the same capacity as Douglass. He refused to downplay his brutal descriptions of slavery to satisfy white expectations, and, as a result, upset Victorian standards of gentility and racial dynamics. He also suffered after prominent British aristocrats slandered his reputation in the newspapers, which discredited his testimony and subsequently his tour.[10]

Hence, in this book, I uncover new evidence surrounding Black activist performances and shed new light on their rhetoric and actions both on and outside an abolitionist stage.[11] As Audrey Fisch notes in her

[9] This will be discussed in detail in Chapters 2 and 3. See also Caleb McDaniel, *The Problem of Democracy in the Age of Slavery: Garrisonian Abolitionists and Transatlantic Reform* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2013) and Blackett (1983).

[10] *Manchester Daily Mirror*, January 23, 1852, 2.

[11] In doing so, I build on the pioneering work of Fisch (2000); Blackett (1983); Ripley (1985). See also Fionnghuala Sweeney, *Frederick Douglass and the Atlantic World* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007); Alan J. Rice and Martin Crawford, *Liberating Sojourn: Frederick Douglass and Transatlantic Reform* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999); Sinha (2016).

monumental study, *American Slaves in Victorian England*, there was a distinct "Afro-American campaign" between 1850 and 1861. Blackett too makes reference to a protest tradition where Black abolitionists wanted to create a "moral cordon around America that would isolate her from international feeling."[12] I shift focus and point to the ways in which Moses Roper contributed to and nurtured a transatlantic Black American protest tradition in Britain before the visits of Charles Remond and Frederick Douglass in the early 1840s. I also extend my study to focus on Black abolitionist visits beyond the American Civil War, and theorize that through their employment of adaptive resistance, Black activists maintained a growing abolitionist momentum and refused to let the British public forget that the legacies of slavery haunted them still.

Adaptive resistance was, then, a specifically *British* approach not only because of the nature of British abolitionist groups but also because activists used their position abroad as a distinct political ploy to challenge slavery. By amplifying their accounts of oppression on foreign soil, activists used their politicized testimony to shame enslavers and proslavery defenders, which gave their resistance an international dimension. Britain's history of abolition and its intertwined narrative of moral superiority also allowed Black women and men to simultaneously praise Britons for their abolitionist efforts, as well as challenge what further action the nation should take in regard to American slavery. While Black abolitionists could exploit the elements of adaptive resistance on American soil, the antislavery climate was inherently different and more complex. Activism in America was often mortally dangerous for formerly enslaved individuals. The ability to establish antislavery networks was sometimes hindered by this fact, and most successful connections between abolitionists were exploited in the northern states. In Britain and Ireland, activists could exploit and actually combine performance, print culture and international networks from their positions abroad: in doing so, some chose to stay for months, years, or even the rest of their lives in order to escape slave catchers, racial violence, or domestic terrorism. Even if Black abolitionists received criticism or experienced racism in the British Isles, it was rare that they were mobbed, threatened, or assaulted during the course of their activism. Ready audiences awaited them there, and they provided Black activists with support, money, and extensive coverage in national newspapers. Activists distributed this coverage, and

[12] Fisch (2000), 5; Blackett (1983), 6.

sent it to American newspapers to maximize their success. In America, slavery was an entrenched institution in politics, the economy, society, and culture; the lack of a supportive provincial and especially national press hindered the ability to make a national impact, at least when compared to the success of these activists in the British Isles. In turn, activist performances in Britain and Ireland were designed to, in some respects, "preach to the converted": antislavery sentiment was woven into the national and patriotic fabric of the British Isles, and most people did or could not publicly denounce abolition in as blatant terms as the United States. Thus, Black anglophilia was much more pronounced in the British Isles, simply because of its political climate, antislavery history, and physical distance from America.[13]

Leading on from this, how can we determine the success of African American missions to the British Isles? Their lectures raised awareness of American slavery, maintained antislavery momentum throughout the nineteenth century, changed attitudes toward Black people and the South, inspired British and Irish people to become activists, and persuaded thousands to rally against the Confederacy, a possible factor in Britain's contested neutrality. More specifically, though, Black abolitionists sought tangible outcomes from their visits abroad such as raising money for a specific antislavery society or freeing an enslaved family member. They accomplished such missions relatively easily, and their success can therefore be tangibly measured. However, for Black abolitionists more broadly, how should the success be estimated? By the amount of money raised for transatlantic antislavery societies, the attendance at abolitionist meetings, the number of slave narratives or pamphlets sold, or the number of lectures given by activists? Richard Blackett's groundbreaking work *Building an Antislavery Wall* defines success by the scale and number of lecture tours, but we cannot "measure the success of these efforts, except to say that at the outbreak of the Civil War the British public was knowledgeable about the nature of American slavery and that each belligerent in the conflict desperately sought to influence British opinion in its favor."[14] If we take attendance or frequency of lectures as a basis, then it leaves us in no doubt that Black abolitionists were extremely successful: it is no exaggeration to say they spoke to millions of people across the nineteenth century, reaching thousands more through the publication and sale of their narratives. The extensive and enormous

[13] See Sinha (2016) for a brilliant analysis of abolition and the lives of Black abolitionists.
[14] Blackett (1983), xi, 16–17.

coverage of their lectures in the Victorian press indicated their impact on British and Irish society.[15]

In 1930, W. E. B. Du Bois wrote that he was disappointed to learn many African Americans thought that "unless [a] protest is successful or seems to have a reasonable chance of success, it is worse than worthless." He wrote that protest was always successful if one had stood their ground and shown the enemy their position: "Even if the offending politician does not hear of your opposition; does not feel your lone vote, you know and you feel, and it is an awful thing to have to be ashamed of one's self."[16] As formerly enslaved individuals, the act of escaping slavery represented an extraordinary act of resistance in the face of a violent and oppressive white supremacist system. Their survival was a form of revenge against their former enslavers, but this was not enough: Black abolitionists, as advocates of freedom, traveled abroad to embarrass, shame, and, most importantly, condemn proslavery defenders from an international stage. The British Isles gave them a platform, pulpit, and an amplifier through the Victorian press. With every word they uttered or action they took on British and Irish soil, Black women and men contested white supremacy and the racist stereotypes placed upon them, intervening into a white transatlantic society to share their testimony.

Thus, while I recognize the success of Black abolitionists more *broadly*, this book examines certain *individual* successes in more detail. Within the theoretical framework of adaptive resistance, success rested on the ability for a Black abolitionist to maximize their antislavery message and receive extensive reportage in the Victorian press. Thus, newspaper coverage can be used in part to measure success: activists could use this mode of print culture to amplify their voices, their words, and their performances as a whole. Their definition of success rested on the exploitation of the three strands of adaptive resistance to *gather*, *build*, and *maintain* antislavery momentum, even in places where they had not physically visited. In doing so, they could shape and change narratives surrounding slavery and its legacies, raise public awareness, and ultimately alter the racialized perception of themselves. Through the creation of unique performances, the establishment of connections with influential people, and the manipulation of print culture (specifically the

[15] Author's website, www.frederickdouglassinbritain.com.

[16] John Stauffer, "Foreword," in Zoe Trodd (ed.), *American Protest Literature* (Cambridge: Belknap University Press, 2008), xvi.

Victorian press), abolitionists could thus advance the antislavery cause as well as establish fame on the British circuit.

Taking their resistance efforts together, then, Black activists visited nearly every corner of Britain. They transformed transatlantic abolitionism and emphasized the importance of Black testimony in every speech, letter, or action. Written and portrayed in popular culture as subservient or passive figures, activists transformed their Black bodies into sites of protest. Layering such protests upon their physical selves, they became embodied self-reflexive agents in order to disrupt racial norms and protest against attempts to render Black voices invisible. These activists were architects of subversion and challenged misconceptions of slavery and white obsession with the Black corporeal. They played on preconceived notions and spoke eloquently to win their audience to the cause of abolition. Their reactive and proactive agency rejected racial stereotypes and constantly pushed at the boundaries of identity.

Through the employment of such tactics, Black women and men forged a Black American protest tradition in Britain. Sustained by bold testimony, they wanted, in Moses Roper's words, to "tell the truth" about the violence of slavery and champion African American humanity.[17] Roper's declaration was a foundation upon which future African Americans would build. In 1847, Douglass declared that enslavers could no longer hide what slavery truly was, for "the slave now broke loose from his chains and went forth to tell his own story, and to make known the wrongs of his brethren."[18] In 1850, William Wells Brown argued it was right and "proper that some one should speak in favour of the slave," and, instead of relying on slaveholder's testimony, he decided "to send his own representative, one who had himself worn the chains of slavery."[19] In 1853, Turner Williams argued that "he had been twenty years a slave, and therefore ought to know something about slavery and slave owners."[20] And in 1863, Julia Jackson declared it was her right "to make a few remarks on slavery" as she herself had witnessed it.[21] Black women

[17] Paul Walker, "Moses Roper: African American Baptist, Anti-Slavery Lecturer and Birmingham Nonconformity," *Baptist Quarterly*, 44 (April 2011), 102–106.

[18] Frederick Douglass, March 25, 1847, in John Blassingame (ed.), *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series One – Speeches, Debates and Interviews, Vol. 2, 1847–54* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 8–19.

[19] *The Leeds Mercury*, January 19, 1850, 7.

[20] *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, July 16, 1853, 3.

[21] *Western Times*, January 30, 1863, 5.

and men, as advocates of freedom, sought to make their voices and actions heard in a climate dominated by white supremacy.

ADAPTIVE RESISTANCE: PERFORMANCE

Britt Rusert has described how performance scholarship is often defined by "bold leaps and experimental engagements with history." In order to piece together the artful and innovative strategies employed by Black activists, historians must consult a wide range of sources, including various forms of print ephemera (narratives, advertisements, posters, newspapers) as well as visual culture. We cannot capture the whole extent of Black performance, but can carefully comb through the archive to examine a partial picture of what it would have looked like.[22] I have consulted Victorian newspapers, advertisements, slave narratives, pamphlets, letters, photography, children's literature, plays, poetry, songs, and even a Madame Tussaud's exhibition catalog in order to fully grasp the extent of Black abolitionist performance. Uncovering and recognizing multiple sources is one step closer toward understanding the myriad forms of expressions African Americans used to fight white supremacy.

British and transatlantic history is rich with Black performance and activism. Some activists who traveled to the British Isles already possessed oratorical careers and were successful at convincing white audiences about slavery's horrors, but used their visit as an opportunity to practice their well-honed performances or network-building.[23] In America, Frederick Douglass and Henry Highland Garnet employed blistering and stunning oratory to convince their audiences of the sin of slavery, and relied on white and Black abolitionist networks for their activism.[24] Once in Britain, Black protestors built on the successes of their predecessors, and learned from persons of African descent who had shaped the British landscape long before Moses Roper's first lectures. Ignatious Sancho wrote antislavery letters and challenged Britain's moral superiority, declaring that "the grand object of English navigators – indeed of all

[22] Britt Rusert, *Fugitive Science* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 17–20, 127–129.

[23] William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760–1865* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 100.

[24] See Sinha (2016); David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018) and James Jasinski, "Constituting Antebellum African American Identity: Resistance, Violence, and Masculinity in Henry Highland Garnet's (1843) 'Address to the Slaves'," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 93:1 (2007), 27–57.

Christian navigators – is money – money – money." In 1787, Ottobah Cugoano wrote and published the first treatise by an African abolitionist, and worked with Olaudah Equiano in the Sons of Africa, a group of men who championed the end of the slave trade and slavery. Cugoano declared that Atlantic slaveholders were a "bramble of ruffians, barbarians ... grown up to a powerful luxuriance in wickedness."[25] Cugoano criticized the monarchy, the church, and the government for its sanction of the slave trade and championed its immediate abolition around the world. He was probably the earliest abolitionist to advocate Royal Naval patrols to capture slave ships, a concept that would become a reality after abolition.[26] Olaudah Equiano challenged the Atlantic slave trade through the first slave narrative, published in 1789, as well as through numerous letters to London newspapers. He exploited contemporary markets to disseminate his textual and oral accounts of slavery, racism, and imperialism, and was entirely self-published; he organized networks of distribution by himself, and wrote letters to abolitionists on both sides of the Atlantic.[27] Phillis Wheatley published her poetry in London in 1773, and nurtured networks with prominent antislavery activists and aristocratic figures.[28] Robert Wedderburn and Mary Prince intervened into a white supremacist schema and presented their narratives to audiences ignorant of Black struggles. Other Black personalities such as Ira Aldridge, Samuel Morgan Smith, Paul Molyneaux, Bill Richmond, and Pablo Fanque were self-reflexive performers and challenged Black stereotypes through acting, boxing, and the circus.[29] Joseph Johnson, an artist and a beggar, wore a model of a ship on his head akin to a West African headdress and used this to make a political statement to Britons and the navy in particular for their refusal to pay him a pension, although he had although he had served as a sailor. He exploited British moral and naval superiority to entice an audience, and subversively revealed how he

[25] Sinha (2016), 124–125.

[26] Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 296–298.

[27] Vincent Carretta, *Equiano, the African: Biography of a Self Made Man* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), xi–xiii, 237–257, 366–367.

[28] Vincent Carretta, *Phillis Wheatley: Biography of a Genius in Bondage* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), ix–xi.

[29] Alan J. Rice, "Hidden Heroes of the Black Atlantic," *African American Review*, 45:4 (Winter 2012), 504–510; Deirdre Osborne, "Writing Black Back: An Overview of Black Theatre and Performance in Britain," *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 26:1 (2006), 13–31.

and his fellow Black sailors were a central part of the British navy.[30] The performer Joseph Jenkins flitted between the roles of preacher, actor, and street-sweeper with apparent ease, fascinating William Wells Brown with his shifting identities.[31] Operatic singer Elizabeth Greenfield, or the "Black Swan," traveled to Britain in the early 1850s and became an immediate sensation, joining the pantheon of formerly enslaved individuals who made an impact on transatlantic audiences.[32] Finally, elocutionist Mary Webb performed an adapted version of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, entitled "The Christian Slave," on both sides of the Atlantic to great success.[33]

In *Performing Authorship in the Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Tour*, Amanda Adams argues that performance "contains potential for artificiality or put more positively, creativity and invention." Transatlantic lecture tours in particular were "inescapably embodied" experiences since "an author stood on the stage, rather than the page, displaying much of his or her physical self through voice, accent, hand gestures and stature."[34] A performance could encompass the entirety of a lecturing tour, as any form of lecture or action, a private gathering, or a large meeting of 6,000 people required a performative response. In relation to Black abolitionists, a performance could be any action in front of a white audience where racial identities met. As we saw in the opening extract of Douglass's speech, Black performers actively created assertive relationships with their listeners, either through the deemphasis of their body and the focus of attention on their voice, or the use of their body as a "voice" to highlight the sin of slavery. This relationship was an empowered act between audience and body because the speaker captivated the audience with their presence; they were in control of how and what the audience saw, since they dictated the content and shape of the message. In doing so, they sought to look beyond the commodification of their racialized bodies.

[30] Alan Rice, *Radical Narratives of the Black Atlantic* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2003), 206–209.

[31] John Ernest, "The Reconstruction of Whiteness: William Wells Brown's *The Escape*; or, *A Leap for Freedom*," *PMLA*, 113:5 (October 1998), 1108–1110.

[32] Sara Lampert, "Black Swan/White Raven: The Racial Politics of Elizabeth Greenfield's American Concert Career, 1851–1855, *American Nineteenth Century History*, 17:1 (2016), 75–85.

[33] Lisa Merrill, "Most Fitting Companions: Making Mixed-Race Bodies Visible in Antebellum Public Spaces," *Theatre Survey*, 56:2 (May 2015), 152.

[34] Amanda Adams, *Performing Authorship in the Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Lecture Tour* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 2–13.

During their performances, activists employed both *assimilationist* and *dissonant* strategies to win support. In doing so, they often engaged with the "doubleness" of thought and consciousness they had adopted on plantations to protect their humanity or hide their resistance in order to survive.[35] Once free, those who gave lectures participated in this "doubleness" on the British stage: they appealed to Victorian norms and used rhetoric with which British audiences were familiar, and activists were thus likely to be successful. All invoked assimilationist techniques at some stage in their careers to gain a hearing and few were deliberately controversial, as this would have left them with few contacts or avenues of support. They incorporated mimicry, masking, minstrelsy, anglophilia, and exhibited whips and chains within their performances to create a memorable appeal to British audiences. For example, Frederick Douglass used mimicry to regale his Exeter audience in 1846 when he pretended to be a southern preacher, "with a most imitable tone of voice and a genuine Yankee twang." His "sermon" caused "shouts of laughter" and resulted in a very successful meeting.[36]

Activists also relied on dissonant language. A musical term, "dissonance" refers to a "clashing," a conflict or unexpected beat against the mainstream. In most cases, audiences actively tried to avoid or limit situations where they were confronted with dissonance, or other scenarios within the performance world where they were made to feel physically or mentally uncomfortable.[37] During a meeting in Wexford in 1838, for example, Moses Roper's language toward slave-owning Methodist and Baptist ministers raised the ire of local religious people and according to a local newspaper he "would not publicly contradict his statements." He had "represented [Methodists] as cruel, canting, hypocrites," and several prominent individuals threatened to end the meeting lest Roper apologize. Roper stood up to speak and endeavored to "excite the feelings of the audience" with his statement that a *Methodist* had enslaved his mother: the meeting broke up with "the majority being evidently displeased with the line of conduct Mr. Roper had pursued."[38] While many Black abolitionists employed a measure of compromise or curtailed their radical

[35] John Blassingame, qtd. in Eric J. Sundquist, "Introduction," 1–23, in Sundquist, *Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 2–3.

[36] *Western Times*, September 5, 1846, 6.

[37] Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Evanston: Row, Peterson & Co., 1957), 2–5, 21–27.

[38] *Wexford Conservative*, October 6, 1838, 3.

language, Roper refused to downplay the violent and hypocritical nature of slavery, and argued only he – as a former survivor – could know what it was like to be enslaved. Activists used such language to shock their audiences and sang a discordant tune against their expectations; some made white Britons *deliberately* uncomfortable to enhance a feeling of dissonance and force them to change their misconceptions about slavery. Black people or Blackness was, in the Victorian public's eyes, inextricably linked to slavery and this influenced how they portrayed and interpreted Black people on stage.[39] In response, activists rejected racial stereotypes and argued that Britain had never been a haven for Black people. Numerous abolitionists were unafraid of chastising the British for their self-aggrandized claims of liberty. Almost all activists criticized the notion that slavery did not exist on British soil, and as formerly enslaved women and men, they used their own experiences to highlight the difference between rhetoric and reality.[40] Navigating tensions between assimilationist and dissonant strategies on stage was often a difficult task, but the ways in which they approached this challenge has the potential to change our understanding of abolitionism.

It must be stressed, though, that there was no strict binary between assimilationist and dissonant strategies. Most abolitionists employed both in the same lecture, and praised and then chastised Britons who had allowed the nation's antislavery spirit to grow dormant. Even Moses Roper did not employ dissonance in every part of his speeches. Furthermore, as we will see in the following chapters, men such as Roper, Frederick Douglass, and Josiah Henson employed minstrelesque techniques in some of their lectures: on the surface, this assimilationist strategy won them support from their audiences, but all three men often used such techniques in dissonant ways to subvert racial norms. This is partly why some activists had trouble with such assimilationist strategies, as on the surface it appeared to pander to white tastes. For example, James Watkins outright refused to employ minstrelsy in his narrative or speeches, as he identified it as a purely white supremacist tactic to mock an "oppressed people." Roper also exhibited whips and chains to convince audiences of the brutality of slavery, recounting in dispassionate tones the torture that had been enacted on his own body by those very tools. Frederick Douglass initially displayed whips and chains, but as his

[39] Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America 1780–1865* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 144.

[40] Sinha (2016), 340–351.

independence from the Garrisonian movement grew more pronounced, he ceased to do this on the British stage. While Douglass had begun this strategy as an assimilationist tool, complying to British audience expectations as well as his Garrisonian colleagues, he later felt he could adopt more dissonant approaches, particularly through his blistering oratory.[41]

In navigating both assimilation and dissonance within their lectures, African Americans occasionally relied on the tradition of masking, a complex survival strategy where an individual embraced racialized stereotypes or behaviors to subtly challenge the white racist schema and, in some cases, influence the outcome of a scenario to their advantage.[42] Certain assimilationist strategies like minstrelsy were purely designed for the benefit of white audiences, who usually missed the radical subversive narratives that some Black activists disguised throughout. As bell hooks argues:

> It is useful to distinguish between performance that is used to manipulate in the interests of survival (the notion of wearing a mask), and performance as ritual play (as art). Collapsing the two categories tends to imply that the performative arts in black expressive culture emerge as a response to circumstances of oppression and exploitation . . . One may engage in strategic performances in the interests of survival employing the same skills one uses to perform in the interest of ritual play, yet the performative standpoint alters both the nature and impact of the performance. In one context performance can easily become an act of complicity, in the other, it can serve as critical intervention, as a site of resistance.[43]

This perfectly speaks to the intricate performative strategies African Americans engaged in while traveling the British Isles, and on the abolitionist platform in general. Masking their true intentions was a form of survival, while others adopted seemingly assimilationist strategies while attempting to subversively challenge or create a "critical intervention" in the landscape. For example, in 1877, Josiah Henson returned to Britain and capitalized on his association with the character of "Uncle Tom"

[41] *The Bradford Observer*, March 5, 1840, 3; *The Leeds Times*, November 15, 1845, 7; James Watkins, *Narrative of the Life of James Watkins* (Bolton: Kenyon and Abbatt, 1860), 43–45; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 8, 1877, 3.

[42] George Hovis, "Masking," 476–480, in Joseph M. Flora and Lucinda H. MacKethan (eds.), *The Companion to Southern Literature: Themes, Genres, Places, People, Movements and Motifs* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 477–479. See also Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[43] bell hooks, "Performance Practice as a Site of Opposition," 210–222, in Catherine Ugwu (ed.), *Let's Get It On: The Politics of Black Performance* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1995), 210–212.

from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, where he received numerous invitations to lecture around the country. However, this connection became burdensome at points and in a meeting in March, he completely rejected the racial epithet and demanded that "without his consent no person had any right to call him Uncle Tom." This demonstrates not only the complexities Black activists faced on the transatlantic stage but also how they met such challenges with a flexibility whereby they practiced both a desire to embrace and rebuff audience attempts to define them.[44] In order to be successful on the British stage, and for his own survival, Henson appeared to be complicit in Victorian racial dynamics and even engaged in what hooks describes as "ritual play," while simultaneously rejecting the moniker of Uncle Tom when necessary.

Such ritualized performances, together with voice and gesture, were also central to the concept of Black performance particularly when we consider the relationship between rhetoric and how aural texts were written and conceived on the page. For a performer like Douglass, his corporeal figure along with his voice and appearance symbolically worked together to create a masterful, unique, and often site-specific event. For example, in Leicester in March 1847, the town hall "was filled literally to overflowing" and Douglass' "open, intelligent, and cheerful countenance, most expressively spoke the thanks his tongue would have uttered, for the hearty welcome with which he was greeted, if he could have made himself heard above the cheering which burst simultaneously from all parts of the vast assembly." In the same speech, Douglass described the violent beating of an enslaved female cousin:

> And I have known him take the same young woman my cousin, and have her tied up so (by the hands, with the wrists crossed), UNTIL HER FINGERS BECAME BLACKER THAN THE GOD WHO MADE HER PAINTED THEM. (Great sensation.)[45]

Douglass demonstrated his knowledge of print pathways as he knew this graphic and horrifying image would mark a key point in his speech, as well as to those who read an account of it afterward. One can imagine – in line with Douglass' performative engagement with his audience – that his voice became louder and louder, and reached every corner of the hall, before he delivered this terrible statement of slavery's brutality with deliberate force, while at the same time using gesture to demonstrate

[44] *Dundee Courier and Argus Warder*, March 13, 1877, 3.
[45] *Leicestershire Mercury*, March 6, 1847, 2.

how the hands would have been tied. The correspondent noted this through capitalization and wanted to illustrate the strength of his words to those who were not there. Douglass was no stranger to this: during a speech in Taunton in 1846, the local newspaper correspondent wrote how he "displayed a painful position" as he relayed how "the warm blood trickled" down an enslaved woman's scarred back.[46]

Through their myriad performances, African Americans engaged in complex acts of self-representation, exploiting their position as outsiders to American citizenship *and* their position abroad to challenge America's artificial freedom and national ideology. In the majority of their speeches, African Americans relied upon anglophilia and constantly referred to Britain's history of abolition both in positive and critical terms. Knowing their lectures would be more successful if they engaged with such narratives, they specifically referred to abolitionists such as William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, the end of slavery in the British Empire, and sometimes the nation's commitment to the capture of slave ships. During a meeting in 1846, for example, Douglass quoted the words of Lord Henry Brougham, a British parliamentarian and abolitionist, who rejected the philosophy "that man [could] hold property in man," which many West Indian slaveholders had subscribed to.[47]

This performative tactic made adaptive resistance wholly unique to Britain. By boosting their popularity abroad, Black women and men were acutely aware that their speeches would be reported in the press, and potentially, distributed and circulated in a transatlantic storm of print to the United States. This would raise the ire of American correspondents, who would often report on Black abolitionist missions. Even if this did not directly occur, however, Black activists wanted to shame America from abroad.[48] By raising support from prominent men and women, churches and reform groups, they not only wanted to shine an international light on America's sins but also use their freedom and activism to publicly embarrass their former enslavers.

Black abolitionists constantly juxtaposed British monarchical freedom with America's republicanism, and highlighted the hypocrisy of a national identity that prided itself on an artificial form of freedom. Their position on foreign soil aided their attacks against America's so-called liberty, as seemingly they had to travel thousands of miles outside the United States

[46] Blackett (1983), 29. [47] *Dundee Courier*, September 29, 1846, 3.
[48] The American press often reported on abolitionist tours: see *The Bee*, June 27, 1846, 2; *The Georgia Telegraph*, June 22, 1847, 3; *The Atlanta Constitution*, June 23, 1894, 4.

to find true freedom under a monarchy. They engaged with, played upon, and rejected Britain's nationalistic pride for abolition and the dormant antislavery spirit that had taken hold of society. For example, although Frederick Douglass was not beyond criticism of Britain (especially when pressed by hecklers or patronizing chairmen), he was very adept at rousing audiences and flattered British patriotism when it suited him. In Dublin in 1845, Douglass argued it was British influence that led to greater freedom in the northern states: this "happy change has been caused by improved opinion – by glorious efforts and agitation in Ireland, and in England, and in Scotland on the question, as well as in America." He directly connected his audience to substantial and real change in America, which no doubt would have resonated with and encouraged men and women to actively support Douglass and his cause. He argued that "Americans are very sensitive to the opinion of the world" and "he implored his audience to keep up this opinion, by making every American slave-holder, every American apologist of slavery who sets his feet upon our soil, feel that he was in a land of freedom, among a people that hated oppression, and who loved liberty." Douglass was well aware he needed to build and maintain transatlantic antislavery momentum and the chance to raise awareness to shame American visitors would help to do this.[49] In Newcastle in 1847, Douglass urged his English audience "to blow the trumpet of freedom once more across the Atlantic ... to arouse again the gigantic energies of that spirit, and to direct those energies against the enslavement of humanity." The United States

> should know that England would never rest satisfied, until the foul blot of slavery was wiped, not only from the character of America, but from the character of humanity ... The expression of opinion, in England, had great influence across the Atlantic in times gone by. America had taken up the sayings of [Thomas] Clarkson, [William] Wilberforce, of [Daniel] O'Connell and [Lord Henry] Brougham. She had taken up the declarations of the religious bodies in England against slavery, and such was the influence which the abolitionists had excited in the United States, that slavery had now almost entirely hidden itself, and had sought a refuge under the drippings of the American altar.[50]

Douglass invoked famous abolitionist heroes to spur and inspire his British and Irish audiences into action. His activism and transatlantic support shamed proslavery Americans into hiding, like beasts afraid of

[49] *The Evening Packet*, September 11, 1845, 2.
[50] *The Newcastle Guardian*, January 2, 1847, 6.

the light. He constructed a scenario in which his transatlantic audiences needed to amplify his voice and actions, which would lead to the destruction of slavery.

Some African Americans did not always rely on flattery. In 1851, William Craft declared that those in England who believed they had nothing to do with American slavery were "selfish." Britain "had a good deal to do with establishing slavery" in America, and "if they had put the chains upon himself and [his] wife, it was not too much for him to ask them to do something for his relatives and friends now groaning in American bondage."[51] A year later, John Brown declared that "the demand for cotton, rice, sugar, &c., in England had a great influence upon the slave trade in Georgia, and whenever prices ruled high for these articles in this country, the slave trade was very brisk, as an increased number of hands were required to assist on the plantations." Although the British government had paid £20,000,000 in compensation, "that money in reality remained in England" and "was given to English merchants and planters, and none of it went to the poor slave." Britain's reliance on slave-grown cotton also tarnished the nation's reputation of freedom, as it was a "produce of roguery." Brown apologized for "speaking out," but "some allowance must be made for his feelings as he had relatives still in slavery." Brown radically and directly linked the slave trade to British society and tried to shame his audience for their imperialism.[52]

Similarly, James Watkins was frank in his slave narrative about experiencing racial prejudice, particularly with merchants in Liverpool who refused him a job because they believed "a nigger would steal." For a short time, he obtained employment in a hotel, but swiftly left after racist remarks from guests. To avoid displeasure from British audiences (where his narrative was published), Watkins attributed this discrimination to "American feeling," which had poisoned the minds of Englishmen. Racism was an "American problem," and the British had to be strong to resist this mind-set and uphold their commitment to liberty. Despite his own personal difficulties, though, Watkins wanted to preserve the freedom he enjoyed in Britain as he could "worship in the noblest cathedral in the land" and travel with limited restriction in contrast to the United States. He could therefore, "defend old England as the home of the

[51] *Western Times*, May 10, 1851, 6. [52] *Bristol Times*, September 25, 1852, 3.

oppressed, the refuge of the persecuted and as the freest and happiest land under heaven."[53]

Most activists, then, adapted their speeches to specific locations or made references to British people. In 1850, William Wells Brown dismissed the "absurd doctrine" of Thomas Carlyle, "who had asserted the inferiority of the negro race."[54] In a meeting in Sheffield in 1859, Frederick Douglass urged his audience to make a concerted effort to resist proslavery defenders, since the city's influence traveled "wherever its knives and crinoline went." He warned people not to support American slaveholding churches and "in so far as England supported it she was riveting the chains of the American slaves." Since "England had helped to put the negro into slavery," the nation "had a right to take him out."[55] Similarly, in Manchester in the same year, Sarah Parker Remond criticized the town for allowing the "pro-slavery spirit of America" to take hold, a bold statement since Lancashire and neighboring towns relied heavily on cotton imported from the South. She also reprimanded the Wesleyan Conference in the city for their refusal to engage in nonfellowship with their slaveholding brethren in America, despite the fact that the Leeds Young Men's Anti-Slavery Society had warned them in a remonstrance.[56] In a speech at Leicester in February 1867, John Sella Martin urged his audience to remember that "large towns such as Manchester, Liverpool, and Bradford had been built upon the results of the cotton and other commerce with America, [and] it was their duty to assist these people [freedmen and women], as far as lay in their power now that they were no longer chattels."[57] Finally, Ida B. Wells wrote an article entitled "Liverpool Slave Traditions and Present Practices" in 1894 and specifically criticized the city's role in the slave trade and the legacy of slavery. In doing so, she targeted Britain's deliberately constructed historical amnesia surrounding slavery, and reminded her audiences that merchants and even ordinary citizens relied on slave-grown cotton.[58]

[53] James Watkins, *Struggles for Freedom; or the Life of James Watkins* (Manchester: Printed for James Watkins, 1860), vii, 11–13, 40–44, 61–74.

[54] *The Leeds Mercury*, January 19, 1850, 7.

[55] *Supplement to the Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, December 24, 1859, 10.

[56] Sarah Parker Remond, *Anti-Slavery Advocate*, November 1, 1859. Online via Black Abolitionist Archive, www.research.udmercy.edu/find/special_collections/digital/baa/item.php?record_id=956&collectionCode=baa.

[57] *The Leicester Chronicle and the Leicestershire Mercury*, February 16, 1867, 8.

[58] Ida B. Wells, "Liverpool Slave Traditions and Present Practices," in Mia Bay and Henry Louis Gates Jr. (eds.), *Ida B. Wells: The Light of Truth: Writings of an Anti-Lynching Crusader* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2014), 160–163.

The navigation of such a tense struggle between celebrating and criticizing Britain's history of abolition was just one example of the balance between employing assimilationist and dissonant strategies on stage. Such tensions were a battle for Black abolitionists, as they attempted to construct one's own image, in opposition to an audience's attempt to embody or push its own preconceived notions onto a performer.[59] British audiences often held a stereotypical image of Black people, founded upon racist depictions of African Americans made popular in caricatures and minstrel shows.[60] Nineteenth-century newspaper descriptions of Black abolitionists consistently focused on the corporeal, and Black women and men had to find a way to incorporate this within their performance without succumbing to exhibitionism. For example, descriptions of Frederick Douglass' "eloquence" rarely failed to connect this trait with the fascination surrounding his Black body. It was difficult for him and other Black abolitionists to disembody themselves from their oratory, as British audiences saw the body first and heard the voice second. Even if his audience appreciated his voice, they only understood his corporeal self through the racialized lens of white Victorian popular culture, but Douglass challenged this as much as possible throughout his British sojourns.[61]

Between 1845 and 1847, Douglass exploited antislavery networks to conduct an extensive lecturing tour across the country and forged new friendships and contacts to speak out against slavery. He wrote to editors of prominent newspapers, courted relationships with reformers, and constantly wrote letters back and forth to America to share stories of his British trips. His fiery rhetoric won many new recruits to the antislavery

[59] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Interfaces: Women, Autobiography, Image, Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 10.

[60] Alex W. Black, "Abolitionism's Resonant Bodies: The Realization of African American Performance," *American Quarterly*, 63:3 (September 2011), 619–623. For discussion on transatlantic racial stereotypes, see also Tavia Nyong'o, *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance and the Ruses of Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Lorimer (1978); Peter J. Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea (Revised Edition)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983/1989), and Hazel Waters, *Racism on the Victorian Stage: Representation of Slavery and the Black Character* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[61] Jeanne DeLombard, "'Eye-Witness to the Cruelty': Southern Violence and Northern Testimony in Frederick Douglass's 1845 Narrative," *American Literature*, 73:2 (2001), 270–271. See also Celeste-Marie Bernier, *Characters of Blood: Black Heroism in the Transatlantic Imagination* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2012); and Bernier's article "'Iron Arguments': Spectacle, Rhetoric and the Slave Body in New England and British Antislavery Oratory," *European Journal of American Culture*, 26:1 (2007), 57–78.

cause and hundreds of people flocked to hear him speak. Douglass' exploitation of the triad of adaptive resistance specifically in the 1840s worked successfully to ensure he was a celebrity on the British stage. In contrast, Douglass' second visit in 1859 was not as successful as his first, as certain networks were closed to him after his infamous break with radical abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison in the early 1850s.[62] Together with the growing apathy in Britain toward Black rights, Douglass' employment of adaptive resistance was hampered by his inability to exploit the triad in equal measure.

In the last forty years, there has been a significant growth in scholarship about Douglass' experience abroad, with a particular focus on Ireland.[63] There are many reasons for this, but primarily Douglass' Irish visit was the first part of his 1840s tour and so was the starting point for dramatic changes in his self-fashioning. For the first time in his life Douglass felt free, and his often-relentless schedule proved representative of his later travels; he cultivated abolitionist networks and important

[62] This will be discussed in Chapter 4. See Richard J. M. Blackett, "Cracks in the Antislavery Wall: Frederick Douglass's Second Visit to England (1859–1869); and the Coming of the Civil War," in Rice and Crawford (eds.), *Liberating Sojourn*, 187–207.

[63] Chief among them are John Blassingame (ed.), *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series One – Speeches, Debates and Interviews, Vol. 1, 1841–1846* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); Philip S. Foner, *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings* (New York: Citadel Press, 1999, first published in 1950), Ripley (1985); Blackett (1983); Rice and Crawford (eds.) (1999); Iain Whyte, *Send Back the Money! The Free Church of Scotland and American Slavery* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2012); Alan J. Rice, "Transatlantic Portrayals of Frederick Douglas and His Liberating Sojourn in Music and Visual Arts 1845–2015," 167–188, in Celeste-Marie Bernier and Bill E. Lawson (eds.), *Pictures and Power: Imaging and Imagining Fredrick Douglass 1818–2018* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017); Leigh Fought, *Women in the World of Frederick Douglass* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Alasdair Pettinger, *Frederick Douglass in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018); Bernier and Lawson (eds.) (2017); Celeste-Marie Bernier (ed.), Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (New York: Broadview Press, 2018); Celeste-Marie Bernier and Andy Taylor, *If I Survive: Frederick Douglass and Family in the Walter O. Evans Collection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018); Laurence Fenton, *"I Was Transformed": Frederick Douglass – An American Slave in Victorian Britain* (Amberley: Stroud, 2018); and Blight (2018). Historians have also focused heavily on Douglass' Irish sojourns: Sweeney (2007); John F. Quinn, '"Safe in Old Ireland': Frederick Douglass' Tour 1845–1846," *Historian*, 64:3–4 (2002), 535–550; Jeffrey R. Kerr-Ritchie, "Black Abolitionists, Irish Supporters, and the Brotherhood of Man," *Slavery & Abolition*, 37:3 (2016), 599–621; Patricia J. Ferreira, "Frederick Douglass and the 1846 Dublin Edition of His Narrative," *New Hibernia Review*, 5:1 (2001), 53–67. Robert S. Levine dedicates an entire chapter to the Dublin edition in *The Lives of Frederick Douglass*. See also Ann Coughlin, PhD thesis from the bibliography and also Christine Kinealy, Frederick Douglass in Ireland. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

dignitaries in order to lecture on slavery whenever possible. A second reason for the focus on Ireland is that Douglass' new edition of his narrative (printed in Dublin) represented his growing independence from the Garrisonian movement. In this book, I refocus attention on Douglass' experiences in England where his extraordinary success has received – in comparison – less scholarly attention. Through the analysis of previously undiscovered speeches and commentaries, I provide new insight into Douglass' oratory and the myriad performative techniques he used to win support for abolition and Black rights.

Douglass' example also illustrated how adaptive resistance was deeply gendered. In Chapter 5, I focus on the previously neglected performative techniques that Black women used on the British stage to challenge white supremacy and align themselves with their Black identity. Teresa C. Zackodnik argues that there was a "politics of embodiment facing African American women" as they had to negotiate the male-dominated public stage. They also faced pressure from white abolitionists whose politics necessitated that a Black body represented an eyewitness to the cruelties of slavery. Black women's double embodiment meant they had to appeal to white societal norms and present themselves as civilized, feminine, and eloquent, while at the same time ensuring that they asserted their humanity.[64] Women had to rely on "a double-voiced discourse to address the concerns of an African American audience while appearing to appease or appeal to a white audience," which perfectly illustrates the complexities women faced in embracing both assimilationist and dissonant language in their speeches.[65] Since white society constantly objectified and sexualized Black women, individuals such as Sojourner Truth, Ellen Craft, Sarah Parker Remond, and Ida B. Wells challenged their double embodiment in both the public and private spheres. They used their bodies and oratory to express their Black experiences, identity, and

[64] Teresa C. Zackodnik, *Press, Platform, Pulpit: Black Feminist Publics in the Era of Reform* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 2011), xv–xvi, xxii. See also Renee K. Harrison, *Enslaved Women and the Art of Resistance in Antebellum America* (New York: Palgrave, 2009); Stephanie Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1996); Valerie Cooper, *Word Like Fire: Maria Stewart, The Bible, and the Rights of African Americans* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011); Xiomara Santamarina, *Belabored Professions: Narratives of African American Working Womanhood* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

[65] Teresa C. Zackodnik, *The Mulatta and the Politics of Race* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), xviii.

ultimately their womanhood.[66] For example, Ellen Craft used silence as a performative technique and crafted a form of embodied resistance to stand up at the end of meetings and confirm everything her husband William had said about slavery. Her near-white skin shocked British audiences, and she used her complexion to highlight that slavery represented violence and rape toward Black women. Despite relying on this concept of whiteness in public, I have discovered numerous ways in which Craft created private networks that aligned with her Black identity, including the forging of Black networks from her home in London. Furthermore, Julia Jackson was possibly the first African American woman to speak publicly on a British stage about her experiences as an enslaved individual, which radically alters our perception of Black female transatlantic activism. These complexities help us understand why the majority of activists to exploit adaptive resistance – and travel to Britain for a lecturing tour altogether – were male.

ADAPTIVE RESISTANCE: PRINT CULTURE

On both sides of the Atlantic, Black Americans vociferously adopted various forms of print culture to demonstrate their freedom and literary prowess. From slave narratives to pamphlets of their speeches, they distributed thousands of copies of printed material, which often became the beating heart of the transatlantic antislavery movement. In their landmark study, Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein describe the differences between print and print culture: the former is "a technology that fixes impressions, whereas 'print culture' focuses on a world in which print both integrates with other practices and assumes a life of its own." Thus, "it directs our attention instead to the ways that print affects (and sometimes effects) personhood, circulates to unintended readers, is subject to reiteration and reappropriation, solicits publics that may not yet recognize themselves as such, and allows equally for representation and misrepresentation."[67] Victorian newspapers form a large foundation of this book and I have tried to keep in mind the ways in which print in

[66] Zackodnik (2011), xv–xxvi. See also Teresa Zackodnik, "The Politics of Embodiment and Appeal: The Female Slave and Sarah Parker Remond's 1859 Antislavery Lecture Tour," 23–36, in Martin Hewitt (ed.), *Platform, Pulpit, Rhetoric* (Leeds: Leeds Centre for Victorian Studies, 2000), 24–33.

[67] Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein, "Introduction," 1–19, in Cohen and Stein, *Early African American Print Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 2–7.

particular "is subject to reiteration and reappropriation," and how African Americans attempted to combat and control the narrative to their own designs. I have included references to slave narratives, letters, pamphlets, adverts, and handbills, but for the purposes of my study, I include forms of print culture in *direct* relation to the Victorian press. When measuring the success of African American tours, newspapers together with their reportage, correspondence, editorials, and advertisements, can offer numerous analyses of the ways in which African Americans interacted with these circuits of print and how far they managed to maximize antislavery momentum. Abolitionists would also rely on both British and American newspapers to do this: in a transatlantic circulation of print culture, Frederick Douglass wrote letters about his British adventures to William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator* and distributed his slave narrative through his numerous abolitionist contacts.[68]

Hence, antislavery activists on both sides of the Atlantic realized that a successful lecturing tour depended on their relationship to print culture.[69] African Americans lived up to this spirit in the British Isles, too, but regardless of why activists traveled the Atlantic, they were well aware that favorable newspaper coverage could influence public opinion and increase attendance at their lectures. For example, Garrisonian abolitionist John B. Estlin was friends with the editor of London's second-biggest newspaper, *The Advertiser*, a connection William Craft exploited to ensure larger coverage of his lectures. William Wells Brown used this connection, too, and in a letter published there in September 1852, wrote he was "informed by my kind friend Mr. Estlin, of Bristol, that you would insert any article that I might write in favour of my enslaved countrymen."[70] In essence, the heavy emphasis on oratory as part of this examination of adaptive resistance has led me to consider how the mechanics of certain forms of print culture – in this case, newspapers – can amplify Black *oratorical* testimony.

In the first wave of British abolition, Thomas Clarkson exploited the marketplace and growing print industry to distribute pamphlets and books: Clarkson's 1788 *Summary of the Slave Trade* sold nearly 20,000 copies.[71] Between 1823 and 1831, 2,802,773 pamphlets were written and

[68] *The Liberator*, January 1, 1846, as an example. [69] Sinha (2016), 436–437.
[70] Ripley (1985), 18–25, 316–317.
[71] John R. Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery: The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade 1787–1807* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 1–2, 44–52.

published by the Anti-Slavery Society and of that number, 469,750 tracts were published in 1831 alone.[72] Similarly, slave narratives were rapidly consumed by a growing marketplace. Between 1789 and 1837, thirty-six editions of Equiano's narrative were published; Moses Roper's 1837 narrative went through eleven editions in two years; Frederick Douglass had sold seven editions by 1849; and William Wells Brown's narrative went through four editions in the first year of its publication in the same year.[73] Visual culture was essential to this burgeoning movement too. Building on illustrations and popular images (including Josiah's Wedgewood's "Am I Not A Man And A Brother?" in 1789 and William Blake's illustrations for John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition* in 1796) activists on both sides of the Atlantic would later incorporate daguerreotypes, photographs, panoramas, and performances into their repertoire. The year 1835 marked a turning point for the American Anti-Slavery Society when they published and disseminated more than a million abolitionist writings, with a large proportion of them containing images and illustrations.[74]

Newspapers can provide us with illuminating insight into Black abolitionist performances and their political strategies against white supremacy. Through the analysis of their performances, the collation of advertisements for their speeches, and the evaluations of their lecture coverage, we can map their speaking locations and assess their popularity in each location. However, when examining newspaper texts, it must be remembered that what we read is a correspondent's version of a particular lecture that cannot be recreated or taken for a literal speech.[75] We must also be aware of Victorian racial dynamics: as Marcus Wood states, "evidence, and historiography and even the mythology of slavery is one-sided and comes out of a series of white records."[76] The majority of, if not all, the correspondents who reported on Black performances in the press

[72] James Fireman, "The Propaganda of Anti-Slavery," 49–68, in James Walvin (ed.), *Slavery and British Society 1776–1846* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), 60.

[73] Frances Smith Foster, *Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Ante-Bellum Slave Narratives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 22.

[74] Martha J. Cutter, *The Illustrated Slave: Empathy, Graphic Narrative, and the Visual Culture of the Transatlantic Abolition Movement 1800–1852* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017), 29, 56–57, 91.

[75] Janette Lisa Martin, "Popular Political Oratory and Itinerant Lecturing in Yorkshire and the North East in the Age of Chartism, 1837–1860," PhD Thesis (University of York, 2010). Online, www.etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/834/1/CORRECTEDthesis.pdf, 7.

[76] Marcus Wood, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 9–11.

were white, and reports of activist speeches can never be called accurate representations, since their words were copied down in note form or shorthand and then written up for publication. After all, performances were ephemeral, fleeting, and sometimes impossible to describe, particularly if a Black artist constructed a performance in front of or for a white audience. Historians analyze such performances through white interpretation, and as a result, it was likely on several occasions that correspondents misread or misheard performances and even failed to understand abolitionist strategies. For example, within the coverage of a meeting in 1877, one white reporter described Josiah Henson's revocation of the epithet Uncle Tom, but another correspondent in a different city completely ignored this form of groundbreaking activism.[77]

Whether this was subconscious or not, other correspondents made the deliberate decision to curtail lectures. Occasionally, this was a reflection of a lack of column space. Newspapers usually did not have the space to print coverage of a two-hour speech, since Victorian lecturers could speak roughly 7,000 words an hour.[78] In 1839, a correspondent from *The Royal Cornwall Gazette* noted in response to Moses Roper's speech that they could only give "the outline of Mr. Roper's address" and stated "we pass over his detailed account of the horrid cruelties of the system under which he had himself been oppressed."[79] After formerly enslaved individual Francis Fedric gave a speech in 1862, the correspondent for *The West Middlesex Advertiser* wrote, "We omit the account of the horrible tortures to which the slaves are subjected, as his tale of woe will be repeated in various parts of the neighbourhood."[80] This particular correspondent deemed it unnecessary to write down all of his speech, and disregarded the possibility he may have varied his words or story. Being mindful of such biases is crucial to understanding Black resistance in this context, together with the notion that Black performance often relied upon cloaked words and actions to subvert traditional racial norms. We must also recognize Black American contributors to the British landscape whose lives, words, and performances went unrecorded, or are still waiting recovery.

Furthermore, local newspaper coverage ensured there were two audiences: those that heard and witnessed the lecturer in the flesh, and

[77] *Liverpool Mercury*, April 23, 1877, 7. [78] Martin (2010), 130–138.
[79] *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, February 15, 1839, 2.
[80] *The West Middlesex Advertiser*, March 8, 1862, 2.

those that read the speech afterward.[81] The connections between performance and print culture are essential to understanding how correspondents reported on such meetings. Numerous speeches were distributed in printed pamphlets and by the mid-1850s, 10 percent of books had their origins from speeches or some form of oral communication. Lecturers who had their speeches printed in pamphlets had more control over their words, and often edited or added to their speech. Others wrote a copy of their speech and gave it to newspaper editors to ensure accuracy. Occasionally, reporters tried to capture the performance more specifically and drew attention to a lecturer's gestures or the emphasis they made on certain words. More often than not, they recorded audience reactions, which included laughter, cheers, and shocked gasps, and these inflections in the *printed* word helped others to imagine the *spoken* word.[82]

The Victorian press was a large factor in sustaining antislavery momentum and arousing interest in a visiting lecturer. American attendees at the World Anti-Slavery Convention believed British newspapers had an important role to play in global abolition. Since American society always held a close ear to British ground, respected the nation's novelists (such as Charles Dickens), and traveled to and from the country, American abolitionists believed the British press should print as much antislavery literature as possible, which would then be circulated around the United States. Henry B. Stanton, secretary of the American Anti-Slavery Society in the late 1830s, declared that British writers should "saturate their literature with abolition principles" so they could "reach the ears of men whom the voice of the Abolitionists cannot reach."[83]

While I do not enter into detail about the political loyalties of every newspaper, I do highlight why certain publications supported or criticized African American lecturers, which in part was due to networks. As stated, if an abolitionist had connections with the local newspaper editor, it was likely an antislavery meeting would receive favorable coverage. For example, *The Christian Age*, edited by Josiah Henson's benefactor John Lobb, endlessly advertised his lectures and reported on his campaign.[84]

[81] Tom F. Wright, *Lecturing the Atlantic: Speech, Print and an Anglo-American Commons 1830–1870* (London: Oxford University Press, 2017), 20–23.

[82] Martin (2010), 120–126.

[83] Maurice Bric, "Debating Slavery and Empire: The United States, Britain and the World's Anti-Slavery Convention of 1840," 59–77, in William Mulligan and Maurice Bric (eds.), *A Global History of Anti-Slavery Politics in the Nineteenth-Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 66–67.

[84] *The Christian Age*, March 28, 1877, 290:12 (4), 1, as an example.

However, abolitionists could not reach every publication: *The Northern Warder*, a Free Church–supported newspaper, unsurprisingly berated Douglass for his "Send Back the Money" campaign against the Free Church, and other newspapers switched loyalties very quickly in defense against his language regarding slavery or the church. Even Douglass himself noted that during the late 1850s, *The Times* had become more conservative since his last visit.[85]

Thus, Black activists were astutely aware that positive speech coverage would lead to more speaking engagements. For reformists, establishing a relationship with a white editor was often essential to garner further readership and ensure more support. Newspapers grew increasingly political, and often took on clear allegiances, but publications could not survive without the appeal or publication of printed articles favorable to their readership. Although it is impossible to determine the exact reasons why certain people purchased newspapers, it was evident that the steady and sometimes extended coverage of Black abolitionist speeches indicated a popular interest in their missions.

Victorian newspaper circulation increased by 36 percent between 1816 and 1836, by 70 percent between 1836 and 1856, and grew exponentially by 600 percent between 1856 and 1881.[86] Provincial press growth was astounding too. By 1800, there were 70 weekly publications, increasing to 130 by 1832 to more than 200 in the mid-1840s. *The Leeds Mercury* and *The Liverpool Mercury* reached audiences of more than 6,000 per week in the 1840s; *The Manchester Guardian* sold 11,000 by this time and rose to more than 20,000 in the 1850s. However, sales figures alone did not equate to readership, as individuals would read to others, share articles, and debate them in meetings.[87] By the early 1870s, stalwart publications such as *The Times* had a circulation between 65,000 and 70,000; *The Daily Telegraph, Daily News*, and *The Standard* had a daily circulation of 500,000 in total; and daily papers in the larger cities

[85] *The Northern Warder*, March 19, 1846, 5; *The Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, December 20, 1859, 3.

[86] Kevin Williams, *Read All About It! A History of the British Newspaper* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 5.

[87] Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695–1855* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 29–35, 63. See also Ivon Asquith, "The Structure, Ownership and Control of the Press 1780–1855," 95–115, in James Curran, George Boyce, and Pauline Wingate (eds.), *Newspaper History from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day* (London: Constable, 1978), 98–117.

outside London could reach 200,000–300,000.[88] Together with the rise in literacy, vast developments in the construction of paper and printing itself revolutionized the Victorian popular print media. Changes in technology such as wood-engraving and lithographing, allowed images to be reproduced in the press, and the *Illustrated London News* was the first publication to utilize such images on a large scale.[89]

In this growing market of communication, Black and white activists worked tirelessly to persuade newspapers to print favorable antislavery coverage. Garrison himself acknowledged the importance of this when he wrote to Bristol abolitionist John B. Estlin: after a successful meeting in London in August 1846, Garrison noted that "nearly all the other city journals have noticed the meeting in respectful terms and thus have given that publicity to our movement which is so essential to its success." Thanks to his own background as a newspaper editor, he understood well enough that favorable opinion had a larger impact beyond simply the spread of their message, mainly, respectability. This, together with extensive coverage, would mean the abolitionists and their cause could not "fail to make a deep impression on the public mind, on both sides of the Atlantic."[90] Black abolitionists hoped as much as possible that their international visits, with their subsequent press coverage, would reach the shores of the United States. However, few activists were in the fortunate position of Ida B. Wells, who orchestrated employment with the *Chicago Inter Ocean* in 1894. This gave her unprecedented access to transatlantic print culture in a way that former antislavery activists could not take advantage of. She wrote about her experiences and used her American connections to amplify her successes and shame white southerners on two geographical fronts.[91]

ADAPTIVE RESISTANCE: ABOLITIONIST NETWORKS

The growth of Victorian print culture spurred the success of Black abolitionist visits, but antislavery networks were also a vital part of

[88] Martin Hewitt, *The Dawn of the Cheap Press in Victorian Britain: The End of the "Taxes on Knowledge" 1849–1869* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 165–176.

[89] Andrew King and John Plunkett, *Victorian Print Media: A Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 166, 339–340, 375–377.

[90] William Lloyd Garrison to John B. Estlin, August 19, 1846, in Taylor (1974), 278.

[91] Carolyn L. Karcher, "The White 'Bystander' and the Black Journalist 'Abroad': Albion W. Tourgee and Ida B. Wells as Allies Against Lynching," *Prospects*, 29 (2005), 101–103.

transatlantic lecture tours. Black activists became adept at befriending influential people and newspaper men who promised to print coverages of their speeches.[92] Both in America and in Britain, they forged alliances and friendships with as many communities as possible who would help, support, and financially aid them. In America, people of color worked within their communities to build antislavery momentum, which extended to religious institutions, schools, mutual benefit societies, educational societies, and Black-owned newspapers. New York offered a prime example of radical cooperation and integration between churches and reformist societies. These networks organized antislavery meetings and led donation drives, commemorations of events (contemporary or historical), vigilance committees, and protest marches.[93]

The success of Black transatlantic abolitionist missions often relied on organized abolitionist networks: for example, if a formerly enslaved person was recognized as a friend of the radical abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, numerous homes and contacts would be open to that individual as soon as they stepped onto British soil. Conversely, the same white networks could ruin a lecturer's reputation through defamation in the press or through abolitionist networks. Victorian racial dynamics decreed that white testimonials were essential to Black activist tours, and those without extensive connections – such as Moses Roper – suffered in comparison to Frederick Douglass, who had numerous doors open to him through his Garrisonian contacts, particularly during his first tour.

John R. Oldfield argues that communication was central to the abolitionist movement, and "through their networks, activists circulated a huge amount of material – letters, newspapers, prints, books and pamphlets – that, in turn, was abridged, translated and recycled." These "'circuits of knowledge' were multi-directional" and laid the foundations for future networks. Letter-writing was an essential factor in sustaining these circuits, as facts and information were shared constantly among national and international societies; letters were read at public meetings and shared between activists.[94] Similarly, Caleb McDaniel argues that for Garrisonians, the World Anti-Slavery Convention in 1840 had led to "shared meals, afternoon teas, rambling parlor conversations, and overnight stays

[92] Ripley (1985), 14–19. [93] Sinha (2016), 135–142, 380–387.

[94] John R. Oldfield, *Transatlantic Abolitionism in the Age of Revolution: An International History of Antislavery c.1787–1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3–4, 42–47.

in British homes" and hence, they "made previously abstract ties newly tangible." From this date onward, they "built a communications network" through exchanging letters and newspapers that sustained the transatlantic movement. For example, American abolitionist Abby Kimber wrote to Irish activist Richard D. Webb that his extensive commentary on antislavery events meant she looked "round almost expecting to see you at my elbow."[95]

After the Civil War, activists continued to exploit such connections: Josiah Henson in particular forged a relationship with John Lobb, who utilized his numerous contacts in London to organize an extensive lecturing tour in 1876–1877. Many abolitionists had died or had turned their focus toward other subjects by the late 1870s, but Henson employed adaptive resistance in a new era to remind his white benefactors and white audiences that slavery had not yet fully perished. Tied to this, I also uncover evidence of white reformist sabotage of Black abolitionist campaigns. While Lobb was instrumental in making Henson's visit a success, he heavily edited a new edition of Henson's narrative and marketed him as *the* "Uncle Tom," which occasionally grated on Henson.[96] Over thirty years before, Moses Roper was the subject of intense white sabotage as a former supporter denounced him in the public press and aristocrats defamed him for his lectures, interracial marriage, and his supposedly deceitful conduct. Roper had no choice but to strike out by himself.[97] Thus, white networks could often "make or break" abolitionist tours, which revealed Victorian racial dynamics and the white racist schema Black women and men had to operate within. Whether supported by white abolitionists or not, Black activists sustained antislavery momentum in Britain, borrowed from their abolitionist predecessors to create new "circuits of knowledge," and encouraged Britons to challenge American slavery.

As further evidence of these networks, I have created a digital-mapping project – the first of its kind – that plots Black abolitionist speaking locations in the British Isles. Britt Rusert has argued in relation to transatlantic slavery specifically that "mapping and data visualization projects help users envision hidden regimes of violence and power, as well as

[95] McDaniel (2013), 78–83.

[96] Josiah Henson (ed.) John Lobb, *Uncle Tom's Story of His Life: An Autobiography of the Reverend Josiah Henson* (London: Christian Age, 1876).

[97] *Staffordshire Advertiser*, November 28, 1840, 2; *Manchester Daily Mirror*, January 23, 1852, 2.

obscured patterns of movement, migration, and escape in slavery and postslavery contexts." The "archive of slavery" is often defined by "loss, fragmentation, transience, and perhaps, above all else, a profound, irreparable violence." As a result, historians "tend to focus more on reckoning with the fragments of the past, rather than on repairing or recuperating history." The digitization of records can provide not necessarily a solution to this problem but another avenue in which to interrogate, explore, and work within such gaps and ruptures.[98] Visualizing Black lecturing tours allows us to analyze their extensive activism, how and why activists visited certain locations, and sometimes the method of transportation itself. To uncover the unforgettable mark they had on British society, it is possible to partially heal some of these archival ruptures, and the maps illustrate – through activists' own words and actions – that the echoes left to us should not be wholly defined by violence or loss. Recovering their testimony remains an ever-consuming and significant goal, to understand not only the extent of white supremacy and slavery's oppressive roots (and routes) but also that each individual adopted different and radical resistance strategies to survive.

The map represents a small minority of the lectures given by African Americans from the late 1830s to the mid-1890s. It serves to be a benchmark rather than a completed map, as it is impossible to know or record how many hundreds of thousands of lectures were given during the nineteenth century. Black women and men traveled from Inverness in the Highlands to Penzance in Cornwall, and reached virtually every coastline and corner of Britain. During Frederick Douglass' first trip, for example, he lectured at least six times in Bristol and eleven times in the Newcastle area. While many activists spoke in any location they could get a hearing, individuals such as Douglass exploited abolitionist connections and stayed with, for example, the Estlin family in Bristol and the Richardson family in Newcastle. Both families had extensive connections that would have organized lectures for him.[99] Hence, if employed decades earlier, adaptive resistance would have only resulted in moderate success because the triptych would have been a diptych instead; the technological advancements were not in place to help activists gain a wider, and national, hearing. More excavation work needs to be done of course – particularly in regional areas – before we can slowly build up a picture of

[98] Britt Rusert, "New World: The Impact of Digitization on the Study of Slavery," *American Literary History*, 29:2 (Summer 2017), 268–272.
[99] *The Newcastle Guardian*, December 12, 1846, 4.

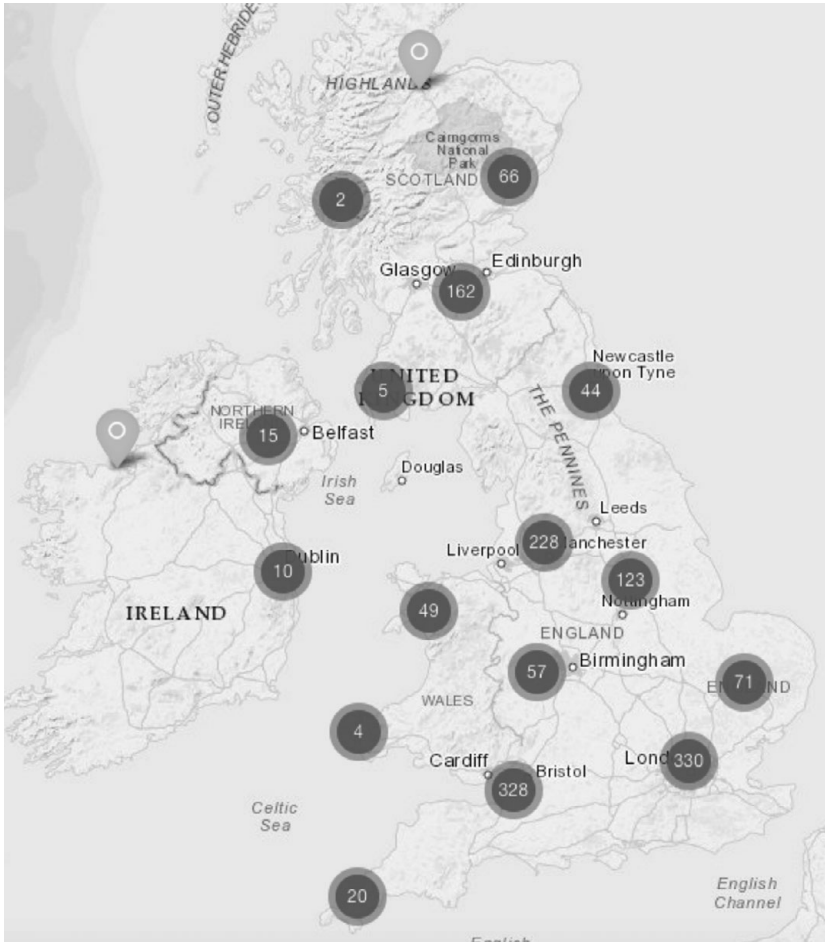

FIGURE 1 Map of African American abolitionist speaking locations in the British Isles.
Author's website, www.frederickdouglassinbritain.com.

their impact and understand how activists visited certain locations, who they stayed with, and how they traveled there. It would take several books to explore the intricacies behind abolitionist motives and the networks they created, but it is an essential step toward fully understanding the legacy of Black activism.

Since the eighteenth century, both white and Black abolitionists had cultivated connections and friendships across the Atlantic. As part of his campaign against the slave trade, Thomas Clarkson conducted several

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108767057.001 Published online by Cambridge University Press

tours of Britain: in 1787, he arranged a tour of prominent slave ports such as Bristol, and the following year he lectured across southern England. In 1790, he visited Scotland and several northern towns, and the year after, he concentrated on the north east of England. Altogether, he journeyed more than 35,000 miles and built connections with local and influential people who would help the cause and stir abolitionist support after he had left. He forged connections between London and numerous cities, organized local branches of antislavery societies, and sold and shared as much abolitionist literature as possible. Early abolitionists established transatlantic networks, too, as Granville Sharp's communications with Benjamin Rush and Benjamin Franklin testify. Correspondence between Quakers in Britain and America shared a mutual desire for abolition as they discussed tactics and exchanged factual information. The Pennsylvania Abolition Society made connections with Clarkson and shared information about the slave trade in states such as Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts.[100]

By the 1830s, British abolitionists such as George Thompson forged their own connections, and often relied on religious circuits made up of Evangelicals and Quakers who offered their homes and churches to the antislavery cause. Before Thompson or other activists arrived in a particular location, local ministers would prearrange meetings in town halls or churches, as it was extremely difficult for a Black activist to arrive at a new place, friendless, with no connections. In this instance, a speaker (Black or white) was forced to search and pay for lodgings, print and circulate handbills which advertised a lecture, and sometimes employ a bell-ringer to announce the meeting. Some lecturers would venture into the office of a newspaper editor who had influential connections to townspeople and could print advertisements or coverage of their lectures. While some meetings were arranged spontaneously or through local networks that included churches, organized political meetings had to be arranged at least a week early to ensure local authorities granted permission. The chairman was usually an influential townsperson, occasionally the mayor or an MP, who introduced the main speaker and preserved order.[101]

While Black visitors received support from the aristocracy (which included figures such as the Earl of Shaftesbury and the Duchess of Sutherland), the majority of abolitionists came from the middle classes,

[100] Oldfield (1995), 1–2, 44–45, 51–75. [101] Martin (2010), 46–48, 85–93.

such as lawyers, printers, and merchants, who were able to exploit such connections. Lecturers required introductions and testimonials to ensure unproblematic travel, and saved funds or stayed with abolitionist friends who organized lectures and encouraged leading local men to be chairmen for antislavery meetings.[102] For example, Douglass described his travel arrangements as he was due to leave Scotland in 1846, and wrote that as he traveled toward London, he would stop at Newcastle, North Shields, "and such other Towns as lay in my way, and in which I may be invited to lecture."[103]

The Garrisonian network of abolitionists was an indefatigable source of support for Black lecturers. Boston-based radical activist William Lloyd Garrison established pockets of support in New England, and in Britain when he visited in the early 1830s. Abolitionists such as Richard D. Webb (Dublin), John and Mary Estlin (Bristol), Elizabeth Pease (Darlington), and Eliza Wigham (Edinburgh) ardently campaigned for immediate emancipation. British Garrisonians were Quakers, Unitarians, Chartists, temperance advocates, literary celebrities, and politicians, and kept steady correspondence between themselves and prominent activists in Boston such as Garrison and Maria Weston Chapman.[104] Female antislavery groups were also vital in their support of Black abolitionist lecturers, which often outlasted and adopted a more radical nature than male societies. Antislavery politics was discussed in private homes and networks, as women threatened to close the widening gap between the public and private spheres. Women organized petitions and went door-to-door demanding support and subscribers for their societies. Garrisonian female antislavery societies were found in places such as Glasgow, Edinburgh, Perth, Kirkcaldy, Cork, Belfast, Dublin, Bridgewater, Rochdale, and Carlisle.[105]

Black networks were essential to the cause, too. In America, African Americans consistently looked beyond their borders not only to seek strength and relationships with other diasporic peoples but also to commemorate key events in history. Numerous celebrations were held every year in the United States on August 1, the date of abolition in the West

[102] Ripley (1985), 10–11.

[103] Frederick Douglass to Elizabeth Pease, July 6, 1846, in John R. McKivigan (ed.), *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series Three, Correspondence, Vol. 1, 1842–1852* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 141–143.

[104] Taylor (1974), 3–11.

[105] Clare Midgley, *Women against Slavery: The British Campaigns 1780–1870* (London: Routledge, 1992), 43–45, 60–67, 124–133.

Indies, and such events inspired African Americans that they could be the driving force behind achieving liberty.[106] Black missionaries, including John Jea, Zilpha Elaw, James Williams, Henry Beckford, Nathanial Paul, Edmund Kelly, William Allen, John Sella Martin, Peter Stanford, Henry Parker, and Thomas Lewis Johnson, traveled around the British Isles in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During another wave of antislavery activity in the late nineteenth century, African Americans George Washington Williams and William Shepherd traveled the British Isles to raise awareness of slavery in the Congo.[107]

While there was a smaller African or Black British community during the nineteenth century, this did not mean Black citizens were not politically active, were apathetic toward slavery, or did not forge their own connections with other communities of color. Olaudah Equiano solidified Black networks in the late eighteenth century, and stayed with Mosa, a friend in Savannah, and kept correspondence with Black communities in St. Kitts and in Philadelphia.[108] In Manchester in 1787, forty to fifty Black women and men attended an antislavery meeting; almost half a century later in the same city, a man named Thomas Wilson stood up to speak in one of Frederick Douglass' meetings and brandished a whip to illustrate slavery's brutality. His decision to bring this instrument of torture with him highlighted his desire to contribute his testimony and collaborate with another formerly enslaved individual. On another occasion, Douglass also spoke alongside John Joseph, a formerly enslaved man who had settled in England.[109]

As mentioned previously, during the eighteenth century, the Sons of Africa campaigned against the end of the slave trade, and this Black protest tradition continued in abundance throughout the nineteenth century. Formerly enslaved individuals would often unite on the antislavery platform, and William Wells Brown and William and Ellen Craft undertook an extensive tour of the British Isles. Frederick Douglass and Sarah Parker Remond spoke twice together on stage; William Craft

[106] Mitch Kachun, "'Our Platform Is as Broad as Humanity': Transatlantic Freedom Movements and the Idea of Progress in Nineteenth-Century African American Thought and Activism," *Slavery & Abolition*, 24:3 (2003), 1–7.

[107] David Killingray, "Black Baptists in Britain 1640–1950," *Baptist Quarterly*, 40:2 (2003), 69–82.

[108] James Walvin, *Making the Black Atlantic: Britain and the African Diaspora* (London: Cassel, 2000), 103.

[109] Oldfield (1995), 126–127; *Manchester Times*, November 14, 1846, 6; Fenton (2018), 177–178.

collaborated with John Sella Martin in a series of antislavery lectures; and Lewis Smith, accompanied by his friend Tabb Gross, crossed the Atlantic and lectured on their experiences of slavery in order to raise money to free Smith's enslaved family members. Henry Highland Garnet did the same with the Weims family, who were successful in legally purchasing family members as a result of British donations. Men such as William Powell offered a place of solidarity and friendship in Liverpool, and even helped rescue fugitive African Americans who had snuck aboard on American steamers to the city. While more research is yet to be completed on Ellen Craft's networks within London, I discuss how her ties of kinship with family and friends allowed her to turn her home into a hub of Black networks. Lastly, and by no means least, Black students at the University of London played an integral part in Ida B. Wells' anti-lynching mission in Britain, as did the Jamaican-born Celestine Edwards, who organized meetings and campaigned alongside Wells in his capacity as a journalist, editor, and founding member of the Society for the Recognition of the Brotherhood of Man. Although the story of abolition as a collaborative Black movement was complex (William Wells Brown refused to endorse and even outrightly rejected Henry "Box" Brown's British tours), most adapted to their environment and collaborated with each other and the Black British citizenry, to forge a united front in solidarity against white supremacy.[110] Black networks had an extraordinary impact on British social reform circles too: for example, during the 1850s, William Wells Brown stayed at Robert Impey's home in Street, whose daughter – Catherine Impey – would grow to become a radical activist in the fight for equality. To further foster such relationships and connections, Catherine Impey stayed at Brown's home when she visited America after the Civil War.[111]

[110] Merrill (2015), 138–143; *Nottingham Review*, April 4, 1851, 3; *Western Times*, May 10, 1851, 6; *The Leeds Mercury*, December 24, 1859, 4; *The Morning Advertiser*, November 15, 1861, 6; *The South London Chronicle*, March 9, 1861, 4; Ripley (1985), 327–329, 434–436; Sinha (2016), 433; Richard J. M. Blackett, *Beating Against the Barriers: The Lives of Six Nineteenth-Century Afro-Americans* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1989), 104–107, 119–122; *Newcastle Chronicle*, May 16, 1863, 2; Caroline Bressey, *Empire, Race and the Politics of Anti-Caste* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 191–194; Sarah Sikley, *Black Woman Reformer* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 81–90 and Jeffrey Ruggles, *The Unboxing of Henry Brown* (Richmond: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 145.

[111] Brucella Wiggins Jordan, "Ida B. Wells, Catherine Impey, and Trans-Atlantic Dimensions of the Nineteenth-Century Anti-Lynching Movement," PhD Thesis (West Virginia University, 2003), 48.

White and Black networks also benefited from the developing technologies inherent in industrialism, and as Peter Ripley noted, the "antislavery gospel . . . frequently followed the railway lines."[112] While it was growing exponentially, the railway network was by no means extensive or cheap even by the early 1840s, which meant some lecturers would have continued to travel by carriage or walked shorter distances.[113] For many Black activists, though, it was the most effectual way to travel and spread their message. The first railway opened in 1826, connecting Stockton to Darlington, and four years later, industrialists built a route between Manchester and Liverpool. Journey lengths and times were drastically reduced throughout the nineteenth century: a journey from London to Manchester would have taken thirty hours in the late 1820s, which decreased to five hours and forty minutes by 1850, and was further reduced to four hours and fifteen minutes by 1887. In 1841, there were 386 stations in Britain, and by 1861, more than half of the population resided in a parish with a station, growing to four-fifths by 1911.[114] Such networks allowed men like Douglass to lecture during the height of his fame in one city in the morning, and then another in the evening. William Lloyd Garrison summarized the impact of such revolutionary technology on antislavery, when he wrote in Belfast in 1846 "is not this driving business with steam power?"[115] Furthermore, rapid developments in technology and communication meant the travel time for steamboats between London or Liverpool to New York reduced from around forty days to just more than two weeks. The circulation of news magnified, as articles from the London, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York presses were exchanged across the transatlantic at unprecedented levels: newspaper editors in both Britain and in the northern states of America would eagerly await the arrival of steamboats to publish the most up-to-date news as possible.[116]

Unfortunately, revolutionary changes in communications and technology, or Black abolitionists themselves, could not prevent the fracture of abolitionist networks in the mid-1850s. British Garrisonians tried to establish a major society during the 1850s, but failed due to hostile

[112] Ripley (1985), 14–19. [113] Martin (2010), 61–62.

[114] Ian Gregory and Jordi Henneberg, "The Railways, Urbanization and Local Demography in England and Wales 1825–1911," *Social Science History*, 34:2 (2010), 200, 210, 225.

[115] William Lloyd Garrison, October 3, 1846, in Walter M. Merrill (ed.), *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison, Vol. 3: No Union with Slaveholders 1841–1849* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 431–436.

[116] Joel H. Wiener, *The Americanization of the British Press 1830s–1914* (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 64–66.

abolitionist divisions and a lukewarm response from the public. Antislavery societies in Edinburgh and Glasgow separated from the radical Garrisonians to form their own networks, and these divisions were furthered when some tried to reach out to the rival British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. Black abolitionists themselves did revive regional antislavery societies and used the American Civil War to stir further antislavery activity; together with the unrelenting George Thompson and his son-in-law Frederick Chesson, William and Ellen Craft, and Sarah Parker Remond formed the London Emancipation Society.[117] Regardless of abolitionist divisions, Black lecturers worked hard to speak at as many engagements as possible and either tried to heal divides between societies or collaborated with all.[118]

Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this book to explore every abolitionist connection, or the complete impact the British Isles had on these individuals. Men such as Lewis Smith, who visited Britain to raise money to purchase enslaved family members, returned home to start a new life, reunited with his loved ones. Josiah Henson, particularly during his visit in 1876–1877, paid off the debts on his mortgage, buoyed with the financial support he had received in Britain.[119] Frederick Douglass' British journey provided the stepping stones for future fame in America and the gift of a printing press gave him the tools to further establish his literary career. The British Isles changed the course of his antislavery activism, a fact that was evident in the first speech he gave on his return to America in May 1847: his declaration of "I have no country" evidently showed a furious struggle with his national identity and with William Lloyd Garrison, his partner on the platform.[120] Regardless, the politicized and radical journeys Douglass and other African Americans took abroad had a huge impact on their activism and individual self-fashioning.

***

Beginning in the late 1830s, this book adopts a chronological approach to demonstrate how Black abolitionists exploited adaptive resistance to sustain a Black American protest tradition, which was driven by literary, oratorical, and visual testimony. In doing so, we can understand how

[117] Taylor (1974), 14–15. [118] Blackett (1983), 42–43.

[119] Lewis Smith and Jacob Odgers, *The Self-Ransomed Slave: A Biographical Sketch of Lewis Smith* (Redruth: N. Odgers, *c.* 1871); Josiah Henson (ed.) John Lobb (1876).

[120] Frederick Douglass, "Country, Conscience, and the Anti-Slavery Cause," May 11, 1847, in John Blassingame (ed.), *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Vol.* 2 (1979), 57.

Black strategies evolved throughout this time period, how they continued to exploit events such as the American Civil War advancements in technology and print culture, and how activists such as Wells built on the success of her predecessors.

Chapter 1 opens with Moses Roper's lecturing tour in the British Isles. While not an invisible figure in historical scholarship, historians have rendered Roper peripheral in their discussions. Using new evidence, I uncover Roper's previously unexplored performative techniques, and how he employed adaptive resistance with mixed success. He refused to compromise on his brutal descriptions of slavery, and his experience of torture proved either too upsetting for audiences or invited criticism. Since Victorian racial dynamics decreed that formerly enslaved individuals had to be supported by white networks, Roper's lecture tour was hindered by his lack of white testimonials, and I analyze how white sabotage affected Roper's tour. Therefore, his exploitation of the triad of performance, print culture, and abolitionist networks proved difficult compared to individuals such as Douglass.

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on Frederick Douglass' transatlantic journey to Britain between 1845 and 1847. Douglass epitomized the successful exploitation of adaptive resistance and showed that his employment of each triad's element *simultaneously* could court significant fame. He recognized the essential importance of print culture, however, and as a result altered his relationship with that triad to place it center stage. Hence, Chapter 2 discusses Douglass' performative strategies and his relationship with print culture. He incorporated both favorable and negative reviews of his lectures into his repertoire, and courted endless debate in the press. His invocation of strategic anglophilia was balanced with a chastisement of British policy that championed liberty without actively seeking to help the enslaved in America. Unlike Roper, Douglass was a virtuoso who could balance assimilationist and dissonant language effectively. As a result, Douglass caused a furor toward slavery that was unrivalled by any other African American within a similar time period.

Chapter 3 focuses on Douglass' relationship with abolitionist networks and print culture. He was a shrewd activist and formed friendships with newspaper editors, prominent citizens who had influence over the local press, and sometimes wrote *for* newspapers specifically to clarify his opinions or to cause further controversy, such as the *Cambria* in 1847. The constant exchange of letters and newspaper articles that reported on his speeches maintained essential momentum for the antislavery cause and enhanced a connected feeling of solidarity. This network did have its

disadvantages, however, as white abolitionists were not free from prejudice and Douglass – like other Black activists – struggled against a white racist schema that threatened to control Black bodies. As Alan Rice notes, Douglass "was not prepared to act as second fiddle in an ensemble orchestrated by others, and his visit to Britain convinced him of the limitations of the absolutist Garrisonian mindset."[121] Douglass left Britain more independent and determined to seek his antislavery career outside the realm of white control.

Chapters 4 to 6 chart the movement of Black activists in the British Isles from the 1850s to the 1860s. To convey the width and breadth of adaptive resistance during the height of popular abolition and to highlight as many voices as possible, these chapters act as case studies to show the collective nature of the abolitionist movement, when the highest concentration of African Americans visited the British Isles. A lack of space does not permit me to write individual chapters on Henry "Box" Brown, William Wells Brown, Henry Highland Garnet, or the numerous other activists that traversed the Atlantic during that time. Abolition was a mass movement, a phenomenon of collective action that comprised formerly enslaved individuals, free African Americans, and their white allies. In Chapter 6, in particular, I include several figures to illustrate their shared action against the Confederacy and scientific racism, as during the height of the Civil War so many African Americans were lecturing in numerous ways against slavery that the chapter would act as a disservice by focusing on just one figure. Thus, my determination to retain their individual identity is not hampered by this split focus, as I have tried to ensure their unique personalities are not lost within their shared experiences, instead highlighting their interactions with perhaps one or two strands of adaptive resistance within this changing climate, and always placing their testimony at the forefront of their experiences.

Thus, Chapter 4 focuses on an era where numerous African Americans visited Britain and exploited the rise of popular abolition after the publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852. I argue that while activists such as William Wells Brown and the Reverend Samuel Ward manipulated the interest surrounding the novel to maintain antislavery sentiment, they also used the opportunity to chastise and even harshly criticize Britain for its role in the slave trade. Ward recognized that Britain invested in an abolitionist novel without any

[121] Rice (2003), 174–175.

acknowledgment of the nation's own history of slavery. An architect of subversion, he intervened in a traditional white space and used his body as a form of protest: he used dissonant language within his form of adaptive resistance, and attacked Britain's sense of moral superiority and displaced memory of slavery – a narrative that would grow in strength and threaten Josiah Henson's visit in the 1870s. The chapter also focuses on two other famous figures in the 1850s, Henry "Box" Brown and Frederick Douglass. "Box" Brown refused to bend to any rule in transatlantic activist history, and while he initially incorporated Stowe's novel into his visual panorama, he used his savvy business flair and did not solely rely on the text. He constantly reinvented himself and his repertoire to court his celebrity, and even starred in a play based on his own life. "Box" Brown was a virtuoso who spurned the traditional abolitionist lecturing circuit and crossed the barrier into the realms of entertainment, theater, mesmerism, and biology to educate thousands of Britons on American slavery. Lastly, I explore the reasons why Douglass' exploitation of adaptive resistance in 1859 was comparatively less successful than his first visit in 1845, in part, he believed, because of the growing racism in British society that would become further entrenched during the Civil War.

Chapter 5 concentrates solely on Black female transatlantic tours. Due to the gendered nature of adaptive resistance, a separate chapter is necessary to chart the ways they endured a double embodiment on the Victorian stage to campaign against slavery. I argue that Ellen Craft and Julia Jackson used different versions of adaptive resistance that were conditioned by gender as well as race. Craft used silence as a performative tool and exploited the antislavery networks and even created her own communal networks that were based on racial pride. While in public she exploited her reputation as a "white slave," in private she was outspoken and was tireless in her enthusiasm to promote abolitionist and other reformist causes. In contrast to Craft's silent public performance, Julia Jackson lectured several times on the British stage alongside her husband, which possibly made her the first Black American woman to speak publicly about her experience as an enslaved individual. She intervened in a white, male-dominated space, exploited her peripheral position (one that did not require white testimony that attested to her respectability), and crafted a unique performance of radical Black feminism on the British stage. African American women were central to the Black protest tradition in Britain and maintained antislavery sentiment throughout the nineteenth century, decades after the British Empire had legally abolished slavery.

Chapter 6 explores adaptive resistance in Britain during the American Civil War. Black activists exploited this resistance strategy amongst a climate of growing scientific racism and pro-Confederate sympathy, two factors that were inseparable. Throughout the conflict, Black abolitionists used their testimony to revoke charges of Black inferiority and demanded Britons follow a policy of non-fellowship with slaveholders. Despite abolitionist networks that had dwindled at the start of the war, activists such as William Craft, John Sella Martin, and William Andrew Jackson lectured on both an abolitionist and non-abolitionist stage with a greater sense of urgency, convinced that the conflict's outcome would mean either the consolidation or the removal of slavery. Craft and Martin, in particular, used dissonant language to target scientific racists such as Dr. James Hunt, who lectured and published work on Black inferiority. Hunt avidly supported the South and his friendship with Confederate propagandist Henry Hotze represented the synonymy of a cause that promoted slavery and racism, and as much as possible, Black activists used dissonant language to challenge such theories.

Chapter 7 moves beyond most scholarly accounts of Black abolitionist transatlantic visits to the British Isles and focuses on Josiah Henson in 1876–1877. I analyze his lecturing tour, his visit to Windsor Palace to meet Queen Victoria, and the numerous artistic responses to him, which included a revised performance of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on the stage, a bust in the Royal Academy, and a wax model in Madame Tussauds. I argue that Henson exploited adaptive resistance in an entirely new age, and to do this, he needed to reawaken British interest and lecture about the memory of slavery. He used assimilationist language to capitalize on his association with the character of Uncle Tom from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to win fame (and fortune) on the British stage. Henson sought out old friends and made new connections, but Britain's obsession with Stowe's novel added more complexity to Henson's tour: as alluded to in Chapter 4, British society seized upon narratives of American slavery in a deliberate act to forget its own past. Henson had to negotiate racial stereotypes and work in a climate that whitewashed the nation's own bloody history of slavery in favor of a romanticized plantation ideal in America. Henson fought against this at every turn and contributed to the Black American protest tradition in Britain a decade after the end of the Civil War.

Chapter 8 focuses on Ida B. Wells's transatlantic visits to Britain in 1893 and 1894. I argue that Wells, like Henson, exploited adaptive resistance in a new era, but this time redeployed its attention to the *legacy*

of slavery, particularly lynching and racial violence. She sustained the Black protest tradition until the end of the nineteenth century and borrowed from it to create a successful tour in 1894 in particular. Learning from previous activists such as Frederick Douglass, Wells befriended newspaper editors, collected favorable coverage of her lectures, orchestrated interviews in numerous papers, and cultivated reformist networks to raise awareness of lynching. Through her skills as a journalist, Wells – like Douglass – recognized the importance of print culture and courted press interviews and collected numerous descriptions of her speeches to send to both supporters and detractors alike. Her extensive connections to aristocrats and influential British supporters ensured her message was met with credibility, despite the numerous occasions in which white activists tried to sabotage her reputation. Wells also used a form of visual dissonance within her employment of adaptive resistance: she used photographs of lynched bodies to convince the British people of racial violence, and passed the image around at small meetings as a tool of truth to support her rhetoric. She intervened in traditional white spaces such as Parliament to sustain the Black American protest tradition and remind British audiences they lived and breathed a legacy of slavery.

Contemporary Black activists – including those active in the #BlackLivesMatter movement – continue to protest against white supremacy and slavery's legacies. In the Conclusion to this book, I trace how Black Americans who visited Britain as a result of the Ferguson Solidarity Tour in 2015 contributed to this transatlantic tradition of protest and forged their own networks across the country to challenge racism and police brutality. Their methods of organization, protest, and awareness-raising were *adapted from* their historical precedents and *adapted to* the contemporary world.

At its heart, then, this book focuses on the recovery, amplification, and advocacy of formerly enslaved testimony, and is dedicated to their activism and memory. I am guided by the words and voices of African Americans themselves, in particular, Frederick Douglass, who believed enslaved people should be their own "advocates." While I examine the success of their tours, I in no way demean or reject their role in the transatlantic abolitionist movement. Some may have only given one lecture to a sparse town hall or sold limited copies of their books, while others may have ridden the waves of fame and popularity, but regardless, their activism is stitched together in a complex patchwork of protest that was an essential part and driving force within the US abolition movement,

as well as British history. Their journeys to the British Isles (which represented a radical action in itself) together with their lectures, their quarrels with white racists or abolitionists, and their relentless campaigning, signified their desire to be advocates of freedom and destroy slavery once and for all.