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Maria Weston Chapman, French Salons, and Transatlantic Abolitionism in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

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Abstract

This article examines the idea of anti-slavery sociability as part of a wider analysis of the informal elements of the transatlantic anti-slavery movement. It considers how American abolitionist Maria Weston Chapman drew support for the American anti-slavery cause from French salons during her time spent living in Paris from 1848 to 1855. This case-study highlights how a focus on the informal dimensions of anti-slavery activism illuminates the often underappreciated work of female abolitionists in the transatlantic reform sphere. Through the connections she established with the likes of French writer Victor Hugo and Russian exile Nicholas Tourgueneff at salons in Paris, most notably that of Mary Clarke Mohl on the Rue de Bac, Chapman was able to cultivate European support for abolitionism in myriad ways. This included financial donations, goods to be sold at anti-slavery bazaars, and, perhaps most importantly, testimonies against American slavery from renowned Europeans like Hugo that could be republished in the United States.

I

On 19 July 1848, American abolitionist Maria Weston Chapman set sail for Liverpool on the first leg towards her ultimate destination, Paris.¹ Accompanied by her four children, as well as her sister and fellow abolitionist Caroline Weston, Chapman embarked on a journey that would see her reside in Europe for the next seven years. There were two main reasons behind this relocation. One was Chapman's desire for her children to receive an overseas education, just as she had had during her youth. But Chapman's interest in moving across the Atlantic was also driven by what she believed to be an

¹ *Liberator*, 28 July 1848.

opportunity to conduct her anti-slavery activism in a new environment. Her departure was deeply felt by abolitionists in her home city of Boston, most notably her close associate and leading abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. Writing to Chapman on the day of her departure, Garrison questioned 'how to feel resigned to your separation from our little anti-Slavery band by a foreign residence of years, I scarcely know; but I know that the step has not been hastily taken on your part'.² He knew that Chapman would find new avenues of support in France, and that whether 'at home or abroad, [she] will be equally untiring to promote that sacred cause [of abolition]'.³ Though far from the abolitionist strongholds of New England, Chapman remained active in her reform work while in Paris. As she wrote to British abolitionist John Bishop Estlin a year after her arrival, 'I have been able to promote the cause as much while residing here as if I had been in Boston.'⁴

This article examines the anti-slavery activism of Maria Weston Chapman during her time in Paris from 1848 to 1855. More specifically, it interrogates how Chapman cultivated connections through French salons in support of the American anti-slavery movement. By attending salons, most notably that of Mary Clarke Mohl on the Rue de Bac, Chapman immersed herself in an elite Parisian social circle. Developing ties with European liberals such as French writer Victor Hugo and Russian exile Nicholas Tourgueneff, she drew on these connections in myriad ways. The first was by soliciting contributions to *The Liberty Bell*, the long-running anti-slavery giftbook, of which she was editor. The links she formed in Paris led to a notable increase in European contributors in the 1850s. Written submissions from prominent politicians like Victor Schoelcher and novelists such as Émile Souvestre played an important role in helping Garrisonians like Chapman nurture and sustain a European voice against the continuation of slavery in the United States. As Pia Wiegink suggests, it was important for abolitionists to convince the wider American public that their anti-slavery views 'reverberated with a broad community of likeminded people from all over the world'.⁵ Chapman's European supporters also assisted in a pecuniary sense by donating both money and goods to be sold at the Boston Anti-Slavery Bazaar, an annual fair run by Chapman and her sisters that funded the activities of the Garrison-led American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS). This type of fundraising was essential for the movement. As Teresa Goddu has summarized, women-led events like the Boston fair 'kept the machinery of institutional anti-slavery

² William Lloyd Garrison to Maria Weston Chapman, 19 July 1848, Anti-Slavery Collection (ASC), Boston Public Library (BPL), <https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/7s75dp152>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Maria Weston Chapman to John Bishop Estlin, 21 Sept. 1849, ASC, BPL, www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:7s75f580f. Chapman reiterated this notion in 1853 when she wrote to Estlin that 'I do more for the cause here.' Maria Weston Chapman to John Bishop Estlin, 14 Dec. 1853, ASC, BPL, www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:7s75f752p.

⁵ Pia Wiegink, *Abolitionist cosmopolitanism: reconfiguring gender, race, and nation in American anti-slavery literature* (Leiden, 2022), p. 72.

running'.⁶ Lastly, Chapman was involved with the French translation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's cabin*, the anti-slavery novel taking the literary world by storm, completed by two of her closest friends in Paris – Louise Swanton-Belloc and Adélaïde de Montgolfier.

This article has two primary objectives. The first is to bring France, or more specifically Paris, into the Anglo-American dominated story of transatlantic abolitionism in the mid-nineteenth century. Though institutional anti-slavery in France began to dissipate following the abolition of slavery in 1848, there remained a significant number of abolitionists and anti-slavery sympathizers who continued to support the cause on an international scale.⁷ It was common for American abolitionists to seek support abroad, but most ventured to the British Isles. The case-study of Chapman highlights the opportunities that were available to anti-slavery activists in France during this period.

The second and most important aim of this study is to highlight how focusing on the informal connections of activists provides insight into the vital yet often overlooked contributions of female abolitionists in the transatlantic anti-slavery movement.⁸ The example of Chapman and the salons of Paris allows us to unearth female activism that often took place behind the scenes, activism commonly obscured in both a contemporary and historiographical sense by abolitionists whose activism was more public-facing in nature.⁹ By illuminating both the opportunities for abolitionists in France and the informal ways in which Chapman agitated for the American anti-slavery cause as she orbited in elite social circles in Paris, this article sheds fresh perspective on the intricacies of the transatlantic anti-slavery movement in the mid-nineteenth century.

Scholars have long acknowledged the transatlantic nature of abolitionism. In the last decade, John Oldfield and Caleb McDaniel, building on the earlier works of scholars such as Richard Blackett, have chronicled the vast transnational exchanges between American and British abolitionists, while Bronwen Everill and Padraic Scanlan have importantly expanded the geographical reach of anti-slavery studies to areas such as West Africa.¹⁰ As well

⁶ Teresa A. Oddu, *Selling anti-slavery: abolition and mass media in antebellum America* (Philadelphia, PA, 2020), p. 88.

⁷ The French abolition of 1848 was the second time that France had abolished slavery in its colonies. Slavery was abolished for the first time in 1794 during the Haitian Revolution. However, the system was reinstated by Napoleon in 1802. For more on French anti-slavery, see Lawrence C. Jennings, *French anti-slavery: the movement for the abolition of slavery in France, 1802–1848* (Cambridge, 2000).

⁸ It is my aim to take a transatlantic approach to the important work of scholars like Julie Roy Jeffrey who have recognized the vital work of female abolitionists. Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The great silent army of abolitionism: ordinary women in the anti-slavery movement* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998).

⁹ Examples include well-known men like Garrison and Wendell Phillips, as well as women with more public profiles such as the Grimké sisters, Lucretia Mott, and Abby Kelley Foster.

¹⁰ W. Caleb McDaniel, *The problem of democracy in the age of slavery: Garrisonian abolitionists and transatlantic reform* (Baton Rouge, LA, 2013); J. R. Oldfield, *Transatlantic abolitionism in the age of revolution: an international history of anti-slavery c. 1787–1820* (Cambridge, 2013); J. R. Oldfield, *The ties that bind: transatlantic abolitionism in the age of reform, c. 1820–1865* (Liverpool, 2020); R. J. M. Blackett, *Building an anti-slavery wall: Black Americans in the transatlantic abolitionist movement, 1830–1860*

as reinforcing the centrality of Black abolitionists to the anti-slavery movement, Manisha Sinha has highlighted its international dimensions, how American abolitionists linked their cause to simultaneously occurring struggles against tyranny and oppression in other parts of the globe.¹¹

Notably missing from recent scholarship on transatlantic anti-slavery, however, is France. There may be a few reasons for this. Anti-slavery as a movement did not grip a significant portion of the French public like it did in Britain and, to a lesser extent, the United States.¹² Lawrence Jennings recognizes French anti-slavery as more elite in nature than its anglophone counterparts, and notes that abolitionists in France ‘had much difficulty bringing themselves to resort to the tactics of popular appeal’.¹³ The abolition of slavery in France in 1848 also triggered a decline in institutional anti-slavery. When Chapman and her family arrived in Paris in September 1848, the main anti-slavery society in France – the Société pour l'Abolition de l'Esclavage – was winding down prior to its eventual dissolution in 1850. Formed in 1834, the Société pour l'Abolition de l'Esclavage was led by French politician Victor de Broglie. Other leading members included politician Victor Schœlcher and politician and poet Alphonse de Lamartine, both of whom Chapman formed connections with during her time in Paris.¹⁴

The anti-slavery landscape in France directly contrasted that in Britain, where numerous organizations remained active, or, like the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (BFASS), were formed after British emancipation in the mid-1830s to combat slavery globally.¹⁵ Though factional rifts meant

(Baton Rouge, LA 1983); Bronwen Everill, *Abolition and empire in Sierra Leone and Liberia* (Basingstoke, 2013); Padraic X. Scanlan, *Freedom's debtors: British anti-slavery in Sierra Leone in the age of revolution* (New Haven, CT, 2017).

¹¹ Manisha Sinha, *The slave's cause: a history of abolition* (New Haven, CT, 2016).

¹² John Oldfield estimates that in Britain as many as 400,000 individuals participated in the petition campaigns against the slave trade in the late eighteenth century. J. R. Oldfield, *Popular politics and British anti-slavery: the mobilisation of public opinion against the slave trade 1787–1807* (London, 1998), p. 1.

¹³ Jennings, *French anti-slavery*, p. 20.

¹⁴ Chapman was a big admirer of Schœlcher. She wrote that ‘France owes [him] so much for his eminent services...as well as for his previous life of devotedness to the cause. He it was who took the initiative in that noble work of immediate-ism.’ *Liberator*, 18 July 1851. We know that Chapman connected with Lamartine from a few different sources including a letter from George Thompson to his daughter Amelia in which he commented that the Weston Chapmans ‘know some of the best literary men, and are very intimate with Lamartine & Victor Hugo’. George Thompson to Amelia Thompson, 14 Nov. 1851, transcriptions of letters of George Thompson, 1975–95, Raymond English Anti-Slavery Collection, University of Manchester Library, GB 133 REAS/3/2. There is also a letter in the BPL from either Lamartine himself, his wife, or perhaps his secretary, to Chapman that has been given the potential date of March 1841. But looking at the contents of the letter sent from Paris, which details that ‘M. and Mme Lamartine will be happy to receive the visit of Mrs Weston Chapman any evening between eight and nine and to thank her for the interesting volume of the Liberty Bell’, it seems more likely the letter was written between 1848 and 1855 when Chapman was in Paris. Alphonse de Lamartine to Maria Weston Chapman, [March? 1841?], ASC, BPL, www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:7s75fg54p.

¹⁵ For more on abolitionism in Britain, see David Turley, *The culture of English anti-slavery, 1780–1860* (London, 1991); Oldfield, *Popular politics and British anti-slavery*; Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral*

Garrisonian abolitionists travelling to Britain did not often seek support from the BFASS, there were a number of Garrisonian-aligned societies in cities like Darlington and Bristol from which they could seek assistance.¹⁶ Most American abolitionists looking across the Atlantic for support chose Britain, with its various anti-slavery organizations and well-established lecture circuits, as their destination. But Chapman saw an underutilized audience in France.

Both the nature of French abolitionism and the state of the movement after 1848 meant that Chapman had to look to informal means of support in Paris. This is where for both Chapman, and the historian seeking to extract what is often obfuscated female activism, salons take on an important role. Though attended by both men and women, salons exemplify the types of informal spaces where female reformers conducted their activism in a more social setting. Surveying the intersection between reform and spaces like salons allows for the examination of an understudied dimension of abolitionism – its sociability. This is a crucial dimension of transatlantic abolitionism that, as Oldfield recently noted, ‘historians sometimes tend to ignore’.¹⁷ The concept of anti-slavery sociability was first explored by Elisa Tamarkin, who questioned ‘would it be impolitic to say that, for all their moral seriousness and reforming zeal, these abolitionists are, nonetheless, having fun?’¹⁸ In spaces like salons we can imagine, to quote Tamarkin, that the ‘talk of anti-slavery is exactly like the friendly talk of books’.¹⁹ While these were not anti-slavery salons, for Chapman, they were spaces filled with influential individuals to whom she could instil the horrors of American slavery. As British lawyer Henry Crabb Robinson recalled when he met her in Paris, Chapman, whom he observed was ‘well known in connection with the anti-slavery movement’, was ‘an enthusiast...and they will seldom allow themselves to talk on any other than their own special topic’.²⁰ Though salons may appear as a leisurely activity for the elite, we as historians should not let that mask the fact that they had a more serious purpose for activists like Chapman.

II

Maria Weston Chapman was born just outside of Boston in Weymouth, Massachusetts, on 25 July 1806. A Unitarian, she began her education in her

capital: foundations of British abolitionism (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006); Richard Huzzey, *Freedom burning: anti-slavery and empire in Victorian Britain* (Ithaca, NY, 2012).

¹⁶ Though there were crossovers between the two factions, abolitionism in the mid-nineteenth century can largely be characterized by the Garrisonian/non-Garrisonian binary. This factionalism was solidified by the split of the AASS in 1840 – over issues such as the role of women, politics, and churches in abolitionism – and the formation of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (AFASS) by the likes of Arthur and Lewis Tappan. The views of the AFASS aligned more closely with the BFASS.

¹⁷ Oldfield, *The ties that bind*, p. 177.

¹⁸ Elisa Tamarkin, *Anglophilia: deference, devotion, and antebellum America* (Chicago, IL, 2008), p. 215. See also Elisa Tamarkin, ‘Black anglophilia; or, the sociability of anti-slavery’, *American Literary History*, 14 (2002), pp. 444–78.

¹⁹ Tamarkin, *Anglophilia*, p. 215.

²⁰ Thomas Sadler, *Diary, reminiscences, and correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, II (Boston, MA, 1869), p. 401.

home town, and in 1825 she travelled to London for further education under the auspices of her uncle – wealthy banker Joshua Bates. She returned to the United States three years later. In 1829, she took up a role in education at Ebenezer Bailey's Young Ladies' High School in Boston. During this time, Chapman became increasingly involved in abolitionism. Considered by her contemporaries as one of the leading abolitionists in their midst, she was a founding member of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society (BFAS), formed in October 1833 by both white and African American abolitionists. Chapman was an unwavering Garrisonian, and she helped establish the New England Non-Resistance Society with Garrison and Henry Clarke Wright in 1848.²¹ When the BFAS, like the AASS, split in 1840, Chapman helmed the Garrisonian faction. Unlike some New England based female abolitionists, such as Lucretia Mott and the Grimké sisters, Chapman did not speak publicly on slavery. Rather, she, alongside her sisters, worked diligently behind the scenes. Despite the less public nature of her activism, according to Lee Chambers the Weston Chapmans 'occupied a position of unusual visibility, even notoriety'.²²

One of six daughters, Chapman was, unusually for the period, the only sister to ever marry. In 1830, she married businessman Henry Grafton Chapman, with whom she had four children – one son and three daughters. The marriage fuelled her abolitionism, as Henry, treasurer of the Garrisonian Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, was also a dedicated anti-slavery activist. Following years of illness from tuberculosis, Henry died on 3 October 1842. Chapman never remarried.

Overshadowed by the likes of Garrison, Chapman has largely remained in the historical background.²³ Though she does feature in numerous studies of the anti-slavery movement, Chapman, as distinct from her sisters, has not been the focus of a single biography.²⁴ The time she spent in Europe has received even less attention. Her years spent in Paris are completely overlooked in the chapter on her activism in William and Jane Pease's biography of American abolitionists.²⁵ Chapman's work editing the abolitionist giftbook *The Liberty Bell* during her stay in Paris features in Pia Wiegink's recently published study on the cosmopolitan nature of anti-slavery literature.²⁶ But much remains to be written about her time in Europe.

²¹ McDaniel, *The problem of democracy*, p. 69.

²² Lee V. Chambers, *The Weston sisters: an American abolitionist family* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2014), p. 20.

²³ Works where Chapman features prominently include Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, *Bound with them in chains: a biographical history of the anti-slavery movement* (Westport, CT, 1972), ch. 3 in particular; Valerie Domenica Levy, 'The anti-slavery web of connection: Maria Weston Chapman's Liberty Bell (1839–1858)' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Georgia, 2002); Debra Gold Hansen, *Strained sisterhood: gender and class in the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society* (Amherst, MA, 2009); Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne, eds., *The abolitionist sisterhood: women's political culture in antebellum America* (Ithaca, NY, 1994), in particular chs. 3 and 13; Kenyon Gradert, *Puritan spirits in the abolitionist imagination* (Chicago, IL, 2020), in particular ch. 2.

²⁴ Two key works have looked at the activism of the Weston sisters: Chambers, *The Weston sisters*, and Clare Taylor, *Women of the anti-slavery movement: the Weston sisters* (New York, NY, 1995).

²⁵ Pease and Pease, *Bound with them in chains*.

²⁶ Wiegink, *Abolitionist cosmopolitanism*, ch. 3.

Chapman arrived in Paris just months after the abolition of slavery in France in April 1848.²⁷ As Jennings has argued, emancipation in the French colonies was made possible by the events of the February Revolution of 1848, which had seen the overthrow of King Louis Philippe and the installation of the French Second Republic. But it was not long until dissatisfaction with the new government resulted in an uprising of French workers known as the ‘bloody’ June Days, during which thousands were killed in just four days. The June uprising failed, and a few months later Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, later Napoleon III, became president of the new republic. The occurrences in France were just some of the many revolutionary events that swept across Europe in 1848, shaking the long-standing supremacy of monarchies as the primary ruling structure in Europe. Ferocious revolutionaries rose up against the established rule in Italy, Hungary, the German states, and the Austrian empire.²⁸ Though unsuccessful, the revolutions sparked a desire for democratic reform that would be difficult to extinguish.

The abolition of slavery in France meant this was an opportune time for Chapman to relocate to Paris, despite the trepidation of some of her anti-slavery colleagues, who questioned whether Chapman’s efforts might be better spent in Boston. As Garrison told his wife Helen, abolitionist David Lee Child had ‘expressed much surprise and wonder at [Chapman’s] choice’.²⁹ But when considering the wider ramifications of French abolition for the transatlantic anti-slavery movement, her decision to relocate makes complete sense. Over fifteen years after British emancipation, and with little progress in the United States, the abolition of slavery in France provided a fresh sense of hope for American anti-slavery activists. With leading French abolitionists like Victor Schoelcher securing influential roles in the Second Republic, now was the time to nurture transatlantic connections in Paris. As Caleb McDaniel suggests, in-person continental travels like Chapman’s were vital for both the creation and maintenance of the ‘European branch’ of Garrisonian abolitionists.³⁰ Other Garrisonians travelling to Paris during this period were William Wells Brown, George Thompson, Mary Anne Estlin, Richard D. Webb, William Henry Ashurst, Charles B. Hovey, and Anne Knight.³¹

Chapman’s relocation to Paris was also fuelled by a desire to become more cosmopolitan, a quality she believed the French capital embodied. As she wrote to her close friend and British Quaker Elizabeth Pease, Paris would allow her and her family ‘to become cosmopolitan...& to be able to say with an experimental feeling, “My Country is the World My Countrymen are all Mankind”’, a

²⁷ The family docked in Liverpool on 6 Aug. 1848 before making their way to France. *Liberator*, 8 Sept. 1848.

²⁸ For more on the 1848 revolutions, see Peter Jones, *The 1848 revolutions* (London, 1991); Timothy Mason Roberts, *Distant revolutions: 1848 and the challenge to American exceptionalism* (Charlottesville, VA, 2009); Jonathan Beecher, *Writers and revolution: intellectuals and the French Revolution of 1848* (Cambridge, 2021).

²⁹ William Lloyd Garrison to Helen Eliza Garrison, 18 July 1848, ASC, BPL, www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:cv43rc91f.

³⁰ McDaniel, *The problem of democracy*, p. 78.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 186. Chambers, *The Weston sisters*, p. 43.

reference to the masthead of *The Liberator*, which read ‘Our Country is the World – Our Countrymen are all Mankind.’³² Cosmopolitanism was a defining feature of both Chapman’s anti-slavery ideology and Garrisonian abolitionism more broadly.³³ Garrisonians saw theirs as one of many ongoing struggles for freedom and democracy throughout the Atlantic world. They circulated in a transatlantic orbit with well-known British liberals like John Bright, John Stuart Mill, and William Henry Ashurst, as well as European reformers like Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini.

Paris was also an attractive destination for American abolitionists, particularly Black abolitionists, some of whom found the city less racially prejudiced than even cities like Boston in the free state of Massachusetts. This was particularly evident for William Wells Brown when he attended the Paris Peace Congress in 1849 alongside James W. C. Pennington and Alexander Crummell, and at which Chapman was also present.³⁴ Writing to Garrison about a speech given by Wells Brown, Chapman marvelled that ‘our friend’s color and his cause, the two very reasons that would have prevented his obtaining a hearing in the United States, removed all obstacles here’.³⁵ Wells Brown noticed a similar difference in his reception in Paris compared to his voyage across the Atlantic. While talking to British reformer Richard Cobden at the congress, he noticed a man from his ship who had ‘not deign[ed] to speak to [him] during the whole passage’,³⁶ The man approached Wells Brown, looking for an introduction to Cobden. He was shocked that ‘the man who would not have shaken hands with me in the city of New York or Boston...comes to me in the metropolis of France, and claims that we were “fellow-passengers

³² Maria Weston Chapman to Elizabeth Pease, 25 Dec. 1849, ASC, BPL, www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:7s75dt48f.

³³ Wiegink defines abolitionist cosmopolitanism as the ‘tension between a patriotic attitude for one’s country and the idea of human brotherhood transgressing the confines of nation-states, between the defense of American republican, democratic ideals, and a critique of the national institution of slavery, and ultimately between coalition-building across national confines and national moral suasion that characterized abolitionist cosmopolitanism’. Wiegink, *Abolitionist cosmopolitanism*, p. 63. For more on cosmopolitanism as it relates to abolitionism and the Atlantic world, see W. Caleb McDaniel, ‘Philadelphia abolitionists and anti-slavery cosmopolitanism’, in Richard Newman and James Mueller, eds., *Anti-slavery and abolition in Philadelphia: emancipation and the long struggle for racial justice in the city of brotherly love* (Baton Rouge, LA, 2011); Benjamin L. Carp, ‘“Fix’d almost amongst strangers”: Charleston’s Quaker merchants and the limits of cosmopolitanism’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 74 (2017), pp. 77–108; Carole Lynn Stewart, *Temperance and cosmopolitanism: African American reformers in the Atlantic world* (University Park, PA, 2018); Edlie Wong, ‘Anti-slavery cosmopolitanism in the Black Atlantic’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 38 (2010), pp. 451–66; Sirpa Salenius, *An abolitionist abroad: Sarah Parker Remond in cosmopolitan Europe* (Amherst, MA, 2016); Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo, *Black cosmopolitanism: racial consciousness and transnational identity in the nineteenth-century Americas* (Philadelphia, PA, 2005); Christine Levecq, *Black cosmopolitans: race, religion, and republicanism in an age of revolution* (Charlottesville, VA, 2019).

³⁴ The Paris Peace Congress of 1849 was held in August at the Salle Sainte-Cécile. Presided over by Victor Hugo, the Congress brought together hundreds of reformers from France, the United States, Britain, Germany, and Belgium. *Report of the proceedings of the second general peace congress held in Paris, on the 22nd, 23rd and 24th of August, 1849* (London, 1849).

³⁵ *Liberator*, 28 Sept. 1849.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2 Nov. 1849.

from America”.³⁷ Though not a society completely free from racial prejudice, abolitionists felt the atmosphere in Paris to be different from the United States.

III

It was in the salons of Paris that Chapman could most deeply immerse herself into this cosmopolitan world. She became enamoured with these spaces and the opportunities they presented for her anti-slavery activism. Unlike anti-slavery societies, however, salons were not formal organizations. There were no membership lists, which makes their examination difficult. However, by pulling together a variety of sources, it is possible to paint a picture of who was in attendance. Chapman herself described the diverse range of individuals that one could find at a salon in Paris:

those whose honoured names stand high in the ranks of Literature...those whose families are the leaders in Science and Art...[a] range of representatives of that social charm which has made the salons of Paris admired of every land. The organization of Artistic genius, the nature of feminine grace, the model of domestic devotedness, the type of noblest exaltation of good, the conscientious and devoted Catholic, the equally conscientious and devoted Protestant, all are here.³⁸

Most importantly for her activism, Chapman noted that these attendees were asking ‘with one voice how they may best promote our cause’.³⁹ She was more than happy to provide the answers.

Salons were a staple of French society from the seventeenth century onwards. Though they shifted in appearance and meaning over the years, K. Steven Vincent notes that, at its core, ‘a salon was an intimate society of men and women of the leisure class meeting for elegant conversation under the presidency of a skilled *salonnière*’.⁴⁰ The centrality of salons to French politics declined in the mid-nineteenth century with the rise of modern political parties and mass-media. However, Steven Kale maintains that salons were a robust institution, and though there were less of them when Chapman arrived in Paris in 1848, they remained a stalwart dimension of upper-class French life.⁴¹ The importance of salons for the study of transatlantic abolitionism stems from the fact that, as Kale has argued, salons ‘filled some sort of

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Maria Weston Chapman to the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* as quoted in the *Liberator*, 18 July 1851.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ K. Steven Vincent, ‘Elite culture in early nineteenth century France: salons, sociability, and the self’, *Modern Intellectual History*, 4 (2007), pp. 327–51, at p. 329. For more on salons, see Antoine Lilti, *The world of the salons: sociability and worldliness in eighteenth-century Paris*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (New York, NY, 2005); Steven Kale, *French salons: high society and political sociability from the old regime to the revolution of 1848* (Baltimore, MD, 2004).

⁴¹ Kale, *French salons*, p. 3.

institutional vacuum at the intersection between public and private life'.⁴² These were meetings of like-minded, more often than not wealthy men and women, discussing art, literature, and, most importantly for this article, politics and social issues.

The most important salon for Chapman in Paris in terms of cultivating relationships with members of the French elite was that of Mohl on the Rue de Bac.⁴³ Born in England in 1793, Mohl moved to France and married German Orientalist Julius von Mohl in 1847. In hosting her salon, Mohl succeeded earlier *salonnières*, including her close friend Madame Juliette Récamier, as well as her idol – and early abolitionist sympathizer – Madame Germaine de Staël.⁴⁴ Just like Récamier and de Staël before her, Mohl's salons were frequented by members of the French elite, including politicians, writers, poets, and artists. In her study of Mohl's salon, Kathleen O'Meara described how, 'by the sole magnet of her *esprit*, [Mohl] drew around her the most remarkable personalities, not only of France, but of the world. Celebrities from every capital in Europe gave one another rendezvous at Madame Mohl's Friday evenings and Wednesday afternoons.'⁴⁵

While salons were inherently record-less, we know that Chapman attended Mohl's salon because of various sources. American physician Orlando Williams Wight recalled meeting Chapman, whom he described as 'a very amiable lady', at Mohl's salon.⁴⁶ Mohl wrote a number of letters to Chapman's daughter Emma Weston, and she also mentioned the Weston Chapman family in letters sent to the likes of British reformer Elizabeth Jesser Reid.⁴⁷ There are also instances where others noted in their correspondence the connection between Mohl and Chapman. While visiting Paris in late 1851, British abolitionist George Thompson wrote to his daughter Amelia that he had 'just received a note from Madame Mohl, telling me to squire her & the Americans to the theatre this evening'.⁴⁸ The 'Americans' were of course the Weston Chapmans.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴³ Clare Taylor has noted that Chapman did hold her own salon, but Mohl's was the more important salon for Chapman in terms of making connections. Taylor, *Women of the anti-slavery movement*, p. 76.

⁴⁴ Lawrence Jennings has noted that Madame de Staël circulated copies of British abolitionist William Wilberforce's work in Paris. Jennings, *French anti-slavery*, pp. 5–6.

⁴⁵ Kathleen O'Meara, *Madame Mohl: her salon and her friends: a study of social life in Paris* (Boston, MA, 1891), p. 116.

⁴⁶ Orlando Williams Wight, *Peoples and countries visited in a winding journey around the world* (Detroit, MI, 1888), pp. 48–9.

⁴⁷ Mohl mentioned the Weston Chapman family in numerous letters. She also wrote letters to Emma Weston, Chapman's daughter. M. C. M. Simpson, *Letters and recollections of Julius and Mary Mohl* (London, 1887), pp. 18, 95–8, 221–2, 225, 274–7, 372–3; Mary Clarke (Madame Julius Mohl), 'BC RF/103/11/12: letter recommending M. Duval as French master for the college, 7 November [1849]', *Elizabeth Jesser Reid's correspondence networks: a digital archive*, accessed 2 Oct. 2021, <https://ejrletters.omeka.net/items/show/242>; Mary Clarke (Madame Julius Mohl), 'BC RF/103/11/15: letter reporting that Miss [Sarah] Fitton is in London, [c. 1850]', *Elizabeth Jesser Reid's correspondence networks*, accessed 2 Oct. 2021, <https://ejrletters.omeka.net/items/show/245>.

⁴⁸ George Thompson to Amelia Thompson, Oct. 1851, transcriptions of letters of George Thompson, 1975–95. Lee Chambers has also noted that Mohl often facilitated introductions for Chapman to members of French society. Chambers, *The Weston sisters*, pp. 134–5.

It is unclear how exactly Chapman met Mohl, and thus was welcomed into her salon. It is possible they connected through their mutual friend Harriet Martineau. British writer Martineau was a friend of many abolitionists, and she first met Chapman during a visit to the United States in 1834–5. That meeting was the start of a decades-long friendship which involved Chapman visiting Martineau in England a number of times, one of which was following her Atlantic voyage in the weeks before she settled in Paris.⁴⁹ It is possible that Martineau advised her friend on who to seek out when she arrived on the continent.

Where we do not have records, it is still possible to hypothesize about who Chapman may have interacted with based on who were regular attendees at Mohl's salon. This account from Eustace Reynolds-Ball gives us an idea as to the attendees at Mohl's salon: 'At their informal Friday evenings might be met Thiers, Prosper Mérimée, Cousin, Guizot, Ampère, De Tocqueville, Benjamin Constant, and many other well-known men...of English authors, Thackeray, Mrs. Gaskell, Dean Stanley, and George Eliot were frequently guests here.'⁵⁰ As this account suggests, one of the main types of guests that frequented Mohl's salon were members of the international literary elite. Elisabeth Jay has noted that Mohl's salon in particular 'played a leading part in introducing English writers to Parisian cultural life'.⁵¹ These writers included the likes of Elizabeth Gaskell and Elizabeth Browning, the latter of whom met Chapman at Madame Mohl's in 1851.⁵² Browning described Chapman as 'the female mover of the American abolitionist movement'.⁵³ Another important guest from the literary world was Harriet Beecher Stowe, renowned for her anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom's cabin*. While visiting Paris in June 1853 Stowe stayed with Chapman, describing her American host as a 'perfect *Parisienne*'.⁵⁴ Like Chapman, Stowe treasured the salons of Paris, describing them as 'a fashion of receiving one's friends on a particular night, that one wishes could be transplanted to American soil'.⁵⁵ When Stowe returned to Paris in 1856, she visited Mohl's salon once a week, where she would 'meet all sorts of agreeable people'.⁵⁶ The renowned writers one could find in Mohl's salon would become particularly important supporters for Chapman.

IV

One of the most important ways that Chapman drew support for American anti-slavery from her Parisian social circle was by soliciting contributions

⁴⁹ Taylor, *Women of the anti-slavery movement*, p. 68.

⁵⁰ Eustace Reynolds-Ball, *Paris in its splendour*, II (Boston, MA, 1900), pp. 211–12.

⁵¹ Elisabeth Jay, *British writers and Paris, 1830-1875* (Oxford, 2016), p. 132.

⁵² Marjorie Stone, 'Elizabeth Barrett Browning and the Garrisonians: "the runaway slave at Pilgrim's Point", the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, and abolitionist discourse in the Liberty Bell', in Patricia Pulham, Marjorie Stone, Glennis Byron, Michele C. Martinez, Susan Brown, Natalie M. Houston, and Joseph Bristow, eds., *Victorian women poets* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 55.

⁵³ Stone, 'Elizabeth Barrett Browning and the Garrisonians', p. 55.

⁵⁴ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Sunny memories of foreign lands*, II (Boston, MA, 1854), p. 147.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 154–5.

⁵⁶ Charles Edward Stowe, *Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe: compiled from her letters and journals by her son Charles Edward Stowe* (Boston, MA, 1889), p. 291.

for the annual abolitionist giftbook *The Liberty Bell*. As editor, Chapman functioned as an important conduit through which the anti-slavery testimonies of European liberals, many of whom were well known in the United States, could be transmitted to a wider American public. As Wiegink suggests, *The Liberty Bell* became an important centre of exchange between prominent Atlantic intellectuals in the debate surrounding the continuation of slavery.⁵⁷ Published from 1839 until 1858, *The Liberty Bell* contained works such as poetry, short essays, and letters. It was released annually to coincide with the Boston Anti-Slavery Bazaar.⁵⁸ The giftbook had always been cosmopolitan in nature, with numerous works from British writers such as Martineau and prominent abolitionist Thomas Clarkson. However, before Chapman arrived in Paris, there were few non-British European contributors.⁵⁹

This changed after 1850, as the Europeans Chapman encountered at salons like Mohl's began contributing to *The Liberty Bell*. The 1851 edition included contributions from writers Louise Swanton-Belloc and Émile Souvestre, as well as Souvestre's wife.⁶⁰ For the 1852 edition, Chapman solicited contributions from Schœlcher, Alexis de Tocqueville's travel companion and magistrate Gustave de Beaumont, politician and physicist Dominique François Arago, and Protestant minister Joseph Martin-Paschoud.⁶¹ Contributors for the 1853 issue included Russian exile Nicholas Tourgueneff, French politician and Lafayette's grandson Oscar du Motier de La Fayette, French dramatist Ernest Legouvé, French politician Charles de Rémusat, and Haitian abolitionist J. F. Dorvelas Dorval.⁶² Tourgueneff in particular remained an important European anti-slavery ally in later years. Born in 1789, Tourgueneff was, according to Mohl, 'a distant relation of Ivan, the author'.⁶³ He had been exiled from Russia for his support of the serfs, described by Mohl as 'the great object of his life'.⁶⁴ Chapman described him as 'one of those truly wise and good men whose opinions cannot fail to have great influence wherever they are known'.⁶⁵

The 1856 issue included a collection of testimonies against slavery from well-known French liberals such as historian Jules Michelet, publicist and historian Charles Forbes René de Montalembert, renowned diplomat Alexis de Tocqueville, Frédéric de Passy, and politician and journalist Émile de

⁵⁷ Wiegink, *Abolitionist cosmopolitanism*, p. 49.

⁵⁸ *The Liberty Bell* was eventually replaced with a subscription service. As Wiegink has detailed, 'the annual print format of the gift book was soon driven out of the market by the increasing popularity of monthly magazines in the 1860s'. The subscription service, however, was short-lived. Interestingly, it was replaced with a salon. Wiegink, *Abolitionist cosmopolitanism*, p. 147.

⁵⁹ Prior to 1848, there were just a handful of European contributors, including Swedish writer Fredrika Bremer, Haitian dignitary and abolitionist Jean-Baptiste Symphor L'Instant de Pradine (referred to as L'Instant), and Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini in 1845, 1846, and 1847 respectively.

⁶⁰ *Liberty Bell*, 1851.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1852

⁶² *Ibid.*, 1853. *The Liberty Bell* was not published in 1854 or 1855.

⁶³ Simpson, *Letters and recollections of Julius and Mary Mohl*, p. 308.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 309. Mohl gave this description in 1871 following Tourgueneff's death.

⁶⁵ *Liberator*, 28 Jan. 1853.

Girardin.⁶⁶ Tourgueneff, as well as Adolphe Monod, also contributed in 1856 in separate letters. The final edition of *The Liberty Bell*, published in 1858, included an essay from French writer Jean-Jacques Ampère.⁶⁷ Of these European contributors, we know that at least Belloc, Souvestre and his wife, Ampère, Montalembert, Tourgueneff, and Tocqueville attended Mohl's salon.⁶⁸ It is likely that Legouvé did so too, but, as is the inherent elusiveness of the salon, we cannot know for sure.⁶⁹ Though he did not contribute to *The Liberty Bell*, Victor de Broglie, president of the Société pour l'Abolition de l'Esclavage, was another visitor of Mohl's salon.⁷⁰

Chapman was well aware of the weight of these European testimonies against slavery for the anti-slavery cause. Many of these Europeans had a certain 'star-power' to American audiences. Teresa Goddu has expressed that, in naming the authors of the included works, *The Liberty Bell* differed from mainstream giftbooks of the time in which contributors were often kept anonymous and were mostly of the same nationality. As Goddu argues, 'anti-slavery giftbooks advertised their authors' name and thereby associated anti-slavery with the aura of celebrity'.⁷¹ Being in Paris allowed Chapman to solicit 'celebrities' for the cause. She wrote to Bristol abolitionist John Bishop Estlin in January 1850 of her plan, which involved 'obtaining the testimony of the celebrities...against slavery, De Tocqueville, De Beaumont, Victor Schœlcher, Lamartine & many others have a name & fame in the United States'.⁷² She was convinced of their importance in swaying the American public on the issue of slavery. We see this in a letter she sent to Alexis de Tocqueville in 1857, in which Chapman encouraged him to continue to speak out against American slavery as 'our statesmen and men of literature can only be reached by those whom they look up to, in other countries...every word against slavery, uttered by European celebrities, hastens the time when the atrocious system shall be abolished'.⁷³

⁶⁶ There was also a contribution from a 'Carnot' from Paris.

⁶⁷ *Liberty Bell*, 1858.

⁶⁸ We know that Ampère and Tocqueville were there from Eustace Reynolds-Ball's account. Simpson notes that Mohl and Belloc were old friends. Simpson, *Letters and recollections of Julius and Mary Mohl*, pp. 17–18. In an 1854 letter to Émile Souvestre, Elizabeth Gaskell recalled a conversation she had with him at Mohl's. J. A. V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard, eds., *The letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester, 1997), p. 275. O'Meara names Montalembert as a regular guest of Mohl. O'Meara, *Madame Mohl*, p. 126. Harriet Beecher Stowe described Mohl's salon as the place where 'the noble Russian exile forgets his sorrows', highly likely to be a reference to Tourgueneff. Stowe, *Sunny memories of foreign lands*, II, p. 156.

⁶⁹ We know that both Chapman and Mohl attended at least some of Legouvé's lectures. *Liberator*, 18 May 1849; Simpson, *Letters and recollections of Julius and Mary Mohl*, p. 56.

⁷⁰ O'Meara, *Madame Mohl*, p. 194.

⁷¹ Goddu, *Selling anti-slavery*, p. 127.

⁷² Maria Weston Chapman to John Bishop Estlin, 4 Jan. 1850, ASC, BPL, www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:7s75f585t?view=commonwealth%3A7s75f589x.

⁷³ Maria Weston Chapman to Alexis de Tocqueville, 7 Aug. 1857, in Aurelian Craiutu and Jeremy Jennings, eds., *Tocqueville on America after 1840: letters and other writings* (New York, NY, 2009), pp. 246–7.

One of the most important testimonies Chapman was able to gather was that of Victor Hugo. Born on 26 February 1802 in Besançon, Hugo was a writer and politician. He was elected to the French National Assembly in 1848 as a conservative. However, he soon embraced more liberal views, and when he spoke out against the autocratic rule of Louis Napoleon he was exiled from France. Again, though it is impossible to know for sure, it is likely that Chapman came into contact with Hugo at a salon like Mohl's. It is clear that Mohl knew Hugo, reflecting in 1868 on her time spent at Madame Récamier's where she met the likes of 'Victor Hugo, Ampère, and many others [who] were glad to come to talk politics with my mother and nonsense with me'.⁷⁴

As French newspaper *L'Événement* detailed, Hugo gladly provided his testimony against American slavery in 1851 after he received a letter from 'a generous and courageous woman, Mme Chapman, who undertook, in America, the holy crusade of total emancipation'.⁷⁵ He wrote to Chapman:

You are pleased to believe and assure me that my voice, in this august cause of Slavery, will be listened to by the great American people, whom I love so profoundly, and whose destinies, I am fain? To think, are closely linked with the mission of France. You desire me to lift up my voice. I will do it once, and on all occasions. I agree with you in thinking that within a definite time; that, within a time not distant, the United States will repudiate Slavery with horror. Slavery in such a country! Can there be an incongruity more monstrous?⁷⁶

Just as Chapman hoped, Hugo's criticism of American slavery reverberated in the United States. The letter was republished in various newspapers.⁷⁷ Many papers sympathetic to the anti-slavery cause applauded Hugo's words, with one article suggesting that 'if this remarkable letter can be read without stirring the soul to to [sic] the bottom, then there surely is no soul to stir'.⁷⁸ Another paper noted that Hugo's letter was likely 'the spontaneous result of the intercourse in society', 'as Mrs. Chapman and her family have been welcomed, during their stay for the last three years in Paris, into the most distinguished literary circle of that city'.⁷⁹ Hugo's letter gained even further traction in the American press due to a widely publicized response by John H. B. Latrobe, a Baltimore lawyer and president of the Maryland Colonization Society. Initially published in the *Newport News* in Rhode Island, Latrobe insisted that 'if Victor Hugo, before expressing the strong opinions

⁷⁴ Simpson, *Letters and recollections of Julius and Mary Mohl*, p. 21.

⁷⁵ *L'Événement*, 11 July 1851. Hugo was one of the founders of *L'Événement* when it was established in 1848.

⁷⁶ *Daily Free Democracy*, 2 Sept. 1851.

⁷⁷ Newspapers where the letter was republished include *Evening Post*, 2 Aug. 1851; *New England Farmer*, 9 Aug. 1851; *Pittsburgh Gazette*, 11 Aug. 1851; *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, 16 Aug. 1851; *Brandon Post*, 21 Aug. 1851; *Daily Free Democrat*, 2 Sept. 1851.

⁷⁸ *Green-Mountain Freeman*, 28 Aug. 1851.

⁷⁹ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, 7 Aug. 1851.

of his letter of the 6th July, had considered what would be the condition of the emancipated slave', 'he would have found that all history teaches but one lesson...that two races which cannot amalgamate by intermarriage can exist in the same land only in the relation of master and slave'.⁸⁰ Latrobe's letter was republished by a number of newspapers, including the *Daily News* in London.⁸¹ Hugo's fulfilment of Chapman's request, facilitated by their encounters in the social spheres of Paris, had sparked a discussion that reached across the Atlantic and made its way back to Britain.

Like Hugo's, Nicholas Tourgueneff's views on slavery were also transmitted to an American audience through publication of his letters to Chapman in *The Liberator*. Tourgueneff wrote to Chapman in October 1852 after she had supplied him copies of *Uncle Tom's cabin*, *The Liberator*, and the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*. In the letter, which had been translated from French by Chapman's sister Caroline, the Russian exile thanked Chapman for the reading materials, and remarked that he 'could not have believed that the perversity of the human understanding and of the human heart could go so far'.⁸² Tourgueneff wrote to Chapman in late 1855, just before she departed Paris for Boston. In this letter, he praised Garrison, and asked that she present him 'the accompanying copy of my work, by which he will see that a co-laborer in another hemisphere has long wrought in the same vineyard of the Lord... with the same love for the oppressed'.⁸³ He likened the plight of American enslaved people and Russian serfs as he was 'thoroughly persuaded that all success obtained in America in the cause of the colored race will be eminently serviceable to my poor countrymen in Russia. It is then, first as a man, and secondly as a Russian, that I hail the efforts of Mr. Garrison and his fellow-laborers'.⁸⁴ As he could connect the struggles of the enslaved in the United States to similarly unfree people in Europe, reflecting the Garrisonian emphasis on American anti-slavery as part of a wider global struggle against various forms of tyranny, Tourgueneff's testimony was particularly valuable.

V

Upon her arrival in the French capital, Chapman wrote to Elizabeth Pease that she 'hope[d] to be more useful here than at home to our cause, for I can do more financially, at least I hope to be able to do so'.⁸⁵ One of the most important ways she did this was by soliciting from her European supporters both money and goods for the Boston Anti-Slavery Bazaar. Anti-slavery fairs were an important date on the American reform calendar, and they were organized

⁸⁰ *Evening Post*, 3 Sept. 1851. Italics in original.

⁸¹ *Daily News*, 27 Sept. 1851. See also *Washington Union*, 6 Sept. 1851; *Tuskegee Republican*, 9 Oct. 1851; *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, 9 Oct. 1851.

⁸² *Liberator*, 28 Jan. 1853.

⁸³ *Letters on American slavery from Victor Hugo, De Tocqueville, Emile De Girardin, Carnot, Passy, Mazzini, Humboldt, O. Lafayette-&c.* (Boston, MA, 1860).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Maria Weston Chapman to Elizabeth Pease, 29 Nov. 1848, ASC, BPL, www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:7s75dt432.

mostly by female abolitionists. The Boston fair was first organized in 1834. It was initially led by Lydia Maria Child until Chapman took over in its second year. The main goal of the bazaar, held every year at Christmas, was to raise funds for the cause, or, more specifically, for the activities of the American Anti-Slavery Society, which included paying itinerant lecturers. Lee Chambers has noted that the Boston bazaar was ‘the most successful of all abolitionist fund-raisers’; that it was a ‘lucrative moneymaker that raised up to five thousand dollars a year’.⁸⁶ Though they were an important element of the anti-slavery movement, it is important to note that, as Teresa Goddu has argued, though abolition was an inter-racial movement, these fairs were noticeably white and middle class.⁸⁷

Financial contributors to the fair from Chapman’s Parisian social circle included Mohl, Montgolfier, Tourgueneff, Martin-Paschoud, Floreska Leconte, Arago, Belloc, zoologist Isidore Geoffrey Saint-Hilaire, and Hilary Bonham Carter, the last of whom was a friend of Harriet Martineau. The earliest contributors were Leconte and Mohl, with the former subscribing to the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* in 1851 and donating 10 francs for the 1852 fair, and the latter donating 25 francs for the 1852 fair.⁸⁸ Both women donated again in 1853 – Leconte 15 francs and Mohl 25 francs.⁸⁹ They were joined by Bonham Carter, who contributed 15 francs that year.⁹⁰ In 1853, a number of individuals from Chapman’s Paris social circle joined together to fund the purchase of a bronze statue – Charles Cumberworth’s *Negro Woman* – to be sold at the fair that year. Contributors to this purchase included Leconte (5 francs on top of her separate donation), Mohl (also 5 francs on top of her separate donation), Tourgueneff (20 francs), Tourgueneff’s wife (20 francs), Arago (5 francs), Martin-Paschoud (10 francs), and the Bellocs (5 francs).⁹¹ Financial contributors to the 1854 fair included Mohl (10 francs) and Montgolfier (5 francs).⁹² In 1855, Leconte, now Madame Guépin, contributed 40 francs.⁹³

The donation of the Cumberworth statue in particular speaks to Goddu’s larger argument about the centrality of whiteness to the Boston fair. That a statue of a Black woman was placed on a white marble table in the centre of the bazaar reflects what she describes as a larger theme of the fair – ‘the

⁸⁶ Lee Chambers-Schiller, ‘“A good work among the people”: the political culture of the Boston anti-slavery fair’, in Yellin and Van Horne, eds., *The abolitionist sisterhood*, p. 250.

⁸⁷ Goddu, *Selling anti-slavery*, chs. 4 and 5 in particular.

⁸⁸ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, 18 Dec. 1851; *Liberator*, 27 Feb. 1852.

⁸⁹ *Liberator*, 28 Jan. 1853.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.* There were a number of other contributors. However, I have listed those I know were connected to Chapman through Mohl. Note also that Belloc is spelled ‘Belloi’ – I am quite certain this is a spelling error.

⁹² *Liberator*, 20 Jan. 1854.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 26 Jan. 1855. Leconte had married a doctor and childhood friend of Souvestre – Ange Guépin, who it seems also came into contact with Chapman, as he noted in his 1854 *Philosophie du XIXe siècle, étude encyclopédique sur le monde et l’humanité* that ‘Maria Weston Chapman tackles the burning issue of slavery.’ Ange Guépin, *Philosophie du XIXe siècle, étude encyclopédique sur le monde et l’humanité* (Paris, 1854), p. 936.

production of white identity through the purchase of black freedom'.⁹⁴ We also see this with the European goods that Chapman organized to be sent to Boston to be sold at the fair.⁹⁵ These were a vast assortment of goods including books, ornaments, embroidery, and so on. In preparing to send materials from Paris to Boston, Chapman described 'a vast collection of rich and valuable things; beautiful objects of art; the charming ebenisterie of Paris; embroidery in muslin, very costly and valuable; lace, application d'Angleterre et de Bruxelles, in scarfs, veils, collars...glass and porcelain; embroidery in Berlin wools'.⁹⁶ A report following the bazaar in 1854 noted that the French goods on display that December had 'attracted universal admiration'.⁹⁷ Goddu describes this 'reverence for European (and specifically Anglo-Saxon) culture' as reflective of how the fairs portrayed 'refinement as white'.⁹⁸

Chapman's European contacts who donated goods to the bazaar included Souvestre, Saint-Hilaire, and Hannah Monod, wife of Protestant minister Adolphe Monod. Souvestre sent six signed copies of one of his works for the 1853 bazaar.⁹⁹ Saint-Hilaire, who was associated with the Museum of Natural History in Paris, sent goods to Chapman with the accompanying note that 'these specimens I now have the honour of presenting to you...they are at the same time one offering more to a most sacred cause'.¹⁰⁰ Many goods were procured by French women sympathetic to the cause, such as Hannah Monod. According to Chapman, 'the Monods...have always helped our efforts'.¹⁰¹ Despite this, when collecting items for the bazaar, Monod was unsure that she would be able to acquire many items. However, Chapman recalled that 'it turned out better than our most earnest wishes could have anticipated', and Madame Monod was able to contribute four boxes of goods to be sold in Boston for the 1854 bazaar.¹⁰² In 1854, *The Liberator* notes a number of contributions from France, but it is unclear whether or not they were in the form of donations or goods. Nevertheless, these contributors included Tourgueneff and his wife, Arago, Martin-Paschoud, Swanton-Belloc, Monod, and Saint-Hilaire.¹⁰³

⁹⁴ Goddu, *Selling anti-slavery*, pp. 93, 121–2.

⁹⁵ For example, for the 1850 fair Chapman sent three boxes to Boston, and for the 1855 fair she sent four boxes and a trunk. *Liberator*, 25 Jan. 1850, 26 Jan. 1855.

⁹⁶ *Anti-Slavery Advocate*, Oct. 1854.

⁹⁷ *Liberator*, 26 Jan. 1855.

⁹⁸ Goddu, *Selling anti-slavery*, p. 110.

⁹⁹ *Liberator*, 28 Jan. 1853.

¹⁰⁰ Isidore Geoffrey Saint-Hilaire to Maria Weston Chapman, 18 Nov. 1853, ASC, BPL, www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:qz20t164r. It is difficult to decipher what the goods actually were.

¹⁰¹ *Anti-Slavery Advocate*, Oct 1854. The letter was sent 'from an American Lady in Paris to her friend in England'. I am quite certain that this is Maria Weston Chapman. However, when it was partially republished in the *Liberator* it was not clarified as such, which seems odd. *Liberator*, 20 Oct. 1854.

¹⁰² *Liberator*, 26 Jan. 1855.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 20 Jan. 1854.

VI

Central to the transatlantic anti-slavery movement was the wide dissemination of texts, and in Paris Chapman played an important role in organizing the French translation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's famed *Uncle Tom's cabin*. Two of Chapman's closest friends in Paris, Louise Swanton-Belloc and Adélaïde de Montgolfier, had translated a number of foreign works into French. Swanton-Belloc, born in La Rochelle, France, in 1796, was married to painter Jean-Hilaire Belloc. Montgolfier, the daughter of a noted aeronaut, was, like Mohl, a distinguished *salonnière*. Her salons were a staple of French society, as one obituary observed upon her death in 1881, 'her salons were once the most brilliant in the gay capital. She had remarkable gifts and many accomplishments. Among her constant visitor [sic] were Victor Hugo, Lamartine, Michelet, Mignet, Barthelemy Saint-Hillaire, and Charles Dickens.'¹⁰⁴ Her social circle clearly overlapped with that of Mohl and Chapman.

Together, Belloc and Montgolfier translated *Uncle Tom's cabin*. Theirs was not the first French translation of Stowe's work, but the American author had not been wholly satisfied with previous French translations. Stowe believed that Belloc and Montgolfier would capture the spirit of the text that other versions had lacked. Stowe told the French translators she had heard highly of them, that 'people of taste have long appreciated the merit of the various translations of Mesdames L. Sw. Belloc and A. de Montgolfier'.¹⁰⁵ After it was completed, Stowe celebrated their version as 'the best French translation' of her novel.¹⁰⁶ Doris Kadish suggests that one of the key differences between this version of *Uncle Tom's cabin* and others was 'its willingness to grapple with the translation of the black dialect used in the novel'.¹⁰⁷

There was another popular anti-slavery text that Chapman was involved with, albeit to a lesser extent, in Paris, that highlights the value of her French social circle. This was the French version of Frederick Douglass's autobiography. First published in 1845, *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass, an American slave* sold in massive figures in the United States and the British Isles. As Roy has detailed, British abolitionist Kate Parkes began working on a French version of the celebrated memoir in late 1846. When the translation was complete, John Bishop Estlin began to seek a publisher in Paris.¹⁰⁸ Surprisingly, this proved a difficult task. The text was eventually published in 1848 by means of 'commission publishing', but it failed to make any real

¹⁰⁴ *Jewell Country Review*, 21 Apr. 1881. It appears that Montgolfier and Chapman remained in touch, with the former writing to the latter from Paris in May 1873, almost twenty years after Chapman's departure from France. Letter from Adélaïde De Montgolfier, Paris, France, to Maria Weston Chapman, May 1873, BPL. Another letter from Montgolfier to Chapman from 6 Nov. 1854 is also in the BPL.

¹⁰⁵ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *La case de l'Oncle Tom* (Paris, 1853). My translation.

¹⁰⁶ Doris Y. Kadish, 'Translation in context', in Doris Y. Kadish and Françoise Massardier-Kenney, eds., *Translating slavery, I: Gender and race in French abolitionist writing, 1780-1830* (Kent, OH, 2009), p. 52; Stowe, *Sunny memories of foreign lands*, II, p. 156.

¹⁰⁷ Kadish, 'Translation in context', p. 52.

¹⁰⁸ Michaël Roy, "'Throwing pearls before swine": the strange publication history of *Vie de Frédéric Douglass, Esclave Américain* (1848)', *Slavery and Abolition*, 40 (2019), pp. 727-49, at p. 734.

impact in France. As Roy describes, ‘the publication of *Vie de Frédéric Douglass* was an abysmal failure’.¹⁰⁹ He attributes this to the political climate in France at the time, suggesting that, as popular as it was in Britain and the United States, Douglass’s memoir could not pierce the tumultuous political climate that was capturing the attention of Parisian residents in 1848.¹¹⁰ Estlin decided to send the unsold copies to Chapman with the hope that she would share them with her influential social circle. Chapman was happy to oblige, responding to Estlin that she ‘hope[d] to be able to do a good work for the cause here with a part of the life of Douglass’.¹¹¹ It is important to note here that while Chapman was happy to distribute copies of Douglass’s autobiography for the benefit of the anti-slavery cause, historians like Hannah-Rose Murray have identified moments of racially fuelled paternalism when surveying the relationships of Black and white abolitionists. Murray suggests that Chapman was known for trying to ‘exert her control’ over Black abolitionists such as Douglass and Henry Highland Garnet.¹¹² Though her anti-slavery efforts cannot be understated, it is important to be aware of the racial dynamics at play within the wider contours of transatlantic abolitionism.

VII

Maria Weston Chapman arrived home from Europe on 24 November 1855. But her departure from Paris did not stop her European friends from continuing to support the anti-slavery cause. Nicholas Tourgueneff continued to donate until at least 1862, when he donated 100 francs for the twenty-eighth National Anti-Slavery Subscription Anniversary.¹¹³ He clearly stayed involved in the anti-slavery movement, as when William Lloyd Garrison travelled to Paris in 1867 he ‘dined with Monsieur Tourgueneff’, whom he labelled his ‘Russian admirer’.¹¹⁴ During the American Civil War, Mary Mohl donated 20 francs in support of enslaved Americans, and she remained in touch with the Weston Chapmans.¹¹⁵ Once the war concluded in 1865, Chapman took a step back from her activism. According to Lee Chambers, she believed that the passage of the thirteenth amendment that abolished slavery in the United States meant that the work of abolitionists was done.¹¹⁶ Chapman died in her hometown of Weymouth on 12 July 1885.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 740.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Maria Weston Chapman to John Bishop Estlin, 4 Jan. 1850, ASC, BPL, www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:7s75f585t.

¹¹² Hannah-Rose Murray, *Advocates of freedom: African American transatlantic abolitionism in the British Isles* (Cambridge, 2020), pp. 147–8.

¹¹³ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, 15 Feb. 1862.

¹¹⁴ William Lloyd Garrison to Helen Eliza Garrison, 7 June 1867, ASC, BPL, www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:cv43rz820.

¹¹⁵ As noted in a letter from Mohl to Elizabeth Reid in 1865 as quoted in Margaret Lesser, *Clarkey: a portrait in letters of Mary Clarke Mohl (1793–1883)* (Oxford, 1984), p. 174; Simpson, *Letters and recollections of Julius and Mary Mohl*, pp. 221–2.

¹¹⁶ Chambers, *The Weston sisters*, p. 44.

Upon her return to the United States, Garrison reflected on the fruits of her labours for their cause in France. According to Garrison, Chapman's residence in Paris had 'not only improved, but created opportunities to aid us, on British and French soil by speech, testimony, personal influence, the press, the preparation of circulars and tracts, a generous pecuniary co-operation, multitudinous letters, and well-directed blows, struck at the right time, and with irresistible force'.¹¹⁷ Garrison's words reinforce the significance of Chapman's activism in France. At its core, both Garrisonian abolitionism and American abolitionism more broadly were transatlantic movements which required the continued establishment and maintenance of relationships with distant allies. Chapman believed that in Paris she could contribute to the cause in a way that was not possible in Boston or London by spreading awareness of American slavery to a different audience. Looking at the growing list of Europeans in the pages of *The Liberty Bell* and in the reports of the Boston fair published in *The Liberator*, it seems plausible to say that she was correct.

For the study of transatlantic anti-slavery more broadly, Maria Weston Chapman's years in Paris highlight how we must look to the informal elements of abolitionism to uncover the essential contributions of women. By tracing her movements through the social scene of Paris, we can see that Chapman formed close bonds with leading European reformers who made, both in a tangible and intangible sense, important contributions. Though we as historians cannot see behind the doors of salons like Mohl's, by piecing together disparate material we can picture Chapman inside, conversing with guests like Hugo and Tocqueville about the evils of slavery, sharing American newspapers and copies of *The Liberty Bell*, and explaining to them how they could contribute to this important cause.

¹¹⁷ William Lloyd Garrison to Maria Weston Chapman, 24 Nov. 1855, ASC, BPL, www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:7s75dp241.