

1-1-2008

Writing the Wrongs : A Comparison of Two Female Slave Narratives

Miya Hunter-Willis

Follow this and additional works at: <http://mds.marshall.edu/etd>

 Part of the [African American Studies Commons](#), [American Literature Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hunter-Willis, Miya, "Writing the Wrongs : A Comparison of Two Female Slave Narratives" (2008). *Theses, Dissertations and Capstones*. Paper 658.

Writing the Wrongs: A Comparison of Two Female Slave Narratives

Thesis submitted to
The Graduate College of Marshall University

In partial fulfillment of
The requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
In History

By

Miya Hunter-Willis

Dr. Robert Sawrey, Ph.D., Committee Chairperson
Dr. Daniel Holbrook, Ph.D.
Dr. Jerome Handler, Ph.D.

Marshall University

October 2008

ABSTRACT

This thesis compares slave narratives written by Mattie J. Jackson and Kate Drumgoold. Both narrators recalled incidents that showed how slavery and the environment during the Reconstruction period created physical and psychological obstacles for women. Each narrator challenged the Cult of True Womanhood by showing that despite the stereotypes created to keep them subordinate there were African American women who successfully used their knowledge of white society to circumvent a system that tried to keep their race enslaved. Despite the 30 years that separate the publication of these two narratives, the legacy of education attainment emerges as a key part of survival and binds the narrators together under a common goal. Pursuing a formal education and becoming a part of academia emerges as the method that Jackson and Drumgoold use to improve their status and support others in the racial uplift movement. Finally this thesis suggests that the efforts of ex-slave women translated into an important contribution to our understanding of plantation life and the methods of resistance to slavery. The female slave narrative brings historians closer to recognizing the unique and often underestimated resilience of the African American community.

DEDICATION

To Grandma Dot: You were my inspiration for completing this project. Your support was a constant reminder especially when I felt like giving up. I hope to live up to your example.

To George: For the tough love and reminding me that “excuses are tools of the incompetent.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee for their patience during this project. Working long distance was tough, but we got through it. I still owe you oatmeal cookies.

Many thanks go to my Mom. A mother's love is unconditional. Even when you weren't around, I could hear your words echoing in my mind. Thank you for crying with me and rejoicing with me.

Paul & Shirley Willis, Penny Jacobs, and my extended family. Thanks for the phone calls, free babysitting, impromptu visits, and prayers. You kept me grounded and guaranteed that I would finish the degree.

To Ray, Jyl, Sarah, Issaia, and Kesha: Thank you for the laughter. Your jokes were right on time. There were many days when I looked forward to your company. Your friendships mean the world to me and I hope that I can return the favor.

My gratitude goes to LaUanah King-Cassell, my "Aunt Doodie," for her advice and words of wisdom.

Special thanks to Dr. Jerome Handler who was more than a committee member. You forced me to recommit myself to the thesis. You never gave up on me.

Special thanks to my "Grammar Queen", Christy Rockholt Baker, for taking the time to comb through this project and give it "fresh eyes."

Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank my husband, George. There aren't enough words to describe how much you guided the completion of this project. You believed in me even when I wanted to give up. Thank you for your thoughts, edits, and ability to discern when I needed Ben & Jerry's. You said that I have the "D", so now you have my "A."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: Removing the Veil.....	8
CHAPTER TWO: Mattie J. Jackson: Defiance Translating into Action.....	28
CHAPTER THREE: Kate Drumgoold: Finding Life Beyond the Shackles.....	53
CHAPTER FOUR: Education: Agent for Change.....	72
CHAPTER FIVE: Writing Themselves Out of the Margins.....	88
CONCLUSION.....	93
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	97
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	105

INTRODUCTION

Slave narratives represent a number of things to the history community. Written primarily over the 18th and 19th centuries, these intensely personal texts detail incidents from the lives of former slaves. The general consensus among scholars is that there were about 200 narratives published between 1760 and 1947 with nearly half being published before the end of the Civil War.¹ While many narrators wrote under the tutelage of abolitionists and some wrote to challenge the stereotypes professed by the slaveholding society, all formerly enslaved authors reflected on slavery as an emotionally and physically debilitating institution. Yet, these same narratives illustrated encouraging tales about slaves who successfully escaped, families that were reunited, and most importantly, people who defied expectations to become leaders in their communities. This genre of writing has emerged as an essential source of information about plantation life because it was told by people who had experienced slavery first hand.

¹ Sources vary as to the exact number of slave narratives that were written. Many include the former slave oral history initiative conducted by the Federal Writer's Project. That particular project, which will be referenced later, accounts for work that was not written by ex-slaves.; *True Tales of Bondage and Freedom: 19th Century Slave Narratives*, Publishers' Bindings Online: Slave Narrators. University of Alabama; [website]; available from http://bindings.lib.ua.edu/galler/slave_narratives.html; Internet; accessed 20 February 2008.; David Blight, "The Slave Narratives: A Genre and a Source," *History Now*, Issue 2, December 2004, in *The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History*, [on-line journal]; available from http://www.historynow.org/12_2004/historian3.html; Internet; accessed 20 February 2008.

Of the hundreds of slave narratives published only a few were written by women.² Well-known narratives by Frederick Douglass, Josiah Henson, and Henry Craft eloquently portrayed how African American bondsmen struggled to secure independence within a society that labeled them as less than human. While their accounts were informative, male ex-slave narrators failed, unsurprisingly, to accurately address and interpret how a woman survived under similar conditions. The obvious questions are why were so few narratives published by women, what did they write about, and why is the female perspective significant? Anna Julia Cooper, famed 19th century racial activist and feminist, theoretically answered those questions by stating, “‘tis woman’s strongest vindication for speaking that the world needs to hear her voice... Hers is every interest that has lacked an interpreter and a defender.”³

This thesis examines female ex-slave narrators and how they translated their lives into the narrative form. To narrow the scope, the lives of two women are compared through the events re-counted in their narratives. Mattie J. Jackson published her narrative, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson; Her Parentage, Experience of Eighteen Years in Slavery, Incidents During the War, Her Escape from Slavery: A True Story* in 1866 and Kate Drumgoold published *A Slave Girl’s Story, Being an Autobiography of Kate Drumgoold* in 1897. Combined, their accounts covered

² “‘I will be heard!’: Abolitionism in America,” Division of Rare & Manuscript Collections, Carl A. Kroch Library, Ithaca: Cornell University; [website]; available from <http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/abolitionism/narratives/Narratives.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 February 2008. The Division of Rare & Manuscript Collections at Cornell University was the only source that claims that 12% of slave narratives published were written by women. “North American Slave Narratives” found in *Documenting the American South*, Chapel Hill: The University Library of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004; [website]; available from <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/chronautobio.html>; Internet, accessed 22 September 2008. According to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s *Documenting the South collection*, 140 slave narratives were published between 1800-1899; this figure also accounts for narrators that published multiple versions of their narratives). Of those 140 narratives, women wrote only 14 narratives (about 10%) according to their list of publications. I believe that the disparity between the number of male and female-authored narratives is why we lack sufficient information about the female slave experience.

³ Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South* (Reprint, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988; Xenia: The Aldine Printing House, 1892), 121.

over 50 years of life-altering moments--poignant to both narrator and audience. Both narrators participated in traditional work roles (and experienced the frustrations) common to black women; those experiences make their accounts representative of the body of female authored narratives. Through their autobiographical accounts, Mattie Jackson and Kate Drumgoold were able to bring a voice to the female experience during slavery and demonstrate their dedication to education as an agent of progress in the years following their freedom.

Within the female slave narrative genre, feminist American historian Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and African American Studies and literary historian Henry Louis Gates relied on often-cited staples such as Linda Brent, Mary Prince, and Elizabeth Kleckly. I chose Mattie J. Jackson and Kate Drumgoold because little research has been dedicated to exploring their lives. Beyond being a footnote in major African American anthologies or listed as one of many slave narrators who lived through the Civil War, no scholarship analyzes the entire lives of Jackson or Drumgoold. Although, both narrators were atypical of freedwomen by having their memoirs published, some of the incidents highlighted in these two narratives were typical. For example, obtaining an education was a rare accomplishment for all freedwomen, but as part of the educated few, Mattie and Kate were among hundreds of freedwomen that used their skills to help other blacks attain some measure of social mobility. By examining Mattie and Kate's narratives instead of relying on interpretations from others, we come closer to understanding how different communities emerged out of the plantation experience. The narratives of lesser known women such as the two profiled in this thesis are important to expanding our knowledge base about the lives of enslaved women. There is diversity of experience within the genre of slave narratives and a wealth of information yet to be uncovered. Old and young, freedwomen and fugitive, all female slave narrators had an important perspective.

Mattie J. Jackson, born in 1846, described how working conditions deteriorated as the Civil War approached, recalled the abuse she suffered from cruel masters, and lamented the separation from her family members.⁴ Jackson's narrative covers about twenty years and ends at the beginning of the Reconstruction Era and provides her readers a realistic portrayal of how women endured slavery and the trials of freedom. Mattie wrote "to gain sympathy from the earnest friends of those who have been bound down by a dominant race in circumstances over which they had no control."⁵ Jackson's introduction began like many slave narratives—with a plea to white citizens. She implored her audience to use her story as real evidence of the horrors of slavery. English professor Laura Browder suggested that "the conditions of literacy in antebellum America ensured that black autobiographies of the period...were written almost exclusively for a white audience and in a form recognizable to and comfortable for readers."⁶ Mattie's declaration confirms Browder's assessment of this narrator's intended audience; however, this does not take away from the impact of Mattie's account. Mattie understood that she had to get the attention of citizens who could directly influence the system that held her and others like her in bondage. Thousands of slave women suffered at the hands of this cruel system, but they were not silent. By writing her narrative, Mattie hoped to encourage the "earnest friends" to become active in the fight against slavery and the discrimination that remained after the Civil War. Mattie appears to have been a spirited young woman whose narrative assumes an

⁴ I calculated the year based on inferences from the narrative. Mattie states that her younger sister Hester was sixteen in 1863; however, Hester is also mentioned as being sixteen in 1861. However, she states that she was seventeen when she makes her final escape in 1863.

⁵ Mattie Jackson and Dr. L.S. Thompson, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson; Her Parentage, Experience of Eighteen Years in Slavery, Incidents During the War, Her Escape from Slavery: A True Story* (Lawrence: Sentinel Office, 1866) Found in *Six Women's Slave Narratives*, With Introduction by William L. Andrews, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 1.

⁶ Laura Browder, *Slippery Characters: Ethnic Impersonators and American Identities* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 20. Browder's opinion is of particular interest because her specialization is autobiographies. She has written extensively on the history of American autobiographies and the development of identity politics.

assertive tone since she defied her master, successfully ran away to Indianapolis after numerous unsuccessful attempts, and dedicated her life to pursuing an education.

Kate Drumgoold, born in 1858 or 1859, seems to have been more passive than Mattie and accepting of her condition while enslaved.⁷ Published thirty-three years after Jackson's narrative, Drumgoold's account spans about thirty years beginning at the eve of the Civil War through her transition into the life of freedwoman.⁸ Drumgoold shared her childhood memories of growing up in a slave society, including the inevitable separation from her family. Kate's fondness for her mistress came forward as an integral part of her life and was evidence of the type of complex and at times maternal relationship that developed between children and the master's family. Her ultimate career as a teacher leads us to believe that Drumgoold found satisfaction in helping other African Americans find material success through educational attainment. Subsequently, Kate's narrative captured her lifelong personal struggle to find approval from whites and to secure the privileges possessed by white society.

Although a few decades separate the events discussed in the two narratives and the personalities of the authors are different, I argue that both Jackson and Drumgoold expressed the trials (and at times the naiveté) of being enslaved. While providing evidence that African American women never stopped fighting for a better life, Jackson and Drumgoold used the publication of their narratives to pursue an education; thus translating their slave experience into a source of self-improvement and uplift for the black community. Literary scholar Martha Cutter

⁷ Julia Fleischner, *Mastering Slavery: Memory, Family, and Identity in Women's Slave Narratives* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 134. Kate's narrative does not give an exact date of birth; however, like Mattie, she provides other dates that are used to presume her age.

⁸ A "freedwoman" was a former slave who was manumitted by her master or freed by the Emancipation Proclamation. A "freewoman" is a person who was never a slave. After reading narratives, I have seen where these terms are used interchangeably. For the purposes of this thesis, I will use freedwoman when referring to both Mattie Jackson and Kate Drumgoold since both were born into slavery.

posits that “language is intertwined with reality, and critically literate slave narrators will understand that particular uses of language reflect particular--and often oppressive--realities. And they will work to change these oppressive realities.”⁹ The incidents that the narrators chose reflected an interest in providing a comprehensive look at how slave women fared and eventually prevailed under harsh conditions and eventually prevailed. While the purpose of most slave narratives was to function as autobiography, as Cutter suggests, many narrators had an ultimate goal of supporting social reform. Julie Roy Jeffrey, historian of gender and education, researched how women responded to the abolition movement in *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement*. Jeffrey used minutes from women’s organization meetings, diaries, slave narratives, and newspaper articles as her main sources. Jeffrey mentioned an Ohio women’s organization that responded with shame and disgust after learning about the appalling conditions hiding behind the paternalist mask of slavery:

‘We should be less women...if the nameless wrongs of...the slaves our sex...did not fill us with horror’ and awaken ‘a deep personal interest in this matter.’ Slave women were ‘groaning under the yoke of an insupportable and most degrading bondage.’ Their masters, without any vestige of ‘manly shame,’ covered them with ‘merciless stripes’ and perpetrated ‘cruel outrage’ on their bodies. As a group of Ohio women explained, ‘while man is scourged a woman is more than scourged she is insulted too.’¹⁰

⁹ Martha J. Cutter, “Dismantling ‘the Master’s House’: Critical Literacy in Harriet Jacobs’ *Incidents in the Life of A Slave Girl*,” *Callaloo* 19.1 (1996): 209. Coined by educational theorists Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo, the term “critical literacy means a way by which an oppressed people can use the tools of their oppressors in order break their silence. The oppressor’s resources that once were used to keep their captives in bondage are transformed into tools of freedom. In this case, language kept slaves in a state of servitude including laws that forbade teaching blacks how to read, fugitive slave advertisements, and interpretations of the Bible. The slave narrative genre is founded upon the idea of critical literacy because ex-slaves understood that in order to let their voice be heard that they had to use a medium that could effectively reach their intended audience of white citizens.

¹⁰ Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement*. (Chapel Hill and London: University of NC Press, 1998), 41.

The Ohio women's comment and Jeffrey's assessment pertain directly to female slave narratives. All of these white women agreed that slavery was inherently wrong and an especially intolerable experience for black women. However, the Ohio women were not aware until it was brought to their attention. In this respect and as the following chapters will reveal, slave narratives are agents for change because they increased awareness about what women endured for those who did not experience slavery first hand.

CHAPTER ONE

Removing the Veil: Looking for the African American Voice

The role of slave narratives as a method of slave resistance has not been extensively explored. For decades, scholarship concerning the resistance efforts of African Americans has focused on revolts and running away, although daily activities such as feigning illness or slowing down field work have become part of the discussion surrounding slave resistance. Yet, the full impact of slave narratives on how African Americans translated their pain into power is a topic that deserves more attention. This thesis considers female authored narratives as important tools in combating existing stereotypes of slave women because Mattie Jackson and Kate Drumgoold depicted themselves as resourceful and industrious. On a larger scale, self-awareness and the desire to present a raw image of the slave woman's struggle is a common theme found in the corpus of female authored narratives that can not be adequately summarized by whites or black men. With narrative, we witness the evolution of the female slave from silent and child-like to resilient and ingenious. I place Mattie J. Jackson and Kate Drumgoold in the latter category; their narratives attest to the complex dynamics of the plantation community that went beyond that of master/slave, powerful/ powerless binaries.

The Realities of Studying Narrative

As in all autobiographies or memoirs, we can not assume the authors' full intentions, but we can trust that the narrative revealed incidents their authors considered important to their lives, and thus gave voice to the complexities of the slave existence. Gender historian, Sylvia Hoffert, concluded that "whether they were male or female, white or black, northern or southern, autobiographers chose very carefully what they were and were not willing to disclose about their

lives, usually for reasons that were known only to themselves.”¹ We must take slave narratives at face value because there are sufficient sources that support the existence of slavery. In fact, Civil War and Reconstruction historian Paul Escott noted that since former slaves left little written evidence about their experience, “The slave narratives offer the best evidence we will ever have on the feelings and attitudes of American slaves, and these records present a story which differs considerably from some of the best known historical studies.”² Therefore, narratives should be used in conjunction with other historical documents.

On the other hand, there are some historians who argued against the utility of slave narratives in understanding the lives of slaves and their contribution to our grasp of slavery. William Andrews’s 1986 text *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865* attacked slave narratives as a “rhetorical tool” used to “reconstruct personal history.”³ Andrews, an authority in Southern literature, suggested that there was a formula that ex-slaves used in order to craft their story. Therefore, slave narratives, by design, had issues of reliability that were hard to avoid. If slave narratives in general were questionable, then female slave narratives were also questionable. Similarly, 19th century African American literature and historical literature expert Carla Peterson remains one of the strongest critics of the reliability of slave narratives. Her article “Forced to Some Experiment: Novelization in the Writings of Harriet A. Jacobs, Harriet E. Wilson, and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper” insists that slave narratives are influenced by “a politics of publication” where the authors’ voice is

¹ Sylvia Hoffert, “Jane Grey Swisshelm, Elizabeth Keckley, and the Significance of Race Consciousness in American Women's History,” *Journal of Women's History* 13.3 (2001): 15.

² Paul D. Escott, *Slavery Remembered: Twentieth-Century Slave Narratives* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1979), 18.

³ William Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865* (Urbana, University of Illinois, 1986), xi.

constructed to fit the needs of abolitionist publishers.”⁴ Peterson argues that ex-slaves employed “fiction techniques” to respond to mounting criticism about the legitimacy of ex-slave writing.⁵

Yet, I believe that there is sufficient evidence that narratives are strong sources of information that permit a more comprehensive account of the antebellum period. All memoirs are subject to questions of reliability since the source of information will always be biased. What cannot be biased is the occurrence of an historical event. In this case, slavery happened—an irrefutable fact. Since slave narratives reflect an actual historical event, we can trust that those accounts offer personal perspectives on that experience.

For female ex-slaves, sharing experiences via narrative added a certain level of defiance to a system that willingly restricted women’s ability to control their minds and bodies. The “true cult of womanhood,” as defined by historian Barbara Welter, characterized what it meant to be a woman during the mid- 19th century. Welter wrote that, “women were encouraged to cultivate the virtues of domesticity, piety, purity, and submissiveness” within the confines of the household.⁶ Slave women were never able to live up to this restrictive definition for a variety of reasons.⁷ The slave woman labored outside of the home and often performed work similar to

⁴ Carla Peterson, “Forced to Some Experiment: Novelization in the Writings of Harriet A. Jacobs, Harriet E. Wilson, and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper,” in *Doers of the Word’: African-American Women Speakers and Writers in the North (1830-1880)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁶ Jeanne Boydston, “The Pastoralization of Housework” in *Women’s America: Refocusing the Past*, Sixth Edition, Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart, eds. (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 153.

⁷ Living up to the Cult of True Womanhood was a desire expressed by a number of free born and middle-class African Americans during the late 19th century. These African Americans believed that the only way to garner respect from white society was to emulate their social customs. To support this improvement effort, African Americans formed the uplift movement. A series of classes (e.g. hygiene, literacy) and efforts sponsored by churches and other civic organizations guided blacks toward adopting white mainstream ideals. Unfortunately, many of these theories were impossible standards for the enslaved and recently freed black women. This was difficult for many free born and middle-class African American women to understand because they did not have the same economic hardships.

men, particularly in the fields; gender division of work was rare. The African American woman's responsibility to her family was trumped by her duties to the master's kin. Not only did class and labor separate black women from the distinctions of womanhood, but race made her inferior as well. The slave woman was the antithesis of the white woman's virtue. As a result, redefining womanhood was a key aspect in the production of narratives.

Historiography

For this thesis, understanding how the voice of the enslaved was interpreted by early historians is important because it illustrates that for decades African Americans were not given an opportunity to interpret their experience in their own words and were pushed to the periphery of slavery studies. Scholarship involving the slave point of view continues to grow as more first-hand accounts are unearthed and analyzed. The approach taken by early 20th century historians to the study of slavery reflected the racist sentiments of the time when African Americans were viewed as marginal to white society. Fictionalized representations, found in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), Margaret Mitchell's book and movie adaptation *Gone With the Wind* (1936), and D.W. Griffith's notorious film *Birth of A Nation* (1919), were anchored in prejudiced thinking stemming from slavery. The persona of African Americans was characterized as infantile, incompetent, and generally incapable of achievement. This systematic attempt to label African Americans as unable to function independently of slavery led to a plethora of scientific and historically-based investigations.

Ulrich Phillips's classic and influential text *American Negro Slavery* (1918) explored the plantation economy from the slaveholder's point of view. Perhaps the most prominent text on slave life published during the first quarter of the 20th century, Phillips viewed and justified the behavior of slaveholders as a reality of a centuries old institution; he stated that, "[t]here was

injustice, oppression, brutality and heartburning in the régime,--but where in the struggling world are these absent?"⁸ North American slavery was no worse than slavery elsewhere because it was a viable method of securing and maintaining a cheap labor force. Unable to think or fend for themselves, African Americans were portrayed as being "easy going, amiable" people who succumbed to "seriocomic obedience."⁹ From Phillips's perspective, the degradation expressed in slave narratives was over dramatized and nothing more than a by-product of abolitionist propaganda. Phillips's theories kept ex-slaves in the bowels of antebellum literature and the credibility of the black experience questionable.

American Civil War and Reconstruction historian Kenneth Stampp, whose theories resulted in a major reinterpretation of Ulrich Phillips's work, opted to analyze slavery as a failed labor experiment where plantation owners took for granted that Africans would accept being in bondage.¹⁰ Unlike Phillips, Stampp did not find physical or biological reasons to support a predisposition to slavery for any particular race of people. Instead, he deduced that slave owners' racism led to the collapse of an economic system as well as Southern culture.¹¹ Stampp's study revealed that both slaves and owners were victim to the "peculiar institution"

⁸ Ulrich Phillips, *American Negro Slavery A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime*, (New York and London: D. Appleton & Company, 1918): 514; [book online]; available from the web, http://books.google.com/books?id=SDQOAAAIAAJ&dq=american+negro+slavery+ulrich+Phillips+free+book&pg=PP1&ots=7gRina41Mx&source=citation&sig=-jqmsW1_nI206g_Wxh5YbK0Z8XQc&hl=en&prev=http://www.google.com/search?q=American+Negro+Slavery,+Ulrich+Phillips,+free+book&hl=en&rls=HPIB.HPIB:2005-17.HPIB:en&sa=X&oi=print&ct=result&cd=1&cad=bottom-3results#PP_A514_M1.

⁹ Ibid., vii.

¹⁰ Kenneth Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956) , 6,8-14. From an indeterminate position, some argue, comparable to indentured servitude instead of lifetime servitude, African and African American people lived through legislation that tested the strength of the slavery empire as a viable economic enterprise. At the same time, scientists during the late 19th century searched for reasons to prove that Africans were suitable for perpetual servitude. Stampp concluded that these series of financial and scientific ideas helped slave owners to justify slavery and perpetuate myths of African American inferiority.

¹¹ Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution.*, 419-420.

because African Americans survived a traumatic experience that would severely divest them of almost everything they knew, while slave owners were “more or less blind to the ultimate consequences of the choices they were making” and were unable to adjust with the changing times.¹² Stamp’s theories put forth the idea that African Americans might resist bondage; however, he never suggested that former slaves succeeded and told about the experience through narrative.

Historian Stanley Elkins was responsible for another major line of thinking that accounted for the place of African Americans in slavery research. His text *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (1959) was extremely influential for a short period with regard to explaining the debilitating effect of American slavery on slaves.¹³ Perhaps the most critical part of Elkins’s conclusions was the often cited “Sambo” personality type that he insisted developed of North American slaves:

The result of the closed system of slavery in the United States was to destroy the personality of the slave; that is, to reduce his behavior to that of a child....Many slaves were docile, irresponsible people, perpetual children incapable of mature behavior....They had no initiative, and offered no resistance to slavery.¹⁴

This assessment resulted in an extremely damaging stereotype of African Americans that historians would refer to when discussing the merits of the ex-slave voice. Not only were they considered “perpetual children,” but Elkins insisted that slavery “was effective and pervasive enough to require that such infantilism be characterized as something much more basic than

¹² Ibid., 6.

¹³ Elkins, *Slavery*, 81-82. Unlike the Caribbean and Latin American “open-system” of slavery, North American slavery left Africans with no opportunities to merge within the existing society. The transfer of a cultural identity was a major indicator of how well a group of people acculturated during slavery. He cited a lack of government regulation as the main reason that slavery failed in North America.

¹⁴ Ibid., 81-82.

mere ‘accommodation’.’¹⁵ The “shock experience” and “new adjustment to absolute power” that made Africans forget their “cultural sanctions for behavior” thus leading to complete domination by slave owners.¹⁶ This explanation reinforced the racist views that previous historians made with regard to the antebellum and post-Reconstruction era progress of African Americans. With Elkins’s theory, African Americans remained in a cycle of societal and historical inferiority unable to insert their opinion into the discussion.

The research conducted by Ulrich Phillips, Kenneth Stampp, and Stanley Elkins represent arguments against the ability of African Americans to survive slavery with some modicum of intelligence, independence, and will to succeed. Other historians and critics responded to these damaging stereotypes with equally impressive conclusions about the how the enslaved felt, what they did, and how they lived their lives. The middle and late 20th century marked an important shift in historical studies as valuing the voice of marginally represented people became a key tenet of cultural relativism. In the 1970s, Herbert Gutman, the labor historian, wrote the pivotal text *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* and used census data and records from the Freedman’s Bureau to formulate a socio-cultural study of slavery that focused on the African American condition.¹⁷ He explained plantation life with respect to activity by slaves—including their refusal to accept their condition and attempts to form a new life with limited

¹⁵ Ibid., 86. He cited examples of revolutionary activity in other slave holding societies as proof that slaves in other parts of the world retained their culture and their “will to resist” unlike the passive North American slave. For Elkins, geographical comparisons of slave societies provided sufficient evidence for the inferiority for African Americans.

¹⁶ Stanley Elkins, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), 88. The “shock experience” that Elkins referred to was the Middle Passage. He identified different stages of repression that marked the African’s journey to the New World. Events such as being transported overseas and being forced to abandon every semblance of their culture made Africans prone to extreme subjugation not experienced in other slave cultures. Africans that survived this event were drained emotionally and psychologically which made it easier to control them.

¹⁷ Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), xvii.

resources. Gutman used his research to prove that it was possible to validate the perspective of African Americans; he incorporated slaves into historical discussions and valued their experience as worthy of investigation.

Similarly, African American Studies historian John Blassingame's *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* suggested that African Americans survived the brutality of slavery and created a hybrid culture with borrowed elements from African and European traditions. His research relied heavily on information obtained from African Americans—a method under-utilized in the field. Up to that time, Blassingame discarded the idea that the African American family was unable to survive slavery. He suggested that the stereotypes of slaves and planters developed in response to an institutionally determined set of roles where defining the laboring class as inferior bolstered not facts but socially held beliefs.¹⁸ From antebellum newspapers, court records, and diaries, Blassingame painted a portrait that did not romanticize the slave regime. Instead, he revealed that slaves were “a composite of the effects...of cruel and kind owners...and of several other factors” that would ensure survival.¹⁹ With respect to slave narratives, Blassingame's research supported the conditions that the narrators described. From separation from family to the way that slaves viewed themselves, *The Slave Community* gave credence to the slave experience and suggested that African Americans were actively involved in forging their own identity and fighting for freedom:

¹⁸ John Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 226- 233.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 321.

The most important aspect...was that slaves were not solely dependent on the white man's cultural frames of reference for their ideals and values. As long as the plantation black had cultural norms and ideals...he could preserve some personal autonomy..., total identification with planters, and internalization of the unflattering stereotypes calling for abject servility.²⁰

This major conclusion demonstrated that African Americans actively fought to secure a distinct place for themselves within the plantation society that was not dictated by someone else. His text elaborated on the many ways that the slave's dedication to preserving a modicum of independence led to a culture of resistance. Blassingame's treatment of the slave experience authenticated the variety of incidents shared in Jackson and Drumgoold's narratives. His research proved that a picture of plantation life is incomplete without acknowledging the powerful presence of the slave.²¹ Before Blassingame, historians rarely included the perspective of the enslaved when addressing slavery. The next section deals with the voice of African Americans and how narratives became a part of that voice.

Writing Themselves into History and Out of the Margins

African Americans researched and wrote about themselves in an attempt to add to the discussion about the voice of the slave. Expressing an opinion about the slave experience did not begin after the Civil War, during Reconstruction, or with the efforts of 20th century historians. Fighting for the voice of the enslaved began long before these moments in American history. Perhaps the most widely recognized mode was via the press. The establishment of black-owned and operated newspapers such as *Freedom's Journal* (1827), *The Weekly Advocate* (1837), *The National Reformer* (1838), and the highly recognized *The North Star* (1847) arrived in the early 19th century as some of the first circulated press written by African Americans about

²⁰ John Blassingame, *The Slave Community*, 147-148.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 340.

African Americans. An estimated forty black owned and edited newspapers existed prior to the Civil War.²² These publications addressed the pressing issues of the time including abolition, emigration versus assimilation, and most importantly black pride. Most importantly, Civil War and economic historians Ronald L. F. Davis and B. J. Krekorian pointed out that these “articles [body of literature written by black authors] aimed at increasing pride in their race among blacks, uplift pieces designed to encourage black readers to pursue education and life-improvement schemes.”²³ Although these publications were in limited release in the North and reached a small audience of African Americans, each newspaper offered the reader information to help support those that remained enslaved while providing freedmen the necessary tools to become progressive. The editors understood that in order to change how African Americans were treated, African Americans (and not whites) had to take responsibility for and change how they were viewed.

Other works produced by African Americans in the form of pamphlets, treatises, and speeches added to the flurry of writing that represented a deliberate effort to not only support anti-slavery activity, but change how blacks were perceived by whites and themselves. From abolition literature to self-improvement pamphlets, African American writers strived to change how they were perceived. Literary production generated by African Americans during the 19th century considered the former slaves not as victims but as people carrying a legacy of greatness. In fact, Elizabeth McHenry, professor of 19th century African American literature and intellectual history, insists that “blacks began establishing their own libraries, reading rooms and

²² Ronald L. F. Davis and B. J. Krekorian, “The Black Press in Antebellum America,” *Slavery in America*, (New York Life), no pagination; [web-site]; available from: http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/history/hs_es_press.htm; Internet; accessed 27 February 2008.

²³ Ibid.

literary societies as early as 1821” in response to a new desire to not only develop political consciousness but this movement encouraged freedmen and women to take ownership of how African Americans were represented in print.²⁴ Groups such as Philadelphia’s Colored Reading Society (1828) and New York’s Phoenix Society (1833) “provided regular opportunities for black writers to ‘publish’ original literary creations” and re-shape how blacks presented themselves to mainstream society.²⁵

Perhaps the most compelling written arguments against the inferiority of blacks were produced by great thinkers such as Martin Delany, W.E.B. DuBois, Alexander Crummell, and Booker T. Washington. As bulwarks of the social and political thought community of the late 19th century and early 20th, these African American men used their writing to discredit the negative images of blacks put forth by white society. Even more important was that these scholars infused their writing with first hand accounts from former slaves. In his examination of African American historians of the early 19th century, professor of American literature and Race Theory John Ernest suggests that these scholars “drew from multiple texts—white scholarship, primary sources, the Bible, classical histories, and oral testimonies—with an interpretative method grounded in the need to address the condition of oppression that defined the African-American community.”²⁶ They worked to replace the commonly accepted idea of black identity as simply a by-product of white oppression by referencing the experiences of fellow African Americans as the foundation of their arguments. Perhaps the most famous activist and scholar, W.E.B. DuBois wrote extensively about the need to rehabilitate the black race and redefine how

²⁴ Elizabeth McHenry, “Rereading Literacy Legacy: New Considerations of the 19th-Century African-American Reader and Writer,” *Callaloo* 22.2 (1999) :478.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 478-480.

²⁶ John Ernest, “Liberation Historiography: African American Historians before the Civil War,” *American Literary History* 14.3 (2002), 415; [database on-line], Project Muse; accessed 9 April 2006.

the race was labeled by mainstream white society. In his legendary collection of essays *The Souls of Black Folk*, DuBois poetically identified a series of issues that kept the race handicapped and slow to advance beyond the limitations imposed by slavery.²⁷ Originally published in 1903, this text addressed a wide range of issues meant to stimulate conversation about how to move the black race forward. His famous adversary, Booker T. Washington, also fought for a different perception of African Americans. While he advocated assimilation and industrial training, Washington also called for African Americans to elevate their image by producing quality work and taking responsibility for how they were represented.

More important than the newspapers, journals, and books published by black writers was the idea that their research focused primarily on accounts from black people. DuBois, Washington, and other black scholars reasoned that African Americans would be the best people to describe (and address) their condition. While the voice of women was still negligible, the inclusion of black testimonies was an important step forward to reconstructing the history of slavery. This line of thinking connects directly to slave narrative because only the formerly enslaved could give the most accurate account of what slave life was like. Failing to rely on the perspective of the black voice limited the scope of research on slavery.

Another effort to communicate the African American perspective emerged with the recognition of oral history. While slavery research sometimes may have suppressed the possibility that slaves had a point of view, the Federal Writers' Project's Slave Narrative Collection of the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) provided ample proof that slave, or rather, all Americans had a story to tell. Born out of the Depression and a need to create jobs for writers, the W.P.A. hired unemployed writers during the 1930's to document America's living

²⁷ W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Henry Louis Gates and Terri Hume Oliver (Reprint, New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1999), 17.

history. Sociologist and American Studies professor Norman Yetman described the urgency to record these events as a “revitalization...marked by a concerted quest for a ‘usable’ past, one that would impart a sense of self-respect, dignity, and identity to African Americans.”²⁸ The last generation of former slaves was dying and documenting their lives was a necessity. The project entitled *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves* (Washington, D.C., 1941) is comprised of photographs and oral histories of ex-slaves from seventeen Southern states. This inclusive effort to expand our knowledge of slave life brought the earliest slavery research to an important crossroads. For the first time, a major effort to collect first-hand testimonies from ex-slaves was deemed important. Oral history such as the work produced by the W.P.A. showed how African Americans emerged from slavery as conquerors of their horrible past. Each survivor recounted events from benign recollections of a day’s work to heartfelt memories of lost loved ones. Information garnered from the W.P.A. collections opened the door for more diverse sources of information such as slave narratives that placed African Americans in a more accurate light.

Beyond written and oral history describing slavery, volumes have been dedicated to identifying and analyzing the different ways that slaves refused to comply with their status. From collective and individual efforts to violent and passive methods, the slave’s ability to challenge the rules ran the spectrum as does the historical community’s attempts to consolidate these events into one definitive version of the truth. The gradual acceptance of the W.P.A.’s efforts provided an outlet for more African American authored texts to be considered as acceptable perspectives of history. For example, Escott capitalized on the relative lack of

²⁸ Norman Yetman, “Slave Narratives and the New Debate about Slavery,” in *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936-1938*. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress and Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress. 23 March 2001; [website]; available from <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snintro04.html>; Internet; accessed 25 January 2008.

research on W.P.A. narratives and used them as the focus of his book *Slavery Remembered*. He declared that there were few written accounts generated by slaves, so we may never know everything about what it was like to be a slave. However, Escott concluded, “[T]he slave narratives offer the best evidence we will ever have on the feelings and attitudes of American’s slaves, and these records present a story which differs considerably from some of the best known historical studies.”²⁹ The resurgence of slave narrative studies in the 1970s sparked a new interest in creating a more inclusive perspective of slavery and finally led to a wider acknowledgment of the African American voice.

As mentioned earlier, the African American voice always existed; rather, finding the right medium to share this perspective was the concern. Slave narratives were presented as significant documentation of the slave experience. Narratives written by Henry Bibb, famed activist Frederick Douglass, and a host of other former slaves emphasized what the African American saw, felt, and did during slavery. Countless recollections filled the pages of these personal accounts and awakened historical scholars to the substantive nature of the black experience. The public knew that slaves worked in the fields, but now they could read about what it felt like to work from sun up to sun down. The public knew that slaves were sold away from their families, but now they could read about the whipping a mother endured when she held on to her child for too long at the auction block. In these pages, narrators not only told their side of a story, but also they attempted to define themselves as conquerors over an institution that sought to keep them mentally bound.

Eager to fully grasp the significance of these rare texts, historians and literary scholars alike analyzed the merits of slave narratives. Literary critics Charles Davis and Henry Louis

²⁹ Escott, *Slavery Remembered*, 18.

Gates echoed the postmodernist arguments in their edited collection of essays called *The Slave's Narrative*.³⁰ Davis and Gates suggested that historians should use the “hermeneutical tools” from other disciplines to attain a more comprehensive interpretation of narratives.³¹ Daniel Shea, American literature professor, agreed with Davis and Gates in that there are specific methods to understanding the construction of slave narratives. In his article “The Prehistory of American Autobiography,” Shea suggested that writing offered people an opportunity to create a place in history and share that experience.³²

Literary scholars such as John Sekora placed value in the slave narrative as a source of historical information. His article “Black Message/White Envelope: Genre, Authenticity, and Authority in the Antebellum Slave Narrative” traced the history of slave narratives and their influence on colonial studies.³³ He paid particular attention to narratives written by George White, Josiah Henson, Frederick Douglass, and other ex-slave men. Sekora insisted that narratives provided the only gateway to accurately determine slave life and portray the African American attempt to survive. Bernard Bell, an African American literature specialist, also argued for an examination of slave narratives as viable historical sources in his book *The Afro-*

³⁰ Charles Davis and Henry Louis Gates, ed., *The Slave's Narrative* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) , Preface.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Daniel Shea, “The Prehistory of American Autobiography,” in *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Paul John Eakin (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991) , 40. More specifically, the centrifugal republic created a space where “language and action instinctively reject conceptions of the ideal” and no one could safely claim the center (40). The autobiographer should be treated as an archeological artifact. He uses examples of autobiographies written by the American ancestors to demonstrate how pluralism shaped our identity and guided the production of narratives by Others.

³³ John Sekora, “Black Message/White Envelope: Genre, Authenticity, and Authority in the Antebellum Slave Narrative,” *Callalo* 32 (Summer 1987) : 491,493.

American Novel and Its Tradition.³⁴ Bell theorized that African American novelists used their “bicultural tradition” to develop a distinct voice thus providing a method of resistance to the domination inherent in mainstream American society.³⁵ By using accounts written by Olaudah Equiano and Frederick Douglass, Bell identified slave narratives as the first space where African Americans could flesh out their issues of identity.³⁶ Both Sekora and Bell emphasize that slave narratives added a crucial component to constructing a better understanding of the slave’s opposition to their condition.

Despite the fact that slave narratives introduced the ex-slave as an active participant in plantation life with a distinct perspective, the voice of slave women remained hidden. While men and women faced indescribable torture at the hands of slavery, slave women endured “the humiliation and pain of sexual exploitation” in addition to the unthinkable suffering experienced by all.³⁷ Tales of rape and forced concubinage at the hands of the master and jealousy and undeserved wrath from the mistress showed that slave women were subjected to countless acts of cruelty, both mental and physical. Through the narrative genre, women documented the unique circumstances surrounding the dire situation of the female slave.³⁸

³⁴ Bernard Bell, *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), Preface.

³⁵ Bi-cultural tradition means the fusion of distinct African and North American customs. In his argument, Bell supports the theory that North American slaves were able to retain some of their African roots. This refutes the closed slavery system argument put forth by Elkins.

³⁶ Bell, *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition*, xiv.

³⁷ Andrea Starr Alonzo, “A Study of Two Women’s Slave Narratives: *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and *The History of Mary Prince*,” Found in ‘*We specialize in the Wholly Impossible: A Reader in Black Women’s History*, eds. Darlene Clark Hine et al. (Brooklyn: Carlson, 1995), 145.

³⁸ This does not suggest that enslaved men never exploited slave women sexually. As the master, white men exerted authority over the living conditions of the slaves. I am also not suggesting that black men were never raped, but the act would never result in adding children to the property.

In the 1980s, Hazel Carby, cultural historian and feminist, suggested that the black female perspective resides on the periphery of the already marginal women's studies.³⁹ Her book *Reconstructing Womanhood* analyzed the growth of 19th century black female novelists and how they confronted an ideology of womanhood that denied them access to the same privileges secured by white women.⁴⁰ She investigated diaries, works of fiction, journal articles, and a host of other literary sources written by black women. Carby revealed that race and gender conflicts created power struggles that left black women tasked with finding their own identity. These movements were often attached to political endeavors that resisted the needs of and failed to address the issues specific to black women.⁴¹ Writing about themselves offered black women an opportunity to re-shape how they were represented:

In slave narratives written by black women the authors placed in the foreground their active roles as historical agents as opposed to passive subjects; represented as acting their own visions, they are seen to take decisions over their own lives. They document their sufferings and brutal treatment but in a context that is also the story of resistance to that brutality.⁴²

In this context, slave narratives are an important source of information that can impact the interpretation of antebellum scholarship. Narratives offered historians a direct account of plantation life from the female standpoint that others including male ex-slaves failed to address. More importantly, slave narratives offered women an opportunity to change how society perceived them.

³⁹ Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 11.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 6, 44.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 36.

Deborah Gray White's work in *Ar'n't I A Woman?: Females in the Plantation South* offered another way to consider the role of black women by changing how we think about slavery resources.⁴³ From an African American Studies and American women's historian's perspective, she declared that the double bind of sex and race made slavery a completely different experience for black women that can never be adequately compared to accounts from white men and women or black men.⁴⁴ Through first-hand accounts including narratives, letters, diary entries, and oral interviews from black women, White pieced together an analysis in which black women were ever-present and critical to the maintenance of the plantation. Most importantly, her research defines black women not as elusive pawns, but as resourceful networks of resistance and survival as documented in their writing.⁴⁵ This conclusion is major on two levels. First, White's analysis proves that there are sufficient materials available to explore the antebellum black female voice. We must consider a variety of methods of communication, including narratives, as evidence that black women constructed their own identity. Paying attention to the mention or presence of black women in other sources may leave more clues to unlocking this under-examined player in history. Second, White's text suggested that while black women have received more attention as of late, their role did not end with the abolition of slavery. In fact, black women continued to respond with great strength with each mounting challenge. The skills female ex-slaves learned during enslavement made the black woman a rock for her community. With respect to White's observations, Mattie J. Jackson and Kate

⁴³ Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I A Woman?: Females in the Plantation South* (New York: Norton, 1985), 8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 119.

Drumgoold are good examples of how narrative translated the efforts, thoughts, and feelings of enslaved black women.

A few years after White, Shirley Yee, Women's Studies historian achieved the same goals as White and Carby by situating antebellum writing as a way to "fill in the large gaps in African American and women's history."⁴⁶ Yee's text, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860*, combined an investigation of social scientific records such as membership lists of antislavery societies and churches with the written documents that women left behind such as meeting agendas and letters.⁴⁷ Yee suggested that African American women resisted stereotypes by proving to mainstream America that blacks could succeed at the same activities as whites. These women joined political organizations, formed clubs that promoted ideals of domesticity, and used churches to host classes on self-improvement. Writing was one such example of a black women's ability to dismantle widely held beliefs and contribute to racial uplift. Publishing a narrative served as defiance because women shared their experiences from their point of view.

Each of the above scholars stressed that African American women's writing was a significant tool for providing a comprehensive interpretation of slave life. These historians and scholars from other disciplines laid the groundwork for placing female slave narratives at the crux of resistance and survival efforts. Former enslaved female narrators used their writing as a way to expose how society treated them while clarifying the definition of black womanhood. This thesis expands the research begun by historians interested in the enslaved female voice by interpreting two female authored slave narratives and how both women addressed the impact that

⁴⁶ Shirley Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

certain incidents had on their lives. Through the lives of Mattie J. Jackson and Kate Drumgoold, we situate female slave narratives within a model of self-expression.

The research surrounding slave narrative shows that most literary experts and historians alike believe that these documents are important to our understanding of slavery and the lives of the enslaved. In the following chapters, the narratives of Mattie Jackson and Kate Drumgoold will illustrate this point.

CHAPTER TWO

Mattie J. Jackson: Defiance Translating into Action

Mattie Jane Jackson shared her experience through the pages of her narrative, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson; Her Parentage, Experience of Eighteen Years in Slavery, Incidents During the War, Her Escape from Slavery: A True Story*. She was born in 1846 in Bremen, Missouri to slave parents Ellen Turner, a cook, and Westly Jackson, a slave preacher.¹ However, her account begins with a brief summary of her family history dating back to her paternal great-grandfather who was captured in Africa. Mattie's grandfather was born in New York, emancipated by his master, and captured by a slave trader and sold in St. Charles, Missouri. After a failed attempt at running away, grandfather Jackson started a family and remained a part of slave society in the St. Louis, Missouri area.

Missouri was described as “a State of small slaveholdings” and the household where the Jackson family lived was no different.² By 1850, slaves represented about 13% (87,422 according to U.S. census data) of the total population of Missouri with most slaveholding families owning less than five slaves.³ Most slaves were listed as house servants, as contrasted with field hands typical of southern plantations.⁴ While the threat of being sold down the river (Missouri or Mississippi) was present, Missouri was not known for frequent slave trading like Alabama, Georgia, and other southern states. For slaves like Ellen and Westly, residing close to

¹ Westly was described as being uneducated in the formal sense but who “administered the Word of God according to the dictation and revelation of the spirit” (6).

² The Missouri Compromise of 1820 established Missouri as a slave state within the union and cultivated a much different environment than the southern plantations. As a border state, there was legislation that kept new slaveholders from migrating to the state and prevented current occupants from acquiring more slaves from the trade.

³ Harrison Trexler, *Slavery in Missouri, 1804-1865* (Baltimore.: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1914) , 18-19.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

non-slave states was a constant reminder of freedom; for Mattie, this proximity guided her ambitions as shown in her narrative.

Mattie was one of three daughters (Sarah Ann and Esther J were the others) born to Westley and Ellen. As was often the practice in eastern Missouri, the entire family was owned by the same master. The Jackson family lived together for about three years as the property of James Harris until they were sold to pay Harris's debts. Mattie and Esther stayed with Ellen and were sold to Charles Canory in St. Charles County, Missouri while Westly was sold to a fellow in the neighboring county.⁵ In 1849, Westly ran away to Chicago and was never heard of again after failed attempts to rescue his family.⁶ Mattie's intimate account began after her father's successful escape and her remaining family's first attempt to run away in 1851.⁷ Following her first runaway attempt, the narrative illustrates how Mattie's life evolved in response to the development of the Civil War. The reader follows Mattie through three masters and her final escape to freedom in 1863. The images of physical punishment, the epic-like attempts to escape slavery, and life as a fugitive are the focus of my examination of this narrative.

After unsuccessfully attempting to run away (discussed in following paragraphs), Mattie spent most of her slave life in St. Louis, Missouri as the property of William Lewis and his wife.⁸ Her mother was a cook while Mattie and her sister were house servants. Described as a "severe

⁵ The third daughter, Sarah Ann, died of causes not discussed in the narrative. Mattie refers to her other sister as Esther at the beginning of the narrative, but the spelling changes to Hester at the end. I am positive that this is not a fourth sister from the Jackson union or a daughter from Ellen's marriage to George Brown. The Brown relationship only produced a son who is unnamed in the narrative.

⁶ Mattie Jackson and Dr. L.S. Thompson. *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson; Her Parentage, Experience of Eighteen Years in Slavery, Incidents During the War, Her Escape from Slavery: A True Story* (Lawrence: Sentinel Office, 1866) Found in *Six Women's Slave Narratives*. With Introduction by William L. Andrews (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 4-5.

⁷ This year, 1851, is an estimate based on Mattie stating that they left two years after her father escaped.

⁸ Ellen, Mattie, and Esther's attempt to escape from Charles Canory will be discussed later.

master,” Mr. Lewis made an impression on Mattie and his family left her with a host of terrible memories.⁹ Slave masters and overseers commonly inflicted physical and emotional pain on their slaves. Depending on the severity of the offense, slaves—men and women alike—were reprimanded. For example, slaves were publicly whipped to show other slaves what would happen if there was suspicion or disobedience toward any white person.¹⁰ Captured runaway slaves were often confined to an iron collar, could have an appendage amputated to prevent future escapes, or were branded to permanently identify them as property.¹¹ For Mattie and her family, simply being a slave was reason enough to be abused.

Mistresses often punished slaves in the absence of the master or served as an agent by keeping the master informed of disobedience. Mrs. Lewis acted in both capacities. At times, the mistress could be more relentless than the man of the house. Antebellum historian Elizabeth Fox-Genovese dedicated a book to the vacillating relationship between white mistresses and female slaves in *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South*. Fox-Genovese analyzed journals and letters written by women from wealthy mistresses to black slaves to discuss life in slave holding communities. She posited that from an early age, all women were taught their respective position inside the established plantation hierarchy. White women were expected to know how to control their slaves and manage the responsibilities

⁹ Jackson and Thompson, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson*, 7.

¹⁰ Jerome S. Handler and Michael L. Tuite, “Whipping Slaves, Missouri, 1856,” *The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas: A Visual Record*, The Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and The Digital Media Lab, the University of Virginia Library. 2006. [website] <http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/index.php> ; Internet, accessed 26 April 2008.

¹¹ Jerome S. Handler and Michael L. Tuite “Iron Collar on Fugitive Slave, Missouri, 1862” *The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas: A Visual Record*, The Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and The Digital Media Lab, the University of Virginia Library. 2006. [website] <http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/index.php> ; Internet, accessed 26 April 2008.

associated with maintaining the everyday management of the house.¹² As an authority figure, the mistress often embodied the same cruel characteristics of the master in that “mistresses could be demanding and quick with their whips in everyday life. They could also be brutal.”¹³ Fox-Genovese supported her position with examples from Sarah Gayle and Anna King, both white household mistresses, as well as statements from slaves Alice Shaw, Ida Adkins and Sally Brown.¹⁴ Each mistress lamented the burdens of having to be concerned about the slaves’ welfare; at the same time, the mistresses carped on the ineptitude of their servants and bickered with the more experienced (and often times most respected) of them. The slaves complained about the incompetence of their mistresses and how that relationship led to miscommunication. They were punished regularly. In so many words, each woman made it clear that the mistress’s propensity toward discipline reflected a common experience for slave women. Mattie J. Jackson was no stranger to the violent temperaments of slave owners. Upon the reader’s first introduction to the Lewis family, Mattie commented on her mistress’s violent treatment:

His wife was constantly pulling our ears, snapping us with her thimble, rapping us on the head and the sides of it. It appeared impossible to please her. When we first went to Mr. L.'s [Lewis] they had a cowhide which she used to inflict on a little slave girl she previously owned, nearly every night. This was done to learn the little girl to wake early to wait on her children.”¹⁵

Whether exerting her influence as second-in-command or acting in the interest of her household, Mrs. Lewis clearly took her position as a slaveholding woman very seriously. In accordance with the prevailing belief of whites at the time, “the best way to develop good house

¹² Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988) , 115-117.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 152-154.

¹⁵ Jackson and Thompson, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson*, 7.

servants...was to raise them” and Mrs. Lewis used violence as an extension of her authority.¹⁶

This example shows that Mattie and those that came before her were no strangers to acts of physical maltreatment. Regardless of the severity, Mattie pointed out that white women participated in the punishment inflicted upon slaves.

Mattie was a target of her mistress’s temper and she came to expect arbitrary beatings as a part of life in the Lewis household. Since whites dictated the rules, justification to harm slaves was never needed. She recalled that “[m]y mistress was more enraged than ever--nothing pleased her. One evening... she, in a terrible rage, declared I should be punished that night. I did not know the cause, neither did she.”¹⁷ In later paragraphs, Mattie explained that these outbreaks were common especially when the presence of Union soldiers became a constant reminder that their way of life was coming to an end. This brief recollection demonstrates that Mrs. Lewis was guided by emotion in that particular incident; she would not hesitate to inflict punishment without reasonable cause. Fox-Genovese reasoned that part of the cruelty of slavery resided in the deliberate and unjustified violence inflicted by slaveholders and their agents:

More commonly, the white folks rather than conscience administered the whippings. For the slave girl, the quick blows and occasional whippings rapidly became an expected feature of everyday life...Random cruelty and violence were part of what whites did—part of what they were.¹⁸

Borrowing from Fox-Genovese’s explanation, conscience did play a role; rather, the appeal of maintaining absolute control over slaves was motivation enough for slaveholders to use violence as a means of authority. As a result, the slaveholder could use any situation as justification for

¹⁶ Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 153.

¹⁷ Jackson and Thompson, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson*, 11.

¹⁸ Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 154.

brutality. With this understanding, slave women had reason enough to fear the mistress. On the other hand, these outbursts revealed that some white women were capricious and unsure of how to effectively manage their household. The white mistress's vulnerability was something that slave women realized also and would use to their advantage as the opportunity arose.

The presence of the Union Army threatened the slavery regime by interrupting the daily management of many Southern plantations and small estates alike. Many circumstances caused planters to worry about their property—both chattel and land.¹⁹ Inflicting harsher punishments to deter fugitive slaves, threatening to sell incorrigible slaves, and increasing work loads to discourage slaves from being nosy became a part of wartime life. With respect to the impact of the Civil War, Emmy Werner, a child psychologist, suggests that the lives of slave children in the South did not change much. The presence of troops made for lively discussion amongst adults, but children were relatively unaffected unless they were sent to fugitive shelters.²⁰ However, Werner states that because Missouri was part of the Union, their slaves were not considered in emancipation discussions. Promises of emancipation were guaranteed to slaves in the Confederacy. This left slaves like Mattie and her siblings in an indeterminate position and ready to run away.

Mattie and her mother, Ellen, were aware of how the war influenced their masters' behavior. As a staunch supporter of the Confederacy, Mrs. Lewis was vocal about her disgust over the recent infiltration of Union soldiers in the area. On many occasions, she openly commented about the impending drama in front of Mattie. One particular incident transpired

¹⁹ Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 262-263.

²⁰ Emmy Werner, *Reluctant Witness: Children's Voices from the Civil War* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 44. I kept Werner's information because her specialty is child psychology during traumatic historical periods. Her ongoing research includes child survivors of the Pioneer West, Holocaust, and World War II.

following the encampment and subsequent imprisonment of Confederate soldiers near the Lewis property. In response to the recent news, Mattie boldly sparred with Mrs. Lewis and took an opportunity to assert herself:

She [Mrs. Lewis] went immediately and selected a switch. She placed it in the corner of the room to await the return of her husband at night for him to whip me. As I was not pleased with the idea of a whipping I bent the switch in the shape of W, which was the first letter of his name...I was permitted to attend to my work without interruption until three weeks after. One morning I entered Mrs. Lewis' room, and she was in a room adjoining, complaining of something I had neglected. Mr. L. then enquired if I had done my work. I told him I had. She then flew into a rage and told him I was saucy, and to strike me, and he immediately gave me a severe blow with a stick of wood, which inflicted a deep wound upon my head. The blood ran over my clothing, which gave me a frightful appearance. Mr. Lewis then ordered me to change my clothing immediately. As I did not obey he became more enraged, and pulled me into another room and threw me on the floor, placed his knee on my stomach, slapped me on the face and beat me with his fist... She [Mrs. Lewis] was highly gratified with my appropriate treatment, as she called it.²¹

Mattie knew that Mrs. Lewis was particularly upset about the deterioration of the Confederate army, but she chose to comment on the situation anyway. We do not know if this incident was exaggerated, but we can infer that Mattie tried to make a point by responding in opposition to Mrs. Lewis. Mattie wanted to show that, although she was a slave, she was still observant. It is possible that Mattie endured more severe clashes with her owners. Mrs. Lewis never provided an explanation or gave reasons for why Mattie was targeted. Instead, punishment was to reinforce Mattie's status as a slave and the Lewises's power over her. We can infer from this particular incident that Mrs. Lewis might have been right about Mattie's "saucy" attitude. Mattie seemed to not easily be threatened, even when violence loomed near. This behavior distinguished Mattie from other domestic slaves and might have played a key role in her survival. Mattie seemed willing to take risks and face uncertain circumstances with courage; her bold demeanor could have prepared her to withstand the physical demands of being a fugitive.

²¹ Jackson and Thompson, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson*, 11-12.

In Mattie's case, detailing events of violence strengthened the stereotype of the cruel mistress. Mrs. Lewis represented the type of unwarranted wickedness that characterized many of the mistresses of the period. Including this confrontation helped Mattie show readers that all white women did not live up to society's virtuous expectations outlined by the cult of womanhood; culpability for slavery's cruelty was shared by white men and women alike. The main focus of the narrative does not concern whether the incident occurred exactly as Jackson recorded. Rather, Mattie's ability to show that women like Mrs. Lewis existed overrides the details presented in the account.

Most telling about the scenes of violence was that Mattie revealed her desire to openly communicate with her audience about the evil that plagued the lives of thousands of former slaves. From her prologue, we know that Mattie identified those who were sympathetic to slaves as her main audience. We can deduce that her audience included the same class of white women that Julie Jeffrey investigated. In order for her story to be effective, Mattie had to understand the dynamics of gender and social status. From Mattie's accounts about how the war shaped the attitudes of her owners and their treatment of the slaves, it is not hard to recognize the political impact that revealing these incidents would have on those who had been in the antislavery movement. If white women empathized with what they read, slave narrators like Mattie were better equipped to find asylum, should they escape slavery. What is more, these same white women could help former slaves transition into freedom via political support for antidiscrimination legislation or changed attitudes toward the welfare of all women.

The last recorded incident of cruelty occurred immediately before Mattie made her final escape to freedom. She was sold to Captain Ephraim Frisbee in 1863 after four weeks in a slave

trader's yard in Louisville, Kentucky.²² Mattie and her family were separated as punishment for trying and almost succeeding in being rescued by Union soldiers while still owned by Mr. Lewis. The anguish of being torn away from her mother and siblings surely resulted in mental agony for Mattie. With Captain Frisbee's family, Mattie does not mention specific incidents like she did with the Lewis family. Instead, she summarizes the six month experience as being the most distressing period of her life. Without the support of her family, Mattie does not seem like the same sassy woman that was introduced in earlier chapters:

I fared worse than either of the family. I was not allowed enough to eat, exposed to the cold, and not allowed through the cold winter to thoroughly warm myself once a month. The house was very large, and I could gain no access to the fire. I was kept constantly at work of the heaviest kind,--compelled to move heavy trunks and boxes-- many times to wash till ten and twelve o'clock at night...My health has been impaired from that time to the present. I have a severe pain in my side by the slightest over exertion. In the Winter I suffer intensely with cold, and cannot get warm unless in a room heated to eighty degrees. I am infirm and burdened with the influence of slavery, whose impress will ever remain on my mind and body.²³

In her brief description of life with the Frisbee family, Mattie related the most deplorable conditions presented in the narrative. Although the Frisbee family did not use violence like the Lewis family, they found another way to remind Mattie of her status as a slave. The harsh working conditions, insufficient food allotment, and inadequate heating in her living quarters rivaled the constant threat of beatings characteristic of the Lewis family.

Not only did Mattie discuss her personal experiences with physical violence, but she also commented on other slave owners who inflicted terrible punishments on their slaves. One of these owners was her mistress's sister, Mrs. Larry. Mr. Lewis and Mr. Larry became business partners and lent their slaves to each other. Mattie recalled, "It unfortunately fell to my lot to

²² Jackson and Thompson, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson*, 20.

²³ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

live with Mrs. Larry...which rendered my condition worse than the first. My master even disapproved of my ill treatment and took me to another place."²⁴ Although Mattie never disclosed the specifics of what happened in the Larry household, she quickly stated that others, even the self-proclaimed cruel master Mr. Lewis, disagreed with the extreme treatment—a observation that should convince an outsider that the situation was very grim. On the other hand, Mr. Lewis was probably protecting his investment. A sick, injured, or old slave was not economically productive and was therefore a liability. It is odd that Mattie, who detailed her problems with Mrs. Lewis, failed to provide more information about the violence in the Larry household.

Another harsh master was Mr. Lewis's brother, Benjamin. According to Mattie's description, "Benjamin was a more severe slave master than the one who owned me."²⁵ Mattie described the extent of his cruelty:

He was very severe in his punishments. He used to extend his victim, fastened to a beam, with hands and feet tied, and inflict from fifty to three hundred lashes, laying their flesh entirely open, then bathe their quivering wounds with brine, and, through his nose, in a slow rebel tone he would tell them "You'd better walk a fair chalk line or else I'll give yer twice as much."²⁶

Mattie did not state whether she personally experienced this level of physical torture at the hands of Benjamin Lewis. However, the mere mention of this type of brutality suggests that she witnessed how his slaves were treated. We can gather that Mattie chose to mention Benjamin Lewis to show her audience that there were masters whose severity knew virtually no limit. This was a powerful argument against slavery that could impact the opinions of her audience.

²⁴ Ibid., 8.

²⁵ Ibid., 30.

²⁶ Ibid.

Through her accounts of physical punishment, Mattie J. Jackson exposed her readers to what she and others had endured. While male narrators discussed violence on the plantation, none could relate to incidents involving women because it starkly contrasted to the image of femininity put forth by white society. White men placed white middle class women on a pedestal of virtue while they viewed black women in opposite terms. Cultural historian and Women's Studies professor Kathleen Wilson suggested that "law and custom worked to put white women on a pedestal that emphasized the cultural distinctions of 'race' as it endowed planter society with respectability."²⁷ As a result, black women were labeled inferior legally and culturally, thus sentenced to a life without protection from acts of violence. Similarly, slave women were more vulnerable to sexual assault. Harriet Jacobs made this point clear in her influential narrative *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. She spent the majority of her slave life fighting sexual advances from her master, Mr. Flint.²⁸ Without guaranteed legal protection, ineffectual safety measures provided by loved ones, particularly slave men, or influence from the mistress, many young slave women were defenseless against the demands of their white masters.²⁹ This contrast made Mattie's story that much more distinctive because her account showed readers that women were suffering as badly as men. Gender did not protect black women from the whip and other physical abuse.³⁰

²⁷ Kathleen Wilson, "British Women and empire," found in *Women's History: Britain, 1700-1850: an Introduction*, ed Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (London and New York: Routledge, 2005) , 274. I used Dr. Wilson because she has done extensive work on gender studies and the development of feminist ideologies.

²⁸ Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Boston, 1861. Reprint, Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2001) , 26-27.

²⁹ This is not to say that slave women did not resist and members of the slave community or plantation authority that did not provide roadblocks for sexually perverse masters. Sexually abused slaves could instigate backlash from others. Rather, the overwhelming majority of slaveholders built a community where the sexual exploitation of slave women was an accepted and in fact encouraged behavior among men of privilege.

³⁰ At the same time, gender did not preclude white women from using the whip as shown by Mattie's accounts. Although, Mrs. Lewis was not exercising piety when exerting power over her slaves, she was still

While descriptions of physical punishments are numerous, slaves suffered other forms of spitefulness. Separating families was one of the most vindictive actions that a slave holder could take. As time passed, families were separated for various reasons, including securing higher profits in other markets, using slaves as part of a wedding dowry, paying off a debt, or as inheritance in wills. Slave owners understood that the family unit was a source of strength for many slaves and used it as punishment by threatening to send away the perceived trouble makers. Like the horrific scars that physical punishments left on her body, Mattie reminded her readers that she and her family were not immune to emotional and psychological pain. After being separated from her first husband, Mattie's mother, Ellen, married George Brown.³¹ They lived on the Lewis plantation and had a son. As a foreman in Mr. Lewis's tobacco factory, George was considered a valuable slave and was described as "trustworthy and of good moral habits."³² After four years, George was not pleased at the quantity and quality of his food and asked for a change of diet. Mr. Lewis "considered it a great insult, and declared he would sell him."³³ Instead of facing the embarrassment of other traders learning of George's insubordination and dealing with similar attitudes from other slaves, Mr. Lewis found an excuse to sell him reasoning that "[George] calculated to bring the highest price in the human market."³⁴

considered more of a woman than Mattie by virtue of race and class. The point remains that slave women lived in a society fret with rules that did not protect them because of gender.

³¹ While slave marriages were not recognized by white society as legally binding during the time when the events in this narrative took place, Mattie explicitly uses the term "married" to describe the relationships between her mother and all three of men in her life--Westly Jackson (pg 4), George Brown (pg 8) and Mr. Adams (pg 27). She even entitled a chapter "Mother's Marriage." In fact, all of the slave unions in the narrative are referred to as marriages. This vocabulary choice could have been a deliberate editorial decision to emphasize that slaves had monogamous relationships. On the other hand, Mattie might not have known the distinction.

³² Jackson and Thompson, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson*, 8.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

Although George was considered an asset, Mr. Lewis chose emotional punishment knowing that it would serve as a lesson to the remaining Jackson family and other slaves. Ellen was heartbroken at losing yet another husband to the slave system. The children were upset at losing another father. Other incidents in Mattie's narrative also reflect the cruelty of breaking up family units.

Another example of a divided slave family was the story of an unnamed friend's wife. The friend was a fellow slave with Mattie on Captain Tirrell's estate. Mattie learned that this slave was an acquaintance of her mother. The unnamed slave started a family with a slave who had been passed down through Tirrell's family. Due to unknown circumstances, Captain Tirrell decided to separate the family by selling all of the children. Mattie recalled that, "[t]his cruel blow, assisted by severe flogging and other ill treatment, rendered the mother insane, and finally caused her death."³⁵ Not only did the slave's wife suffer from being torn apart from her family, but she died under Tirrell's brutal treatment. There are no more references to this unfortunate slave in Mattie's narrative; however, this recollection, though brief, summed up the extreme cruelty that all slaves feared. The possibility of having to endure such excessive treatment made staying with family even more appealing. It was also important for Mattie to share the plight of the unnamed friend to prove that nothing good came from slavery. The entire institution created ruthless people who would do anything to another human in order to maintain slavery.

Mattie's narrative also shows how her life was affected by political events in the United States, particularly the controversy surrounding slavery and the Civil War. She noticed that "there was so much excitement at that time...by the Union soldiers rendering the fugitives

³⁵ Ibid., 17.

shelter and protection.”³⁶ The actions of her owners mirrored the fear and uncertainty that many slave owners felt during the war. While Mattie’s masters did not renounce their allegiance to the Confederacy, they discussed the current state of affairs with great concern for their status—hoping and praying to preserve their way-of-life. The events that Mattie describes demonstrate that the attitudes of society, black and white, changed in response to the progressing Civil War. At one point, Confederate and Union soldiers set up camp near the Lewis Plantation. Jackson and her mother kept abreast of the local news and regularly discussed new advancements. On a number of occasions, Jackson informed Mrs. Lewis of what she heard around the estate concerning the movement of the soldiers. Once, Mattie corrected Mrs. Lewis about a rumor. When Mr. Lewis confirmed that Mattie’s information was indeed correct, his wife sensed that the slaves secured too much information for her comfort. Mattie recalled that “she was much astonished, and cast her eye around to us for fear we might hear her. Her suspicion was correct; there was not a word passed that escaped our listening ears.”³⁷ Jackson does not mention any resulting punishment. Instead, she described the haughty comments made by Mrs. Lewis in response to the army’s presence:

[M]y mistress came down to the kitchen again with another bitter complaint that it was a sad affair that the Unionists had taken their delicate citizens who had enlisted and made prisoners of them... She then hastened to her room with the speed of a deer, nearly unhinging every door in her flight, replying as she went that the Niggers and Yankees were seeking to take the country.³⁸

The Civil War scared slave owners and put them on high alert. Anything could happen. Leading American Southern historian Drew Gilpin Faust posited that mistresses were in a unique

³⁶ Ibid., 13.

³⁷ Ibid., 10.

³⁸ Ibid., 10.

situation because at anytime they could become responsible for managing the plantation. Without the presence of men, the constant fear of restless and potentially hostile slaves was disconcerting. In her article “Enemies in Our Households: Confederate Women and Slavery,” Faust echoed some of Mrs. Lewis’s concerns. She noted that “white women’s actions as slave mistresses were crucial to Confederate destinies, for the viability of the southern agricultural economy and the stability of the social order as well as the continuing loyalty of the civilian population all depended on successful slave control.”³⁹ Not only did Mrs. Lewis rant around the slaves, but Mr. Lewis also displayed his discomfort about wartime developments. For example, Mattie’s mother, Ellen, was punished for having the audacity to display her support for President Abraham Lincoln:

On one occasion Mr. Lewis searched my mother's room and found a picture of President Lincoln, cut from a newspaper, hanging in her room. He asked her what she was doing with old Lincoln's picture. She replied it was there because she liked it. He then knocked her down three times, and sent her to the trader's yard for a month as punishment.⁴⁰

Ellen knew that her owners were loyal to the Confederacy and undoubtedly understood that she could be punished for her outward expression of defiance. We can assume that Ellen, like her daughter Mattie, was daring. Ellen knew that disobedience led to punishment; however, she was gutsy and asserted herself as an independent thinker. Both slaveholders and slaves were frustrated and could sense that the Civil War signaled a change in their status. Perhaps the information that Mattie and Ellen garnered from newspapers and gossip gave them a new sense of hope—an optimism that could withstand the temporary agony of life with the Lewis family.

³⁹ Drew Gilpin Faust, “Enemies in Our Households: Confederate Women and Slavery,” in *Women’s America: Refocusing the Past*, Sixth Edition, Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart, eds. (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) , 221.

⁴⁰ Jackson and Thompson, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson*, 11.

With Mr. and Mrs. Lewis visibly shaken by military events, Mattie knew clearly that this was the perfect time for her to take advantage of their moment of weakness and escape.

In addition to the cruelty highlighted in *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson*, the attempts to escape demonstrated Mattie and her family's high level of patience, courage, and persistence. There were dozens of reasons why slaves ran away. Typically, we notice accounts of slaves who were in extreme distress. However, "it was not always the most dissatisfied who were to be watched. Slaves with special skills, who could read and write, who pretended to be happy and content, or who were hired out might also be plotting to run off."⁴¹ John Blassingame stated that runaways were typically "extremely resourceful men."⁴² Blassingame, like most historians, focused on male fugitives because they vastly outnumbered women. Fugitive slave notices were littered with descriptions of bondsmen who could recognize words without being literate by today's standards, were of great physical strength, possessed exemplary masonry skills, or had a command of the English language that was noticeable in comparison to other slaves—all distinguished abilities that could aid in their attempt to escape. Nevertheless, women also attempted to escape. Some historians reason that women ran away for shorter periods of time, usually to visit loved ones on a neighboring plantation while men tried to permanently. Young men were less likely to have family responsibilities, which was a major reason that women chose to stay. Also, the presence of an unaccompanied female slave could provoke more suspicion than a man servant. John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger reasoned, "[A]lthough slave women desired freedom as much as slave men and were often as assertive...the task of uprooting

⁴¹ John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 259.

⁴² John Blassingame, *The Slave Community*. Revised 1976 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 200.

and carrying children in flight ‘was onerous, time-consuming, and exhaustive.’⁴³ However, men, women, and children successfully escaped despite the odds.

Mattie’s mother made two attempts to transport her family to freedom. Ellen and her children’s initial attempt happened in 1851, just two years after her first husband, Westly Jackson, escaped. Running away would prove difficult because she had two young daughters, Mattie and Esther, in tow:

[M]y mother, with her two children, my sister and myself, attempted to make her escape. After traveling two days we reached Illinois. We slept in the woods at night. I believe my mother had food to supply us but fasted herself. But the advertisement had reached there before us... She was aware that she was arrested, consequently she gave a true account of herself.⁴⁴

Mrs. Jackson surrendered when caught. The family was “destitute of any articles of clothing excepting our wearing apparel. Mother had become so weary that she was compelled to leave our package of clothing on the way.”⁴⁵ This episode demonstrated that Mattie’s family actively resisted their condition by trying to run away. As a group, the odds were against them and they were eventually caught. Franklin and Schweninger believed that mothers were extraordinary in that “[i]t was not easy to feed, clothe, care for, and protect children while on the run. The physical burden of carrying babies or youngsters...was extreme, while the seven- or eight-year-olds had trouble keeping up and often tired quickly.”⁴⁶ Surprisingly, they made it to Illinois in hopes of finding Westly Jackson, Mattie’s father. Unfortunately, hunger and exhaustion kept the women from remaining undetected. The family was taken to a trader’s yard and sold to another

⁴³ Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 212.

⁴⁴ Jackson and Thompson, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson*, 7.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 64.

slaveholder as punishment for attempting to escape.⁴⁷ It was important for Mattie to share her first run away experience because it appealed to her mostly white, female audience. It was easier to empathize with a deserted mother who had no financial support or protection supplied by her husband and wanted to provide a better a life for her children. Even as a child, Mattie was shown that her living condition as a slave was unjust. Not only did the girls learn about endurance, but Mrs. Jackson revealed that there were women who tried to take their families with them.

In 1862, Mattie and her family made their second attempt to flee. Mattie, the oldest child at 17, and her 16 –year-old sister had a ten-year-old half-brother to include in this run away plan. Unlike the Jacksons, many slave families did not leave the plantation, fearing the burden of protecting so many—especially children. With the Civil War in progress, Ellen and her children had more issues to consider than during their previous attempt. The country was not safe for fugitives, let alone unprotected women and children. “Women encumbered by children, for whom encampments of armed young men could be frightening and dangerous places,” Berlin noted, “were slower to leave.”⁴⁸ The threat of violence from both Union and Confederate soldiers was a cruel reality. Yet still, the Jackson family vowed to protect each other and stay together at all costs.

Preceding this attempt to run away, the Jacksons were sold to Captain Tirrell, a well-known sailor. Captain Tirell led the Jacksons to believe that he would smuggle them into Kentucky and set them free as long they did not try to escape. Mattie and her sister were sold to

⁴⁷ Mattie states that the family was sent back to St. Louis, put in prison for one week, and sent to Linch’s trader yard. The family was sold to Mr. Lewis after four weeks in the trader yard. I am assuming that Linch was located in Missouri.

⁴⁸ Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998) , 231.

different estates while Ellen and her son were kept together.⁴⁹ To complicate the situation, Ellen agreed to marry Mr. Adams, a freed slave and old acquaintance, at the insistence of the captain. In other words, Captain Tirrell convinced the Jacksons that he had their best interest in mind and tricked the family into trusting that he would set them free. While Ellen and Mr. Adams were making plans to get married, Captain Tirrell was planning to sell the Jackson family. On the wedding day, the entire Jackson family was kidnapped by slave traders working in cahoots with Captain Tirrell; the plan was a trap to keep them enslaved. Over the next chapter, Mattie detailed the entire experience from being thrown onto a ferry, held in a prison cell, and shuttled on trains and wagons to John Clark's trader's yard. Her half-brother was allowed to stay with their mother during this traumatic experience. Mattie hoped that this failed attempt would not create more problems once they were scheduled to be sold.

Mattie understood that she needed to make another attempt at escaping from St. Louis before the traders at John Clark's yard had a chance to divide the family.⁵⁰ The increased presence of the Union Army added to the uncertainty of where a slave could go to find safety because although "[s]lave speculation was forbidden in St. Louis at that time" Mattie knew that "[c]onsiderable smuggling was done, however by pretending Unionism."⁵¹ The whole system of slave trading put fugitive slaves and freedmen at risk more so than they had been previously. Certain states were considered free whereas other regions claimed neutrality and left runaways to fend for themselves. Missouri's proximity to free states and access to water made it a prime

⁴⁹ Jackson and Thompson, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson*, 15-16.

⁵⁰ Earlier, Mattie mentioned that Captain Tirrell was a slave trader. By selling the Jackson family as individuals, he could make more money. Young women like Mattie and her sister were assets because they were of childbearing age.

⁵¹ Jackson and Thompson, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson*, 15. Missouri was a border state and thus strategically located for both armies. The occupation made it a hotbed for confusion and promising for slaves seeking protection.

location to make an escape. While they tried to take advantage of the weakening system, Mattie's family was unsuccessful due to the duplicity of Captain Tirrell. This particular account strengthened Mattie's narrative by showing the deception that fugitive slaves encountered. She exposed the slave's dilemma when trying to decide which white people to trust. Countless slaves were lured back into slavery by someone they trusted who had promised them freedom.

Mattie finally succeeded in escaping to Indianapolis, Indiana on her third try. This time, she was by herself. In 1863, she had been sold to Captain Ephraim Frisbee in St. Louis after spending four weeks in the trader's yard following her second attempt to run away.⁵² Over the next six months, Mattie planned to escape. Although she was treated poorly, the family trusted her to accomplish certain tasks with minimal supervision and she was occasionally allowed to attend church. Mattie "became acquainted with some persons who assisted slaves to escape by the underground railroad" and mapped out a plan to get her on a ferry to Indianapolis.⁵³ In her haste, Mattie almost aroused suspicion from a company of soldiers yet triumphantly declared, "I had always been under the yoke of oppression, compelled to submit to its laws, and not allowed to advance a rod from the house. Now this constant fear and restless yearning was over."⁵⁴ Mattie used her experiences to create a heroine image that her readers could empathize with during the hard times and cheer for during the good times. The two previous attempts added momentum to her victorious ending.

⁵² Major General Fremont, who commanded the Western army, declared Missouri under martial law and issued a declaration of manumission to all slaves in 1861. This order allowed blacks to join the union army as a ploy to disable Confederate sympathizers in the area. President Lincoln had the issue rescinded and changed the date to comply with his 1863 edict.

⁵³ Jackson and Thompson, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson*, 21. She does not state whether the people were white or black.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

The stories of escape did not end with Mattie. She included the whereabouts of her family members as well. The last time that she saw her sister, Hester, was when they were separated and sold at the trader's yard. Hester was sent to Kentucky. After she made her eventual escape to a free state, Hester was never heard from again.⁵⁵ This was a common occurrence, as the probability of recapture was a constant threat. Franklin and Schweningen reasoned that attempting to contact family members was dangerous and led to voluntary disappearance from fugitives.⁵⁶ This choice, while difficult, was for the safety of those still enslaved as well as those on the run. Family members were often pressured into giving the slave owners information about their loved ones' whereabouts, tortured for refusing to provide information, or given more grueling work to compensate for the lost labor. From Mattie's story we can deduce that Hester knew the dangers of trying to find her family and probably started a new life with a new identity.⁵⁷

Mattie's mother and half-brother were also able to escape. After her mother's seventh attempt, Mattie rejoiced, "[We] were now all free... I was overjoyed with my personal freedom, but the joy at my mother's escape was greater than anything I had ever known."⁵⁸ Ellen emerged as quite a heroine in her own right. She was a slave for forty-three years and regularly defied her owners. Her defiance alone could have gotten her killed. Ellen made seven attempts to escape three of which involved the participation of her children. The chance to be free outweighed her fears.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁶ Franklin and Schweningen, *Runaway Slaves*, 71.

⁵⁷ Refer to footnote 5 about Hester and Esther clarification.

⁵⁸ Jackson and Thompson, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson*, 26.

For over a half century, Mattie's family was enslaved.⁵⁹ In the early chapters of her narrative, Mattie attempted to relate to her audience and gain its sympathy by recounting the most horrible moments in her life. If there were happy moments, they were crushed under the weight of Mattie's recollections of abuse and the constant threat of pain. She held up a mirror to white America in hopes of showing how African Americans suffered for the sake of turning a profit. Masters and mistresses were depicted as cruel business people who valued their property over the well-being of others. On the other hand, slaves made several attempts to leave. The presence of the Civil War offered slaves a window of opportunity to fight back through daily resistance or running away. For Mattie and her family, they chose to run away regardless of the consequences.

The last part of Mattie's narrative relates to her new life in Lawrence, Massachusetts, which included going to school and completing her desire to procure a formal education. Years before arriving in Massachusetts and starting a new life, Mattie was not ignorant to what literacy and education could provide. Her attendance at school will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

The events extrapolated from Mattie's narrative illustrate the difficulties that many enslaved women endured. From cruel interactions with slave masters to a triumphant reunion with family members, Mattie revealed her life in slavery. We find that through her writing, Mattie redefines womanhood instead of attempting to fit into the mold put forth by white

⁵⁹ At the beginning of her narrative, Mattie states that her paternal great grandfather was from Africa. I assumed that there was at least 20 years separating each generation. She does not provide information about her maternal family.

society.⁶⁰ Her forceful reactions to situations carry through the entire narrative. Some may debate that Mattie's step-mother or an editor may have taken poetic license with the choice of incidents. However, we cannot debate the power behind the context of this narrative. Within these pages, Mattie comes off as a strong-willed young woman who desired a better life, no matter what the cost. Interestingly enough, I venture to say that Mattie's behavior was in response to her mother's example. Perhaps by slavery's design to splinter the black family, Jackson had no consistent black male role models in her life. Instead, she patterned her attitude after her mother. Before Mattie attempted to be insubordinate to the Lewises or run away, Ellen had already done the same. Arguably, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson* serves as a blueprint for the legacy of rebellion that black women passed down to each other through generations.

Mattie undoubtedly provided her own definition of womanhood. She showed that black women could survive even the most hopeless of situations, such as slavery, and use the experience to their advantage—hers being the publication of an autobiography. She proved that women with families could successfully escape slavery just like their male counterparts—a feat achieved by few slaves. Most importantly, Mattie demonstrated that black women were more than what slave society proposed. Black women were resilient and resourceful rather than the morally corrupt, breeding machines that suited the needs of mainstream society's perceptions.

On the other hand, there are some elements that are absent from Mattie's narrative that are regarded as typical, distinctive experiences for women. The major theme of sexual and

⁶⁰ Linda Kerber, "The Republican Mother and the Woman Citizen: Contradictions and Choices in Revolutionary America," in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, Sixth Edition, Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart, eds. (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 119-127. Womanhood refers to the "Cult of True Womanhood" of the 19th and 20th centuries instead of the "Republican Motherhood" of the eighteenth century. The latter positioned women as "rational, independent, literate, benevolent, and self-reliant" members of the family. The Republican Mother was encouraged to abide by her husband by embracing patriotism and democracy. On the other hand, the "Cult of True Womanhood" figuratively positioned women on a pedestal of purity while stripping them of the independence that was bestowed upon them but a generation earlier. The "Cult of True Womanhood" is discussed in relation to African American women and their place within this sphere.

reproductive exploitation is not present. It is no secret that white slave owners took sexual liberties with their black slave women; miscegenation happened frequently on the plantation. One only needs to look at the countless references to children with fair complexions and European facial features looming around the slave quarters. Memoirs written by mistresses also point to suspicions and proven infidelity of white men looking to protect the virtues of their women while satisfying their sexual desires with slaves. Mattie does not mention bearing any children of her own while enslaved. She was of childbearing age, so the ability to carry a child was highly probable.

We also know that Mattie was in close proximity to Mr. Lewis. Her position as one of Mrs. Lewis's personal servants put her in regular contact with the master. While proximity could increase the opportunity for clandestine meetings, this does not fully suggest that slave owners refrained from sexually abusing women when slave quarters were situated far from the "big house." We also know that Mrs. Lewis was particularly cruel in her interactions with Mattie. Jackson commented that Mrs. Lewis' contempt often seemed sporadic and unwarranted. Could this mean that Mrs. Lewis suspected Mattie of having a sexual relationship with her husband? We will never know; however, that is one plausible explanation for Mrs. Lewis' behavior. Conceivably, Mattie was protected from sexual advances by her mother. The presence of family could deter some slave owners from pursuing young slave women. Unlike most slaves, Mattie lived with her mother through her teenage years. More importantly, Mattie's father and step-father were present for a number of years. Although limited in his ability to exercise his power, the protection from a slave father or the mere suggestion of an angry male slave could make a plantation owner think twice about taking advantage of girl slaves.

Mattie Jackson beat the odds as a young slave woman during the prime time of slavery. For the study of female slave narratives, this may place Mattie as an exception rather than the rule. However, we cannot ignore that the information expressed in this narrative provides more insight into how enslaved women lived and fought against their treatment. More importantly, the mere existence of this narrative suggests that black women sought to claim an identity that was based on their self-perceptions.

CHAPTER THREE

Kate Drumgoold: Finding Life Beyond the Shackles

African American Studies Historian Hazel Carby reminds us that, “being a slave woman did not end with the abolition of slavery as an institution but haunted the texts of black women throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.”¹ Slave narratives played an important role in this push toward women asserting themselves because the texts document the measures that former slaves were taking to start anew. While legally free, blacks still faced discrimination on many levels.² In particular, the Black Codes regulated the activity of African Americans throughout the South.³

African Americans changed their focus from asserting themselves as humans to evolving into an independent class of American citizens. This perspective was expressed in the literature and political activities of the second half of the nineteenth century. Frances Smith Foster, Professor of Women’s Studies and African American Literature, commented that “the year 1892

¹ Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 61.

² The landmark case, *Plessey v. Ferguson*, took place in 1896. The decision dictated that “separate but equal” public facilities were legal. As a result, racial segregation was constitutionally protected and African Americans were forced into a substandard way-of-life. Everything from restrooms to transportation was segregated often times sub-par facilities were reserved for African Americans. *Plessey v. Ferguson* (1896) is important to this discussion because it illustrates the openly racist environment that former slaves endured. Addressing the injustices remaining from slavery and showing how African Americans overcame these setbacks were major topics of narratives published during Reconstruction.

³ Although the 13th Amendment prohibited involuntary servitude, the Black Codes, a series of informal legislation established in 1865, continued to restrict the lives of all African Americans (born free, freedmen alike). Rules ranging from acceptable places of employment to basic civil rights like the freedom of speech regulated every part of life for former slaves. Some states like Georgia added additional laws to hold on to vestiges of slavery. Rules like the Black Codes were reminiscent of Slave Codes of the earlier centuries that operated in the same fashion: to completely control the African American population by any means necessary. To override the damaging effects of the Black Codes, the Civil Rights Act of 1866 was passed. This legislation dictated that anyone born in the United States were American citizens regardless many factors including condition of servitude. By 1868, the 14th Amendment was ratified guaranteeing due process and equal protection under the law. While constitutional measures were taken to eradicate the Black Codes and other informal practices, irregular policing of violations against African Americans persisted into the twentieth century.

marks the beginning of a new era in African American women's literary tradition. It [women's writing] became less discreet, more visible."⁴ In the context of my discussion, the writing produced during the Reconstruction Era provided women with an opportunity to respond to changing social conditions. Kate Drumgoold traced her journey from slavery to life as a free person during the Reconstruction period. Through her narrative, *A Slave Girl's Story* (published in 1898) Drumgoold provided a firsthand look at the competing factors that made life challenging in the post-slavery period.

Raised in Petersburg, Virginia, Kate was a child during the Civil War and spent relatively no time with her biological family even though they were initially owned by the House family. According to 1860 census data, slaves made up roughly 36% of the population of Petersburg-Richmond with about half of Virginians owning at least one slave.⁵ Based on suggested evidence in the narrative, I believe that that House family, who owned Kate and her family, was wealthy at one point and owned a considerable number of slaves including the eighteen children in the Drumgoold family. After an estate division and the selling off of her mother, Kate's siblings were divided amongst neighboring plantations while she was taken in by her mother's first mistress, Mrs. Bettie House. Kate goes on to detail her brief childhood and her journey toward becoming a teacher. Her separation from her family and complex relationships with white citizens are examined in further detail and represent the impact of slavery on the first generation of freedwomen.

⁴ Frances Smith Foster, *Written By Herself: Literary Production by African American Women, 1746-1892* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 6.

⁵ William G. Thomas, "Aggregating and Georeferencing 1860 U.S. Census Data in GIS: Some Preliminary Conclusions from the Valley of the Shadow Project," Conference: ECAI/Pacific Neighborhood Consortium, January 11, 2000, University of California at Berkeley, 6, *Virginia Center for Digital History*. University of Virginia; [website]; available from <http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/ECAI.paper.html>; Internet; accessed 5 April 2008. Thomas presents Slave Ownership graphs based on census data.

The Civil War gave Kate her first memorable experience with family separation. “My dear mother,” she wrote, “was sold at the beginning of the war, from all of her little ones, after the death of the lady that she belonged to.”⁶ The money from Mrs. Drumgoold’s sale went “to keep the rich man from going to the field of battle.”⁷ Sending a poor man or slave in the place of a wealthy man or using slaves as collateral was a common practice during the Civil War. Not only was her mother used as a bargaining tool, but Kate’s brother, James, met the same fate. She declared, “[T]he gentleman that my dear brother belonged to was a Methodist and a minister. He did not want to go to the war and so he sent my poor brother to defend what belonged to him.”⁸ After the mistress died, the other slaves were sold to help reduce debts resulting from the war. Kate’s sisters Frances and Annie “fell to a dead brother who had drank himself to death, and these were sold to pay for his drink...those that he owed now came in to get their pay.”⁹ Another slaveholding brother, John House, tried to keep the Drumgoold children but he could not afford the expense because Confederate money lost its value. This living situation was unfortunately too common for slave families in that children were often at risk of losing parents to the auctioneer’s block. One source claims that before the Civil War “over a third of all slave children grew up in households from which one or both parents were absent. About a quarter of all slave children grew up in a single-parent household ...and another tenth grew up apart from both parents.”¹⁰ The eighteen Drumgoold children experienced firsthand the trauma of being

⁶ Drumgoold, *A Slave Girl’s Story*, 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 4-5. Since the House family owned all of the Drumgoolds at this time, we do not know if the rich man was Mr. House (Bettie’s husband) or another member of the family.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁰ S. Mintz, “*African American Voices*” *Digital History*; [website]; available from http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/black_voices/voices_display.cfm?id=22; Internet; accessed 29 January 2008.

split and spent a lifetime trying to find each other. As shown in both Mattie's and Kate's situations, the turmoil resulting from the Civil War increased the likelihood of internal slave trading to settle financial obligations.

The Drumgoold children became part of the unfortunate statistic of separated families. Kate revealed that her mother was bought by a slave holder from Georgia and longed to be with her children:

[W]e did not know that she was sold until she was gone; and the saddest thought was to me to know which way she had gone and I used to go outside and look up to see if there was anything that would direct me, and I saw a clear place in the sky, and it seemed to me the way she had gone, and I watched it three and a half years, not knowing what that meant, and it was there the whole time that mother was gone from her little ones.¹¹

It is common to read about slave holders hiding information about a sold family member; fear of separation was often used to threaten slaves into submission. In this case, we learn that Mrs. Drumgoold was sold to prevent a rich man from going to war. Regardless of the reason for separation, Kate's recollection demonstrated how she longed for the company of her mother and pined over her for three and a half years. While the Drumgoold children eventually reunited with their mother, that knowledge did not heal the pain of her initial absence.¹² John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger assert that "the weeks following a sale were especially traumatic for slaves...The heartbreak of leaving a ...loved one behind, whom they would probably never see again, created feelings of indescribable despair and anguish."¹³ Franklin and Schweninger address the circumstances that provoked slaves to run away, and the sale of family

¹¹ Drumgoold, *A Slave Girl's Story*, 5.

¹² We do not know if the mother the mother's final destination was Georgia, where the slave holder was from, or if she was placed at a plantation nearby. Some members of the family reunite years after the war begins; I discuss their reunion later in the chapter.

¹³ John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 55.

members ranked as one of the main reasons. Mrs. Drumgoold also suffered from the separation. With the youngest child being nearly six weeks old, she initially had no way of knowing if her children were alright and never regained contact with all of them. Slavery and gender historian Marie Schwartz surmised that “[s]lave youths without parents around to protect them could find themselves at high risk for sale in the market or forced to fulfill adult roles in the slave quarter.”¹⁴ Even more disconcerting was the vulnerability to sexual exploitation that often awaited slave girls in the absence of adults.¹⁵ With these considerations in mind, Kate managed to avoid an extremely traumatizing situation in the absence of having her immediate family.

Unlike most formerly enslaved families that were separated, Kate was later able to account for the whereabouts of most of her siblings after their mother was sold. For example, “Sister Lavinia was at the same place where I was and she was treated very badly by the man's own daughter, for she would whip her without cause.”¹⁶ Kate does not supply any detail other than their location and the temperament of their owner:

My sister Frances was hired out and we did not see her from one Christmas to the other, for she was a good way off where she could not get home. She was treated very badly by some of those where she lived and her limbs had been sprained so that she could hardly move on them.¹⁷

Frances and Lavinia, Kate's sisters, fared the worst based on what she knew. Sister Annie “was given to the gentleman's married son and she was not with us” and “sister Tempy Green was

¹⁴ Marie Jenkins Schwartz, *Born in Bondage: Growing Up Enslaved in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000) , 172.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 173.

¹⁶ Drumgoold, *A Slave Girl's Story*, 34.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

with the minister.”¹⁸ The other six children simply lived close by, but Kate provides no specific details about their experience.

While her biological family is not the focus of her narrative, we can infer that Kate still felt a connection to them. After returning to Virginia to claim her children following the war, Mrs. Drumgoold moved ten of her daughters, including Kate, to Brooklyn where the girls worked as domestics with resources provided by Major Bailey.¹⁹ Based on the limited information in the narrative, I assume that Brooklyn was the destination because Dr. Bailey lived there. Unable to financially care for her children, Kate’s mother had to send them out to work. Wilma King chronicled the aftermath of the Civil War and how children fared in *African American Childhoods: Historical Perspectives from Slavery to Civil Rights*. King pointed out that post-war legislation and the shortage of employment often hindered African American families from reuniting. For example, laws determined the legitimacy of slave marriages. If a union was considered illegal, then the children were labeled as illegitimate and went under custody of the court.²⁰ In turn, the courts could send children to indentured servitude until they turned eighteen.²¹ Unfortunately, Kate Drumgoold’s family was not protected from this practice. Children with different fathers were held under the same conditions with courts acting as

¹⁸ Drumgoold, *A Slave Girl’s Story*, 34.

¹⁹ It is unclear as to how many people helped Mrs. Drumgoold find her children since they were scattered to different homes after the war began. Kate’s oldest sister Frances was instrumental since the eldest Mr. House owned her. He, in turn, was involved in the initial division of the estate. Mr. Bailey, soldiers, and an unidentified man are listed among the people who helped locate the remaining children. Kate does not discuss how her mother met Dr. Bailey or why he chose to help her family. Based on his actions in the narrative, I assume that he was an abolitionist from New York. We also do not know how Dr. Bailey found jobs for all of the children.

²⁰ Wilma King, *African American Childhoods: Historical Perspectives from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 81.

²¹ Location factored into the length of servitude. Gender was another consideration. Wilma King notes that girls served until they were eighteen while boys worked until they were twenty-one. King does not provide reasoning about the difference in duration. She also reveals that boys received more money at the end of their term than girls.

stewards. This system was also exercised regularly by the Freedmen's Bureau when the government declared parents unfit to take care of their children. (Note that the "unfit" condition was usually defined by whites.) While using the legal system to control the orphan population seemed logical, this procedure regularly split up black families. In Drumgoold's case, she and some of her siblings never saw each other again after securing employment in Brooklyn.

While she lived with a number of families (who will be discussed later), Kate saved for school while keeping in contact with a few of her siblings. She proclaimed, "[A]ll of the time that I was in school they [family] were sending me their mites to help me along. My sister, Mrs. E. F. Rodwell and... my sister, Mrs. Annie Lindsey... were the ones that never for once forgot me."²² The separation of the Drumgoold family and eventual reunion of a few members created a new bond for the children. Although they lost contact with half of the family, the Drumgoold children survived. Franklin contends that "the breakup of families revealed the callous nature of many slave traders, it also bore silent testimony to the desperate attempts to maintain family unity in the midst of constant assault on its stability."²³ With this observation in mind, Kate's family was triumphant in that a few members were able to stay in touch.

As we will see later, Kate expressed a certain fondness for whites who showed her kindness, even though she was separated from her biological family by their whims. Many ex-slaves were negatively impacted by separation and showed their displeasure in many ways. Historian Herbert Gutman noted that "some of the best remembered abuses of slave owners' power concerned the separation, splitting up and selling of individual members of slave

²² Drumgoold, *A Slave Girl's Story*, 46. A mite is money secured through church grants to support a mission or projects to uplift the kingdom of God. In annotations provided by *Documenting the South*, the transcriber defines mites as small sums of money. In the same paragraph, Kate mentions finishing work in 1886. I assume that the monetary support Kate refers to happened prior to 1886.

²³ Franklin and Schweningen, *Runaway Slaves*, 74.

families... the slave family found it difficult to thrive in the harsh human and social environment.”²⁴ Some slaves became apathetic about completing chores, drifted into a deep depression, showed their anger through violence, or resorted to suicide. For Kate, the emotional distress of separation was difficult. After her mother was sold away, Kate would watch the sky to see “which way she [her mother] had gone, and I watched it three and a half years.”²⁵ We can assume that, subsequently, Kate’s attachment to her master and future employers eased the burden that separation from her biological family created.

Kate’s separation from her family set the stage for her relationships with whites. Before the estate division, wealthy whites would “have me to talk for them and I would stand and talk and preach for some time for them.”²⁶ Kate never mentioned working during these escapades and other children (black and white) were never talked about. Marie Schwartz, in her research about slave children, concluded that the relationships that emerged on the plantation were often a complex merging of ideals from both the owner and slave parents:

At some times and in some places, owners succeeded in gaining the loyalty of slave children. Most were children raised from a young age in the big house by their owners with no close relationships with kin or other slaves—children dependent on close attachments to the white family for their survival.²⁷

Like most slave children, Kate was being molded into assuming a role of compliance. Because of her youth she was probably not fully aware of the attitudes, values, and behaviors that whites were impressing on her. Kate never mentioned a life of drudgery and spoke positively of her childhood. She was virtually oblivious that her skin color (and mother’s status) made her a

²⁴ Herbert Gutman, “Persistent Myths about the Afro-American Family” in *The Slavery Reader*, ed. Gad Heuman and James Walvin (New York: Routledge, 2003), 265.

²⁵ Drumgoold, *A Slave Girl’s Story*, 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 4, 9.

²⁷ Schwartz, *Born in Bondage*, 104.

slave for she “was feeling as free as any one could feel” because “they all loved me, as noble whites will love a child...and all of their friends learned to love me and send me presents.”²⁸

In this opening recollection, Kate appeared to be comfortable with whites and enjoyed the attention they gave her. The reader who is familiar with the slave owner archetype common to the slave narrative genre is surprised to learn that Kate’s life seems ideal considering she is a slave. From Kate’s perspective, she has the adoration of the neighborhood. However, was she just a “pickaninny minstrel”-- a parody of Southern culture brought to life through the innocence of a child?²⁹ Kate does not mention white children living on the estate, so we assume that her behaviors were not formed by relationships with the owner’s family. At the same time, Kate’s siblings lived with other members of the House family and in the surrounding neighborhoods. Kate’s perspective of a carefree childhood on the plantation during the Civil War was common in comparison to other narratives published by former child slaves. For example, ex- slave Annie Burton published *Memories of Childhood’s Slavery Days* in 1909. She described her experience in slavery as “happy, care-free childhood days” and stated that those memories were some of the fondest of her life.³⁰ Lucy Delany, another slave narrator, exclaimed, “Slavery had no horror then for me, as I played about the place, with the same joyful freedom as the little white children.”³¹ In his influential text, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the*

²⁸ Drumgoold, *A Slave Girl’s Story*, 4.

²⁹ The pickanny stereotype may have started with Harriet Beecher Stowe’s character Topsy according to *A History of African American Theatre*, 130. This child sings, dances, and acts innocent almost to the point of buffoonery when involved in capers.

³⁰ Annie L. Burton, *Memories of Childhood’s Slavery Days* (Boston: Ross Publishing Company, 1909) , 3; found in *Documenting the American South*; [book on-line]; available from <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/burton/burton.html> ; Internet; accessed 29 March 2008.

³¹ Lucy Delany, *From the Darkness Cometh the Light or Struggles for Freedom* (St. Louis: Publishing House of J.T. Smith, 189?) 13; found in *Documenting the American South*, [book on-line]; available from <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/delaney/delaney.html>; Internet; accessed 5 April 2008.

Antebellum South, John Blassingame extended the discussion of slave children into a matter of self-consciousness. He noted that childhood for a slave was complicated by the child's connection to his or her biological family in opposition to the paternalistic slave family headed by the master.³² Blassingame stated that "the pleasures of early childhood...sometimes obscured the young slave's vision of bondage. During this period many of the young blacks had no idea they were slaves."³³ Based on Drumgoold's opening chapters and the memories of the other two female narrators, each woman clearly followed the pattern described by Blassingame. More realistically, Kate was a source of entertainment for the neighborhood. For a slave, commanding positive attention was paramount to survival; however, finding this level of sophisticated thinking and behavior from a slave child was unlikely especially without direction from an adult. Yet, this early experience shaped Kate and affected how she interacted with whites for the remainder of her narrative.

In particular, Kate developed a close relationship with Mrs. Bettie House. After her biological mother was sold away to Georgia, Kate was sent to work at Mrs. House's main house:

[S]he took me to be her own dear, loving child, to eat, drink, sleep and to go wherever she went, if it was for months, or even years; I had to be there as her own and not as a servant, for she did not like that, but I was there as her loving child for her to care for me, and everything that I wanted I had.³⁴

³² John Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, Revised 1979), 181, 183-187. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese in *Within the Plantation Household* also discusses identity politics on the plantation. Fox-Genovese calls the unusual dynamic "the family, white and black" to demonstrate the complex gender and racial divide (294). Her assessment revealed that these roles defined how all members on the plantation interacted with each other and how the slave's status evolved from childhood into adulthood. When slaves became economically viable during early adolescence, they were fully embraced as chattel and treated as such.

³³ *Ibid.*, 184.

³⁴ Drumgoold, *A Slave Girl's Story*, 7.

The narrative suggests that Bettie House was married based on her prefix; however, we do not know if she had children or grandchildren of her own.³⁵ In fact, Kate became so attached that she dubbed Mrs. House her “white mother” and referred to her with fondness throughout the narrative. Based on Kate’s writing, Mrs. House represented a rare breed of Southern slaveholders who openly displayed their affection for their slaves. Kate recalled, “my white mother did not like the idea of calling us her slaves, and she always prayed God that I should never know what slavery was, for she said I was never born to serve as did the slaves of some of the people that owned them.”³⁶ Kate does not mention any poor treatment by Mrs. House.³⁷ There are a multitude of plausible reasons why Mrs. House developed a fondness for Kate. Whatever Mrs. House’s reason may be for taking an interest in Kate, it is clear that Kate felt comfortable enough to disclose this relationship to the public.

However, Mrs. House believed that some African Americans were well suited for slavery. This conditional attitude was shared by many white women who formed bonds with their personal servants and placed them in a category above other slaves. In other words, all slaves were not created equal. Still, the suggestion that Kate was unaffected by slavery and should never know what slavery was through Mrs. House’s efforts is oversimplifying the complexity of the slave-master relationship.

³⁵ From Kate’s narrative, there are no hints as to why she (and no other slaves) became intimately acquainted with Bettie House.

³⁶ Drumgoold, *A Slave Girl’s Story*, 5.

³⁷ Although Kate Drumgoold does not mention any tales of punishment, we must remember that she was a child during slavery. When owned by Mrs. House, she was under the age of seven. This is important to consider because she was not old enough for major duties. Many children of that age “worked” as playmates for the master’s family and wandered through the plantation until they were old enough to work. Mattie Jackson, on the other hand, was well into her late teens when she escaped slavery. As a result, she would have experienced more and been aware of dangers on the plantation.

Drumgoold and House spent a lot of time in each other's company; their affection seemed mutual on the surface. It appears that Mrs. House treated Kate with great affection. Kate recounted that she received a number of expensive presents. For example, she was given a horse.³⁸ Most children, white or black, were not fortunate enough to own a horse. Mrs. House also lavished Kate with more practical gifts such as clothes:

I can call to mind when she the blessed one, that I call my white mother, went to get me some shoes and a fine hat, and the one that sold them told her, as she looked at a hat I wanted, that its price was twenty dollars...and he told my white mother that was too much for to spend on a hat for me, but she told him nothing would cost too much for her to get for me, and she got that fine hat for me and he had his money; so you can see how much she loved me.³⁹

Not only did Mrs. House spend an exorbitant amount of money on Kate, but she shopped for her in public. In slaveholding communities, showing open affection to a slave could result in trouble for all parties involved. Mrs. House clearly doted on Kate and bestowed worldly possessions on her. This is the only incident recounted in Kate's narrative where Mrs. House or any white person was questioned about his or her close relationship with slaves.⁴⁰ Kate never mentioned lifting a finger to do an ounce of work for Mrs. House, even though she was her slave.

Drumgoold credited Mrs. House with essentially saving her from a dreadful life of servitude.

³⁸ Drumgoold, *A Slave Girl's Story* 11.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴⁰ *Slaves and the Courts, 1740-1860*, Law Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division and General Collections of the Library of Congress from *Slavery in the Courtroom: An Annotated Bibliography of American Cases* by Paul Finkelman, 1985. Website: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/sthtml/>. Internet; accessed 16 September 2008.; John Hope Franklin, *Reconstruction After the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 47-57, 88, 91. I find this event significant because the law and social culture during the 1860s dictated that slaves were property and to bestow any open demonstrations of affection was deadly. Hundreds of laws (formal and informal) were established throughout the country that prohibited whites from taking a stake in the African American population outside of providing necessities (e.g. adequate food) for maintaining a strong working force. These rules varied by state, but the goal was the same: keep blacks under control. Chapter 3 annotation 3 goes into more detail about the Black Codes. However, I failed to mention that white citizens who supported black rights were at risk too. They were fined, publicly humiliated, physically injured or killed for helping black citizens.

On the other hand, one can only infer how attention from whites and her personal relationship with Mrs. House impacted Kate. Her narrative suggests she intensely worshipped

Mrs. House:

[S]he was the joy of my little life and I seemed to be all the joy of her sweet life. She had learned to love me from the time that I came into the world. She...longed for the day to come when I should be able to walk, for she knew that I would follow her everywhere she should go. She said to all of the friends around that if I should live to remember her that would be all that she would ask.⁴¹

Kate's adoration is almost pathological in the sense that her life revolved around this woman's attention; Mrs. House was like a surrogate mother. In fact, when Mrs. House died, Kate lamented stating, "I did not think then that I could have lived without her whom God had given to me for this world."⁴² This testimony demonstrates that Kate invested a lot of emotion into their relationship. However, was Mrs. House treating Kate like a member of the family or more like a pet—simply for her amusement? Nowhere in her narrative does Kate revere anyone, not even her biological mother, with this much intensity. In fact, Kate practically laments the moment when she is reunited with her biological mother years later stating, "for a child that had all of the love and comfort of a queen was now left to her own dear mother."⁴³ Based on Drumgoold's writing, her biological mother's affections do not compare to the attention from Mrs. House. Kate's attachment and strong affinity toward whites is shown in the remainder of her narrative.

Throughout the remainder of the narrative, Kate mentioned kindness from other whites. Although none became as close to her as Mrs. House, the deeds of employers and countless

⁴¹ Drumgoold, *A Slave Girl's Story*, 29-30.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 31.

teachers were described in her book. For example, Mrs. Haseltine was one of Kate's many employers who gave her extra work to pay for school. Drumgoold declared, "Wherever she is I love her and she has my heart."⁴⁴ Another employer, Miss L. A. Pousland, was described as "one of the loveliest ladies that ever lived, for she loves me to-day as a mother."⁴⁵ All the women that Kate mentioned hired her as a domestic when teaching jobs were not available and she acknowledged the others with equal affection. Similarly, Kate referred to her former professors with great admiration. Dr. J.D. Fulton was particularly great because "[h]e shall be loved by me as long as I live... for he has been a father to me."⁴⁶ Dr. Fulton was a professor at the Harper's Ferry School that Kate attended. She mentioned over 10 other professors that contributed to her career and dozens of other teachers with whom she worked. Through the accolades, Kate never complained about any mistreatment by any of these people.

Favorable interactions with whites did not end with Mrs. House. After three and a half years, Mrs. Drumgoold returned to Virginia and demanded that her children be put into her care. With the help of a white man named Major Bailey, Mrs. Drumgoold immediately relocated the remaining children including Kate to Brooklyn, New York.⁴⁷ Major Bailey was the "head man that was placed there by the North to look after the welfare of lately emancipated negroes of the South, to see that they should have their rights as a freed people" and was instrumental in helping Kate's mother secure work for the children.⁴⁸ Kate's first job was working for the Hammond

⁴⁴ Ibid., 45.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 57.

⁴⁷ Kate does not indicate whether she is referring to the city of Brooklyn located in New York or another location. However, her book was originally published in Brooklyn, New York. For the purposes of this thesis, we will assume that Kate is referring to New York since gradual emancipation became law by 1827.

⁴⁸ Drumgoold, *A Slave Girl's Story*, 6.

family on Adelphi Street. Upon experiencing the drudgery of real housework and not being permitted to attend church on Sundays, she decided to leave the family.⁴⁹ Kate lucked upon a position in the Bailey household. Called her “beloved family,” the Baileys were credited with taking her to Sunday school and church.⁵⁰ Kate was so appreciative of the Bailey family’s kindness for allowing her to continue practicing her faith that she called their household “heaven” in comparison to life with the Hammond family.⁵¹

In addition to allowing Kate to go to church, the Bailey family and members of their church taught her how to read.⁵² The Washington Avenue Baptist Church became the conduit through which Kate received monetary support from several of its members.⁵³ In addition, she was tutored by Miss Abbie Bailey with lessons from the Bible. With this support, Kate grew interested in going to school, and, as discussed further in the chapter, pursued formal education throughout her life.

Even though Kate was encouraged by white church members, she was likely surrounded by some Christian racists who still believed that blacks were inferior. “For every time that I saw the newspaper there was some one of our race in the far South getting killed for trying to teach,” Kate lamented, “I made up my mind that I would die to see my people taught.”⁵⁴ Although post-war attitudes reflected an unwillingness to support the inclusion of the newly freed, Kate put

⁴⁹ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁰ Ibid. In the narrative, Kate interchanges the spelling of the family’s surname from “Bailley” to “Bailey.”

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Kate never mentions learning how to write. During this time period, “literacy” meant many things to many people. Being able to recognize a few words could constitute literacy. I am assuming that she learned how to write while attending Washington Avenue Baptist Church under the tutelage of Abbie Bailey as discussed later.

⁵³ Drumgoold, *A Slave Girl’s Story*, 20-21.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 24.

faith in the Baileys and her church family that their kindness would overshadow the problems facing freedmen.

Kate's positive experience with whites continued with the Stafford family, who were friends of the Bailey family. Kate did not want be alone in the house when the Bailey family took a vacation during the summer of 1867, so she was introduced to the Stafford family by Mrs. Bailey. As a housekeeper for this self-proclaimed Christian family in Brooklyn, Kate was allowed to carry on her reading lessons. Willie, the Stafford's son, picked up where Abbie Bailey left off and continued to tutor Kate:

I had some of the best days of my life when I began to learn so fast, and he [Willie] would bring me before his mother and father that they might hear me recite my lessons and see how well I was doing under him as my teacher. They felt the more glad to see how much he was interested in teaching me.⁵⁵

She does not mention this family any more in the narrative. However, the Stafford family's participation in her learning process seems commendable. They allowed her to forgo preparing dinner on Sundays in order to hone her reading skills by attending church services. Again, Kate lucked upon people who encouraged her to pursue educational goals of becoming a teacher.

Conversely, the Bailey and Stafford families should be seen for who they really were: rich, white people who employed house servants. Drumgoold seems almost blinded by their willingness to let their children tutor her occasionally. Both families were still part of a society that rested on the labor of African Americans to maintain their households.

Kate's testimony proved there were benevolent whites who differed from the horrid individuals described by Mattie Jackson. From being cared for by Mrs. House to the families who employed her following general emancipation, Kate had positive experiences with whites

⁵⁵ Ibid, 26. I assume that the lessons were from the First Reader given to her by Mr. Lansberry in addition to reading from the Bible. Perhaps, Willie also shared his school lessons with Kate.

while enslaved and freed. The likelihood of a slave chancing upon so many helpful whites was doubtful. Maybe Mrs. House socialized Kate in such a way to view her bondage in a different light. This early influence could easily shape how Kate interacted with whites for the rest of her life. Like Uncle Tom's loyalty to the St. Clare family, Kate's loyalty for all of her employers persists throughout the narrative.⁵⁶ Or, like Mattie Jackson's sassiness, Kate's pleasant attitude or congenial personality might have impacted how people treated her. Perhaps Major Bailey was affiliated with an anti-slavery organization as alluded to in the opening chapters of Kate's narrative. Therefore, Bailey was connected to a network of white abolitionists and sympathizers that truly supported the welfare of African Americans. Some scholars would caution that these were exceptional cases. The historian Elizabeth Fox-Genovese advised that "the kindnesses that singled out particular whites as good masters and mistresses were interpreted as the result of their own basic characters or passing whims, rather than as a response to the slave girl's good efforts."⁵⁷ We can never know if Kate harbored secret memories of cruelty suffered at the hands of past masters or employers. She never mentions a negative encounter, but the absence of information from the narrative does not indicate the absence of cruelty in Kate's life. In fact, the unaccounted for time periods might suggest that Kate had moments that she wished never to disclose to her audience. With the accounts presented, we can infer that her narrative revealed a portrait of exceptional whites who lived according to what their social status dictated, but chose to retain some semblance of decency to African Americans.

⁵⁶ In Elizabeth Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the main character, a slave named Tom, shows an affinity for his white masters. I used that popular analogy to symbolize what may be inherent in Kate's personality.

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 154.

With respect to her narrative, Kate Drumgoold's choice of incidents suggests that there were unresolved issues in her life. Developmental Psychologist Emmy Werner believes that children who live through war use writing as a coping mechanism. The trauma of family separation and violence leave these children in a state of emotional distress for the rest of their lives⁵⁸. Kate definitely experienced quite a bit of separation and detachment from her biological family. In fact, the almost maternal relationship with Mrs. House can be interpreted as Kate's psychological attempt to heal the pain of being constantly separated from her family. Perhaps writing about her various positive encounters with white citizens and her teaching career serve as therapy. Through teaching, Kate could provide dozens of black children with a portion of stability that she was unable to secure as a slave child.

Arguably, Kate Drumgoold emerges as an unlikely heroine. Frail and impressionable in comparison to the brazen Mattie J. Jackson, Kate's experience cannot be ignored. Her story sheds light on the complex and often confusing lives that slave children lived during the war. Surrounded by a pampered lifestyle in which she could never indulge due to her race, Drumgoold is held captive by the whims of an aging white mistress. Kept for the amusement of Mrs. House, Kate seems too naïve and young (rather than ignorant) to be held responsible for her complacency. Without the benefits of a black role model to guide her through the politics of plantation life, Kate survives the best way that she knew. Unfortunately, Kate's readers are left with a two-sided image of an emotionally troubled woman who lived for the approval of whites, juxtaposed against an extraordinary woman who dedicated her career to providing educational opportunities for others.

⁵⁸ Emmy Werner, *Reluctant Witness: Children's Voices from the Civil War* (Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1998), 151-152.

Possibly, appearing to be impressionable serves Kate well and sets the stage for her resulting educational success. Kate probably wrote about white citizens with such endearment, knowing that her primary readership would be whites of the same caste. Choosing to eliminate cruel masters and horrific events shows a level of sophisticated writing in that Drumgoold wanted to keep the focus on her achievements. The goodwill expressed by these white Samaritans could be a gross exaggeration of the truth in order to reinforce how black women were taking opportunities to improve themselves and using them for the betterment of the community. At the same time, alienating her principal audience could impact the success of her book.

Simply getting through slavery and making a life is reason enough to believe that Kate provides another archetype of womanhood—the survivor. Regardless of how long she was enslaved or what cruelty she endured, Kate was still a part of the system. Instead of going back to the familiarity of Virginia, Kate pursued a life. Although she had to rely on her role as a domestic house servant, Kate was still able to save enough money to put herself through school—an accomplishment that is discussed in the next chapter. Even more remarkable, Drumgoold pressed forward and became a teacher, which was a profession still largely reserved for Northern white women. At the pinnacle of her career, during a time when black teachers were discriminated against by their peers, Kate continued to provide positive images of her experiences in the field. She never spoke poorly of a fellow teacher or pupil. Perhaps she intended to serve as an example of success over the pitfalls of an enslaved past.

CHAPTER FOUR

Education: Agent for Change

An unnamed female former slave confessed, “[M]y soul has hungered and thirsted after knowledge, and I have looked to the right hand and to the left, but there was none to give me food. Prejudice has strictly guarded every avenue to science and cruelly repulsed all of my efforts to gain admittance to her presence.”¹ This woman, speaking at an 1837 anti-slavery convention, echoed the sentiment of thousands of African Americans, men and women, free and fugitive. The attempts to pursue an education by ex-slaves served as a testament to their desire to survive in the racist environment that persisted during and following slavery. However, after the Civil War for some, access to education became the fruit of independence.

Historian Stephen Butterfield has noted that “education is an equally important movement toward an image of the self and the world different from that given by the master, and toward the possibilities offered by life as a free man.”² For example, former slave Peggy Burton discussed the importance of going to school during an undated Federal Works’ Project interview. She encouraged her children, grandchildren, and others in her neighborhood to take advantage of the educational opportunities that became available:

I raise’ my chillum-sent dem to school and give dem what education dey got, and I’s done raise’ my grand chillum and help to educate dem-guess I’s done through. I try to give dem all de chances cause I never had privilege to go to school cause I come long during slavery days...if I had de chance dese young folks have now a days I’d make good use of dem cause I always wanted an education so dat I could be somebody.³

¹ Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, *An Appeal to the Women of the Nominally Free States, 12 May 1837*. Second Edition (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838. Reprint, Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1971) , 50.

² Stephen Butterfield, *Black Autobiography in America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1974) , 25.

³ Peggy Burton Interview found in *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves*, ed. Charles L. Perdue, Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994) , 65.

Peggy did not have the chance to go to school; however, she understood that knowledge was power. Similar to the self-image thesis put forth by Butterfield, Peggy equated education with being the key to becoming a “somebody”—a person with options for a better life. Going to school led to financial independence, more employment opportunities, and access to information systematically hidden from African Americans by illiteracy.

The events recalled in Mattie J. Jackson and Kate Drumgoold’s narratives provide a wide spectrum of first-hand knowledge about slavery and the limitations put on African Americans. More importantly, ensuring that African Americans could continue to move forward by showing “the image of a hardworking, honest, and financially successful entrepreneur[s] to challenge the fundamental and prejudiced assumptions” by subscribing to an ideology of racial uplift was an integral goal once freedom was attained.⁴ Drumgoold and Jackson used education as their source of uplift.⁵ In spite of the decades that separate the lives and publication of both narratives, pursuing an education remained a constant theme in the struggle toward advancement. The narrators asserted themselves as individuals who used education to improve the lot cast for all African Americans.⁶

⁴ Sylvia Hoffert, “Jane Grey Swisshelm, Elizabeth Keckley, and the Significance of Race Consciousness in American Women's History,” *Journal of Women's History* 13.3 (2001) : 24.

⁵ Historian Kevin Gaines defined “racial uplift” as one of the major movements “for group struggle for freedom and social advancement” at the turn of the twentieth century. In his book *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century*, Gaines probed the development of the racial uplift movement and how this ideology influenced the African American community. Interesting enough, the black bourgeois supported these initiatives by subscribing to white middle class standards of respectability.

⁶ Literacy has different meanings during different points in history. In this argument, I refer to the following definition coined by Cathy Davidson and used in Lisa Sisco’s article “Writing in the Spaces Left’: Literacy as a Process of Becoming in the Narratives of Frederick Douglass”: “literacy is a process, not a fixed point or a line of demarcation. ‘Literateness’ is a more useful term . . . since it suggests a continuum (and a continuing process of education and self-education) between, say, rudimentary reading and elementary ciphering, on the one hand, and the sophisticated use of literacy for one’s material, intellectual, and political advantage, on the other.” At the same time, knowing how to read and write are not mutually exclusive. A slave could know how to recognize or read symbols, but not know how to write.

As a fugitive slave during the Civil War, Mattie Jackson encountered barriers that made it illegal to become literate. Many states like South Carolina passed laws as early as the colonial period that explicitly forbade anyone, black or white, freed or enslaved, to teach African Americans how to read or write.⁷ Some states like Virginia regarded all attempts to assemble as an attempt to teach slaves:

That all meetings or assemblages of slaves or free negroes, or mulattoes, mixing and associating with such slaves at any meeting hours, or houses, or any other place &c. in the night, or at any school or schools for teaching them reading or writing either in the day or night, under whatsoever pretexts, shall be deemed and considered an *unlawful assembly*.⁸

Enacted in 1819, this law and others created an environment of fear for every person of color. Offenders of this particular law, black and white, were sentenced to corporal punishment. Even former slave John W. Fields of Indiana remembered that “it was the law that if a white man was caught trying to educate a Negro slave, he was liable to prosecution entailing a fine of fifty dollars and a jail sentence.”⁹ With rules such as these, supporters of anti-slavery and African Americans alike found themselves in constant danger for simply wanting to learn how to read and write. Legislation designed to prevent slaves, former slaves and freedmen from obtaining an

⁷ Ralph Erickson, “The Laws of Ignorance Designed to Keep Slaves (Blacks) Illiterate and Powerless,” *Education*, 118 (Winter 1997), On-line database. Academic Search Premier; available from <http://search.epnet.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&an=234330>; Internet; accessed 28 December 2005. Erickson, an education historian, wrote the article found in concerning the systematic attempts by state governments to prevent African Americans from learning how to read. He identified South Carolina’s literacy law of 1740 as one of the first legal measures recorded. The law stated, “Be it enacted, that all and every person or persons whatsoever, who shall hereafter teach, or shall use or employ any slave as a scribe in any manner of writing whatsoever, hereafter taught to write, every such persons or persons shall, for each offense, forfeit the sum of one hundred pounds current money.”

⁸ Rev. La Roy Sunderland, “Facts and Arguments on American Slavery.” Found in *Interesting Memoirs and Documents Relating to American Slavery, and the Glorious Struggle Now Making for Complete Emancipation*. (London: Chapman Brothers, 1846; Westport: Negro Universities Press, 1970) , 240.

⁹ National Underground Railroad Freedom Center , et. al. ed. *Unchained Memories: Readings from the Slave Narratives*. Forward Henry Louis Gates (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 2002) , 84.

education continued well into the Civil War. For Mattie, this legislation added a formidable hurdle to overcome in order to realize her dream of attending school.

Although it was an unstable period of time, African Americans like Mattie J. Jackson understood that getting an education was important. She did not provide details about how she came to understand the importance of becoming literate. There were no poignant scenes where the master's children shared their school lessons or where her mistress thought it necessary for her domestic to be literate. Instead, we do know that Ellen, her mother, could read and shared her knowledge with her daughter. Mattie recalls that "[m]y mother and myself could read enough to make out the news in the papers....It aggravated my mistress very much. My mother used to sit up nights and read to keep posted about the war.¹⁰ We can assume that Ellen taught Mattie everything that she knew in secrecy, fearing punishment and possible death. As domestic slaves, Ellen and Mattie were more likely than field slaves to acquire reading skills. In his published collection of anti-slavery papers, abolitionist James Russell Lowell commented on the logic of plantation owners. In fact, he tried to persuade them that the system of slavery would not prevent slaves from trying to improve themselves:

Though our American slaves are cut off as much as possible from every avenue of instruction, yet it is impossible to prevent a certain gradual diffusion of intelligence among them, the more especially as a large class (those employed as domestics) are brought into immediate contact with a higher order of refinement and education.¹¹

Lowell understood that house slaves were perhaps the most likely to find opportunities within the household to increase their knowledge base. Unlike most abolitionists, Lowell was not so naïve

¹⁰ Mattie Jackson and Dr. L.S. Thompson. *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson; Her Parentage, Experience of Eighteen Years in Slavery, Incidents During the War, Her Escape from Slavery: A True Story* (Lawrence: Sentinel Office, 1866) Found in *Six Women's Slave Narratives*. With Introduction by William L. Andrews (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) , 13.

¹¹ James Russell Lowell, *The Anti-Slavery Papers of James Russell Lowell, Volume I* (Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1902; New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 200.

to think that slaves would wait on the efforts of sympathetic whites to catapult their resistance efforts. He was well aware that house slaves already exploited the power of proximity—that is, using their masters as a resource to learn more information. For example, a maid could come across literature in the parlor, Bibles on night stands, or entire reading rooms and office space ripe for the picking. “I liked dustin’ part best,” explained former house slave Julia Frazier, “‘cause I could git my hands on de books and pictures... Ole Missus used to watch me mos’ times o see dat I didn’t open no books. Sometimes she would close up all de books an’ put ‘em on de shelf so’s I couldn’t see ‘em.”¹² Julia Frazier’s mistress made it clear that books were off limits. Frazier’s master, like most, probably feared that access to reading would distract slaves from their chores, give them the tools to contest their condition, and proof false one underlying justification for slavery itself. However, this did not stop many slaves from finding time to learn in secrecy. Mattie was no exception.

Knowing how to read newspapers gave Jackson and her mother access to the same information that the slaveowners had concerning the war. Knowing that other people’s efforts could lead to her freedom made reading a powerful tool for Jackson and made her family dangerous to the survival of the slave system. If a slave knew that she could be free, then convincing her of her subordination became difficult and could lead to resistance to her condition.

In the case of Mattie Jackson, the antebellum period generated an avalanche of information that forced the country to reconsider the place of African Americans. The attitudes during the Civil War resulted in more attempts by blacks to seek education. As explained in

¹² Julia Frazier, Interview 20 April 1937, found in *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves*, ed. Charles L. Perdue, Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 97-98.

Mattie's narrative, the closeness of the Union Army meant that slaves had a potential ally in their attempt to improve their lives.¹³ The military offered blacks a life complete with a job, home, and education—things that were practically non-existent in the outside world.¹⁴ Historian Karen Dalton supported this conclusion in her article "The Alphabet is an Abolitionist" Literacy and African Americans in the Emancipation Era." Dalton stated that there were slaves who sought an education from the military:

[I]n the early months of the Civil War, black Southerners were clamoring for formal education. Before the end of 1861 they established schools, with the assistance of the American Missionary Association, in the Union army camp at Fortress Monroe, Virginia. Later, black men in the Union army... learned to read and write from chaplains, off-duty enlisted men, and civilian volunteers.¹⁵

Although some slaves did not take advantage of this opportunity, it is important to note that access to education was increasing and that whites knew that learning how to read and write was a coveted prize among African Americans.

While Mattie's connection to the Union army surfaced as a brief hint at her reading skills, the remaining chapters of her narrative were dedicated to her efforts to go to school and convince the reader of the importance of education. Mattie successfully escaped to Indianapolis, Indiana where her fight for equality continued by seeking opportunities for formal schooling beyond her

¹³ Some Union Army regiments recognized the benefit of recruiting the talents of African American soldiers. Having a semi-literate body of soldiers could greatly improve communication amongst units. Bobby Lovett's article, "Black Adult Education during the Civil War, 1861-1865" documents the impact that the Union Army made on the lives of slaves, freedmen, and black soldiers through education. To improve the success of their soldiers and increase recruitment, special effort was made to maintain regimental and freedmen schools.

¹⁴ Bobby L. Lovett, "Black Adult Education during the Civil War, 1861-1865," In *Education of the African American Adult: An Historical Overview*, Ed. Harvey G. Neufeldt and Leo McGee (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1990), 36.

¹⁵ Karen Dalton, "The Alphabet is an Abolitionist" Literacy and African Americans in the Emancipation Era," *Massachusetts Review* 32, 4 (Winter 1991); [database on-line], Academic Research Premier; accessed 28 December 2005.

elementary reading knowledge.¹⁶ Before entering school, an abolitionist named Mrs. Harris helped Mattie to hone her reading skills. Jackson proudly announced to the reader that she took her first steps toward “literacy advancement” since she “could read a little, but was not allowed to learn in slavery.”¹⁷ Jackson paid others to write letters for her until her hand-writing was legible.¹⁸ After several months of hard work, the efforts of Mrs. Harris resulted in Jackson’s preparation for formal school. Mattie overcame the roadblock that slavery imposed upon her.¹⁹ Mattie, in fact, broke the law by pursuing these skills since Indiana strictly adhered to the Fugitive Slave Law up until 1864; the conclusion of the war did not signal the end of all injustices.²⁰ Knowing this information put Mattie in danger while living on the plantation; knowing this information as a fugitive could get her killed. While we will never know what Mattie informally learned while enslaved, we do know that she essentially risked her life by trying to obtain an education after escaping slavery.

¹⁶ Mattie was sold in 1863 to Captain Ephraim Frisbee. However, she states that she plotted her escape for six months. In the next chapter, Mattie saw Lincoln’s body after living with Mrs. Harris for seven months. Since Lincoln died in April 1865 and we don’t know how long Mattie was acquainted with the abolitionists before meeting Mrs. Harris, it is possible that she could have escaped at the end of 1863 or beginning of 1864. We can infer that she started living with Mrs. Harris around September 1864 according to her timeline.

¹⁷ Jackson and Thompson. *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson*, 28.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 28.

¹⁹ Mattie claims that she lived with Unionists who took an interest “in teaching and encouraging me in my literary advancement and all other important improvements” (28). She only identifies Mrs. Harris among this group once she volunteers to tutor her in writing. Mattie says that after living with Mrs. Harris for seven months that General Lee surrendered in Richmond, so I assume that it took her almost a year before feeling comfortable enough to write legibly.

²⁰ Gwen Crenshaw, “Indiana and Fugitive Slave Laws,” found in “*Bury Me in a Free Land*”: *The Abolitionist Movement in Indiana*, Indiana Historical Bureau; [website]; available from <http://www.in.gov/history/3777.htm> ; Internet; accessed 16 April 2008. In 1824, Indiana enacted their own Fugitive Slave Law stating that all citizens must return a slave to his or her slaveholder. Years later, Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. Indiana ratified a new state constitution in 1850 that explicitly supported the congressional legislation and added Article 13 that forbade anyone from supporting the migration and settlement of blacks in the state in years thereafter.

Considering the circumstances, Jackson's accomplishment was quite remarkable. In their article "Legacies of American Slavery: Status Attainment among Southern Blacks after Emancipation", sociologists Martin Ruef and Ben Fletcher studied the economic progress of ex-slaves and what factors affected their ability to attain financial independence and social standing. Their findings showed that socioeconomic status was directly correlated with educational achievement. They noted, "Despite the opportunity costs and difficulty of obtaining education, it was widely embraced by former slaves and their children" because it was the most promising method of ensuring upward mobility.²¹ With this general idea about the meaning of an education, it made sense for ex-slaves like Mattie to want to go to school.

Mattie's efforts did not stop once she achieved basic reading and writing skills. Jackson pursued public education in Lawrence, Massachusetts where she "advanced in my studies as fast as could be expected."²² Upon suggestion from her mother and with the determination to better her life, Jackson considered "select school and placing myself entirely under its discipline and influence."²³ In fact, she wrote to "aid me in obtaining an education."²⁴ Mattie's triumph resides in that she worked toward improving her condition even though obtaining an education was a

²¹ Martin Ruef and Ben Fletcher, "Legacies of American Slavery: Status Attainment among Southern Blacks after Emancipation, *Social Forces*, 82.2, December 2003; [journal on-line]; available from [http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0037-7732\(200312\)82%3A2%3C445%3ALOASSA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-O](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0037-7732(200312)82%3A2%3C445%3ALOASSA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-O); Internet; accessed 28 December 2005.

²² Jackson and Thompson, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson*, 36. Mattie says that she and her brother arrived in Massachusetts on April 11. In a previous chapter, Mattie says that her mother and brother escaped three months after her sister, Hester. Hester escaped two weeks after President Lincoln's assassination. If Lincoln died on April 15, 1865 and her brother escaped (perhaps) in August 1865, then there was no way for Mattie to arrive in Massachusetts in April 1865.

²³ Ibid. Select school was a term used to describe many of the private boarding schools during the nineteenth century chartered by religious groups such as the Quakers. Many of these schools served as preparatory institutions for teachers and followed a religiously focused curriculum. All of these schools were segregated by gender and race. A select school would have been one of the only options for formal schooling available to African Americans.

²⁴ Ibid., 3.

financial hardship. In later chapters in the narrative, we learn that Mattie worked as a domestic servant and accepted donations from her church and family to finance her education.

Not only did Mattie J. Jackson take great strides to improve her condition, she encouraged others to do the same: “that I may be enabled to do some good in behalf of the elevation of my emancipated brothers and sisters” which could be an inspiration to others.²⁵ Jackson understood that it was not enough to educate herself, but she must use this skill to help others; true uplift occurred when knowledge was shared with others. Mattie realized that education remained the best method of overcoming the conditions imposed by the postbellum era because these skills could never be taken away. In her narrative, she imparted important words of wisdom to those who remained mentally enslaved saying, “I would advise all, young, middle aged or old, in a free country to learn to read and write. If this little book should fall in to the hands of one deficient of the important knowledge of writing, I hope they will remember the old maxim:--‘Never too old to learn.’”²⁶ By putting her appeal in print, Mattie Jackson called attention to the influence of reading and writing on an ex-slave’s ability to regain control over her fate. She implored her brethren to understand that former bondage should not hold them back from expanding their knowledge base and taking advantage of the information that white people had known for years.

Jackson promised that “when I complete my education, if my life is spared, I shall endeavor to publish further details of our history in another volume from my own pen.”²⁷ In fact, it was Mattie’s step-mother who suggested that she publish her life story to help defray the cost

²⁵ Ibid., 3.

²⁶ Ibid., 29.

²⁷ Drumgoold, *A Slave Girl’s Story*, 38.

of additional education, thus using her narrative as an agent for progress.²⁸ Her writing, encouragement, and uplift testimony places Jackson's narrative as an avenue through which other ex-slave women could pattern their lives. Being free was not enough. African Americans needed to have a strategy in order to survive in the post-Emancipation world. The law did not guarantee that freed people would have a fair life, so it was imperative that African Americans find a tool that would serve them indefinitely. Unfortunately, we do not know if Mattie completed the amount of schooling that she endeavored with the proceeds from her book. The only documented information about her life is in the narrative. Yet, Mattie's sheer desire to go to school and her efforts toward accomplishing that goal are remarkable.

Unlike Mattie J. Jackson, Kate Drumgoold did not encounter the same obstacles following slavery; however, she too sought education as a means to improve her condition and help her people. Kate decided that education was the best way to "be of some use to my own people."²⁹ She grew weary of hearing about the injustices that African Americans faced:

[E]very time that I saw the newspaper there was some one of our race in the far South getting killed for trying to teach and I made up my mind that I would die to see my people taught. I was willing to go to prepare to die for my people, for I could not rest till my people were educated.³⁰

This pledge initiated Kate's pursuit to serve her community by going to school to become a teacher.

In order to pay for school, Kate continued domestic work. By 1875, she had lived in Brooklyn for twelve years as a housekeeper for various families while saving money. Miss L.A. Pousland, her last employer before leaving for school "longed to see me out in the world doing

²⁸ Ibid., 31.

²⁹ Ibid., 28.

³⁰ Ibid., 24.

my Master's will and helping to teach” because she “like[d] to see all others learn.”³¹ She also received “the sum of twenty or thirty dollars to help me in paying my expenses” from the Washington Baptist Church congregation as well as monetary support from the church’s Mission Band and Sunday School.³² This lifestyle as a part-time domestic continued after she became a teacher and was quite common. Many teachers sent down south lived in boarding houses and worked for the household as payment for their room. It is interesting to note that the white congregation at Washington Baptist Church provided the funds for her education. Although Kate’s church was located in New York (a free state) and slavery had been abolished nationwide for more than ten years, we must not overlook the intent of this white Christian congregation. Conceivably, Kate represented an example of how to mold African Americans into the type of citizens that they wanted. We must not forget that the Church had a long history with sending missionaries to “civilize” Africans and others from foreign countries by presenting aid and religious instruction. While their support resulted in an educated black woman, we can not help but take into consideration the intent of Kate’s church.

Keeping in line with her Christian roots, in 1875 Kate “went to Washington, D. C., and entered the Wayland Seminary, under the leadership of Professor G. M. P. King, of Bangor, Maine.”³³ Considered a normal school and partially funded by the newly formed state of West Virginia with support from the Freedmen’s Bureau, the major goal was to train black teachers to

³¹ Ibid., 38. Master meaning God of the Christian faith.

³² Ibid., 59.

³³ Drumgoold, *A Slave Girl's Story*, 27.

teach black students.³⁴ As part of the American Baptist Home Missionary Society (ABHMS), Wayland Seminary operated as part of an effort to prepare freed people not only for secondary education but also for work in the ministry.³⁵ Additionally, Wayland Seminary students were exposed to languages and liberal arts classes which eventually gave way to gender based instruction in domestic science for ladies and industrial arts for men.³⁶ With this level of training, Kate prepared herself to become a teacher and live up to the goals that she set.

Becoming a part of the teaching force was one of the most useful ways that Kate could use her skills. The school system for African Americans was a loose organization established by the Freedman's Bureau. While the majority of the teachers were white, "[i]t is not generally known that by 1867 one-third of the 2087 teachers in the Freedmen's schools were themselves Blacks."³⁷ In his study *Race and Schooling in the South, 1880-1950*, African American Studies and American economics historian Robert A. Margo traced how literacy in the black community increased in response to the educational efforts of organizations like the Freedman's Bureau. Teachers hired by the Bureau reached out to thousands of black students in the South. Margo mentions that in 1869 an estimated 150,000 students attended schools sponsored by the

³⁴ A. R. Whitehill, *History of Education in West Virginia*. Ed. Herbert B. Adams (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902), 114-115. Based on the history of education in the Harper's Ferry, Wayland Seminary was the only secondary institution available to people of color in that region. Established in 1867, resources were limited but Kate Drumgoold was fortunate enough to secure a spot. Eventually, Wayland merged with Richmond Theological Seminary in 1899 to become Virginia Union University. This historically black university still operates under a strong Baptist Christian foundation. Mattie's description is a bit confusing because she states that Wayland was located in Washington, D.C., but my secondary source states that Wayland was located in Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. Although the Harper's Ferry region did not become a part of West Virginia until 1865, this still does not explain the contradiction in her narrative. For the purposes of this thesis, I assume that Kate went to school in Harper's Ferry and worked as a domestic in Washington, D.C.

³⁵ Raymond P. Hylton, "University History." Virginia Union University; [website]; available from <http://www.vuu.edu/aboutVUU/history.htm>; Internet; accessed 9 February 2006.

³⁶ Whitehill. *History of Education in West Virginia*, 117.

³⁷ Erickson, "The Laws of Ignorance..." no pagination.

Freedman's Bureau.³⁸ In 1880, about 30% of black men between the ages of 10-14 were literate and by 1900 that same age group was 65% literate.³⁹ Literacy for black women in the same age group and over the same time period increased by almost 60%!⁴⁰ It is hard to ignore that obtaining an education increased for this newly freed population.⁴¹

By 1885, Kate had completed her education and was actively teaching in communities along the Shenandoah Valley including Woodstock, Virginia and Hinton, West Virginia. Similar to the average teacher at this time period, Kate was over-extended because "all of the people sought me to take their children in my school and give them a start. I had my hands full of work, but I let them come in for the Board always sent them to me to find out if I could find room and time and I always made the time."⁴² In one respect this turn of events must have been encouraging for Kate; she was highly sought-after. Kate was part of a generation that felt the immediate impact of having to establish a livelihood against all odds and the number of students she had was living proof of that struggle. Teachers confronted issues of "adequate funding... establishment of curricula... and better physical facilities" for African American students.⁴³ However, women like Drumgoold routinely prevailed over "[l]imited economic

³⁸ Robert A. Margo, *Race and Schooling in the South, 1880-1950: An Economic History* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 8.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Assembling an accurate account of how many blacks were literate prior to the Civil War is difficult. We must take into consideration that Margo based his information on blacks who were part of the school system. There is no accounting for people who did not participate in the formal school setting, but who learned through other avenues (e.g. church service).

⁴² Drumgoold, *A Slave Girl's Story*, 29.

⁴³ Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, "African American Women and Adult Education in the South, 1895-1925," in *Education of the African American Adult: An Historical Overview*. Ed. Harvey G. Neufeldt and Leo McGee (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1990), 163.

opportunities, inferior housing, severe health problems” in order to serve their students.⁴⁴ Their desire to learn outweighed the obstacles. Data from the Freedman’s Bureau indicates that “[e]ven at its height, this system of public education reached only approximately 10% of black children and suffered considerable setbacks.”⁴⁵ As a result, Kate knew that reaching black students would be difficult, but she was committed to her craft and continued to teach African Americans for another eleven years.

Kate recalled the joys of being a teacher when time and circumstances permitted. She lovingly described learning as an opportunity to “refine and elevate the mind” in order to “cultivate our hearts and minds and live to bless those we meet.”⁴⁶ These early years of organized public education were weighed down with challenges and Drumgoold met them face on. The meager resources often resulted in shorter school terms and fewer students which forced Kate to continue work as a domestic at the homes where she boarded; yet, Kate continued to teach wherever she was requested. One author described these teachers as “crusaders” who “were youthful idealists who were leaving home for the first time to take part in the most significant movement of their day.”⁴⁷ As for her colleagues, she declared, “They love the work of the school-room, and it is their meat and their drink daily to give away what they have received.”⁴⁸ Not only did many of her colleagues find joy in their profession, but Kate

⁴⁴ Ibid, 163.

⁴⁵ Ruef and Fletcher, “*Legacies of American Slavery*”

⁴⁶ Drumgoold, *A Slave Girl’s Story*, 31.

⁴⁷ Dorothy Sterling, ed., *We are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, Reissued 1997), 263. This is a collection of oral histories. The editor purposely left out speeches and sermons from the more established or educated classes of black women of the time. Instead, she focuses on letters and oral responses to certain situations. Sterling provides background information about each woman, her life circumstances, and how she contributed to the betterment of the race.

⁴⁸ Drumgoold, *A Slave Girl’s Story*, 56.

encountered students who thirsted for knowledge. Of one of her last teaching assignments in 1895, Drumgoold recalled, “When I had finished my public school I taught a pay school for the Summer and had a large number of scholars, and they progressed well. Some of them would go without their food all day to study extra lessons.”⁴⁹ In light of her students’ financial limitations, Kate aspired to match their fervor because “[s]ometimes I have had it rough, but in it all I can see the hand of God leading me to do all that I could to help forward the great cause of education in those parts where there was so much need.”⁵⁰

Kate never describes any frustrating personal trials she endured in teaching African American students. At times, her portrayal sounds too ideal to be true. Perhaps the class room was Kate’s opiate to deal with the more devastating issues confronting her community. In the midst of sickness and occasionally running out of money to finish her classes, Drumgoold provided an inspiring portrait of a woman dedicated to helping her race. She did not allow inopportune circumstances to prevent her from becoming a teacher. Unlike the ineffectual personality portrayed in the beginning of her narrative, Kate emerged as a persistent and resilient educator. As someone who was genuinely dedicated to the uplift of her people, Kate Drumgoold made it her life’s work to ensure that those who wanted an education could have the best instruction possible. I believe that the preface to Kate’s narrative was a metaphor for the power of education: “There are many doors that are shut to keep us back as a race, but some are opened to us...and I hope that they will be true to their trust and be of the greatest help to those that have

⁴⁹ Ibid., 61. Kate does not specify where she was toward the end of her teaching career except to say that she went back “west” before returning to Brooklyn. This could mean that she went back to Hinton, West Virginia.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 62.

given them a chance.”⁵¹ For former slaves like Kate who took advantage of education, chances became more plausible.

Both Mattie and Kate found remarkable personal success by improving themselves and sharing their knowledge with the masses. Sociologists Martin Ruef and Ben Fletcher attributed the efforts of scholastically minded individuals during the Reconstruction Era with “opening new economic opportunities for freed blacks.”⁵² As freewomen, Mattie and Kate took responsibility for helping to fight against “culturally dominant views...and social order” that assumed that African Americans were incapable of advancing.⁵³ Obtaining some semblance of formal education was a major step even for white Americans. To come from a situation where it was illegal for you to look at book to being in a position to help others learn was a phenomenal accomplishment. Education was the tool and both women used it to help advance their people and themselves.

⁵¹ Ibid., 4.

⁵² Ruef and Fletcher, “*Legacies of American Slavery.*”

⁵³ Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill and London: UNC Press, 1996), 40.

CHAPTER FIVE

Writing Themselves Out of the Margins

Author Adebayo Williams posits that there are clear connections between the efforts of slave women's writing and the future community. He asserts that "the slave narrative is to the black slaves what the early novel was to the ascendant bourgeois class: a vehicle for channeling group aspirations, hopes, fears, and insecurities, and at the same time, an offensive weapon for mounting spectacular assaults on their tormentors."¹ Both narrators consciously used their narratives in this fashion. Mattie published "to gain sympathy from the earnest friends of those who have been bound down by a dominant race in circumstances over which they had no control--a butt of ridicule and a mark of oppression" and Kate, as mentioned in previous chapters, wrote for the same reasons.²

The abilities that Mattie Jackson and Kate Drumgoold displayed were exemplary. While we are still discovering published accounts of former slaves, we can be assured that these two women's narratives are testaments to the resilience of the African American community. These two women in particular were able to communicate that while temporarily physically enslaved, former slaves were not mentally captive and immediately sought ways to improve their condition. In the words of Annette Niemtzw:

¹ Adebayo Williams, "Of Human Bondage and Literary Triumphs: Hannah Crafts and the Morphology of the Slave Narrative" 138 *Research in African Literatures* 34.1 (2003) [journal on-line]; available from http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/research_in_african_literatures/v034/34.1williams.html; Internet; accessed 3 November 2005.

² Mattie Jackson and Dr. L.S. Thompson. *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson; Her Parentage, Experience of Eighteen Years in Slavery, Incidents During the War, Her Escape from Slavery: A True Story* (Lawrence: Sentinel Office, 1866) Found in *Six Women's Slave Narratives*. With Introduction by William L. Andrews (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 2.

[S]lave narratives had a deep social mission which would ensure that the future would not repeat the past, and that was to establish the identity of each slave as slave no longer, but sentient, intelligent human being. I read, I write, therefore I am, says the slave autobiographer of nineteenth-century America.³

Niemtzow's quote suggests that slave narrators had a unique opportunity to rectify the injustices facing blacks by communicating their objectives to the masses. Jackson and Drumgoold decided to take advantage of their circumstances and use their narratives as a blueprint of reform. Their experiences provided a model under which other women (and men) could follow. At the same time, their efforts led to an improved definition of womanhood—one that put black women at the forefront of using education for the betterment of their people.

Tales of separation from family members was approached in different ways. For Kate, she seemed indecisive. I assumed that as a child she would have been more scared about being torn away from her mother and having to fend for herself. I expected some resistance and perhaps an outward expression of depression. Instead, she channels her energy into her white “surrogate” mother, Mrs. House. Perhaps this relationship served as her security blanket in the midst of overwhelming circumstances. Yet, when reunited with her biological mother and sisters, Kate appeared sadder at having to leave Mrs. House. On the other hand, Mattie was fiercely bound to her family. Although she was not separated from them as a child, her narrative alludes to a strong connection between her mother and siblings. Even when presented with opportunities to escape, the Drumgoold family planned together as a family until they were sent to different masters.

³ Annette Niemtzw, “The Problematic of Self in Autobiography: The Example of the Slave Narrative,” in *The Art of Slave Narrative: Original Essays in Criticism and Theory*, ed. John Sekora and Darwin T. Turner (Macomb: Western Illinois University, 1982), 98.

Relationships with whites stand out in these narratives. The difference in time period is intriguing because it shows that some of the same issues persisted over the course of slavery. Mattie and Kate provided only a portion of their lives for the reading audience; however, that segment gave them an opportunity to capture the attention of those who were ignorant of the plantation regime. Both narrators accomplished this in different ways. Mattie chose to amplify the brutalities of slavery particularly through her interactions with the Lewis family. From the verbal abuse to the scenes of physical punishment, Mattie shared no memories of good whites. On the other hand, Kate had a more tolerable experience in captivity although she seemed to be more passive in her relationships with whites. Her maternal bond with Mrs. House, being the most obvious example, contradicts the image of cruel masters. In fact, the worst experience Kate shared was having too much house work, leaving her with less time to study. The stark contrast between Mattie and Katie's perspectives on whites demonstrate the there is diversity of experience within the female slave narrative genre that should not be overlooked. What is more, our stereotypes of white masters deserve reconsideration in that there were slaves who could attest to humane treatment given the deplorable institution of slavery.

Ira Berlin, one of the leading historians of North American slavery, declared that "slaves were different people in 1650 than they would be in 1750 or 1850, but they always carried something of their forebears into the future."⁴ Berlin's comment directly pertains to the narratives written by Mattie J. Jackson and Kate Drumgoold. We learn that both women carried education as an agent of progress into the future. This common goal binds these narratives together as representations of a collective experience. With more than three decades separating the publications of their narratives, Kate and Mattie were part of a tradition of resistance. By

⁴ Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity, A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003) , 8.

sharing moments from their life, these narrators exposed the ills of slavery to a wider audience and fought the idea that formerly enslaved women were powerless. By using education as a vehicle for change, both narrators subscribed to an ideology that helped to break down barriers for their people. In fact, learning how to read and write was powerful because it was a skill that could never be taken away.

It is interesting to note that some themes were never mentioned in either narrative. Sexual exploitation and rape, a highly researched part of a female slave's life, apparently were not part of these women's lives. The absence of sexual abuse in these accounts leads one to believe that Mattie J. Jackson and Kate Drumgoold were spared such experiences. Along the same lines, miscegenation was never introduced as an occurrence within their respective environments. Although a demeaning experience for slave women, it was an unfortunate reality. On a positive note, the presence of family could have prevented both narrators from experiencing these cruel situations. The protection of the slave family or benevolent member of the household could keep young girls safer than if they were on their own. Mattie and Kate fortunately escaped perhaps the most emotionally and psychologically painful experience that only slave women had to endure.⁵

As communicated in their accounts, both narrators invested in the future of their community by pursuing an education. In her article "Jane Grey Swisshelm, Elizabeth Keckley, and the Significance of Race Consciousness in American Women's History," women and gender historian Sylvia Hoffert discussed female literary history and the obstacles that prevented black women from being full participants in the 19th century:

⁵ White women were raped and sexually exploited; however, there were laws to protect them in the event that something happened. White women had the protection of white men to deliver justice on their behalf. Black women did not have this luxury.

The problem of defining women stems from the fact that, in their early attempts to place the female experience in the historical record, women's historians tended to view women as a homogenous mass and approached their sources from a perspective that was typically white, heterosexual, and middle class.⁶

Through a comparison of the autobiographies of Jane Grey Swisshelm, a white woman, and Elizabeth Keckley, a former slave, Hoffert suggested that it was impossible for female ex-slaves to write about being in bondage without acknowledging gender as well as race. African American narrators had to reassure their audiences that they had “no ill will for their enslavement and that ex-slaves were willing to adopt a work ethic consistent with the principles of free enterprise.”⁷ This awareness made the stories about financial independence, family stability, and educational attainment significant. At the same time, female ex-slave narrators defied white expectations through their actions because they would never fit into the cult of true womanhood. In that respect, slave narratives gave black women an opportunity to define themselves through the incidents that they chose to share. Womanhood was not predicated on race. No longer were they bound to the strict definitions imposed by society. Mattie Jackson and Kate Drumgoold presented their audiences with an image of black women that history could never erase.

⁶ Sylvia Hoffert, “Jane Grey Swisshelm, Elizabeth Keckley, and the Significance of Race Consciousness in American Women's History,” *Journal of Women's History* 13.3 (2001): 10.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

CONCLUSION

This thesis abandons the idea that the female slave experience was confined to one perspective. There was diversity among the enslaved. Beyond their gender and status as slaves, we learn that Mattie J. Jackson and Kate Drumgoold exhibited opposite personalities. Time period, region, age, size of the plantation, labor and work dictated or rather made it possible for an infinite number of incidents to shape the lives of slaves including Mattie and Kate. In her book *Sweet Chariot: Slave Family & Household Structure in 19th-Century Louisiana*, historian Ann Malone addressed the competing notions about the plantation composition and the resulting affects on the black population. She concluded that the ever-changing arrangement of the plantation led to adaptation being the key survival skill for African Americans.¹ From Malone's assessment, we gather that the enslaved experience was not rigid and predictable; rather, it was fluid and predicated on numerous factors. In the case of Mattie and Kate, their differences demonstrate that we can recognize how varied circumstances impacted women's writing without taking away from their shared enslaved experience.

Narratives brought attention to the issues born from slavery and forced society to recognize that African Americans would not be silent about their current or future condition. To be black and female meant one was constantly fighting opposition; their very existence was a direct contradiction to everything that symbolized beauty, significance, and power. Women like Mattie Jackson and Kate Drumgoold used their narratives to show that there was diversity within the formerly enslaved female population while these same women worked toward common goals. In the words of nineteenth century black female activist Mary Church Terrell, "No sooner had the heads of a favored few been filled with knowledge than their hearts yearned to dispense

¹ Ann Malone, *Sweet Chariot: Slave Family & Household Structure in 19th-Century Louisiana* (Chapel Hill, UNC Press, 1992) , 252.

blessings to the less fortunate of their race. With tireless energy and eager zeal colored women have worked in every conceivable way to elevate their race.”² As women, Mattie and Kate opened the doors for other women, black and white, to critically think about gender issues and commit those thoughts to paper. As black women, these two narrators opened the doors for other former slave women to control representations of themselves in print.

With the evolving nineteenth century it was easy to see the differences in how both women lived; at the same time, being black and female was a fixed condition that resulted in a number of similar circumstances for Mattie and Kate. Historian Katherine Fishburn concluded that female authored texts serve as a testament to slave women’s experiences:

The books the ex-slaves wrote, therefore, speak the absent body. They give voice to the bodily felt experience of enslavement (the pain, deprivations, humiliations, sufferings, and so on), but they also give voice to the bodily knowledge of our relatedness-to-*being*...they stand in for the absent body of the slave whose work we hold in our hands.³

Publishing a narrative during the nineteenth century became an indicator of a former slave’s exploits to the black community, desire for mental and physical freedom, and a commitment to ensure that bondage (physical or otherwise) would come to an end.

Future research could expand this discussion to include more narratives as well as women from different regions. Regional comparisons may yield information about certain slave behaviors such as preferred method and route of escape and property size as a correlation with

² Mary Church Terrell, ““The Progress of Colored Women,” found in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, ed. Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: The New Press, 1995) , 65.

³ Katherine Fishburn, *The Problem of Embodiment in Early African American Narrative* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997), 38.

interactions between whites and blacks.⁴ Focusing on a different common theme in narrative would produce interesting results. For example, major issues such as the impact of religion create more insight into how slaves found ways to survive a system that attempted to divest them of everything. There were a number of former slaves like Rev. William Mack Lee, Rev. Jordan Early, and Minister “Old” Elizabeth (last name not given) who documented their religious conversion and tracked their missionary exploits through the Civil War and into the late nineteenth century. Similarly, drawing conclusions about family formation after the war would provide an interesting case study. I mention the Jackson family and the Drumgoold family in both narrators’ background information, but those relationships were not the focus of this thesis.

Another consideration would be placing an emphasis on time period. While time span was significant to this study, removing that variable may produce more consistent portrayals of slavery and life during Reconstruction. For example, narrators who were children toward the end of slavery, like Annie Burton, will shed light on the relatively easy transition into adulthood because they did not experience such a contrasting change in status. Similarly, adding narratives written in the eighteenth century may illustrate an even longer tradition of valuing reading and writing as a source of uplift.

Writing gave Mattie Jackson and Kate Drumgoold more power over their identities than granted by white society. Narratives gave former slaves a forum to claim authority over their lives. Both narrators chose which incidents to share, who to mention, and how to represent their participation in each situation. This act was extremely powerful because no one could portray the experience of a slave woman better than a slave woman. No one could convey the advances

⁴ Glimpses of regional differences are present in Kate’s narrative. Missouri was an anomaly by slave state standards in that it was part of the Union. Its physical proximity to free states was attractive to slaves as was the access to the Missouri River and Mississippi River. Using a comparison to Lucy Delany’s narrative would be an appropriate comparison.

of a new freedwoman better than a freedwoman. In this respect, slave narratives stripped society of the ability to control the African American woman and her ability to define herself. Mattie and Kate's narratives resulted in the amplification of the enslaved woman's voice.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

- Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women. *An Appeal to the Women of the Nominally Free States, 12 May 1837*. Second Edition. Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838. Reprint, Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1971.
- Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Library. available from <http://cti.itc.virginia.edu~ela/freedmen/bureau.html> (Accessed 22 January 2006).
- Burton, Annie L. *Memories of Childhood's Slavery Days*. Boston: Ross Publishing Company, 1909. Found in *Documenting the American South*, available from <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/burton/burton.html> (Accessed 29 March 2008).
- Cooper, Anna Julia. *A Voice from the South*. Xenia: The Aldine Printing House, 1892. Reprint, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Delany, Martin. *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*. In *African-American Social & Political Thought 1850-1920*. Sixth Edition. Ed. Howard Brotz. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999.
- Drumgoold, Kate. *A Slave Girl's Story: Being an Autobiography of Kate Drumgoold, in Six Women's Slave Narratives*, With Introduction by William L. Andrews. Brooklyn: the author, 1898. Reprint, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Jackson, Mattie J. and Dr. L.S. Thompson. *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson; Her Parentage, Experience of Eighteen Years in Slavery, Incidents During the War, Her Escape from Slavery: A True Story*. (Lawrence: Sentinel Office, 1866) Found in *Six Women's Slave Narratives*. With Introduction by William L. Andrews. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Boston, 1861. Reprint, Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2001.
- Lowell, James Russell. *The Anti-Slavery Papers of James Russell Lowell, Volume I*. Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1902; New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969.
- National Underground Railroad Freedom Center (Cincinnati, Ohio), Henry Louis Gates, Spencer Crew, and Cynthia Goodman. *Unchained Memories: Readings from the Slave Narratives*. With a foreword by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Boston: Bulfinch Press, 2002.

Parsons, C.G. *Inside View of Slavery: Or A Tour Among the Planters*. With an introduction by Mrs. G. B. Stowe. Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1855. Reprint, Detroit: Negro History Press, 1970.

Perdue, Jr., Charles L., Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips. *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves*. ed. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1976.

Sunderland, La Roy. "Facts and Arguments on American Slavery," In *Interesting Memoirs and Documents Relating to American Slavery, and the Glorious Struggle Now Making for Complete Emancipation*. 235-247. London: Chapman Brothers, 1846. Reprint, Westport: Negro Universities Press, 1970.

Terrell, Mary Church. "'The Progress of Colored Women,'" found in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African- American Feminist Thought*, ed. Beverly Guy-Sheftall. New York: The New Press, 1995.

Secondary Sources

Alonzo, Andrea Starr. "A Study of Two Women's Slave Narratives: *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and *The History of Mary Prince*," Found in 'We specialize in the Wholly Impossible: A Reader in Black Women's History'. eds. Darlene Clark Hine et al. Brooklyn: Carlson, 1995.

Andrews, William. *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986.

Bell, Bernard. *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987.

Bentley, George R. *A History of the Freedmen's Bureau*. New York: Octagon Books, 1974.

Berlin, Ira. *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves*. Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003.

----- *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*. Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998.

Blassingame, John. *The Slave Community*. Revised 1976. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

- Blight, David. "The Slave Narratives: A Genre and a Source," in *History Now*, Issue 2, December 2004, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. On-line journal. http://www.historynow.org/12_2004/historian3.html. Internet; accessed 20 February 2008.
- Browder, Laura. *Slippery Characters: Ethnic Impersonators and American Identities*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.
- Boydston, Jeanne. "The Pastoralization of Housework" in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, Sixth Edition, Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart, 153-164 eds. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Butterfield, Stephen. *Black Autobiography in America*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1974.
- Carby, Hazel V. *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Cutter, Martha J. "Dismantling 'the Master's House': Critical Literacy in Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of A Slave Girl*." *Callaloo* 19.1. (1996): 209-225.
- Dalton, Karen. "'The Alphabet is an Abolitionist': Literacy and African Americans in the Emancipation Era." *Massachusetts Review* 32.4 (Winter 1991): 545-80. Journal on-line. Academic Research Premier. <http://ezproxy.marshall.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.asp?profile=web&defaultdb=aph>. Internet; accessed 28 December 2005.
- Davis, Charles and Henry Louis Gates, ed. *The Slave's Narrative*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Elkins, Stanley. *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*. Second Edition. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1968.
- Erickson, Ralph. "The Laws of Ignorance Designed to Keep Slaves (Blacks) Illiterate and Powerless." *Education* 118 (Winter 1997). On-line database. Academic Search Premier. <http://search.epnet.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&an=234330>. Internet; accessed 28 December 2005.
- Escott, Paul D. *Slavery Remembered: Twentieth-Century Slave Narratives*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1979.
- Faust, Drew Gilpin. "Enemies in Our Households: Confederate Women and Slavery." In *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, Sixth Edition, eds. Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart, 220-232. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

- Fleischner, Julia. *Mastering Slavery: Memory, Family, and Identity in Women's Slave Narratives*. New York: New York University Press, 1996.
- Foster, Frances Smith. *Written By Herself: Literary Production by African American Women, 1746-1892*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993.
- Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth. *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South*. Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988.
- Franklin, John Hope. *Reconstruction After the Civil War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Franklin, John Hope and Loren Schweninger. *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Gaines, Kevin. *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century*. Chapel Hill and London: UNC Press, 1996.
- Gutman, Herbert. *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1976.
- "Persistent Myths about the Afro-American Family." In *The Slavery Reader*. eds. Gad Heuman and James Walvin, 252-273. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Hoffert, Sylvia. "Jane Grey Swisshelm, Elizabeth Keckley, and the Significance of Race Consciousness in American Women's History." *Journal of Women's History* 13.3 (2001): 8-33. Database on-line. Project Muse.
http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_womens_history/v013/13.3hoffert.html. Internet; accessed 5 November 2004.
- Jeffrey, Julie Roy. *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement*. Chapel Hill and London : University of NC Press, 1998.
- Kerber, Linda. "The Republican Mother and the Woman Citizen: Contradictions and Choices in Revolutionary America," in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, Sixth Edition, eds. Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart, 119-127. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Lovett, Bobby L. "Black Adult Education during the Civil War, 1861-1865." In *Education of the African American Adult: An Historical Overview*, ed. Harvey G. Neufeldt and Leo McGee, 27-44. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1990.
- Malone, Ann. *Sweet Chariot: Slave Family & Household Structure in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana*. Chapel Hill, UNC Press, 1992.

- Margo, Robert A. *Race and Schooling in the South, 1880-1950: An Economic History*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Neverdon-Morton, Cynthia. "African American Women and Adult Education in the South, 1885-1925." In *Education of the African American Adult: An Historical Overview*, ed. Harvey G. Neufeldt and Leo McGee, 163-178. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1990.
- Nimtzow, Annette. "The Problematic of Self in Autobiography: The Example of the Slave Narrative." In *The Art of Slave Narrative: Original Essays in Criticism and Theory*, ed. John Sekora and Darwin T. Turner, 98-104. Macomb: Western Illinois University, 1982.
- Peterson, Carla. "Forced to Some Experiment: Novelization in the Writings of Harriet Jacobs, Harriet E. Wilson, and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper." In *'Doers of the Word': African-American Women Speakers and Writers in the North (1830-1880)*. 146-175. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Phillips, Ulrich. *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime*, (New York and London: D. Appleton & Company, 1918). Book online.
http://books.google.com/books?id=SDQOAAAIAAJ&dq=american+negro+slavery+ulrich+philips+free+book&pg=PP1&ots=7gRina41Mx&source=citation&sig=-jqmsW1_nI206gWxh5YbK0Z8XQc&hl=en&prev=http://www.google.com/search?q=American+Negro+Slavery,+Ulrich+Philips,+free+book&hl=en&rls=HPIB,HPIB:2005-17,HPIB:en&sa=X&oi=print&ct=result&cd=1&cad=bottom-3results#PPA261,M1; Internet; accessed 24 January 2008.
- Ruef, Martin and Ben Fletcher. "Legacies of American Slavery: Status Attainment among Southern Blacks after Emancipation." *Social Forces*, 82.2 (December 2003). 445-480. Database on-line. Academic Research Premier. [http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0037-7732\(200312\)82%3A2%3C445%3ALOASSA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-O](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0037-7732(200312)82%3A2%3C445%3ALOASSA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-O). Internet; accessed 28 December 2005.
- Sekora, John. "Black Message/White Envelope: Genre, Authenticity, and Authority in the Antebellum Slave Narrative," *Callalo* 32 (Summer 1987): 482-515.
- Shea, Daniel. "The Prehistory of American Autobiography," in *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Paul John Eakin, 25-46. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991.
- Stamp, Kenneth M. *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South*. New York: Vintage Books, 1956.
- Sterling, Dorothy, ed. *We are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century*. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997.
- Trexler, Harrison. *Slavery in Missouri, 1804-1865*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1914.

White, Deborah Gray. *Ar'n't I A Woman?: Females in the Plantation South*. New York: Norton, 1985.

Whitehill, A. R. *History of Education in West Virginia*. ed. Herbert B. Adams. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902.

Williams, Adebayo. "Of Human Bondage and Literary Triumphs: Hannah Crafts and the Morphology of the Slave Narrative." *Research in African Literatures* 34.1 (2003). 137-150. Database on-line. Project Muse. http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/research_in_african_literatures/v034/34.1williams.html; Internet; accessed 3 November 2005.

Yee, Shirley J. *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism 1828-1860*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992.

Websites and Internet Postings

Crenshaw, Gwen. "Indiana and Fugitive Slave Laws," found in "*Bury Me in a Free Land*": *The Abolitionist Movement in Indiana*, Indiana Historical Bureau. Web-site. <http://www.in.gov/history/3777.htm>. Internet; accessed 16 April 2008.

Davis, Ronald L. F. and B. J. Krekorian. "The Black Press in Antebellum America," *Slavery in America*, (New York Life). Web-site. http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/history/hs_es_press.htm. Internet; accessed 27 February 2008.

"I will be heard!": Abolitionism in America." Division of Rare & Manuscript Collections, Carl A. Kroch Library, Ithaca: Cornell University. Website. <http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/abolitionism/narratives/Narratives.htm>. Internet; accessed 20 February 2008.

Handler, Jerome S. and Michael L. Tuite. "Whipping Slaves, Missouri, 1856," *The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas: A Visual Record*, The Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and The Digital Media Lab, the University of Virginia Library. 2006. Website. <http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/index.php>. Internet, accessed 26 April 2008.

Handler, Jerome S. and Michael L. Tuite. "Iron Collar on Fugitive Slave, Missouri, 1862" *The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas: A Visual Record*, The Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and The Digital Media Lab, the University of Virginia Library. 2006. Website. <http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/index.php>. Internet, accessed 26 April 2008.

Hylton, Raymond P. "University History" in *Virginia Union University Homepage*. Richmond: Virginia Union University, 2007. Website. <http://www.vuu.edu/aboutVUU/history.htm>. Internet; accessed 9 February 2006.

Mintz, S. "African American Voices" in *Digital History*. Website. http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/black_voices/voices_display.cfm?id=22. Internet; accessed 29 January 2008.

"*True Tales of Bondage and Freedom: 19th Century Slave Narratives.*" Publishers' Bindings Online: Slave Narrators. University of Alabama. Website. http://bindings.lib.ua.edu/galler/slave_narratives.html. Internet; accessed 20 February 2008.

Yetman, Norman. "An Introduction to the WPA Slave Narratives," in *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938*. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress and Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, 23 March 2001. Website. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html>. Internet; accessed 25 January 2008.

Yetman, Norman. "Slave Narratives and the New Debate about Slavery," in *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938*. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress and Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, 23 March 2001. Website. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snintro04.html>. Internet; accessed 25 January 2008.

Works Consulted

Andrews, William. "Harriet A. Jacobs, Documenting the American South," Chapel Hill: The University Library of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004. Website. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/jacobs/bio.html>. Internet; accessed 14 April 2007.

Brinkley, Douglas. "Unmasking Writers of the W.P.A.," *New York Times*, 2 August 2003. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9905E7D7123EF931A3575BC0A9659C8B63&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all>. Internet; accessed 26 January 2008.

Casmier-Paz, Lynn A. "Footprints of the Fugitives: Slave Narrative Discourse and the Trace of Autobiography." *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly* 24.1 (Winter 2001): 215-255. Database online. Academic Search Premier. <http://muse.jhu.edu/login?uri=/journals/biography/v024/24.1casmier-paz.html>. accessed 6 November 2004.

Forsythe, Harold and Debra Jackson <djackson23@nyc.rr.com.>"REPLY: "Civil War Historians Need Not Apply." In H-CIVWAR, <h-civwar@msu.edu>, 2 March 2005, Archived at: <<http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=h-civwar&month=0503&week=a&msg=4OJRVOTY2jEAt6kvILRrOg&user=&pw=>>>.

Greene, Lorenzo Johnston. *The Negro in Colonial New England, 1620-1776*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1942. Reprint, Port Washington: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1966.

“North American Slave Narratives, Documenting the American South”, Chapel Hill: The University Library of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004. Website. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/chronautobio.html>; Internet, accessed 22 September 2008.

Savage, W. Sherman. *The Controversy over the Distribution of Abolition Literature 1830-1860*. Location unknown: Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Inc., 1938. Reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968.

Slaves and the Courts, 1740-1860. Law Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division and General Collections of the Library of Congress from *Slavery in the Courtroom: An Annotated Bibliography of American Cases* by Paul Finkelman, 1985. Website. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/sthtml/>. Internet; accessed 16 September 2008.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Miya Hunter-Willis
hunter50@marshall.edu

EDUCATION

Masters of Arts, History, December 2008
Marshall University, Huntington, WV

Bachelor of Arts, African American Studies and Psychology, May 2002
University of Virginia- Main Campus, Charlottesville, VA

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| June 2004-August 2004 | Summer Research Intern
Alexandria Black History Museum
Alexandria, VA |
| September 2001-May 2002 | Research Assistant for Senior Fellow Dr. Jerome Handler
Virginia Foundation for the Humanities
Charlottesville, VA |
| June 2001- August 2001 | Research Participant, College of William and Mary
Historical Research Program
Williamsburg, VA |
| October 2000- December 2001 | Research Assistant, University of Virginia
Department of Psychology
Charlottesville, VA |

PRESENTATIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Mattie J. Jackson: She Penned Her Own Voice.” Paper presented at Marshall University, Women’s Studies Conference, Huntington, WV (March 2006)

“West Virginia Black History Jeopardy.” Program presentation at Marshall University, Huntington, WV (February 2005)

“Securing the Blessings of Liberty: Freedoms Taken & Liberties Lost.” Panel Text Writing Credit, Alexandria Black History Museum, Alexandria, VA (August 2004)

“The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas: A Visual Record.” Credit for research assistance (<http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/index.php>), Charlottesville, VA (May 2002)

AFFILIATIONS

Association of Black Women's Historians, 2007-2006
Southern Association for Women Historians, 2006-2005
Phi Alpha Theta- History Honorary
Omicron Delta Kappa, Beta Lambda Circle- National Leadership Honorary
Seven Society Honoree, February 2002
Class of 2002 Trustee Appointment, 2006- 2001

ACADEMIC HONORS

Colonial Dames Award, Department of History, Marshall University, Huntington, WV, May 2006
Shannon Ewing Memorial Scholarship, Department of History, Marshall University, May 2006
Herman Weill Paper Contest- 1st place Graduate Essay, Department of History, Marshall University, Huntington, WV, 2005
Candice M. Ruff Scholarship, University of Virginia, 2000- 2001
University of Virginia, Dean's List (3.5 G.P.A. and higher), 2001
The National Dean's List, 2001-2000, 2000-1999, 1999-1998